

Jews in Ukraine: Anti-Semitism

A. Polyakov

Corrupted Soviet structures are disintegrating and moving towards total destruction, which will create a vacuum in the executive power. In the midst of a profound economic crisis and a struggle for a nationalist movement, Jews are the most vulnerable in the population.

The consolidation of antidemocratic forces in Russia clearly indicates the unifying role of the "Jewish factor." There is a strong possibility that this process may spread to Ukraine. Nine out of ten people interviewed in our survey believe that is a distinct possibility—that anti-Semitism in Ukraine has long roots, and that no significant changes have occurred. Official public assurances to the contrary have a political character and may change under the pressure of political circumstances.

This is the opinion of an overwhelming majority—eight or nine out of ten people interviewed in the survey.

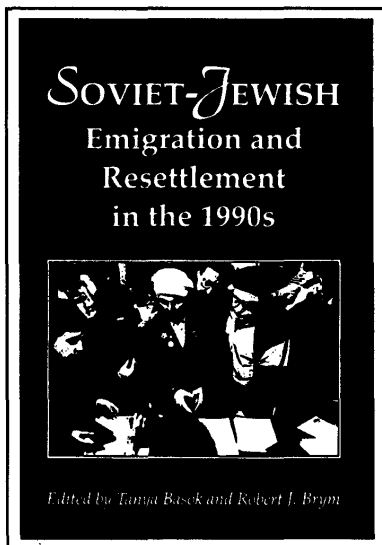
As for the so-called "revival of Jewish culture" in Ukraine, it is true that we are trying to take advantage of the situation that allows us, at least for the moment, to restore our national pride, to teach our children, to renew activities of religious communities, to restore traditions, holy days and knowledge of Hebrew, etc. In the last one and a half years, a number of Jewish organizations, newspapers and theatres have sprung up. In spite of all this, the majority of Jews do not see it as a "revival." Only less than five percent of the Jewish population participate in these organizations and establishments. Some rather important organizations were in fact created from "above," in order to demonstrate the "harmony of interethnic relations at a new stage of the development of Soviet society."

The remaining 95 percent of Jews feel uncertain and fearful of their future in Ukraine. This fear is nourished by the growing number of attacks on Jews. We

have evidence of pogroms in synagogues and schools in Kiev, Kirovograd and Dnietropetrovs, of assaults on the members of "Beitar" (a Zionist youth organization), of people spreading anti-Semitic literature in Russia, and other acts.

All these examples can be viewed as individual acts. However, in the framework of the political struggle between Ukraine and Moscow and the present economic situation, these provocative attempts to focus the Ukrainian population's attention on the relations between Ukrainians and Jews can lead to unforeseen consequences, including scapegoating. Under these circumstances, a growing majority of the Jewish population do not wish to stay in Ukraine and are considering emigration. ■

A. Polyakov, who passed away recently, was the Director of the Kiev Bureau of Human Rights, Ukraine.



SOVIET-JEWISH EMIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE 1990s

Edited by Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brym
York Lanes Press 1991, 159 pp, \$15.95 plus postage.

This book provides an analysis of the Soviet-Jewish emigration movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Nine articles analyse this emigration movement's context, causes, size, composition and resettlement problems. By offering tentative forecasts about the shape of Soviet-Jewish emigration over the next several years, this book marks a departure from most other books on the subject.

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Community involvement is encouraged. Abstracts should be sent to the conference organizer by the end of May 1993:

Jock Collins, Associate Professor
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The conference proceedings will be published. Negotiations with a number of publishers are underway. We would appreciate early notice of interest in the conference. A newsletter will be sent in early 1993 to outline the arrangements for accommodation and the conference. Funds are not available to pay for airfares, although a letter of invitation to attend the conference can be arranged.