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To cite this article: Larissa Remennick (2005) 'Idealists Headed to Israel, Pragmatics Chose Europe': Identity Dilemmas and Social Incorporation among Former Soviet Jews who Migrated to Germany, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23:1, 30-58, DOI: [10.1080/0261928042000334835](https://doi.org/10.1080/0261928042000334835)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0261928042000334835>



Published online: 19 Aug 2006.



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'Idealists Headed to Israel, Pragmatics Chose Europe': Identity Dilemmas and Social Incorporation among Former Soviet Jews who Migrated to Germany

Larissa Remennick

Since German reunification in 1989, about 185,000 former Soviet Jews have been granted refugee status in Germany. Drawing on my observations and in-depth interviews with recent immigrants in five German cities, this qualitative study explores the identity dilemmas faced by Russian Jews who moved to the lands of the historic nemesis loaded with the memories of the Holocaust. The findings suggest that for most informants migrating to Germany (rather than Israel or North America) was a pragmatic decision based on the anticipated benefits from the German welfare system, security and comfort of living in Europe. All but a few informants were secular and had limited interest in the Jewish life, keeping in touch with the Jewish communities only inasmuch as it proved useful for their resettlement. Most middle-aged informants were traumatised by their occupational downgrading and/or chronic unemployment, but many also believed that the welfare aid they receive from the German state is morally justified as a continuing retribution for the wartime crimes. Older immigrants did not even try to narrow a cultural gap with German society, kept to their co-ethnic social circle, and were permanently intimidated by the shadow of anti-Semitism.

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Conversely, many younger informants opined that past grievances were no longer relevant, tried to adopt some cultural features of the mainstream, and saw themselves as citizens of unified Europe, rather than Germany as such.

Introduction

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, over 1.8 million Jews emigrated from the former Soviet Union (FSU). Over 60 per cent of them have moved to Israel, about 30 per cent went to the US and Canada, and around 10 per cent headed for other destinations in the West.¹ In 1991 the first government of united Germany decided to grant former Soviet Jews a status of special refugees, with the double goal of paying the historic debt to Jews for the wartime grievances and rejuvenating the country's small and aging Jewish community. The proportion of Jewish émigrés who opted for Germany out of the total emigrant flows from the FSU grew from eight per cent in 1992–93 to 26 per cent in 1998.² According to the latest data provided by the German authorities, about 185,000 former Soviet Jews have migrated to Germany, mainly to the wealthier Western *Länder*.³ The process of resettlement of former Soviet Jews was managed by the local Jewish communities (*Jüdisches Gemeinde* – JG) and funded by the federal government, *Länder* and municipalities in accordance with the numbers of the new arrivals in every city and town. The definition of who is a Jew for the purpose of a refugee visa adopted by the German immigration authorities in the early 1990s was rather loose, including also half- and sometimes quarter-Jews, plus their immediate family members. On the other hand, the Central Jewish Council of Germany and the local communities adopted a much more stringent religious definition, accepting in its ranks only those born of a Jewish mother. As former Soviet Jews had experienced decades of assimilation and mixed marriage, a large number of new arrivals were not recognised as Jews and could not join local JG. Due to these conflicting definitions, the actual numbers of refugees who entered Germany via Jewish channels, according to the Foreign Office statistics, is roughly twice as large as the number registered by the Central Jewish Council as new members – 95,000 and 185,000 respectively.⁴

For a better understanding of this immigrant wave, a brief background on former Soviet Jews would be useful. Jews under Soviet rule have gradually lost connection with their religion and language (Yiddish), moved in great numbers from small Jewish towns of the former Pale of Settlement to the major urban centres of the USSR, and manifested increasing rates of intermarriage from one generation to the

next, so that today about 75 per cent of Jews are married to non-Jews and among Jewish youth aged between 15 and 29 only about one third have two Jewish parents.⁵ As a result of their strong drive for upward social mobility, and despite state anti-Semitism, about 70 per cent of former Soviet Jews received post-secondary education and worked in professional and white-collar occupations. Many of them have achieved relatively high professional status, with resulting economic and social gains. At the same time, most Soviet Jews of the older generation lost relatives in mass executions of Jews during the German occupation of the western parts of the USSR in 1941–43. Thousands of Jewish women and children survived the war as a result of the organised evacuation of citizens from Moscow and Leningrad when Hitler's army approached these cities. Tens of thousands of Jewish men were recruited to the Soviet Army and fought the Nazis, were killed or wounded along with other soldiers, and many were honoured by medals and orders for courage.⁶ Thus the collective memory of this war and hatred for the Nazis, as well as a lingering distrust of Germans as a nation, form an important part of the Soviet Jewish identity, especially for the older generations. The indirect repercussions of this historic animosity spilled over also to the younger generation via popular cultural channels: literature and cinema not only depicted Nazi atrocities and the suffering of the populace, but also the heroic struggle of the Soviet Army, the partisans, and also Soviet secret agents working in the heart of Hitler's political apparatus.⁷

The post-war relations between the USSR and the two German states were complex and uneven, but after reunification they evolved into growing economic cooperation and political alliance, with pragmatism taking over old historic accounts. Yet, the history of the Second World War is still a factor colouring the bilateral relations and collective memory of both nations.⁸ It is easy to appreciate from this brief account that Russian, Ukrainian and other former Soviet Jews had rather mixed feelings toward Germany and Germans, and for many moving there as immigrants (formally as refugees, an even more socially loaded status) involved something of a cognitive dissonance. In this respect, Jews were different from ethnic Germans from the FSU (*Aussiedler*) – return immigrants who were repatriated to Germany during the same period, driven by the promise of a better future in their historic homeland. Before turning to the context of social integration of Russian Jews in Germany, let me offer a brief reflection on the issues of ethnicity generally and Jewish ethnic identity specifically.

Jewish Identity and Immigration

This research was of an exploratory nature and did not seek to endorse or refute any specific theoretical constructs. Rather, my goal was to stimulate the initial empirical insights for further research and theoretical reflections by providing an ethnographic narrative account or ‘thick description’ of the social encounter between Jewish immigrants and various segments of the German society.⁹ However, the concept of ethnic identity is a useful lens for viewing my empirical data. There is little doubt that ethnicity and ethnic identity are socially constructed, context-bound and constantly reshaped by both personal circumstances and historic processes.¹⁰ Despite this contingency, the main pillars of ethnic identity include language, cultural symbols, embodied for example in music, literature, cuisine and costume, along with collective memory, and its adjacent mythology.¹¹ Jewish ethnicity is even more complex, given the thousands of years of Diaspora existence and cultural assimilation in various receiving societies, which along with secularisation and dilution by mixed marriage turns current Jewish identity into both virtual and vanishing.¹² Indeed, the Jewish identity of the former Soviet and other East European Jews has mainly been preserved through the twentieth century through three forces: institutional and popular anti-Semitism, with the ensuing limitations for Jews in education and careers, as well as exposure to prejudice and insults; the collective memory of the Holocaust; and the establishment of Israel, with the subsequent anti-Israeli propaganda across Eastern Bloc countries.¹³

Being Jewish is defined by former Soviets as an ethnic rather than a religious affiliation, as over 90 per cent of them are secular, speak Russian as their mother tongue, and know little about Judaism. Historically, both the persecution of Jews under the Nazi regime and the 1950 Law of Return regulating immigration to Israel stem from the ethnic definition of Jews rather than religious observance, reflecting the predominantly secular lifestyle of most Jews in Europe and in the USSR after the 1920s. The ethnic concept of Jewishness has been further reinforced by the late twentieth-century immigration criteria adopted by Israel and Western countries for Jewish refugees based on ancestry and official documents stating ‘*natsional’nost*’ (the equivalent of ethnicity in Russian).¹⁴ Similar to other Diaspora Jews, the ethnic identity of former Soviet Jews is split or two-tiered and includes both Jewish and Russian or Soviet components; they can underscore one or the other as more salient, depending on the context. Educated Soviet Jews living in large cities were both active creators and consumers of Russian culture and regarded themselves as belonging to

its very core as many key cultural figures of the twentieth century – poets, composers, artists, journalists and the like – were Jewish. Some preservation of the Jewish traditions, language and religiosity was found only among older small-town Jews from western parts of the former Pale of Settlement and in the small Jewish communities of the Caucasus and Central Asia.¹⁵

Immigration transforms ethnic identity in a complex way. Migration itself is often caused by the wish to join one's ethnic group in a historic homeland, but reverse causality is also common: ethnic roots may be 'rediscovered' with the emergence of opportunity of return migration to a wealthier country. Yet, upon resettlement the expressions of ethnicity are again reshaped in the light of majority–minority relations in the receiving society. In fact, immigrant ethnic identity is always situational and often reactive: it is crystallised and inflated as a reaction to discrimination or social exclusion by the hegemonic majority, and even more so in reaction to ethnic violence.¹⁶ Immigrants typically express their ethnic and social identity via using their native language and reproducing various forms of their 'authentic' cultural life in the new country, often by establishing ethnic press, clubs and societies, and language classes for children, for example. This activity is often perceived by the mainstream as their lack of interest in integration and further enhances majority–minority frictions.¹⁷

The ethnic consciousness of Russian Jews in Germany is augmented by the collective memory of the Holocaust and present-day expressions of anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant sentiment in the right-wing media and political movements. The main venue of ethnic mobilisation for all Jews in Germany is the organised community (JG) that is called to settle the complex relations between this small but special minority (comprising slightly over 0.1 per cent of the total population) and the German nation at large. At the same time, the identity dilemma of Soviet Jews in Germany must be rather intense, revolving around the eternal vexing question – to be or not to be Jewish? On the one hand, Jewish migrants have to pay their moral tribute to the JG that facilitated their immigration and helped them to resettle, yet on the other being openly Jewish in Germany may be still regarded by many as too risky and likely to stir up conflict with Germans. Hence, many former Soviets, especially those who are only partly Jewish, may choose to distance themselves from anything Jewish and rely instead on the Russian, Ukrainian or Soviet component of their origins and identity.

Russian Jews in Germany

Several German social scholars took issue with the social integration of post-1990 Soviet Jewish immigrants, often using in comparison the much larger *Aussiedler* population of over two million that largely has a rural or small-town background and lower rates of post-secondary education. Most published studies were of a statistical or survey type, examining patterns of employment, social dependence, language proficiency and other related issues.¹⁸ While the integration of ethnic Germans is understood by German scholars and policy makers rather straightforwardly as a socio-economic incorporation into the nation's mainstream, the integration of Jewish immigrants usually implies a double meaning: An inclusion in the existing Jewish communities (JG) and in the German society and culture generally. There is little doubt that both facets of social insertion have been fraught with problems for both Russian Jews and Germans.¹⁹

First and foremost, despite their high level of education and professional experience Jews have a poor chance of finding qualified work on the German market for three main reasons: the incompatibility of credentials and skills gained in the FSU with the local standards (and the difficulty of their formal recognition); their poor command of the German language (only 15 per cent of the respondents in a survey by Schoeps and others in 1999 self-rated their proficiency as good or excellent); and the recession and structural changes in the German economy since the mid-1990s that has curbed the demand for workers in traditional skilled occupations such as engineering and medicine. As a result, over half of the Jewish immigrants of working age have been unemployed for most of the time they have spent in Germany. Their main source of livelihood has been welfare benefit, modest by German standards but rather generous by the Soviet ones, especially because it covers not only basic living expenses but also housing and medical care. Of those educated immigrants who have found work, only some 25 per cent continued their pre-migration occupations, while the majority had to convert into semi-skilled or unskilled workforce. Thus, despite a wide gap in their pre-migration education and occupational record, the economic mobility of both Jews and *Aussiedler* has been similarly limited.²⁰

Another factor precluding an improved command of German and social inclusion is the formation of residential ethnic enclaves in most German cities and towns, whereby whole buildings and neighbourhoods are gradually inhabited by Russian-speaking immigrants forming informal social networks of their own, exemplified by the *Charlottenberg* area of

Berlin that is jokingly renamed by veteran Berliners into *Charlottengrad*. Although many middle-aged and older Jewish migrants have enough spare time (being unemployed or retired) and opportunities for studying German in free or subsidised classes, relatively few of them are engaged in a regular study, probably because of their low economic motivation, created by their slim chances for upward occupational mobility. At the same time, the Jewish immigrant youths grasp the German language and adopt elements of everyday German culture much more rapidly than their parents via schooling and other youth activities. Combined with the traditional Jewish values of hard work and excellence in education, this facilitates the mass entry of young Jewish immigrants to elite high schools and universities with resulting signs of expedient social mobility.²¹ This process is in contrast to young *Aussiedler*, who often go into vocational training and remain bound in the blue-collar workforce like their parents.²²

The second tier of the integration process – the insertion into the local Jewish communities (JG) – caused multiple problems owing to the rapid expansion of JG both locally and nationally, from about 28,000 in the late 1980s to about 95,000 today. Since the JG assumed the key role in the organisation of resettlement of former Soviet Jews, they had to redefine and expand their functions from mainly religious congregations to civic associations delivering social services to the newcomers (German classes, housing aid, running old age homes and kindergartens, vocational and social counselling, and more). Although federal and municipal budgets allocated to the JG have also grown in tandem with the numbers of new members, they were insufficient for hiring paid staff and meeting many other practical needs ensuing from these new functions.²³ Before the influx of ex-Soviet Jews, most local JG in Germany counted from several hundred members in smaller towns to several thousand in the larger cities, with most of the members of advanced age. The incorporation of new members has drastically changed the demographic and political balance in most JG, rejuvenating them on the one hand but redressing power relations on the other. Even in larger JG, such as those of Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich, new Russian-speaking members now form over half of the total membership, while in many small towns, especially in the Eastern *Lands*, the JG consist almost totally of ‘Russians’. At the same time, the organisational power and financial control of the JG still belong with the old-timers, who vehemently oppose the entry of the newcomers to the elective councils, arguing that they are unequipped to deal with the tasks at hand, such as maintaining good relations with mainstream German politicians and lobbying for more funds. Yet, the voting power of the newcomers gradually shifts the balance towards their greater

representation, and it is clear that the veterans will have to give in and share both their privileges and duties. Many old-timers feel disenfranchised and alienated by this new challenge and resist the dominance of the Russian language at the meetings and the proliferation of Russian cultural activities sponsored by JG.²⁴

Another serious cause of tension between the old and new members of the JG is the latter's lack of interest in religious learning and activities. Although most veteran members of JG had been only moderately observant themselves, now they felt the need to juxtapose themselves against secular 'Russians' and underscore their belonging to Orthodox Judaism. Complying with the expectations of the receiving society, during the initial months after joining JG many immigrants took classes in Hebrew and Jewish tradition and participated in religious services, but over time they tended to diminish or quit these activities and distance themselves from the JG. In fact, the continuous attendance of social and religious events is mainly typical of older Soviet Jews, while younger members show a reluctance to reshape their Jewish identity along religious lines. As a result, new members are reproducing the age-related activity pattern that had existed in the JG before their arrival, thus calling into question the very purpose of their recruitment, the rejuvenation of membership and ensuring the community's future.²⁵

An important background factor shaping the integration process of former Soviet immigrants is the public atmosphere surrounding their arrival and the attitudes of Germans towards immigrants generally, former Soviets as a group, and Jews specifically. The total number of immigrants (or 'foreigners') in Germany is over six million. This figure excludes the *Aussiedler*, who are citizens from the moment of arrival and hence are usually not counted as foreigners, and over eight million with the *Aussiedler*, in the total population of 80 million (i.e. roughly seven and ten per cent, respectively). Although the majority of Germans show a high tolerance of other cultures and languages, right-wing and anti-immigrant sentiment has been on the rise in Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, in recent decades. This trend is especially clear in its former Eastern *Lands*, where some 17 per cent express extremist views and vote for the radical right, as opposed to some 12 per cent in the West, with slogans such as "Germany for the Germans". On a daily basis, many Germans cannot distinguish between the two ethnic groups of former Soviet immigrants (*Aussiedler* and Jews) and perceive them on the basis of the spoken language, appearance and conduct as 'Russians' or 'Soviets'. On the other hand, the mainstream public discourse on Jews, German-Jewish relations and the Holocaust is highly cautious and politically correct, both due to

the institutionalised routine of atonement for the past sins and the wish to underscore the current pluralistic and democratic face of new Germany. During the 1990s, German media extensively covered the arrival of Russian Jews, who 'became the offering of choice on Germany's multi-cultural platter'.²⁶ Yet, after the initial enthusiasm about the return of Jews to Germany, discussions have shifted in focus to contested issues such as the doubtful Jewish identity of many newcomers and the ensuing conflicts within the JG, their high unemployment and social dependence on the German taxpayer. This unflattering portrayal in the media has further increased the alienation between the immigrants and Germans.²⁷

Drawing on this background, my current study addressed several related questions about the integration process of former Soviet Jews in Germany. First, I wanted to explore identity dilemmas experienced by adult Russian Jews as a result of their resettlement in Germany, in the light of historic legacies and current relations with members of the mainstream German public. Specifically, I was interested in the perceived identity conflict as it surfaced while answering the uneasy question: 'Why Germany and not Israel?' Second, I explored the ways in which Jewish immigrants perceive and present their relations with their principal counterparts in German society (JG, *Aussiedler* and mainstream Germans), as well as their own place and prospects in the new country. As my focus was on the subjective experiences of the cross-cultural encounter and their interpretation by the immigrants (and in some cases also the hosts), the best way to elicit this kind of data was a qualitative ethnographic study based on observations and semi-structured personal interviews.

Study Participants and Methods

The study was informed by the qualitative research paradigm and drew on my observations and interviews with the immigrants and the staff or activists of the local JG conducted in August–September 2003. In order to compile a more comprehensive picture of the way Russian Jews adjust to life in Germany, I made field visits to five cities of different size with significant shares of new arrivals in the local JG – Berlin, Dortmund, Krefeld, Dusseldorf and Munich. In every city, I met with JG representatives, who often provided the initial list of contacts among the immigrants, who further referred me to their friends and acquaintances, i.e., the so-called snowballing method was used for the recruitment of informants. I conducted most interviews in Russian, my native language. Two of the JG officials who spoke only German were interviewed with the help of interpreters. All interviews were

tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed by repeated scanning for the key topical and conceptual categories using the codebook method.²⁸ Besides interviews, I also read the Russian immigrant press, attended community meetings and religious services in the synagogues and took field notes.

The researcher–informant relationship is of paramount importance in gathering qualitative data, as it directly affects the quality and depth of the ensuing narratives. Classic studies emphasise this point.²⁹ So do more recent studies of ethnic relations in multi-ethnic or border locations which point to a broad gap between the public and private discursive styles people use while discussing sensitive topics of the ‘Other’, depending on the context and identities of the speakers.³⁰ Private exchange is usually less censored and may be fraught with negative stereotyping and referrals to the ‘Other’ as a threat. My own location as a researcher was rather beneficial. On the one hand, I was perceived by the Jewish immigrants as co-ethnic and spoke in their mother tongue, but on the other, I do not live in Germany and do not belong to their social networks. As a result I was not viewed as a threat or a rival, and most informants were pleased to confide in me their innermost feelings and thoughts. After living several years in Europe, most former Soviets have become accustomed to censoring their speech and relate to sensitive topics in a relatively politically correct way. Yet, with me they felt free to use very sheer language, refer to ethnic stereotypes and generally speak their mind in their own terms. Although some of the remarks I heard during the interviews are rather straightforward and opinionated, I am conveying these accounts uncensored, changing only the names in the quotes.

Altogether I interviewed eight representatives of the Jewish communities who work with the recent arrivals and 29 immigrants who arrived in Germany after 1990 and have lived there for at least three years. Among these immigrants, 13 were men and 16 women, and their ages lay between 25 and 65; all but four had academic degrees from the USSR. The majority of interviewees were middle-aged people, because younger immigrants were usually busy at work and generally less available for the interviews. Yet many informants told me about the adjustment process of their children. Most informants came to Germany from Russia or Ukraine and have resided in the country for 12 years or more (30 per cent), 7–11 years (35 per cent) and 3–6 years (35 per cent). At the time of the study, fewer than half of all informants (43 per cent) were working or had worked previously in Germany. The majority received social welfare aid as their principal or supplementary source of income.

Findings

Below, I am presenting and discussing my chief findings, illustrating them by the typical quotes from the interviews. All names of informants have been changed to ensure anonymity, but other essential details (age, occupation) have been preserved.

Identity Dilemmas

The attitudes of informants towards their Jewish origin and possible Jewish lifestyle in Germany varied, reflecting their own ethnic origin (i.e., having one or two Jewish parents), that of their spouse, and pre-migration proximity to Jewish life. Out of 29 informants, about 30 per cent had non-Jewish spouses and 40 per cent had only one Jewish parent. Generally, all informants but three described themselves as secular and most have kept only a minor and symbolic attachment to the Jewish traditions and lifestyle for at least two generations. Given this ethno-cultural ambiguity, for most informants identifying as Jewish or Russian, Ukrainian or Soviet was the matter of choice rather than necessity. Several informants expressed their unease about the very route of entry to Germany with a 'Jewish ticket' and the definition of their status in Germany as refugees. Eugene (48) said:

Everybody knows that this refugee status is just a pretence, we are in fact economic migrants from the deteriorating post-Soviet countries. State anti-Semitism in Russia was no longer there by the early 1990s, and popular dislike of Jews is probably the same everywhere, including Germany. The German government offered us a comfortable shelter and we were happy to accept it.

Maya (51) added along the same lines:

Soviet Jews failed to live up to the expectations of the Germans: They wanted to 'import' real Jews, who observe the religious rules and contribute to the Jewish community life, but in fact received a bunch of regular immigrants who are eager to use German welfare and the comforts of life in Europe.

I am rather torn between the two instincts: on the one hand, I came here as a Jew and must show some commitment to the Jewish causes, but on the other I have never lived as a Jew in Kiev and it's too late to start it here in my age. I feel rather foreign in the synagogue, and Jewish holidays do not interest me too much, but I still have to participate in this 'game' in order to justify my living here. (Vladimir, 62)

Who am I? I see myself as a member of Russian intelligentsia of a Jewish descent. My language and culture are Russian, the only Jewish trait I have is the assignment as a Jew in my Soviet passport, and endless troubles that ensued from that during Soviet times. Thank God, Germany is part of Europe and a free country, so I can identify as I wish; I'd rather be a Russian immigrant than a Jewish one. (Alexander, 44)

For Germans, all speakers of Russian are the same, and I am no better or worse for them than an *Aussiedler*. And you know what – I don't mind being seen as Russian, or Soviet, it's unwise to underscore your Jewish origins in this country. (David, 43)

Apprehensions of Anti-Semitism

The last quote brings forward another facet of the Russian Jewish identity in Germany – the tacit or explicit apprehension of anti-Jewish sentiments on the part of native Germans.

You know, every German I met always made a point of his or her neutral or friendly attitude towards Jews; they have been conditioned from young age to atone for the sins of their fathers and censor their speech. But for some reason I don't believe them. If you scratch deep down, every German dislikes Jews to this or that extent. Today they repress and conceal this dislike, but tomorrow things can change drastically, especially as more Jews will become visible in the economy, politics and the media. (Jacob, 53)

You see, I don't look very Jewish. When I talk with the natives (which doesn't happen often!) I never say that I am Jewish from the 'special refugee contingent', I say I am Russian, or come from the FSU. I am never sure about how a simple German woman from a supermarket or hairdresser's would react to meeting a Jew. (Lydia, 60)

When I hear on the news about yet another neo-Nazi attack on a synagogue or a Jewish cemetery I shudder and feel really miserable and helpless – the past terrors my family had lived through come back to me, and I start brooding on the same damned question: what I am doing here in Germany as a Jew? But then I remind myself that in Russia the neo-Nazis and skinheads are even more numerous and violent, so this is the world we have to live in anyway (Galina, 72)

I have noticed that older women like myself [i.e. Russian-Jewish immigrants] seldom venture to go out into the city for some business or shopping alone, they always seek company of one or more other women. Maybe we do not realise it, but we feel insecure alone in the streets full of Germans, including these hideous youth groups in black

leather and metal all over their bodies. Not knowing the language and being a Jewish woman is a double jeopardy. (Fania, 64)

Conversely, many other informants, mostly younger and working ones (who are more familiar with Germans), believed that middle and younger generations of Germans were generally open-minded and free of racist feelings or prejudice towards minorities, including the Jews.

I think it's all in the past. Younger Germans were raised like other Europeans in the atmosphere of tolerance and democracy. There are some right-wing and extremist elements here, but I think that their share is not higher than in other parts of Europe. (Sasha, 38)

My being of Russian-Jewish origin is irrelevant: we live in a cosmopolitan world, Europe is full of immigrants and visitors from every corner of the globe, and I am one of them. The important things are to learn German well, to find a good job, to find your own place in this society! You are judged by your achievements, and not by your origin or blood running in your veins. (Michael, 29)

Thus, the opinions ranged from being extremely apprehensive of potential anti-Semitism among Germans (largely among older immigrants) to the most relaxed, which denied the existence of any special problem for the Jews, and assumed the welcoming and meritocratic nature of German society (expressed by younger newcomers more involved with the German society). It is interesting that those most prone to deny the existence of anti-Semitism among modern-day Germans often made reference to Germany as part of Europe, or the EU, or global Western society, while those who believed that negative sentiments towards the Jews were still in place spoke of Germany as a special country with a unique history, without referring to a wider geopolitical framework.

The Loss of Professional Identity

A large part of the identity crisis experienced by older Jewish immigrants reflected their loss of social status and professional identity as a result of resettlement. Soviet-trained professionals often perceived their occupational role as the core of their self-image and self-esteem.³¹ During the Soviet era, occupational change was rare among educated citizens: most remained in the same occupational track for life and very few ventured drastic turns in their careers, if only because by Soviet law they could not re-enter university or college after their mid-30s. Hence the need to redefine one's professional identity on the new market and to find alternative ways of using one's skills and talents is a tightrope for most

middle-aged ex-Soviet professionals. Many informants whose credentials were not recognised or could not find work in Germany, were nevertheless not ready to downgrade to manual work for low pay and preferred to remain for years on welfare.

I prefer to remain a former research scientist to becoming a current cleaner or caregiver for the elderly. I have modest needs and can survive on the unemployment benefit. This way, I am kind of frozen in my past and avoid a degrading experience. (Oleg, 51)

Those who kept trying to find skilled work faced growing insecurity as to their actual ability to work under new conditions. 'My papers say, "N.N., Professor of Chemical Technology". Ha! It's *there* that I was a Professor, and *here* I am dog shit!' – was the punch line offered by one informant. The feeling of social displacement makes it difficult for educated immigrants to find proper ways of referring to Germans of ostensibly similar social status.

I once went for a job interview in an engineering firm in my old area of work, after being unemployed for over two years. Although the man who interviewed me was of middle rank, younger and probably less experienced than me, I felt highly uncomfortable when he tried to examine my past work and knowledge. On one hand, I am almost sure that my professional baggage was greater than his, but on the other, I had hard time proving it because of my humble immigrant condition, lack of current employment and limited German or English. So I am no longer sure who I am and what I have to offer as a worker. (Mark, 47, metallurgic engineer)

I feel so useless, and indeed a nobody here in Germany – just another recipient of social benefits from good German taxpayers. In Odessa, we lived very modestly but at least I knew who I was, and people respected me and sought my advice. Here I became a shade of my former self. (Anatoly, 59, former surgeon)

A good summary of these reflections was offered by Lydia (49), a former engineer from St Petersburg:

Living in Germany is good for the young, who adapt quickly, and for the old, who don't need to adapt and can just enjoy relative safety and welfare. The middle generation, i.e. the people who interrupted their careers in Russia and hoped to regain them in Germany, are the ones who lost it all. It is very hard to make a decent living with the kinds of jobs that are available to people with unrecognised credentials and poor German. Many guys I know – doctors, musicians, scientists – have tried and failed, ending up among the recipients of welfare. Some see it as normal, others as degrading, but few have a choice of rejecting this option.

Poor proficiency in German was another common predicament damaging immigrants' identity and dignity.

Being unable to express yourself in a meaningful way is so humiliating! You feel like a half-wit, or a retarded child ... muteness makes you professionally disabled. Because of this language problem I stopped even trying to find qualified work. (Vera, 48, former social worker)

Germans are not really tolerant of accents and mistakes in German that immigrants make. When you come for a job interview, the boss is not sympathetic to the fact that you are new in the country and never spoke German before. If your language is less than fluent, you are automatically discarded, regardless of your qualifications and experience. (Rina, former schoolteacher, looking for work in a kindergarten)

Some older informants believed that there is nothing wrong with being supported for years by the money of German taxpayers, seeing this aid as a form of historic retribution for the Nazi crimes.

I am not feeling guilty living on welfare. Firstly, if the German bureaucracy doesn't recognise my professional experience as a doctor, then it is itself responsible for the fact that I cannot make a living with my profession. I am not ready to clean the streets for the same money I get as a living allowance. And I'd tell you more: I think they should pay the historic price for destroying Jewish lives not so many years ago. If they want Jews to come back and live here, they should pay. (Herman, 52, former physician)

Germans killed most of my relatives during the war, so they should at least compensate for their crimes by making my old age more comfortable. I see this pension as a kind of historic due. (Rosa, 77)

Thus, the combination of ambiguous ethnic identity, lack of trust in the alleged German tolerance of Jews, the loss of professional identity, economic dependence and linguistic handicap created multiple points of ambivalence among Russian Jewish immigrants as to their new identity and place in German society.

'Idealists headed for Israel, Pragmatists chose Europe'

Given my identity as Israeli scholar of Russian Jewish descent interested in post-communist immigrants, many interviews came to touch on the vexing question of the destination country. Some informants mentioned in passing or even made a point of their reasons for choosing Germany rather than Israel, and I have asked some others myself by the end of the interview

(unless they clearly avoided discussing this topic). The answers largely depended on age and the strength of informants' Jewish identity. Nikolai, 44, a former journalist, said:

I emigrated to Europe, not so much to Germany. Europe is becoming one entity with open borders, a European passport allows you to live and work anywhere in the region ... Why not Israel? I can't really imagine myself living in the Middle East – it's a different civilisation, very far from my own. I grew up as a Russian intelligentsia member, which means being European in your outlook, values, interests ... hence my place is in Europe.

Israel was out of the question. To move from one madhouse to another, from chaos and instability in Russia to the war and terror in Israel? Besides their security problems, I have heard from my friends that there is no work for educated immigrants anymore, all the places are taken. What would I do there with my diploma of music teacher? ... On the other hand, neither do I practise my profession here in Germany. But at least it's quiet and you can ride the buses without fear. (Diana, 36)

My wife and I had thought about Israel in the mid-1990s, but decided against it mainly because of a very hot climate. My wife has hypertension and I have heart disease ... The moderate European climate is better for older folks like us. It's not that we were seduced by higher pensions and free flats! I swear, health is the main reason why we moved to Germany. (Felix, 65)

We did not consider Israel because I have two sons who would be recruited in the military right away. I am not so much of a Jewish patriot to sacrifice my children to the endless war with the Arabs. I have also heard that veteran Israelis dislike Russian immigrants because they are too educated and took many qualified jobs that Israelis wanted for themselves, so the Zionist welcome is a myth. (Marina, 43)

Thus the image of Israel in the minds of my respondents was rife with negative features such as violence, insecurity, harsh climate, unemployment and an unwelcoming reception of immigrants. Most informants drew on the images of Israel they saw on television (which focus on the military conflict and terror attacks and almost never show the images of everyday life, nature and cultural events), and were aware of the negative bias that the news in the media inevitably entails. Many had relatives and friends in Israel and stayed in touch with them by means of telephone and letters; fewer informants had actually visited Israel and had some first-hand impressions of the country. These attitudes were usually more positive. Yet, most informants felt tangible discomfort when confronted with the question 'Why not in Israel?', and many went into a defensive

mode while giving explanations, perhaps augmented by my own identity as an Israeli scholar. Yuri (40) reflected:

You know, there are idealists and there are pragmatists. Then there are more Jewish Jews and less Jewish ones ... Take myself: I was never interested in Jewish issues and would've probably totally ignored this birthmark (i.e., being born a Jew) if not for state anti-Semitism in the FSU. People who have moved to Israel are either idealists or have a strong link to their Jewish side, that's why they are ready to compromise their well-being for the Jewish cause. Pragmatics like me do not believe in the Zionist ideals and we opted for the civilised – and yes! wealthy – Europe. I don't see any fault with the human wish to find a better place for yourself and your children.

Informants with a stronger Jewish identity were even more defensive in their attempt to justify their immigration to Germany instead of Israel. Alex (53), a television operator, said:

Not a day passes by without my asking myself – what the hell am I doing here? I found myself in Germany mainly for family reasons (my ex-wife insisted on Germany, not Israel), and now that we got divorced I am free to move wherever I wish. My fears about Israel are not related to Arab suicide bombers or political turmoil, they are about learning Hebrew and adapting to this new culture and work environment. I have invested so much energy in learning German and finding work, so it's scary to start again from scratch. But I am sure that I'll move there one day.

Mira, 50, a JG activist:

I am a convinced Zionist and have been active in the Jewish community for many years, both before emigration and in Germany. Most of my family lives in Israel and I visited there several times. I feel rather guilty about having to stay in Germany, and this is mainly because of my own and my husband's poor health – a hot climate would kill us in no time. So I do what I can for the Jewish causes: teach classes on the Jewish tradition, raise money for Israel, host Israeli kids on vacation in my home ... This makes me feel better about myself.

There was one informant, an Orthodox religious man in his mid-40s and a teacher of Hebrew, who perceived his living in Germany as a national and religious mission of reinstating Jewish community there.

I see this as a moral debt to my German-Jewish forefathers who perished in the Holocaust. The German state gave us a chance to make a comeback to this part of Europe and it was my duty to oblige. In several decades Germany will have a small but thriving community of believing Jews.

Perhaps in a weaker form, a similar idea was expressed by a few other informants, who regarded living in Germany as returning historical dues to the Holocaust victims and as a proof of vitality and resilience of the Jewish people. 'Zionists say: "You are winning by building Jewish state and making it thrive." I agree, but add: "You can also prove your worth and win as a Jew by repopulating Western Europe where you had once been exterminated"' (Evgeny, 48).

'New Russian Jews' and their Social Relations with Other Groups

Let me turn now to social relations between Jewish newcomers and their main counterparts during the resettlement process; the veteran members of the Jewish community (JG), ethnic Germans from the FSU (*Aussiedler*), and other Germans belonging to the receiving majority. These social relations form the context of the immigrants' new lives, whereby their ethnic identity is expressed, reinforced or reshaped. It is in these interactions that they have to decide if they want to be perceived and treated as Jews, or rather switch to their alternative identity as 'Russian/Soviet immigrants'.

Relations within Jewish Communities

While some initial contact with the local JG is mandatory for the newcomers, to receive local residence permit and housing subsidy, the subsequent extent of their participation in JG activities is voluntary, and for most younger immigrants it decreases over time. Many immigrants, who are not recognised as Jews by religious criteria (i.e., those having a Jewish father, but not mother), or those having non-Jewish spouses were annoyed by the JG's policy of checking the 'purity' of the Jewish blood among the new applicants. Veronica (52) said:

My husband is Russian, so I was accepted and he wasn't. This means he cannot attend German classes or receive any other aid from the community, for which our daughter and myself are entitled as Jews. Of course he feels excluded! For example, when we come to a concert or lecture subsidised by the JG, I pay a symbolic low fee and he has to pay the full fee. Since we are close and don't want anyone to split our relationship, we just stopped going there altogether.

Some informants told even more emotionally charged stories of suspicion and maltreatment by JG staff of the new members, whose Jewishness caused even the slightest doubt. Tanya (45) depicted how her elderly parents were denied membership and had to appeal twice

because their Soviet documents issued in the mid-1920s did not state their '*natsional'nost*' (there were several years in early Soviet history when this paragraph was omitted from personal documents).

My parents are as Jewish as it gets, it's enough to look at their faces, their names, to hear their Yiddish accent . . . Yet, this social worker at the JG (herself a former Soviet) was fixed only on their papers, not on them as people . . . My old and disabled father even suggested to open his pants for her to see that he is circumcised . . . what a shame! After this prolonged agony, all our family has decided that we don't want to have anything in common with these bureaucrats, and we never crossed their doorstep ever since. Never mind that we have lost all possible subsidies and services.

Several informants defined these practices as openly racist and totally unacceptable in an enlightened European country.

Have we escaped anti-Semitism in the Ukraine in order to be abused here by our fellow Jews? The German community had known in advance that Jews from the FSU have had mixed marriages for decades and many spouses are non-Jewish. Why even let us immigrate if we were not kosher enough for them? (Leonid, 46)

The JG folks check our Jewishness four generations back like the Nazis had done back in the 1930s and 1940s. Shouldn't they be more sensitive and reasonable, after all the hideous history of racism and blood purity assessments? In my view, if you identify willingly as a Jew you *are* a Jew, no matter who your mother was. (Boris, 39)

Apparently, the JG workers had a different perspective on this matter, arguing that by abandoning the religious definition of a Jew and accepting everyone into its ranks, the JG will soon lose its role and meaning as a religious Jewish congregation and will evolve into yet another social welfare office or an ethnic society. They also asserted that many Russian immigrants are trying to get their way in the JG solely to partake in all the material benefits that it grants its members. Hilda, a social worker, commented: 'It is known that over one third of the current immigration wave are not really Jewish, they are just seeking a better life in Germany, often using false identities or forged papers. How can we screen these people out without checking who they are?' She later added:

These Russian Jews are a great disappointment for us. They come with demands and want to grab as much as possible of our free services, but few of them are ready to offer their time and work in return. It's hard to find volunteers for our projects, they only look for paid jobs . . . the very idea of voluntary work for common causes is alien for them.

The response to this common accusation was given by several immigrant informants, who opined that it was unfair to expect that recent immigrants would do unpaid work. 'Veteran members are established and wealthy Germans and we are immigrants from an impoverished country, and we have totally different resources and abilities' (Vera, 54).

The old JG members and staff want us to work for community causes without pay, but how can we do this having no decent income? They see the world through their own lens of affluence and a solid footing in Germany, while we are still nobody here and have to struggle for every Euro. Of course we seek jobs, not volunteering. If they could switch shoes with us for a few days, they would do the same. (Maria, 43)

We need a few years to get some footing in Germany before we start giving rather than receiving services. It's not true that Russian Jews do not volunteer: I know several psychologists and a lawyer who started helping here soon after getting their German licences. Of course not every one is ready to invest their time with no direct remuneration; but then you can benefit from your community activism in many other ways, for example via meeting new people, building connections and such ... It may be even more important than the money. (Lydia, 56)

Other informants have pointed out that being Jewish is different for the veterans and the novices.

Although we are all Jews, but we are far from equals. Being Jews for us means something different than for them, it has little to do with synagogue attendance or keeping kosher. It's more about striving for education and a better future for our children, keeping some cultural standards, reading books ... Perhaps the only common ground for us is the threat of anti-Semitic attacks, both in Russia and in Germany. (Oleg, 41)

Several informants said that they tried to take active part in the JG but were repelled by the power fights:

We have become a majority in most local communities, but still have almost no representation in the elective organs. This is both because old-timers still control the elections and because Russian Jews have little solidarity and don't vote for each other ... You know, a Bukhara Jew won't vote for an Ashkenazi one, and both would vote against a Georgian Jew – that kind of petty old prejudice. I know some activists who take part in these political fights that boil down to greater access to money and control ... but for me it is repulsive. The more I know about the political kitchen of the JG, the less I want to take any part in it. (Victor, 47)

It can be inferred that the relations between the veterans and the newcomers in the JG are constructed around the give and take discourse,

reflecting inequality in their status and personal resources. At the same time, the conflicts around membership and rights reflect the clash between the ethnic and religious definitions of Judaism: the alleged bad reputation of Russian Jews and their blocked access to power in the community are often justified by their detachment from religion.

Relations with Aussiedler

It has been emphasised already that former Soviet Jews and ethnic Germans come from very different social backgrounds: the former are educated urban professionals or white-collar workers and the latter are predominantly small-town or rural residents with blue-collar occupations (the share of academic degree holders among these groups is roughly 70 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively). In Germany, *Aussiedler* as ethnic return migrants receive full citizenship with all the ensuing entitlements soon upon arrival, while the Jews obtain only a residence permit and have fewer legal privileges. For instance, *Aussiedler* with academic degrees from Soviet universities and colleges are entitled by law to have them regarded as comparable to German degrees when applying for jobs or in regard to wage levels, but Jews with similar Soviet degrees are not entitled for their automatic recognition. This puts the Jews in an unfavourable position in comparison to *Aussiedler* while competing for positions on the German job market.³² On the other hand, as a result of the federal resettlement policy, more *Aussiedler* than Jews found themselves in the economically less developed Eastern *Lands* with higher unemployment and poorer housing quality (for example, living in former Soviet military townships). In most other respects, though, the starting conditions for the economic and social integration of the two groups were rather similar: both were entitled to subsidised housing and free German instruction, unemployment benefits and healthcare insurance. German proficiency among *Aussiedler* had been preserved mainly among the older generation (who speak an obsolete German dialect of their forefathers barely understandable to today's Germans), but for younger Soviet Germans their Primary Language has been Russian.³³ Hence the linguistic challenges were also rather similar.

The two communities of former Soviets have developed a certain animosity and kept residential and social distance from each other from the very outset of their lives in Germany. Both parties have had sad memories and historic claims to each other's conduct in Soviet times: older Germans remember too well the Jewish names of the NKVD/KGB officers who often organised their deportations and persecution during the war with Hitler. The Jews, in turn, accuse ethnic Germans in their intrinsic

anti-Semitism and generally consider them rough and uncultured. The current relations between the two communities of Soviet migrants are exacerbated by the explicitly anti-Semitic tone and messages of the ethnic press and cultural societies established by Russian Germans.

Russian Germans who came in the 1990s strongly contribute to the new wave of anti-Semitism via their newspapers, radio talk shows and all kinds of cultural venues like youth clubs. They say and write things unimaginable in the mainstream German media: they deny the Holocaust or accuse Jews themselves in what had happened to them; they implicate Jews in all the crimes of the Stalin's regime; they circulate obsolete ideas of the global Jewish plot. After you read such materials, how can you keep speaking to these people? (Matvei, 60, journalist from a Russian Jewish paper)

Some informants expressed very strong opinions about their German neighbours:

I declined good housing offers several times just because these buildings were populated by *Aussiedler* families. Why? Because they are anti-Semites and primitive rural people. Look at their youth – they don't study, don't work, just hang around in public gardens and drink beer. It's important for me to have good neighbours and not to be scared entering the house lobby at night. (Tamara, 53)

Others were more moderate and fair, but still had their reservations:

I don't have anything against *Aussiedler*, and I disagree with the stereotype that they are rude, uneducated and criminal. I have met many of them here in Germany and I know that most are decent, hard-working people trying to take a fresh start, just like us. But I also know that Jews and Germans are indeed very different in their everyday culture and mentality. So I won't be happy if my daughter had decided to marry a German guy ... (Pavel, 48)

Unfortunately, I could not juxtapose these attitudes with those of *Aussiedler* themselves, since none of several persons I approached agreed to be interviewed by an Israeli researcher, and even if they did they would probably have refrained from expressing their true thoughts and feelings because of my identity. I have found indirect confirmation of anti-Semitic attitudes among *Aussiedler* from reading a bi-lingual newspaper, several magazines and websites published by Russian Germans in Berlin, Frankfurt and Dresden, which were indeed full of tacit and explicit allegations against the Jews (and Israel) in many articles, memoirs and political commentaries. Hence, the former Soviet immigrant community in Germany has become a current scene where mutual historical animosity between ethnic Germans and Jews is augmented by the economic

competition for scarce jobs, and old motifs are replayed in new forms using modern electronic media.

Relations with the Native Germans

Most informants said that their contacts with indigenous Germans were limited to workplaces (if they worked) and bureaucratic structures such as *Sozialamt* (Social Welfare Office) they needed to visit for settling their financial, residential and other matters. Few working informants have developed informal friendly relations with their co-workers. Arkady (43), a working engineer, said:

It is not common in Germany to become friends with your fellow workers, let alone the bosses. Every one minds their business, although on the surface Germans are very amicable, smile a lot, ask how you are, etc. The moment the workday ends, they just shut out everything and everyone that comes from that part of their lives and switch gears to their family roles, personal business, etc. Work and personal lives are kept separately. So no, I don't have friends whom I met via work, despite my full-time employment with the same firm for five years.

We are aliens in Germany and we will never become real friends with the locals, our mentality and lifestyles are so different ... We moved here for the sake of our children and they will surely make it in the future. They can gain most of the German education system, they can travel around Europe, for them the sky is the limit. But our generation is lost – this is the price we have to pay. (Sara, 50)

Some informants mentioned being friendly with their German neighbours or with the volunteers whom they met during their initial hard months upon arrival and who continued to help them. Irena (35) said,

I can only say the best about Germans who gave us a hand in hard times, and for no reason or benefit of their own ... You sort of don't expect this openness and generosity from a German ... Some of them just wanted to help, especially after learning that we were Jewish. In fact, we found this apartment and I got my first job with the help of Gustav, an older man whom I just met in the street a week after landing in Germany. He approached me and asked if I needed help, seeing that I was lost and helpless, my eyes full of tears ... Since then we have remained friends.

She continued,

You cannot generalise, all Germans are different, like Russians or Jews ... But most people I met here are relaxed and amicable, not like us former Soviets, always tense and alert, always prepared for some

mischief or blow from others ... Perhaps years of good life in security and affluence make people kinder. What's amazing, they are ready to share their wealth with total strangers like us ...

The memoirs of the war were a common motif in the accounts of many informants.

When I see an older German man, I can't help thinking: he could have been an SS officer or a camp official during the war, he could have fought against my dad at the outskirts of Leningrad ... It is largely a generation matter: younger Germans have no direct responsibility for the Nazi crimes, but most elders had been involved with the regime in some way. On the other hand, I realise that Germans had been drafted to this war just like Russians, having no choice and often paying with their lives, so one should be fair. (Gregory, 46, Munich)

Many informants noticed the attitudes of Germans towards immigrants, including former Soviets, were related to their social status and prosperity.

I guess the locals are more against us when they themselves have no jobs and live in what they think is poverty (all is relative!). This is why most acts of violence against immigrants are in the Eastern *Lands*, and in poorer city quarters. Germans who are educated, and work and live in good conditions, especially in small country towns where there are few immigrants, are much more friendly and accepting. (Victor, 51, Berlin)

Yet, even in cases when Germans tried to be friendly and include the newcomers into their circle, there was some discomfort and tension in this encounter ensuing from the gap in statuses and personal resources. Nina (53) recounted:

I am often invited to this ladies group run by a local dame, who hosts everyone in her large and beautiful house – to play bridge, talk about the books and films, drink sherry, etc. As I am the only immigrant in our wealthy neighbourhood and can speak some German, they love me as a token object of their benevolence and charity. Some would bring me their used clothes or kitchen utensils, others would just show interest and give advice ... but I still feel alien there and often try to find excuses not to come.

Conclusion

In this exploratory ethnographic study I have tried to illuminate some of the identity dilemmas faced by former Soviet Jews who chose Germany as their new home. Coming from the same ethno-cultural background as my interviewees, and being an outsider to the social setting in question, I believe that I have elicited open and uncensored accounts of their

resettlement experiences. Generally speaking, I have confirmed my initial assumption that many Jewish immigrants face some moral discomfort, if not full-fledged cognitive dissonance, about residing in the midst of the nation largely responsible for the extermination of the European Jewry just several decades ago. For most Soviet Jews the memory of the Great War and the Holocaust remains rather fresh and casts a shadow over the lives of post-war generations. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the predominant expressed attitude towards native Germans is the mix of caution and perceived broad social distance. At the same time, the key identity issue for many immigrants coming from the assimilated ranks of educated Soviet Jewry is: whether and why remain Jewish at all? It is much easier to assume a neutral identity of a Russian, a Ukrainian or former Soviet, and pass as any other foreigner in Germany, rather than face multiple possible ramifications of belonging to this 'small but special minority'. After all, the initial affiliation with the organised Jewish community is temporary and may be regarded as a pure formality necessary for obtaining legal status and financial aid from the state. The JG policy of selecting new members by ethnic purity is perceived as discriminatory or even racist by most newcomers and further repels many immigrants from the ethno-religious community they allegedly came to join.

The immigrants whom I interviewed have solved these identity dilemmas differently, depending on their age, family history and the extent of their social adjustment in Germany. Age is important as a marker of generation, with the ensuing personal memories of the war, life in evacuation, family loss in the Holocaust (especially for those coming from western parts of the USSR occupied by the Nazis). Older migrants tend to feel more insecure living among Germans and are constantly intimidated by the possibility of anti-Semitic attacks in the future. One expression of this insecurity is their refraining from being alone in the open social spaces (i.e., in fact anywhere outside immigrant residential enclaves), and exclusive social networking with other Jewish migrants. The majority of older migrants did not even try to contact or befriend native Germans, being convinced of their arrogance towards foreigners and intrinsic anti-Semitism. Conversely, younger and more successful migrants, who have learnt German and found work, are typically free from these apprehensions. They are still socially distanced from native Germans and prefer the company of their co-ethnics, but their attitudes towards the receiving society are much more positive and their social inclusion is largely a matter of time. Younger immigrants regard themselves as citizens of unified Europe, a new geopolitical entity without borders and with unlimited economic opportunities. In their opinion, younger Germans are

no different from other West Europeans in their general outlook and tolerance of 'others' and are not directly responsible for the Nazi crimes against Jews. If anti-Semitism still lingers among some Germans, it is not a specific German phenomenon but a reflection of the bigotry found in every country, and there is no way to escape it.

The study has endorsed the view that Russian-Soviet Jewish identity is split along the lines of cultural affiliation and may include various shares of Russian and Jewish components. Immigration generally, and settling in Germany especially, highlight this identity split and compel Jewish immigrants to choose the main path. The strength of the pre-migration affinity to Jewishness emerges therefore as another salient predictor of the psychosocial adjustment of Russian Jews in Germany. Those who have a strong Jewish identity have either to live in tension and a lingering sense of insecurity or to rationalise their choice of Germany by the moral or religious duty, or both of these, to reconstruct Jewish life after the Holocaust in this historic centre of European Jewry.

The immigrants with greater interest in Jewish traditions, the Hebrew language and Israel as the centre of modern Jewish life have also to tackle a difficult question of choosing Germany over Israel. My findings seem to indicate that recent immigrants with a more universalistic and cosmopolitan orientation, i.e. perceiving Germany mainly as part of Europe, have a better chance for expedient acculturation and psychological well-being than their counterparts with a stronger Jewish identity.

As yet it is unknown how the expansion of the European Union into countries that were formerly part of the Soviet bloc will affect the issues that have been discussed. The effect of international criticism of the Sharon government in Israel on Jewish identity in Germany is also uncertain.

Acknowledgement

My research in Germany has been supported by the German National Council for Academic Exchange (DAAD).

Notes

- [1] Tolts, 'Russian Jewish Migration in the Post-Soviet Era'; Tolts, 'Jewish Demography of the Former Soviet Union'.
- [2] Tolts, 'Russian Jewish Migration in the Post-Soviet Era', 190.
- [3] Schoeps, 'Russian Jewish Immigration to Germany'.
- [4] Ibid.; and Dietz *et al.*, 'The Jewish Emigration from the Former Soviet Union to Germany'.
- [5] Tolts, 'Russian Jewish Migration in the Post-Soviet Era', 190–93.
- [6] Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust*, chs.2–4.
- [7] Merridale, 'War, Death, and Remembrance in Soviet Russia'.

- [8] Ibid.; see also Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*; Levy and Sznajder, 'Memory Unbound'.
- [9] Geertz, 'Thick Description'.
- [10] Alba, *Ethnic Identity*; Waters, *Ethnic Options*.
- [11] Giles, *Language, Ethnicity, and Intergroup Relations*; Roosen, *Creating Ethnicity*; Bell, 'Mythscape'.
- [12] Dershowitz, *The Vanishing Jew*.
- [13] Remennick, 'Identity Quest among Russian Jews of the 1990s'.
- [14] Joppke, and Rosenhek, 'Contesting Ethnic Immigration'.
- [15] Brym, *The Jews of Moscow, Kiev and Minsk*; Remennick, 'Identity Quest among Russian Jews of the 1990s'; Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust*.
- [16] Waters, *Ethnic Options*; Fearon and Laitin, 'Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identities'.
- [17] Giles, *Language, Ethnicity, and Intergroup Relations*; Tong *et al.*, 'Language Use as a Carrier of Social Identity'; Remennick, 'Language Acquisition as the Main Vehicle of Social Integration'.
- [18] Schoeps *et al.*, *Ein Neues Judentum in Deutschland*; Dietz, 'German and Jewish Migration from the Former Soviet Union to Germany'; Nauck, 'Social Capital, Intergenerational Transmission and Intercultural Contact in Immigrant Families'.
- [19] Jasper and Vogt, 'Integration and Self-Assertion', 217–27.
- [20] Schoeps *et al.*, *Ein Neues Judentum in Deutschland*, Parts 3–5.
- [21] Ibid., Part 2; Schoeps, 'Russian Jewish Emigration to Germany'.
- [22] Dietz, 'German and Jewish Migration from the Former Soviet Union to Germany', 641–44.
- [23] Jasper and Vogt, 'Integration and Self-Assertion', 221.
- [24] Ibid., 223.
- [25] Ibid.; see also Dietz *et al.*, 'The Jewish Emigration from the Former Soviet Union to Germany'; Bensimon, 'Jews in Today's Germany'.
- [26] Jasper and Vogt, 'Integration and Self-Assertion', 219.
- [27] Schoeps *et al.*, *Ein Neues Judentum in Deutschland*, 135–47.
- [28] Crabtree and Miller, 'A Template Approach to Text Analysis'.
- [29] Giles, *Language, Ethnicity, and Intergroup Relations*.
- [30] Galasinska and Galasinski, 'Discursive Strategies for Coping with Sensitive Topics of the Other'.
- [31] Epstein and Kheimets, 'Immigrant Intelligentsia and its Second Generation'.
- [32] Jasper and Vogt, 'Integration and Self-Assertion', 226.
- [33] Dietz, 'German and Jewish Migration from the Former Soviet Union to Germany'.

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