

EAST EUROPEAN JEWISH AFFAIRS

Volume 33 Number 2 Winter 2003

ARTICLES

* * *

POST-SOVIET JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO GERMANY
From Objects of Administration to Agents of Change: Fourteen Years
of Post-Soviet Jewish Immigration to Germany
Robin Ostow

Jewish Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Germany:
History, Politics and Social Integration
Barbara Dietz

Migration and Recognition: Russian Jews in Germany
Franziska Becker

Are Russian Jews Post-colonial? Wladimir Kaminer and Identity Politics
Oliver Lubrich

The Post-Soviet Immigrants and the *Jüdische Allgemeine* in the New Millennium:
Post-Communism in Germany's Jewish Communities
Robin Ostow

* * *

Mass *Aliyah* and Jewish Emigration from Russia: Dynamics and Factors
Mark Tolts

Jews in Belorussian Public Prosecutor's Offices, 1944–1956
Leonid Smilovitsky

East European Jews in Amsterdam: Historical and Literary Anecdotes
Shlomo Berger

The Catholic Church in Croatia and the 'Jewish Problem', 1918–1941
Ivo Goldstein

REVIEWS

BOOKS RECEIVED

A FRANK CASS JOURNAL

Member of the Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN 1350-1674

FRANZISKA BECKER

Migration and Recognition: Russian Jews in Germany

She did not really know who she was, Alla Eisenberg said at the conclusion of an interview in which she had told me the story of her migration. Up to her emigration, she declared, she had been a Jew, but whether she was still one in Germany was questionable. As far as religion was concerned, she was not Jewish because she was not religious. She was a Jew only when ancestry was the criterion. But if Jewish identity was defined as nationality, as in the former Soviet Union (FSU), then, again, she could no longer be a Jew in Germany – first, because in Germany Jewishness was understood as religion and second because in Germany nationality was no longer considered ethnicity but citizenship, and she had become stateless following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Alla Eisenberg is one of the migrants Germany has admitted as Jews from the FSU since the early 1990s. Here, she expresses identity insecurities not untypical of these immigrants. On migrating to Germany, they are confronted with the fact that an identity category on which their presence here is based is completely changed. The former Soviet definition still formally justifies their right to residence permits since Russian Jews have been recognised as 'Jewish quota refugees' since 1991 if they are able to prove their Jewish identity with birth certificates and the old Soviet passport. But the cultural significance of Jewish identity changes on entry into Germany in such a way that migrants such as Alla Eisenberg no longer know if they can still label themselves as Jews.

This example indicates that the migration system prescribes a legal and bureaucratic framework for structuring the immigration process and the migrants' membership of the new society. And German migration policy involves a specific cultural order aimed at expanding Jewish communities in Germany while, at the same time, symbolically solidifying the image of a country which is mindful of the Holocaust. This form of identity attribution is legally and politically linked to the regulation of refugee status and acceptance procedures. But it bears clearly normative traits. The Russian Jewish immigrants are confronted with the images and expectations

connected with both the status of being a 'quota refugee' and with the acceptance criterion of 'Jewish identity'. These identity expectations and attributions attain biographical relevance where they are transferred into a bureaucratic order and codified in institutions on which migrants depend in their search for legal and social recognition in Germany. In refugee reception centres and foreigner registration offices, in the social services bureaucracy and in Jewish communities, Russian Jews are confronted with a discourse concerning authenticity and legitimacy which encourages them to re-evaluate or re-interpret their own life history in order to justify their presence in Germany. These norms become all the more significant for securing the self as the gap between personal life history and self-image in the society of origin and identity demands in the new society increases.

The manner in which a self-image is 'constructed' depends, according to this thesis, on recognition relationships. The term recognition raises the question of acceptance of migrants in the new society. This involves, on the one hand, the subject who seeks recognition and, on the other hand, the question of the conditions on which recognition is granted or denied. More precisely, it is a matter of the migrants' relationship to the social groups and institutions important for them in the new country. Whether or not recognition is successful can depend less on the new society's social and legal integration measures than on the level of acceptance migrants experience in terms of the personal emphasis they place on their individual request for recognition. Migrants' biographical self-images primarily provide insight into the meaning structure of recognition relationships.¹ Self-images reflect the social esteem the migrants experience in the new society, and in turn determine the manner in which they look back on their own life history.

The following pages, then, deal with the connection between migration policy, the struggle for recognition, and ethnification processes, that is the development of ethnic and/or religious identities among Russian Jews who have emigrated to Germany. My first step will be to outline the migration system's central characteristics and standards and its cultural order, using the example of political and public discourse about Russian Jewish immigration. I will then attempt to show how this normative structure affects the ways in which Russian Jewish migrants situate themselves.²

The symbolic field: moral politics

From its inception in the early 1990s, the wave of emigration of Russian Jews, provoked by what was felt to be an increase in anti-Semitic sentiment in the FSU states,³ was bound up in the Federal Republic of Germany's identity discourse. In political debates and media reporting about this immigration, moral implications symbolically frame the migration process. Among them is the reference to a special responsibility, resulting from the Holocaust, to make

22 Migration and Recognition

admission possible for Jews who wish to enter the country. The acceptance of Russian Jews is thus primarily discussed from the interpretive perspective of German history. At the end of October 1990 the German parliament considered the question of Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union for the first time. In these plenary debates, unity beyond party faction lines was indicated and appeals were made for non-partisan consensus on this 'highly sensitive subject'.⁴

Not only did the left-liberal element of the party spectrum at that time plead for admitting Soviet Jews on the basis of the 'Holocaust debt', but the conservative government of the then chancellor, Helmut Kohl, did likewise. According to one member of parliament, it was 'unusual for a Jew to seek refuge in the country that was responsible for the Holocaust. If such people come, we must be generous'.⁵

The special point in time at which this debate took place lent particular weight to the categories of historic duty and moral responsibility. In the context of the events of 1989/90 and the discussions about East-West German unity, Jewish immigration also became a factor in measuring the integrity of the newly 'whole' German state.⁶ Caught up in the moral discourse about historical responsibility, the acceptance of Soviet Jews is interpreted as a symbolic gesture of restitution and simultaneously functions as a representative act of united Germany. Against this background, Russian Jews are primarily constructed in terms of their connection with the common fate of Jews during the Holocaust.⁷ In the moral discourse, the difference between those persecuted under National Socialism and those desiring entry into the country in the present is erased.⁸ Perceived as 'brothers in faith'⁹ or direct descendants of those murdered, Jewish immigrants are considered members of a group of collective victims.¹⁰

A second level of attribution is produced by the idea that the arrival of Russian Jews will contribute to German culture through the 'revitalisation of the Jewish elements in German cultural and intellectual life'.¹¹ Such expectations, linked to positively valued phases of German Jewish history, are also reflected in the media's initial reporting on the subject, where immigrants, 'practically only professors, artists, doctors, all highly situated people', as for example reported in Berlin's *Tagesspiegel*,¹² were primarily considered members of a cultural bourgeoisie and were depicted as a group with a corresponding aura.

Finally, a third identity expectation resulted from the goal of increasing the membership of the small and over-aged Jewish communities in Germany, and especially in East Germany, through the settlement of Russian Jews – thus 'rejuvenating'¹³ those communities. This idea corresponds to the (German) definition of Jewishness as religion and is, at the same time, normatively connected with the concept that the migrants' Jewish identity is expressed

22 Migration and Recognition

admission possible for Jews who wish to enter the country. The acceptance of Russian Jews is thus primarily discussed from the interpretive perspective of German history. At the end of October 1990 the German parliament considered the question of Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union for the first time. In these plenary debates, unity beyond party faction lines was indicated and appeals were made for non-partisan consensus on this 'highly sensitive subject.'⁴

Not only did the left-liberal element of the party spectrum at that time plead for admitting Soviet Jews on the basis of the 'Holocaust debt', but the conservative government of the then chancellor, Helmut Kohl, did likewise. According to one member of parliament, it was 'unusual for a Jew to seek refuge in the country that was responsible for the Holocaust. If such people come, we must be generous.'⁵

The special point in time at which this debate took place lent particular weight to the categories of historic duty and moral responsibility. In the context of the events of 1989/90 and the discussions about East-West German unity, Jewish immigration also became a factor in measuring the integrity of the newly 'whole' German state.⁶ Caught up in the moral discourse about historical responsibility, the acceptance of Soviet Jews is interpreted as a symbolic gesture of restitution and simultaneously functions as a representative act of united Germany. Against this background, Russian Jews are primarily constructed in terms of their connection with the common fate of Jews during the Holocaust.⁷ In the moral discourse, the difference between those persecuted under National Socialism and those desiring entry into the country in the present is erased.⁸ Perceived as 'brothers in faith'⁹ or direct descendants of those murdered, Jewish immigrants are considered members of a group of collective victims.¹⁰

A second level of attribution is produced by the idea that the arrival of Russian Jews will contribute to German culture through the 'revitalisation of the Jewish elements in German cultural and intellectual life.'¹¹ Such expectations, linked to positively valued phases of German Jewish history, are also reflected in the media's initial reporting on the subject, where immigrants, 'practically only professors, artists, doctors, all highly situated people', as for example reported in Berlin's *Tagesspiegel*,¹² were primarily considered members of a cultural bourgeoisie and were depicted as a group with a corresponding aura.

Finally, a third identity expectation resulted from the goal of increasing the membership of the small and over-aged Jewish communities in Germany, and especially in East Germany, through the settlement of Russian Jews – thus 'rejuvenating'¹³ those communities. This idea corresponds to the (German) definition of Jewishness as religion and is, at the same time, normatively connected with the concept that the migrants' Jewish identity is expressed

through their participation in the Jewish communities and that their faith should be visibly demonstrated by membership of the community.¹⁴

In sum, that was what was expected of Russian Jews, and was repeatedly expressed by politicians, representatives of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and the media. The right to immigration was intended to benefit persecuted Jews who were fleeing to the Federal Republic, burning the bridges to their homeland and seeking a new home in Germany's Jewish communities. And these expectations produced corresponding identity demands. A sort of ideal type emerged to describe what people considered 'the Jewish immigrant from Russia' and how he was supposed to be – that is, highly educated and highly skilled, religious but not orthodox, or at least prepared to observe Jewish traditions again, poor and willing to integrate, largely without any ties to his land of origin, modest and grateful for the assistance given by the new society, and, above all, someone who had emigrated because of anti-Semitic persecution and knew about the Holocaust or had even experienced it personally.

The admission process: Jewish immigration as a refugee movement

The moral over-emphasis in the discussion on the admission of Soviet Jews reveals where the challenge for political decision-makers lay. A privileged immigration status was to be derived from a German responsibility for Jews based on the Holocaust. But it could not be linked only to religious membership because that would contradict the principle of equal treatment under the law. In addition, there was the politically tense situation. At a time when the discussion on tightening political asylum laws had reached a climax in Germany and fears of the immigration of the poor through the newly opened borders to Eastern Europe were being fanned,¹⁵ no new special law should, it was felt, be created only for Jews. To grant Soviet Jews a legal title and thus permanent residency, it was necessary to refer to existing precedents. The refugee rules could not be used because they demanded individual case assessment and individual proof of state persecution in the country of origin. In view of the history of National Socialism, these kinds of identity checks on Jews were considered too risky.

Moreover, classifying the migrants as politically persecuted persons contradicted the foreign-policy assessment of the Soviet Union's successor states, which had broken with Soviet state anti-Semitism. The law on quota refugees, then, provided a legal framework for this situation. Those to be admitted are formally and legally considered refugees on the basis of the Law on Measures for Refugees Admitted in the Framework of Humanitarian Aid Programmes, adopted in 1980 in connection with the admission of Vietnamese 'boat people'. Classifying Soviet Jews in this way defined them as a 'community of victims', allowing them to be granted the legal status of a

quota refugee simply because of their documented membership of the group of Soviet Jews. Individual cases would not be examined. *De facto*, this procedure permits Jewish immigration under relatively privileged conditions¹⁶ – comparable with ‘immigrants of German ancestry’ from Eastern Europe. All Jews from the FSU who can prove their Jewish identity are allowed to enter Germany without examination of their motives for immigrating, and there is no time limit.

Yet, from the very beginning, there is a built-in tension in this regulation, and it is increasingly turned against the migrants. Against the background of the Holocaust and current anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union’s successor states, they are first discursively conceived as a collective of persecuted victims. Legally constructing the immigrants as a refugee group appeared to match this interpretation. Yet while the symbolic framework within which this immigration is perceived and evaluated lies in the perspective of ‘Jews as victims’, the procedure itself produces an immigration process which moves ever further away from this identity image and goes beyond its moral dimensions. In the course of immigration, Germany’s unrealistic images and expectations collide with the multifarious practices and identities of the ‘real’ immigrants. The result is that making Russian Jews morally special was reversed in the mid-1990s.

The public debate on Jewish authenticity

This is shown in, for example, the media debate on forgeries of Jewish identity papers. However, the only forgeries mentioned are cases where Russians purchase Jewish documents on the black market in order to emigrate to Germany. But there is no mention of the frequent practice of reverse forgeries, where entries in passports or birth certificates documenting Jewish ancestry, erased in the FSU to avoid anti-Semitic discrimination, are restored for the purpose of emigration. There is also no mention of applicants who, because of National Socialist and/or Stalinist persecution, no longer possess original Jewish documents. Precisely because they were persecuted as Jews, these people lack proof of Jewish identity – or, to put it differently, Jewish identity can be proven in such cases only by the fact that it can no longer, or only with great difficulty, be proven at all. Due to the complications of twentieth-century history and the violence of two dictatorships, a portion of Jewish identity is sometimes the total suppression of that identity. This applies to applicants from the Baltic states, for example, and to those from Upper Silesia. In the article ‘Half a Jewish Life Only for Documents’, the *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung* of 25 April 1991 reports on a married couple from Latvia who forged the nationality entry in their birth certificates. The fact that they were German Jews meant danger, first in a Latvia annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and then under Nazi occupation of the country in

1941. Therefore, the husband had no documents at all, and the wife possessed only a carbon copy of a birth certificate in which there was no mention of her parents' nationality. He speaks Yiddish, and she speaks German with a Yiddish accent. They were convicted of document forgery in Germany.

In the media discourse on immigration, the difficulties of bureaucratic determination of Jewish authenticity¹⁷ are not a subject and the problems of identity check are not logic. Rather, a general distrust of the migrants comes to prevail in the course of the public debate on forgeries, with increasing speculation about the percentage of 'fake Jews.' Thus, 'real Jews' tend to be considered fake. Jewish migration is questioned and, along with it, its legitimacy.¹⁸

Secondly, the refugee status ascribed to the migrants produces certain identity expectations which, in the course of immigration, come to contradict behaviour patterns observed among the migrants. It does not fit the picture when Jewish quota refugees maintain connections with their home country since travelling or commuting stands in sharp contrast to the definition of the refugee as a client of the welfare state. Refugees enjoy protection because they have to leave their home country. This forced change is accompanied by a loss of one's past. Not only do they leave their homeland behind, but also their professional activity, social recognition, and acquired status. They are no longer anything but refugees, and the admitting society's assistance is based on precisely this exclusiveness. Nor may signs of a comfortable life enter into the current situation of the needy welfare recipient. If they do, the suspicion grows that the migrants have other income or lucrative connections in their homeland in addition to welfare payments. Precisely their periodic return visits to their homeland give rise to doubts about the legality of their newly acquired status, and, by crossing the border into their countries of origin, the travellers evade state control and abandon their ascribed role of passive clients.¹⁹

In the course of immigration, the tension between moral demands and actual migration processes produces a discourse on delinquency which gives rise to negative images, such as the 'non-Jewish free-rider',²⁰ the 'commuter existence', the 'Soviet functionary', and the 'Russian economic refugee.' When the magazine *Focus*, for example, points out that 'even high functionaries of the former communist system'²¹ are admitted to Germany through the quota refugee measures, it is not only an attempt to reactivate an ideological stereotype from the Cold War but also to protest against abuses of the symbolic order of neediness. It is claimed that primarily the well-to-do are immigrating to Germany in order to maintain their social and economic status.

And thirdly, tensions are produced by the efforts to revitalise the Jewish communities. The media report increasing conflicts between the established members and those newcomers who only turn to the Jewish communities for

material assistance in getting settled or use them as some sort of 'social welfare station'.²² The newcomers even behave irreverently on Holocaust memorial days: 'they babble, eat bananas, and lean on the central memorial stone bearing the inscription "Love thy neighbour as thyself"'.²³ The established members' displeasure with 'the Russians' is indeed put into quite vivid aesthetic images: 'Women with gaudy shag vests and their hair died blonde, men with callused hands and USA sweatshirts.'²⁴ In such descriptions, the immigrants appear as members of a social strata that has not (yet) mastered the rules of proper behaviour in capitalism. And this clientele plays the exclusive role of petitioner for, and beneficiary of, social welfare by misunderstanding the Jewish community as a service organisation, 'employment office', or even as a 'lawmaker.'²⁵ The difference between German and Russian Jews is also interpreted as a disparity in attitude whose causes are to be found in typically Soviet socialisation. Germans have referred to the migrant as 'homo Sovieticus', meaning someone who, as a result of state tutelage, has no sense of independence. Attempting to make his way through unfathomable networks, he is the very prototype of the disloyal and unpleasant new community member: 'When they find out that the [Jewish] community doesn't work like the *Komsomol* or even a mafia brotherhood for arranging housing and jobs, most of them don't come any more.'²⁶

On the whole, the shift in images here, too, refers to the fact that the immigrants do not behave as Jews in terms of German ideas about Jewish behaviour. 'Jews in search of a return to traditional religious values' become 'Russians' of the 'homo Sovieticus' type. In the course of this debate on authenticity, Russian Jews either become false Jews, or become unrecognisable as Jews because they do not 'perform' their Jewishness in Germany. Accordingly, they are accused of having a purely instrumental relationship with Jewish identity. This assertion leads to the conclusion that they can have come to Germany only for economic reasons. But in no case are those coming the ones people here had in mind when thinking of Jewish refugees. To the extent to which excessive, projective images of the desired 'Jewish immigrant' are assumed as the normative standard for the evaluation of the migrants' integration process, the real immigration process is seen in an increasingly negative light. And, behind the scenes, politicians consider limiting, or even ending, it.²⁷ As portrayed in the media, the drifting apart of the actual immigration process and the pre-established image based on Jewish cultural adherence, anti-Semitic persecution, and religious identity in turn places an even greater demand for legitimacy on the migrants. The fact that these 'normal' immigrants do not really fit the exaggerated images of them does not result in questions being asked about how Germans managed to misunderstand them, but is made into an additional burden on the migrants themselves. This happens as of the mid-1990s when the immigration of

Russian Jews is found not to be Jewish enough, is said to be problematic on account of its supposed Russian character, and is ultimately perceived as undesirable. One result is that a political discussion about undesired effects of the immigration process begins along with considerations about ending it. This takes place behind closed doors since Germany's Holocaust past forms an interpretive filter through which such a debate can only be considered anti-Jewish, and would damage the credibility of German policy.

'Why Germany?': justifying the destination

But now let us look at the Russian Jewish immigrants themselves. The migrants do not remain untouched by all this talk about 'Jewish authenticity.' Rather, it is incorporated into their own life designs and self-images. The problems for self-situating that arise from this are what I would now like to demonstrate on the basis of several recurrent patterns in biographical interviews.

'Why did you all actually come to Germany?'²⁸ Since 1991 this question has been a central theme of media reports on this immigration. Most of the approximately 45 people I interviewed were also first confronted with this question in the refugee shelters where herds of journalists showed a passing interest in them. Galina Lawrezkaja²⁹ tells of the media presence in the admission centre:

They all wanted to talk with me. It was that time seven years ago when there was a big wave of them. They all came to us, and I talked with each one, almost every day. A television journalist even asked me right up front: 'Why did you all emigrate to Germany?' And she asked if we weren't afraid to live in Germany and 'Why did you all do that?' And it was so embarrassing! She meant it well, but what a difficult question.

And in her interview with me, yet another justification, ten minutes long, follows.

Why Jews 'immigrate into the very country where the Holocaust was organised and where neo-Nazis are active today'³⁰ apparently requires a particular explanation given the background of German Jewish history. Here, too, the German past frames the notion that the immigrants must feel particularly dismayed by the Holocaust. Persecution is considered to be what comprises Jewish identity. This moral norm, as Yvonne Schütze put it, produces a dilemma 'between individual aims the migrants connect with life in Germany and moral obligations resulting from belonging to Jewry.'³¹ On the biographical level, this evokes multiple efforts to justify oneself: making the decision to come to Germany appear accidental, for example, being forced to come by family members, deciding against Israel because of its unfavourable climate and distance to European culture, etc. The constant demand experienced by the migrants to justify themselves also contributes to

their emphasis on pressure to emigrate because of anti-Semitism and to their presentation of a biography that corresponds to the idea of a 'real Jewish refugee.' Not only do other migration motives, such as the hope for better opportunities in life, recede behind this front, but also the fact that not only discrimination and social exclusion, but also social and political participation characterised a large portion of the Jewish minority in the Soviet Union.³² This simultaneity of advantage and disadvantage not only remains hidden in the German idea of the migrants as a 'group of victims', but is also largely omitted in the migrants' biographical accounts due to the pressure of these normative demands.

Reinterpreting Jewish identity

The second expectation – that the immigrants in Germany 'perform' Jewish traditions and religion – often stands in direct opposition to life histories in which Jewish origin was concealed in the FSU, or was seen either as unimportant or as a discriminatory attribute. Until the policy of *perestroika* observance of the Jewish religion outside the private sphere was forbidden. The entry *evrei* (Jew) in a Soviet passport could lead to discrimination and disadvantages in admission to university and in employment. Children of binational marriages therefore usually took advantage of the possibility of assuming the nationality of the non-Jewish parent.³³ Others attempted to avoid the Jewish stigma through marriage and name change. Where denial of their Jewish heritage had become a prerequisite for social advancement and integration in Soviet society, Germany demanded 'performance' of Jewish identity as a condition for social integration. Jewish organisations, primarily responsible for social and religious care of the newcomers, now expect a proud display of Jewishness. Those who had denied their Jewish heritage are now looked down upon and labelled 'closet Jews.' Many migrants join a Jewish community even without a Jewish conception of themselves, due to their need for social counselling and care. Many also view joining as mandatory because membership of a Jewish community proves 'real Jewish identity', and thus gives them the right to be in Germany. Many of those I interviewed said their reason for joining a Jewish community was that in Germany it was expected of them.

One woman I interviewed expressed the feeling that the formal condition for admission was 'We have to become what we are. We should live as Jews now.' The fact that assumption of Jewish identity is here considered mandatory provides insight into the power of state and bureaucratic authority which allows no alternative perception of oneself because immigration is *a priori* determined to be Jewish, that is here an ethnically defined status passage. State identification requires personal identification. Admission to Germany not only requires that one be a Jew, but also that one become Jewish

by joining a Jewish community. Yet precisely this produces a typical recognition problem.

Belonging to an ethnic group cannot easily be transformed from something rather meaningless or burdensome into a positive or even religious identity pattern. Moreover, this proud performance of Jewishness often stands in sharp contrast to the deeply rooted shame regarding the Jewish heritage acquired in the FSU. One migrant explained to me that she had married a Russian man precisely in order to free herself of the stigma of her Jewish surname, of which she had always been ashamed. Joining a Jewish community elicits fresh feelings of shame in many migrants, this time not because they are Jewish but because they had not wanted to be Jews in the FSU. Svetlana Kalinina, for example, who had tried to join an orthodox Jewish community in Berlin, said:

Now, we knew we were Jews and that, yes indeed, there is a synagogue for Jews. Well, we got some new expressions, but ... and to ask somebody in the community, well, I didn't have any language at all for that, and then the shame, the shame of admitting you don't know anything at all, because the German Jews, they have certain expressions, what it means to be a Jew, and then, they have their own ideas of course: 'What kind of Jews are they, if they've never been in a synagogue a single time?' And that's why, when you've heard remarks like that one time and then a second time, you don't feel a bit like going in there again and hearing all that again.

In the synagogue the newcomers are often confronted with a lack of understanding and are rejected by the old established members for not knowing Jewish traditions and religious rules. Conversion procedures fail because there are no rabbis to introduce them to the rituals. In contact with Jewish institutions, a biographical arrangement becomes a problem of recognition because turning one's back on one's Jewish heritage stands in stark contradiction to a self-confident Jewish identity in Germany. This tension emerges in biographical accounts, and leads to numerous self-justifications when people recapitulate their personal history.

The burden of proving 'authenticity'

Justifications are also demanded by the confrontation with stereotypes and bureaucratic distrust. Many of those I interviewed, for example, had come under pressure because of the debate on forgeries. Passports and documents were not sufficient proof of 'Jewish authenticity' so a 'typically Jewish physiognomy' could become a criterion. A supposedly non-Jewish appearance could cause doubts. Many migrants told me about such recognition problems in the Jewish community. Especially during admission interviews, they said, when they presented their birth certificate they were met with distrust because they did not 'look Jewish' or because they had a

Russian-sounding name. Or admission to the Jewish community would be turned down if, as a result of Nazi or Stalinist persecution, they no longer had original documents. Mrs Lukina, for example, approximately 60-years-old, no longer had her original birth certificate. Her parents were shot by SS troops in Kiev in 1941. At the age of 12 she was caught in a German raid, told the SS she was 16, thought up a Russian name, and ended up in Germany as a Ukrainian forced labourer. When she returned to the USSR after the war, she retained that Russian name and obtained a birth certificate indicating Russian nationality. In the Jewish community in Berlin, after her immigration, her Russian documents and non-Jewish sounding name caused suspicion, and she was denied membership. She then turned to the Jewish community to explain her survival strategy plausibly by describing her personal biography, loss of documents, and name change to provide oral evidence of being a Jew. The Jewish community employee she encountered rejected her argument, however, claiming that, because of her 'Jewish face', she would know Mrs Lukina was a Jew. In the end, she was admitted to the community, not as a persecuted Jew, but because of her 'typically Jewish physiognomy.' This insulted her so much that she broke off contact with the community.

Some immigrants turn away from the Jewish community after this kind of experience but, for others, this merely increases the pressure to provide biographical proof. They want to prove, for example, that in the FSU they always attended synagogue despite the prohibition, that they never changed their Jewish name or concealed their identity, or that they were constantly persecuted. Or they suddenly place ethnic categories such as 'blood' and ancestry and 'a typically Jewish appearance' in the foreground. In another excerpt from the interview, Galina Lawrezkaja says: 'There in the Jewish community when I arrived, it was funny. They didn't believe me either about being a Jew, they didn't believe me, they said: "No, you're a Russian!" How come? "Your face!" Well, maybe, but all my documents are the way they are.' I asked her: 'What did you have to present in the community?' She replied:

Well, all the documents, the certificates, our parents' birth certificates, too, everything, everything, everything, well, who my father was, who my mother was, but for people who fake documents, that's no problem either. They pay money, and they make them over there [on the black market in Russia], anything you want. Yeah, Mr Galinski [then president of the Jewish community] asked me, too: 'Are you a Jew?' And I said: 'Yes!' 'Honestly?' I told him I'm Jewish on all sides, I don't have any other blood at all, and then he laughed and said: 'Oh really? That's very interesting.'

Then again, in refugee shelters, social welfare offices, or in the medical officer's examination rooms, immigrants encounter talk about 'economic refugees' and the 'Russian mafia' which they take personally and from which they try to distance themselves. On the one hand, they must repeatedly

provide legitimation for their Jewish refugee identity and their decision to come to Germany; on the other hand, they are required to justify their presence here as foreigners of Russian origin. In many ways, the migrants are caught up in a discursive field of tension that requires multiple biographic strategies to dispel doubts about their identity and right to residence.

Finally, the new cultural order of Germany produces a new biographical evaluation. When encountering German Jews or formerly displaced persons in the Jewish communities, Russian migrants may experience an outbreak of poignant memories of their own persecution. Often, a consciousness of the far-reaching taboo concerning the Holocaust or of the failure to work through Stalinist repression in the Soviet Union develops, and they begin to look for traces of, and explanations for, corresponding traumas in their family context. This identity discourse, centred on the Holocaust in the German Jewish communities, and the sensitivity to anti-Semitism resulting from German history and contemporary life, open up a new perspective on persecution in the Soviet Union for the migrants and help them, after the fact, to obtain explanations for a marginalisation they had often only diffusely sensed.

Conclusion

These examples have shown how bureaucratic and cultural classification processes affect immigrants' identities. The pressure of having to justify their migration to Germany, the expectation that they assume a religious identity, the difficulties of positively reinterpreting a negative Jewish identity, and the irritation of bouncing between 'Jewish' and 'Russian' attribution discourses are only a few of the demands faced by Russian Jewish immigrants in a complex process of reconstructing social experience.

German immigration policy includes a cultural taxonomy of being Jewish and being authentic which always has a restrictive counter-image ready. This normative regulation constructs collective identities and simultaneously has a major influence on processes of self-definition. This not only results in a series of recognition problems for Russian Jewish immigrants, but also challenges them to reflect on and re-evaluate their own life histories in order to legitimate their presence here and make it plausible.

The experience of insufficient social recognition evokes biographies in which migrants attempt both to defuse the resistance they have experienced and to integrate categories of authenticity and legitimacy, produced by German discourse, into their own biographies. In this respect, these biographies are themselves integration strategies.

The connection between migration regulation, the struggle for recognition, and the construction of national, ethnic, and/or religious identities, as shown here through the example of Russian Jews, extends beyond this concrete case. Similar processes of identity policy will indeed play a decisive role in an

32 Migration and Recognition

emerging global society and its attempts to cope with refugee and migration processes.

This article was translated from the German by Richard Gardner.

NOTES

- 1 Axel Honneth has developed this kind of recognition model, which refers back to G. H. Mead's person-concept. According to this model, human subjects owe their identity to the experience of intersubjective recognition. Honneth distinguishes between 'legal recognition', 'affective attention' and 'social esteem' as the three forms of social recognition essentially enabling individuals to achieve a non-fragmented self-relationship. Here, disrespect or degradation also always includes a 'social exclusion' not limited to the 'violent limitation of personal autonomy', but also linked with the feeling of 'not having the status of a full partner of interaction with equal moral rights.' See Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt a.M., 1992), 148–225.
- 2 For a more detailed analysis of the migration experience of Russian Jews in the context of German migration policy and its legal, institutional and cultural framework, see Franziska Becker, *Ankommen in Deutschland. Einwanderungspolitik als biographische Erfahrung im Migrationsprozeß russischer Juden* (Berlin, 2001).
- 3 Cf. Judith Kessler, *Jüdische Migration aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion seit 1990. Das Beispiel Berlin* (Master's thesis, Sociology Department, Correspondence University Hagen, Berlin 1996, unpublished manuscript), 5–6; Claudia Waldhans-Nys, 'Nationalität – Ja!' Manifestationen eines neuen jüdischen Lebens in Rußland', in Julius H. Schoeps, Willi Jasper, Bernhard Vogt, *Russische Juden in Deutschland. Integration und Selbstbehauptung in einem fremden Land* (Weinheim, 1996), 256.
- 4 *Tagesspiegel*, 26 October 1990, a report on the German parliament's open debate on the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe.
- 5 *Tagesspiegel*, 1 November 1990.
- 6 As Director of the Office for Multicultural Affairs of the city of Frankfurt-Main, for example, Daniel Cohn-Bendit demanded a conference on growing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union: 'Precisely at the time at which both German states are uniting, Germany's historical responsibility obliges us to take in all Soviet Jews who desire to enter', *taz*, 7 May 1990.
- 7 This understanding of the migrants as a group of Jewish victims is also found in the media, which demonstrated a conspicuous consensus. *Die Zeit*, for example, wrote on 21 September 1990: 'It is a matter of course that the Germans of the East and the West are happy to provide a new home to the brothers in faith of six million murdered European Jews.'
- 8 One member of parliament, for example, from the party *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, read from a public appeal during a parliamentary debate: 'The new German state should not, at the hour of its birth, deny assistance to those persecuted and eliminated by the former state' (*Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 15 November 1990).
- 9 *Die Zeit*, 21 September 1990.
- 10 Such a perspective is affirmed in current reports describing increasing discrimination against and persecution of the Jewish minority in the FSU. From 1990 onwards the German press begins to report an escalating anti-Semitic mood inflamed by the so-called Pamyat organisation and extremists such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, which, they write, is driving more and more Jews into Germany.
- 11 This expectation was expressed in similar wording by politicians from all parties during the parliamentary debates on the admission of Soviet Jews in 1990 (here, an undersecretary of the Federal Law Enforcement Ministry quoted in *Tagesspiegel*, 26 October 1990).
- 12 *Tagesspiegel*, 12 January 1991.
- 13 Thus the then chancellor, Helmut Kohl, stressed in a conversation with representatives of the Central Council of Jews in Germany that he supported the policies of its president, Heinz

- Galinski, who was speaking out in favour of development aid for the Jewish communities in Germany. According to Kohl, 'lively Jewish communities [should also] develop' again (cf. *Tagesspiegel*, 29 January 1992).
- 14 Thus in remarks on general admission procedures, Heinz Galinski, then president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, called on the immigrants to prove their will to integrate through a public profession of faith: only if the Russian Jews also professed their faith to the outside world, could one speak of a benefit for the Jewish communities in Germany (cf. *Tagesspiegel*, 18 June 1991).
 - 15 For example, under the headline 'West Fears Poverty Migration from USSR', *Tagesspiegel* of 7 December 1990 reported on estimates by experts in Moscow and the foreign ministry that an emigration of up to 10 million Soviet citizens, including two million Jews, was to be expected.
 - 16 They have a right to permanent residence and work permits, social assistance and integration aid (language courses, for example), welfare payments, housing subsidies, children's aid, and student loans; on completion of a recognised language course, they have a right to unemployment office services (further training and/or retraining programmes, state work programmes, etc.). In contrast to immigrants of German ancestry, who receive German citizenship immediately, Jewish contingency refugees can apply for citizenship only after seven years' residence.
 - 17 German embassies abroad serve as 'classification filters' by checking on Jewish ancestry and forwarding documents to the domestic agency inside Germany (the Federal Administrative Agency in Cologne), which distributes the 'Jewish quota refugees' among the individual federal states according to the refugee allocation guidelines.
 - 18 The more forgeries, the fewer Jews is the oversimplified conclusion when people speak of a 'so-called Jewish emigration' and the 'recent increase in criticism' of the immigration procedures 'within the government' (*Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 13 June 1996: Federal Minister for Aid to Developing Countries Spranger during a visit to Ukraine).
 - 19 In legal practice, contrary to the stipulations of the quota refugee law, Jewish refugees are allowed to retain their passports and/or citizenship in their former country. To describe this special rule, the immigration bureaucracy has adopted the term 'analog procedure.'
 - 20 In an article in *Focus* (No. 7, 1997), 'Purchased Documents', one reads: 'Helmut Kohl and Wolfgang Schäuble may have hoped to increase the membership of Germany's Jewish communities through this immigration, but practice has shown that not a few of the new arrivals are either non-Jewish free-riders or not interested in religious-cultural life.'
 - 21 Ibid.
 - 22 *Rheinischer Merkur*, 14 February 1992. In the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1 February 1993, the director of the Jewish welfare agency in Frankfurt a.M. reports on reservations regarding the religiously alienated newcomers. It appears that some of the established community members think that they 'only want to take advantage of the benefits [...]. These people 'fill up the synagogues even though most of them have never seen a synagogue from the inside; they don't know what *Kashrut* means; the men aren't circumcised; Bar Mitzvah is a foreign word for them.' In Düsseldorf and Essen community representatives do indeed consider the immigration an enrichment and a challenge but scepticism nonetheless prevails. Only neediness links the migrants, who have 'no idea about religious matters', to the communities, without however resulting in any interest in religious life (*Rheinischer Merkur*, 14 February 1992). Critical voices are raised about the immigrants' passive breadwinner attitude. The initial 'enthusiasm about membership increase' gives way to 'resigned sobriety.' 'Many of the newcomers are used to the state organising everything for them and consider the [Jewish] communities to be "a sort of union where you can get something for yourself"', according to one Berlin member' (*Der Spiegel*, 29 March 1993). On the whole, the clientele relationship demonstrated here seems to be ambivalent. While the Jewish communities are overwhelmed by the need to care, provide for and religiously educate the new members, they are also angry about the fact that so many of them refuse what the Jewish communities offer them.
 - 23 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 February 1998.
 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 Ibid.
 - 26 *Tagesspiegel*, 27 August 1992.

34 Migration and Recognition

- 27 In an article entitled 'As Quietly as Possible', *Der Spiegel* (No. 22, 1996) makes public what politicians have been thinking for some time, albeit behind closed doors: ending the immigration of Jews from the FSU. The article's subtitle puts it in a nutshell: 'Helmut Kohl's promise to admit Jews from the former Soviet Union into Germany is drawing criticism from the Foreign Office. Too many are coming, and often the wrong ones.'
- 28 *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 27 December 1996.
- 29 The names of those interviewed have been changed. The interviews took place between 1996 and 1997.
- 30 *Zeitmagazin*, No. 2, 1992.
- 31 Yvonne Schütze, 'Warum Deutschland und nicht Israel?' Begründungen russischer Juden für die Migration nach Deutschland', *BIOS*, 10 February 1997, 186.
- 32 Cf. Fran Markowitz, 'Soviet Dis-Union and the Fragmentation of Self: Implications for the Emigrating Jewish Family', *East European Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 24, No.1, 1994, 8.
- 33 According to Soviet law, children of parents of different nationalities could, at the age of 16 (when they received their own identity card), opt for the nationality of one of the parents. The majority opted for the nationality of the non-Jewish parent, either to avoid state-sponsored anti-Semitism, to acquire better professional and university opportunities, or simply due to lack of interest in their Jewish heritage. Already upon the introduction of these passports in the 1930s, when they could themselves decide on the nationality to be entered in the passport, many Jews had themselves registered as Russians.