

CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGEE

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The Plight of East European Refugees

Nationalism has become a destructive force throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Masses of people have become uprooted as a result of border clashes between people of newly independent states and discriminatory—at times genocidal—policies that their governments pursue. Most of these people flee to neighbouring regions of what used to be their country. Relatively few manage to escape to the West. The number of those who are accepted by Western countries is even smaller. Certainly not everyone wants to flee to the West, but even those who do are held back by barriers erected by receiving countries to prevent massive refugee inflows.

European and North American governments' immigration policies have become more restrictive as a result of at least three factors. First, broad anti-Communist, pro-market reforms in the former Soviet bloc countries produced euphoria in the West that blurred the vision of Western countries and made them close their eyes to human rights abuse by these seemingly "democratic" states. As a result, several asylum and

refugee-receiving countries have adopted policies that disqualify Soviet and Eastern Europe refugees from being recognized as such and at times from even claiming refugee status. In Canada, for instance, as of September 1990, the Designated Class category for self-exiled persons from Soviet and Eastern European countries was removed. The Designated Class category applies to those displaced people who do not fit the strict UN Convention's refugee definition under which a claimant needs to prove a well-founded fear of persecution. It is expected that in

September 1992 the Lautenberg Amendment, which exempts certain categories of Soviet applicants from establishing a well-founded fear of persecution, will be lifted in the United States. In 1990, both France and Switzerland announced that they would cease accepting asylum applications from nationals of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Second, the economic recession has contributed to deficiencies in the budget for immigration process and resettlement on the one hand, and xenophobic sentiments among the host population on the other. In the United States the

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quota for Soviet Jews was not met. In November 1990 and April 1991 Austrian government regulations were issued to limit assistance to several categories of asylum seekers, including Romanians, Bulgarians and most other East European refugees.

Xenophobic anti-immigrant sentiments are rampant throughout Europe. The Freedom Party in Austria has experienced substantial gains in several provincial elections in the fall of 1991 on an anti-immigrant platform. Right-wing, anti-immigrant parties showed dramatic gains in local elections in Bremen and Lower Saxony in Germany. Germany has also witnessed widespread attacks on asylum seekers and other foreigners. In France, the National Front, headed by Jean-Marie Le Pen, is at the forefront of xenophobic appeals to limit immigration. There is significant backlash against immigrants in Sweden and Switzerland. Several refugee reception centres have been vandalized there. Anti-immigrant political parties have gained popularity in both countries.

Third, the unprecedented increase in the number of people seeking asylum in the United States, Canada and Europe

has caused serious preoccupation among the governments of these countries. In response they adopted stricter measures to control and regulate the flow. In Canada on June 16, 1992 a new bill was introduced to Parliament. The proposed changes include eliminating one of two existing status determination hearings in order to speed up the process of refugee status determination; fingerprinting all refugee claimants in order to detect and deport criminals; and granting more power to immigration officers at the border, enabling them to reject refugee claims.

In an effort to make control more efficient, several European countries, including France, Germany and the Benelux countries have attempted to standardize visa requirements and entry criteria by signing the Schengen Agreement in June 1990. Since then Italy, Spain and Portugal have also signed. The agreement determines which country is responsible for adjudicating asylum claims and sets procedures for exchanging information on asylum seekers. The agreement includes a provision levying sanctions on carriers transporting undocumented aliens, as

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Errata: The acknowledgements in the May issue should have included the Association for Soviet Jewry. B'nai B'rith should have been listed as the Institute for International Affairs of B'nai B'rith Canada.

well as provisions on security and law enforcement.

Whether signatories to the Schengen Agreement or not, most European countries have maintained and introduced tough measures aimed at curbing immigration and refugee flows. In Austria the asylum law of April 1990 precludes foreigners from applying for asylum at the border. It also prevents passengers from disembarking from stopover flights transiting through Austria. At the same time, the law makes it easier for border guards to make on-the-spot decisions about turning away undocumented asylum claimants. A new and stricter refugee law went into effect in Belgium on October 1, 1991. In Italy new legislation introduced in 1991 includes legal authority to reject asylum seekers at the border if they arrive via third countries that have signed the Refugee Convention. But asylum seekers could be repatriated from Italy even if they do not travel via another country, as clearly shown in the case of the thousands of Albanians, who arrived on Italian shores by boat in March and August of 1991. This is discussed by Campani in this issue. Similarly, in the United Kingdom new tough measures were recently introduced to curb the number of asylum seekers and those accepted.

While Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary have been crossed off the list of refugee-producing countries by several Western states, they have turned into asylum countries. While open to refugees from the former Soviet Union and Romania, Poland nevertheless takes measures to prevent a mass influx of people from these countries. It imposed entry restrictions on Romanians and fortified its eastern border force. Hungary has given a very warm reception to thousands of ethnic Hungarians from Romania (see Noelte in this volume). Thousands of uprooted people fleeing ethnic violence in former Yugoslavia have received temporary asylum in Hungary, but the authorities do not wish any of them to apply for refugee status.

Measures taken to help two million Bosnians displaced by the brutal "ethnic



cleansing" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as can be seen above, will test the humanitarianism of not only Western European countries and of the three new host countries but also of the former Yugoslavia's newly independent states. So far, Germany has proven to be the most generous by committing itself to receiving 200,000 refugees from this region. Sweden and Switzerland have provided asylum to 45,000 and 17,000 refugees from Yugoslavia respectively. Austria and Italy have accepted two trainloads of Muslim Bosnian refugees, but they insisted that this should not be viewed as a precedent. Hungary, which

has already hosted 60,000 refugees from Yugoslavia, is reluctant to accept more. Similarly, Croatia and Slovenia refuse to take more refugees.

It is unfortunate that the eruption of refugee crisis in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union coincides with the political and economic climate in which many refugee-receiving countries are revising their liberal refugee policies and introducing tough control measures against refugees. The only hope for these refugees, under these conditions, lies in the early resolution of the conflict in their home countries. ■

Tanya Basok, Guest Editor

Reflections on Refuge in Hungary: A New Host Country

Earl Noelte

Since 1988 Hungary has increasingly become a refuge for people who seek asylum and refugee status.¹ Immigration, which included a substantial number of ethnic Hungarians from Romania, as identified in Table 1, passed through three important phases. The last phase — the inflow of refugees from Croatia and Serbia — continues to receive a critical response from many levels of society and government in Hungary. The refugee regime's international community recognizes Hungary's vital importance as a new refugee-hosting country in Central Europe.

Hungary became a new host country for refugees for internal and external reasons. Hungary's model of an alternative between a socialist and a capitalist market economy began in 1968.² By the 1980s, economic alternatives to a rigid, socialist market system found their societal and political counterparts in emerging intellectual and social movements. These groupings and associations — which addressed environmental, peace and minority issues — were to provide a focus of interest for Hungarian political parties by 1989. Hungary's pluralism and democratization evolved over a period of two decades and gave the country an image of transitional change prior to the major turning-point of Eastern Europe's transformation at the end of 1989.

Hungary's image of transition with stability continues to hold great consequence for the nation. The population is 10.6 million people. In addition, important ethnic Hungarian populations reside outside of Hungary. These neighbouring populations include two million people in Romania; 250,000 in Ukraine; 800,000 in Slovakia; and 300,000 in Croatia and Serbia. These

populations' sociocultural transnational Hungarian identity directs their consciousness to the sovereign nation-state of Hungary, which means that respect, as well as lack of respect, for Hungarian individual, group and minority rights is an interest and concern that the Hungarian government cannot disregard. Therefore, the nation-state of Hungary has a permanent pull factor on ethnic Hungarian populations that reside outside of Hungary. The effect of this pull factor was partly responsible for the first wave of ethnic Hungarians refugees who flooded into Hungary from Romania in 1988. Romania's

Hungary's image of transition with stability continues to hold great consequence for the nation.

repressive Ceausescu regime was the second factor that caused 11,745 ethnic Hungarians to seek asylum in Hungary this year. Severe hardship and lack of respect for ethnic Hungarians' rights in Transylvania drove them to flee Romania and seek refuge in Hungary.

Hungary gave these "fellow Hungarians" a warm reception and generous assistance. A network of nongovernmental organizations was established to coordinate the reception, assistance and assimilation of these refugees. As well, the government of Hungary organized its Department of Refugee Affairs in the Ministry of the Interior after the first wave of ethnic Hungarian refugees from Romania arrived and settled.

Two nongovernmental organizations, the Hungarian Red Cross and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, were instrumental in receiving these refugees. Governmental authorities in Budapest, Bekescsaba and

Debrecen subsequently recognized the need to receive and provide for the refugees. Refugee admission centres opened to accommodate their basic needs. Unlike the fate of so many other refugees at admission and reception centres, the ethnic Hungarians spent only two to three weeks at Hungarian refugee admission centres. Hungary had the socio-economic means to meet the housing, employment, health and educational needs of this first wave of refugees. Therefore, the decision to host, facilitate family reunification and assume costs of assimilation became an integral part of Hungarian social politics. At the same time, Hungary became the front yard of refuge in Central Europe.

The consequences of Hungary's shift to the front yard of Central and (by the end of 1989) "new Europe" were considerable. First, Hungary became a model for hosting refugees, mostly ethnic Hungarians from Romania. In 1989 and 1990, which mark the second phase of refugee inflows into Hungary, the totals were 10,821 and 14,953 respectively. During this phase the Hungarian government signed the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, which became effective in Hungarian law on October 15, 1989. Although Hungary reserved the right to refugee status for individuals of European origin,³ it was the first former East European state to become a party to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and to gain a prominent position in the international refugee regime. Furthermore, Hungary's model was used by other East European states — Poland, Czechoslovakia and, in time, even Romania. Therefore, Hungary became the centre of a front line between Eastern and Western Europe.

The second consequence of Hungary's shift to the front yard and then to the front line of Eastern Europe put Hungary into the backyard of

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Western Europe. In fact, Hungary became a shield that held back forced migration from Eastern to Western Europe. These fundamental transformations began to make increasing demands on Hungary's capacity to host asylum seekers and refugees. At the same time, Hungary's expectations of assistance from the UNHCR and the international refugee regime were not met. Also, the initial socio-political consensus to host, assist and assimilate refugees began to wane. Towards the end of the second phase of refugee movement into Hungary in late 1990, socio-economic discrimination towards ethnic Hungarians began to spread towards other Europeans (for example, Albanians) and non-European asylum seekers and refugees in Hungary.

The change from warm reception to discrimination of asylum seekers and refugees was the third consequence of the country's shift to the front and the backyard of the "new Europe." Hungary's transition from a socialist to a liberal capitalist system depended on the pace with which markets and international (i.e., Western Europe and the United States) investments accumulated in Hungary. The government made a gradual transition, while politics became of vital interest to Hungarian pluralist groups and political parties. As a result of Hungary's

democratization, all of the country's socio-political sectors participated in societal and political debates. At the same time, these debates increasingly coincided with negative socio-economic indicators. By 1991, inflation was at 36 percent; unemployment was at 8 percent; gross domestic production was 8

Bearing the burden and acting as the front and the backyard of the "new Europe" seemed to be Hungary's particular position in the summer of 1991.

percent. Housing shortages and strained social services in health and education also contributed to the change from an open reception to discrimination towards asylum seekers and refugees in Hungary.

The warm reception during the first two phases of refugee inflows into Hungary weakened and turned into discord by June 1991. One popular solution to the problem was to help ethnic Hungarians in their communities of origin and thereby remove, at least in part, the causes for which these people

might seek refuge in Hungary. Nongovernmental organizations and voluntary agencies began cross-border operations of assistance, for example, to Transylvania inside Romania. These initiatives seemed more appropriate as Hungary's capacity to host, assist and assimilate refugees waned. In fact, by June 1991 asylum seekers and refugees had to stay in Hungarian refugee admission centres for much longer periods than before. These people felt demoralized and marginalized from Hungarian society. Signs of alienation were even stronger for nonethnic Hungarian refugees, whose opportunities for third country resettlement in Western Europe, Canada or the United States had greatly diminished to nothing more than an illusion.⁴

Bearing the burden and acting as the front and the backyard of the "new Europe" seemed to be Hungary's particular position in the summer of 1991. The Department of Refugee Affairs in the Ministry of the Interior organized a centre to respond to forced migration into Hungary. Also, illegal immigration and human smuggling were taking place through Hungary's "green border" with Romania. At the same time, economic migrants sought socio-economic opportunities in Hungary or migrated through Hungary to Western Europe and North America. As the categories of population movement became more numerous, all parties in Hungary recognized the need to inform and educate the public and thereby reconstruct the earlier consensus with respect to reception, assistance and assimilation of refugees.

At the same time, all the parties in Hungary perceived a future wave of asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants. This flood, which was expected to come from the former U.S.S.R., would subject Hungary to successive waves of population movement into and maybe even out of the country. The population influx across the Ukrainian border was estimated from one to two million people. An operational network of governmental and nongovernmental organizations was in place in the northeast region of Hungary to handle the expected influx.

Table 1: Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Hungary*

	1988	1989	1990	June 1991	Total
Asylum seekers	13,173	17,448	18,283	2,629	51,533
From Romania	13,098	17,171	17,416	1,864	
ethnic Hungarians	11,745	10,821	14,953	1,864	
ethnic Romanians	1,097	5,545	2,358		
ethnic Germans	256	805	99		
From Soviet Union			488	413	
ethnic Hungarians			213		
others			275		
From other countries			379		
Recognized as refugees		95	2,561	149	
ethnic Hungarians			2,409		
others			152		

*Reproduced with the permission of Boldizsar Nagy, The Hungarian Refugee Law, Budapest, June 1991.

The reality, however, was different. Yugoslavia's war of societal and state conflict caused the third wave of refugees into Hungary. By November 1991 6,000 asylum seekers arrived daily, and by March 1992 there were 50,000 registered refugees from Croatia and Serbia. Hungary's response during this third phase seems to support the image and model of its original consensus at the end of the 1980s. Certainly receiving and assisting these refugees influenced Hungarian attitudes. Also, the arrival of these refugees into southwest Hungary — a new regional reception area — facilitated their reception and settlement. Once again, the major actors were the Department of Refugee Affairs, the Hungarian Red Cross and the Ecumenical Council of Churches. Assistance from the international refugee regime and the European Community was slow to materialize. Once more, Hungary acted as a shield, which gave further legitimacy to its front and backyard position in the "new Europe."

Conclusion

Hungary's profound transformations since 1988 have occurred at all levels — subnational, national, transnational, regional and international. In becoming a new host country, Hungary experienced three important phases of forced migration during the past four years. Hungarians' transnational identity undoubtedly contributed to their positive reception of ethnic Hungarian refugees. This shared ethnic identity, however, was not strong enough to prevent discrimination towards refugees in 1990 and 1991. Socio-economic constraints and political uncertainties removed the earlier, favourable consensus to host, assist and assimilate asylum seekers and refugees in Hungary.

Hungary's transformation into the front and backyard of the "new Europe" became a complex set of internal and external Hungarian relationships. The legitimacy that the new host country gained within the international refugee regime and thereby for the West was certainly a gain in status for Hungary. At

the same time, however, this country did not receive—at least not soon enough—the expected financial or political assistance, i.e., third country resettlement for non-Hungarian refugees, which was necessary if Hungary was to be a model and effective key member of the new front line between Eastern and Western Europe. Increasingly, Hungary acted as a shield in response to the societal and political conflicts that displaced ethnic and nonethnic Hungarian populations. A current example is, of course, the refugee inflow from Croatia and Serbia.

Hungary's immediate future is uncertain. Its transformation to a liberal capitalist system is not yet complete.

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Political and economic demands have been made on Hungarian society — demands that severely test the societal consensus necessary for the democratization process to develop in this country. Respect for individual, group and minority civil rights are an integral component of this democratization process. Developing a civil society in Hungary is a vital interest of the state and government. This civil society also forms the new core of the nation and the people of Hungary. Therefore, the strength and status of the Hungarian community — at both the state and interstate levels — are legitimate concerns and interests for the "new Europe" and the international community.

In fact, Hungary's identity must be more than its front and backyard position with regard to economic and forced migration in the "new Europe." Comprehensive and extensive interdependence — the right of solidarity — is necessary for Hungary's security among European states and their

transforming regional organizations. This greater interdependence would have to allow Hungary to drop its shield and thereby gain a multilateral security for its internal and external policies. Without this fundamental and necessary transformation, Hungary's future could become one of civil strife and societal conflict. These two classical causes of refugee flows would then revert Hungary from a new host country to a refugee-sending country. This should not happen. ■

Notes

1. Geza Tessenyi, "The Development of Immigration and Refugee Policy in a New Host Country: The Case of Hungary," *The New Refugee Hosting Countries—Space for Innovation, SIM Special No. 11* (December 1991):109-128.
2. J. Ann Zammit, Dharam Ghai, Neelan Tiruchelvam and Bryan Turner, *Hungary in Transition: From Socialism to Capitalism?* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1990). Also see "Central and Eastern Europe in Transition." *Proceedings of a European-Japanese Conference on Reform and Change in Eastern Europe in the 1990s*, March 5-7, 1991. Arbeitspapiere zur Internationalen Politik, 64, Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e. V. and National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA), Tokyo, August 1991.
3. Boldizsar Nagy, "Before or After the Wave? The Adequacy of the New Hungarian Refugee Law," Special Issue: The 1991 Geneva Colloquium, The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees: Principles, Problems and Potential. *International Journal of Refugee Law* 3, no. 3 (July 1991):529-39.
4. Material in this paragraph, as well as in those that follow, are taken from a study trip to Hungary in May 1991 and the VII Annual San Remo Seminar on "Societal Identity in Hungary and the New Central Europe," organized by the Refugee Studies Program, Webster University in Geneva, Switzerland, in cooperation with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, San Remo, Italy, November 1991.

Albanian Refugees in Italy

Giovanna Campani

In March 1991 the Albanian exodus to Italy involved over 20,000 refugees, who arrived in precarious and rotten boats. They waited in the rain and wind in the bay of Brindisi to be allowed to stay, but the Italian government was cynically indifferent to them.

In August 1991 desperate Albanians jumped into the sea from a crowded ship, the *Valona*, as it came into Bari harbour. But this time, the Italian government's reaction, which may have been condoned by other European states, went far beyond indifference. These people were all sent back. Since then the Adriatic Sea, which divides Albania from Italy, is guarded day and night. As Ruotolo (1992) said, "the sea as a place of freedom or transit towards freedom has become inaccessible for Albanians."

Italian patrol vessels, military ships and coastguards try to prevent any flight. Albanian harbours are watched by soldiers. Still, illegal immigrants manage to reach Italy, as on July 7 when a boat with 109 men, women and children on board tried to force its way into Italian waters. All of them were sent back.

It seems paradoxical that when the Albanian government wants to join the Western democratic world, the latter requests that Albanian citizens be restricted inside the country and even shot if they attempt to get out. Albanians have obtained the right to vote, but they have not obtained the right to leave their country or to travel. Albania is still a huge jail, as it was at the time of Enver Hodja.

Reasons for the Flight

In no other Eastern European country has the end of Communist dictatorship been accompanied by such large-scale emigration. There are different reasons for it: economic disaster, fear of civil war

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and lack of confidence in the democratization process and in those who were supposed to promote it.¹ It is also possible that this mass migration is the Albanian government's manoeuvre to pressure the West, and particularly Italy, into giving them more help.

But apart from these reasons, this exodus can be seen as an explosion of claustrophobia (Colafato 1992) in people who were confined within a small country for forty years. These people do not wish to wait any longer for change in

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Albania. It is certainly difficult to generalize, but refugees' statements to journalists at the time of their arrival and comments made during the indepth interviews we conducted,² express this sense of claustrophobia and wish to enjoy a way of life known only through Italian television.³ We did not encounter the will to fight for change in Albania and to construct a new country during any of the interviews conducted between November and December 1991. Only in some very recent interviews conducted in May 1992 was the will to go back to Albania expressed.

Albania's recent history partly explains these attitudes. This country seems to be suspended in time (Ferraris 1991). It was isolated from the rest of the world by Enver Hodja's dream of

creating a purely autarchical socialist country. Enver Hodja, who was the hero of the Resistance against the Germans and Italians, as well as the leader of the Party of Work (the name of the Communist Party in Albania), broke relations with Tito and turned to Stalin. Later he refused to "de-Stalinize," and took the China's side against the Russians. China was Albania's main partner until 1978 when it stopped providing military and economic aid because of ideological and political conflicts. Albania was always portrayed as the "bright spot" of world socialism in official propaganda. One refugee interviewed in the study commented:

I thought that Yugoslavia was not a Communist country any more. They told us that it was Communist until 1948, then it changed its way because it was no longer in agreement with Enver Hodja. Until 1960 we were friends with Russia, then they told us that Russia had also changed its way. Hodja was friends with China. Then when Mao died, that finished too. And they told us that we were the only bright spot.

This change of ideological and trade partners had a devastating effect on the country's already weak economy.⁴ The results were outdated industries and technology, poor agriculture, hard working conditions, no contacts with the rest of the world and widespread poverty. The government's attempt to remain ideologically pure did not succeed either. Despite the propaganda, young people were sceptical of socialist principles and would rather have consumer goods.

The regime's crisis began after Enver Hodja's death on April 11, 1985, but it only became evident five years later. In 1985 Ramiz Alia became the new Secretary of the Party of Work and began modest liberalization, a kind of "Albanian Spring," following the

examples of other East European countries and especially that of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, but this relative liberalization resulted in an economic crisis, and living conditions began to get worse.

In July 1990 approximately 5,000 people occupied different European embassies in Tirana. Thanks to international intervention, 4,500 Albanians arrived in Brindisi on July 13. They were brought from Tirana to Dürres. Most of them will not stay in Italy. They will go to Germany, which agreed to take them. It was the only

exodus are also very complex. There was a rumour that there were boats in Albanian harbours to take people to Italy. The same rumours sparked the exodus in August 1991 and the most recent one of 10,000 people who wanted to leave the Albanian harbour of Dürres on July 7 and 8, 1992.

How can these rumours be explained? Were they manufactured by the government to push people out of the country and to show the world the extent of Albania's misery? Were there information networks to link those who wanted to leave with owners of boats? Or

In March 1991 the Italian government received 26,000 refugees and found them places to stay. Only one boat went back to Albania. Although Albanian refugees are beginning to realize that the myth of Italy does not correspond to reality, they have nowhere else to go. Italy is the closest European country and a gate to Europe, both in a metaphoric and geographic sense. As one refugee said, "I would have liked to go to Germany, but I could not get a visa—the embassy was always closed. There was no choice but to emigrate to Italy or to Greece. I wanted to go to Germany. I was in Austria to study and I speak the language."

So the exodus continued between March and August 1991. Most of the rafts were stopped and people were sent back—often in a harsh way—after an exhausting trip (D'Angelis 1992). In August 1991 there was another mass exodus. This time, the myth of Italy was definitely shattered. Albanians understood that they could be sent back in the most humiliating way. Still, there were new attempts to leave in July 1992. As one refugee explained, "There is nothing to do in Albania, at least for twenty years." "How many years will go by before Albania becomes rich, democratic and prosperous? We will be old and Europe will always be better," said another Albanian refugee. Western aid is not sufficient. It is just enough to enable the country to survive. The victory of Sali Berisha's Democratic Party has not performed any miracles. The West did not give any more aid just because the Democratic Party won the election.

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"planned" exodus and the only time when Albanians were received and consequently treated as political refugees in Italy. After the "crisis of the embassies," the exodus continued slowly. People leave individually or in small groups, sometimes by boat or plane. It is still possible to get tourist visas in some European embassies. It is easier to get an Italian visa than a French or a German one, even though it is necessary to wait for a few months. It is quite difficult but not impossible to obtain a passport, especially for those who are not well-known dissidents, or for those who pay bribes or have friends in the ministries or in the Party.

By March 1991 the economic situation continued to deteriorate and there was still much political uncertainty. On December 1, 1990 Ramiz Alia promised free elections on February 10, 1991. On December 12, the Democratic Party was founded. But on January 16, 1992 Ramiz Alia rescheduled the elections for the end of March, and on February 20 he formed a new government.

The March exodus was a response to the uncertainty and insecurity within the country a few weeks before the elections. However, the dynamics of the

was an explosion of claustrophobia that occurred when it seemed possible that a dream might become reality for people who lost hope for the future?

Regardless of the origin of the rumours, they prompted people to rush to the harbours without taking any of their possessions. They squeezed in the boats. People who lived in the ports of Dürres and Valona had a better chance of getting on the boats first. From the northern town of Dürres boats went to Valona and left for Brindisi and Otranto. Most Albanian immigrants in Italy are from Dürres and Valona.

Protests against the government are the strongest in urban areas. Rural Albania is still supportive of the Party of Work. Ramiz Alia and the Party of Work will win in the elections, thanks to rural voters.

Because of the Italian government's negligence, Albanians met bad conditions in Brindisi during their first few days, but the government's response was compensated for by the generous attitude of the Italian people, or at least of those living in Brindisi and Otranto. Most of the Albanians whom we and some journalists interviewed felt grateful to the people of Brindisi and Otranto. Only a few complained of exploitation.

Attitudes of the Italian Government and the Italian Population to the Albanian Exodus

If in March the Italian government adopted a cynical and neglectful attitude, in August it used a "mixture of force and astuteness" (Rusconi 1991) to send back the Albanians, which provoked shame among the Italians. Paolo Giuntella (1991) wrote, "It is one of the most shameful pages of our recent history." No real effort was made to communicate

with the Albanians or to analyse Italian public opinion. In fact, the media expressed hardly any opposition to receiving the refugees. Only one newspaper, *Il Manifesto*, suggested that perhaps receiving 20,000 or even 40,000 people was not so dramatic, considering what other countries had done (Germany with East Germans and Turkey and Iran with Kurds). For the rest of the press, it was more or less clear that the arrival of so many people would provoke crises in social services, the labour market and everyday life.

In February 1990 Law 39 (known as the Martelli Law), which sets new procedures for immigration, was adopted. One generous provision of this law allowed 223,000 illegal immigrants, mainly from Third World countries, to obtain residence and work permits. The law also established procedures for regulating immigration in the future. The immigrant intake for 1991 was set at zero.

The mass arrival of Albanians forced the government to review this plan, and in March Albanians received temporary permits that were valid until July 15, 1991. If they found jobs or vocational training courses by then, the permits would become permanent in agreement with the provisions of the Martelli Law.

In April the Italian government established a new Ministry of Emigration and Immigration, headed by Margherita Boniver, a socialist deputy. On May 11, Margherita Boniver was also designated an "Extraordinary Commissary for the Albanian Emergency," replacing the former Minister for Civil Protection.

In early March, it was decided to disperse Albanians throughout the country instead of keeping them in Puglia. In May there were still over 9,000 Albanians in the Puglia, so Margherita Boniver had to accelerate their resettlement in other regions. The attitudes of local authorities in these regions varied. Some were generous and did everything to find lodging and work for Albanians, while others refused to take them.

Albanians lived under the threat of expulsion. Eventually, their temporary status was extended to July 31 and finally to March 1992, but fear of being sent back

will push many Albanians to become illegal immigrants in order to avoid restrictions.

At the end of October 1991, Margherita Boniver announced that among 24,157 Albanians, 645 obtained political refugee status (17,718 had solicited it); 2,715 were sent back; 315 were expelled; 9,452 found jobs; 711 found vocational training courses; and approximately 8,000 had not yet found jobs. The rest became illegal immigrants. Although the Minister of Emigration and

"It is so close! We would go for a weekend and come back and work here. But if we go, we cannot get out."

Immigration was pleased with the results, she did not wish to accept more Albanians. In fact, she approved of the treatment Albanians received in August and contended:

"We were able to respond quickly to the dramatic events of last August. In the meantime, political conditions in Albania changed as a democratic government was formed, which gave an opportunity to all the main political forces to participate. By repatriating 17,476 Albanians from August 8-13, and another 3,400 (including 700 soldiers) on August 17, we were able to show respect to Law 39/90" (Boniver 1991).

What Boniver refers to as "respect to Law 39/90" translated into terrible images of Albanians trapped in a stadium and being thrown sandwiches, as if they were animals. Many were taken away in the middle of the night. They included children who found Italian families ready to take them. Shameful as these memories are to many Italians, nevertheless even the public failed to show as much hospitality to the Albanians in August as they did in March.

Colafato (1991) explains this difference by relating the Albanians' arrival in March to the Gulf War. After the trauma of a horrible war, the public expressed an "after-war solidarity." In

August, the situation was different. The impending war in Yugoslavia produced much anxiety, since it promised to provoke mass flights. Furthermore, difficulties created by the first exodus reduced solidarity to a minimum. Still, Colafato (1991) insists, present socio-cultural processes in Italian society leave room for attitudes of solidarity, but tend much more towards defending individual welfare and particular interests.

A Sea and a Prison

"I left Albania for personal reasons. I like the Communist theory—no rich, no poor—I like it, but I didn't like my town. I wanted to see the world and to cross the sea," said a young Albanian from Dürres, who arrived in Italy in March 1991 and who is now living in Portocannone, Molise, a small Italian-Albanian village. His case is certainly exceptional: in our thirty-four interviews, he is the only one who considers himself a Communist and is favourable to Communist theory. Still, his case is interesting: he wanted to travel, to see the world, to cross the sea he had seen since his childhood. To do so, he had to get in a crowded boat, risk his life at sea and be humiliated by the Italian government. Other refugees told us that they would go back to Albania every month if they could. "It is so close! We would go for a weekend and come back and work here. But if we go, we cannot get out."

On September 4, 1991, the Italian government, in agreement with the Albanian government, decided to create the XXII Navy Group to prevent another mass exodus. Two coastguard patrol vessels (vedettes) stay in Dürres harbour. There is also an Italian ship and Italian headquarters. One hundred Italian soldiers watch the Albanian Sea. The XXII Navy Group works with Albanian ships. Since August, the Albanian authorities have required ships to anchor in roadstead to prevent exodus. The Italian vedettes patrol 300 km of the Albanian coastline. The Albanian soldiers control the harbours. On July 7, 1992 10,000 Albanians protested against this tight control and were shot at by the soldiers.

Albanians in Italy

In general, the present situation of the 24,000 Albanians in Italy is no longer as desperate as it was earlier. Many of them found work in agriculture in the South. In Central and Northern Italy, they found work in construction, small factories and janitorial services. Local authorities, despite the negative attitudes of some, assisted Albanians in finding work. They found warm reception in Italian-Albanian villages. The fact that Albania is so close could make travel to and from Italy easy if there were no barriers. Migrants could play an important role in the development of Albania. Seasonal migration could be a solution for some people. The Albanian immigrants interviewed last May were critical of the violence and drug problems in Italy. They lamented for a more simple life. Some were thinking of going back.

Let's hope that in the not-too-distant future the Adriatic Sea will become a place of exchange, crossed not by vedettes and military ships or by rafts of desperate people, but by boats of people at home on both sides of the water. ■

Notes

1. Some people in the present government, like Ramiz Alia, used to be in Enver Hodja's government.
2. In October 1991 I began research on eastern immigration in Italy. The goal was to conduct about fifty qualitative interviews in Tuscany, Liguria and Emilia-Romagna. I hoped to conduct return interviews with some people to see how they integrated. Unfortunately, it was possible to interview only twenty-five people, twelve of whom were Albanians. In May we interviewed other refugees, including six Albanians. All the Albanians were living in Tuscany (Florence, Signa, Scandicce). At the same time, a student from my department did research on the Albanians in Portocannone, a small village in the Molise, founded by Albanian refugees of Skanderberg in the fifteenth century. The student conducted sixteen interviews. Although our methodologies were different, we were still able to compare results. In the article I referred to thirty-four interviews, and I also made use of press releases.

3. The importance of Italian television in creating the Italian myth in Albania has been emphasized by many observers and journalists. Albanian refugees referred to Italian television when they explained how they gained knowledge of Italy. It was not by chance that in March 1991 the director of an Italian channel felt it was his duty to explain to Albanians that Italian reality is not the one that appeared on television.
4. The level of development is not comparable to that of other former socialist countries. In Albania 50 percent of the population worked in agriculture in 1988, 66 percent were rural. In Romania it was 22 percent and 49 percent, respectively; in Poland 22 percent and 39 percent; in Bulgaria 14 percent and 34 percent (De Agostini 1991). Albanian cities are quite small. Tirana counts, the capital, has only 225,000 inhabitants; Dürres 80,000 and Valona 70,000 (De Agostini 1991). The total population in Albania is approximately three million people.

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The Canadian Refugee Policy and Practice Towards Refugees from the Commonwealth of Independent States

Tanya Basok

In the general climate created by the Cold War, the Canadian government welcomed refugees from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe with open arms. It offered generous reception to thousands of Hungarians fleeing the 1956 Soviet invasion, to Czechoslovakians escaping the repression following the 1968 "Prague Spring," to Poles fearing persecution for participation in the Solidarity movement, and to Soviet Jews propelled to leave by state anti-Semitism.

Shattering political reforms in the Soviet bloc countries brought about the demise of the Community Party's totalitarian rule. One of the positive outcomes was the end of the Cold War. But the Gorbachev reforms opened a new can of worms. Nationalist movements erupted throughout the region, leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Only the latter has so far been spared the violence between rival ethnic groups striving to create or strengthen their nation. Several newly independent states have engaged in bloody territorial disputes and violent repression of ethnic minorities. The rise of Russian nationalism has made life precarious for Russian Jews. Millions of people have been uprooted by these conflicts, yet the reaction of the Canadian government to the political processes in the region was to cancel its special refugee policy.

Prior to September 1990, most refugees from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe came as members of the Designated Class. The 1976 Immigration Act allows for two categories of refugees to be admitted to Canada. Convention refugees are those who fall under the definition set out by the 1951 UN

Convention and 1967 Protocol on refugees. They have to demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion or membership in a political, social or ethnic minority group. In addition, they must be outside their country of origin and unable to get protection from their native government. The Canadian government recognizes that there are categories of people who do not fit this rigid definition, yet who may also find themselves in refugee-like situations. The 1976 Immigration Act therefore gives authority to the Governor-in-Council to designate such categories of people and admit them under the refugee class. In 1976 self-exiled Soviet and East European citizens were defined as falling under this category. Although most of these emigrés could not demonstrate a well-founded fear of individual persecution in their countries of origin, given the tight

Several newly independent states have engaged in bloody territorial disputes and violent repression of ethnic minorities.

exit-control situation there, their departure would have been treated as an act of treason subject to severe reprisals.

Sweeping political reforms throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and especially the removal or relaxation of the strict exit control, have prompted a significant policy change. On August 17, 1990, Employment and Immigration Minister Barbara McDougall announced that the Designated Class for self-exiled persons would be phased out. Instead she reinstated normal immigration processing for citizens of this region. This policy is still active, in spite of the

exploding refugee population in former Soviet bloc states. The rest of the article will deal with Canadian refugee policy towards the Soviet Union. Since the 1970s, most of those who have come to Canada from this country are Jewish. The article will focus on them.

Emigration Potential of Russian Jews

The sharp decline in living standards for most people in the former Soviet Union, combined with intense dissatisfaction with the existing political leaders, have produced a political vacuum that is easily filled by ultraright nationalist groups. Just a year ago, such organizations were insignificant in size, never exceeding a few hundred members. Within the last year, their numbers and membership experienced a dramatic growth. Now they enjoy the support of thousands of Russian people. According to some estimates, up to 30 percent of the population view them favourably.

The rise of nationalism poses a threat to democratic leaders, supporters and ethnic minorities, including Jews. There are over fifty nationalist, profascist and anti-Semitic publications and one radio station in Russia. The state can no longer contain them peacefully. It should not be surprising, under those circumstances, that thousands of Jews feel threatened and are considering leaving their country.

Severe shortages of employment and housing in Israel have discouraged many potential emigrants from choosing this country as their destination. Although Germany has committed itself to accepting 30,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union, many of them find it difficult to overcome their distrust of Germans and fear that history may repeat itself in Germany. Other countries do not seem to rush to the rescue of Russian Jews.

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Soviet Arrivals Then and Now

Before the 1976 Immigration Act became effective in 1978, Soviet Jews were admitted to Canada mainly as independent immigrants. Starting in 1978 they started coming under the Designated Class category. Between 1978 and 1981 these refugees from the U.S.S.R. constituted an important part of the Canadian refugee flow (see Table 1). When Soviet authorities tightened exit visa regulations between 1982 and 1987, their inflow into Canada dropped significantly. The few who were allowed to leave the Soviet Union were sponsored by family members. In 1988 the flow increased again. In the last two years of the refugee program for the U.S.S.R., a large proportion of Soviet people came under the private sponsorship of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Service of Canada (JIAS) as members of the Designated Class.

For a number of reasons, until 1990 the Canadian policy towards refugees from the U.S.S.R. was very generous. First, the Canadian government's Cold

War mentality influenced its perception of those fleeing the Soviet Union as victims of Communist rule and in need of protection by the West. Soviet emigrants were used as an ideological weapon against the U.S.S.R. At the same time, Soviet immigrants provided ideological support for right-wing and centre-right-wing political parties in Canada. Thus in Canada they were preferred over those refugees who were persecuted because of their left-wing affiliations.

Second, Canadian resettlement of Soviet Jews was part of a multilateral arrangement with Austria, Italy, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. Under this agreement, Austria and Italy provided temporary asylum to Soviet self-exiled Jews, while other countries offered them permanent resettlement.

Third, relatively high levels of the refugees' educational achievement (see Table 2) made Soviet-Jewish settlement in Canada attractive when Canada was making a significant effort to increase the number of skilled workers in the labour force.

Finally, Canadian-Jewish organizations pressured the government to increase the intake of Soviet Jews who, they felt, were denied the right to practise their religion and traditions and were subject to discriminatory practices at school and at work. In addition to its role as a lobby group, JIAS also provided significant settlement assistance to newly arrived immigrants. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, it was successful in bringing many Soviet Jews under its sponsorship.

By 1990 the situation in the Soviet Union and Canada changed in a number of important ways. Dramatic political changes in the Soviet Union altered perception of its emigrés. They could no longer be viewed as opponents of Communist rule since the latter was crumbling. Soviet Jews lost their ideological attractiveness to Western countries. They were now regarded as economic immigrants in search of better material opportunities elsewhere in the world.

The Canadian government was aware of the rise of anti-Semitism in the

Table 1: Refugees from Major Refugee-Source Countries to Canada, 1978-87 (in percentages)

Country	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	Total
Vietnam	63.1	68.2	59.4	42.2	21.8	21.3	21.5	23.1	18.4	17.1	37.7
Poland	3.5	1.0	1.2	17.3	42.2	15.9	13.9	12.8	18.5	20.6	13.3
Kampuchea	0.2	4.2	8.8	8.9	7.8	9.8	8.0	7.0	6.2	5.7	7.2
Laos	0.1	13.9	14.9	5.4	2.0	2.8	5.2	1.8	2.9	1.8	7.2
El Salvador	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	1.6	12.7	13.6	13.9	12.2	10.7	6.0
Czechoslovakia	3.8	1.0	2.5	6.6	5.1	8.3	5.1	4.5	3.6	3.5	3.9
U.S.S.R.	4.5	4.1	4.7	5.0	1.6	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	2.4
Iran	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	2.0	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.5	2.3
Ethiopia	1.5	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.4	3.8	4.6	4.2	4.7	4.3	2.3
Romania	4.6	1.0	0.8	3.1	3.3	3.8	2.4	2.0	2.3	3.9	2.2
Hungary	1.7	0.7	0.7	2.5	2.2	2.6	1.7	3.0	2.8	2.5	1.8
Chile	10.7	1.0	0.9	2.1	2.0	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.5	1.3
Guatemala	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	2.9	2.8	3.5	2.5	1.2
Nicaragua	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	2.9	3.5	4.5	1.2
Afghanistan	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.6	2.0	2.7	3.5	1.0
Sri Lanka	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	1.4	2.7	0.5
Total number	848	27,517	40,348	14,981	16,927	13,970	15,345	16,754	19,147	21,530	187,367

Soviet Union, yet it sought a remedy in Jewish repatriation in Israel. This solution was strongly advocated by Israel and was supported by a number of pro-Zionist organizations in the U.S. and Canada. Furthermore, as the Vienna-Rome pipeline for Soviet immigrants ceased to exist in October 1989, Canada was relieved of its international responsibility in assisting its allies in settling Soviet Jews. At that time, most Soviet emigrants were streamlined to Israel.

By cancelling its refugee policy for Soviet and Eastern European immigrants, the Canadian government felt it was responding to criticisms of favouritism expressed by the Canadian Council for Refugees and other interest groups concerned for refugees.

While JIAS continued to lobby on behalf of Soviet Jews, it did not challenge the government's decision to discontinue the refugee program, but insisted that those Jews applying under

family sponsorship or as independent immigrants should be given extra consideration by visa officers in Moscow. In April 1992 JIAS Montreal, along with Allied Jewish Community Services, entered into an agreement with the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration to bring approximately one hundred Jewish families from the former Soviet Union over four months in the winter and spring of 1993. These families will have to qualify as independent immigrants according to the Quebec point system. At the same time, all of the selected families will have to have relatives in Montreal who are expected to help them with their settlement needs and employment. If this pilot project is successful—that is if the selected immigrants remain in Montreal, speak French, find employment and do not require public assistance—other Soviet-Jewish families will be accepted under the same agreement.

Inland Refugee Status Determination

The process of refugee selection by overseas visa officers is one of two venues for refugee admission set out by the 1976 Immigration Act. The second way is through an inland status determination of refugee claims. Until recently, very few Soviet citizens chose that route because of extreme difficulties in getting a visitor's exit visa from the Soviet Union. In the ten years following the introduction of the Immigration Act, only thirty people from the Soviet Union made refugee claims. Most of these claims were rejected. In 1989, 1990 and 1991 it became relatively easy for Soviet people to travel abroad. To get an exit visa, they needed an invitation from a friend or a relative. As long as at least one of the family members stayed behind, they were almost guaranteed an entry visa to Canada. Some of these visitors chose to stay in Canada. Not all of them applied for refugee status. Some were sponsored by JIAS, others by their relatives, while still others were admitted as independent immigrants. But the number of Soviet refugee claimants started rising as well. While in 1990 112 Soviet citizens applied for refugee status, their number reached 1,385 by the end of 1991.

In 1991 the perception of the situation in the U.S.S.R. and decisions made on refugee claims were uneven. Factors that explain the Canadian refugee policy for selecting refugees from overseas do not apply to the process of refugee status determination. Canadian refugee policy is influenced by foreign policy objectives, ideological and security concerns, economic interest, public opinion and lobbying by various pressure groups. Refugee status determination, while not completely devoid of these influences, seems to reflect individual panel members' perception of the general situation in a refugee's country of origin. This perception is shaped by the media coverage of a refugee-producing country, by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) documentation centre's documents that are at the

Table 2
Educational Attainment of Refugees in Canada from
Major Refugee-Producing Countries, 1978-87
(in percentages)

Country	— Highest level of educational attainment —			Total
	Less than secondary	Secondary graduate	University graduate	
U.S.S.R.	46.8	31.8	21.4	100.0
Romania	33.3	46.5	20.2	100.0
Poland	41.3	38.8	19.9	100.0
Iran	56.7	26.3	17.0	100.0
Afghanistan	67.5	18.1	14.4	100.0
Czechoslovakia	47.7	40.2	12.1	100.0
Nicaragua	76.3	15.0	8.7	100.0
Hungary	41.6	50.5	7.9	100.0
Ethiopia	69.2	23.6	7.2	100.0
Sri Lanka	59.4	34.3	6.3	100.0
Guatemala	80.1	16.3	3.6	100.0
Chile	76.6	20.9	2.5	100.0
El Salvador	81.7	16.0	2.3	100.0
Vietnam	90.0	8.1	1.9	100.0
Laos	93.3	5.9	0.8	100.0
Kampuchea	94.9	4.5	0.6	100.0

disposal of legal counsel and panel members, and by country profile reports prepared by specialists. Before the attempted August coup, mass media emphasized positive changes in the Soviet Union. Not much information was available on the rise of nationalism at the time. It is no surprise that many IRB members felt that while Jews suffered from discrimination, they were not persecuted in the Soviet Union and were therefore ineligible for refugee status. Thus one IRB member writes in a summary report on a case heard in May 1991:

In our opinion, the evidence presented at this hearing does not lead us to conclude that there is a reasonable possibility that the claimants would suffer persecution should they return to the U.S.S.R. There have been rumours of pogroms; no pogroms have taken place, however. There have been threats of civil war; civil war has yet to erupt, however, and should such a war by some awful chance erupt, many nationals, including Jews, would be affected. We are not persuaded, moreover, on the basis of the evidence before us, that Jews would be at any greater risk than other citizens in a civil war situation in the U.S.S.R.

Another IRB member writes about another case heard at the same time:

...the freedom of expression has given rise to numerous controversial opinions, including anti-Semitism. However, this anti-Semitism is neither government sponsored nor approved by the Soviet authorities. Considering all this, the panel is of the opinion that the harassment and discrimination that the claimants may have received in the U.S.S.R. does not amount to persecution.

The coup brought much confusion and uncertainty, and thus cases scheduled to be heard shortly thereafter were adjourned until the situation in the Soviet Union became clearer. In the fall, the perception that Jews experienced discrimination rather than persecution persisted among some panel members. One Soviet-Jewish claimant states:

[Panel members] believe that just because I had five fights in the last ten years and heard one hundred insults, it is not

Table 3
Results of Refugee Claims Adjudicated in 1991
— Listed by Country of Origin —

	Claims heard to completion	Positive decision	Negative decision	Ratio pos./neg.
Sri Lanka	4,568	4,458	154	28.9
Iraq	248	234	11	21.3
Somalia	4,059	3,672	292	12.6
Iran	2,074	1,875	188	10.0
Sudan	177	150	21	7.1
Lebanon	2,086	1,794	283	6.3
Seychelles	254	196	33	5.9
Ethiopia	557	395	71	5.6
Afghanistan	185	137	26	5.3
Zaire	262	207	40	5.2
Cuba	142	98	27	3.6
Yugoslavia	117	82	23	3.6
El Salvador	1,735	1,351	417	3.2
Guatemala	489	352	116	3.0
Kenya	124	90	32	2.8
Peru	219	144	56	2.6
U.S.S.R.	763	433	172	2.5
Pakistan	716	446	193	2.3
Syria	125	81	43	1.9
Romania	668	392	212	1.8
Chile	144	89	50	1.8
Venezuela	100	38	26	1.5
Honduras	173	100	69	1.4
Algeria	103	48	44	1.1
Argentina	263	112	103	1.1
Haiti	248	103	122	0.8
Ghana	714	233	285	0.8
Bangladesh	425	146	216	0.7
Nicaragua	221	83	131	0.6
India	308	81	142	0.6
Bulgaria	1,510	517	1,064	0.5
Nigeria	283	72	160	0.5
China	2,498	537	1,951	0.3
Poland	183	33	148	0.2
Czechoslovakia	175	11	150	0.1
Others	1,265	635	445	1.4
Total	28,181	19,425	7,516	2.6

persecution. These were just accidents. No one broke into my apartment, no one put a knife to my throat, no one made a threat to my life. Well, yes, I got phone calls. Yet I got flyers in my mail. I've also been brought to a police station because I believe I should fight back. But they don't believe it is a serious crime, especially because there is anti-Semitism in Canada as well. But in Canada there is a law that makes it possible to sue someone who insults you. In the U.S.S.R. it does not exist. When I went to complain about a person insulting me, they told me at the police station, "Wake up! Who is going to listen to you if you have 'kike' written all over your face." So to whom should I appeal for help, if militiamen talk like this?

As more and more reports about the rise of profascist, anti-Semitic organizations began appearing in Soviet and Western media, panel members started concluding that Soviet Jews could be in jeopardy if they returned home, and even though pogroms had not started in Russia yet, Jews had genuine reasons to fear for their lives. This, of course, did not guarantee a positive decision in every case, even though some panel members observed that most Soviet cases are like "twins." Yet many seemingly strong cases were still rejected. But at the same time, some cases in which persecution was not evident received positive decisions. Decisions often depend on which IRB member is hearing the case (some are more predisposed to reach negative decisions than others), on the lawyer representing the case (some lawyers seem to have consistently positive decisions made on cases they represent), on how well claimants can serve as witnesses, and on other idiosyncratic features of the hearing. In the words of one claimant evaluating the outcome, "It depends on good weather and a good night's sleep. If the judge has slept well, he would grant the status. All these are human factors. All the stories that you come up with (and some say you've got to come up with a good story), well, it is all the same to them." Another claimant recalled, "I had an impression that the judges did not believe me, that they had made their decision already and that nothing I said was going to change it."

In adjudicating refugee claims, panel members often make use of country profiles prepared by area specialists. Such a report on the U.S.S.R. was prepared in the summer of 1991 and came out a few months later. Yet the situation in the region was so unstable that this report was outdated almost as soon as it came out. The breakup of the Soviet Union in December 1991 invalidated many points made in it.

IRB members were often guided by newspaper and magazine clippings collected in the documentation centre or presented by the claimant's legal representative. Since media coverage of this region in turmoil is often contradictory, so are the decisions reached. Canada and the United States supported independence of the former Baltic republics. Thus mass media coverage of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was generally positive, making it difficult for claimants from these states to prove persecution. Gradually, as the claimants supplied documentary evidence on discrimination against ethnic minorities in these states, panel members started lending an ear to their claims. Similarly in the case of Ukraine, many IRB members were influenced in their

decisions by Kravchuk's public statements, in which he regretted the genocide of Jews during the Holocaust and said that Jews were welcome in his country. It was up to refugee claimants and their legal counsel to supply the decision-makers with documents illustrating widespread anti-Semitism at the grassroots level in Ukraine.

In making decisions on Soviet-Jewish refugee claims, panel members were consistently preoccupied by three problems—proof of being Jewish, citizenship and migration to Israel. With respect to the first one, internal Soviet passports list one's nationality, while external travel passports lack this information. In order to detect fraudulent claims of anti-Semitic persecution by non-Jews, panel members inquired about observance of Jewish religion and traditions. Yet most Soviet Jews are secular and know very little about Jewish history and its traditions. Jewish identity is maintained more by discrimination than by maintenance of a separate culture and community. Yet ignorance of Jewish high holy days among some Soviet-Jewish claimants cast doubt on the validity of their claims.

Table 4
Regional Effect on Refugee Claims from the U.S.S.R. Adjudicated
January - September 1991

Decision	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	B.C.	Total
Claims heard	77	232	105	16	12	442
Positive	62	168	28	9	1	268
Negative	12	29	41	4	9	95
Ratio pos./neg.	5.2	5.8	0.7	2.3	0.1	2.8

Table 5: Regional Effect on Total Refugee Claims Adjudicated
January-September 1991

Outcome	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	B.C.	National
Claims heard	317	7,473	11,697	403	1,214	21,104
Rejected	94	2,184	2,376	115	508	5,277
Upheld	223	5,289	9,321	288	706	15,827
Ratio pos./neg.	2.4	2.4	3.9	2.5	1.4	3.0

Citizenship, the second issue, concerns those who were born in a Soviet republic different than the one from which they escaped. Some panel members insisted that if a claimant was born in Belorussia and experienced persecution in Russia, he or she should be able to claim Belorussian citizenship. No regard was given in this case to the fact that a claimant may not speak the language of this newly formed country and that the institution of *propiska* (residence permit) is still alive throughout the former Soviet Union and prevents one from moving freely within it.

Finally, the last stumbling block has been the issue of emigration to Israel. Several Soviet-Jewish claimants were asked why they did not go to the state that would give them the most protection

The Immigration and Refugee Board's treatment of Soviet refugee claimants reflects neither positive nor negative bias.

from anti-Semitism and that is willing to accept and settle as many Jews as possible. Apart from tremendous hardships experienced by recent *alia* in Israel, what often prevented Soviet Jews from choosing this alternative was the relatively lengthy procedure of getting an exit visa when one applied for permanent resettlement. Getting a visitor's exit visa may take a few months as well, but it is faster and is therefore preferred by someone who fears for his or her life.

The Immigration and Refugee Board's treatment of Soviet refugee claimants reflects neither positive nor negative bias. In 1991 the acceptance rate for the U.S.S.R. was at the national average (see Table 3). Among thirty-four countries (each of which had at least a hundred refugee claims adjudicated in 1991) ranked by the acceptance ratio, the U.S.S.R. is right in the middle.

There are regional differences in outcomes of claims made by Soviet citizens (see Table 4). In the first nine

months of 1991 they were most successful in obtaining refugee status in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec. Ontario and British Columbia had the lowest acceptance ratio for claimants from this country. It is interesting that while differences in the acceptance rate of all refugees existed between various provinces of Canada, they were less significant during the same period (see Table 5).

By the end of 1991 the acceptance ratio dropped consistently by a few decimal points in each province. In Ontario it went down most significantly to 3.1. It continued falling in the first quarter of 1992. The national ratio of positive to negative decisions went down to 1.6 and in British Columbia to as low as 0.4. In Ontario, where the ratio was the highest in 1991, it went down to 1.7. This affected Soviet refugee claimants as well.

On June 16, 1992 Canadian Immigration Minister Bernard Valcourt introduced Bill C-86 to Parliament. The proposed Bill advocates eliminating one of two existing status determination hearings in order to speed up the process of refugee status determination; fingerprinting all refugee claimants to prevent criminals from entering the country; and granting more power to immigration officers at borders, enabling them to reject refugee claims. Valcourt also proposes the cessation of welfare assistance and legal aid to refugee claimants. Critics of the proposed bill argue that it "eliminates all constitutional guarantees of the rights of refugees."¹ The proposed bill indicates that Canada wants to curb significantly the number of refugee claimants entering the country. In the case of Soviet claimants this has already been achieved to a significant degree. Within the last year, it was extremely difficult to obtain a visitor's visa at the Canadian Consulate in Moscow. What will Soviet Jews opt for under these circumstances? Will they go to Israel despite the problems of settlement and tension related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Will they stay in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union and try to resist anti-Semitic attacks? Will they flood Europe? ■

*The Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology recently released its report on Bill C-86, An Act to Amend the Immigration Act. Several of the recommendations relating to refugee matters are as follows.**

1. Cases in which a person is not eligible to make a claim to refugee status, in the view of a senior immigration officer, should be referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board for a determination of eligibility.
2. The existence of bilateral or multilateral agreements specifying which state is responsible for examining a refugee claim and guaranteeing the admissibility of persons to be returned should be a precondition to any "safe country" return policy.
3. Compliance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in general, rather than just Article 33 thereof, should be a precondition to the designation of any country as one to which claimants could be returned. All designated countries must have actually acceded to the Convention.
4. All countries to be prescribed as countries to which refugee claimants could be returned must agree to determine the claims of individuals returned to them on their merits, and must have refugee determination systems that comply with Canadian principles of fundamental justice.
5. Claimants recognized as Convention refugees elsewhere who claim to fear persecution in that country should be eligible to enter the Canadian determination system.
6. The provisions that would allow for the rejection of a refugee claim in the event of a split decision on the claim by the Refugee Division should be reconsidered.
7. The proposed inadmissibility provisions relating to security and criminality should be narrowed in order to target more precisely the individuals and activities intended to be excluded. In particular, "terrorism" should be redefined, and either the prohibited conduct in subsection 19(1)(k) should be specified or the provision should be removed.
8. In view of the very significant changes that the bill makes to applicants' expectations, retroactivity should be applied only to cases arising after the bill comes into force.

* As extracted by Leanne MacMillan, *Legal Programs, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University.*

The Third Road: Where Is It Leading Russia?

Alexander Benifand

The former Communists and the new Nationalists who, until recently, despised each other, seem to be merging and creating a united, Nationalist-Communist bloc. Recent events point out that this new ideology is supported by well-developed political structures, a socio-economic foundation and even hit squads. Nationalist-Communists, who form an uncompromising and aggressive opposition to the government and the president, perceive themselves as a large and solid organization that has taken the so-called "third road." Their program for the reformation of Russia is approved by the Russian National Congress. This type of opposition became possible in a xenophobic and extremely frustrated society. According to Ilyushenko, "An inferiority complex

the country, 9 percent believe in the Zionist conspiracy, and 10 percent do not want Jews to be their neighbours.² What would be the government's reaction if these attitudes lead to action?

According to Yuri Levada, a Russian sociologist, democratic governments

have demonstrated their weakness in controlling these forces.³ Zhbankov, an employee of the Ministry of Justice, observes, "There is no law prohibiting the spread of fascist propaganda. If a fascist party comes to register we will do it."⁴ Consequently, the number of

Nationalist-Communists, who form an uncompromising and aggressive opposition to the government and the president, perceive themselves as a large and solid organization that has taken the so-called "third road."

related to the collapse of the Empire, ethnic conflicts and mass impoverishment create a fertile soil for Nazi propaganda. Fascism poses itself as patriotism."¹

Jews and populations in Caucasus and Central Asia top the list of the most hated people. The Moscow Public Opinion Research Centre found that 10 percent of the population are strongly against Jews, 11 percent believe that they have too much influence on politics in

Alexander Benifand is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Refugee Studies.



chauvinist organizations is rapidly increasing and their activities are becoming more blatant and uninhibited. In an attempt to project an image of political democracy, the authorities leave their hostile actions unpunished.

Nationalist forces are consolidating and becoming well organized and coordinated. On June 12-13 there was a meeting of the Russian National Congress, a large-scale nationalist umbrella organization for all nationalist parties and groups that believe in sovereignty based on ethnic Russian principles. The Congress proclaimed the priority of Slavic over universal principles, and those of the Empire over those of the individual. They demanded the president's resignation. During the meeting of the Congress, Jews were often blamed for all evils. The Congress united 1,250 delegates from 117 cities and sixty-nine organizations from all the republics of the former Soviet Union.⁵

At the same time, factionalism is developing in the democratic camp. Some democrats are even joining the Nationalists allied with the Communists. On June 12, the first anniversary of Russian sovereignty, there was a meeting of Communist and fascist forces at the Ostankino television building. They demonstrated aggressively their opposition to the democratic forces. Tens of thousands of people demanded the president's resignation. Along with this demand, they also requested that Jews be purged from science, literature and arts and that they leave the country. The meeting was guarded by the Black Shirts from the Russian Youth Union. The meeting's objectives were to scandalize the government, to issue a warning, to frighten society and to test the grounds.

After the demonstration in Ostankino, some democratic members of the Russian Parliament requested that they discuss the fascist threat to democracy. This motion was voted down. At the same session, right-wing members stated that if the agreement made by Yeltsin with Bush in Washington is ratified, they will begin an armed struggle with this "antipopular" government that would make the

demonstration in Ostankino look like child's play in comparison.⁶

There seems to be significant public support for demands made by the Nationalist-Communist bloc. A poll conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre with 1,082 people in thirteen Russian cities points out that 14 percent of those interviewed said that the demonstrators in Ostankino represented their interests.⁷ All these events raise fears among Russian Jews. Two weeks after the events in Ostankino, the number of Jews requesting visas to go to Israel went up by 10 percent and is continuing to increase.⁸

So far there has been no official reaction to the events in Ostankino, the growth of the number of public acts by neo-fascist organizations and the publication of anti-Semitic articles. This lack of official reaction encourages these activities. ■

Notes

1. V. Ilyushenko, "Perezhiyyot li Rossia krushenie imperii?" ("Will Russia Survive the Collapse of the Empire?"), *Literaturnaya Gazeta* 8 (February 19, 1992):11.
2. Yu Levada, "Vechno chuzhie" ("Forever Strangers"), *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (August 1-2, 1992):7.
3. Ibid.
4. D. Zgersky, "Pechat' chernoi sotni" ("Black Hundred Press"), *Novoe Vremya* 3 (1992):34.
5. V. Nadein, "Zharkoe Leto v Ostankino" ("Hot Summer in Ostankino"), *Moskovskie Novosti* 25 (June 21, 1992):5; O. Bichkova, "Chernorubashichniki zovut na barrikadi" ("Black Shirts Are Calling to Join the Barricades"), *op. cit.*, 7.
6. M. Khazanova, "Oni uzhe ne klouni" ("They Are Not Clowns Any More"), *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (July 31, 1992):11.
7. "Expressopros" ("Express Opinion Poll"), *Moskovskie Novosti* 26 (June 28, 1992):2.
8. A. Yefimova, "Zemlya obetovannaya: Vid s Bolshoi Ordinki" ("Promised Land: A View from Bolshoi Ordinki"), *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (August 1, 1992):7.

CRS ANNUAL DINNER AND MEETING

FEBRUARY 4, 1993

Yes, it's that time of year again! The Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS) cordially invites you and your friends to join us at our Annual Chinese Dinner and Meeting. The dinner is being held on February 4, 1993 at the Jade Garden Restaurant, 222 Spadina Avenue, Toronto.

Vincent Kelly Award

We are pleased to announce that we have invited the Honourable Kim Campbell, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to present the Vincent Kelly Award.

This year's award will be presented to Barbara Jackman and Pierre Duquette, two lawyers who have performed outstanding work on behalf of refugees. The dinner will focus on the legal profession and its contribution in the area of refugee studies.

CRS Endowment Fund

Our Annual dinner is an opportunity for the Centre to bring together those interested and involved in refugee studies. This year the dinner will assist in funding two graduate legal students with their research through the CRS Endowment Fund.

We look forward to you joining us or your financial support through a donation, which will then enable people from the refugee community to attend our dinner on your behalf.

Please copy the registration form on page 23 (of this issue) and send it to us at your earliest convenience. The CRS greatly appreciates your interest and support of our endeavours.

Join Us!

Jews and Cossacks in the Jewish Autonomous Region

Felix Ryansky

At a recent congress, Cossacks of Eastern Siberia and Far East of Russia demanded the abolition of the Jewish Autonomous Region (JAR). Most zealous Zionists supported this demand, since their primary goal is to bring world Jewry to Israel. However, the majority of the 200,000 Jews and non-Jews of the JAR, including approximately one hundred so-called "Amur Cossacks," rejected this idea. The history of colonization of this tiny part of Russia, located on the left bank of the Amur river, was very dramatic. There were hardships throughout its history that continue today. At a time when the JAR is trying to rebuild its economy and construct new political and social relations and culture, some people raise their voices demanding its abolition.

The history of this region's settlement and development over the last 150 years can be divided into two acts. The first involves the Cossacks' settlement of the region. Most of them were killed or fled the region after the Revolution. The second act involves the creation of the Jewish Autonomous Region. The history of Jewish settlement is not devoid of violence either. There has also been a process of out-migration, but this process has been considerably less bloody and more gradual.

There are some Cossacks living outside the JAR who now demand that the Jewish Autonomous Region territory be returned to them. They argue that their ancestors arrived first and that Jews came to already-colonized territories. In fact, as will be seen later, both communities have contributed their hard labour to colonization and development of the region. Cossacks settled a narrow strip along the Amur

river. Jews were sent later to those parts that remained undeveloped.

Act One: The Cossacks

Cossacks constituted an important part of the Czar's military forces. They paid for their freedom from serfdom and taxes with a lifetime service to the Czar, so when the Czar sent them to settle the middle Amur valley, they could not disobey. They first arrived there in 1854, and between 1857 and 1860 they founded a number of still existing settlements

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along its left bank. A chain of small villages—*stanitsas*—formed the Russian frontier.

The beginning of the twentieth century brought some economic prosperity and military glory to the Amur Cossacks. They were granted land titles enabling them to farm. In addition, they were responsible for policing the trans-Siberian railway and newly discovered gold mines. As the Czar's military force, they had to defend the borders. During the war of 1904-05, they defeated the Japanese "Black Dragon." Even though Russia lost the war, the Cossacks won all battles with the Japanese along the border.

Due to a relatively high birth rate (each family had an average of five or six

children), the population of Amur Cossacks in this region was approximately 15,000 by 1910. At that time the population of non-Cossacks in this region was only 2,000 to 3,000. The Cossacks settled a narrow strip 30-40 km wide along the Amur river. The region surrounding the trans-Siberian railway never belonged to them but was owned directly by the state.

The Amur Cossacks violently opposed the Bolsheviks' rule and their policies of land redistribution and collectivization. Their opposition to the Communist rule grew into a mass uprising in the spring of 1918. It is hard to estimate the number of those who perished in the bloody civil war and those who were still alive in 1921 when the Red Army occupied the Far East. According to some estimates, by 1923 there were no more than 600 Cossacks left in this region. They were those who either did not participate in the struggle against the Red Army or those who concealed their participation. Cossack *stanitsi* were virtually depopulated and gradually settled by migrants from the European part of the country, mainly Russians and Ukrainians. Koreans also came to live there. Thus the Cossack community as a territorial, linguistic, material and cultural unit with self-identity was destroyed.

Act Two: Jews

In 1924 there were 2.2 million Jews in the Soviet Union. They were among the most deprived ethnic groups in the country. Their living standards were low and possibilities for mobility extremely limited. They were dispersed throughout the country where they faced anti-Semitism on a daily basis. The Communist regime, which assumed the role of a protective "older brother" to all smaller nations, had to extend its "tender care" to these unfortunate people as well. For this purpose, the Executive of the Soviet of Nationalities formed the

Felix Ryansky is a geographer, geologist and Director of the Institute of Complex Analysis of Regional Problems, Far East Campus of the Russian Academy of Science, Birobidjan, Russia.

Committee on Land Distribution to Working Jews (KOMZET). The committee's mandate was to find a territory for Jewish settlement and help Jews migrate and settle there.

The population of the Far East was always low, but it experienced a dramatic decline during the years following the civil war. Considering the region's geopolitical significance, it is no wonder that the Soviet state took serious measures to settle it. It seemed that Jews who had no territory of their own in Russia would be happy to make the Far East their new home.

We do not agree with the popular image of the "expulsion" of Jews to the Far East. The Jewish case is very different from that of Volga Germans or Crimean Tartars. The latter two groups were moved forcefully to a new territory. Jews, on the other hand, had a choice and in fact most of them preferred to stay in their places of origin. They were exposed to ardent propaganda, but there was no coercion. Some high-ranking government officials tried to lure them to the Far East by painting a rosy picture of their future. In 1926 Kalinen, the president of the U.S.S.R., stated publicly that the government was interested in founding a Jewish republic [*sic*] in the Birsko-Bidjan region. (Until now its administrative status has never been more than that of a region.)

The idea of creating a Jewish region was rejected by Zionists and assimilationists among Soviet Jewry. For different reasons, both tried to prevent it, but some Russian Jews saw in it a possibility of acquiring a "promised land." These enthusiasts saw a parallel between their movement to the Amur River and their remote ancestors' exodus from Egypt. For them it was also a viable alternative to the settlement of Palestine, which was violently opposed by Arabs and mistrusted by the Turkish and later by the British authorities. In the colonization of the Far East they saw an opportunity of getting a vast territory for which they did not have to shed their blood. It seemed to them that perseverance and hard work would guarantee a reward. Generous financial support came from Ikor, an American

Jewish organization, which eased the pains of early settlement.

In 1930 Birsko-Bidjan was officially declared the Jewish National (not yet autonomous) Region. A group of 650 Jews arrived soon after. They cleared the marshes in the lowlands surrounding the trans-Siberian railway. It was expected that meridians of Jewish villages crossing the taiga and the marshes would connect the trans-Siberian railway with the Amur River. Tikhinkaya Station was the centre of the Jewish settlement. Later it became the capital city, Birobidjan.

The newcomers faced extremely harsh living conditions that many were not prepared to accept, and the return migration was significant. Nevertheless, in 1937 the Jewish population reached

efforts to please Moscow that they exceeded the required quota for agrarian population. Even among Jews residing in Birobidjan—which was the administrative, cultural and industrial centre of the JAR—60 percent of the population was agricultural.

By the end of World War II and the years that followed it, the country's economic priorities were oriented towards restoring the industries destroyed in the war and encouraging their growth in new regions of the country. In this context, the idea of "agriculturating" the Jews came to an end, and they started moving into more familiar urban occupations. Birobidjan became the nucleus that attracted them.

Strictly speaking, anti-Semitism is not evident in the JAR. The region's multicultural nature, its high degree of intermarriage and representation of Jews at all levels of the socio-economic ladder, have all prevented the growth of anti-Semitism. Yet the rise of nationalism and anti-Semitism in other parts of Russia alerts Jews residing in the JAR as well.

17,000, or 25 percent of the region's entire population.

The idea of a Jewish sovereign region, despite its limited autonomy and distance from the historic homeland, attracted numerous Jews from abroad. Among them were 116 Argentinian, 101 Lithuanian, 88 French, 83 Latvian, 65 German, 61 Belgian, 43 American and 30 Polish Jews. The most interesting fact is that among them were 74 people from Palestine.

However, by the beginning of World War II, the migration of Jews to the region virtually came to an end as did their dream of Jewish autonomy. Jews of the region were forced to become agricultural producers in collective farms. Local authorities received orders from Moscow to direct no less than 50 percent of the migrants to rural areas. Regardless of migrants' previous occupations—whether they were teachers, shoemakers or hairdressers—they were ordered to become collective farmers. Local authorities were so zealous in their

During the period of Gorbachev's reforms, the JAR's Jewish community underwent an amazing metamorphosis. First, it became clear that the community numbered many more than the 8,900 officially-registered Jews. In Birobidjan alone, 20,000 people claimed to be Jews. In addition, there were other settlements in the area densely populated by Jews. Second, a number of Jewish organizations emerged, including some for youth, women, culture and others. Third, Jews residing in the JAR got a chance to learn Yiddish. Yiddish was even taught in kindergartens and spoken on TV. There was an attempt to rebuild a synagogue that was destroyed in a fire thirty years earlier. The revival of Jewish culture was accompanied by democratization and reintroduction of private property. These processes gave hope for individual and ethnic self-expression. Living standards were rising and communication with relatives abroad improved significantly. During these years very few Jews were interested in

emigration. Even though it became easier to emigrate to Israel between 1986 and 1988, only twenty to thirty families did so.

The gradual decline of *perestroika's* potential for reform and its obvious failure by 1988 created much confusion. People became disappointed, impoverished and uncertain of the future. They feared the resurrection of the old regime. Ethnic conflicts tormented Russia, and ethnic groups with ties or roots abroad tried to leave. Attempts by "Pamyat" to stimulate a wave of anti-Semitic hysteria with all its consequences fuelled the departure of Jews. Strictly speaking, anti-Semitism is not evident in the JAR. The region's multicultural nature, its high degree of intermarriage and representation of Jews at all levels of the socio-economic ladder, have all prevented the growth of anti-Semitism. Yet the rise of nationalism and anti-Semitism in other parts of Russia alerts Jews residing in the JAR as well.

During 1989-91 about 2,000 Jews left the JAR. The Jewish Cultural Society in Birobidjan predicted that 2,000 to 3,000 more people would leave in 1992-93. However, the actual emigration rate turned out to be lower than expected for several reasons. First, Israel faced tremendous difficulties in settling Jews from the former U.S.S.R. Second, despite the economic crisis in Russia and the political destabilization, there are growing opportunities for economic advancement through private entrepreneurship. And finally, the revival of Jewish culture in Birobidjan, which is supported even by its Russian population, looks promising.

Undoubtedly, if the situation in Russia takes a turn for the worse, JAR will become less Jewish, but it is impossible for all Jews to leave. Despite the JAR's economic weakness and slow formation of its national status, the local diaspora has consolidated and has formed its territorial identity. At the present time, after the latest wave of emigration, its leaders are taking measures to unite the community. Many are quite optimistic about its future, but there are also some developments that alarm the Jewish community. These have

to do with the revival of Cossackdom, some factions of which are interested in gaining control over the territory of the JAR.

Relations Between Cossacks and Jews

The first Jewish settlers came to live among the Cossacks of the Far East in 1928. Cossacks hoped they would help them rebuild the area devastated by the civil war. They believed that if Jews settled there, there would be no more repression, no more fighting, and that the government would send them aid to repair roads and plant their fields. Recognizing the relatively high level of education among the Jews, their hosts offered them jobs as teachers.

It is not our objective to paint an idyllic picture of harmonious relations between the Cossacks and Jews, but it is important to emphasize that the Cossacks of the time, despite their low levels of education and harsh living conditions of the time, were not hostile towards Jews. They blamed the new Communist regime for their misfortunes, while holding no grudge against those whom they perceived as weaker.

Recent years have witnessed the revival of Cossackdom throughout the former Soviet Union, including the JAR where the Cossack community comprises one hundred people. They aim to recreate the culture and traditions of their ancestors. In most cases, it is impossible to prove their genealogical ties to the early Cossack communities. While they are trying to revive some noble aspects of Cossackdom, their ideas and activities cause alarm among many people as well. Among the Amur Cossacks, there is a faction that claims the JAR lands belong to them. Some of them are ready to take up arms if a Jewish republic replaces the Jewish Autonomous Region. These tendencies may destabilize the region, blocking its further economic and political development. If Cossacks grow into a stronger force, many Jews who are presently optimistic about their future in the region will start packing. ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue on Refugee Crisis in Africa

Most countries in Africa continue to experience severe refugee crisis in the last two decades, due to political tyranny, mismanagement and adverse environmental changes. The Centre for Refugee Studies will publish a special issue of *Refuge* on this crisis, and papers are now being invited on the following issues and other related areas for consideration:

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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.

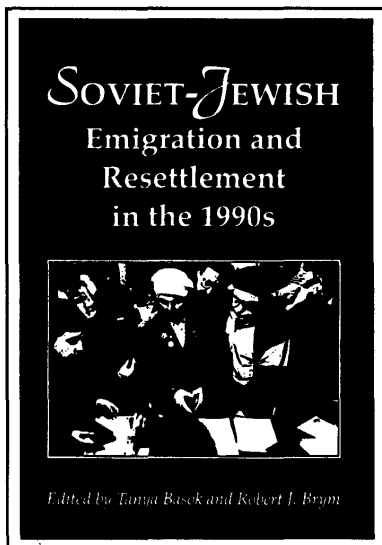
As for the so-called "revival of Jewish culture" in Ukraine, it is true that we are trying to take advantage of the situation that allows us, at least for the moment, to restore our national pride, to teach our children, to renew activities of religious communities, to restore traditions, holy days and 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.

Contributors: Sidney Heitman, Mikhail Tillman, Robert J. Brym, Alexander Benifand, Roberta Cohen, Sabina Pohoryles-Drexel, Ronald Pohoryles, Gregg A. Beyer and Tanya Basok.

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ANNUAL DINNER AND MEETING**

Jade Garden Restaurant

222 Spadina Avenue, Toronto

February 4, 1993

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NOVEMBER 25-27, 1993

Papers are invited on the following themes:

- the social construction of aboriginality, ethnicity, "race" and gender
- contemporary dimensions of racism
- antiracist strategies
- racial discrimination in the workplace and the community
- multiculturalism and racism
- state policies and practices
- community responses and strategies

Papers can be from contemporary, historical, comparative or single country perspectives.

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

Jock Collins, Associate Professor
School of Finance and Economics
University of Technology
Sydney, NSW 2007
Australia

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.