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Soviet Immigrant Jewry in the Chicago Area (1960-1980): Enculturation and Education

Sharon Rae Bender
Loyola University Chicago

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SOVIET IMMIGRANT JEWRY IN THE CHICAGO AREA (1960-1980): ENCULTURATION AND EDUCATION

by
Sharon Rae Bender

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
January
1992
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: TZARIST RUSSIAN AND SOVIET PERIODS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzarist Period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khrushchev</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brezhnev/Kosygin to Gorbachev</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ENCULTURATION AND INFORMAL EDUCATION: ROLE OF AGENCIES</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ENCULTURATION AND FORMAL EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF SCHOOLING</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SELECTED CASE STUDIES</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with &quot;Carla Weiss&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with &quot;Dee and Ian Nathan&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with &quot;Mia and Ziv Stine&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with &quot;Ann and Uri Fine&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with &quot;Sonja and Jacob Leff&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study is to examine the historical development of Soviet Jews who immigrated to the Chicagoland area during the years 1960-1980, in terms of their immigration, enculturation and education in their adopted country. It enumerates the obstacles Soviet Jewish immigrants have encountered and serves to examine the process through which they have become acclimated and enculturated into American mainstream society through both informal and formal education.

Included in Chapter II is an historical commentary which traces the deeply-rooted anti-Semitic treatment of the Jewish minority from its inception during the Tzarist Period through its refinement by Communist regimes within the Soviet Union. This chapter addresses major restrictive governmental policies directed toward the Jewish population in both Tzarist Russia and the Soviet Union and establishes that this minority was physically, educationally, politically and economically severed from mainstream society by tyrannical authoritarian design.

Chapter III probed the difficulties encountered by Soviet Jewish immigrants who have resettled in Chicago, Illinois, and the challenges they confronted during their quest to become enculturated and informally educated. Interviews with the administrators of three selected Jewish agencies, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Jewish Family and
Community Service (JFCS), and Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe (F.R.E.E.), were conducted in which the role of each agency and its utility to the newly arrived Soviet Jewish immigrant is explored. Each agency assumes an integral, but different function in the enculturation process.

HIAS assists Soviet Jews in the pre-migration phase to gain entry into the United States. Once this has been achieved, HIAS aids the immigrant with the paperwork and documents required by the United States State Department and the Department of Immigration and Naturalization to assure permanent residency.

Jewish Family and Community Service works with the Soviet Jew during resettlement. It is this agency which initially enculturates the immigrant into the practices of his adopted land. Counselors encourage the immigrant to enroll in English language classes, offer suggestions in locating an apartment, and most importantly, provide monies to him and his family for payment of rent, food, utilities, and personal care until the immigrant secures employment and becomes self-sufficient. To this end, JFCS refers the immigrant to Jewish Vocational Service, which assists in locating employment commensurate with the immigrant's experience, training and education.

Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe, which is administered by Orthodox rabbis, serves a two-fold purpose. Unlike HIAS and JFCS, this agency strives to rekindle and/or introduce the immigrant to the Jewish religious customs and practices which were forbidden in the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, it also attempts to enculturate and educate the emigre into the nuances of the American community.
Chapter IV investigates the Chicago public schools and Truman College in terms of the formal education curriculum these institutions provided to the Soviet immigrant population during the years 1960-1980. Prior to a 1980 government bilingual education mandate the Chicago public schools offered English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction on a limited basis to those students who were tested and categorized as limited-English-proficient. Specific information regarding students whose native language is Russian was not available, as prior to 1980, the school system was not required by law to maintain this statistical data. It was ascertained through interviews with two Soviet Jewish immigrants that ESL instruction was provided for native Russian speakers at three public schools located on the northside of the city, however they were unable to provide detailed information.

Truman College provided extensive data concerning its academic/vocational program specific to the needs of Soviet Jewish immigrants. The former director of Truman’s Soviet Jewish Program, Rabbi Louis Lazovsky, during an interview, detailed information regarding a federally funded Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (C.E.T.A.) program specifically designed to retrain and secure employment for Soviet Jewish immigrants. The college’s Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center provides support services to all Soviet emigres who enroll, regardless of the educational program they select. It is mandatory, however, that all immigrants register in ESL classes. There is no doubt that Truman College provides the formal education necessary to facilitate the emigre’s quest for enculturation into mainstream American society.
Chapter V contains personal interviews with the members of five Soviet Jewish immigrant families and chronicles their struggles to become self-sufficient citizens of their adopted country. A common thread that runs throughout these interviews is that one of the motivating factors in the decision to leave Russia was the perception by various members of these families of deep-rooted and pervasive anti-Semitism. Coupled with the knowledge that Jews are limited in their opportunities of social and economic advancement in the Soviet Union was the desire for a better life for the members of the younger generation of these families. Although the adjustment was not without struggle and sacrifice on their part, the unanimous conclusion among the interviewees was the knowledge that they had made the right choice in adopting the United States as their new homeland.

Incorporated within the body of this text are the definitions of the operative words and phrases which are the focus of this study. In each instance where the use of a foreign language word or sentence was appropriate, transliteration was employed for the purpose of clarity.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: TZARIST
RUSSIAN AND SOVIET PERIODS

Tzarist Period

The history of the Jewish people in what is today the Soviet Union spans more than twenty centuries. In 586 B.C., following the Babylonians' destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Jews were expelled from Palestine. This exile, historically referred to as the Judeo-Hellenic Diaspora, caused a small group of Jews to establish a colony along the Black Sea in what was then Scythia. Prior to the founding of Christianity, Jews resided in the Caucasus and Kiev. They witnessed the establishment of Catholic Poland, to which they fled in 1240, in the wake of Tartar persecution. Those who remained were subjected to discrimination and oppression, as exemplified in Tzar Ivan the Terrible's 1547, edict to "baptize the Jews who consent to baptism and drown the rest."¹

The annexation of Poland in 1793, caused approximately one million Jews to fall subject to Tzarist rule. This autocracy immediately ordered Jews to reside solely in a restricted "Pale of Settlement" located in the Ukraine. By 1835, the Pale of Settlement

incorporated fifteen provinces, inclusive of Bialystock, Minsk and Kiev, however, not the city of Kiev. In 1843, all Jews living along the borders between Prussia and Austria were ordered to move inland. Twenty years later Courland, Latvia and the remainder of the Polish Kingdom were added to the Pale of Settlement. These boundaries remained in effect until 1917.2

Jews in the Pale of Settlement were severely restricted by draconian Tzarist ukases, which sought a solution to what was referred to as the "Jewish problem." Official propaganda emanating from both the anti-Semitic Tzarist government and Russian Orthodox pulpit depicted Jews as Christ-killers, parasites, crafty, greedy and without scruples. In an effort to convert young Jewish boys to Russian Orthodoxy, they were conscripted into the army for twenty-five year terms, thus separating them from their families and Jewish heritage. It was the Jewish community leaders whose woeful task it was to fill the army quota, mostly from the ranks of the poorest families who could not pay taxes.

Many Christians were taught that the Jews, at Easter, took the bread of Christ's body and ate it after dipping in blood. Another popular belief was that at Passover, Jews would murder a Christian child and drink his blood. In fact, Jewish religious law strictly prohibits the consumption of the blood of both humans and animals.

Jews were forbidden to hold religious services in the Moscow

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synagogue, which was shuttered, and in 1892, ordered sold at auction unless the Jews converted it to a charitable institution. Although they complied with this ukase, the Tzar issued five additional orders designed to desecrate the sanctuary. After an eight year struggle, the synagogue was saved.3

Economically at the mercy of the Tzar's ukases, Jewish artisans were expelled from Moscow in 1891; however, those Jewish merchants who paid the annual first guild tax fee of one thousand rubles were permitted to remain. Jewish merchants who arrived in Moscow on temporary business were summarily arrested and immediately expelled. These "rightless" Jews, if captured, brought a reward equal to that of two burglars. By 1899, Jewish merchants of the first guild were forbidden to live in Moscow unless the Minister of Finance and governor-general granted them permission. Jewish merchants already settled in Moscow were deprived of their vote in commercial associations. These restrictions were imposed in an attempt to exorcise the Jews from the Russian capital.4

Moscow was not alone in the administration of economic anti-Semitic regulations. St. Petersburg, Kiev, Yalta and Siberia, among other provinces, contributed to the Judaeophobia. Jews were forbidden to hold civil service positions; Jewish lawyers were restricted from admittance to the bar; and Jewish doctors were limited to private practices.


4 Dubnow, 14.
The principal occupation of Jewish villagers living near St. Petersburg was the manufacture of alcohol. The Minister of Finance convinced Tzar Alexander II in 1882, to introduce a state liquor monopoly, thus rendering the Jews economically destitute. These laws, known as the "The May Laws" or "Temporary Rules," included the suspension of the "completion of instruments of purchase of real property and merchandise in the name of the Jews" outside of towns and villages. Jews were also forbidden to transact business on Sundays and Christian holidays, therefore, suffering even greater economic hardships.

There were, however, a few Jews who, despite the political and economic sanctions imposed against their brethren, were able to enter the mainstream of the Russian economy. Among these were Israel Brodskii and his sons, who by 1889, owned one-third of the Ukraine's sugar refineries, and Joseph Gunzburg, who was a pioneer railroad builder. Jews were also prominent in banking, water transportation and the oil industry. However, an overwhelming number of the Jews barely sustained themselves and their families; between 30 to 35 percent depended upon Jewish charity for survival.

During the reigns of Tzars Alexander III (1881-1894) and his son Nicholas II (1894-1917), both avowed anti-Semites, additional prohibitive ukases were issued against the Jewish population, among which was the establishment of educational quotas. Jewish students were

5See ibid., 9; Eckman, 8.

6Eckman, 9.

7Gitelman, 21-23.
accused of joining revolutionary causes and, therefore, only 10 percent were allowed to attend secondary schools and universities within the Pale, 5 percent outside the Pale, and 3 percent in St. Petersburg and Moscow. These percentages were later reduced to seven, three and two respectively. 8

In 1901, Jewish children who had successfully completed six years of the gymnasium were forbidden to advance unless there was a "Jewish vacancy" within the established quota—a rare phenomenon. Restrictions also applied to commercial schools. The result of this discrimination was an exodus of young Jewish men and women to foreign universities and higher professional schools where they were not denied admission. Many of those who returned to Russia brought with them ideas of revolution to which they were introduced in Europe.

In March 1911, Jewish students (externs) who were unable to attend "official" schools, and who sought the examination for the "certificate of maturity" based upon their outside studies, were restricted by yet another ukase. They were permitted to stand for the examination only in proportion to the number of Christian externs. In fact, there were no Christian externs. 9 Discrimination did not draw its borderlines at educational, political and economic restriction and prohibitions. There were those who would not rest until the Jewish people were either annihilated or expelled from the nation. With official Tzarist sanctions, the Russian press embarked upon a vicious, relentless anti-Semitic campaign designed to incite the general

8See Dubnow, 29; Eckman, 9.

9Dubnow, 29-31.
population to slaughter and maim the defenseless Jews and demolish their property. Jews became the scapegoats for all of Russia's woes. If the Jews were viewed as the enemy of all the Russian people, then the latter would blame these "aliens", rather than the Tzar, for all their miseries.

Pogroms, beastly organized massacres, were initiated in 1897, with the prior knowledge and consent of local officials, and within a two-month period Jews in Shpola and Kantakuzenka fell victims to rioting peasants. Embarrassed, the government was forced to prosecute the rioters, one of whom commented upon his arrest, "They told us we had permission to beat the Jews, and now it appears that it is all a lie."10

Pogroms, led with the Tzar's blessing by the unmerciful, vile Black Hundred, were responsible for the maiming and mass murders of hundreds of thousands of Jewish men, women and children; the destruction in millions of dollars of Jewish property; and the desecration of synagogues and religious materials. The result of this decimation was the mass emigration of one-third of the six million Jews between 1881 and 1914.11 Thus, a portion of the ominous prediction forecast by the fiercely anti-Semitic Pobyedonostev, chief procurator of the Holy Synod, became a reality, "One-third will die out, one-third will leave the country, and one-third will be completely dissolved in the surrounding population."12

Of those who remained, many entered the developing light

10 Ibid., 34.
11 Shaffer, 8.
12 Dubnow, 10.
industries of textile and garment manufacture. Despite twenty hour work days, subservient wages and unsanitary conditions, approximately 50,000 Jewish men, women and children labored in the factories of such cities as Odessa, Warsaw and Bialystock by the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{13}

It is both ironic and antithetical that although they suffered the tyranny and oppression of brutally anti-Semitic ukases in almost all facets of their daily lives, Jews within the Pale of Settlement were allowed to embrace their religious, cultural and linguistic traditions.\textsuperscript{14}

Jews in the Pale of Settlement were permitted to observe the Sabbath, light the Sabbath candles, pray in the synagogues three times per day and openly celebrate all their religious holidays, inclusive of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth and Passover. For the latter holiday, they were allowed to bake matzoh and other foods required by Jewish law, as well as read the Haggadah (the story of Passover) at their seders (festive meals).

Circumcisions (milah) were performed by a mohel, a religious male surgeon trained in the removal of the foreskin, on the eighth day after a male child’s birth. The milah was necessary for a male to enter the world of the Jew; uncircumcised Jews could not fulfill their covenant with God, and therefore, were not truly Jewish. This rite is of utmost importance and separates the Jew from the Gentile.

At thirteen years of age the Jewish boy becomes a man who is

\textsuperscript{13}Gitelman, 21.

responsible not only for himself, but for other members of his community. This rite of passage, the bar mitzvah, was performed openly and without interference in synagogues, as were Jewish wedding ceremonies and Jewish divorces.

Religious education was permitted: young men were trained for the rabbinate in Hebrew at the yeshivahs (theological seminaries), while children attended Jewish elementary religious schools (heders). The latter served, in particular, the children of the poor, to whom general schools were inaccessible. Shohetim, trained ritual animal slaughterers, who according to Jewish law must perform this duty in a prescribed manner using a halaf (special knife) and examine the animals to determine their fitness for human consumption, were also permitted to practice their profession. Jews are forbidden to consume animals and fowl which are not slaughtered in this manner, and are, therefore, not kosher, or pure. The shohetim were considered members of the clergy and highly respected.

The production of religious articles for the proper observance of Jewish rituals and scholarship was acceptable. These included prayer books, prayer shawls, phylacteries, Torah scrolls (which are written by hand), Talmuds, mezuzahs, Jewish calendars and skull caps.15

Yiddish, the vernacular, flourished in all cultural areas: the theater, poetry, short stories, essays and song. Yiddish newspapers were published daily and the once dormant ideal of Jewish nationalism was rekindled within their pages. Hebrew, the language of prayer, was

15Rothenberg, 69, 101, 141, 176.
fostered by those who embraced Zionism, the return to the Land of Abraham.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, a Jewish Enlightenment movement entered the confines of the Pale. With its roots in Germany, this movement, Haskalah, sought to assimilate the Jews to Russian social, economic and cultural mores, as well as to the language, while some converted to Russian Orthodoxy. Religious Jews who were adherents of Haskalah attempted to balance their ancient religious beliefs with secular knowledge. They endeavored to find solutions to the problems that confronted them and were largely responsible for both the nationalist and socialist movements.\textsuperscript{16}

There were, however, other Jewish factions which promoted nationalism and autonomy, but espoused varying methods for the achievement of this goal. One movement, Hoveve Zinon (Lovers of Zion), was established in the 1860's. In 1884, led by Leo Pinsker, they advocated the revitalization of Jewish national life through the colonization of Palestine. However, the first Russian Jews to actually return to Palestine were members of the Beth Ya'cob Lechu ve-Nelcha (Bilu) movement. These young students fled Russia after the pogroms of 1881, to establish agricultural colonies "built on cooperative-social foundations."\textsuperscript{17} They encouraged immigration and subsequently established Rishon le-Zion.

Yet another national movement, perhaps the most widely know, was political Herzlian Zionism, founded by Dr. Theodor Herzl in the wake of

\textsuperscript{16}See Eckman, 20; Gitelman, 23.

\textsuperscript{17}Eckman, 10.
growing anti-Semitism caused by the Dreyfus case. Herzl roused and awakened the Jews and offered them an alternative to assimilation. He advocated a return to Hebrew as the national language of the Jewish people. Herzl's plan was to petition the Turkish government to provide the Jews with a charter granting them permission to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. The formation of a society to foster Jewish immigration to Palestine was also necessary. Speaking on the issue, Herzl declared, "Zionism aims at the establishment of a publicly and legally assured home for those Jews who, in their present places of residence, are not able, or not willing, to assimilate themselves."

In 1889, Jewish philosopher Ahad Ha'am founded Bne Moshe (Sons of Moses), a semi-Masonic group based in Odessa. He formulated the idea of Spiritual Zionism, which believed that Herzlian Zionism could never be realized, as the Jewish people were too numerous to successfully transfer to Palestine. Ahad Ha'am proposed the establishment of a small spiritual center in Palestine which would include a Jewish national school, foster the cultural and religious development of Judaism without foreign intervention, and revive Hebrew as the mother tongue of daily speech. While this movement did have supporters, numerous Jews feared it would destroy the political aspirations of Herzlian Zionism and in 1897, Bne Moshe was disbanded.

Simultaneously, another type of Jewish nationalism, autonomism, developed based upon the research of Russian Jewish historian Simon Dubnow. Dubnow contended that Jews were unified by their suffering and

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18 Dubnow, 48.
19 Ibid., 48-51.
that despite the attempts of hostile governments to assimilate and repress them, their common bond and spiritual powers kept them together. The more severe the penalty they paid for being Jews, the more united they became. Dubnow believed that, while he was not totally opposed to it, the existence of the Jewish people was not contingent upon a national territory or Jewish state, as these were not necessary conditions for survival of the Jewish people. Had not their history proved this to be true?

... at all times, with the exception of a few brief and partial deflections, the Jewish Diaspora, ... represented the national organism, in which the absence of territorial unity was made up by the stronger cohesion of its spiritual and cultural ties and the greater intensity of its social and autonomous life. For many centuries the entire culture of Judaism assumed a religious coloring and its communal autonomy was centered in the synagogue--which circumstances gave the modern champions of assimilation reason for thinking the Jews were only a religious group scattered among various nations.20

Dubnow called upon the Russian Jews to fight for their civil equality and national rights, which he declared were the autonomy of the Jewish community, schools and language. He wanted the Jews to sever the shackles of Russian oppression.

Dubnow's outcry was heard by the Jewish Social-Democratic Party, also known as the General League of Jewish Workingmen in Russian and Poland (Bund), which was organized by Jewish workers in 1897, in such heavily populated Jewish areas as Warsaw, Bialystock and Lodz. In the beginning, the Bund was comprised of scattered labor societies merely seeking economic benefits--shorter working hours and increased wages. The young Jewish intelligentsia embraced the idea of Marxian Socialism

20Ibid., 53.
and applied it to their struggle for equality. Once they became a cohesive force, however, organizing demonstrations and strikes, they gave impetus to the formation, one year later, of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, which the Bund subsequently joined as an autonomous group "independent only in matters which specifically concern the Jewish proletariat." A number of Bundists, however, retained leadership positions in the Russian Social-Democratic Party.

In the midst of brutal pogroms in Kishinev (1903) and Bialystock (1905) and other Russian cities, the Bund formed self-defense leagues, claiming that their self-defense against the pogroms would aid the revolution against the Tzar. "Jews are no longer weak cowards who flee from Gentiles. . . . Jews can form self-defense organizations, Jews are building barricades." Extremely militant, the Bund was instrumental in the overthrow of Tzar Nicholas II, who had imprisoned hundreds of their members for revolutionary activities.

The desire of many in the Bund was to foster political and socialist awareness in the Jewish community and to stress equality. However, there was tension between those Bundists whose aim it was to completely assimilate, and those who wanted only economic and political acceptance, but not cultural assimilation. Some were advocates of complete national autonomy, which angered Lenin, while others vehemently opposed this idea.

One aim of the Bund was to promote secular culture which did not

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21 Gitelman, 33.

22 See Dubnow, 55-57; Eckman, 11; Gitelman, 25.

23 Gitelman, 51.
conflict with social-democratic theories. Societies which promoted Yiddish drama, music and literature were organized. Yiddish schools were established and youth groups and workers cooperatives were formed. This was done in an attempt to strengthen their power base and circumvent the influence of the Herzlian Zionists and the "bourgeois intelligentsia" upon the Jewish masses.24

The Bundists believed that Herzlian Zionism, which promoted Hebrew as the Jewish national language, was a quixotic illusion. They advocated Yiddish, which was spoken by 97 percent of the Jews, as the mother tongue. Both groups departed from the religious Orthodox Jewish traditional ideology, but maintained that Saturday (Sabbath) should be recognized as the Jewish day of rest. All three groups vied for the support of the Jewish population at large and viewed each other as the opposition.

It is estimated that as many as 200,000 Jews were massacred during the Russian civil war by the "White Army" forces under the command of Anton Denikin, while thousands of Jewish communities were obliterated.25

Lenin

It is little wonder then that faced with humiliation, torture and death, that hundreds of young Jewish men and women, many university educated, joined the Bolshevik Revolution (1917-1921), standing beside Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who promised them an egalitarian society and

24See Eckman, 11; Gitelman, 53.

surcease from their oppression. This they did despite Lenin's 1903 declaration, "The Jews have ceased to be a nation, for a nation without territory is unthinkable."\(^26\)

To Lenin's ideological model, Karl Marx, the answer to the Jewish problem was assimilation and, hopefully, the abolishment of Judaism. Viewing religion as the "opiate of the Masses," Marx, who had been born into a rabbinical family, but whose father subsequently converted to Christianity for the purpose of practicing law, was an adamant anti-Semite. Jews, he believed, could never be emancipated. They were the bourgeois. Marx wrote:

> Look at the real Jew of our time: not the Jew of the Sabbath . . . but the Jew of everyday life. What is the Jew's basis in our world? Material necessity, private advantage. What is the purpose of Jew's worship in this world? Usury. What is his worldly God? Money.\(^27\)

Thus, Marx left behind an anti-Semitic platform for the Bolshevik leaders and Russian people to digest and effectuate.

An avowed atheist, Lenin, unlike Marx, was sympathetic to the Jews in Russia. "No nationality in Russia is as oppressed and persecuted as the Jewish one."\(^28\) However, Lenin was unable to accept the fact that Jews were part of a Jewish nation. In his 1913 essay on "Two Cultures in Every National Culture," Lenin wrote:

> Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, the slogan of our enemies. . . . whoever, directly or indirectly, puts forward the slogan of Jewish "national culture" is (whatever his good intentions may be) an enemy of the proletariat, a supporter of all that is outmoded and connected with caste among the Jewish people; he is an accomplice of the rabbis and the

\(^{26}\)Gitelman, 43.

\(^{27}\)Eckman, 25.

\(^{28}\)Gitelman, 44.
bourgeoisie. On the other hand, those Jewish Marxists who mingle with the Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and other workers in international Marxist organization, and make their contribution (both in Russian and in Yiddish) towards creating the international culture of the working-class movement—those Jews, despite the separatism of the Bund, uphold the best traditions of Jewry by fighting the slogan of "national culture."29

This Bund-Lenin debate and the inner wrangling of the Bundists themselves over the national issue, were "to color all of Soviet policy toward the Jews and the reaction of the politically conscious Jews to the Soviets after 1917."30 The Jewish problem was one the Bolshevik leaders would be unable to avoid. The Jewish Sections of the Communist Party, (Evsektsiia), which were charged with the task of integrating the Jews economically, socially and politically into the mainstream of modernization, would later be abolished by the Party (1930) after they had served their purpose. Jews were to consider themselves a part of the Soviet family of nationalities rather than as part of the worldwide Jewish community, and many accepted this idea.31 However, many resisted the attempts to rob them of their heritage and viewed the new regime as merely a new face on the old Tzar.

In 1918, the Council of People's Commissars decried any form of anti-Semitic propaganda or pogroms and urged all of Russia to fight this evil. In 1919, Lenin himself appealed to the people via a radio

30 Gitelman, 66.
31 Ibid., 13.
broadcast to cease their anti-Semitic campaigns "for the good of the greater whole."\textsuperscript{32}

Lenin surrounded himself with non-practicing, secular Jews who played prominent roles in the Bolshevik Revolution. Among them were his military leader Leon Trotsky, chief organizer of the Red Army, and Yakov Sverdlov, the first president of the Soviet state. Jews were appointed to influential positions in proportions exceeding their percentage of the population, and by 1927, in Moscow, the Ukraine and Byelorussia, they were deeply rooted in the civil service.

Those Jews who did not succumb to the new Communist theory were not so fortunate. Anathema to this ideology were religion and Zionism, both targeted for eradication. Although the official Party line decried anti-Semitism, there were a number of atheistic publications which espoused the elimination of Judaism.\textsuperscript{33}

In January, 1918, the secularization of religious institutions and schools was mandated in Lenin's "On the Separation of Church from State and of School from Church." This decree struck a severe blow to the Russian Orthodox Church as well as to Jewish institutions and synagogues. Their property and money were confiscated, religious instruction was prohibited and religion as a whole was outlawed. To appease the Jews so they would not decry these acts as anti-Semitic, Jewish affairs were placed under the auspices of the Evsektsiia, which were, of course, controlled by the Party.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32}Eckman, 29-30.

\textsuperscript{33}Shaffer, 7.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., 6-7.
Ironically, it was the Jewish Communist Sections which in June 1918, adopted an official anti-Zionist/Hebrew language platform that was eagerly embraced by Lenin. "The Zionist Party plays a counter-revolutionary role. It is responsible for strengthening, among the backward Jewish masses, the influence of clericalism and nationalist attitudes." The Zionist movement, which had attracted more than 300,000 followers, was depicted as an instrument of imperialism and the mainstay of all reactionary Jewish forces. Subsequently, Zionism was outlawed and 3,000 of its leading advocates were arrested and/or deported to political labor camps in Siberia. It was obvious that dissent was an unwelcome entity within the environs of the new ideology of the Communist Party.

Hebrew, the "language of the bourgeoisie, religion and Zionism, and hence, ... an instrument of counterrevolution," was banned and taught solely under governmental control as part of "dead cultures of the Near East" courses.

It was the belief of the Jewish communists and Lenin that if the Jewish people were deprived of their religion and cultural heritage, assimilation would occur. Consequently, the Jewish nationalist movement would become diluted and evaporate. Indeed, within a few years after the Revolution, assimilation through intermarriage accounted for 25 percent of Jewish marriages in Russia's interior.

Although the Declaration of Rights of Peoples (1917) proclaimed the "free development of national minorities and ethnic groups

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35 Eckman, 30.

36 Ibid., 33-34.
inhabiting Russian territory," Lenin's assimilationist efforts led to the disintegration of Jewish religious life and culture. Yiddish supplanted Hebrew as the "official" Jewish language; Yiddish education was placed in the hands of assimilationist Jews, and by 1926, only 70 percent of the Jewish population designated Yiddish as their mother tongue. (In 1959, this figure plummeted to 18 percent.)

Lenin's regime, while it clearly accessed Jews to opportunities in government and economic endeavors, barred the door to the Jewish religion, culture and Zionism. Legal status as a nationality had been granted to the Jewish people, however, efforts to eradicate their heritage were unabated. This contradiction in theory and practice would, under Stalin's regime, be magnified a hundred fold.

**Stalin**

Joseph Stalin, Lenin's successor, inherited the still unsolved "Jewish problem" which plagued the Soviet Union. Stalin viewed socialism as a "one country" concept, and those who espoused nationalism or internationalism, as did Leon Trotsky, became his enemies. Born in Georgia, Stalin was no stranger to Judaeophobia, and the anti-Semitic practices of his regime initiated in the 1930's, rivaled that of the tzars. Stalin's efforts to homogenize the Jews into the mainstream, while simultaneously attempting to destroy all vestiges of Jewish culture and religion, are well documented.

When Stalin ascended to power, thousands of Jewish workers had

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37 Korey, 29.

38 Ibid., 26.
entered the labor force in factories and mines. Their economic life improved, and intensified industrialization efforts brought about by the five-Year Plan resulted in large Jewish populations in the major cities—Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Odessa, among others.

In 1928, in an attempt viewed by many to quell the cause of Jewish nationalists as well as rid the major cities of their Jewish populations, Stalin established Birobidzhan as the official Jewish settlement within the Russian Republic. Now, theoretically, the "homeless" Jews would possess a territory of their own; their own "Palestine" within the confines of the Soviet borders. This, it was believed, would quash the efforts of those remnants of the Jewish population who advocated Zionism, and simultaneously appease world Jewry, especially in the United States.

Birobidzhan, which was accorded the status of "Jewish Autonomous Region" in 1934, did not prove successful. Located in the far eastern part of the Soviet Union near the Chinese border, desolate Birobidzhan attracted only a few thousand Jewish settlers. Those who colonized the territory initially resided in small Ukranian and Byelorussian towns where they were artisans and working men. No attempts to compel Jewish resettlement in Birobidzhan were initiated; however, as the Ukraine was notoriously anti-Semitic, it is not surprising that Jews voluntarily left there for this new settlement.

The majority of Jews had no desire to abandon urban life in favor of an agrarian existence in a territory which held no Jewish

historical sentiment. A small group of Jewish communist leaders volunteered to help those who did move to Birobidzhan; however, these pioneers found life in the territory fraught with hardships and stress and many subsequently abandoned the area.

In 1934, in the wake of Hitler's Nazi movement, Birobidzhan was given new impetus and by 1935, fourteen thousand Jews, some fleeing Germany, comprised one-fourth of the population in the Jewish Autonomous Region. There they established schools in which instruction was in both Yiddish and Russian, began a Yiddish publishing house, theater, cultural groups and the Jewish press.

In 1936, Birobidzhan fell victim to Stalin's purges. Its leaders were accused of being Trotskyites, Zionists, nationalists and traitors. Subsequently, they were dismissed from their jobs, imprisoned, exiled or executed. The same fate befell numerous Jewish teachers, journalists, and writers. Foreigners who acted as community volunteers were charged with spying, conspiring with the Zionists, and committing acts of sabotage. Many were imprisoned and executed.

Birobidzhan never recovered from the purges, which were followed by the Nazi decimation during World War II. Jewish ethnic-cultural life was laid waste by the purges, a feat even the tzars' pogroms were unable to accomplish. By 1946, Jewish schools in the Region were closed. In 1948, all remnants of Jewish culture were eradicated from Birobidzhan. According to the 1959 census, only 8.8 percent of the Birobidzhan

40 Korey, 25.

41 Eckman, 41.
population (14,270 persons) were identified as Jews.\footnote{Korey, 25.} This percentage, by 1976, had declined to only one fifteenth of the total regional population.\footnote{Epstein, 80.} Commenting on the minute number of Jews living today in Birobidzhan, 0.7 percent of the Soviet Jewish population, Chicago Sun-Times journalist Jay Bushinsky emphatically announced, "There is no Jewish republic in the Soviet Union."\footnote{See forum with Jay Bushinsky, "They Dare to Be Free," Skokie, Ill., 21 October 1986; Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction (New York: National Conference on Soviet Jewry Research Bureau, 1986), 2.}

Stalin's genocidal purges did not begin or end at Birobidzhan. Indeed, by 1939, Stalin had succeeded in liquidating Lenin's old Jewish Bolshevik associates, many of whose death warrants were signed prior to the "trials." It is also believed that Stalin was responsible for the 1940 assassination of his exiled ideological nemesis, Leon Trotsky.

Although Stalin's official statements professed his adamant opposition to anti-Semitism, "... anti-Semitism is a phenomenon profoundly hostile to the Soviet regime and is sternly repressed in the USSR,"\footnote{See Shaffer, 9; Korey, 66-67.} his actions gave lie to his words. Jews were now the victims of Stalin's decrees which were more severe than the tzars' ukases.

Jewish cultural life was totally suppressed. Jews were forced to desecrate the Sabbath; Torahs, Talmuds, phylacteries and other religious materials were burned in the streets. Jewish schools were closed, newspapers shut, and rabbis were arrested. In 1932, Judaism was openly ridiculed at an official exhibit in Moscow; public banquets were
catered on Yom Kippur, a day of fasting, and a Passover seder depicting Jews as superstitious was conducted.46

Jewish legal status was permanently fixed in 1932, when the Central Executive Committee and the Council of Peoples' Commissars created the internal passport. All Soviet residents, upon their sixteenth birthday, were ordered to obtain these passports which identified the bearer according to his nationality. Jews are designated as "yevrei" (Jewish), not by virtue of where they were born (as in the case of other nationalities), but rather by virtue of their parentage. If both parents were Jewish, the child was Jewish; if one parent, however, was not Jewish, then the child selected the nationality of either parent. The internal passport served as a Stalinist method of identifying and eliminating Jews from urban housing, universities, the labor force, and governmental positions. The internal passport is still used for the same nefarious purpose; therefore, most children of intermarriages select the nationality of the non-Jewish parent, thus escaping the stigma attached to the "yevrei" designation.47

The apex of official Judaeophobia was reached in the late thirties and early forties, and labeled as "unenlightened zoological ... anti-Semitism" by Soviet scientist and Nobel Prize recipient Andrei Sakharov, who was himself banished from Moscow.48 It was during this period that Stalin signed a short-lived pact with Hitler and declared he would oust Soviet Jews from high-ranking posts. By 1942,

46See Eckman, 45; Shaffer, 11.
47Korey, 24.
48Ibid., 67.
after the Nazi invasion of Russia, Jewish quotas were established in governmental positions. Jews were deported to labor camps in Siberia, where hundreds died.

Almost half a million Jewish men fought in the Soviet Army, Navy and Air Force against the Nazi invaders. Jewish resistance was continuous through the three years of Nazi occupation and 34,000 Jewish soldiers were decorated for their bravery. Their very survival was based upon defeating the Nazis.

In the wake of the Nazi's genocidal "Final Solution" more than one million Soviet Jews were slaughtered. In Lithuania and the Ukraine, Nazis were aided and abetted by the anti-Semitic populations in the extermination of the Jews and the plunder of Jewish property. In Babi-Yar, a ravine near Kiev, 33,771 Jewish men, women and children were stripped, beaten with brass knuckles and clubs as they ran a gauntlet surrounded on both sides by Nazi Kommandos and Ukrainian Polizei, and upon reaching the end of the tortuous line, were shot with automatic rifles while they stood on the edge of the ravine. Children were thrown into the pit while still alive. These monstrous acts of terror and mayhem took the barbarous villains three days to complete. It is estimated that during the course of the war, 195,000 Soviets, Jews and Gentiles, were exterminated in the general area of Kiev.

After the war, the martyrdom of the Jews at Babi-Yar was almost

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49 Eckman, 47.

50 See Gitelman, 50-53; Korey, 67; Shaffer, 10.

ignored by the Soviet press. Attempts to erect a monument there in their memory were initiated, but withdrawn by the government. Those who attempted to honor the memory of the Jews, even as late as 1971, were subsequently arrested and sent to labor camps. The Soviets have, for forty years, attempted to obliterate Babi-Yar from the pages of history. 52

During the war Stalin's response to the Nazis took on three faces. He continued his regime's severe policies towards the Jews in Soviet-occupied Poland, where he arrested thousands of businessmen, exiled hundreds to Siberian labor camps, and killed others. On the other hand, he suppressed anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda from the populace, least he be accused of fighting a war "for the Jews." The Nazi extermination of millions of Jews was totally ignored in the Russian media.

Lastly, Stalin, in efforts to gain the aid of the United States and Great Britain, launched his own propaganda campaign. Yiddish newspapers and publications were reopened in the unoccupied areas of the Soviet Union and Jews who desired to participate in cultural and religious activities were permitted to do so. In 1942, a Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was officially established and its leaders traveled the length and breadth of the United States enlisting the aid and sympathy of American Jews. Thus, this committee was largely responsible for obtaining considerable aid for the Soviet regime's war efforts. 53

Although the Jews played an integral role in the war effort,

52 Korey, 24.

53 See Eckman, 48-49; Shaffer, 11.
within three years after the Nazi surrender, Stalin's government resumed its vitriolic anti-Semitic campaigns. In 1948, all members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were executed after being tried for "conspiring to detach the Crimea and establish a separate Jewish state."\textsuperscript{54} Every Jewish school, cultural institution, theater, newspaper and publishing house were again shuttered. Jewish authors, scholars, artists, poets and composers were accused of being "homeless bourgeois cosmopolitans,"\textsuperscript{55} a charge akin to treason. Subsequently, 400 were either arrested, deported or killed. Quotas were imposed upon Jewish admissions to educational and vocational institutions, and Jews were barred from the upper echelons of the Soviet army, Komsomol, Foreign Ministry, and the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{56}

It is ironic, and perhaps indicative of Stalin's enigmatic, contradictory behavior towards the Jews, that while promoting Judaeophobia within the borders of the Soviet Union, he was, simultaneously, a leading proponent of the May, 1948, creation of the State of Israel. During the 1949 Arab-Israeli War, Stalin vigorously supported the Israelis, severely criticized the Arabs and sent military supplies to Israel through Czechoslovakian communist channels. Some believe Stalin's motive was to rid the area of the British presence and regain a cordial relationship with the United States. Friendship with

\textsuperscript{54}Eckman, 51.

\textsuperscript{55}Shaffer, 11.

\textsuperscript{56}See Eckman, 50-52; Korey, 75.
Israel was short-lived, however, and Stalin initiated an overtly antagonistic policy toward Israel.57

Stalin's anti-Semitic inclinations never abated. Two months prior to his death in 1953, he ordered the arrest of nine distinguished Kremlin physicians, six of whom were Jewish, and charged them with conspiring with Zionists, Americans and the British in a plot to assassinate prominent Party leaders. Known as the Doctors' Plot, it was the justification for a new wave of anti-Semitism throughout the Soviet Union. Stalin died before the defendants could be tried, and, according to one expert, had the trial been held, the result would have been "a nation-wide pogrom."58 It was later revealed that the entire affair was a fraud, contrived by Stalin to perhaps gain momentum for his ultimate goal: the exile of the entire Russian Jewish community to Siberia.59

For thirty years, Stalin fervently bore the banner of anti-Semitism bequeathed by Lenin. He fomented Judaeophobia in the hearts and minds of the Soviet masses and, upon his death, the banner was passed to Nikita S. Khrushchev.

Khrushchev

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev's ascendency to power did not occur immediately after Stalin's death in March, 1953. Although named First Secretary in September, 1953, the government was one of


58 Ibid., 622.

59 See Eckman, 52; Shaffer, 12.
"collective leadership" until mid-1954, when Khrushchev became the undisputed leader of the country.60

Born in Kalinovka, near the Ukrainian border, he led the Ukrainian Communist Party, almost uninterrupted, from 1938-1949, when he advanced to the position of secretary of the Central Committee in Moscow. It was Khrushchev's involvement in the anti-Semitic Ukraine which affected his attitude towards the Jews and caused him to jettison those who held government positions. Jews were severely restricted in municipal employment and any mentions of their martyrdom and oppression during the Nazi era were suppressed. Indeed, Khrushchev, in an attempt to obliterate the horrors of Babi-Yar, ordered an apartment complex built on the site.

When Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenkov's tribute to the Jews at Babi-Yar was recited on Poets' Day in 1961, the crowd that gathered was dispersed by the police. Composer Dmitrii Shoshtakovitch was forbidden from including "Babi-Yar" in his concerts.61

Khrushchev vigorously denied the existence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. When questioned about Jews he stated, "No Jewish problem exists here and those who invent it are singing a foreign tune."62 However, following the path of his predecessors, Lenin and Stalin, Khrushchev's words and actions as they related to the Jews were antithetical.


61Eckman, 53-61.

62Shaffer, 14.
Although in 1956, Khrushchev permitted the reopening of a rabbinical seminary (yeshiva) in the Moscow synagogue, the publication of 4,000 prayer books in the outlawed Hebrew language and a revitalization of Jewish cultural life, in 1957, the hopes of the Jewish community were dashed when the government withdrew its "liberal" policy towards them.

Once again, synagogues were closed, prayer meetings prohibited and anti-Semitic propaganda spewed forth from the media. Jewish theologians were forbidden to travel abroad, meet Jewish leaders from other countries, and join the World Council of Churches.

While other religions were subjected to Khrushchev's hostility to theology, "Communist education presupposes emancipation from religious prejudices and superstitions, which hinder Soviet people from fully developing their creative powers," attacks on Judaism were particularly vituperative. Jews were depicted as immoral worshippers of a money-god, and imperialists who promoted Zionism and repatriation to Israel. A plethora of anti-Semitic literature was distributed, some of which accused pro-Zionists of aiding and abetting the Nazis in their genocidal campaign against the Jews and stereotypical cartoons of Jews with hooked noses, grabbing pots of money, and the like, were printed.

Jewish community leaders were denounced as spies, and Jewish merchants accused of the "economic crimes" of "bribery, pilferage, and currency speculation" and sentenced to death. Although all of these

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64 See Eckman, 60-61; Shaffer, 19.
"criminals" had adopted Russified names, their Jewish names were emphasized in all media reports.

Jewish admission to higher institutions of learning was sharply curtailed, and quotas were imposed upon the number of Jews granted professorships in universities and institutes of scientific research. "... if in some institute, there is one Jew among nine or ten department chairmen or professors, then a second will not be appointed; and if one is appointed, then this must be compensated for at the expense of some other institute."65 Military academies and diplomatic schools completely excluded Jewish youth. While Jewish enrollment in higher education ranked among the highest of any nationality group in 1960, 3.2 percent, it had drastically fallen from the 13 percent enrollment of 1935. The restrictive internal passport was employed to insure enforcement of Jewish quotas.66

Jewish religious practices were stifled even further when, in 1962, baking matzoh (unleavened bread) for Passover was outlawed, and circumcision attacked as a "barbaric custom and danger to health."67 Thus, Jewish male infants were in effect prohibited from fulfilling their ancient covenant with God and were excluded from their heritage. The only institute permitted to train rabbis, cantors and kosher butchers was temporarily closed and, upon its reopening, only four students remained.


66Smolar, 77.

67Eckman, 58.
Jewish cultural institutions were not permitted to operate and, while in 1959-1960, there were some Yiddish reprints of Jewish authors, by 1961, the Yiddish literary journal ceased publication.68

With regard to Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel, Khrushchev's stated policy was inconsistent with his practice. In 1957, he acknowledged that it was difficult for Soviet Jews to "reunite" with their families, however, in 1960, he stated that there had been "no requests of persons of Jewish nationality"69 to immigrate to Israel. In fact, 9,236 Soviet Jews had requested exit visas at that time.

Khrushchev, while not as blatantly anti-Semitic as Stalin, did not afford equal nationality status to the Jewish population. Yiddish language schools were discontinued; Hebrew and Jewish history courses were terminated; Jewish cultural institutions and religious practices were demeaned, and Jews were excluded from the hierarchy of the Soviet government. In keeping with this policy, the regimes which have subsequently assumed power have also proven to be no friend of the Soviet Jew. They, too, have borne the banner of anti-Semitism.

Brezhnev/Kosygin to Gorbachev

Upon Khrushchev's demotion in 1964, Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin were named to jointly lead the Soviet government. The former became the First Secretary of the Party; the latter the chairman of the Council of Ministries.70

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68 See ibid., 59; Shaffer, 19-21.

69 Korey, 194.

70 Eckman, 62-63.
While religious restrictions were relaxed for other sects, Jews were still forbidden to organize and form a central coordinating body. Jewish publications, inclusive of prayer books, Bibles, Torahs and Talmuds, remained closed; production of prayer shawls, phylacteries and other devotional materials remained at a standstill. The number of synagogues dwindled from a high of 1,100 in 1926, to 60 in 1973. In 1971, three of Moscow's five synagogues were shuttered, leaving one rabbi to serve a quarter-million Jews. In 1972, the last synagogue in Kiev closed its portals forever. Teaching religion to persons under sixteen was prohibited by law; the average age of Jewish religious functionaries was seventy; and only six students enrolled in yeshiva in 1972.71

Although the prohibition against baking matzoh for Passover was relaxed in 1969, by 1974, 90 percent of the synagogues had no rabbi. In 1986, 1.8 million Soviet Jews were served by only five rabbis and those who wished to enter the rabbinate studied in Budapest, Hungary. Since 1980, only three or four persons have been trained.72

Hebrew, the common language of prayer for world-wide Jewry, banned by Lenin in 1920, faced much the same fate under subsequent regimes. In 1981, those Jews who offered Hebrew instruction were threatened with banishment and in 1984-85, those who ignored the order were sentenced to prisons and labor camps.73 Thus, the Hebrew language,

71See ibid., 63-65; Rothenberg, 45-46, 128-132; Shaffer, 39; Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction, 5-6.
72See Eckman, 65; Rothenberg, 49; Shaffer, 40-41; Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction, 7.
73See Rothenberg, 179-180; Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction, 7.
which has been a cohesive force throughout the history of the Jewish people was denigrated to criminal status.

Jewish cultural pursuits were also stifled. Only one Yiddish newspaper, the Birobidzhaner Shtern, a four-page daily of 1,000 copies per issue, and one Yiddish magazine, the Sovietishe Heimland, a monthly of 7,000 copies per issue, have been published since the late 1960's. Yiddish drama, concerts, literary readings and recitals were rarely performed. Although permission was granted in 1978, to form a Jewish Chamber Musical Theater, it was limited to performances in Birobidzhan, in which area fewer than 12,000 Jews reside.

Despite the Soviet government's assertion that all nationalities are permitted to practice and retain their unique cultures, the overwhelming evidence refutes this. Soviet Jews were not granted the same religious and cultural expressions afforded other nationalities. While there is no doubt that other groups were also subjected to discrimination, anti-Semitism pervaded almost every corner of the Soviet Union. Organized governmental suppression of Jewish culture and an attempt to sever Jews from their heritage have been, and still are, a major goal. Thinly disguised as anti-Zionism, Judaeophobia continues to thrive.

The ominous image of Zionism painted by Lenin, was honed by his successors. However, now the State of Israel was no longer a dream of a handful of Jews; it is a reality. Soviet Jews repatriated to the land

74See Gilbert, 183; Shaffer, 42-43; Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction, 8.

75See Gilbert, 163; Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction, 9.
of their forefathers following the Holocaust, and after the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six Day War, feelings of pride and happiness permeated the community. Thousands, lead by Jewish students, began a vigorous campaign for repatriation and, instead, found themselves victims of a vindictive government campaign of harassment.

In 1966, Kosygin declared that all Soviet Jews who wished to reunite with their families in Israel were not hampered from immigrating. "As regards the reunion of families . . . the road is open and no problem exists here." The road was, in reality, strewn with broken glass and nails.

The process of applying for and obtaining an exit visa for Israel was an arduous undertaking which took, in numerous instances, years to finalize. First one was required to obtain a vyzov, an invitation from an Israeli relative who vowed to support the applicant upon his arrival. The vyzov was then notarized by the Israeli relative, taken to the Finnish Embassy (which oversees Soviet concerns there), certified and mailed by the relative to the applicant. This process may have had to be repeated numerous times as the Soviets often intercepted the vyzov. Only "first degree" relatives were allowed to submit vyzov, thereby sharply curtailing the number of qualified applicants.

Upon receipt of the vyzov, the applicant brought it to the local Office for Visas and Registration (OVIR) of the Ministry of Interior, which held office hours one or two days per week for brief periods. There he completed a form and submitted proper documents. Among these was the kharakteristika, an evaluation made at his place of employment.

76See Eckman 68; Korey, 194-195.
and signed by his supervisor, the local Communist Party official, and the representative of the trade union. If the applicant had children attending a school or university, a kharakteristika was mandatory for each. The applicant was often subjected to harassment on the job by his co-workers, may have been dismissed from his position, and if enrolled in a university, expelled due to sudden "poor" academic performance. The final document required the signature of the committee which supervised the applicant's apartment. Thus, his neighbors may have ostracized him.

When all documents were in place and submitted to the OVIR, a filing fee was paid and the applicant waited as long as six months to learn his eligibility status. No explanation for rejection was necessary, however, should this have occurred, the applicant was able to appeal and wait an additional three months for a decision. If rejected a second time, the applicant had to wait one year to reapply.

Soviet Jews whose exit visa had been rejected, refuseniks, were often told they pose a "security risk" to the government or offered another dubious explanation. Refuseniks became society's outcasts and were summarily dismissed and/or demoted from their jobs; many were stripped of their university degrees. This was particularly true for scientists and academicians, many of whom were sentenced to lengthy prison or labor camp terms, where they were treated inhumanely.77

Those Soviet Jews who openly promoted repatriation and religious or cultural activities were arrested on such charges as "parasitism," "hooliganism," or "treason." Known as "Prisoners of Conscience," they

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77Korey, 194-195.
were sentenced to prison, labor camps, or internal exile, isolated from family and friends.\textsuperscript{78} Despite Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's claim that the Soviet Union had complied with international human rights accords, as of 1986, more than half of the "Prisoners of Conscience" were sentenced since his ascent to power.\textsuperscript{79}

There are more than fifteen thousand known cases of refuseniks and Prisoners of Conscience, many of whom waited fifteen years or longer for their exit visas.\textsuperscript{80}

The Soviet Union has vacillated considerably in its emigration policy. It is greatly dependent upon the government's perception and image in the eyes of the world, the West in particular. From October 1968 to June 1986, 648,824 Soviet Jews received vyzovs; only 266,059 were granted permission to repatriate. The zenith was reached in 1979, when 51,300 Jews emigrated; the nadir in 1984, when merely 896 exit visas were issued.\textsuperscript{81}

On November 7, 1986, in the wake of world-wide criticism concerning its treatment of Soviet Jews, the Gorbachev regime announced it would enact a new law, effective January 1, 1987, which would extend emigration rights to those who desired to leave "for personal reasons": family reunions, visiting sick relatives, marriages, and other

\textsuperscript{78}\textit{Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction}, 13.


\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Soviet Jewry Fact and Fiction}, 13.

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., 12-13.
"important reasons." Although the regime claimed at that time "there are no social or national reasons that might lead to a wish to emigrate," it is noteworthy that in 1990 alone, more than 180,000 Jews have left the Soviet Union for Israel, America and Western Europe with predictions that one million Jews will flee in 1991. This mass exodus of Soviet Jewry is in response to intensified anti-Semitism, political uncertainty and economic chaos within the Soviet Union.

Those fortunate individuals, who have emigrated, were forced to borrow thousands of dollars from family and friends in order to pay both an exorbitant "renunciation" fee and an internal passport fee. Where, one may query, will refuseniks, Prisoners of Conscience or unemployed Soviet Jews obtain the necessary finances to emigrate and join in a celebration of their religious and cultural heritage?

**Conclusion**

More than two thousand years have elapsed since the Russian Jews fled from the crucible of Babylonian persecution into the blazing abyss of the Tzars' Empire. There they found themselves despised, maligned; politically and economically severed from mainstream society. It was only in the restricted Pale of Settlement that Jewish culture and

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83 Ibid.


85 Korey, 195.
religion were allowed to flourish. It was within the Pale of Settlement that the Jew was permitted to honor his heritage.

For seventy years the Soviet Union has methodically endeavored to expunge all visages of Jewish culture and religion from within its perimeters. Despite its vigorous denials, evidence has been presented herein to reveal the disparities between the government's assertions and its practices as they relate to the Soviet Jew.

In most regimes, practice is related to theory. The ideology of the nation is the linchpin of government actions. Students of the Soviet Union quickly admit to the ideological basis of the Soviet government, perhaps one of the most carefully formulated in the world today. These same students must admit that in the Soviet Union today, there is a wide schism between theory and practice.

Singled out in this chapter is one issue—the Soviet Jew. This has shown that the Soviet Jew, while the subject of many theoretical writings, has been isolated from mainstream society through government practice. Communist ideology has been unable to replace historical prejudices and practices which began with the Tzarist regimes. Indeed, they have been honed and refined under the Communist dominion.

Soviet dissident author Aleksander I. Solzhenitsen, sentenced to eight years in forced labor camps by Stalin's regime, stated, "I have been in the dragon's belly, in the red burning belly of the dragon." Today hopes have been rekindled for those Soviet Jews who wish to repatriate. However, one must remember the historically mercurial policies to which they have been subjected. One might ask, why, if the Soviet Jew is so hated, despised, persecuted and otherwise trod upon by
his own government, why should that same government make the Jew's journey back to his homeland such an odious trek? Is it because the Soviet government realizes that the emigration statistics will speak for themselves and that there, for all the world to see, will be an entire people clamoring to be free--from the "red burning belly of the dragon?"

What has happened to those fortunate immigrants who have escaped the dragon's belly? Who aided them in their quest for freedom? What has happened to those who chose not to repatriate to Israel but, in its stead, selected Chicago, Illinois, as their adopted new home? These questions are explored in the following chapter.
In accordance with Mosaic law, Jews are commanded to aid indigent persons and those in woeful circumstances who are unable to assist themselves, "Thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother" (Deuteronomy 15:7). To this extent, Jews have offered shelter and charity to the downtrodden since Biblical times and continue to do so today. Soviet Jews are no exception. They have been supported and encouraged in their quest for freedom by numerous Jewish philanthropic agencies.

The perspicuity of the following is dependent, in part, upon an understanding of the terms "informal education" and "enculturation." Informal education refers to any incidental learning which takes place outside the formalized educational structure. Enculturation is used here to define a proactive process through which emigres become familiar with and transfer the nuances, idioms and practices of their adopted country for the purpose of mainstreaming into that country's established societal structure. In the case of the Soviet Jew, enculturation is a multi-level process. He must adapt to the accepted mores of the United States; maintain his personal Soviet cultural identity in the microcosm of that society to which he is bonded by birth; and attempt to
understand, perhaps for the first time in his life, what it means to be free and to be a Jew in a democracy.

This chapter examines three Jewish agencies, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Jewish Family and Community Service, and Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe (F.R.E.E.), and their varying roles in assisting the Soviet Jew once he had been granted his ticket to freedom, the vyzov. The time frame is a twenty year period--1960 through 1980--a score in which the doors to freedom were cyclically held open or bolted shut, depending upon the Soviet regime's temperament. Interviews were conducted with administrators of these agencies, each of whom has been designated a pseudonym.

Founded in 1975, by Mrs. Reitza Kosofsky and the ultra-Orthodox Lubavitcher Rebbe, F.R.E.E. is the youngest of the three agencies and differs from them in that it not only aids immigrants in their resettlement in an alien country, it also attempts to reawaken and/or introduce the Soviet Jews to the religious and cultural identities which were denied them for more than 70 years in their native land. Other immigrant populations are familiar with Jewish traditions, however, most Soviets are not. With few exceptions, staff members and administrators speak fluent Russian as they themselves were born in the USSR. HIAS and Jewish Family Service, which are supported by the Jewish community, do not attempt to inculcate the Soviet Jew into the religious customs and traditions of their people. The tasks of these agencies are more secular in nature. All three, however, receive funds from the Jewish Federation, the umbrella organization for numerous Jewish agencies.

For the purpose of clarity, it is necessary to distinguish
between the terms "immigrant" and "refugee." According to Martin Koosed, all Soviet Jews who have been granted permission to leave their country should be classified as "refugees" as opposed to "immigrants." This is owing to the fact that "an immigrant leaves his former place of residence voluntarily"\(^1\) while "the refugee is an involuntary agent."\(^2\) Koosed argues that in the wake of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, Jews have been forced out of the country, however, their exit has not been facilitated by the government.

Koosed expounds upon this position that the pervasive and irrefutable evidence of systematic and extensive anti-Semitic behavior and policy on the part of the Soviet authorities are primarily "push factors" that have directly led to the involuntary movement of the Soviet Jews, despite, or indeed because of, their relatively high economic, professional, and educational status within the USSR. Therefore, both legally and socially, the Soviet Jews are refugees and not immigrants.\(^3\)

When the Soviet Jew was granted permission to emigrate, he debarked in Vienna, Austria, where he was greeted by a representative of the Israeli government in an attempt to persuade him to make "aliyah," a return to the homeland of his forefathers, where he will be immediately granted full citizenship. Prior to 1975, approximately 75% of Soviet Jews did repatriate to Israel, however, subsequent to that year, many, perhaps 80%, have opted to emigrate directly to the United States.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Ibid., 8.

\(^3\) Ibid., 9.

If the Soviet Jew did not wish to repatriate to Israel and insisted upon emigrating to the United States, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) would assist him. Founded in 1880, to succor those fleeing Tzarist Russia, HIAS has to date served to rescue more than two million Jews worldwide. During 1979, HIAS assisted approximately 34,000 Soviet Jews to resettle in the West.

A HIAS representative would interview the Soviet Jew in Vienna, and attempt to locate a relative in the United States who was willing to sponsor him and, if necessary, his family. From Vienna the emigrant was flown to Rome, Italy and from there "to various parts of the country [United States] or Australia or Canada." There are local HIAS offices established throughout the world, however, HIAS International, the central office, is located in New York City, and acts as a clearing house. This office notifies local HIAS offices of the impending arrival of a Soviet Jew in a particular city.

In an interview, the executive director of HIAS Chicago, "Samuel Gold", distinguished between sponsorship of an immigrant as opposed to sponsorship of a refugee. For the former, relatives must sign an affidavit pledging three years of support and submit it to the United States government. Sponsors of refugees, however, may take the Soviet Jew into their homes for short periods of time and are not required to


7 Ibid.
submit an affidavit. It is, therefore, an advantage to be a refugee, rather than an immigrant. HIAS does not charge fees for its services.

HIAS Chicago was initially established at the turn of the century to aid immigrants and refugees who emigrated to the United States. Today it serves the same purpose and is supported in part with monies raised by the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago (JUF), which holds annual fund raising drives throughout the Jewish community. The monies raised benefit a myriad of Jewish community programs, including Mt. Sinai Hospital, Jewish Family and Community Service, Jewish Vocational Service, the Board of Jewish Education, and Jewish Community Centers. Funds are allocated to HIAS by the Jewish Federation, which oversees distribution of JUF donations to all Jewish social service agencies, schools and hospitals in the Chicagoland area.8

HIAS is a separate corporate entity which has its own Board of Directors and raises some of its own funds, although it is managed by Jewish Family and Community Service (JFCS). Originally called the Jewish Social Service Bureau, JFCS offers family counseling, aid for the elderly and underprivileged, and resettlement services for immigrants, among them the Soviet Jewish immigrants, in addition to other social service programs.9

Gold described the functions of HIAS Chicago as working with persons in pre-migration in conjunction with HIAS International. HIAS


9See Rosen, 211-213; "Gold," interview by author.
works with sponsoring families to see that "things go smoothly once the 
emigre arrives, either in the status of a refugee or an immigrant." He 
stressed, however, that the vast majority of persons who have arrived 
in the United States from the Soviet Union were classified as refugees 
seeking safe haven.

Persons who hold refugee status are eligible to receive 
government and Jewish community funds until they are able to obtain 
employment and become self-sufficient. According to Gold, the average 
length of time for this type of support was six months, but in some 
instances persons required aid for only two months, others for ten 
months.

HIAS also works with immigrants and refugees in post-migration 
by aiding them with the Department of Immigration and Naturalization 
(INS) requirements, laws and procedures. HIAS assists them in obtaining 
permanent residency and naturalization documents. Gold stated that 
there are instances in which persons enter Chicago or another American 
city on a visitor's visa and then request a change of status or asylum 
for the purpose of remaining in the United States. If the person has a 
first degree relative, and a change of status is requested, it is 
usually granted; those who have no first degree relative apply for 
asylum on religious grounds, a status which is usually granted to Soviet 
Jews.

Gold stated that in 1979, HIAS Chicago serviced 2,000 Soviet 
Jewish immigrants, and that was a peak year. Commenting on the future,

10"Gold," interview by author.

11Ibid.
he believed that the Soviet government's new immigration policy would account for an increase in the number of refugees and immigrants fleeing the USSR. Gold also felt that the talks between the World Jewish Congress and the Soviet authorities, in addition to the Gorbachev regime's strategy, would also heighten Soviet Jewish immigration.

Once the Soviet Jew was relocated in Chicago, HIAS' work was completed and the emigrant was then assigned to a family worker at Jewish Family and Community Service as a resettlement case. It is JFCS which is responsible for aiding the emigre in adjusting to his new life in an alien country.

According to "Sarah Simon," an administrator and family worker who oversees a JFCS office located on Chicago's northside, emigrants, whether their status was immigrant or refugee, were regarded as persons who were "in a state of crisis." In an interview, Simon, who speaks fluent Russian, elaborated:

> It is a different state of crisis than that of a person whose mother is dying. They are in a state of crisis also, but it's a different kind of crisis. It is a crisis where everything that the immigrants are exposed to is totally unfamiliar to them. They come from larger cities and smaller cities. Those that come from Moscow and the larger cities are less afraid. Those who come from smaller towns, everything is much newer to them. Just going shopping to any one of them, even grocery shopping, is an absolutely overwhelming experience. They can't believe this stuff is going to be there tomorrow.12

JFCS assisted the emigre in acclimating to this foreign environment, however, it did not do everything for the new arrival. Simon stated that it was important for the emigre to learn to help himself. An example of this is locating an apartment. JFCS instructed

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12"Simon," interview by author.
him how to locate an apartment, but did not necessarily physically rent one for him. She expressed this rationale:

You slowly begin to educate them. Our policy is not to find apartments for the immigrants. We can do it for them, but we want them to learn how to do it themselves and with the help of the relatives. We give them addresses or sometimes we tell them just walk down the streets of Rogers Park. We tell them to go out, giving them all little cards, and talk to the landlord and have the relatives talk to them the best they can. Sometimes they’ll come back and say, "I’ve found an apartment, but I can’t talk to the landlord. Please call them." I’ll call the landlord and say that these people are immigrants. They’d like the apartment and we negotiate for them. We try to leave the choice of apartment to them.13

JFCS allocated monies to the family or individual for payment of rent; the allocation was dependent upon the size of the family. According to Simon, "It’s more than public aid. For a couple with one child we would allow a family to have rent between $350 and $425 per month, an amount of money with which they could find an apartment in East or West Rogers Park."14

In addition to rent, JFCS also provided money or an allowance for furniture, utilities, food and personal care costs. Budget scales varied according to family size and ages. Simon explained the allocation process:

We have a budget scale which goes from one single adult to two adults, to couples over 65, three adults, or a couple with a teenager. There are different budget scales. Its probably equivalent to what you would call the State of Illinois minimal economic level per couple, or standard of living.15

JFCS encouraged them to shop for bargains and often they

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
received hand-me-down from those who emigrated here before them.

Simon continued that the allocation did not include transportation money to attend school. "That’s expensive. So we encourage them and we give them an additional $46 per month, per adult, for a bus pass to go to English classes every day."\(^{16}\) However, she added that as immigrants are also allotted money for gas, electric and telephone expenses, they may receive $900 per month per family.

So figure at $900 per month clear, the man would have to have a gross income of at least $13,000 to $14,000 per year in order to have that much clear when he begins work. Or a couple’s income should be about that in order for them to have the same amount of money that they were getting from us.\(^{17}\)

When asked for how long a period of time emigres are supported by JFCS, Simon responded:

We pay anywhere for five to seven months until we see that the immigrants are self-supportive. Hopefully, by then, they’ll have a job and that’s where Jewish Vocational Service comes in. They come in before the five to seven month period. We work with them from maybe the first month of arrival. We assume the responsibility for our immigrants as far as paying them an allowance.\(^{18}\)

Jewish Vocational Service provides for job placement and counseling for the Soviet Jews as well as for other persons in need of its services. They help the Soviet Jew with his resume and attempt to locate employment commensurate with his experience, training and education.\(^{19}\)

Simon stated that is sometimes necessary for emigrants to be

\(^{16}\)Ibid.  
\(^{17}\)Ibid.  
\(^{18}\)Ibid.  
\(^{19}\)Ibid.
placed on public aid if they are unable to obtain employment due to lack of English language proficiency. She added, "It's not something I like to do. We can only afford to support the family for so long, but we cannot support them for years. Only six, seven or eight months maximum, then we turn them over to public aid."  

When queried as to how Soviet Jews are referred to JFCS and to her West Rogers Park office, Simon explained:

First there's communication between "Samuel Gold" and our Executive District downtown; "Esther Fine" does the accepting for the agency. She accepts all the immigrants who come to Chicago. Then, depending on where the closest relatives live, the cases will be sent to those districts. When the family is in Rome, communications between HIAS in Rome and HIAS in Chicago go back and forth to make sure that the family hears that we can provide a certain amount of sponsorship. They are in Rome for a month or a month and a half. Then HIAS is notified that the plane will be arriving with these people in New York on a certain date. Usually they'll be put on a plane in the evening so that relatives here can pick them up. Then HIAS notifies our central office downtown and the central office notifies the local district office. The cases are then assigned.

Simon stated that cases are assigned to the JFCS office closest to the home of the emigre relative, but are often reassigned to her Devon Avenue location once the emigre locates an apartment. This may be due to the fact that only two JFCS family workers speak Russian and both are assigned to the Devon Avenue locale. This also causes delays because paperwork must be sent from one office to another.

Simon has kept a log of Soviet Jews whom she has personally resettled in Chicago. In 1975, 95 people; 1976 107 people; 1977, 91 people; 1978, 86 people, and in 1979, 109 people. She stressed that these figures were not the number of families she serviced, but the

\[20\text{Ibid.}\]

\[21\text{Ibid.}\]
number of persons she has aided. In 1979, Simon became the supervisor of the program and her personal caseload was reduced while resettlement cases were assigned to other workers. However, in 1980 she serviced 30 Soviet Jews.

When asked if emigres complained of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, Simon answered that it depended upon the individual. Some feel that there was discrimination; others do not. It may or may not be a factor but it is interesting to note that Simon remarked that she has found that an unusually high percentage of immigrants have cancer when they arrive here or develop it soon after their arrival. Other illnesses common to many emigres are heart disease, diabetes and colon problems. She stated this may be a reason for their desire to emigrate, adding that medical technology in the Soviet Union is not as advanced as that in the United States. In Chicago, Michael Reese and Mt. Sinai Hospitals provide services to the emigre.22

Soviet Jews are referred to Jewish Vocational Service for assistance in obtaining employment. Emigres are cautioned to always have their identity cards and/or their Documents of Admission which are stamped "Employment Authorized" in their possession as proof of their legality to work. They are also given instructions to obtain a Social Security card and number.23 Those over 65, blind or disabled are informed that after one month in the United States they may apply for Social Security Supplemental Income.24

22 Ibid.

23 Bergman, 9.

24 Ibid., 27.
The process of obtaining employment is, for some Soviet Jews, a shocking experience, quite unlike what they experienced in the USSR. Their ability to locate employment is dependent not only upon the job skills they possess, but also upon their fluency in English and their education. Jewish Vocational Service assigns a counselor to assist in not only finding a job, but to also explain the differences between working in America and working in the Soviet Union. Many may be forced to accept employment which does not hold the equivalent status of their employment in the Soviet Union.

In an interview with "Rabbi Sol Baum," who is the associate director of F.R.E.E., he expounded upon the problem Soviet Jews encounter when attempting to obtain employment.

The biggest problem we encounter is jobs. When they come over here, they give them a certain amount of assistance from the Jewish Vocational Service and the Jewish Federation. It runs out after six to eight months. The main thing is they must get on their feet. They must put bread and butter on the table, and here they have to learn the language and the lifestyle of an American. They have to find a job that is suitable for them. Many of them are coming here highly educated, engineers, scientists, doctors. The only problem is all that does not meet up with the standards of America, which means they have to go back to school and brush-up on their education. It's a real hardship. It is very difficult A) financially just to pay for school and B) how to tackle both at the same time. You have to seek a job and at the same time, you must brush-up your education. So many take menial jobs, and are very unhappy about it because they are not getting their share. You know, their fair share. They have to find a job that is suitable for them. Many of them, unfortunately, go on public aid. We try to encourage them, knowing their problem. We tell them to get the most suitable job immediately. So it is not the best job, a scientific job, but it is a job. Put bread and butter on the table. Meanwhile, that will do. Go to class in the evening and in many ways you can advance. They are people with a great deal of pride. They are strong egotists. They do not like to have the image of an immigrant. They want to shake it off; they don't want to be different than Americans. They feel they are smarter and better than the American. They are educated people; aggressive people; studious people. They are challenging. Those who have been here
for any length of time buy homes, cars. They are successful. They work very hard.²⁵

Both F.R.E.E. and JVS assist the emigre in his search for employment. Baum noted that those who trained in the Soviet Union in the fields of engineering and computer programming may find it easier to obtain positions in those professions because "the basic language is the same so the employers don't mind training them on the job as well."²⁶ The majority of those who were doctors, however, must change their professions.

When asked how F.R.E.E. helps with job placement, Baum stated that they know that employment is "out there." People call F.R.E.E. seeking employees, especially in engineering and computer programming. F.R.E.E. writes resumes, types job applications, and often bridges the language gap between the employer and employee. Baum explained, "The biggest problem is the language. They don't want to ask for instructions a second time because they are embarrassed that they did not understand."²⁷

Jewish Vocational Service assists the emigre in his search for employment through an organized five-step systematic approach to "job hunting." The emigre is first asked to complete a "Self-assessment and Appraisal" questionnaire designed to help him identify his strengths and weaknesses and to determine how he "best fits into the world of work now


²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.
and in the future." Once this is accomplished an "Exploration of the Job Market" is conducted. This consists of using various sources to locate appropriate employment. Sources include the library, the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, personal contacts with knowledge of available employment, newspapers, magazines and trade publications, occupational associations, and personal contact with executives of companies, agencies and small businesses.

Instructions are then given in the techniques of finding a job, inclusive of, but not limited to "cold turkey" doorbell ringing or phone calling with no previous contact with employers," responding to newspaper ads, submitting resumes to employers located in directories or through personal contact and employment agencies. Step-by-step instructions are given in the formulation of a resume and appropriate cover letters.

If these steps are successfully completed, and an interview with a prospective employer is granted, the emigre is assisted by the JVS counselor as to the manner in which interviews are conducted in the United States. This includes how to respond to questions, what type of attire to wear, and stresses punctuality.

The fifth step in the "job hunting" process is "Follow Up." The emigre is told to contact the prospective employer within several days.

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29 Ibid., 4-8.

30 Ibid., 8.

31 Ibid., 13-18.
after the initial interview "to express ... interest in the job, and
to determine when a decision will be made regarding the position."32 If
he so desires, the JVS counselor will complete this step for him.

All emigres are not able to obtain satisfactory employment and
may be forced, due to economic circumstances, to accept a position they
do not desire, however, they are encouraged to continue their efforts to
locate employment they deem acceptable while maintaining their current
jobs.

Conclusion

There is no doubt than the emigre's entire life is altered once
he leaves the Soviet Union. There are, however, Jewish social service
agencies which aid in the enculturation process and personal adjustment.
Jewish Family and Community Service, Jewish Vocational Service and HIAS
tend to be more formal in their relationships with the Soviet Jew than
does Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe. This may be due in part to
the fact that the majority of its staff are Russian immigrants and
refugees who are able to empathize with the plight of the newly arrived
emigre. Indeed, F.R.E.E. interacts with the Soviet Jew on three levels:
professional, social and religious.

It is HIAS whose task it is to locate a safe haven for the
emigre once he has left the Soviet Union. This organization aids with
the documentation requirements of the United States Department of State
and the Department of Immigration and Naturalization. HIAS initiates
the emigre into the legal maze of paperwork and networks with Jewish

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32 Ibid., 19.
Family and Community Service. It is the latter agency which resettles the emigre and informally educates him in the mores of his adopted country. However, it is Jewish Vocational Service which propels the enculturation process one step further into the mainstream, as this agency, through job placement and counseling, assists the emigre in his quest to become a self-supporting, viable member of society.

This chapter has shown that the Soviet Jewish emigre, whether immigrant or refugee, having escaped the "dragon's belly," is not left to flounder in a sea of red tape. These agencies, supported by the Jewish community in addition to the federal government, offer the emigre the life raft he must have in order to remain afloat.

What role did formal educational institutions play in the life of the emigre? How did they facilitate his quest for the American dream? The answers to these questions are explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV

ENCULTURATION AND FORMAL EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF SCHOOLING

It is written in the Shem’a, a Hebrew daily prayer, "Thou shall teach thy children diligently. . . ." In accordance with this commandment, historically, education among Jewish people has always been a priority. They subsumed the traditional value of education into their secular lives, even though they were barred from the overt practice of Judaic tradition in their daily lives. Jews adopted education’s value as the mechanism for enculturation into society’s mainstream. Soviet Jewish emigres were acutely aware of the exigency and foremost necessity to master the language of their adopted country. Those who emigrated to the United States understood the necessity for proficiency in the English language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing if they were to be incorporated into America’s established societal structure as viable, productive and self-sufficient members. Additionally, they realized the need to study further academic and vocational oriented disciplines for employment purposes. Therefore, Soviet Jews sought formal schooling, defined herein as learning which is organized and structured and which takes place within an educational institution.

Chapter IV examines two formal accredited educational
institutions, the Chicago public schools and Truman College, and their roles in assisting Soviet Jewish emigres to acquire proficiency in the English language and related academic disciplines and vocational training programs from the years 1960 to 1980. Bilingual educational statistics in the Russian language were not available from the Chicago Board of Education. Most case study participants are adults; therefore, the Truman College experience provides a more fruitful basis for discussing enculturation and formal education of Soviet emigres.

Initial efforts to obtain educational and statistical information from the Chicago Board of Education concerning Soviet Jewish immigrants and/or refugees were inconclusive. Numerous telephone conversations with courteous and concerned former and current employees of the Department of Language and Cultural Education resulted in conflicting responses. Therefore, a formal request was filed under the Freedom of Information Act requesting available data pertinent to Soviet immigrants and/or refugees who were enrolled in the Chicago public schools during the twenty year period from 1960 to 1980. This resulted in apologetic written responses which contended that the data were not available. General Superintendent of Schools, Ted D. Kimbrough, in correspondence dated September 26, 1990, stated:

In answer to your Freedom of Information Request, I offer the following:


Reply: Our central database does not contain this information. The only other possible source of information would be from the individual school records or paper records maintained at the Central Service Center. Because this information is not compiled in a format specific to school staff, It [sic] would be too burdensome to compile all of the specific information needed to prepare an answer.
to this request. As spelled out in section 203(f) of the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, you have the opportunity to reduce this request to manageable proportions. If that cannot be done, your request will be denied because compliance would be unduly burdensome.¹

Further inquiry to the Department of Management and Information Processing, Chicago public schools, netted a similar result. George R. Floress, principal systems engineer, in correspondence dated November 15, 1990, wrote:

Your request for information on students of Soviet immigrants/refugees who enrolled in the school system during the years 1960-1980 cannot be accomplished as we do not keep records that would enable us to identify these type of students.²

A final request, dated October 8, 1990, pared to "manageable proportions," was submitted to the General Superintendent's office in which the following information was sought:

1. For the years 1960-1980 (inclusive), the types of English language instruction offered by the Chicago Board of Education to those students whose native language was Russian. Any materials pertinent to this instruction.

2. For the years 1960-1980 (inclusive), materials pertinent to instruction in the content areas to those students whose native language was Russian.

3. Any available statistics concerning the number of students enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools during the years 1960-1980, whose native language was Russian, and/or who held immigrant/refugee status.³

On November 19, 1990, a response was received from the Chicago Board of Education's Freedom of Information Officer, Mrs. Marj Halperin, which stated that "student immigration data has been collected only

¹Ted D. Kimbrough, TLS, to author, 26 September 1990, Chicago.
²George R. Floress, TLS, to author, 15 November 1990, Chicago.
³Sharon Rae Bender, TLS, to Ted D. Kimbrugh, 8 October 1990, Chicago.
since 1980, when first required for Federal funding purposes. This correspondence, although not entirely responsive to the inquiry, also offered limited information concerning the types of instruction available to students whose native language was Russian and who were enrolled in the Chicago public schools during the stated time frame:

... during the years 1960-1980, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction was provided to limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in the Chicago Public Schools on a limited basis prior to the bilingual education mandate. As of that mandate, all LEP students enrolled in the Chicago Public Schools are provided ESL instruction.5

English as a Second Language is a component of bilingual-bicultural education which offers education in the English language and culture, giving equal stress to the student's culture and the new culture. ESL and language arts in the second language are the same in programs for limited-English-speaking children.6

It should be noted that in a 1975-76, report published by the Department of Research and Evaluation, Chicago Board of Education, there are twelve languages listed on a "Bilingual Student Information Sheet" none of which was Russian.7

It was ascertained through interviews with two case study participants who enrolled in Stone and Clinton, and Boone Elementary

4Marj Halperin (Mrs.), TLS, to author, 19 November 1990, Chicago.

5Ibid.


7John W. Wick, Director, Department of Research and Evaluation, Board of Education City of Chicago, Chicago's Bilingual Programs: Evaluation Report 1975-76, Chicago, July 1977, Appendix B.
Schools in West Rogers Park during 1979 and 1980, that one received no instruction in English as a Second Language, while the other was released from certain English only content area classes each day and offered ESL instruction. This participant received English language instruction at Clinton and Boone Schools from teachers who spoke Russian; the other participant knew there was a teacher at Stone School who spoke Russian and attempted to help those who needed assistance; however, neither was able to recall the specifics of the instructional programs.

As there is a paucity of information regarding specific Russian bilingual-bicultural programs implemented by the Chicago school system from 1960-1980, and statistics are unavailable, reliable and valid conclusions are unable to be drawn. However, information was available from Truman College concerning implementation of an academic/vocational program specific to the needs of Soviet Jewish immigrants and refugees. A discussion of this program will be the crux of the following pages.

Truman College, located in Uptown, on Broadway and Wilson Avenues, was officially dedicated by the City Colleges of Chicago in May, 1976. From its inception, this community college offered English as a Second Language classes, free of charge, to area residents and others whose native language was not English. The prerequisites for enrollment were an English language placement examination in addition to


9 Dr. Wallace B. Appleson, President, Truman College, interview by author, telephone, Chicago, 14 May 1991.
a personal interview with a college advisor. Students were required to enroll concurrently in a "block" of three separate ESL classes: English, Reading and Speech. Each component earned three college credit hours, for a total of nine credits, upon successful completion.10

In August 1979, Truman College initiated a federally funded Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (C.E.T.A.) program designed specifically for Soviet Jewish immigrants. The former director of the Truman College Soviet Jewish Program, Rabbi Louis S. Lazovsky, in an interview conducted February 4, 1991, described the program in detail:

Our program started in August 1979, and it started with thirty initial immigrants who were to receive a training statement from the C.E.T.A. program. . . . It was a trust of all funds for use for employability. . . . Now it is [called] J.T.P.A., the Job Training Partnership Act. C.E.T.A. was its forerunner and I had submitted papers to them to justify running the program. The person who is no longer living, but was in charge of the program was at the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training. His name was Samuel Bernstein. Truman had an advisory council called the Jewish Manpower Council, whereby Hershel Berger was the chairman and Sol Branzel was his first assistant. I guess the link between the Manpower Council and the Mayor's office was a personal relationship between Sol Branzel and Sam Bernstein. Sam Bernstein had come to the United States as an immigrant and he made his way up to the third most powerful position in the City of Chicago, under the former Mayor Daley's mayoral administration.

Basically, the program was to take recently arrived Soviet immigrants, provide them English instruction over the summer, after we screened, grouped them, and offered them a certificate program in Data Processing, and, of course, enculturation, and English instruction, computer instruction, as well as supportive services which were probably the key to the program, so that they could successfully find placement. We were very successful. Over ninety percent completion rate and over ninety percent employment rate. After the success of that program, we broadened that program to include accounting, clerical bookkeeping, and engineering,

10 Truman College, Schedule of Classes, Fall Semester, 1979, 7.
specifically pi stress analysis. Those eventually all were funded by C.E.T.A.\textsuperscript{11}

When queried as to the manner in which the program was publicized and the criteria used for individual participant selection, Rabbi Lazovsky expounded:

We used community organizations who were working with Soviet immigrants to identify a whole bunch of them. And then there was the word-of-mouth type of thing that eventually led them to us. ... I gave them an exam in English, which was a College Veteran's Placement Exam at Truman College and then a personal interview which dealt with their educational qualifications, their highest level of education achieved, current aptitude towards pursuing such a program, or if they preferred a different program, as well as a feeling if they would succeed in the program.\textsuperscript{12}

Rabbi Lazovsky stated that all participants in the program were "highly educated immigrants," 90 percent of whom held at least the equivalent of a Bachelor Degree; 60 percent a Master Degree or higher from the Soviet Union. Therefore, "they weren't comparable to other immigrant groups, especially not at Truman College."\textsuperscript{13} None attended Truman for the purpose of obtaining an Associate Degree, and each was allowed to select those courses which pertained to his career interests while simultaneously enrolled in ESL classes.

When asked the reason the Truman site was selected rather than an alternative City College, Lazovsky responded:

I think a variety of political reasons. [Truman College President Wallace B.] Appleson was someone they felt they could work with, Truman had a very large English as a Second Language program going because of the area and the student mix that was there already, and the Chancellor of the City Colleges was Oscar Shabat. There were a

\textsuperscript{11} Rabbi Louis A. Lazovsky, interview by author, tape recording, Chicago, 4 February 1991.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
number of reasons, but I think heavy on them was the fact that English as a Second Language . . . the studies were available, it was near a campus and they had some good programs going on there in terms of their cooperative education grants which provide additional job opportunities to immigrants.14

Lazovsky was referring to the Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center based in the college. The Center provides a variety of services to those students who require support in adjusting to their new environment. According to Project Advisor, Ludmila Marinberg, immigrants and refugees from the Soviet Union, Vietnam and Poland comprise the majority of those seeking assistance. In a report to the Truman College Council on March 21, 1991, she provided an overview of the Program:

The Program conducts outreach activities to recruit refugee and immigrant students for the college credit programs at Truman College.

[It] provides refugees and immigrants with orientation and counseling services regarding their language, [and] vocational and academic adjustment. Specifically, the Program assists refugees in their applying for financial aid, in all stages of registration, in their contacts with the Financial Aid and Business offices at Truman regarding their registration and tuition. Also, the Program works with the related college faculty members regarding the learning progress of special students in order to provide appropriate counseling services. In addition, limited tutoring services are provided directly to students in ESL.15

Lazovsky stressed that although his program was initiated to serve only thirty Soviet immigrants, in 1979, there were approximately four to five hundred Soviets enrolled in ESL and other career programs.

14 Ibid.

15 Ludmila Marinberg, Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center, Paper presented as part of an oral presentation to the Truman College Council, Chicago, 21 March 1991, 1, photocopied.
As of September 1990, these numbers had increased to 1,515.16

Lazovsky attributed the success of the Truman College Soviet program to the fact that they were "used to an educational environment as opposed to the informal environments that were found in synagogues or in Jewish Vocational Service or other places."17 He also believed that the C.E.T.A. program was responsible for an increase in the college's general Soviet population. Expounding upon this, Lazovsky related:

I think that most of the other Soviets knew that there was something going on for Soviets there [Truman College]. There's the place to be, like a word of mouth type thing. And all Soviets benefitted. They took programs, let's say in the evening. Instead of taking a year and a half program in nine months, because we used block programs for Soviets, they could take all thirty hours in . . . one nine month period. The other people worked for a year and a half to two years, depending. They didn't receive training from it [C.E.T.A.], or mandatory placement, but certainly many of them were placed [in jobs].18

Of those who successfully completed the C.E.T.A. program, according to Lazovsky, English language skills and their enthusiastic attitudes were key elements in their ability to obtain rapid employment.

Of those who were unsuccessful, Lazovsky explained:

Either they weren't placed or they never finished the program. That could be for other reasons. Like in people who dropped out, I think English was the predominant thing. While many of them have the math aptitudes, and were formal programmers, they were like math kind of people. They had sciences as opposed to linguistics, and they just couldn't handle a rigorous block program curriculum. Many of them just dropped out and went to a [Truman] College program, completed it later and found employment.

But many, interestingly . . . , didn't find employment because of, I think, cultural attitudinal problems. One fellow was an engineer and in an engineering program. When he was asked to calculate

16 Ibid., 2.
17 Lazovsky.
18 Ibid.
things on a calculator to two [decimal] places, he said, "Well, in the Soviet Union we did it to four places and American engineers don't know what they are doing, and this lacks standards."

The guy had perfect English, but, I hate to use a trite example, he wasn't in the card game, but he was telling people how to play their cards. I think that many of these Soviets felt they were not these ignoramuses coming from other places without degrees and they felt that if they had a Master Degree or more, and if they had the English aptitude, they could change the system they were coming to. They found out! They found out they could not. 19

Lazovsky elaborated upon the Soviets' seemingly superior and egotistical attitudes as well as the economic benefits of training this group, as opposed to others, despite this negative image:

I think you have to realize the expectations of the Soviets were far different than past immigrant groups or even current immigrant groups who are uneducated to their [Soviet] level. I think that a study I did using 1981 dollars held constant, where you talk about strictly from an economical sense, not from a policy sense, that the people you would want to train and [expend] government money on are the trained people. Because you will unlock the most of the human capital.

The Soviet Union spent $95,000, on them to give them a college education. In terms of 1981 dollars, it is a small expenditure. You are able to unlock that. Whereas, other people were at a high school degree, and you would have to spend all of this money to get them their equivalent high school degree of $70,000. And then the additional dollars to bring them up to speed with their Associate Degree vs. the inner city people who have already spent through a two year Associate Degree and public funding who now have to spend five more years to train so they get what they missed through the Chicago Public School System and through the City College system, and then re-train them and then place them.

In terms of the ten year pay out of dollars, Soviets would begin repaying the government monies after a year and a half and would yield a very, very great return on benefits, in terms of just taxes, assuming they didn't get a promotion. Whereas, the inner city people, it would take them five or six years to train them, and they would be in model positions, and they wouldn't return anything, even after a decade. So I think that, just from a strict standpoint of cost, without desirable social goals, ... you would always want to

19 Ibid.
re-train the higher educated people before you would want to train others.20

Soviet immigrants, asserted Lazovsky, were "more serious" than were their counterparts from different countries. Unlike previous and present immigrant groups, Soviet Jews were not satisfied with menial labor employment, such as washing dishes and floors, and sought to obtain the highest professional positions available to them. In addition, they did not find American culture completely alien and were able to adapt more rapidly than, for example, the Vietnamese.21 Lazovsky explained:

Comments by the ESL staff at Truman are, When you teach Vietnamese [the] English [language] they can say, "See Dick run. See Jane run," and then still squat in the hallways. But if you teach a Russian [the] English [language], he'll talk to you about the opera and know more than the Americans. So there is a big difference.22

The ESL instructors networked and conferred with one another regarding each Soviet student's progress in the program. Each was evaluated and decisions regarding English language proficiency and classification were then determined, as related by Lazovsky:

Instructors would talk to each other and people would get reputations, as any student in a particular department, and they would have the intermediate level advancement [accelerated] special; then English 197, Speech 110, and then English 101. Very few Russians finished English 101. More may have entered into the special level, and then may have taken English 197, which was pre-freshman tongue.23

An integral component of the C.E.T.A. program was employment

20Ibid.
21Ibid.
22Ibid.
23Ibid.
placement. To this end, Lazovsky and his faculty worked closely with potential employers, determining their requirements and recruiting qualified Soviets to meet these demands. Lazovsky elaborated:

Eventually they [employers] called us, because to develop the curriculum for the C.E.T.A. program, we worked with employers, saying, "What do you want your computer programmers to know? What do you want your accountants to know?" And so, they were aware of us. And, plus, many Soviets had Master Degrees and advanced degrees and Bachelor Degrees.

We would have career days and invite fifty employers. All of the Russians would go through there and create an animosity with the American or Vietnamese or other groups in the college, because [they asked], 'Why are you interviewing the Soviets? Why aren't you interviewing us?' And the answer was, 'Because you don't have a college degree, and they already do. They're just getting supplementary training and you don't have a college degree, so we don't want to interview you.'

Places like Standard Oil or First National Bank would interview Soviets and they would not interview other people in the college. 24

Lazovsky was queried as to whether those who were trained as engineers in the Soviet Union found it less difficult to obtain employment than those who were trained in the medical professions. His forthright answer was:

Everybody is an engineer in the Soviet Union! Their educational system is such that to promote Communist equality, everybody was an engineer, whether they were a bookkeeping engineer, or an accounting engineer, or a data processing engineer. Everybody was an engineer!

My experience has been that we help doctors as well. We got most of them into the Stanley Kaplan course. . . . When they came here, they had to sit for the Educational Committee for Foreign Medical Graduates, the ECFMG. If they had not finished a licensed medical institution, as recognized by the World Organization of Medical Institutions, they couldn't sit for the ECFMG, because their medical degree wasn't recognized.

If they did go to such a school, that was an accredited school, then they could sit for the ECFMG, then take their FLEX exam. Then that will take them past their normal physicians examinations, and then

24Ibid.
sit for residency. So that took seven, eight, nine, ten years.

I know one fellow who came in one of the first groups in 1978--1979, who did successfully complete his medical residency. He was a very good cardiologist in the Soviet Union, as well as a pediatrician in a major Moscow hospital, and . . . [he] was volunteering once a week at the ARK, treating people.

So the physicians that were truly physicians that were younger did finish and become physicians again. Those who were older, 40's and 50's, why finish? By the time they would get done, they'd be in their late 50's and they are not going to get a residency and they are not going to start again. For them, it was very difficult. For others, it was not.25

Lazovsky noted that those who were trained in the dental profession in the Soviet Union required complete re-training in the United States due to the "backwards approach"26 to dentistry in their native country. However, the variable which hampered those in the medical professions was, not surprisingly, their English language vocabulary skill development. He expounded:

Look, you can't tell a guy, "Hey, my appendix hurts me," when they don't know what an appendix is! There is a total lexicon of terminology that physicians have that's different in America than in other places. And they need to know what these blood counts are, and . . . things that they know what they were in the Soviet Union, they just don't know the English equivalent. It's the terminology playing a large factor and back to the English factoring the equation of needs.27

Lazovsky commended the City Colleges' central office and Truman College President Wallace B. Appleson, in particular, for their efforts to bring the C.E.T.A. program to fruition. He stated that despite the Federal government's delayed reimbursement to the City Colleges for administration of the program, they produced a "good product."28

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
you have a motivated student, you are able to say you have a good product. The Soviets, unlike others, provide motivated students and increase your success rate."28

Commenting on the overwhelming success of the Soviet immigrant program he supervised, in closing, Lazovsky proudly stated:

I think it was a wonderful program and a wonderful opportunity. I think that the problem with formal education being provided to working age immigrants should be addressed to the City College System in it's appropriate format. Without it, I shudder to think of how many more of these people [Soviets] would be unemployed or underemployed.

I am very, very proud of the role I played in developing the program, going from thirty to, I think they had over a thousand students at Truman, certainly over eight hundred and fifty last semester.

And the more Soviets that come to Chicago, I hope the more they go through the City Colleges, because it is a benefit to City Colleges because they are employing good teachers to teach needed skills. City Colleges are living up to their mandate in justifying the economies of scale; the property taxes that are being levied to run the City Colleges. And the Soviets are certainly contributing to American life.

America is a country that has been made great by immigrants. We can only benefit from their [Soviets'] expertise, from their perception, from their culture. They are a gifted group of people and we'll have to keep working with them.29

Conclusion

This chapter has examined formal educational opportunities which were available to Soviet emigres through the administration and supervision of the Chicago public schools and Truman College. The public schools were unable to provide definitive statistical or academic data pertinent to this population for the years 1960-1980.

28Ibid.

29Ibid.
Correspondence with the Chicago Board of Education's Freedom of Information Officer, Marj Halperin, revealed that the Board did not compile these data as there was no Federal government mandate prior to 1980, which required this record keeping.

Halperin stated that English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction was provided, however, she was unable to provide details of the curriculum or identify the public schools which provided ESL instruction to Soviet emigres. Instructional information was ascertained through ESL handbooks written by the Board of Education's Department of Curriculum, Division of Teaching English to Non-English Speaking Children. It was learned, during interviews with two Soviet emigres, that ESL instruction was provided at Stone, Clinton and Boone Elementary Schools, which are located in West Rogers Park.

There is also no evidence available in the Board of Education's reports concerning bilingual education that a Russian language bilingual program was initiated during those two decades at any public school.

Based upon the above information, it is not possible to draw valid conclusions concerning the formal education of Soviet emigres who attended the Chicago public schools during the years 1960-1980.

By contrast, Truman College, from its dedication in 1976, provided adult Soviet emigres with formal education instruction in English as a Second Language in addition to academic and vocational oriented training. Of particular note was a federally funded Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (C.E.T.A.) program initiated in 1979, for the purpose of re-training thirty selected Soviet emigres and aiding them in their pursuit of careers in data processing,
computer science, accounting, bookkeeping, and engineering, while simultaneously honing their English language communication skills through intensive study.

Participants were educated in the Soviet Union, where 85 to 90 percent had earned the equivalent of a Bachelor Degree; 60 percent held a Master Degree or higher educational equivalent. Each was provided with enculturation adjustment counseling services, academic tutoring, and employment placement advantages. Program Administrator Rabbi Louis A. Lazovsky reported that 90 percent of participants in the C.E.T.A. program were successfully employed and became viable, productive, self-sufficient members of mainstream American society.

Knowledge of the educational programs available at Truman College attracted additional members of the Soviet immigrant community, thus increasing enrollment in the general educational disciplines. Support services were provided by Truman's Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center to all, whether or not they were participants in the C.E.T.A. program.

There is no doubt that those Soviet emigres who attended Truman College reaped the benefits of the formal educational programs provided to them. Two such cases are those of Soviet emigres "Carla Weiss" and "Dee Nathan", subjects of Chapter V. 30 Weiss, Nathan and other Soviet emigres, in turn, due to their tenacity and high motivational levels, were able to become enculturated and have now moved into mainstream America; in their case, the melting pot had produced the desired alloy.

In the next chapter, we shall meet and talk with some of the individuals who comprise this new Jewish Soviet American amalgam.
CHAPTER V

SELECTED CASE STUDIES

Unfolded in this chapter are the stories of five Soviet Jewish families who chose to immigrate to Chicago, Illinois, during the years 1979 and 1980. These chronicles were described in the first person by the actual participants in these events. Members of each family were interviewed during several sessions. The interviewer took notes and tape recorded each session, thereby having an exact record of the proceedings and to be able to prepare perspective questions for future interviews. The stories that these individuals told are a testimony to their pursuit of freedom despite the hardships, discrimination and persecution they knowingly faced in applying for their exit visas. Their words are a declaration, not only to the difficulties of uprooting one's family to embark on a new life in an alien land, but also to the freedom they have discovered and the love they have for their adopted country.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the process of resettlement and enculturation. It is also a narrative of the portals through which these families passed on their voyage to become United States citizens. These are stories best told by the immigrants themselves, each of whom has been assigned a pseudonym.

To insure a diversity of perspective, criteria were established for the selection of this study's subjects. There were to be at least
four target families, of diverse occupations, of Jewish extraction, who had been residents of two different regions or cities within the Soviet Union.

An informal interview format was employed in which the following five questions were posed:

1. Why did you decide to leave the Soviet Union?
2. What was your profession or occupation and age?
3. Why did you decide to immigrate to the United States rather than another country?
4. What socioeconomic and cultural problems did you experience in the United States?
5. How did education assist in your adjustment?

In search of interviewees, the researcher contacted Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe (F.R.E.E). "Carla Weiss," a worker there, graciously agreed to be interviewed. She became the subject of the first case study. Upon becoming further acquainted with the intricacies of this study, Mrs. Weiss provided this researcher with the names of several persons whom she believed would also grant permission to be interviewed. One of the persons was her daughter, "Dee Nathan," who, with her husband "Ian," are the subjects of the second case study. "Mia Stine" and her son "Ziv," the principals of the third case study, were also contacted through the assistance of Mrs. Weiss.

"Ann and Uri Fine," the participants in the fourth case study, were contacted through the aid of a mutual friend. Mrs. Fine, in turn, furnished this researcher with the names of several persons she had known in Minsk, her native city in the Soviet Union. The result of Mrs. Fine's assistance was an interview with "Sonja and Jacob Leff," the subjects of the fifth case study.
The interviews reported herein are verbatim and may lead the reader to gain an empathic understanding of what these various parties endured in their struggles to achieve freedom. It is written in the Passover Haggadah, "In every generation one ought to regard himself as if he had gone personally forth from Egypt." In keeping with this directive, it is hoped that each person, as he reads the following interviews, shall consider himself a participant in the flight from the Soviet Union to liberty in the United States.

Interview with "Carla Weiss"

SRB: Today is July 3, 1990. This is an interview with Clara Weiss. I want you to know that you will not be named in my dissertation and I'd appreciate it if you would give me oral consent to use this interview.

C: Yes, I give you permission.

SRB: You were born in Kiev in 1923. Can you tell me a little bit about life in Kiev?

C: In Kiev, at that time, we lived together in two rooms, seven people. It was after the war and because of that, it was impossible to receive a better apartment. We lived terrible, but, we don't know another life. In 1980, we started to think about leaving the Soviet Union. We decided to listen to the children and leave everything. There was no future for the children. My mother, husband, daughter, her husband and their two sons. We all lived together in two rooms. One grandchild was eight years, the other was four years. The money was not enough for a family of four people to live. We helped them to live. We helped to send the children to camp that summer. Right now my grandchildren are ages eighteen years and fourteen years. Their house, they pay a mortgage, but they are very lucky to live here. They have a very nice life. They never think about this in Russia.

SRB: What was your profession?

C: My profession. I was a foreman. It was with 2500 people, and I have to manage them. Each year I'd have to go on a business trip to Moscow to make arrangements to order some dresses for women and for men. I was assistant to foreman, an engineer, in this factory where I worked.
SRB: Why did you immigrate to Chicago rather than to Israel which has an open-door policy for Soviet Jews?

C: My son-in-law's sister, she came here a year before us to Chicago in 1979. My sister lives in Israel from 1948, but her life was very miserable. She came. She has over there three children, but the life was violent. To go out from Russia she did, but if you come here, you will not have those problems.

SRB: Did you have a sponsor when you came to Chicago?

C: Thank you to all of the Jewish organizations who helped us. They helped us for four months. They gave us every month money to pay for the apartment and to eat. My mother was at this time eighty years old. I was still young and we were on welfare, one hundred twenty four dollars from the government to help economically for the apartment. After three years, I received a subsidized apartment because my mother and husband were senior citizens.

SRB: How did you locate an apartment in Chicago?

C: I saw the signs for rent and got an apartment. After one year, I studied the language. I know the language, but not perfectly. After one year, HIAS take me to their organization and I worked six years for them.

SRB: How is life different here? For example, going to a supermarket?

C: In the supermarket it was very different because we have to stay in line to buy something in Russia. In line, it is your line and all that you can buy is what is leftover. Here, everything is free from lines.

SRB: Did you experience any anti-Semitism in Kiev?

C: Yes, for myself and for my children. My boss called me and told me, "Why do you have to leave Russia?" He said, "You are like my boss. You receive the same money like I am." I told him, "This is not a future." He said, "Now there is a new law. It is 1 percent where the Jews can go to study at the university." I explain him back that that is the problem and that is why I left Russia.

SRB: That is because they only allow one percent Jewish to attend the university in Russia, and here, it is not like that.

C: Correct.

SRB: When you came here, how did you adjust to the life? For example, how did you learn to speak English?
C: It was hard, very hard the first couple of years because we had no jobs, we had no language, we had no friends, we had nothing. The language was the barrier to do something.

SRB: How did you learn the language?

C: Everybody learned very hard. Day and night, I do not know if everybody else did this, but, I did this. I went to sleep by 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. I made a little notebook and I counted how many words I know today and how many I have to learn for tomorrow. Then I was happy and I told everybody that I have to kiss the ears and the soil of America that we are here, because I am very happy for my children. I left Russia because of love and this was a sacrifice. But I don't think right now about Russia. I think my country is now here.

SRB: You consider yourself an American?

C: Yes, yes.

SRB: A Jewish American?

C: Yes, a Jewish American.

SRB: If you want to go to shul, you don't have to worry that someone is going to watch you?

C: No, I don't worry living here.

SRB: Did you go to a formal school at all in English to learn here?

C: No, because my parents were very religious. I learned seven years in a Jewish school. I read Yiddish, I speak Yiddish and I write Yiddish. But when I finished the seven grades, in Russia it was anti-Semitic. They closed all Jewish schools. That is what happened. That is why our children do not know Yiddish.

SRB: They outlawed it?

C: Yes.

SRB: Tell me, when you wanted to learn English, which obviously you've done beautifully.

C: I'll tell you something about Russia. When we decided to leave Russia, my children went through English courses, but the English courses, the FBI, the KGB, take all names from the Jewish people who enter the English courses and when they give the paper to OVIR, they look through this and they throw you out of the courses.

SRB: So, they are tracking down to see if you have a visa?
C: Yes. In 1979-80, this happened. My daughter and son-in-law, we went to the courses. They found our names and they saw that Mr. Nathan or Mr. Weiss, they go to the courses, they applied to go leave in Russia. They take it out over there.

SRB: Digressing a little, when you applied to leave, you could not go directly to an agency. How did you apply to leave?

C: I'll tell you. I received a visa invitation from Israel and I went to OVIR. But in 1979, when you applied to go out, they take you out from your job, because you have a paper, that you will work for this year until this year. You give this paper to OVIR, to whom is my concern, to OVIR. Then they tell you cannot work in our place any more, move out. They fired me.

SRB: What embassy did you have to go to, to go through all this process?

C: This was the Russian embassy. The name is OVIR. It is the first. When you have to put a visa to enter the United States, you have to go to the Embassy of the U.S.A. But we didn't go through the U.S.A. The Netherlands, Holland, helped us. The Russians do not have diplomatic relations with Israel.

SRB: Getting back to how you learned English, did you ever go to a classroom in the United States?

C: Yes. I went to Truman College for two semesters. In one year it is eight months. In each synagogue was a group. Like right now, Temple Menorah. Everybody who came here went to Temple Menorah to study. It is right now. And before it was two temples where the people go to study English. It was on Lunt and on Touhy, EZRA. California and Lunt and California and Touhy.

SRB: How did this education help you adjust?

C: Because I have the education, I adjusted very easy. I don't know what in my head goes, but I learned the English.

SRB: Now you think in English?

C: When I came, I thought in Russian and had to translate in English. Right now, no Russian, only English, and that's it.

SRB: That means that you have learned the language!

C: Maybe.

SRB: Oh, certainly!

SRB: Is there something that I'm not covering in my questions, that you
would like to tell me about your getting adjusted here and becoming what we call the American?

C: I don't know what else to tell you. It is easier for me to answer your questions.

SRB: Okay. Just taking the bus or the El.

C: You know what, when I worked in HIAS, I have a present in HIAS. They gave me a car. I drive a car. One attorney from a suburb here received a job in Chicago and it was an old car and I drove the car for two years. I had their permission, I have the driver's license and I drive the car. But, when I moved to a subsidized apartment, it was easier for me to come by bus.

SRB: Do you live in Chicago now, or in the suburbs?

C: Yes, I live in Chicago.

SRB: In West Rogers Park?

C: No. I live in a black neighborhood, but I live there seven years. It is like a Russian community, maybe ten or twelve buildings are Russian.

SRB: On Kenmore?

C: Yes.

SRB: Really? That's where I live. On Sheridan Road!

C: I am at Catalpa and Winthrop. What number are you?

SRB: 5445.

C: I go to the park behind the buildings. It is small world.

SRB: I really appreciate your talking to me and I am going to transcribe this interview. I'd like to send you a copy of it and you will know that I will not change your words.

C: Sure. I trust you!

SRB: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Interview with "Dee and Ian Nathan"

SRB: I want to tell both of you that I will not, under any circumstances, use your names in my dissertation. You will both be anonymous, and I would appreciate it if you would give me your
oral consent to use this interview in my dissertation. Today is July 6, 1990.

DEE: Sure.

SRB: Thank you very much. I really appreciate this. I understand that you are both from Kiev?

DEE: Yes, Kiev.

SRB: Can you tell me why you both decided to leave the Soviet Union and who you came here with, and a little background?

DEE: Sure. It was seven people in my family who lived in a two room apartment. It was a little bit bigger than other families had, so my family had four people, me, my husband and our two children. We could not get our own place to live. So in one room lived my husband, me and our two children, and in the other room lived my mother, father and grandmother. Seven people, and it was kind of hard. For ten years, we lived together. After ten years, the situation was worse and worse in the Ukraine and in Russia, and we were standing in line longer and longer to get something. The children were growing and started hearing the words, "You are a Jew and a kike." I did not like that, because I wasn't raised like that.

SRB: Did either of you attend university there?

IAN: Yes.

SRB: What was your occupation in Russia?

IAN: Electronics.

SRB: So how did you attend university in Russia, if they do not allow Jews?

IAN: It was not a University. It was a small college. Everybody especially Jews, managed to attend a college or some kind of University. That was the only way to survive over there, actually.

SRB: So, they do a heavy screening in order to get into one of the universities or colleges?

DEE: Everybody had to take written and oral tests. The same as here.

IAN: Except as a Jew, it was a little bit rougher because they lowered your scores.

SRB: You mean there is a two step process. One for people who are not
Jewish, and one for people who are, as far as admissions to the universities?

IAN: Not really like a law, or something like that. There are rules for everybody. Everybody understands that, but it is not official.

SRB: So it is not an official government policy, but it is done?

DEE: It is done all of the time.

IAN: Not by the government.

DEE: To keep the Jews a little bit further from getting to higher schools, to universities to, colleges.

SRB: Were you allowed to attend any type of services on the Jewish holidays, or to attend Hebrew school?

DEE: We were not religious. There was no Hebrew school in Russia. There were just a few synagogues, maybe one in the big city.

IAN: There was nobody who had the religion in Russia, because there was no way to be a religious person. There was no religious education over there. Everything is all pressed down. Only your attempt to educate yourself in a religious manner, you will be pressed down, whether you are a Jew or not a Jew, by the way. If you are a Jew you will make it happen.

SRB: Now, your mother was telling me that she had learned how to read, write and speak Yiddish.

DEE: Yes, in her time.

SRB: But she was born in 1923, and you were born when?

DEE: In 1951, and my husband, in 1949.

SRB: So, we're talking here right after Stalin.

DEE: Yes, exactly. I was two years old.

IAN: Some people could get a couple of classes of Hebrew in. Some schools were Jewish, by the way, at that time, and more synagogues.

SRB: So, it's not like here in the United States where after public school, if you want, you could send your child to Hebrew school to learn to be Bar Mitzvahed?

DEE: No, permits or nothing like that.

SRB: So, consequently, neither one of you speaks Yiddish?
DEE: We heard Yiddish in our family.

SRB: But, your mother does?

IAN: Oh yes, of course.

DEE: She writes Hebrew, she understands Yiddish and she speaks Yiddish.

SRB: So, the older generation would be more likely to speak Yiddish than people your age. Which is probably why, when I see the older Russians in my neighborhood, your mother lives two blocks from my house, and if I'm in the supermarket, or they need something, that I'm able to communicate with them in Yiddish. The younger generation does not understand.

IAN: They still were taught in the old Orthodox pattern, and probably their parents spoke only Yiddish at that time. Our grandmothers and grandfathers spoke only Yiddish, so that's why we can. Our parents still don't. They still know Yiddish, but they wouldn't really speak in the house, so for us, it was the last lesson.

SRB: The same thing has happened here. My nieces and nephews do not know Yiddish. Very few people my age here know Yiddish, probably because my father was born in Poland and my mother was born here, but her parents were born in Russia, and Yiddish was spoken all over. But when you come to America, you speak English. Have you run into that with your children, saying, "Speak English, don't speak to me in Russian on the street"?

DEE: Yes, yes. Some places they don't want anybody to know that we are Russian. But, when we are speaking bad English, they will say, "Mom, don't speak English, speak in Russian!" so that they would not get, what you call, embarrassed.

SRB: This is typical of children from all different countries. I think being bilingual is wonderful.

IAN: For the children, I think it is nice for them to have another language, even though they lose it, and we can not do anything about it.

SRB: That's good and I'm glad that you keep it up! It's important to remember your roots.

IAN: They probably don't forget what they have learned.

SRB: I am very impressed by your English. I know that if I were in Russia for 10 years, I know I couldn't speak that well! Could you
tell me, in Russia, what was your occupation, and what were your duties? How old were you when you got this job?

DEE: I was a music teacher for ten years, teaching piano and playing to kindergarten also. I had several jobs, actually. Three jobs at the same time. I was in my early twenties.

IAN: She had three jobs at the same time because payment was so small at the time, it was unbelievable for teachers in Russia. Right now, maybe they make a little bit more, but at that time, sixty five rubles a month.

SRB: So, how much is that in dollars?

IAN: I don't know; it's really hard to convert it.

DEE: You cannot survive for sixty five rubles a month.

SRB: What would sixty five rubles buy here, as far as a house?

DEE: A hundred dollars a month.

SRB: And they expect you to survive on that?

IAN: If you did more difficult work, to be able to buy something with it, like food, it's probably one to one. You probably could by the same thing over here for one hundred dollars. Apartments over there are worth twenty dollars. The average salary is probably about one hundred twenty dollars per month at that time, and right now it is about maybe one hundred rubles.

SRB: You say you were an engineer?

IAN: Well, I was really a technician.

SRB: What were your responsibilities? What kind of company did you work for?

IAN: All kinds of government operated. It was like a laboratory.

SRB: Was your job considered top priority or top secret, so when you applied to come to the United States, that they perhaps delayed your visa because you had a security type job?

IAN: I had a special permit, but I waited about five or six years. I changed my job in order to not have any restrictions, on my previous job.

SRB: So, if you wanted to leave, you were forced to change your job?

DEE: No, not really. We were thinking about leaving, so he just decided in advance, instead of us not having any job, he just
prepared himself, and on his own, he left his old job, which was top secret. He had to have clearance. Well, it was really not top secret, but he did need clearance.

IAN: I did it on my own, to prepare for our leaving, five years before I applied to leave.

SRB: When did you apply for your visa?

DEE: He applied in 1979. Then in 1980, we got permit.

SRB: You're quite fortunate. I've heard stories of people waiting twenty years to come over.

DEE: It is true. We were very fortunate.

IAN: The Russians were unpredictable. They did not know what they were going to do and what to expect. There was a time when they did not allow, like a mass leaving from their country, and that was a time when only straight relatives, first degree relatives, could go. We knew how to arrange our papers because her mother's sister had already gone to Israel.

SRB: So your papers said "Israel?"

IAN: Yes.

DEE: Yes, everybody's papers said "Israel." It was a lie. We could not go straight to America. My mother's sister was saying that it won't be easy at all to go to Israel, that we would have to change our plans on our way here.

SRB: So, you went from the Soviet Union to Vienna?

DEE: Yes, and then to Rome, Italy for two weeks, and from Rome we found a place to live in, an apartment in the coast there.

IAN: They kept us in a small hotel for a couple of weeks to allow us to settle up and to prepare our papers.

SRB: Did HIAS help you when you were there?

DEE: Yes, very much.

SRB: What did they do for you?

DEE: They paid for everything, mostly our transportation.

IAN: We don't know technically who paid for it.

SRB: Probably the members of the Jewish Federations.
DEE: We paid them back. As soon as we came here and started working, we paid everyone back. As soon as we started working, we paid them back.

SRB: Did you come under refugee status?

DEE: Yes.

SRB: So, in other words, you told them you decided to change your country because you were being discriminated against for religious reasons?

DEE: No, because we wanted to reunite our family.

IAN: Yes, that too.

DEE: Mostly, they were not asking that question.

IAN: Most permits were granted to those who wanted to reunite with their families in Israel. They did not care really what religion you were.

SRB: When you came to Chicago, from Rome, who sponsored you in Chicago?

IAN: I had my sister already here.

SRB: Did she have to put up money for you to come?

DEE: No. It's a new law, a new policy, that people have to put money up.

SRB: New, as of how long ago?

DEE: New, as of about one year ago. I just started recently.

IAN: Yes, it was just recently, so that there would be no more discrimination. They decided there would no longer be a refugee status any more, which is not true.

SRB: Absolutely. You decided to come to the United States, rather than any other country anywhere. Was it the fact that you had a sister here that you did this, or were there other reasons that you would have wanted to come to the United States, rather than to Israel, and specifically Chicago?

DEE: We were writing letters to each other for a long time; for two years to my sister-in-law. Between the lines we could read how good it was here, but she would not invite us here. She was waiting for us to make this decision on our own, so we would not regret what we did, and we would not blame her for doing that. But she was telling us how good it was here. That she did not
have to stand in line, that you could get everything at the store, that a year later and she could afford to buy a house.

SRB: What year did your sister come here?
IAN: In 1978.
SRB: And what made her come here?
IAN: The same things we came here for.
SRB: And she came here with her husband and her children?
DEE: Yes, she has just one child.
SRB: Did she have trouble getting out?
DEE: It was easier for her. She did not have to be a first degree relative. You could come if you wanted to.
SRB: She did not have a relative to sponsor her at all?
DEE: Four relatives that lived here for five or six months here in Chicago. She invited her the same thing here, she signed some papers.
IAN: They were not so restrictive about that, the government over here. They really did not care because they were accepting everybody. Everybody was living here that wanted to at that time.
SRB: Now, who was the power in Russia then?
DEE: Brezhnev.
SRB: After Brezhnev, it closed out again?
IAN: Yes, because it was not really strong power over there. It was Andropov, and in a couple of months, he died.
SRB: Do you think Gorbechev is show and tell, or is this for real, this glasnost?
DEE: It is for real.
IAN: It would be hard for me to judge what's going on over there, but I think he's the guy who can do something for people.
SRB: We're sitting here in your beautiful, magnificent home, and it is absolutely gorgeous. I know you have worked very for it, and I can see that. It's certainly quite different from living in two rooms with seven people. This is like they say,"The streets of America are paved with gold." Hard work, I guess helps you find
your goal, but I know that when you first came here, there were organizations, Jewish organizations, who helped you get on your feet, as they have for many, years, since before the turn of the century. There used to be vereins of the helping organizations, helping people come from Europe after World War II. This is not new to the Jewish community, to help bring Jewish immigrants to the United States. But what I'd like to know from the two of you is, when you first came here, what kind of socioeconomic problems did you experience and cultural adjustments that you had to experience. Just getting off an airplane and landing here and seeing the airport, and maybe getting into a taxi cab or having someone pick you up at the airport in a car, and maybe getting into your first traffic jam. Can you tell me, what this culture shock was like?

IAN: Yes, it was a culture shock.

DEE: It was a happy culture shock.

IAN: Everything was okay. We liked everything, no matter what. That is our way, to do whatever we have learned. Because in cultural, psychological and economical terms, we're far ahead of Russia. Especially in my profession, electronics, we in Russia, were several years behind.

SRB: Behind the United States?

IAN: Oh, sure.

SRB: I thought you'd be fifty years ahead. You had Sputnik before we did!

IAN: I mentioned doing the same work in Russia.

SRB: What kind of job did you take when you first came here?

IAN: I would install secret alarm systems.

DEE: Yes, for four dollars an hour.

DEE: That was ten years ago.

SRB: And now you do what?

IAN: I am in electronics. I work for an x-ray company.

SRB: And, what are you doing now?

DEE: Right now, I am in accounting department, doing billing.

SRB: You don't teach music any more?
DEE: No, I gave it up completely. This is what I like now. I always liked to work with papers, lots of papers. I don't know why, but I like paperwork job and numbers. When I came here, I took a few courses. I went to Northeastern University for one year, and for one year, I went to Truman College. I needed special courses, accounting courses. The first job paid $4.00 because I didn't speak such good English. Then it was $6.00 an hour. And now it's better, and every time it's better. I've worked in a very nice company.

SRB: Tell me, when you first came here, what was your very first job?

DEE: It was Midwest-Markell, the name of the company, who was doing placemats, napkins, tablecloths, in the accounting department.

SRB: How did your English get to be so good?

DEE: We were forcing ourselves a lot to learn English because if you live in the country, of course you have to speak.

SRB: Unless you're going to go back!

DEE: No, no!!!

IAN: We went to Truman College for one year, a semester, probably.

SRB: In the adult education program?

IAN: No, I think it was different, it was like an English course.

DEE: One course, but when I was working, I was going to Truman College, too. So it is a year.

SRB: They have an excellent program. My husband and I are both on the Advisory Council. We were both in attendance at the celebration for the Soviet's graduation at Truman, and had to contact them for some statistics. When you first came, you didn't move to Skokie, did you?

DEE: No. We lived first in West Rogers Park.

SRB: Where about?

IAN: Devon area. Near Devon and California.

SRB: That's where I grew up. I grew up on Devon and Rockwell.

DEE: When we first moved there, it used to be such a great area. It was such a nice neighborhood.

IAN: Now it is not so nice.
SRB: Now the neighborhood has changed.

DEE: Yes, it has changed.

SRB: Nothing, I guess, stays the same.

SRB: Tell me, what was your first experience going into the Jewel or Dominick's?

DEE: Oh, my head was spinning!

IAN: You see so much. Coffee, coffee, coffee!

DEE: Different kinds of coffee, and they pressure you into buying just one kind of coffee!

SRB: Even chicory?!

DEE: Anything!

SRB: When you first came here, what was it like turning on the television set and seeing all these advertisements for different products.

IAN: That's how we were learning some English.

DEE: It was the best thing for us.

IAN: Absolutely, because they would repeat it all the time.

DEE: And we were always telling college friends and newcomers to learn English by commercials, watching the same program with very clear English, no slang, like what could be in the movies

SRB: That's an excellent way! Your mother told me that she would work with her English every day.

DEE: Yes, she would.

IAN: She is a very talented woman, that's all.

SRB: She's really a hard worker.

DEE: Every day she'd hear some new word, and she'd repeat constantly in conversation and trying to put every word in that she would remember.

SRB: She tells me that she thinks now in English. Do you both think in English now, rather than Russian?

DEE: Yes.
IAN: Yes.

DEE: We are not translating any more in our mind, some words, of course.

IAN: When I am at work, I speak in English most of the time because you don't have to translate back and forth. But I still speak Russian at home!

SRB: Oh, yes.

IAN: Sometimes we speak some kinds of English.

SRB: I don't blame you. Sometimes you have to go back to what you feel most comfortable with.

DEE: But, most of the time in the day, we are speaking English. We are at work, and most waking time, it's English.

SRB: When you went to Truman College, that was like formal classroom instruction and education? Did you go to any other formal education instruction, or any other school?

DEE: Northeastern University in Chicago.

SRB: English?

DEE: No, not English, but accounting and computers.

SRB: And it helped you in your education for your career?

DEE: Yes.

SRB: Was there any kind of Jewish organization that helped with your English?

DEE: In synagogue, there were volunteers.

IAN: There were a couple of classes, yes, on Lunt and California.

SRB: Ezras Israel?

DEE: One, and another one.

SRB: Temple Menorah?

IAN: No, it was not that one.

SRB: I know which one you mean. Rabbi Katz's shul?

IAN: Yes.
DEE: Our children were going to K.I.N.S.

SRB: Oh, what were they learning there?

DEE: Hebrew and English. My younger son. We were taking them to be prepared for Bar Mitzvah. They were helping a lot.

SRB: So they were both Bar Mitzvah?

DEE: Yes, they were. Last year we had Bar Mitzvah and we now have movie recorded of younger son. Older son, we only have pictures. We could not record.

SRB: Oh, that's wonderful. Were you Bar Mitzvahed in the Soviet Union?

IAN: Well, my grandfather was a very religious man and I have a Bar Mitzvah at home. He taught me in the house. There was no Hebrew school.

SRB: There was some semblance of religion from your grandfather.

IAN: Yes, my grandfather knew Hebrew and Yiddish.

SRB: A scholar?

IAN: Well, yes you could say that.

SRB: Can you tell me about your children, how old they were when they came here and about their education.

DEE: Older son was almost eight years old, and the younger son was four and a half years old. The older son should have gone to school already to the second grade, but he couldn't because he didn't know any English. It was a school by the name of Green School on Devon and Whipple, across the grounds of the neighborhood synagogue. He was there for a couple of months. It was a Jewish Academy rented by the rabbi.

SRB: He was in the Green School but it was a Hebrew school, or was it a public school?

IAN: It was an adjustment for the Russian Jews.

SRB: It was not a Chicago public school?

DEE: No, it wasn't.

SRB: That school, when I was in school was a public school, and then the Jewish community rented it as a Hebrew school.

IAN: They went there to prepare them for the regular school.
SRB: This school was for preparing children for the Chicago public school, but it was run by the rabbis?

DEE: Exactly.

IAN: They helped with the language and a little bit what went on in school. We just came here and had no language at all.

SRB: Who sent you to the school? The Jewish Community Service on Devon?

DEE: Yes.

SRB: Mrs. Safer.

IAN: Mrs. Witcoff.

DEE: Mrs. Ida Witcoff was our sponsor.

IAN: Counselor.

DEE: Counselor, and she recommends this school for my children. Whatever she was telling us, we were doing, because we were blind here when we came. We could not understand anything and whatever she would say, we would do.

SRB: So how long did the children go to that school?

DEE: A couple of months.

IAN: A couple of months for the older one. The younger one, he went to K.I.N.S.

SRB: For Hebrew instruction or English?

IAN: For both. For a couple of hours a day.

DEE: But, he learned language there. Hebrew and English both.

SRB: How old was he?

DEE: Four and a half.

SRB: Four and a half. He picked up English very quickly.

DEE: Yes, and he was teaching us. He was playing with his games and toys, and with himself he was talking English already.

SRB: This is when he was going to K.I.N.S. He would come home and he would...

DEE: Play and start talking to us.
IAN: He would talk English. The other family communication was in Russian.

SRB: And your older son was eight?

DEE: Eight years old.

SRB: He was going to the Green School?

DEE: Yes, for a couple of months, and then we transferred him to Clinton School.

SRB: That's a Chicago public school.

DEE: Yes, a Chicago public school.

SRB: What kind of programs did they provide, and what year was this, by the way?

DEE: Nineteen eighty, nineteen eighty-one. The beginning of nineteen eighty-one.

SRB: He was approximately eight or nine years old.

DEE: Yes, eight years old.

SRB: What grade did they put him into?

DEE: It was the second grade.

SRB: What kind of education did he receive? Was he put into a bilingual program or English as a Second Language?

DEE: Just English. Nothing else. It was very hard for him.

IAN: But, at Clinton, there were the Russian teachers over there. I don't know who may be there now, but there was a teacher who spoke Russian there.

DEE: In the 3rd and 4th grade, they started having Russian teachers, who were happy, who knew English, and they were helping kids to pick up English and to help them in English.

IAN: So kids were spending couple of hours with another program.

SRB: It was like a pull-out; they pulled out the children from the classroom for a few hours a day to teach them English?

IAN: Yes, and it also helped him a little to understand math, or other subjects.
SRB: But the rest of the subjects were all taught in English? Did he have a hard time?

IAN: He had a couple of years a hard time. But for him, it was no problem.

SRB: And for your younger one, it was no problem?

DEE: It was no problem.

SRB: And your younger one, there was . . .

IAN: No problem.

DEE: No problem.

SRB: He also went to Clinton?

DEE: Later.

IAN: He went to preschool at Clinton and kindergarten there. And then we moved to Skokie schools.

SRB: Did they have trouble making friends?

DEE: No, I don't think so. They are very friendly children and they always had a lot of friends here.

SRB: That's good. They didn't feel different from the other kids, you know, some of the children they might come in contact with. Children can be very mean.

IAN: Yes.

DEE: It's true.

SRB: If you were to come here right now, again, coming with the knowledge you have now, how would you change? Would you change anything in what you did when you first came?

IAN: I don't think it is possible to have this kind of knowledge before, actually these ten years, it was a very hard way to gather some. I could not say what would have happened without this experience.

DEE: How would you help Russians who are coming now to Americanize faster than we did in our days, when we did not know anything?

IAN: I don't know.

DEE: Would you provide better education or something?
IAN: People who are coming now should really educate themselves, differently than what we did because we really didn't have anything. Whatever we had, it was more than what we had in Russia, but people coming here now, they have more help.

DEE: My husband is talking about, not the education, but about people were, at my time, when we came here, not as rich, who were coming at that time, as are people who are coming here now from Russia. They had everything in Russia. They had condominiums, they had cars, they had money, they had relatives that were sending them some help from here, so they had a decent and very good life. Two and three months vacation time, going places. They were wearing very nice clothes, which is a very big difference.

IAN: They were adjusted to the Russian system better than we were.

SRB: I understand now.

IAN: People then, they did not want to change really, they didn't want to bother at that time. But they could survive.

DEE: It was impossible for us to survive. If we would be on the street, or by ourselves, me, my husband and two children. We would never be able to survive in Russia.

SRB: If your parents had not helped you?

DEE: Yes. With my profession having two jobs, with my husband's profession having job, and to feed the children, to give them an education, and, God forbid if somebody would get sick, you have to pay under the table anyhow to your doctor. You have to pay under the table for them to go to a decent college, and to find somebody, any college you are not choosing colleges whatever you found for your child, that's where you are going. That's why I got in music, because my parents found for me this college. My grandparents wanted me to become like for a woman, it is a very nice profession to be a musician, and to play the piano, for a girl, it's wonderful. But it is not what I wanted. I was pushed into it. So, when I came here I learned computers, I learned bookkeeping and I love it. That's what I want. And I'm happy.

SRB: So, what you're saying is the only way you could have gone in your life was up, because you had already reached bottom there.

IAN: Yes.

DEE: It couldn't be worse.

IAN: The first day here in the United States was already better than my best day over there.

DEE: It was the best day in our lives when we reached this land, until now.
SRB: That's quite a statement. I know that your mother and father, may he rest in peace, had to give up their jobs, and they had jobs in high visibility and a lot of responsibility. I mentioned to your mother that she came here out of love and sacrifice. And she said, "Absolutely."

IAN: Yes. Especially her father and I have grandmother. They did it for us. Actually, for our children.

DEE: That's what we did for our children.

SRB: She's ecstatic. She says that if God permits, may she live to be one hundred and twenty! She has so much energy and she is just a wonderful lady! She is very proud of you and her grandchildren, she speaks so highly of you. It is so wonderful to see your family so close together.

DEE: We are trying to keep my brothers and my husband's sister closer to us. It's hard, but we like our family.

SRB: Your brothers are here?

DEE: Yes.

SRB: When did they come?

DEE: My older brother came here in 1976.

IAN: It was very hard time for him to come to this country. He was alone, and was a very hard time.

DEE: Very hard time. But not now. Now he's okay.

SRB: Do you think he'd talk to me?

DEE: I think so.

SRB: Is he married?

DEE: Yes, but they don't have children.

SRB: Before you mentioned, let me digress to education, that it is hard for the children. When you moved out of Chicago. How old were the children and what grades were they in?

DEE: We were trying to get out of Chicago by noticing that education was going down, instead of going up.

SRB: What do you mean?

IAN: It is a big difference between the public schools in Chicago and here in Skokie. A big difference.
DEE: It's like day and night.

SRB: You mean the schools in Skokie are far superior to the schools in Chicago?

DEE: Much superior.

IAN: In Chicago he was getting good grades -- straight "A's." When we moved to Skokie his grades were almost all "F's."

SRB: He was failing most of his classes. But in Russia, he was . . .

IAN: He was four years old.

SRB: Oh, you're talking about your four year old.

DEE: Yes.

IAN: The four year old. The older son, he was not so great in the Clinton School and for him it was even harder to adapt to Niles North High School. So for him it was very hard.

SRB: What I'm trying to establish is you left Chicago schools to move to Skokie. You really left Chicago because of the school system? Only because of the school system?

DEE: No. The biggest reason for us to leave. But not the only reason.

SRB: Because your children weren't doing well in Clinton School?

DEE: Yes. We felt they were not learning enough.

IAN: Education wasn't great at Clinton School.

DEE: Straight "A's."

SRB: The younger one was getting straight "A's" at Clinton school, and the older one?

IAN: He was doing well in grades. But not when we moved here.

SRB: How old was the little one when you moved here?

DEE: He was here first year in Old Orchard Junior High and we are talking about three years. Sixth, seventh and eighth grade.

SRB: He started in the Skokie school system in junior high school.

DEE: In Chicago, he was for how long in school?

IAN: For five years.
DEE: Here he graduated from junior high school. He just graduated.
SRB: And now he'll be starting high school at Niles North?
DEE: Yes.
SRB: How were his grades when he got to junior high school in Skokie?
SRB: Why, because he was not studying or because he didn't feel he was prepared?
DEE: He wasn't prepared at all.
IAN: Most of the subjects at Clinton School, they do not touch.
SRB: You're saying the school system in Chicago didn't do what you thought it should? What subjects for example?
IAN: Most of the subjects.
SRB: Mathematics, English?
DEE: Mathematics, no algebra after eighth grade. My older son graduated eighth grade in Clinton, and there was no algebra touched in Clinton. He had to start in Niles North High School, algebra from the beginning. And if you would compare the junior high school algebra instruction that my younger son graduated now, he already was completely prepared for Niles North High School. He is already taking advanced class in algebra.
SRB: The Chicago school system didn't prepare your older son, now eighteen. When he came here, he started in the Skokie school system in Niles North and had a difficult time?
IAN: Actually, he skipped algebra and took in summer school. Other kids were already ahead of him.
SRB: What about English?
IAN: Almost every subject was the same problem.
SRB: So his grades weren't very good?
IAN: Both of them. They both had difficulty because the Skokie schools were more advanced. The first year was very hard.
SRB: So it was like shell shock because they came from having good grades and now they are getting poor grades?
IAN: Right. The younger son adjusted better. So he's okay, but for both of them, it was a little too fast.

SRB: What grade is your older one in now?

DEE: It is going to be his last year.

SRB: So he'll be a senior. Has he been able to bring his grades up?

DEE: Yes, every year gets better.

SRB: Will he be going to college?

DEE: Yes, definitely. That's why we are here. To give everything, it's all our hope, so they can go to college, and it is very important, especially here.

SRB: Do you know which one?

DEE: He likes what his father does. Both sons love the way their father knows electronics and he's very good at that. He's trying to help them take an engineering class and electronics and computers class in high school. They do communicate and they are very close to their father.

SRB: That's good. Has he taken the college entrance, the ACT or the SAT?

DEE: Yes.

SRB: Did he do okay on that?

DEE: We don't know yet. We didn't get it.

SRB: I've really covered the five basic questions I wanted to ask you, but before we began taping, you mentioned jealousy on the part of other people. Can you talk about that a little bit? I have found in talking to people when I tell them how excited I am about writing my dissertation, and they say, "What is your topic?" And I tell them it's on Soviet Jews, I get comments like: "Yeah, they all live in Skokie."

IAN: Not only. Some live in other suburbs.

SRB: The comment meaning, "How dare you come and build yourself up and make something out of yourself?" I might compare it to the way the dispute is going on between the Koreans and the black community. The blacks are mad at the Koreans because the Koreans have come here, made a living for themselves, and they are buying buildings and they have stores. People tend to resent people who come here, didn't know the language, yet are either self-taught or taught in the schools, or both, a combination of formal and
informal education. People who have been here for twenty five years or more feel a resentment because they don’t have the house that you have. Do you feel that way sometimes when you talk to people?

IAN: Sure, sure.

DEE: All the time, even to my co-workers, when they hear that I’m here only for ten years. Not only the Jews, anybody! We’re here for ten years, and they are living here all their lives and they are still renting apartment, and how come? How could I save this kind of money? Where did I take this kind of money to put down payment, and they still work all their lives working two jobs, working seven days a week, and not having this kind of money to put in a down payment to buy a house. So I tell them, it’s a different culture, and a different way of living. And the reason is, we are not going every day, three times to the restaurant, during the lunchtime, for breakfast and for dinner.

IAN: Which is what most American’s are doing.

SRB: So you cook at home?

DEE: We’ve been saving. We are not cooking every day. We are cooking once for two or three days, which in the refrigerator cannot spoil. People in America are spoiled. Very spoiled. They cannot appreciate what they have. They don’t love what they have. I love what I have. I love America. They don’t. If I would live all my life, but I would get your education, I would be a millionaire already. They don’t know that.

IAN: I call it survival. We just have to survive.

DEE: I would want to show them these good ways.

SRB: But, some people would look at your house and say this isn’t just survival, this is magnificent living, and it is. You have to thank God you have a beautiful home.

IAN: We worked very hard for it.

SRB: And of course you did.

DEE: We didn’t need fresh fruit in the winter time. And vegetables.

IAN: Don’t tell anybody, because . . .

DEE: Nobody would believe us. It’s true, because we know how to survive. It’s a way of surviving. For seven years we were sacrificing a lot, until we would get our down payment. And then, as soon as we would get better and better jobs, we would change
jobs, get more money, and so now we can afford to go out to
dinner, once a week, twice a week.

IAN: Actually, look at Americans. They have a very huge savings. We
do not have a savings. Whatever is there, just use it. Go on
vacation every year.

SRB: Well, as you get older, your children will support you.

IAN: Yes.

SRB: They’ll become millionaires and they’ll be able to help you!

DEE: Oh, I hope so.

IAN: I don’t think that will happen.

SRB: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that I
might have missed, about coming here and becoming Americanized,
enculturated, assimilated. You feel you are Americans.

DEE: I do feel like that, but a lot of people are reminding me that
I’m not.

SRB: Are you citizens yet?

DEE: Yes, we are, after five years living here, we are allowed to apply
for citizenship, so that’s what we did. After five years being
here, we applied.

SRB: Then, how can somebody tell you are not an American?

DEE: I'm not speaking perfect English and they would let me know that
by saying, "Oh, did you say something? Would you repeat again?
What did you say? Oh, I don’t have time talking right now."
That’s how they would let me know.

IAN: They are exercising the fact that you are not from here, that you
came from another country.

DEE: I put aside all that. The most important thing is for our
children, and I love them. That’s all.

SRB: I'm really glad to hear you say that.

IAN: Actually, we were fortunate. We came here because of the
children. We try to give them whatever it is they need.

SRB: It’s an important thing to sacrifice for your children. I know
your mother and father did.

IAN: Yes, they have.
DEE: Yes, it's very important.

SRB: I think that every parent wants their children to have a better life than he or she.

IAN: That is true. We love our children and we're proud of it.

SRB: I think that that is commendable. I have to commend people who venture to a foreign country, not knowing what they will find. My father did that. He came here on a boat alone when he was seventeen. The reason I had a smile on my face when you were talking about an accent, is I understand. I never knew my father had a Jewish accent. He was born in Poland and he spoke Polish and Yiddish. And one day when I was 18 years old, my girlfriend said to me, "Sharon, you know your father has the most darling accent." I looked at her and said, "My father doesn't have an accent. What are you talking about?" A couple of hours later, I listened to him talk, and I guess he did have a Jewish accent! I never knew it. It never bothered me! And he was as American as apple pie.

DEE: That's what I said. I don't care who tells me that. If they want to put me down, it's their problem, not mine.

IAN: A bunch of Russians the first day they came here until now, people are very friendly over here. I really could not judge them, because they were not in the same position, probably. We came here because of our children, and everybody helped to come. This is our country.

DEE: The best country for us. The best!

SRB: Do you belong to any synagogue?

IAN: No, we are not religious. We were not taught this religious way, which is not allowed in Russia.

SRB: I know that F.R.E.E., where your mom works, is run by the Lebovich, the rabbis, and that they want to bring the Jews back to culture. Sometimes they get upset that this doesn't always happen, but they did help you with finding a place so that your children could go to Hebrew school, and be Bar Mitzvahed, and learn the holidays?

DEE: Yes. They did have at that time a program for the children and they did have summer camps, religious Israel camps. Very good!

SRB: Your mother used to work for HIAS. Was she a volunteer, or was she being paid?

DEE: She volunteered.
IAN: She volunteered her time. She is volunteering for F.R.E.E. Also, she just likes to help people. She does good things.

SRB: The help she received, she is giving back now to the community.

IAN: She is always helping.

SRB: Do you ever get out there to work with her?

DEE: My son did for several years.

IAN: All of us did. We go there sometimes to help them prepare for the holidays.

DEE: For all holidays.

IAN: For Passover. All of the holidays.

DEE: And meeting people at the airport.

IAN: I help as much as I can helping the new Jews who come here.

SRB: What you are doing is helping other people who come here from Russia. You're giving back, and you are helping with them.

IAN: Yes.

SRB: Is there anything that I skipped that you want to tell me? These were really the five questions I wanted to ask you. I have really found this conversation fascinating, and I really appreciate it. Is there anything else you would like to say?

DEE: It would be nicer if would be a Russian community, like they have a Polish community. They have Indian communities. They have them, but it's not as close as any other community.

IAN: Russian people, Russian community don't want to be organized any more.

SRB: Why?

IAN: Because the Russian system kills all organized industry. They don't want to be part of it. That's why they could not organize the Russian Jews to be a strong community. They were not allowed to be close in Russia. It was discouraged. They like each other, but are not really close. We will never be a really close community.

DEE: But what about American Jews to be closer?

SRB: Well, we have JUF, Jewish United Fund, and the J.C.C. and they are all sponsored by the same organizations and funded when we donate
money to the Jewish United Fund. That money is put into various sub-organizations, like Jewish Family Service which helps the Russian Jews.

IAN: I know about some of these organizations

SRB: The organizations sponsor "Save Soviet Jews," their signs are all over, and the monies behind it. The JUF has a special "Operation Exodus," a program to help Soviet Jews leave the Soviet Union and repatriate to Israel. Jews here are organized for many years. They send aid to Israel. We have Hadassah, and N'amat Women, the B'nai Brith. But the Jews and the organizations are numerous.

IAN: But Russian Jews do not organize. We were not allowed to organize in Russia. And especially the American Jews, they expect us to go more into the religion. I know I talked to some people and they were upset. They were expecting us to be more involved among the Jewish community. We just could not do it, not because we don't want to do it, we're just too busy to make our living here. We must work on Saturday to make a living.

SRB: Which is basically what happened when the Orthodox Jews came here at the turn of the century and their children had to work on Saturday. Little by little, they fell away from the religion, but were still allowed to practice. Whereas, you were basically saying that it was the Russian government, by design, took the Jewish identity away and the cohesiveness away.

IAN: Yes. Our intelligence survived. The more I think about it. It was because of my grandfather that I know Judaism.

SRB: Actually, you were more fortunate than people your own age, that you had a grandfather who taught you about Judaism.

IAN: Yes. But not very much because of the restrictions.

SRB: It's not fair then for American Jews to think that you should immediately go to the synagogue, put on a tallis and yarmulke every morning and go for prayers three times a day?

IAN: Yes. We were not allowed to openly practice our religion. It was discouraged.

SRB: They didn't promote it. As a matter of fact . . .

IAN: Yes. They don't promote any religion like that, especially the Jewish religion.

SRB: I know that your grandparents were very religious.

IAN: Her grandmother. She came here with her grandmother. Actually, all our meals were Kosher, and religion, we just did not rely on. But this was preferred this way.
SRB: And now, do you keep a Kosher home here?
IAN: No we don't.
SRB: But, when your grandmother came here, she did?
DEE: She did.
SRB: It was a little easier to go to the Kosher butcher.
DEE: Yes.
SRB: Well, I deeply appreciate your allowing me to interview you. You have been most kind. Thank you.
DEE: You're welcome.

Interview with "Mia and Ziv Stine"

SRB: Today is August 30, 1990. This is an interview with the Stine family. I am going to guarantee you that you will not be named in my dissertation; that you will remain anonymous. This is Mrs. Mia Stine and her son, Ziv. If I may have your oral consent to tape this interview, I would appreciate it.

MIA: Sure.
SRB: Basically, I'm going to go through those questions with you again. Where did you live in the Soviet Union?
MIA: We used to live in Kiev. It is in the central of Russia; the capital city of the Ukraine.
SRB: It's right off of the Ukraine? Is that a very large city?
ZIV: It is the third largest city in the Soviet Union.
SRB: You lived in Kiev. Why did you decide to leave the Soviet Union?
MIA: Because we did not want to live there because there was anti-Semitism there and we were worried about our kids, about our two boys. And, at that time, when we saw what was in the front of us, we said, "Time to leave." We applied for our documents and we left Russia. We were very lucky at that time.
SRB: Were you or your husband or children ever a victim of anti-Semitism?
MIA: No, I can't say that. We were not victims, but stationed around us make us feel like it can be, we don't know where, but, it can be. It was a feeling.
SRB: You felt very uncomfortable?
MIA: Yes.

SRB: Did you ever practice Judaism at home? Celebrating?

MIA: I came from religious family. My grandfather was very religious, and he would celebrate and he would teach us all Jewish holidays. From middle age, I know how to do seder and all other holidays. Besides that, both my grandparents spoke Yiddish to us, and we answered in Russian.

SRB: When you were growing up, you understood Yiddish. Did you ever read or write?

MIA: No. My mother, she finished the Yiddish school.

SRB: And what year, may I ask, were you born?

Mrs. I was born in 1946. November 9, 1946.

SRB: And your husband?

Mrs. My husband was born on October 28, 1942.

SRB: You were married and had children?

MIA: We had two sons.

SRB: Where were they born?

MIA: In Russia. In Kiev.

SRB: And in what year?


SRB: So you decided to leave the Soviet Union and come here because you felt you were being persecuted, even though no one overtly did anything. It was the atmosphere?

MIA: We were afraid about our future. Not our future, but for the future of our kids. I've always known, in my opinion, that there was somewhere in Russia that's going to be good, but we don't know when. It's supposed to be, but we don't know when.

SRB: When you lived there, what was you profession?

MIA: I used to be an accountant and I did work for a company who builds bridges. My company did build the biggest bridges in Kiev.

SRB: Was this an architectural or engineering firm?

MIA: An engineering firm.

SRB: And what did your husband do there?
MIA: My husband was an electrician. He did outside work on neon signs and the high-rises.

SRB: Did either of you attend a university there?

MIA: My husband and myself, we both finished technical school.

SRB: Technical school. Is that considered on a different level from the universities?

MIA: Yes, it is just like before going to a university. I will say, after school, it is three years school, and after that, if you want a higher degree, you have to study more.

SRB: It's a trade school, that's what we would consider it here. Did you go there by choice?

MIA: I don't remember why I went there. I think because my parents wanted it. I think it was like this. I really don't remember. My husband went there because he could still do the same things here. All of his life, he did the same thing.

SRB: When you were in the Soviet Union, you were a student. And how old were you, Ziv, when you came here?

ZIV: I was ten.

SRB: Ten years old. So you were enrolled in their school in third grade, and in our school system, ten would be about fifth or sixth grade. I'll get to your education in a little bit. May I ask why you decided to come to the United States rather than immigrate to another country?

MIA: Our friends left Russia before us. It was a very close company. One couple lives in Chicago and they got here in Chicago seven months before us and they sponsored us.

SRB: You entered in what year?


SRB: That's around Rosh Hashanah. You came here because your friends brought you here?

MIA: No. We came here because we wanted to come here, and we came to Chicago, because we were sponsored by this couple.

SRB: Would you have been able just as easily to enter perhaps Israel?

ZIV: We originally were going there, but we changed our minds.

SRB: You were first in Vienna, and then in Rome, and then from Rome, HIAS helped bring you over here? Did they also help pay for your transportation?
MIA: Yes, they did.

SRB: When you came, what types of problems, economically, money wise, did you face?

MIA: Jewish families would always help us. An amount of money, I don’t remember how much it was. We were afraid about our future. Jewish Family Service told us, "You have to go to school. You have to study English," but nobody think about that. You were worried about work and about making a living.

SRB: You had to worry about putting food on the table?

MIA: That’s right. Jewish Family Service helped us for a couple of months. I don’t remember how much. A very helpful organization. Beautiful. We still have to mention them, because we appreciate everything they did for us. HIAS and Jewish Family Service.

SRB: You were contacted by them, using their offices on Devon Avenue?

MIA: That’s right. I was even going to tell you the name of our social worker, Aida Britchcoff, a great person, and we still are good friends, even though she doesn’t live in Chicago anymore. She moved to Boston. Her husband worked there, but we still be good friends.

SRB: When you came here, and even though they were helping you, they certainly weren’t giving you $1,000 a month.

MIA: We paid back them. I’m not sure if it was with interest or without interest at all, because we didn’t pay attention to those things at that time. But we paid them as much as we could. We started to pay $50 a month, and after, when our salaries became better, we paid off what we owed them.

SRB: When you came here, did you go to work yourself?

MIA: First, my husband went to work. His friend helped him with the work when he started to work as electrician. Simplex System Control. It’s in Berkeley, Illinois. And I remember his start salary was $5.25.

SRB: A month?

MIA: No, it was $5.25 per hour. He supported four of us. He was a good worker and he got raise pretty soon, 25 more cents, and more and more. I went to work and started as a manicurist here, and after, a gift shop downtown on Oak Street, and I was working there.

SRB: Which shop?

MIA: Nails at 67 East Oak. Nice person. She teach me, and I learned a lot from her. Both of us were working and our kids went to school.
SRB: Where were you living in Chicago at that time?

MIA: First our address was on Leavitt and Devon, 64 something Leavitt.

SRB: So that's why you went to Stone School, Ziv? You were living in a two bedroom apartment?

ZIV: Yes.

MIA: Yes, a two bedroom apartment. A very nice apartment. It was a very happy time. It was also very hard.

SRB: Did you feel differences in the culture between being in the Soviet Union and being here?

MIA: Yes, of course. It was very hard for us because we have different culture and different customs before we came to America.

ZIV: It was like culture shock, but we had friends here from Russia to talk to and who helped us. We weren't isolated and could be together.

MIA: It wasn't isolated because it was a lot of people that came at the same time and Russians are very friendly, most of the time and whatever we have free time we spent it with friends. They are still good friends, people speak the same language.

SRB: You weren't too far from Astoria Restaurant?

MIA: No, not too far.

SRB: What type of cultural problems did you encounter?

MIA: A couple of thoughts. The first couple of years, just because I am speaking for myself, I was missing the theaters and the movies, but I remember, it was the first year we come to America, Barishnikov was in Chicago. Of course, we was not too good with the money and I asked my husband, "Can I go?" and he said, "Of course." I went to see Barishnikov in the theater. It was in 1980. It's spring and I remember this one.

SRB: When he came, weren't there pickets out there upon his arrival?

MIA: No.

SRB: I thought that's what happened.

MIA: It was another story, it was when other Russian actors came. We went to see that concert, my husband and myself. We were there too, and we saw the pickets, and I said, "You guys are bad guys." People show us our culture. If you want to see it, you see it. You don't want it, don't see it.
SRB: I do agree with you. Well, obviously, looking at this magnificent home, and it is breath-taking, you certainly have come a long way from a two bedroom on Leavitt and Devon in Chicago. How did you and your husband accomplish this?

MIA: After my husband used to go, like I told you, to the factory, as a systems controller. After a couple of years, my husband drove a taxi for a couple of years.

SRB: Doing both, as an electrician and a taxi driver?

MIA: Yes. And after he quit to be an electrician, and drove taxi full-time, because we needed more money, we want to save more money. After that, we bought a restaurant, and we used to have Russian restaurant in our community.

SRB: Oh, you owned it?

MIA: Yes.

SRB: Which one?

MIA: Kafka's. After that, my husband decided to go back to being an electrician.

SRB: He was driving a cab, while owning a restaurant, and working as an electrician?. He was working three jobs, and you were still working as a manicurist and working in the restaurant. The children would go to school.

MIA: And the children would help out at the restaurant and my parents helped out at restaurant, too.

SRB: Did your parents come here with you?

MIA: Yes. We came together.

SRB: How many from your family came here at the same time?

MIA: Six people.

SRB: Do your parents live with you here?

MIA: No. My parents never lived with me in America. They rent apartment on Rosemont and Leavitt. It was very close and very convenient.

SRB: Are they still there?

MIA: No. They live on Kenmore.

SRB: They live in the Edgewater area, and I live on Sheridan Road, and when they go to the park, they cut through my apartment complex. So here you are, the two of you doing five jobs?
MIA: I'll say yes. Besides that, I did manicures and pedicures for everyone who would like to have it at home.

SRB: Believe it or not, I used to go for one a week! I just haven't had time!

MIA: I believe you. But, we did all these things. Non-stop working traffic.

SRB: The point I'm trying to make, is when I hear native born Americans, no matter what their background, say, "How do all of these foreigners come here, and within six or seven years, have a home?" My answer to them is, "Well, if you didn't eat out every night , . . ."

MIA: We did not know what it was like to eat out for a long time.

ZIV: We have a different lifestyle. I never had a birthday party.

MIA: Oh, youngest son, his birthday was at Pizza Hut. It was the most happiest time at that time!

SRB: Did you find a lot of jealousies?

MIA: I was jealous over only one thing. I was jealous of everyone who was born in America.

SRB: Why?

MIA: I was jealous of them because they have good English, it is their country. I was really jealous. I was jealous of everyone who was born here.

SRB: Well, if I were born in Russia, and I were to come here . . .

MIA: Maybe it is my mentality, because my language is so bad, and I am just jealous of everyone.

SRB: But your language isn't bad; that's the point I'm trying to make. You just think it is.

MIA: Maybe. But, we have a lot of complication things, like how to say, in Russia, everyone, [I just asked Ziv what the word is]. New willingness to . . .

ZIV: Everyone is uptight in Russia and afraid to make a mistake. Everything has to be perfect. If you do, you are a failure.

SRB: That's part of the ideology that you don't have confidence in yourself? That you are self-conscious? Is that one of the big differences you find between the American culture and the Russian culture?
MIA: Yes.

ZIV: Everyone tries his best.

SRB: Why is that?

ZIV: You have a job to do and you do it.

SRB: How so?

ZIV: Look at it this way, statistics wise, out of 100% only 80% in America make it. The other 20% doesn't. I may be wrong, of course.

SRB: But the point is, everybody has the opportunity to work and achieve what your parents are assured you have achieved. Nobody is keeping you in a particular position and you take a job usually because you want it.

ZIV: Yes. They came here with nothing and built themselves up through hard work.

SRB: Right. The point that I was asking is: Do you see a hypocrisy in the Russian culture of people trying to put on airs and acting like they have something when they don't?

ZIV: I think you find that in any culture. People either have something or they don't.

SRB: The reason I'm asking you that particular question is one of the persons I interviewed said that she found a lot of hypocrisy in Russia.

ZIV: Only?

SRB: Not only.

ZIV: Because people who have been here for years have achieved. It may be jealousy or whatever you want to call it; that you will find now. You did not find that ten years ago. Ten years ago everyone who came had the same thing. Of course, there were always those who were better off, but they were not rich and no one laughed or put them down. You know how they got it. You know, because they didn't really know but, speculated. Now that has changed because those who have been here, are better off and new Russian immigrants have to begin from the start. They want the same things we have and they really don't want to wait.

MIA: Yes, that's right. You know, we spoke the same language with them and they see the difference between their lives and our lives. Their lives were exactly like our lives when we came to America. The only part different is that we didn't have anybody to ask
things twice. Everything would be on our own. It come from our hard work. People who come now, we try to help them, with advice, and with other things. But, people want material things.

SRB: They do want material things. Do you think they are more important to immigrants coming in now, then they were to those who came when you came?

MIA: That's right.

ZIV: Yes. They want nice houses, furniture.

MIA: But there is nothing bad in these things. They learn, after a few years, they are going to understand all of these things because it is no equal people around. Each family is different and each person is less smart or more smart, more educated, more hard worker, whatever. You name it. It takes time for each family to find their own way.

SRB: When you came here, did you have any of the synagogues contact you?

MIA: Yes. My kids used to study on California and Touhy. They took Hebrew classes there for two years. My kids didn't have a circumcision. They got the circumcision here, one of them. Thanks to Rabbi Notick. He's a wonderful person. He taught my oldest one and he decided and agreed to do a circumcision, and when my youngest one found out that this one is going to have it, he said he wanted to have it, too. They both got it done on the same day. Rabbi Notick did all that ceremony, what all comes after and they become to be not only Jew because they were born from Jewish parents, they become to be a real Jew. After that, both of them had Bar Mitzvah. You know, we are not that religious, but we keep tradition in our family, like Rosh Hashanah.

SRB: Would you consider yourself conservative or reformed?

ZIV: Conservative. We are not religious like the Orthodox. We do not celebrate holidays.

SRB: Not like, well Rabbi Notick. They are the extremely Orthodox at F.R.E.E. They are the Lubavich.

MIA: They are strictly religious people.

SRB: Right. And they did help you at F.R.E.E.?

MIA: Oh, yes! My kids have been in Jewish camp for many years. I will say for six years in a row. Rabbi Katz and Rabbi Notick was the guys who involved themselves in that situation. My youngest one went with them to New York to summer camp to see Rabbi of the Lubavich there in New York. They just, you know, like our kids
was growing with religion atmosphere. I'm not saying strictly religion.

ZIV: I really didn't like it.

MIA: But there is no objections. You know you have to do it.

ZIV: We didn't have a choice. You made us go.

MIA: I don't care!

ZIV: You still made us go.

SRB: Do you, at the present time, belong to any synagogue?

MIA: I work for the Temple.

SRB: Which Temple?

MIA: Ben Zion.

SRB: What do you do there?

MIA: I am a caterer. The members of the Temple get together once a month and I do dinners for them. It's already two years.

SRB: Where is that Temple located?

MIA: On Pratt Avenue.

SRB: I know where that is. It is fairly large.

MIA: Oh, yes. Very nice people and I love them all!

SRB: If I may change the subject a minute and ask you about your education. When you came here, how did you learn English?

MIA: From my work. I went to school for one month.

SRB: Where did you attend?

MIA: It was at California and Lunt at the Temple. There was English classes. After that, whatever I know now it comes from work. My clients teach me with a lot of words.

SRB: Do you read on your own?

MIA: Yes. And after that, I started at Loop College and I finished course there. I took bookkeeping course.

SRB: Did you ever take English as a Second Language?
MIA: No. I plan to do it now. I have plans to do this in October.

SRB: Did you ever attend Truman College?

MIA: Never.

SRB: They have a fine program there.

MIA: I know. It's a little bit too far for me now. At that time I didn't have time to study. Now, I have a little bit more time and I will take school sometime around then.

SRB: Are you still doing manicures?

MIA: No. I don't do manicures. I work for my husband. My husband has a company. An electrical contractor company. And I work for him, and besides working for him, I work also at the Temple.

SRB: When he quit the restaurant, or you sold your restaurant? To Russians?

MIA: No. Some friends. They have a Hindu place.

SRB: When he decided to sell the restaurant, he then opened his own business?

MIA: He already opened up his business. You know, you can't do one things in the same time. We have to support our family. The way that we had it before. That is to continue from the beginning of new jobs.

SRB: Does he have a partner?

MIA: No, he doesn't have a partner. My son works for him and I work for him. It's a hard working family. We are completely involved in family things.

SRB: I can see! Did going to English classes at the synagogue help you at all?

MIA: I didn't have time. Only one class to learn the alphabet.

SRB: Your husband built this house?

MIA: Yes, he built this house.

SRB: How many rooms is this house?

MIA: It has five bedrooms.

SRB: Five bedrooms. Did he actually plan the architectural design?
MIA: Yes, he did everything and an architect helped us. My husband came to an architect with his own plans, whatever he did, and of course, the architect put everything professionally on blueprints.

SRB: I must say that this is the most magnificent house I've ever been in! And I have been in some beautiful houses, but this is absolutely the most magnificent!

MIA: Thank you. Whatever we have here is his own design, his imagination and his and my son's electrical work. Whatever we have here, they did it all!

SRB: Absolutely incredible! Now, if I may ask you, Ziv, about your education in learning English and becoming adjusted. When you came here as a child, how old were you?

ZIV: I was ten years old when I came and started school. I went to a public school, which wasn't bad, because there were a lot of Russian kids there already, so I didn't feel alienated in any way. As far as learning English, it was fairly easy. It was a matter of watching T.V. and conversation.

SRB: Were you ever placed in English as a Second Language?

ZIV: No, not in the public school.

SRB: In what school were you placed in English as a Second Language?

ZIV: In high school, and I was failing out of it.

SRB: Did you get English training when you went to any of the Jewish schools?

ZIV: Let me just say that I had very good speaking skills, language skills. My problem was always with writing.

SRB: Is that because the alphabets are so different?

ZIV: No.

MIA: He learned his own way!

SRB: You're honest! So you went to a Chicago public grammar school for how many years?

ZIV: From fourth grade to eighth grade.

SRB: Fourth grade to eighth grade. That's 4 years. In that period of time, did anybody ever attempt to give you any kind of special help in learning English?

ZIV: Everybody always tried, but I never really took it.
SRB: Were you ever pulled out of your classroom for special tutoring?

ZIV: No, not really. Not that I can remember. Again, I was very good. When the teacher talked to me, I could talk on her level, but I couldn't write at her level.

SRB: To your knowledge, were any of the Russian students, or the Soviet students, ever pulled out of the classroom and taught English, too?

ZIV: In public school?

SRB: Yes.

ZIV: Well, like I told you before, now there's two Russian teachers that I know of in the Stone Public School in Chicago, and they were both very helpful. The only thing I can say for sure, and if my memory serves me right, there was a teacher at Stone School who spoke Russian and tried to help. They started the year that I came to that school. That's when several problems started. Then we moved and I went to Boone School, and when I graduated from there, I knew that he was still there at Stone.

SRB: What was the reason you went from Stone School to Boone?

ZIV: We moved.

SRB: You moved. Where did you move?

ZIV: To Washtenaw.

SRB: Washtenaw and Devon?

ZIV: Washtenaw and Farragut.

SRB: What high school did you go to?

ZIV: Niles North.

SRB: So by that time . . .

MIA: We moved to Skokie, because we were so busy with work, the kids were home all of the time and it was time to move further to go a suburban school.

ZIV: Which, in my opinion, was a big mistake.

SRB: In whose opinion?

ZIV: Mine.

SRB: Oh, in your opinion, okay.
ZIV: It was a mistake because I was in no way prepared for private school, I mean, I call a suburban public school a private school, literally. I mean I went to the best educated school in the State of Illinois, probably in the country. The highest paid teachers are now known.

SRB: And New Trier.

ZIV: New Trier and Niles North are competing with each other in every way. I was lost, and that is understating, and literally did not understand every subject, except gym.

SRB: You excelled in gym?

SRB: I have a lot of students who excel in lunch, and study hall.

ZIV: I always cut those.

SRB: Getting back to your education, when you moved to Skokie . . . by the way, did you buy your own home then?

MIA: No, we did not.

ZIV: We rented until about two years ago.

SRB: Oh, so you have been living in this home for two years. Getting back to your education, you said you picked up your language, verbal language, very easily.

ZIV: I grew up on street knowledge.

SRB: Your teachers in high school, did they attempt to put you in a special classroom?

ZIV: Yes. But I was at that age when I was very rebellious toward that because I felt I was treated like a freak.

SRB: In what sense?

ZIV: Well, I was put into lower grade classes instead of with my classmates. Into classes where people were all newcomers and not necessarily all Russian kids. There were only about ten Russian kids in Niles North when I went there. And then they put me through psychiatric examinations, which I was really upset about that.

SRB: Were those for special education placement?

ZIV: Right.

SRB: Did they think you had a learning disability?
ZIV: Right.

SRB: When you went to school in the Soviet Union, did you ever experience difficulty in the classroom?

ZIV: No, I was getting good at the end. As I can recall, first grade and second grade really wasn't so hot, but by the time third grade came around, it was okay.

MIA: I remember he was okay in Russian school. He was an average student. He wasn't the best, but he was an average student. He did read well and write well in Russian at that time. He was a good average student, I would say.

SRB: So, they decided to test you and they did not find any kind of learning disability, as I understand.

ZIV: My counselor was a native Greek. It's all a big mix up. Really, everybody tries to wash their hands from everything. They just didn't really realize where I came from and my background as far as where I grew up in the city. And this is just a whole different culture between a city kid and a suburban kid, in school and everything else. I guarantee you, probably if I went to Mather High School, I probably would have done well, probably better than average. Not maybe, for sure. When I went to Niles North, I didn't know anything. But when I applied for Mather, I placed in most classes regular, other classes were honors. There is the difference between the schools.

SRB: How did education assist you in your adjustment here?

ZIV: I will be honest with you. I literally grew up on the street. I mean, everything I know, everything I see, everything I do, came from watching, observing.

SRB: So you would say you were more or less learning in an informal way rather than in a structured classroom setting.

ZIV: Yes. There is really nothing the school taught me that I didn't know already.

SRB: What is your profession now?

ZIV: An electrician.

SRB: Did you ever want to go to college?

ZIV: No.

SRB: You had no desire?

ZIV: Remembering in my Freshman year? I was disgusted with school,
literally because it made me feel very degraded. Really, I hated it. I felt I couldn't do it no matter how hard I tried to apply myself.

SRB: Did you have a lot of friends?

ZIV: Mostly Russian. Only after high school did I really start becoming friends with the Americans, and even those Americans are more European Americans. I had very strong responsibilities when I was young. My parents were working all of the time, and I have a brother, but I had to drag him with me wherever I went. I was more or less kept on a strict supervision as my parents would say.

SRB: Did you ever find yourself translating things for your parents?

ZIV: Not really. My parents never really asked that and I didn't really offer because they managed and that was fine. There were times when I didn't really see my parents for weeks, because they worked so hard. You could say that sometimes I grew up sometimes on my own, just me and my brother.

SRB: And you started babysitting for your brother when you were ten?

ZIV: Yes.

SRB: How old is your brother now?

ZIV: He is sixteen.

SRB: And you are how old?

ZIV: Twenty.

SRB: And you took on a lot of responsibilities that many children don't necessarily take on?

ZIV: I put it this way. At ten years old, I was already working.

SRB: In the restaurant?

ZIV: Yes, in the restaurant and also at Goldstein's Drugs which is on the corner of Leavitt and Devon, for $2.00 per hour.

SRB: What were you doing?

ZIV: I was delivering, on a bicycle, in a foot of snow. I was working at a cash register, and then I got to help out in the pharmacy. I pick up things very quickly. In school, in the high school, the only good grades I got were in mechanical shops and in science.

SRB: They always go hand in hand. The fact that you are an electrician, and your knowledge of science.
ZIV: One of the best mechanical schools in the United States offered me a scholarship.

SRB: Which one was that?

ZIV: Wyoming Tech.

SRB: Well, why didn't you take it? Wyoming Tech.

ZIV: I didn't really want to be a mechanic, to be honest with you. I was just good at it.

SRB: Did they offer you a scholarship because of your high school aptitude?

ZIV: I placed. There was one teacher who had confidence in me. Out of four hundred students that he ever had in his class, he placed me first, because I was always more involved in electronics. You know, newer cars. I was more interested in high performance, etc.

SRB: Believe it or not, I had a former student, a girl, who attended that school.

ZIV: It's a regular school.

SRB: She wanted to be a mechanic and she went.

ZIV: She would be making good money.

SRB: I don't know if she finished. I don't know if she ever found a job. When you came here you told me that you had shortened your name. Was that just to make things easier?

ZIV: I suppose.

MIA: No, no. That was a family thing, being Russian. My husband's family, his mother and his sister, still live in Russia at that time and he bring us to go back and see them. And in that time, door was closed. No one could go back to Russia. We thought if we changed our names, if it were a different name, maybe it would be easier for him to get back and see his family, because they never had the idea to come here. He went to Russia first time, it was three or four years ago, to see his mother and his sister, but I'm not so sure to cut off our name helped him.

SRB: But, he had an American passport?

MIA: Oh, yes! Because, before we decided to become a citizen, I did apply and New Trier High School, offered me to go with a group of teachers to see Russia and to help out in translating the small things. They offered to me to go with them, and I applied for the documents, and the Russian government wouldn't let me go. The
whole group left and only one person was left in America, it's me. For six months, my husband applied the documents to tour Russia, and they let him go.

ZIV: Six months. It took that long because there was a change in the Presidents at that time.

SRB: Was that the change between . . .

ZIV: Gorbechev and Andropov.

SRB: And since he's been in, things have been . . .

ZIV: Yes, things are definitely more relaxed, colorful ties. He did a little bit more in show.

MIA: I took my younger son back to Russia to visit. He had no memory because he was so young when he came here. And when he went back, and stayed there for two weeks, he said, "God, I want to go home! I want to go to America! America is my home!" It was good for him.

SRB: You've become very Americanized.

ZIV: Not really. We are still a very Russian family. Absolutely not in all things. We think in Russian, we speak only Russian at home. We may be Americanized on the view of things political views, maybe. But as far as the culture of things, you know, manners, lifestyles, sure, you know, we're in the United States. It is circumstantial, you understand, I mean, it's something that you strive for, and either it happens or it doesn't. If it feels good, you go with it.

SRB: One of the people I interviewed, I asked, what was the one thing that most impressed her with the United States when she first came here?

MIA: Grocery stores!

SRB: That's the grocery store.

MIA: Dominick's, Jewel and you name it! Each grocery store. It was like museum for us. I remember the first year when we came, when we got one hour by ourselves. The first thing that we did was we went to Dominick's and walked from one aisle into the other, and read whatever it said on the shelves. What it is, how to make it, how to see and how to try! We spent a lot of money to buy all of the different products, most of which we put in the garbage because of the different taste, but at least you would know what it is! And I will tell you one more story. My parents, one time I noticed they bought some canned food and brought it home and my mother called me and said, "Oh I bought this beautiful cat on the
jar." And I said, "You know Mom, you better not eat until I'm coming or somebody else." And my cousin came to their apartment to stop by and say hello, and my mother, of course, showed him, and he said, "Don't eat it! This is cat food!"

SRB: That happens! I'd probably do the same thing, to tell you the truth!

SRB: What was the most impressive thing for you when you came here?

ZIV: The most impressive thing and the one thing I will never forget was the first day of Vienna. Our hotel was right next door to a toy store. I will never forget it. The windows, the window dressings! I just stood there for maybe about an hour with my mouth open. It's a day I will never forget!

SRB: You had never seen anything like that. Have you ever been to Marshall Field's at Christmas to see their windows?

ZIV: Nothing compares to Marshall Field's, but what I saw that day for the first time.

MIA: We used to have a tradition in our company. We used to come together each new year and take the kids downtown to show them how beautiful was the Christmas trees and the decorations. And it doesn't matter what kind of weather, snow or windy or whatever. All of us took off and went there and saw!

ZIV: And Buckingham Fountain! That is really beautiful!

SRB: Yes, it is. Chicago is a beautiful city. I like Chicago.

MIA: We were in Mexico last week, and honestly, after a few days we were there, the weather was nice and hotel was perfect. Everything was all right, but my husband said, "You know, I want to go home."

SRB: I really appreciate you're allowing me into your home. Is there something that I haven't asked that perhaps you'd like to say about adjustment to life here in any way at all?

MIA: I can say, I am the most happy person that I'm here in America. I went back to Russia last summer and took our youngest son there, because he still remembers a couple of things from our city life. My husband said, "You know, he wants to go there, take him." And we went there. He didn't like it and for him the most happiest time was the last day on our trip in Moscow, and he said, "God, tomorrow, I'm going to be home!"

SRB: He obviously didn't care for it. Have you been back there?

ZIV: No.
SRB: No desire?

ZIV: There is a cultural aspect. Yes, I admire and yes, I would probably go back. I would look at it from a practical point of view. If you spend so much money to see garbage, I can go to the South Side of Chicago.

SRB: I have never heard anyone express it quite in those terms. I have been interviewing families, and one family I interviewed had very little contact with the larger Russian community.

ZIV: See, one of the cliches of Russians is sometimes they feel that Russians are no good, I'm going to hide away.

MIA: It's nothing new. It's in all communities that you find that like in our Jewish community in Chicago area, people know what kind of job somebody has. Same thing in Russian community. I think it's not that important. If you want to be with people, you be with them.

ZIV: It's as simple as that. Our family being Russian don't deny it and are actually very much proud of it, and basically that's it. But they do find those families that are so shy and try to hide that fact, but unfortunately, it's something we cannot run away from.

MIA: My husband says he was born in Russia and he is proud of it. It's part of you.

ZIV: It's your blood.

MIA: It's your blood, it's your country. If you don't want to go there, it's fine, but you have to remember you were born there and that country gave you life, gave you food, gave you education, but that was in that time. You can not hide. We will always have an accent. You can't hide the accent. We are proud to be Russian.

SRB: I really appreciate your interview and your time.

MIA: Thank you!

ZIV: You are very welcome.

Interview with "Ann and Uri Fine"

SRB: Today is August 28, 1990. This is an interview with Anna and Uri Fine. Before we begin, I want you to know that I will not use your name in my dissertation at all. You will be given a pseudonym. I would appreciate it if you would give me your oral consent to tape this interview.
ANN: All right, you can tape it.

SRB: The first question that I have for you is: Where were you born in the Soviet Union?

ANN: The city of Minsk.

SRB: Is that a large city?

ANN: Very. It has one a half million people. According to Soviet standard, it is a pretty big city. It is the capital of Byelorussia Republic.

SRB: Why did you decide to leave the Soviet Union?

ANN: I might disappoint you here. It is not because of anti-Semitism, which I can not say I experience while located there. It was here and there. Not more than what we have in America in my time, okay, time changed.

SRB: What time would that be?

ANN: It was 1979, and the decision was made three or four years before we were able to leave the country. So, it was not anti-Semitism. It's just simply we could not live there any more, period.

SRB: Why, economic reasons?

ANN: Absolutely not. It's ideological reasons, okay. Because when you live in society which saved you from "kingdom God" that is ideology. Then you grow up with a double split personality, and you understand what's going on. It's not like you're mentally sick. You know what you can not say and then you come to your friends and you talk completely different.

SRB: In other words, you were afraid to talk in front of your friends and express your feelings?

ANN: No, you can talk to your friends, but you can not talk in your office, or with just not well known to you people. It's just not smart thing to do, because then you might be kicked out of your office or, who knows? Everybody remembers the Stalin type.

SRB: People were afraid that they, perhaps, may have to go to Siberia?

ANN: No, this time period has nothing to do with Siberia. No one would be afraid to say a joke, and no one would be arrested for it in our time. It's different generation. So it's a very simplistic point of view. When people are talking the 1950's, my parents, yes, they would be afraid to exchange jokes or mention anything political; they wouldn't. My generation grew up in Khrushchev's time. So this has nothing to do with fear. It just wouldn't be
right to do, because we learned from our parents. It it's not right, then we didn't do it. We wouldn't be arrested, we wouldn't be prosecuted for jokes. It was different times. Much easier.

SRB: You were born after the war?

ANN: Yes, I was born in 1947.

SRB: And your husband was born in?

ANN: In 1941.

SRB: Was your son born in the Soviet Union?

ANN: He was born in Russia and when we left he was nine.

SRB: And you left in 1979. Did you have any problems applying for visas and getting permission to leave?

ANN: Not at all. In 1979, it was very easy year. If you remember, it was the peak of immigration. It was 50,000 people left the Soviet Union. And then in 1980, when Olympic Games if you remember were boycotted, then it was completely drawn. No one came in or out. That was it. The country was closed for five years, I think.

SRB: Until at least 1985. It might be even longer.

ANN: Yes.

SRB: You came with what they commonly call the "first wave" of immigrants that were allowed in?

ANN: I said I was "third wave." The "first wave" was after the revolution, for the aristocracy and other people who could not live as communists is a "first wave." "Second wave" was after the war who did not return or prisoners of war who don't want to return to the Soviet Union. They were "second." We were "third," and now they are talking "fourth," so I don't know.

SRB: No matter what "wave" you were in, you, in any event, are all out of there. In Russia, what was your occupation?

ANN: I was an architect.

SRB: That is a very impressive profession. It must have been extremely difficult to leave such a profession.

ANN: There was no alternative. Decision taken, you can not breathe, you can not live. You do not want your son going to kindergarten and coming home with "Grandfather Lenin," instead of "Grandfather Schlomo," which is my father, so you know, that's my relative. You leave everything. There is no alternative.
SRB: Your husband, what did he do?

ANN: Well, we have in the city, it's a giant refrigerator plant. It's the biggest in Europe. He was chief of department, well, we call it "warranty department" here. Spare part and that stuff.

SRB: So he had an extremely responsible job.

ANN: He was in a well respected job.

SRB: When you decided to leave, this was a joint decision, I assume?

ANN: No. He didn't want to go and it was fine for couple of years because he was afraid. Well, it's understandable, you know. You have a child and we expected to wash the dishes. We didn't expect anything positive. We didn't have an illusion about "golden streets," so he didn't want to go in the beginning. It was like anti-Semitism didn't touch him personally, despite that he looked like a Jew, he had the Jewish name and he is a Jew, no hiding. But he was a well liked man. I don't know, stories people will tell you, our people like to tell a lot of different stories, which you can listen, but it doesn't mean everything is true. I personally don't know anyone, and my friends went to a certain school and university and office, Minsk is a very Jewish city, but it is large population of Jews. No, it's everywhere a fight between small kids here and there, but not because you are a Jew, just because you are obnoxious, perhaps. Who knows? I can not tell you about anti-Semitism very much.

SRB: Did you have any religious training at all?

ANN: None.

SRB: Did your parents?

ANN: No.

SRB: So, basically, when you came here, you know very little about Judaism?

ANN: Very little. Well, before we left, we have a very good friend of ours. He's in Israel now and he was a very well known dissident. He was a colonel who first sent his medal of war back to the Kremlin. Because we were close friends, so he gave us some literature. Some stuff from Exodus, a book, and then slowly, we start to learn something, but it wasn't an education. It was just common knowledge.

SRB: Did you ever attend a seder?

ANN: In Soviet Union? No.
SRB: As far as your education in the Soviet Union, did you attend a university?

ANN: Yes.

SRB: Did you have any trouble getting in?

ANN: No, because, again, no. My name wouldn't was not on a list. We were under symbols like "1, 2, 3," or "A, B, C." And that year, it was done by symbols, so in case we should pass it wasn't my name in it. So I have a high mark, and when they find out what my name was not non-Jewish, it was too late. No, I didn't have any problem.

SRB: Did you decide that you wanted to be an architect, or was it just that there was an opening?

ANN: Not at all. It was incredible high competitive exams in universities. There were only twenty five students accepted in a year and five hundred people would apply. No, I'm wrong. When we started, it was fourteen people for one place. My first exam, it was a nude sketch. Then it dropped by fifty percent, and there was like only seven people for one place. That would be enough. One of seven was accepted, so for me, it wasn't any problem.

SRB: Did you husband also attend a university?

ANN: Yes.

SRB: And he went into training and . . .

ANN: Well, he's an engineer in air conditioners and that sort of thing. But he was different generation, too. Several years apparently make a difference because Stalin died when I was only five or six years old. So that high wave of anti-Semitism after the war touched my husband. But then, after Stalin's death and that "Doctor's Plot," if you are familiar? And then it died. And then it was quiet period. So when I grew up, of course it was anti-Semitism, but I will never know. Well, that's not fair to say. It wasn't government level, but again, it's individual. I didn't fall for it. I didn't feel too much. School teachers were wonderful, friends were wonderful. It's no reason to create dark past than it was. Ideology was there. Life itself was very green.

SRB: Did you have your own apartment?

ANN: Yes. We have very nice apartment in downtown of city. My parents, too, live in this apartment. We live together with parents. According to Soviet standard, it's only two bedroom apartment, but to Soviet standards, it was beautiful, wonderful!
SRB: Did your parents have any desire to come?

ANN: I don't know. They are old and in beginning they were not able to because my father was in the army. He was a colonel. Now he's retired many years ago, thirty years ago. However, that military secret, whatever they talk about. Now they change law. I believe, after five years any secret is not a secret any more. So if you are not working five years in office, even if you posses some secret, you are exempt. So I don't think this really applies now to my father. But he's 78 years old.

SRB: Hard to change.

ANN: It's not reason to change. For what? He's an old and sick man and it's best for him to stay in a norm environment and with his language.

SRB: It would be very difficult.

ANN: Yes, that would be incredible. I would never suggest it.

SRB: Why had you decided to come to the United States, more specifically, to Chicago, than to perhaps Israel or another city?

ANN: About Chicago, we didn't have any alternative. It was given to us as a statement, "Do you want to go to Chicago?" We said, "Yes." We didn't have anyone in America. We didn't know anybody here. It wouldn't be any different in any city we would go . . . New York or Chicago.

SRB: Who sent you here?

ANN: HIAS in Rome. When you needed to come some people give them an ultimatum, like "I'm going just to L.A. Period." For us it wasn't important.

SRB: You had no sponsor here?

ANN: No. Chicago was open and they just offered it, so it was wonderful! We came here.

SRB: I'm surprised they didn't try to steer you toward Israel.

ANN: They didn't press you. The people were wonderful at HIAS. When we just came to Vienna, we met with HIAS man. He was from Israel. We had a wonderful conversation and it was no suggestion. He just asked, "So what did you decide?" So we said, "We decided to go to the United States because we don't have anyone in Israel. We don't have anyone in America." It wasn't completely the truth. We have a friend of ours, who just came from Israel one year before us and when we decided to immigrate, he called us from Israel and he said, "You should understand one thing. You have to
be very Jewish-oriented inside; not just like nobody like we were." You know to be a Jew it doesn't mean by blood. It means by all of you God sustaining statements. Who you are, you are white. Just because my mother was Jewish, I am. That doesn't mean a thing, right? I can be a Muslim or a Moony, whatever, right? So that was number one point. Number two point, he said that you should be Zionist, patriotic, whatever. He said, "If you are none of it, don't go to Israel. It will be hard for you. It will be impossible to break yourself." We took his word for truth. That's all.

SRB: When you came here, what problems did you encounter language-wise?

ANN: I learned English at school. It was pretty poor. It's still not good enough, but is was poor. My husband spoke German, so that wasn't any help. Language problem was my main problem. It's still a problem.

SRB: You speak very well.

ANN: Yes, but the desire to speak much better, to become more polished.

SRB: You said you went to school. Do you mean here?

ANN: No. In the Soviet Union. It was the English language.

SRB: Oh, they didn't object to your going to those classes?

ANN: No, it was a must to take.

SRB: So you took it as part of your curriculum? Not a special class?

ANN: Right.

SRB: In an interview I had with a family they told me they enrolled in a special English class and they were from Kiev.

ANN: Well, maybe it was later. But in regular school, everybody must take foreign language.

SRB: You took the class in the Soviet Union. Then when you came here, how did you learn English?

ANN: We went to a synagogue on Sheridan. It was a beautiful one. The teacher was marvelous. She was just the perfect teacher. And then, pretty fast we found a job. So we didn't finish school. It was like three months passed and then we found a job and then we were too busy to go. You know, it's like evening study, T.V. and books, reading. It's only one way to learn.

SRB: Mostly on your own?
ANN: Well, yes. I would say so.

SRB: What is your occupation now?

ANN: I am in commercial art and advertising.

SRB: You kept up with actually going in from your architectural experience and your artistic background . . .

ANN: Well, not exactly, because to be an architect in America, it's like to be a doctor. You must have proof of your diploma. Otherwise you should take test and have an American diploma. Otherwise you are not an architect. So, it was impossible for me to work as an architect. However, I found a job as an architectural draftsman. Remember Goldblatt's? Seventy six stores around. They call it an interior architect. One great position! They moved furniture around and then I just put on the paper. But they got out of business very soon.

SRB: Yes. They went into bankruptcy, unfortunately.

ANN: Right. You know, I just simply didn't have any interview. I sent the resumes all over. I tried it like five times. And five times they didn't want to talk to me. So I decided to go take the easy way. Advertisement is a marvelous field, very good payment. No special brains required up to my account. So, it's great!

SRB: Good! When you came here, what socioeconomic problems did you encounter?

ANN: Economics. Jewish Family helped a lot.

SRB: Jewish Family Service?

ANN: Yes.

SRB: The one over here on Devon?

ANN: Yes. It's still the same. They helped a lot. They send volunteer. In our time it was wonderful. We have all help possible. "Excuse us, excuse us, it's not Kosher dishes." I said, "Wow! I don't deserve it." People were so wonderful. We had a lot of help.

SRB: They helped you find an apartment?

ANN: No. It was no problem, not with this apartment that time of the year. We had a two hundred thirty dollars a month, one bedroom, fifth floor on Artesian here. It was a small apartment, but see, it wasn't important. It is material part. In the Soviet Union we lived very well. In the country according to other people, my parents were well established, so were we. It was no problem with
money, with anything. So, money wasn't our first priority in America. We didn't expect better things waiting than we had in Soviet Union. Now it was, of course, much better. But we are very realistic people, me and my husband. So it was very easy. We love America from the first moment. We were in love with this country and we love people very much. Openness. People are simple, not trying to pretend like a lot of Russians. Russians are very sick people. I don't know what communism did to them. They are very sick mentalistic [sic] people. They are constantly not what they are of. They are pretending and trying to be different and are trying to show for all of them. For all of us. I don't know. So it was easy. In 1979, there wasn't too many Russians here, so Americans were not sick from us yet.

SRB: I don't know that they are sick from you! I must admit that I see jealousy among people. I speak to Americans who say that Soviet Jews have only been here for ten years. They want to know how Soviet Jews have the money to buy houses in such a short period of time when they, who were born here, are unable to afford houses. Obviously, the answer is not to eat out every night. Don't buy a new Cadillac every year and save your money. To some people, scrimping and saving is more important. Have you felt any animosity towards you? Were there people who asked you, "How in the world did you accomplish all of this?"

ANN: Only one thing. People asked, "Why didn't you go to Israel?" That sounds very offensive. I remember when I enrolled in Jewish Academy, in which came over their secretary. This old lady, who was bored with nothing to do in the summertime. They were hostile. "Why didn't you go to Israel?" So I said, "Why aren't you in Israel?" And they said, "Well, I was born here!" I said, "Well, I wasn't born in Israel either!"

SRB: It's true!

ANN: That's a good question. But not for Americans to ask. Not you. I mean people who have hostile attitudes. Those who say, "You came from the Soviet Union with our money, our support, on Israeli visa." Which is true. We sort of cheated. We didn't go there and came over here and they should have sense.

SRB: Well, there are those who think that there are too many Soviet Jews going to Israel now because there is not enough housing for them. When you came here, besides socioeconomics, perhaps not having the same life-style that you had in Russia, what cultural problems did you encounter? Like, culture shock?

ANN: No. It wasn't culture shock. It was euphoria. We breathe so free here. We adopted America immediately. We didn't have problem. I, for one, didn't have any problem to adopt. Everything love. Every single thing here, everything. There wasn't anything like the openness of the people. You know people
were so friendly here. You know what shocked me first thing in America? First day on street, the mailman said, "Hello," and smiled to me on the street. People not smiling in Soviet Union just on the street. And last smile I saw until now was when I was three years old from strange lady. I was like, "Wow, you smiled at me! Huh?" It was wonderful! Did we have any cultural shock here?

URI: No. I don't think there's any major shock between a culture that you grew up in and America. It's more of everything that you should be, is. Of course, there are things that you should be that are not. But they were never to begin with.

SRB: What about shopping? Most people I've talked to are impressed the first time they go to a supermarket.

ANN: Yes. It was very educational. It was wonderful, but not a shock. The first shock we got was when we came to Vienna and got out of the train. The smell in train station. The smell of coffee and banana. The smell was very good to me, personally. But it was the best smell in my life, really! And after Vienna's shock, the grocery store did not shock me.

URI: It didn't impress me. I mean the first Dominick's.

ANN: Oh, you were small. It depends what you live for. If you live for sausages, well, whatever in the store, then yes, that will shock you forever. But the big shock for my husband was in the book store, when we came over and saw unlimited possibility to read. That was shocking. When we came first to the library on Washington, in old library on Washington, we saw all forbidden books and newspapers and that was the most shocking thing here. Forget shopping, okay? We didn't have much money to shop so we shop mostly in generic section and it was perfect for us.

URI: I remember we would head down three miles down to Clark Street for this one store that would sell the bread.

SRB: Yes, a thrift shop.

ANN: So, you know, we didn't have bike, or money. It wasn't problem. I never felt sorry for us. I would say, "That's okay. It's good for me. My muscles get tight." It's great, great! No time was great. Now when I'm looking back, I understand that maybe it was hard, in a way. But we were younger and country was so promising and so wonderful. I don't think we have any cultural shock here. But books. You know you have a block of English, and you read the dictionary, and you go through ten pages in evening. After two hours of reading, it is frustrating. When you see all of these books, and you have, my God, thirty years passed, and you didn't read it, and all your life wouldn't be enough to read all. And then our poor Russian education, like didn't let us read
Dostoevski! How did we grow up to be such a big person? They didn’t understand that there are much more authors around who give you much greater excitement to live. That was a shock. That was like you have to rush. We have to learn English because we have to rush.

SRB: You’re the first person who has mentioned that to me. I find that interesting.

ANN: Unfortunately, I’m sorry to hear it.

SRB: Well, everyone has his own memory of the first time they have done something. You’re really the first person who has mentioned books to me. Having grown up here with books and a library card, that’s the last thing that really crossed my mind. I’m glad you brought that up. How did education, even going to the synagogue on Sheridan Road, help you to adjust? Uri, when you came here, how old were you?

URI: Ten.

SRB: What grade did they put you in when you enrolled in school?

URI: Fifth.

SRB: And that was a Chicago public school?

URI: Yes, it was.

SRB: Which one?

URI: Clinton. DeWitt Clinton, a Chicago public school.

SRB: I’m familiar with that school. How did they decide to place you in that particular grade level? Did somebody read your transcript?

URI: No. I walked in with my dad and said that I wanted to enroll. They asked, "What grade did you graduate from?" I said, "Second." And so we have to go into second. There’s no way I was going into fifth. He said, "Really?" I said, "Really." He said, "Okay." It’s actually no more complicated than that. That’s the way it happened.

SRB: You went to school in the Soviet Union when you were a child. How did that schooling differ from the schooling in the Chicago public schools?

URI: I’m trying to think of a good answer. Besides the obvious? The obvious in the sense that it’s so much more rigorous, noncreative, non-free approach to education in the Soviet Union.
SRB: More rote?

URI: Rote, I guess, is the standard answer. But it's more than that. It's constant control. It's authoritarian in the sense that you have this little thing called your date book, I guess that's the translation. And every grade you get, gets entered into that. And every test you take or for every homework assignment you do. And then you have to take it home to your parents daily, of course. It led to some creative schemes.

SRB: How to forge Mom's name?

URI: Well, on how to forge Mom's name, but not for me personally, of course. Some more intelligent people would have two copies of the book. One for the school and one for yourself! But that's just part of it. Also, the attitude of the teachers. It's kind of like the whole world conspiring against you. It's not a sense of paranoia, really, but that's what it was. The teachers would provoke you and call your parents and say, "Do you know what he did? Well, let me tell you!"

SRB: So when you came here and...

URI: Well, you see, my parents and I never really took the system very seriously, so it was not a big deal. I'd give my mom the date book and she'd say, "Oh, you got that?" That would be it. And she be like, "Oh, that's great." I think if the teacher was some stupid Byelorussian teacher if she ever called you.

ANN: We never had a problem with Uri because we were really lucky with him. He would start to read when he was three years old and when he go to school it was real easy for him. It was German language school and they start to learn German from first grade. All subjects were in German.

URI: No. All subjects were in Russian, except German.

ANN: So he was brilliant at the beginning and then when we came over here, unfortunately, we could not give him any help because we came here luckily in the spring. So he was enrolled in the Jewish Academy and then he go to summer camp sponsored by the Jewish organization.

URI: I hated both, perfectly.

ANN: When he came back his English was pretty mediocre, but he was able to express himself at least. So maybe first year was hard for him in school, but he did his best.

SRB: Did you go to the Ida Crown Jewish Academy? Which one? Solomon Schecter?
ANN: It's at California and Touhy.

URI: No. I know where it is. It's on McCormick and Devon or Lincoln and Devon? Ring a bell? It's not important.

ANN: The rabbi was very good to us. He helped with the circumcision and he brought us to the hospital.

URI: He forced circumcision upon us.

ANN: Nobody forced anything upon us. He was too small. He's just playing a smart ass.

SRB: Well, that was the Orthodox affiliation with the Jewish Academy.

ANN: Women start to ask questions. "Why are you not ... ." Yes. It was Orthodox, but the rabbi was very understanding and very soft. He didn't push anything. He just taught his point of view and we felt he was absolutely right.

SRB: Are you members of any synagogue now?

ANN: No, we're not. Uri didn't like environment in the summer camp. Maybe because he was with Russian kids that summer and somehow, same thing was in school, only Russian class. He didn't go along with kids. I don't know why. He didn't like environment. Maybe he didn't possess the gang intelligence. He wanted to go away from Russian language, Russian attitude, Russian up-bringing. And then it was his idea, it was close to school to us, and we didn't have any trouble with him. In that school he was "A" student. Teachers were constantly calling us to say he doing wonderful, wonderful.

SRB: That was at Clinton?

ANN: Yes.

SRB: You said you lived 6200 on Artesian?

ANN: Right.

SRB: If I could digress to your education at Clinton for a minute. Were you put in an English as a Second Language class?

URI: Yes. I think my first year I had it. It's a normal course load, except I was forced to take English as a Second Language class and I was excused from subjects like spelling.

SRB: There was, I have been told, a teacher at Clinton who knew Russian and he would help ...

URI: It was an absolutely useless class. But, you know, it was.
ANN: For you it was. For somebody else . . .

SRB: Why was it useless?

URI: They taught me nothing.

SRB: It didn’t help you learn English?

URI: No.

SRB: Where did you really learn English, if not in that class?

URI: Well, you don’t as a child at least, well, even as a grown up, you
don’t learn a language in a classroom. You certainly can’t learn
a language that you are immersed in, in the classroom. You can
learn a foreign language in a classroom, perhaps, but you learn
English from watching cartoons, if nothing else.

ANN: No.

URI: Mom, don’t tell me no!

ANN: First he took book from California library about dinosaurs. His
English was practically like mine over when we just came. I
remember all of these "huffs and puffs!"

URI: I remember that. I never got through it. I got through it about
a year later. It was a book about dinosaurs.

ANN: Little pictures. It was a beautiful book. No one could read.

SRB: So, you feel that if you had not been placed in an English as a
Second Language classroom with this teacher who knew Russian that
you would have learned English anyway?

URI: No question about it. I would have learned it faster.

SRB: Are you in high school now?

URI: No. I graduated.

SRB: What high school did you attend?

URI: Lane.

SRB: How did you do there?

URI: Reasonably well.

ANN: Oh, come on!

URI: My average was 4.35, when I graduated. Or a 4.0.
ANN: He is a Merit Scholarship student and he just won the Barry Goldwater Foundation Award this year! He just won!

SRB: What does the award entail?

URI: Barry Goldwater? The Barry Goldwater Scholarship is for quote, "outstanding scholars in the sciences."

ANN: He's a science major. He tried to go for two diplomas. He does major in physics and computer science.

SRB: Which university?

ANN: Northwestern.

SRB: My nephew goes there.

ANN: Yes?

SRB: You're a double major. Are you entering your sophomore year? What year?

URI: I'm sorry. I'm in my junior year.

SRB: Well, my nephew is just going to start his sophomore year.

URI: It's a scholarship they give to one person in every state. It's basically for people who are in the sciences.

SRB: I think that's absolutely wonderful! What are you going to do with your degrees and, of course, your Ph.D.?

URI: I'd just like to keep my options open. I think I have several menus to pursue. I like doing research, but I'm probably not going to stick to academic research; probably do something in an industry. Of course, I could always get a computer job; maybe as a systems analyst or something. They are reasonably good. They start out at something like $60,000, but, you know, it doesn't go too far.

ANN: Don't forget your poor mother then!

SRB: He'll never forget his mother.

URI: I don't know. I'll just keep my options open.

ANN: In education, we were not any help to him. We could not check his homework or help him anyhow. First of all, we worked and we struggled with our own English, which was for us, first priority. So this poor guy was on his own most of the time through school. We were lucky with him. No smoke, no troubles and great marks. And maybe that's common with immigrants, because when kids see how
hard their parents struggle to succeed and to just establish themselves. Any level, acceptable level of society. At least we are able to talk evenly and you are able to understand me. It's 50% what I understand you, but it's not all deal done. I have to make myself accent, stupid mistakes in grammar, lack of vocabulary, and this is an embarrassment for intelligent person, because like it is the hardest thing in the world, but when you are thirty and over, somehow it's not as fast as you want to. So in our case, I know some parents who a great deal, help their kids. We were not able to do that, so Uri pulled through on his own, and I am very proud of him.

SRB: It's phenomenal! It's like a story. Like a Cinderella type story, but you're not Cinderella! I think it's phenomenal and I really congratulate you! Coming, not knowing English and pulling yourself up.

URI: I don't see that that is anything out of the ordinary.

ANN: I just think it's hard on a child with parents who are unable to buy a bike or gym shoes, or...

URI: Let's face it, we're not poor, I mean, we never were. We were poor for six months, and then they made more money than the average American does.

ANN: No, it's not right. We never were poor because we never considered money a first priority, or clothes a first priority or apartment a first priority. Also, we had a very big family in Soviet Union who helped a lot, you know, like about every two months, we were sending goodies, clothes, everything. So, our money goes this way. But, yes, this country was so good to us, we could not complain. It wasn't a big struggle and also, we didn't expect as much from country as newcomers now expecting because last year we had four families in my house here. They came from the Soviet Union and that happened to be the same period of time. So can you imagine here twenty people? But, I should say what, I was surprised in a bad sense. You know, with people just coming over, they did not expect to find a good car, or a two bedroom apartment, because it's wrong to begin with. People have to think first of all about job and language, not material stuff. Nothing good comes from it. And you know, sooner or later, they all succeed, but God, how poor they are. I know a lot of people who come over just the same time, wonderful in my eyes. You know, sometimes we see each other; it is really not the same era. They didn't change from the way they were ten years ago. They can of course, mix Russian with English. They forgot Russian, they didn't learn English! And that is so unfortunate.

SRB: I agree with you. You mentioned something. You didn't think the language mattered. I am looking at you and you are obviously an extremely intelligent young man, and if we were to take your I.Q.
and put it on scale, you certainly would be in the minority of students, even though Lane Tech gave you an entrance exam for admission. I'm a former grammar school principal, and I know what kids have to go through to apply to get into Lane. I know they accept some people whom they shouldn't. You are intellectually atypical. Many of the students here are average, or below average in intelligence.

URI: I never really agreed with that philosophy. By definition, most students are average. I don't agree with that. It's never been my experience, in all of the people I have ever met in my life. I really think that in terms of what you call intelligence, it's not the students who are lacking, it's the system. It's really scary because I have some friends who graduated from high school and don't know the very basic things. Like, they don't know who bombed who in World War II. They barely know what World War II is. The list goes on and on. And I look at these people and I talk to them, and they are very intelligent; I mean they can grasp a concept like this, they can retain it, they can make conclusions, they can make inferences. They have all of the components of intelligence, and yet they went through the system without absorbing very much, if anything at all. And that to me says something, that it's not the students who are lacking.

ANN: Well, maybe the Soviet schools didn't have too much. Freedom for kids in schools here and freedom for kids over there, if it were possible to do it 50:50, then it would be ideal school, because parents generally don't check homework and they usually think, "Oh, you did your best, I'm sure you'll do better tomorrow." And this is wrong. Parents have to tell, if they know their kid, and they know their kid can do better, then they have to have the courage to say, "It's not good at all and I expect better from you. You see we're working hard, so you should help us, too." And then the kids would feel the responsibility to do it. And here, it is not at all. Here it's like, "Oh just take it easy. Oh, it's 11:00 already, you have to go to sleep." This is wrong. If the job is not done, and you go to sleep and he is still not finished, then let him do it. That is fine, and then he will sleep tomorrow.

URI: I think that's personally true.

ANN: Kids have to push harder. I think so.

SRB: I agree with you.

URI: But from my observation, the teachers are reduced to not teaching, but with a few exceptions, they are reduced to really this low-level mentality where they have to go to work for 40 minutes, and that is ridiculous. There is no reason that teachers should be put in that sort of a position. There is no reason for schools to retain teachers who do not teach.
ANN: Also, horrible disrespect to teachers. That is absolutely wrong, but parents accusing teacher would jump to blame the school. First of all, it's responsibility of parent. If child is doing poorly, they have to take tutor, or they have to help child. Teacher has nothing to do with it. Teacher just teaches. If child is not catching up then it's home problem. Then find out what is wrong with the child. Americans tend to say, "Oh, something is wrong with the school. Or something is wrong with the teacher."

URI: Something is wrong with the teacher.

ANN: This is wrong, completely wrong. Sixty percent of successful child depends on family. How child starts his or her life. When you start from two years old with books before you go to sleep, and his little pictures, then it's fine. It's respect. Respect of teaching because teaching never questioned in Soviet school. Never. Here, it's, "Oh, she didn't understand your lesson."

URI: I couldn't disagree with you more. I agree a large part of it is lack of motivation. You don't know what you are talking about.

ANN: Oh, yes I do. I have a child.

SRB: Both of you have a point.

ANN: Thanks.

SRB: First of all, education starts in the house. It doesn't start anywhere else; nowhere else. It's right there in the house. Secondly, Uri is right. There are teachers who should not be near children. I've seen it. I've been an educator for twenty two years. There are teachers who should not be there; they should have retired before they began. But some of them went into teaching because of the Vietnam War and they got deferments from having to go into the army. They hung out. They are still there. Twenty years later, twenty two years later, and they are still teaching the same class of kids with the same ditto sheets that they used twenty years ago. Nothing has changed. But by far and large, the majority of the teachers I have had contact with are excellent, superior teachers and they really try to convey a message to a population that has drastically changed within the same school.

URI: Well, see this whole new idea of vouchers for students that has been floating around.

SRB: Oh, it will be a reality.

URI: Well, it will be a reality, but the thing that it is, that their work has schools committing the biggest mistake by drafting
from a set geographic boundary, because that is enforcing mediocrity, by definition.

SRB: But Lane doesn't, Whitney Young doesn't.

URI: Lane should boot out half of its class.

SRB: Yes, the education system in the United States is by far, quite different from the education system in the Soviet Union.

URI: I think it's better though.

ANN: Here? I think so. If child were not to have not knowledge of a lot of things he would get at school. Uri was interested in a lot of classes and he was able to take them all. In the Soviet Union, they do not have alternative. Must take some subjects, no any subjects offered on top of it, no matter you are doing well or bad in class or even if you are just follower, or else.

URI: I was dying of laughter, because I had to take summer school so I could get rid of shop.

SRB: My nephew just suffered through two years of drafting.

URI: Oh, drafting wasn't so bad. Spoken as an architect! Drafting, anyway, I mean the system is not set up to help you get ahead, but it doesn't hinder you.

SRB: Is there any advice that you could give to persons who are going to arrive here in the United States, if you could meet them at O'Hare Airport, what advice would you give them? The first thing you would tell them about life in America?

URI: Don't talk to any Russians.

ANN: It's true.

SRB: Don't talk to any Russians?

URI: Don't ask them for any advice.

ANN: Yes. I would give advice. Be open-minded. Try to learn about country where you are going to live. You should know history of this country and judicial system, and everything what they used to know about Russia. Because people live here fifteen years, and they don't know what time lived George Washington, or what about Civil War? That would be my advice. Just go out and get it. First of all, learn about the country, and then, somehow it will build all understanding of life here, because ninety percent of people, obviously I am avoiding Russians and my first desire here was build American friends and go far away as I can from other Russians. We were very lucky because there weren't too many
Russians. Now I'm looking at my cousin, who came a year ago and she was cooking just a Russian pot. All advice I would give her, she wouldn't take. She is with people who came here two years ago and are much closer to her intelligence, much easier to follow and I found it very frustrating because they go through the same mistakes. They do not learn. The most frustrating thing about we constantly hear from Russians. No matter how long they are here. Would be Americans understand they are stupid kids, they don't know anything, they cannot walk, they are phony, they are small minded and crazy; they are here and there. You know, maybe I'm not supposed to tell you this. Maybe that is very bad of me to tell you that.

SRB: No. No.

ANN: But this is the main point why we are not, unfortunately, we do not have any Russian friends here. Last year, I met a very nice person, she is an artist and we kind of befriended. You know, one year is not in my age to tell you that we are close friends, but yes, we are friends. She is a beautiful person. And it's always a person who are very easy to talk, very open-minded person. Not like a horse in a circus with one-sided vision. This is very frustrating, especially in an office when people are talking about their job and say, "This person doesn't do anything all day, he just smokes, and she's just talking, I'm working so hard and they are not paying me enough." They always complain.

SRB: They have a different mentality?

ANN: Yes.

URI: I think the advice is to abandon all that you think. That you are now on your own.

ANN: Learn. Learn about America on your own.

URI: Well, yes, on your own. I'd acknowledge that whether you succeed or fail is very much up to you. I would suspend judgment on everything. Explore. Go out and explore.

ANN: Yes, even about medicine. See, everybody knows, everybody not meaning every one on my block, overall medicine in Soviet Union is about one hundred years behind the United States.

URI: A good example: my mom would not let me eat ice cream when I had a cold or . . .

ANN: Because I was taught always what is cold is bad for your throat and in that condition, you should drink hot meals. That is Soviet myth. But it's not what I want to tell. It is common knowledge, and everybody knows if you are looking for new things in the market, it is in America. Money for research is all in hospitals and it is here. Come to think of it, I hear from all Russians is,
and it is here. Come to think of it, I hear from all Russians is, "Doctors don't know anything. They just charge. I have a pain in my stomach and they don't know what it is." Well, x-ray doesn't show what it is, so they don't know. Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?

SRB: Yes, I do.

ANN: What can you do? How can you break through this wall?

SRB: Well, unless people are willing to break through that wall and I think that the fact that they left their native country to go to a new place, a totally alien place, that shows some willingness to want to change somehow.

URI: I'm not sure I agree.

ANN: I do.

SRB: I want to thank both of you for allowing me to talk to you. I deeply appreciate your opening your home to me. I will send you a copy of the transcript when it is completed.

ANN: You are welcome.

URI: You're welcome.

Interview with "Sonja and Jacob Leff"

SRB: Today is November 20, 1990. This is an interview with the Leff family. Before I begin, may I please have your permission to interview you on tape? I will guarantee you that you will remain anonymous in my paper.

S: Yes, I will allow you to do this interview on tape.

J: I am Jacob Leff and I allow you any information that we give you for only peaceful purposes.

SRB: Thank you. Only peaceful. First of all, in what year did you leave the Soviet Union and why did you decide to leave?

J: We left in May, 1979. Four days later, we celebrated my oldest son's birthday in Vienna. It was scary. It was like diving in a pond, not knowing how deep it was. If I were to explain to you why we immigrated, there probably isn't enough tape here, you know, 1, 2, 3, 4. And even if we used three tapes, it still would not be enough tape. We decided to immigrate in 1978. I got a job with some financial responsibilities, not to cut my responsibilities. I may leave my job, but I am just switching my
job, but I'm going to another job, and I never went for another job again.

SRB: Why?
J: Because we decided to go.
SRB: Why?
J: Why did we decide to go? It was a dead-end job, in my case. I tried to change the job. But I couldn't.
SRB: So you left what city when you left?
J: Minsk.
SRB: That's a large city?
J: There are 1.7 million people.
SRB: That's quite large.
J: On Russian scale, it's a big city. I would say it is number four or five in Russia, in population.
SRB: Did you leave because of your job, basically, or did you leave because of what we are hearing now, discrimination against Jews?
J: This discrimination can have a lot of faces. We both have an education, but I had a horrible time, in certain subjects in college to pass by, to get my exam. Not because I didn't know, because it was a prejudice, but you know.
S: Because he was a Jew.
J: Because I was a Jew. You try to cook with them one at a time, but it all piles up, piles up, piles up, and after a while, we decided, yes, we had to change something.
S: We reached the max.
J: We reached the maximum of what people would call it. This maximum was quite low, and there was no way at that.
SRB: Would you consider yourself to have been living in the "middle class?" I know there is a classless society, but if you were to compare the lifestyle you had there, was it comfortable, or were you struggling?
J: It was comfortable.
S: We lived six years with my parents. We were waiting for an
apartment. When we got the apartment and we lived there for two years and we decided to go.

SRB: So there were four of you, plus your parents? Or you did not have children at the time?

S: During the first 6 years of our marriage, we had our two children, two sons, and it was old house, with your own utilities.

J: In Russia, even if you own the house, you don't own the land. So the big government came and they decided to be the big project of this place, so they swept you away and gave you an apartment instead. And you are happy because with this apartment, you don't have the hustle and bustle. The rent is real cheap in Russia, if it is your apartment. The rent, I would say, is about ten percent of your salary. We were below the "middle class." We decided one day when our oldest one came home from kindergarten, and he had done something wrong and I punished him and he said to me, "You're not the boss, Brezhnev is the boss." He was six years old! In my family, I am not the boss! Brezhnev is the boss! It was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

SRB: I don't blame you. So, after you told him that actually you are the boss in your own house . . .

J: Brezhnev is the boss, not me.

SRB: Brezhnev, okay, well at least he didn't say Stalin! So at that time, you were working in finances?

S: No, he was working as an engineer, but he had financial responsibilities. He was responsible for some materials and some equipment there.

SRB: And what kind of job did you have over there?

S: Chemist. The same as what I am doing here!

SRB: Oh, you are a chemist! You are working with the E.P.A?

S: Yes.

SRB: So, both of you went to universities?

J: In my case, it wasn't university.

S: But it was a technical school, like IIT. It is a different accreditation there. The universities are giving different kind.

J: Universities are usually not technical. Universities have math, chemistry, history and all of this. Useless stuff, such as social studies, psychiatry, medical . . . that's university. If
something is technical, that is an institute, like IIT, or MIT.

SRB: Did you decide that you wanted to be an engineer, or did they just tell you that was what you were going to be?

J: No. I decided. I decided on my own, you know, different way to be in another field. I believed I would succeed much better in another field, but, to succeed, in, let's say, literature or philosophy, over here, it is a must to be a member, to be of the prevailing nationality. And it doesn't only mean for Jews. If you want to succeed in White Russia... you are supposed to be a White Russian. Or in the Ukraine, you are supposed to be from the Ukraine. It is not enough to be just a non-Jew.

SRB: I understand what you are saying.

J: But it is ten times more difficult being Jewish.

SRB: How do they know you are a Jew?

J: The last name as it appears in Russia; as it exists on the passport; the internal passport.

SRB: And on your passport it says...

J: Nationality: Jew.

SRB: Do you put that on your passport voluntarily?

J: No. When you are sixteen, you fill in the papers and on these papers it is written, who is your father, who is your mother, who is your uncle. I am only kidding about who is your uncle. The nationality of your mother and your father, and usually you have some choice. Let's say you've got a mix, and there were many Jews for the convenience of future living choose to be Russians, if they were "halves." In our case, we were 100%. My parents were Jews on both sides, and my wife.

SRB: Do you feel that when you decided to immigrate that it was because that one of the things your son had said, that it just accumulated and built up?

J: No, you see, I was kidding regarding my son. It really happened like this; we were already ready to go, but I never associated myself. We are more basic, and not religious. I will say in that case, I'm not denying anyone's rights to believe. My son was Bar Mitzvahed. It was his choice. But I am considering to be a Jew is a nationality. It's not a religion. For me, a black man goes tomorrow to a temple he says Kaddish and has a Bar Mitzvah, but, he's not a Jew. He is an American practicing the Jewish religion.

SRB: I could agree with that.
J: I consider Jew to be a nationality like a Greek, like French. It's just a nationality dispersed all over the place.

SRB: Do you feel that way, do you think, because it was so suppressed and you weren't really allowed to practice openly, even if you wanted to?

J: I was probably a bit more concerned. Some people who would explain it would say it is their religion, but I wasn't able to resist. It was in one small synagogue, in Minsk, approximately the size of this house. There was a general population of about 200,000 Jews. Usually I was assisting my father to and from.

SRB: Was your father religious?

J: Traditional.

SRB: How old were you when you immigrated?

J: I was 35.

S: I was 29.

SRB: So you were both very young and here you are with two children. How old were your sons?

S: Two and six.

SRB: Did your parents immigrate?

S: My parents came with us. My mother was 53 and my father was 55.

SRB: Were either of your parents religious?

S: Not really, but they know more because they went to Jewish schools before World War II. They got their grammar school and Jewish school, in Yiddish.

SRB: So they can both speak Yiddish?

S: Yes.

SRB: Were your parents able to speak Yiddish?

J: I was able to speak Yiddish myself, and still can. I understand. I was, I would say, able to speak in Yiddish, but, the more I picked up English was less I used Yiddish. I still understand completely and I, with some difficulty, can put a sentence together, but not as well as before.

SRB: Well, I can understand that. My Yiddish is slipping, too.
J: Well, use it, or lose it!

SRB: Well, I use it as much as I can. I talk to my students all of the time!

S: What students are you speaking of?

SRB: I teach English at a high school in Chicago.

J: Did you know that the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Powell, speaks Yiddish? Did you know that?

SRB: Yes. He grew up in a Jewish neighborhood.

J: He grew up in Brooklyn.

SRB: Why did you decide to come to the United States, instead of another country?

S: Because it is a big country with a lot more opportunities, and we used to live in a big country.

SRB: Did you ever consider, for instance, going to Israel?

J: No.

SRB: On your exit visa, as everybody else did, you put down Israel. How did you then wind up in Chicago?

S: In Vienna, there were very strange trains for us, because most of the trains, most of the people were not going to the United States and Canada, or any other country. And on our train, there were only six of us that went to the United States. They looked at us like we were deserters.

J: They looked at us like we were lepers.

SRB: Who did?

S: The people at the train. Like when we left on the train from the Soviet Union.

J: The Russians looked on us as if we were traitors.

SRB: The Jewish Russians?

J: No. The Russians. When we left the Soviet Union, and some people knew we were leaving Russia and they looked on us a traitors betraying the country.

SRB: Did you have any trouble getting out, or did you just apply . . .
S: It took six months.

SRB: The doors in 1979, were open.

J: Brezhnev needed grain. Carter said, "I will give you so much grain if you will allow immigrants, or so much Jews, to leave," so practically, me, my wife and my family were traded for a couple thousand pounds of grain.

SRB: We got the better part of the deal. The Russians lost.

S: Thank you. On this train, all of the people were going to Israel, and we went on train to the United States. We were traitors to them, because we did not feel like going to Israel. I did not feel, myself, Jewish enough, to bring up the kids in a religious country.

J: To be honest, I am scared by Israel. It is the idea to be governed by a religious government. I don't want ideology. To substitute one ideology with another. I don't want to switch Communism with this, even being a religion, is an ideology. For me, I would rather go to Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, but I want to exclude religion from the government.

SRB: You want to be able to think for yourself.

J: Exactly. If I want to drive my car on Sabbath, it's my business, and if I want to go to a movie on Saturday, it is my business.

SRB: I understand exactly what you are saying. That is why we have all different kinds of Judaism, from Reformed to the ultra-Orthodox, the Chasidum.

J: But even the Chasidum prefer to live in the United States! That's insanity. What a hypocrisy!

SRB: Yes, it is. Sometimes, they can get carried away with some of the things that they do.

J: Don't be judged, and don't be a judge.

SRB: That is a good statement. That I will include in my paper. That I will definitely include in my paper. So, when you got to Vienna, did HIAS meet you?

J: In Vienna, we were met by a representative, not from HIAS. From Israel.

SRB: I am not familiar with that.

S: Who was taking people to Israel.
J: It is an Israeli organization. They are supervising the immigration to Israel. I opened my mouth and said, "No, we are not going!" We were shoved on the side like waste. Only after this, a representative from HIAS was allowed to meet us.

S: He was trying to convince us, there in the airport.

J: Wait . . . wait . . . not so.

S: He did it in the airport. He was trying to . . .

J: No. We were put into the cabs and we were dropped off in some housing. It's a very cheap housing somewhere in the outskirts of Vienna, but it's okay. We had a roof over our heads, which we didn't expect to have. We were given some money to feed yourself and to survive the next couple of days. And the first appointment, what we got was with a representative of Israel. We were interviewed, one after another, not together as husband and wife. I was called and then she was called. They didn't talk to parents, they talked with working age as to voice quite an attractive family, however, it was the Russian language, but the style and the pressure and the general vocabulary. The guy who tried to convince us to go to Israel, I got the feeling that I am back in the Soviet Union. I got the feeling that I am back in some organization with pure propaganda, brainwashing. No such thing as civilized democracy. All brainwash convincing and even some kind of harassment. "You will get burned in this country if you go," etc. But we insisted and we made up our minds.

S: We were scared.

J: They were scaring us.

SRB: Did you have relatives in Chicago?

J: No.

SRB: So, when you finally got yourself rid of this suppressive man from Israel, and HIAS met you, did they give you your choice of cities?

J: No, that was later in Italy. In Vienna we were a couple of weeks. In Vienna, we put in some papers that we did not want to go to Israel, that we would like to go to the United States. In Vienna, with HIAS, come both together like a train, 400 families or 200 families at once. They load them in a train, they buy them the tickets, from Vienna.

SRB: With the guards?

J: Yes, with the guards.

SRB: That's scary.
S: It was scary.

J: I don't know how the chain of events, but it wasn't police. It was guys with shot guns, not military guns. When you are travelling through Austria, it's an Austrian police. Austrian soldiers with machine guns staying between the trains. As soon as you arrive in Italy, again, it's their own people, but they not harm me. You know, it's like the movies. Like the "Godfather."

SRB: The mafia.

J: It's a short barreled shot gun. It was scary. We understand, it was not a kidnapping, but they were protecting us, but it still was scary. Anyway, a couple of miles before Rome, the train was stopped, and it was an incredible operation. Everybody comes with packages.

S: We were allowed from Russia to take two luggages per person.

J: That's all. You weren't allowed to take any money. Just winter clothes, summer clothes.

S: And with a kid who is not trained, he is in diapers. I don't think diapers were as popular 14 years ago as they are now, the disposable ones.

J: It was a Di-Dee Wash! Anyway, a couple of nights before Rome, a bunch of guys, with their shoulders like a wrestler jumped into the train and unloaded our stuff onto the platform. The train went ahead. We were then on the platform and loaded onto buses, and we were dropped off at small hotels, outside of Rome. The next day, we went to someplace in Rome. We were given this address and we went to this place, and at this place, they gave us some money. And they said to find an apartment to live. Without language, without anything. You know, in Austria, it was not so bad. Knowing Yiddish, you can get around. But Yiddish is not too much of a help, as well as Russian, especially in Italy. So we went over here to the commerce. You need to pay. Over here they have a security deposit, but you never get it back. Anyway, over here we have the same, like in Milwaukee, like a bazaar, a flea market. So you put your stuff together to sell, but at least you put a couple of bucks together for your security deposit. We went looking in Rome, but it was very expensive. We went during the summer to a place. Then we came to Chicago.

SRB: Let me ask you about your job.

J: I worked in this place for seven years.

SRB: How did you locate a job here?

J: In the Yellow Pages.
SRB: Through the Yellow Pages?

J: Through the Yellow Pages. I gave this guy a call and I said, "I am in the heating, ventilation and air conditioning business and I don't have any American experience." I didn't say I was from Russia, I said from Europe. They said, "What the hell! The air and water is the same over there, so come on in!" I went over there and they gave me a test. So with a gush and gas, I made something I put together, so they gave me a job. I was with them for seven years. The boss, whom I admired very much and who gave me very much and from whom I learned very much, retired and the company was left in the hands of the guys, who I didn't trust very much. So, I started looking around. I went across the street to another company. After four years with this place, I decided, what the hell, the money counts and there is dozens, so I switched again. That's my history of the employment in the United States.

SRB: So you are still in the heating and air conditioning business?

J: Yes.

SRB: Let me digress a little. Back to, you were living in East Rogers Park, then you got an apartment in East Rogers Park, and after that, you moved to where?

J: To this house.

SRB: By the way, your house is just gorgeous!

J: Thank you.

SRB: I have been talking to many persons who came here in 1978 and 1979, and many of them live in magnificent homes like yours. The question I am asking them is one that people ask me because they know I am doing this dissertation and that is, "How could people who just came here eight or ten years ago, afford to buy a home?" I've had people answer this question and I'd like your answer.

S: Our style of living is much different than now. And than the average American.

J: Now, I can afford a much better house than this, if I kept the same lifestyle as before.

S: We suffered a lot. We saved money for one and a half to two years.

J: We didn't know what it meant to eat out.

S: I was making my own clothes.
SRB: I'm smiling because if I pulled out an interview here, I think I may even have it with me, of another family, the words you just said are almost exactly what these people said.

S: Now we can not do it. I don't know how we saved the money. I now understand why the American people who were born here were looking at us. I don't know how we saved so much money for the down payment. We knew that we could suffer with monthly payments, because we are not used to luxury of something.

J: Plus, we bought over the head; through the nose. The first couple of years I understood this way. Next year it will be more expensive, more expensive. Plus, if inflation suddenly goes up, the payment remains the same. So the goal was, as fast a possible and to take as much as possible.

S: We were lucky. The interest rate we got was 14.5 percent and the market was 18 percent. We bought in 1982.

J: It was a question: to buy a car, or to buy a house.

SRB: I know what my answer would have been.

S: Car?

SRB: No, a house.

J: We bought both!

SRB: To me, I'm not a car person. To me a car gets you where you have to go.

SRB: When you came here, what cultural problems did you encounter? Dealing with Americans, dealing with . . .

J: You know the biggest problem? Everybody speaks English!

S: You know when you have your hands full with the two kids, it was something, but we did not feel like we were left alone because of my parents.

SRB: They lived with you?

S: No.

SRB: Where did they live?

S: We lived in separate apartments. My parents found jobs before us.

SRB: What were their occupations?

S: My father was a watchmaker in the Soviet Union and somebody helped
him to find a job. My mother went for knitting in some store and then she was working in the Ida Crown Jewish School. The first movie we saw here in the United States was "Meatball I." It is about kids in a summer camp and it was something for us! We were so happy that we understand something.

SRB: What was the biggest cultural shock you had when you came here? I've been asking everybody that to everybody. What fascinated you the most when you came here?

S: On the T.V. they can talk bad about their President.

SRB: Freedom of speech?

S: It was something! I was really shocked, but you know, you get used to good things so fast, you start speaking like everybody else. But it is good.

SRB: When you went to the supermarket, what was your reaction the first time?

S: They interviewed me when I first started working in the E.P.A. We have an E.P.A. newspaper over there. The guys were laughing at me. I said, "Okay, guys, I will send you to the Soviet Union and I will see you." Of course it was a shock, because a friend of ours gave us a shopping trip. What she did, the first thing she took us to the Dominick's on Ridge and from outside, it is not a store it is just a box. She said it was just a storage area. When we came in, it was a shock, but now we get used to it, too. If something is not in the store, we sometimes complain.

SRB: Look what is going on in Russia right now. The shelves are just totally empty and people are just standing in line. You could empathize with them, I'm sure.

S: I feel sorry for them. But not only in Russia, but when we were in Mexico and we went into the store, and the products that were there, in Cancun, the grocery store that was there, it was like rotten tomatoes, rotten apples through the store. And it is something what you, that after this you said, "No, we had better go anyway."

SRB: Yes, better off! So, basically, you really didn't experience any cultural problems, adjusting to Americans and their attitudes?

S: They looked to me, a little bit strange, because a lot of them are open, a lot of them are asking, "How are you?" and don't care about you. Now, sometimes, I am the one.

SRB: You follow what everyone else does. "How are you?" like kids. But it is just a greeting.
S: Yes, it is just a greeting, but we weren't taught English, and "How are you?" has to be answered.

SRB: Right. And you are supposed to say, "I'm fine, I'm wonderful!" Even if you have a headache!

S: Evidently! There are a lot more smiles on the street.

SRB: That's what somebody else told me.

S: People are smiling!

SRB: What really impressed you, other than the fact that on T.V. they could say anything they want about the President? Was there anything else that impressed you as being so much different than Russia?

S: Do you want to put something in my mouth?

SRB: No, I really don't.

S: I think it is T.V.

SRB: I'll tell you what, another lady I interviewed said something very similar.

S: The people here speak openly. I'm finding myself a little bit different, because people, they are open. I don't know about the men, but there, I knew I am Jewish by the look. See, there are so many different people with different looks, with different color. You can find beautiful any color.

SRB: How did education assist you in your adjustment here? You say you learned English and had known some English before you came here. That helped you.

S: Yes. I'm still spelling better than he does!

SRB: But your education in Russia, as far as your profession, how did that help you?

S: To find a job here. To get where I am!

SRB: And that helped you also?

J: Yes.

S: She asked about cultural shock.

SRB: Cultural shock. Did you find any when you came here?

J: In general, I did not step from Middle East to United States.
Even being in a Communist society, you still remain a form of Western civilization. So in this respect it was easier than for the guy from Iraq.

S: And they slept on the beds there.

J: We were sleeping on the beds in Russia, not on the floor. And I was eating with a fork and knife.

SRB: And not your fingers! Well it was very difficult and it is for the Vietnamese and the Cambodians because the cultures are so different.

J: It is more a matter of Eastern/Western civilization. For us it was different and it was a shock to find the same items in the different stores, costing different amounts of money. That was a surprise, because in Russia, everything is a percent and it’s engraved on a piece of something, a price. I can not show you. Do you still have something we could show her?

SRB: So, it is like competitive shopping?

J: It was not a shock, but a surprise.

SRB: Anything else you can think of?

J: The shock for her was the telephone. We were standing in line to get telephone. We were waiting for six years in Soviet Union. Over here we got the telephone on the second day.

S: We're at the telephone store at Devon and California. They asked me what color? I looked at her, and I could not believe what she was saying.

J: In Russia, is like Ford, Model T. You could have any color you want as long as it is black!

SRB: I just want to recap the questions, very briefly. So, basically without the education you received in the Soviet Union, you would not have been able to obtain a job as quickly, obviously, as a chemist. You came here trained.

S: You know, the painters, they get jobs even faster than we are. They are working without any degrees and they are working for cash.

SRB: Because they did not have to join the union and they wanted cheap labor.

J: Eventually, though, they joined the union.

SRB: Yes.
S: Yes, and they had income. They did not have to wait nine months.

J: Sometimes education does not get you a job.

SRB: Well, if people have the initiative to do it. I've heard of Ph.D.'s. who are driving cabs. Let me ask you a question, if I may go back to a question that you sort of answered before, and that deals with religion. When you came here, did you feel any pressure to join a synagogue? Do you belong to a synagogue now?

S: No. Our oldest son had his Bar Mitzvah.

J: For three years, our kids, our oldest one, and then our youngest one, after we moved over here, I found Northshore School of Jewish Studies. Not religious. Secular, not religious. Jewish tradition, Jewish music, Jewish literature, Jewish holidays. All of those. Then they refused to go, refused to go. They had to learn in school. They learned for themselves.

SRB: Did any of the Jewish religious groups ever try to contact you and try to have a circumcision and a Bar Mitzvah?

J: We circumcised, more from the hygiene standpoint, than from the religious standpoint.

SRB: Did F.R.E.E. contact you?

S: Yes.

J: Yes.

SRB: Did they pressure you? Did you feel pressured?

S: No.

J: We really are not big on pressure. As soon as we get pressure, we have to give the pressure back ten times, especially from her. She can not stay. As soon as somebody pushes the wheel, she pushes the oar.

S: Why should they be pushed?

SRB: That's right, why should you be? For what reason?

S: For what reason? I don't owe anything to anyone.

J: No. Not with us.

SRB: No, nobody wants to be pressured into doing something they don't feel they have to do.
S: I only owe to our kids and to each other and to our parents, and to HIAS. We paid for our service.

J: We paid, because this money was on the loan without interest. We paid it.

SRB: Did they give you a certain amount of time to pay off?

S: It was up to us how it was to schedule the payments. They sent us a bill after we started working. We were sending $10 a month when we couldn't give more. And then we started sending $50 a month.

J: And more and more each month, until it was paid off. This is why I have such great respect for this organization.

S: Now, it is something different.

J: Now, I visit this HIAS. and I look what is going on inside, they have my respect.

S: But now, I don't think HIAS is doing what they should be doing. They hire people who are not working with all-American standards. We are here already, what, ten years?

J: We've got already the American working ethics with us. They hire a bunch of Russians who brought this Russian working attitude to the United States, who never worked in any other place and they hired a bunch of them, and absolutely, it is a real place. It is like a City Hall of Chicago, the same stuff. You find yourself in a city hall where no one realizes what the hell is going on! I was so frustrated.

SRB: What office did you visit?

S: Downtown. We encounter a lot of relatives now lately. A lot of them. Certain people came to me and talked and talked. My sisters-in-law, and now they're putting standards you have to pay so much money to bring them over here that none of the cities in the United States is doing it. For a family of four, you have to pay five thousand dollars in cash.

J: So, a person goes to get $5,000 to $6,000 in cash or they get a loan somewhere and bring them $6,000.

S: In Los Angeles and San Francisco in the Golden State, you paid about for a family, you paid them, it's $2,000 per family.

J: Regardless of how many.

S: Here they are charging per head. Then, they are keeping some money.
SRB: Do you think it is because the director of HIAS has changed, that it is not like it once was any more?

J: We are not in a position to judge directors. I don't even know who he is.

SRB: Did you ever meet the director? Because I interviewed the former executive director in 1987.

S: The new one?

SRB: Yes.

S: I don't know why it is, but . . .

J: I knew the old man that was there.

S: It makes them happy.

J: HIAS has changed. It was located on Randolph and then moved. It moved from there in 1979.

SRB: I did my interview with this gentleman in 1987.

S: It was the new one or the old one?

SRB: He was a young man and he was the executive director.

J: I know him before this.

S: I don't know why it is, but they think that the people who came with our immigration, that they can get the money.

J: Let me tell you something. Our houses are creating a lot of people at HIAS like a lot of other . . .

S: Of course, because we keep people, they are still buying big house.

J: First of all, they can not take into consideration that when we came over here, most of us were professionals, with quality experience.

S: All of the people.

J: All of the people, you know, the people who came from Poland were professionals. Now, these people who came were mostly laborers. Years of hard labor. They can not put yourself in a position of someone who is not skilled, even if my language is not perfect, it does not mean that I am no good.

SRB: I'm very glad that you brought this up because I'm running into
that. I interviewed a couple that came here in 1979, from Kiev. They had five jobs between the two of them. I found their number through asking people who came from various cities. And I called this lady. She was a very charming woman, and she invited me to their home in Northbrook. They gave me the directions to get there. I have never in my life seen a more magnificent home, a larger home. It is the largest! Three homes on this block put together are the size of that home. The driveway is as long as your street from 9400, it seems. And they earned it. And God bless them! They, too, get the, "How did you acquire this in such a short amount of time?" Short, meaning 10 years. Another couple who lives not that far from here, also in Skokie, the same question. She feels that people at work resent her. There seems to be a threat of resentment. One couple that I interviewed, stays away from everybody in the Russian communities, because they do not like the mind set.

S: Everybody has their own way.

SRB: Everybody has their own thing, and surprisingly enough, she is the one who said the same thing you did about being able to talk against the government and no one is going to do anything, you know, and listen to it on T.V. You all have so many similarities, and, at the same time, there's so many people out there who you meet, or who you feel have a resentment because you have come, and you have beautiful homes, thank God, and all of your children are being educated, and they are doing nicely. Instead of being happy and saying, "I'm glad for you," there is jealousy. Is it a jealousy just for the American Jew? Or is it a jealousy for Americans in general?

S: You know, maybe I would be jealous, too, if somebody new came here and to my country and . . .

J: It's okay, the country is big and everybody has his chance.

S: Everybody has his chance. You are talking about somebody doing side jobs. Me and my husband did not do anything else except working at what we are doing, because after doing eight or nine hours of work, you can not do anything else. I don't know how you can go and do side jobs.

SRB: He opened a restaurant, he opened his own business doing some electrical work.

J: We know what you are talking about.

S: We know what you are talking about. We know that couple. You told us that was the couple from Russia, from Kiev?
SRB: No, those are not the people, I don't believe. You may be correct.

S: We know this. These are very nice people. They built a house.

SRB: It's magnificent! Have you ever been to that house?

S: No. Is it the one with the swimming pool?

SRB: I don't know that it has a swimming pool.

J: A white Mercedes?

SRB: I didn't see a white Mercedes.

J: It was in garage.

SRB: I don't know. To tell you the truth, if it had a sign on it, I wouldn't know one car from another. I thought that a Celica was a Ford, so don't ask me!

S: She doesn't have boys.

SRB: I have no children and I don't care what a car looks like, as long as it gets me where I go! Cars don't impress me.

J: To get where you want to go, you need to maintain.

SRB: Oh, I do. It has its oil changes and everything else. The mechanic lives next door to us.

J: You can not stay away from the Russian people here, because first of all, you can not deny your own history. The roots are there. There is a culture, we are still perceptive to this. And I would say it this way: one who doesn't respect his past, doesn't deserve a future, regardless of all of the hardships and everything. The best years of our lives, we spent there. I met her there, and she met me.

S: And he is not ashamed of that. They're not; why should they be?

J: Besides the Communism, besides the Socialism and besides the general wild population of Russia, cultureless as it is. Shameless in many respects, and anti-Semitic, the country gave us some beautiful people. For instance, some poets, some writers, some composers, and all of these are, regardless of your trying to deny it. So if somebody tells you, "I got everything in America," the Russian ballet is still the Russian ballet.

SRB: That's true, and it's not going to change. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to tell me, something that I didn't touch on?
J: Let's talk about Iraq!!!

S: You know, one thing, we've been here for 10 years.

J: Twelve years.

S: Twelve years. The strangest thing. I have friends at work. Like we did not make in Russia. I used to work for one guy who gave me chance to have a job. You know in Indiana, they are calling us.

J: We work with these people, but they are not friends.

S: And we did not make friends. It took a long time. Most of our friends speak Russian.

SRB: What do you attribute that to?

J: Regardless of it. It's not only because of those. It's a simple issue. Don't give a name to the horse you do not know when you will need it. Okay?

SRB: You mean at work?

J: Don't make friends in the office. All of a sudden he is a boss and he is supposed to fire you, and how do you fire a friend? What if you're supposed to fire somebody, or you are supposed to lay somebody off? It's not enough work. You're supposed to fire a friend? You are supposed to lay off somebody who is less profitable. Your friend is less profitable and is not good for business; how can you lay off a friend? Don't make friends at work. That is work.

SRB: It's only work.

J: Am I correct?

SRB: Many people share that philosophy, and as a former principal, I have to say you are absolutely correct. It's very difficult to tell your friend that he is not a good teacher. So, in certain respects, I can agree with you, but in others I know that it's hard.

S: We never had any volunteers. Now the newcomers...

J: Well, you know in general, the Jewish families over here somewhere in the northern suburbs around the temples, we need volunteers to assist them, you know, to help them blend into society. A lot of families don't make it. They need volunteers to help newcomers. We didn't get any volunteers. We just did it the hard way.

SRB: So you now help new Russian immigrants even though there was not that help for you?
S: It's okay. I am giving now advice to some people at work because they need help.

J: In the last year I wrote maybe ten to fifteen resumes.

SRB: For the Russians who are newcomers?

J: Yes.

SRB: Now, did you come here on refugee status or immigrant status?

S: Refugee. But it doesn't matter.

J: Yes it does.

S: It does. If you come as refugee status then you become citizen, then what does it matter?

SRB: Why I can not get statistics, and I had to file under Freedom of Information. As a refugee, the borders are open to you. You are seeking political asylum and religious asylum, to save your life. As an immigrant, they have quotas.

J: I can clearly define the difference. The difference is, as a refugee, you are not counted in a quota. As an immigrant, the quota is like skin, you know, you cut it.

S: What difference does it make when you come here?

J: Nothing, because, as a refugee, and as an immigrant, you have a work permit, so as long as you are here on this side of the water, no difference.

SRB: Right. Now, I can't get the statistics, which is absolutely ridiculous. I need it for my paper. What we believe right now, is, because of what is going on in the Middle East, that some of the people there want refugee status, and they'll turn around and say, "Look at all the Russians that you let come here as refugee status. Let us come." And we want the quotas to keep them out.

J: Let them stay there because the simplest thing is to live in Israel.

SRB: They are afraid because of the violence.

J: From a logical standpoint. That is why they say they can not give you this information. Because the same information can hurt Russian immigration of Jews.

SRB: That's right. You're absolutely right. Well, I really appreciate your allowing me to come to your home and to talk to you. I hope to get a transcription to you.
S: There is one other thing . . . I feel I am interested in people going to the Jewish temple on Saturday. I feel I can not do it yet, but I am missing it. I don't know what I am missing. I want to do it. He does not want me to go. I am afraid to go back because my kids were Bar Mitzvah and everything.

J: I don't want it. It's just too frustrating.

S: This is what I think we are missing. We are missing something. You know, it's hard. You were brought up in Orthodox home where you believed or did not believe. You did not have a choice.

SRB: It was never imposed on me. I will say that. My father did what he did. We went out on Friday nights. We ate non-Kosher food out of the house. It was never forced upon us. My father was Orthodox.

S: Okay, but I feel like we were, growing up in Soviet Union. But even coming here, we did not know what is it.

SRB: Were you ever at a seder on Passover?

S: No.

J: Because we did not know how to do it.

S: Maybe I don't know how to do it.

SRB: Well, I was going to say that many of those organizations have the seders, like F.R.E.E.

S: Maybe I'll go there. When the kids were smaller, we just went there, but it is just like a club. It is not like Seder. It was like a club in school. When we moved here in 1982, he wanted to go there.

J: It was a moral in me and my kids.

S: He wants to go for the Yom Kippur services.

J: We were not allowed in there.

S: He did not buy the tickets. We did not know that you had to buy a ticket to go to the temple.

J: It was fifty dollars per seat. So after this I said to myself, "My God, where is this one hundred fifty dollars just for this?"

SRB: Well, each synagogue has it's own seating prices.

S: Yes, you can go the temple where my parents live on Sheridan.
SRB: That's Temple Emmanuel.

S: I don't know. It was down on Sheridan and had a daycare center. My parents are going there now every time and sometimes they take Michael with them.

J: F.R.E.E. helped us, too.

S: Well, detail stuff with our kids, the Bar Mitzvah's for children. They helped.

SRB: Where was your Bar Mitzvah held?

S: In Chicago, in Rogers Park on Devon. It is Orthodox. I forgot the name.

SRB: Bnei Ruven?

S: Yes.

SRB: My mother was President of the sisterhood there for twenty five years. My parents both went to synagogue.

S: The round one?

SRB: Yes. They built it with their blood, sweat and many, many hours. My father painted it. May they both rest in peace.

J: I told them, "What about the air conditioning? I'll fix it tomorrow."

S: Are you going there?

SRB: No. I go to Anshe Motele.

J: I don't know where that is.

SRB: It's on California and Arthur.

S: So, how did they build this synagogue?

SRB: With their blood, sweat and tears and fund raising and raising honorees for the Israel Bond dinners, and getting people to donate.

J: In 1960?

SRB: I'm trying to remember. We moved here from the West Side in the late fifties, early sixties, because when we moved from the west side, we met in a member's basement, because there was no synagogue. It was a long time ago. Once again, thank you very much for this interview today.
J: You are welcome. Thank you for letting us tell our story.

Summary and Conclusion

The decision to leave the Soviet Union exemplifies a common thread which links the case study subjects together. All fled the Soviet Union in search of opportunities and advancements not afforded to them in their native country. With the exception of the Fine family, the other four believed that they were prohibited and barred from higher echelon employment and educational opportunities because of anti-Semitism, overt and/or covert.

Although Mrs. Fine stated that her husband was "touched" by the high wave of anti-Semitism during Stalin's regime, they emigrated because of suppressive Communist ideology. Again, the Fines did not encounter economic difficulties in her native Minsk, nor did they experience anti-Semitism, although Mr. Fine "looked like a Jew" and "had the Jewish name." The Fines are the sole family of those interviewed who were not touched by economic and discrimination factors in the Soviet Union. When asked why her family decided to leave the Soviet Union, Mrs. Fine enounced:

There was no alternative. Decision taken, you cannot breathe, you cannot live. You do not want your son going to kindergarten and coming home with "Grandfather Lenin" instead of "Grandfather Schlomo," which is my father, so you know, that's my relative. You leave everything. There is no alternative.

Mia Stine was a thirty three old accountant in Kiev, when she, her thirty seven year old husband and two young sons applied for their exit visas. She, her electrician husband, and her parents decided to leave the Soviet Union "because there was anti-Semitism there" and they were "worried" about the effect this would have upon their sons'
futures. Although they were not victims of overt anti-Semitism, Mrs. Stine explained that "... stationed around us make us feel like it can be. ... It was a feeling."

Carla Weiss, who immigrated to Chicago in 1980, at age fifty-eight with her husband, eighty-year-old mother, and the Nathan family, was a clothing factory foreman in her native city of Kiev, where she supervised 2,500 employees. Although she held a responsible position, the Weiss family felt the pressures of anti-Semitism and decided to immigrate for the benefit of their children and grandchildren, the Nathans, all of whom lived together in a two room apartment.

Six of the subjects are contemporaries, as they were born between 1941 and 1949. Carla Weiss, born in 1923, is the oldest participant, while her daughter, Dee Nathan, born in 1951, is the youngest.

In so far as training is concerned, either technical or artistic, the participants display a universality. Their fields of employment in the Soviet Union display specialization, whether on the engineering level or in management. In general, the positions they held did not pay substantial wages, although they were authoritative positions which commanded respect from their co-workers. Mia Stine was an accountant for a large bridge building company. Her husband was an electrician working on exterior neon signs. Carla Weiss, who was a foreman managing 2,500 people, made yearly business trips to Moscow from her native Kiev. Ann Fine was an architect and her husband was "an engineer in air conditioners and that sort of thing."

Jacob Leff, who attended a technical school in the Soviet Union,
"was working as an engineer but he had financial responsibilities." His wife, Sonja, was a university trained chemist.

A notable exception was Dee Nathan, a trained music teacher. Due to dire economic circumstances, she was forced to hold three jobs simultaneously. Mr. Nathan, who attended a technical school where he was trained in the field of electronics, expounded upon this: "She had three jobs at the same time because payment was so small at the time, it was unbelievable for teachers in Russia."

All five families made the decision to emigrate well in advance of actually applying for exit visas. Although the State of Israel was declared as their destination, none had intended to immigrate to that country. Each felt that the United States would allow him the latitude and freedom to reach his full potential and, with assistance from HIAS, were granted refugee status and resettled in Chicago, Illinois.

The families were not hampered by the Soviet government in their efforts to emigrate. Dee Nathan stated that her family and the Weiss family applied for an exit visa in 1979, and "then in 1980, we got permit." Ann Fine concurs, "In 1979, it was very easy year" to emigrate. Jacob Leff explained the Soviet government's vacillation concerning its immigration policy change as follows:

Brezhnev needed grain. Carter said, "I will give you so much grain if you will allow immigrants, or so much Jews, to leave," so practically, me, my wife and my family were traded for a couple thousand pounds of grain.

In 1980, the Soviet government's mercurial immigration policy was once again reversed. Ann Fine explained this reversal:

In 1979, it was very easy year. If you remember, it was the peak of immigration. It was 50,000 people left the Soviet Union. And then in 1980, when the Olympic Games, if you remember, were boycotted,
then it was completely drawn. No one came in or out. That was it. The country was closed for five years, I think.

Albeit no overt blocks were strewn in their path when the subjects applied for their exit visas, subtle messages were delivered. Mr. Leff declared that the Russians looked upon his family as though they were "traitors betraying the country," while the Weiss and Nathan families were promptly excluded from an English language class when it was discovered that they had applied for exit visas. Carla Weiss was summarily dismissed from her place of employment. She recounted this experience:

I received a visa invitation from Israel and I went to OVIR. But in 1979, when you applied to go out, they take you out from your job, because you have a paper that you will work for this year until this year. You give this paper to OVIR, to whom is my concern, to OVIR. Then they tell you can not work in our place any more, move out. They fired me.

In Kiev, Ian Nathan, at age thirty-two, was employed in the field of electronics. Mr. Nathan had held a sensitive position, but in 1975, applied for a transfer in anticipation of the day his family would request exit visas. His wife, Dee, explained this rationale:

We were thinking about leaving, so he just decided in advance, instead of us not having any job, he just prepared himself, and on his own, he left his old job, which was top secret. He had to have clearance. Well, it was really not top secret, but he did need clearance.

When queried as to why they chose to immigrate to the United States, specifically to Chicago, Illinois, the responses of all case study participants varied slightly. Despite the fact that their exit visas denoted Israel as their ultimate destination, Dee Nathan summarized the majority's feelings by exclaiming, "It was a lie." Ann Fine bluntly stated, "We sort of cheated." None had actually intended
to repatriate to Israel, where they would have been granted citizenship immediately.

Carla Weiss' sister, who repatriated to Israel in 1948, cautioned her not to immigrate there because it was "violent" and life was "miserable." The Weiss and Nathan families chose Chicago, because Mr. Nathan's sister immigrated there the previous year.

Ann Fine stated that a family friend who had immigrated to Israel the previous year called her family in Minsk and told them:

You should understand one thing. You have to be very Jewish-oriented inside; not just like nobody like we were. Number two point . . . that you should be Zionist, patriotic. . . . If you are none of it, don't go to Israel.

The Fines, therefore, elected to immigrate to the United States rather than to Israel. Mrs. Fine recounted the reason her family settled in Chicago, with the assistance of a HIAS representative:

About Chicago, we didn't have any alternative. It was given to us as a statement, "Do you want to go to Chicago?" We said, "Yes." We didn't have anyone in America. We didn't know anybody here. It wouldn't be any different in any city we would go . . . New York or Chicago.

The Stine family initially intended to repatriate to Israel, however, "changed" their minds. Mrs. Stine revealed that friends from Kiev had immigrated to Chicago "seven months before us and they sponsored us."

Sonja and Jacob Leff were adamantly opposed to immigrating to Israel. They recalled their experience and rationale as follows:

S: On this train, all of the people were going to Israel, and we went on train to the United Stated. We were traitors to them, because we did not feel like going to Israel. I did not feel, myself, Jewish enough to bring up the kids in a religious country.

J: To be honest, I am scared by Israel. It is the idea to be governed by a religious government. I don't want ideology. To
substitute one ideology with another. I don't want to switch Communism with this, even being a religion, is an ideology. . . . If I want to drive my car on Sabbath, it's my business, and if I want to go to a movie on Saturday, it is my business.

The Leffs immigrated to Chicago with the help of HIAS, the organization which ultimately assisted all case study participants. Each family has subsequently repaid HIAS for its financial and professional services. In fact, Carla Weiss worked for HIAS in Chicago, for six years before she became affiliated with F.R.E.E.

As would be expected, the most prevailing problem experienced by the refugees upon their arrival in Chicago's Rogers Park area, was that of language. Although some had attended English language classes in the Soviet Union, none was sufficiently bilingual or capable of immediate fluent communication. Much of their energies were expended in improving their English language skills. Not withstanding these hardships, the plethora of hard and soft goods was amazing to most as well as the "creature comforts" which native born Americans take for granted.

An additional element which was universal among the subjects was lack of finances. Although each was aided by Jewish Family and Community Service, all were very industrious, eager and frugal. Each had to prove to himself and to others that he, too, would share in the riches of the American dream.

The Stines began their American journey in a two bedroom apartment in Chicago's East Rogers Park neighborhood. Today they live in a magnificent five bedroom home, designed by Mr. Stine, in an exclusive section of suburban Northbrook. Remembering their initial impressions of Chicago, their son, Zvi, stated: "It was like a culture shock, but we had friends here from Russia to talk to and who helped us.
We weren’t isolated and could be together."

In the case of the Stines, a friend helped him obtain employment as an electrician at an entry level salary. Mr. Stine’s ambition prodded him to simultaneously hold three jobs: electrician, taxi cab driver and restaurant owner. His wife, Mia, was concurrently employed as a manicurist, saleswoman, and waitress in the family restaurant.

Concerning cultural adjustment issues, Mia Stine opined:

I was missing the theaters and the movies, but I remember, it was the first year we came to America, Barishnikov was in Chicago. Of course we was not too good with the money and I asked my husband, "Can I go?" and he said, "Of course." I went to see Barishnikov in the theater. It was in 1980. It’s spring and I remember this one.

The Stines also attended a Russian concert despite picket lines which had been established by Jewish organizations protesting the performance. It was their decision, one which they were allowed to execute without fear of reprisals in the United States.

For Carla Weiss, the sole participant to retain a government subsidized apartment residence in Chicago’s Edgewater area, the lifestyle difference between her native Kiev and the United States is succinctly captured:

In the supermarket it was very different because we have to stay in line to buy something in Russia. In line, it is your line and all that you can buy is what is leftover. Here, everything is free from lines.

Other participants echoed Mrs. Weiss’ sentiments. Mia Stine exclaimed that the grocery store "was like a museum for us!" Dee Nathan’s "head was spinning" while Ian Nathan had never seen as many varieties of "coffee, coffee, coffee" on his initial shopping venture to Dominick’s Grocery Store. For the Leffs, their pioneer experience at Dominick’s was "a shock," and admit that they now complain "if something
is not in the store." However, Ann Fine maintained that her first trip
to the supermarket "was very educational," and "wonderful," but "not a
shock."

Commenting on her observations of cultural differences between
the Soviet Union and the United States, Ann Fine, who today owns a
modest two bedroom bungalow in Chicago's West Rogers Park area,
expressed an affinity for her adopted country:

... It was euphoria. We breathe so free here. We adopted America
immediately. ... We love America from the first moment. We were
in love with this country and we love people very much. Openness.
People are simple, not trying to pretend like a lot of Russians.
Russians are very sick people. I don't know what Communism did to
them.

Mrs. Fine's encounter with cultural shock was her "first day on
the street" when the mailman greeted her with a smile. Expounding upon
this, she stated: "People not smiling in Soviet Union just on the
street. And last smile I saw until now was when I was three years old
from strange lady. It was like, "Wow, you smiled at me!"

Censorship of books and magazines in the Soviet Union prohibited
them from gaining access to numerous reading materials. Mrs. Fine
recollected her overwhelmed husband's reaction when he discovered that
in the United States, the ban had been lifted:

But the big shock for my husband was in the book store, when we came
over and saw unlimited possibility to read. That was shocking.
When we came first to the library on Washington, in old library on
Washington, we saw all forbidden books and newspapers and that was
the most shocking thing here. ... When you see all of these books,
and you have, my God, thirty years passed, and you didn't read it,
and all your life wouldn't be enough to read all. And then our poor
Russian education, like didn't let us read Dostoevski!

Dee and Ian Nathan, who currently own a modern three bedroom
home in suburban Skokie, concur with the other subjects' initial
impression of the United States. Both stated that they experienced "happy culture shock." Mrs. Nathan averred, "My first day in the United Stated was already better than my best day over there." Mr. Nathan explained:

Everything was okay. We liked everything, no matter what. That is our way, to do whatever we have learned. Because in cultural, psychological and economical terms, we're far ahead of Russia. Especially in my profession, electronics, we in Russia, were several years behind.

Jacob Leff, who with his wife Sonja and two young sons owns a lovely three bedroom home in Skokie, stated that even though the Soviet Union is a Communist society, they "still remain a form of Western civilization," therefore, it was less arduous for his family to adapt to their new country than "for the guy from Iraq." "We were sleeping on the beds in Russia, not on the floor. And I was eating with a fork and knife."

Mrs. Leff was amazed that television commentators were permitted to make disparaging comments concerning the President, and Mr. Leff was surprised by competitive shopping. However, both were astonished, not only by the rapidity with which they received telephone service, but also that they were able to select a telephone to match their apartment's decor. Mr. Leff recounted:

The shock for her was the telephone. . . . We were waiting for six years in Soviet Union. Over here we got the telephone on the second day. . . . In Russia, is like Ford Model T. You could have any color you want as long as it is black!

The subjects stressed the fact that their lifestyles were quite different from that of the average middle and upper-middle class American. Each was frugal, shopping for bargains, sewing their own
clothes, rarely dining in a restaurant. Dee Nathan commented on this cultural difference:

We've been saving. We are not cooking every day. We are cooking once for two or three days, which in the refrigerator can not spoil. People in America are spoiled. Very spoiled. They can not appreciate what they have. They don't love what they have. . . . I love America. They don't. If I would live all my life, but I would get your education, I would be a millionaire already. They don't know that.

The Leffs struggled for one and half to two years before they were able to afford the luxuries of a car and a home. Mr. Leff stated, "We've got already the American working ethics with us." They related their experience, doubtful that they would be able to relive it now that they have become enculturated into the average American lifestyle:

Now we can not do it. I don't know how we saved the money. I now understand why the American people who were born here were looking at us. I don't know how we saved so much money for the down payment. We knew that we could suffer with monthly payments, because we are not used to luxury of something.

Plus, we bought over the head; through the nose. The first couple of years I understood this way. Next year it will be more expensive, more expensive. Plus, if inflation suddenly goes up, the payment remains the same. So the goal was, as fast as possible and to take as much as possible.

All respondents were educated in the Soviet Union, where Misters Leff, Stine, Nathan and Fine attended technical schools. This schooling subsequently expedited their enculturation into the American mainstream, as they were able to locate employment in their fields of expertise. Sonja Leff, a chemist in Minsk, is currently employed in the same capacity at the Environmental Protection Agency. She attributed her employment solely to her education in the Soviet Union.

Ann Fine, although a university educated architect in Minsk, was not as fortunate as Mrs. Leff. Mrs. Fine, presently a commercial artist
in the field of advertising, explained the reason she was forced to change her profession:

... to be an architect in America, it's like to be a doctor. You must have proof of your diploma. Otherwise you should take test and have an American diploma. Otherwise you are not an architect. So, it was impossible for me to work as an architect. However, I found a job as an architectural draftsman. Remember Goldblatt's? ... They call it an interior architect. ... But they got out of business very soon.

Dee Nathan, who perceived that her Soviet training as a music teacher was foisted upon her and, therefore, resented it, eagerly attended Northeastern Illinois University and Truman College where she successfully completed course work in accounting and computer literacy. She is currently employed in the accounting department of a small company.

Regarding their acquisition of the English language, although all respondents did not attend formal educational institutions in Chicago, while others elected to do so, all were of the opinion that their lack of proficiency in language skills was the paramount obstacle they encountered. Carla Weiss explained the hardships she and the Nathans encountered when they first arrived in Chicago: "It was hard, very hard the first couple of years because ... we had no language. ... The language was the barrier to do something."

In a concerted effort to overcome the language obstacle, Mrs. Weiss and the Nathans attended English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at Truman College which is located in Chicago's Uptown area. She recollected her painstaking struggle to master English:

Everybody learned very hard. Day and night, I do not know if everybody else did this. I went to sleep by 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. I made a little notebook and I counted how many words I know today and how many I have to learn for tomorrow. Then I was happy and I told
everybody that I have to kiss the ears and the soil of America that we are here.

Dee and Ian Nathan, who "are not translating anymore in our mind," augmented their ESL classroom instruction through the employment of television as a learning tool. Mrs. Nathan explained that they would study commercials and Channel 11, WTTW, "watching the same program with very clear English, no slang.

Although she received English language instruction in the Soviet Union, where her husband studied German, Ann Fine lamented, "Language problem was my main problem. It's still a problem." The Fines subsequently attended English language classes offered at a synagogue "on Sheridan Road," however, due to their work schedules they were unable to complete the course. Frustrated by their "poor" English skills, the Fines, paralleling the Nathans, employed television as an educational supplement. "... it's like evening study, T.V. and books, reading. It's the only one way to learn."

Reflecting upon problems he encountered in his adopted country, Jacob Leff, joked, "You know the biggest problem? Everybody speaks English!" The Leffs, who had received English language instruction in Minsk, were elated when they were able to "understand" their first English language movie. Their mastery of the language was honed by daily contact with English speaking persons, a fact echoed by all case study participants. Mia Stine, who attended a synagogue-sponsored class for one month, expressed the majority's rationale concerning English language education:

We were afraid about our future. Jewish Family Service told us, "You have to go to school. You have to study English," but nobody think about that. You were worried about work and about making a living.
I was jealous of them because they have good English, it is their country. I was really jealous. I was jealous of everyone who was born here.

Ziv Stine and Uri Fine, ten year old refugees when their families resettled in Chicago, walked antithetic educational paths in both the Soviet Union and the United States. Fine, who learned to read Russian at the age of three, attended a German language school in Minsk, where he excelled. Stine, who attended school in Kiev, struggled with his primary education, although Mrs. Stine described her son as "an average student" in Russian.

Both boys separately attended summer camp sponsored by F.R.E.E. where they were introduced to Jewish laws and customs while simultaneously receiving English language instruction. Fine declared that he "hated" this experience.

Stine was enrolled in Stone Elementary School, where he entered fourth grade. He maintained that he was not provided ESL classes in that public school, however, "there was a teacher at Stone School who spoke Russian and tried to help." The family moved to a larger apartment and Stine graduated from Boone Elementary School, also located in West Rogers Park.

When queried as to how he mastered the English language, Stine, who at the age of ten worked as a delivery boy in a neighborhood drug store and in his father's restaurant, forthrightly admitted: "I grew up on street knowledge. . . . I will be honest with you. I literally grew up on the street. I mean, everything I know, everything I see, everything I do, came from watching, observing."

Perhaps the severest educational blow was dealt to Stine when
his family relocated to Skokie, where he enrolled as a freshman in Niles North High School. Stine decried the move as "a big mistake" declaring:

It was a mistake because I was in no way prepared for private school. I mean, I call a suburban public school a private school, literally. I mean I went to the best educated school in the State of Illinois, probably in the country. . . . I was lost, and that is understating, and literally did not understand every subject, except gym.

Stine was placed in academic remedial classes and subsequently tested for a learning disability. He stated that this would not have occurred if he had remained in the Chicago public school system, where he had been programmed for honors and regular level subjects at Mather High School. He revealed that he did receive "good grades" in mechanical shops and science and was befriended by his shop teacher who encouraged Stine to accept a mechanical scholarship to Wyoming Technical School. Stine, who presently is employed in his father's electrical contracting business, summarized his high school experience: "I was disgusted with school, literally because it made me feel very degraded. Really, I hated it. I felt I couldn't do it no matter how hard I tried to apply myself."

Dee and Ian Nathan concurred with Ziv Stine's assessment of the Chicago public schools as compared to those in suburban Skokie. They recounted their children's academic difficulties when the family moved from Chicago, where the boys attended Clinton Elementary School, to Skokie:

The older son, he was not so great in the Clinton School and for him it was even harder to adapt to Niles North High School. So for him it was very hard. . . . there was no algebra touched in Clinton. He had to start in Niles North High School, algebra from the beginning. Both of them. They both had difficulty because the Skokie schools were more advanced. The first year was very hard.
The Nathans reported that their sons currently are performing well academically and intend to pursue university training in the computer and electronics fields.

Uri Fine was enrolled in the second grade, also at the Clinton Elementary School, and he described the ESL class he was "forced to take" as "an absolutely useless class." Over the protestations of his mother, Uri vehemently exclaimed:

... you don't learn English in a classroom. You certainly can't learn a language that you are immersed in, in the classroom. You can learn a foreign language in a classroom, perhaps, but you learn English from watching cartoons, if nothing else.

Fine was an honor student and subsequently accepted by Lane Technical High School from which he graduated with a 4.35 grade point average and was a National Merit Scholarship recipient. His mother, Ann, guiltily recounted Uri's educational experiences and, unknowingly, expressed the sentiments of the Stines, Nathans and Leffs:

In education, we were not any help to him. We could not check his homework or help him anyhow. First of all, we worked and we struggled with our own English, which was for us, first priority. So this poor guy was on his own most of the time through school. We were lucky with him. ... And maybe that's common with immigrants, because when kids see how hard their parents struggle to succeed and just to establish themselves. ... So in our case, I know some parents who a great deal help their kids. We were not able to do that, so Uri pulled through on his own, and I am very proud of him.

Uri Fine, whose major courses of study are physics and computer science, is presently a junior at Northwestern University. He was designated the State of Illinois' 1990 outstanding science scholar by the Barry Goldwater Foundation and awarded a scholarship. His is truly a "Cinderella" story which could have been realized only in the United States.

When case study principals were questioned concerning their
Jewish religious and cultural participation in both the Soviet Union and the United States, responses varied. With the exception of Carla Weiss, born in 1923, none had attended a formal Jewish school. Those principals, born between 1942 and 1951, who are knowledgeable of Jewish practices were instructed by their Orthodox grandparents rather than by their parents. Mrs. Weiss, who is fluent in Hebrew and Yiddish, explained:

... because my parents were very religious. I learned seven years in a Jewish school. I read Yiddish, I speak Yiddish and I write Yiddish. But when I finished the seven grades, in Russia it was anti-Semitic. They closed all Jewish schools. That is what happened. That is why our children do not know Yiddish.

The consequences of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union were reiterated by the majority of the respondents. The response of Dee Nathan, born when her mother, Carla Weiss, was twenty-eight years old, reflected the toll taken upon the Jewish population during this time frame: "We were not religious."

Ian Nathan, whose grandparents actively practiced Judaism during the reign of Tzar Nicholas II, received informal Bar Mitzvah instruction from his grandfather. This rite of passage was performed in their apartment. Mr. Nathan expounded upon the prohibition regarding Jewish religious practices in the Soviet Union:

There was nobody who had the religion in Russia, because there was no way to be a religious person. There was no religious education over there. Everything was pressed down. Only your attempt to educate yourself in a religious manner, you will be pressed down, whether you are a Jew or not a Jew, by the way. . . . Our grandmothers and grandfathers spoke only Yiddish, so that's why we can. Our parents still don't. They still know Yiddish, but they wouldn't really speak in the house, so for us, it was the last lesson.

Jacob Leff, who learned Yiddish in his father's "traditional"
Jewish home, spoke of the discrimination he faced in career selection and employment "because he was a Jew." When queried as to how the Soviet government was aware that he was Jewish, Mr. Leff emphatically explained:

The last name as it appears in Russia; as it exists on the passport; the internal passport. . . . Nationally: Jew. . . . When you are sixteen, you fill in the papers and on these papers it is written, who is your father, who is your mother. . . . The nationality of your mother and your father, and usually you have some choice. Let's say you've got a mix, and there were many Jews for the convenience of future living choose to be Russians, if they were "halves." In our case, we were 100%. My parents were Jews on both sides, and my wife.

The Leffs never conducted a seder on Passover because they "didn't know how to do it," nor did they attend the one small synagogue in Minsk, which served the Jewish population of 200,000. Mia Stine, however, was raised in a religious home in which her grandfather celebrated Jewish holidays, including Passover. She reminisced:

I came from religious family. My grandfather was very religious, and he would celebrate and he would teach us all Jewish holidays. . . . I know how to do seder and all other holidays. Besides that, both my grandparents spoke Yiddish to us, and we answered in Russian.

Ann Fine, the sole participant who denied having felt the aura of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, received no Jewish religious instruction. She stated that a family friend who had immigrated to Israel gave her the Leon Uris' novel, Exodus, and "then slowly, we start to learn something, but it wasn't an education. It was common knowledge."

Mrs. Fine declared that she did not personally encounter anti-Semitism when she applied to the university or at any other stage of her life in Minsk. She denied that anti-Semitism was perpetrated by
government policy, however, admitted that it did affect her husband’s generation. She appeared to contradict herself with the following statement:

... So that high wave of anti-Semitism after the war touched my husband. But then, after Stalin’s death and that "Doctors’ Plot," if you are familiar? And then it died. And then it was quiet period. So when I grew up, of course it was anti-Semitism, but I will never know. Well, that’s not fair to say. It wasn’t government level, it’s individual.

Although none of the case study subjects joined the Orthodox Jewish community in the Chicago area, with the assistance of F.R.E.E., their sons have undergone the two imperative ancient Jewish rites of passage: the circumcision and the Bar Mitzvah. Jacob Leff claimed that the circumcisions of his sons were performed, "more from the hygiene standpoint, than from the religious standpoint." Speaking on the topic of religion, he announced, "I don’t want it. It’s just too frustrating." However, Mrs. Leff revealed that her husband had gone to a synagogue for Yom Kippur services, but was not allowed to enter because "He did not buy the tickets. We did not know that you had to buy a ticket to go to the temple."

Mrs. Leff lamented her non-attendance in the synagogue and was disheartened by inner conflict as exemplified in her revealing statement:

I feel I am interested in people going to the Jewish temple on Saturday. I feel I cannot do it yet, but I am missing it. I don’t know what I am missing. I want to do it. He does not want me to go. I am afraid to go back because my kids were Bar Mitzvah ... and everything. This is what I think we are missing. We are missing something. You know, it’s hard.

Mia Stine, who caters a monthly sisterhood luncheon at Ben Zion Congregation, described her family’s religious affiliation as
conservative. She praised the assistance F.R.E.E. offered her sons, and was particularly thankful that they had been circumcised:

They both got it done the same day. Rabbi Notik did all that ceremony, what all comes after and they become to be not only Jew because they were born from Jewish parents, they become to be a real Jew. After that, both of them had Bar Mitzvah. We are not that religious, but we keep tradition in our family, like Rosh Hashanah.

Ian Nathan, almost apologetically, analyzed the reason that the majority of Soviet Jews, inclusive of the case study principals, have not become part and parcel of the Jewish community in Chicago:

Because the Russian system kills all organized industry. They don't want to be part of it. That's why they could not organize the Russian Jews to be a strong community. They were not allowed to be close in Russia. It was discouraged.

As illustrated in this chapter, Soviet Jewish refugees have been enculturated into the American mainstream. In the relatively short period of time they have lived here, they have adopted the American Judeo-Christian work ethic and goals: good citizenship, self-sufficiency, home ownership, higher education and career advancement. Their adjustment from Communism to capitalism speaks for itself. They exemplify the human spirit which, when unfettered and unhampered by artificial constraints such as imposed by the Soviet government and culture, will reach out to fulfill its potential.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research study has examined the historical development of Soviet Jewish immigrants during the years 1960-1980, in terms of their immigration, enculturation and education in the Chicagoland area.

Incorporated into Chapter II is an investigation, with historical commentary, concerning the treatment of the Jewish minority by Communist regimes within the Soviet Union. This commentary examines the roots of the anti-Semitic treatment of the Jewish population during the Tzarist Period and addresses major governmental polices designed to persecute them.

During the Tzarist Period, Jews were politically, economically and physically severed from mainstream society. Forbidden to live outside the Pale of Settlement, Jews were victims of government sanctioned pogroms and anti-Semitic restrictive ukases. The Tzarist government and Russian Orthodox Church depicted Jews as amoral Christ-killers who were deceitful, insidious and greedy. Quotas were established to insure the exclusion of Jewish students from secondary schools and universities; their membership in merchant guilds was heavily taxed and restricted. Jews were forbidden to hold civil service positions; Jewish lawyers were restricted from admittance to the bar; and Jewish doctors were limited to private practices among Jews.
Although the Jewish population suffered the tyranny and oppression of brutally anti-Semitic ukases in almost all facets of their daily lives, Jews within the Pale of Settlement were allowed to embrace their religious, cultural and linguistic traditions. They were permitted to observe all Jewish holidays, inclusive of the Sabbath, and to practice those religious rites central to Judaism. The Yiddish language flourished in all cultural areas: newspapers, theater, poetry, songs, short stories and essays.

The study of Hebrew was encouraged by Zionists, who urged repatriation to the Land of Abraham. Although varying factions promoted nationalism and autonomy, how this would be realized was the subject of debate among the Jewish community. Colonization of Palestine was urged by followers of Leo Pinsker; the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was promoted by Dr. Theodor Herzl; Ahad Ha'am proposed the establishment of a small spiritual center in Palestine which would foster Jewish religious and cultural development without necessitating mass emigration.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, a Jewish Enlightenment movement entered the confines of the Pale of Settlement. Rooted in Germany, this movement, Haskalah, in direct opposition to Herzlian Zionism, sought to assimilate the Jews into Russian social, economic and cultural mores.

Jewish historian Simon Dubnow advocated the establishment of "autonomism," which called upon the Russian Jews to fight for their civil equality and national rights, which he declared were the autonomy of the Jewish community, schools and language. Dubnow's outcry was
heard by the Jewish Social-Democratic Party, also known as the General League of Jewish Workingmen in Russia and Poland (Bund).

The Bund, which was primarily established to insure economic equality for Jewish workers, subsequently embraced Marxian Socialism and organized demonstrations and strikes. This, in turn, gave impetus to the formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, which the Bund joined as an autonomous group overseeing matters of concern to Jewish proletarians. There was disagreement among Bundists as to whether the Jewish community should seek political and social equality while retaining its independent identity or whether Jews should completely assimilate. A militant group, the Bund was instrumental in the overthrow of Tzar Nicholas II, and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's rise to power as leader of the Communist Party.

Lenin, unlike Karl Marx, was not an avowed anti-Semite and was verbally sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish population. However, his essays declared that Jews who were advocates of a Jewish national culture were enemies of the Russian people. In January 1918, the secularization of religious institutions and schools was mandated. Church and synagogue properties were confiscated, religious instruction was prohibited and religion as a whole was outlawed.

To appease the Jews, Jewish Sections of the Communist Party were established. Controlled by Lenin and secular Jews, the Jewish Sections adopted an anti-Zionist/Hebrew platform, and promoted the assimilation of the Jewish population. Jews, deprived of their religious, cultural
and linguistic heritage, began to assimilate through intermarriage. By 1930, the Jewish Sections of the Communist Party were abolished.

Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin, attempted to destroy all vestiges of Jewish culture and religion. In an effort to rid the major Russian cities of their Jewish populations, while simultaneously appeasing the remnant supporters of Zionism, Stalin established Birobidzhan as an official Russian Jewish settlement in 1934. This "Jewish Autonomous Region" was located near the Chinese border and attracted only a few thousand Jews until 1935, when German Jews fleeing Hitler emigrated there. In 1936, Birobidzhan fell victim to Stalin's purges when its leaders were accused of criminal actions against the regime and subsequently imprisoned or executed. By 1948, in the wake of Stalin's purges and Nazi decimation, all traces of Jewish culture were eradicated from Birobidzhan.

Stalin's regime proved to be more severe than the tzars' ukases. Jewish cultural life was suppressed. Jews were forced to desecrate the Sabbath and religious materials were burned in the streets. Rabbis were arrested; Jewish schools closed; newspapers banned. Judaism was openly ridiculed and the creation of the anti-Semitic internal passport was employed to eliminate Jews from urban housing, universities, the labor force and government positions.

Stalin's anti-Semitic policies never abated. In 1953, two months prior to his death, he formulated the Doctors' Plot which would
have promoted and given impetus to his ultimate goal: to exile the entire Russian Jewish population to Siberia.

In 1954, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev became the undisputed leader of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. A parallel to his predecessors, Khrushchev's words and actions towards the Jews were also antithetical. In 1956, he permitted the reopening of a rabbinical seminary in the Moscow synagogue, the publication of 4,000 Hebrew prayer books, and a revitalization of Jewish cultural life. However, in 1957, this liberal policy was rescinded and anti-Semitic propaganda was promoted by the media. Jews were accused of aiding and abetting the Nazis; Jewish community leaders were denounced as spies; Jewish merchants were accused of crimes and sentenced to death. Jews were excluded from military academies, diplomatic schools, and the internal passport was employed to curtail Jewish enrollment in institutions of higher learning.

Jewish religious practices were attacked and further curtailed when circumcision and baking of matzoh on Passover were banned. Jewish literary journals ceased publication.

Although in 1960, 9,236 Soviet Jews had applied to immigrate to Israel, Khrushchev denied this occurrence. By the time of his demotion in 1964, Khrushchev had preserved the anti-Semitic policies of Lenin and Stalin and had assured that they not been altered.

In 1964, Leonid Brezhnev and Alexi Kosygin became the joint leaders of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Brezhnev was the
First Secretary of the Party; Kosygin the chairman of the Council of Ministries. Their ascendency to power promoted and expanded the restrictions placed upon the Soviet Jewish population. Those who offered instruction in Hebrew were sentenced to prisons and labor camps; organized governmental suppression of Jewish culture and religion continued unabated.

Although in 1966, Kosygin stated that all Soviet Jews who wished to reunite with their families in Israel, were free to do so, this was not true. The process of immigrating to Israel was arduous and often took years to achieve. Jews who applied to leave the Soviet Union were harassed, lost their jobs, were ostracized by their neighbors, and expelled from universities. Those who were denied exit visas to Israel, for dubious reasons of national security, were dubbed "refuseniks," and became outcasts of Soviet society. Many were scientists and academicians, who were stripped of their university degrees and sentenced to prisons and labor camps.

The Soviet government's policy toward the emigration of its Jewish population vacillated considerably and was dependent upon the government's perception and image in the eyes of the world. From October 1968 to June 1986, 648,824 Soviet Jews requested permission to immigrate to Israel; only 266,059 were granted permission to repatriate. The apex was reached in 1979, when 51,300 Soviet Jews emigrated; the nadir in 1984, when merely 896 exit visas were issued.

Chapter II has shown that the Soviet Jew, while the subject of
numerous theoretical writings, has been isolated from mainstream society through government practice. It is clear that Communist ideology was unable to replace historical prejudices and practices which began with the Tzarist regimes. Indeed, they have been honed and refined under the Communist domination.

Chapter III examined of problems encountered by those Soviet Jews who were admitted into the United States, specifically Chicago, Illinois, and their struggle to become enculturated and informally educated into American mainstream society. Three selected Jewish agencies, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Jewish Family and Community Service, and Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe (F.R.E.E.), and their varying roles in assisting Soviet Jews were explored through interviews with administrators of these agencies.

HIAS Chicago was established at the turn of the century to aid immigrants and refugees who immigrated to the United States. Its purpose has not changed. The organization assisted Soviet Jews in pre-migration in conjunction with HIAS International and sponsoring families to help the immigrant gain entry into the United States. During the post-migration phase, HIAS aided the immigrant with the United States Department of State and the Department of Immigration and Naturalization's requirements, laws and procedures. It also facilitated obtaining permanent residency, naturalization documents, and, if necessary, a change of status or asylum for the purpose of remaining in the United States. In 1979, HIAS Chicago serviced 2,000 Soviet Jewish
immigrants and refugees, who were initiated into the legal maze of paperwork necessary for them to eventually become American citizens.

It was Jewish Family and Community Service (JFCS) to which the Soviet immigrant was referred for resettlement and enculturation into the practices of his newly adopted country. This agency helped guide him into mainstream American life through counseling services. The immigrant was assisted in acclimating to the foreign environment, however, as he had to learn for himself, JFCS instructed him rather than physically performed various tasks for him.

JFCS allocated monies to the family or individual for payment of rent, food, furniture, utilities and personal care costs. Budget scales varied according to family size and ages and did not include transportation fares. This money was provided until the immigrant became self-sufficient, a process which usually required five to seven months.

Immigrants were encouraged to attend English language classes as employment was often dependent upon their language fluency. Those who were unable to gain English proficiency skills may have been forced to apply for public aid until they were able to locate employment. Those who were over 65 years of age, blind or disabled were eligible for Social Security Supplemental Income.

JFCS referred the immigrant to Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) which provided job placement and counseling for the Soviet Jew. This agency helped write resumes and assisted in locating employment.
commensurate with the immigrant’s experience, training and education. They were given instructions to obtain a Social Security card and number and were advised to always carry proper identification documents. The JVS counselor also explained the differences between employment in America and employment in the Soviet Union and provided them with a Russian language guide book designed to answer employment related questions.

Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe (F.R.E.E.) was founded in 1975, by Mrs. Reitza Kosofsky and the ultra-Orthodox Lubavitcher Rebbe in a dual attempt to enculturate the Soviet Jewish immigrant into the American mainstream while simultaneously reawakening and/or introducing him to his Jewish religious and cultural heritages, access to which were denied him in the Soviet Union. Unlike HIAS and JFCS, this agency is not specifically secular and its rabbis perform Jewish weddings, circumcisions and Bar Mitzvahs for those Soviet Jews who wish to participate in these religious rites. Instruction in all aspects of Judaism is offered and participation in the synagogue is encouraged.

F.R.E.E. additionally assisted the Soviet immigrant in his attempt to locate employment by writing resumes, typing job applications and bridging the language gap between the employer and employee. The agency, which is staffed by numerous Russian immigrants empathic to the new arrivals’ plight, encouraged them to enroll in English language classes to facilitate their transition into American life.

Chapter III has shown that Jewish agencies supported by the
Jewish community and, when necessary, the federal government, offer the Soviet immigrant vital support in his struggle to become enculturated into the mainstream of American life as a self-supporting, viable member of society.

Chapter IV examined enculturation and formal education available to the Soviet Jewish immigrant. Acutely aware of the necessity to master the English language if they were to be incorporated into the established American societal structure, immigrants sought formal schooling, in both academic disciplines and vocational training, for employment purposes. Two formal accredited educational institutions, the Chicago public schools and Truman College, and their roles in aiding the Soviet Jewish emigre were investigated.

Subsequent to several conflicting interviews with both previous and current employees of the Chicago Board of Education's Department of Language and Cultural Education, a request for statistical documentation and academic instructional curriculum pertinent to Soviet immigrants during the twenty year period from 1960-1980, was filed under the Freedom of Information Act. Written correspondence responses from General Superintendent of Schools Ted D. Kimbrough and Freedom of Information Officer Marj Halperin furnished no statistical data concerning Soviet immigrants as prior to 1980, the Board was not mandated by the federal government to obtain these specifics.

Sparse information was provided with respect to the nature of instruction available to those students whose native language was
Russian. Halperin stated that during 1960-1980, prior to the bilingual education mandate, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction was offered on a limited basis to those students who were limited-English-proficient. Halperin did not specify which schools provided ESL instruction to this population; however, it was ascertained through interviews with two Soviet Jewish immigrants, that Boone, Clinton and Stone Elementary Schools held ESL classes for native Russian speakers. Neither was able to recollect specific details of the programs.

Reliable and valid conclusions concerning the implementation of Chicago Board of Education Russian language bilingual-bicultural programs were unable to be formulated due to the paucity of available information. Perhaps this should be explored in a subsequent research study which examines Chicago Board of Education Russian bilingual-bicultural programs implemented after 1980.

Conversely, Truman College provided detailed information concerning its academic/vocational program specific to the needs of Soviet Jewish immigrants and refugees. Mandatory English as a Second Language instruction was provided, free of charge, through concurrent "block" programming in English, Reading and Speech. Enrollment in ESL classes was determined by a placement examination and a personal interview with a college advisor; upon successful completion, students earned nine college credit hours. Those who wished to enroll in additional course work were permitted to do so.

In 1979, Truman College initiated a federally funded
Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (C.E.T.A.) program designed specifically for Soviet Jewish immigrants to re-train and aid them in obtaining employment. Rabbi Louis Lazovsky, the former director of Truman's Soviet Jewish Program, described the format during an interview.

The program began with thirty carefully screened recently arrived immigrants, the majority of whom had earned university degrees in the Soviet Union. Each was tested, interviewed, grouped and admitted to certificated program in data processing. Each was provided instruction in the English language and computer sciences and counselled in enculturation adjustment and job placement matters. Lazovsky reported a ninety percent success rate and stated that based upon that accomplishment, the program was then expanded to include accounting, clerical bookkeeping and engineering. Closely networking with Lazovsky and his staff, potential employers recruited Soviet students during career days held at Truman.

Lazovsky attributed the program's success to the fact that Soviet immigrants were familiar with a formal educational environment and preferred it to the less structured informal educational environments of Jewish Vocational Service or local synagogues. According to Lazovsky, Soviet Jews were not satisfied to hold menial jobs and were determined to attain the highest professional positions available to them. Formal education was viewed as their means to achieve this goal. He also stated that the C.E.T.A. program attracted
numerous Soviet Jews to the Truman campus where they enrolled in ESL classes and pursued academic courses not related to this project. Additionally, Truman's Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center provided support services to all Soviet emigres whether or not they participated in the C.E.T.A. program.

Undoubtedly, Truman College provided Soviet Jewish immigrants with the essential instruction in English language skills to facilitate them in their quest for enculturation into mainstream American life. They availed themselves of those formal educational opportunities afforded to them by the college and, spurred by their perseverance and high motivational levels, were able to overcome those barriers, which hampered their realization of the American dream.

The subjects of Chapter V were five Soviet Jewish immigrant families for whom the American dream had reached fruition and become a reality. Each had immigrated to Chicago, Illinois, during the years 1979-1980, and had successfully accomplished the process of enculturation into mainstream society. Their struggles to attain their current status were recorded during personal interviews with each family, the transcriptions of which are incorporated into the chapter, and are a testimony to the hardships, discrimination and persecution they knowingly faced in applying for their exit visas.

Their love and devotion to their adopted country is chronicled in their own words and relate an unceasing allegiance to the United States, which has afforded them the freedoms and opportunities denied
them in the Soviet Union because of their heritage.

In little more than a decade, they have adopted the American Judeo-Christian work ethic and goals: good citizenship, self-sufficiency, home ownership, higher education and career advancement. Their adjustment from Communism to capitalism is finalized. They exemplify the human spirit which, when unfettered and unhampered by artificial constraints, will reach out to fulfill its potential.
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VITA

The author, Sharon Rae Bender, is the daughter of the late Morris and Rose Bender. She was born January 25, 1947, in Chicago, Illinois. Both she and her husband, John Edwin McNeal, an attorney, reside in Chicago.

Ms. Bender obtained her elementary and secondary education in the public schools of Chicago. She attended Stephen Mather High School from which she graduated in 1964.

In December 1968, Ms. Bender received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago. She was awarded a Master of Arts degree in Reading from Northeastern Illinois University in December 1979.

Ms. Bender has been employed by the Chicago Board of Education since January 1969, as both an administrator and high school English teacher. She was the principal of Lorenz Brentano Elementary School from October 1988 through May 1990. Ms. Bender is currently the Dean of Instruction at Carl Schurz High School.
APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Sharon Rae Bender has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Gerald Gutek
Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. Max Bailey
Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. John Wozniak
Professor Emeritus, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Loyola University of Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

[Signature]
Date: November 11, 1991

Director's Signature

[Signature]