

A b s t r a c t s

Migration, Identity, Politics

Trans-inter-national: Russia, Israel, Germany

Yasha Nemtsov

“Only when it serves self-reconciliation”

Yasha Nemtsov in conversation about active life and the German interest in Jewish culture

The pianist and musicologist Yasha Nemtsov is working to stop Jewish culture from being forgotten. As a music archaeologist, he has uncovered the works of persecuted composers. He has traced the Jewish legacy in European music and familiarised listeners with the sound of the “New Jewish School”. As an individual and through his work, Nemtsov represents the Russian-Jewish cultural transfer. Incidentally, he also fills in the gaps in the German culture of remembrance. In an autobiographical retrospective of Jewish life in the Soviet Union, Nemtsov explains why the Gulag was a major stroke of luck for his father, and why his family emigrated to Germany of all places. He has a problem with the fact that many Germans are only interested in Jewish culture when this serves their “self-reconciliation”. Never has knowledge about the “New Jewish School” been greater than today, although in musical life, it remains marginalised.

Liza Rozovsky

Familiar with a sense of unfamiliarity

Russian-speaking Israelis in Berlin

They were born in the Soviet Union, emigrated to Israel as children, teenagers or young adults, and have lived in Berlin for many years. Ten Russian-speaking Israelis talk about feeling out of place in their homeland, feeling at home in a foreign country, and their relationship with Israel and Germany. They may have little in common, but there is one thing that binds them together: the Russian language.

Shimon Stein

“Megaphone diplomacy is not enough”

Israel, Russia and expectations of Germany

Shimon Stein, Israel’s former ambassador to Germany, admits that by now, Germans and Israelis expect very little from each other, regards illiberal tendencies in Israel as being a further symptom of the erosion of the liberal order that can also be

observed in the west, and analyses the differences between the interests of Israel and Russia in the Middle East. He also claims that there is no political will in Moscow to become involved in building a post-war Syria, and that Russia is incapable of presenting itself as an influential major power in the Middle East. He demands more political engagement from Germany and the EU, and contends that it is illusory to believe that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an essential prerequisite for security and peace in the Middle East. However, in his view, the act of occupation is harmful to the Israeli soul.

Social and political integration

Jannis Panagiotidis

Russian German immigrants

Social characteristics, networks and self-image

At least 2.3 million Russian German immigrants have come to Germany from the Soviet Union and its successor states since 1987. During the 1990s, their integration was frequently called into question. Then, they almost disappeared entirely from public awareness as a group. Many of them achieved a certain degree of prosperity through manual labour and often badly-paid jobs in the service sector. Nowadays, a Russian German middle class has emerged that is well integrated on the employment market. However, this is overshadowed by the attention paid to "problem areas" with a large number of immigrants, to free churches promoting an orthodox form of religion or to those individuals who have been receptive to the lure of Moscow's diaspora policies. This fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity of Russian Germans as a group today, and the difficulty in identifying them as a separate group in German society overall.

Larissa Remenick

Between all worlds

On the impact of migration on children of Russian-speaking Jews in Germany and Israel

Children and young adults experience migration differently to their parents. They have not made a vital life decision themselves, but are more capable of adapting to a new environment and a new language. Much depends on the conditions in their new place of abode. In Israel, the children of Russian-speaking Jews were confronted with the fact that their parents frequently experienced a downturn with regard to their careers and social status. This had a negative impact on their school progress, and many of them are less well-qualified than their parents. In Germany, however, where the group of Russian-speaking Jews is much smaller, in both absolute and relative terms, in most cases, continuous state support and lower financial obstacles in the education system helped enable these children to meet the expectations of their parents. What both groups have in common is that they move in two cultures and aspire to attain bicultural competence.

Karen Körber
Resistant pragmatism
Young Russian-speaking Jews in Germany

Since the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Jews have come to live in Germany. Those who were children at that time have now grown up and have successfully integrated. From a socio-economic perspective, they are more successful than their parents' generation. They have German citizenship and recognise the political order of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, they do not feel entirely German. This is due in part to their experiences. As migrants, they have been repeatedly exposed to exclusion, discrimination and anti-Semitism. External ascription and self-identification form a dynamic relationship and influence their position in society.

Viacheslav Konstantinov
Voting (in) Israel
The political voice of post-Soviet immigrants

Since the early 1990s, one million people have emigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union and its successor states. When majorities are slim, their votes have a major influence over the outcome of elections. Over the past 30 years, a third of them have voted for an immigrant party; in particular, in the last 15 years, for Yisrael Beitenu led by Avigdor Lieberman. These voters are of above-average age, with lower levels of education and lower incomes compared to immigrants to Israel overall, and live away from the centre of the country. A further third voted for moderate right-wing parties, particularly Likud. There is almost no support for religious parties. Within this group, the level of popularity of the left-wing parties has decreased more markedly than among the population overall.

Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin
The Russian-speaking Jewish diaspora
Political attitudes and political influence

During the past 50 years, over two million Jews have emigrated from the Soviet Union and its successor states. In almost all countries that they have made their new home, the majority of them vote for right-wing liberal, conservative and nationalist conservative parties. However, their degree of political influence is low: only in the USA can their votes tip the scales with extremely tight election outcomes. The situation in Israel is different, where this group plays an important role in politics. Avigdor Lieberman's party Yisrael Beitenu, the core electorate of which is the Russian-speaking population in Israel, also represents their interests and views, and focuses on issues that are of importance for all of Israeli society. For this reason, the other parties are also keen to win the support of this group of voters.

Volker Beck

Against the unequal treatment of the returnees

Late resettlers and Jewish immigrants and the pension and citizenship legislation

Since 1990, Germany has accepted around 2.5 million late resettlers and 200,000 Jews from the states of the former Soviet Union. The Russian-Germans were regarded as "Volksdeutsche", or ethnic Germans, who as such had suffered from the aftermath of the war. Jews were accepted in line with the Quota Refugee Law. The reason given for doing so was the discrimination and persecution to which all members of this group were perceived to be subjected. This different legal basis meant that this group enjoyed unequal treatment, which is particularly reflected in the pension legislation. There is no justification for this. This is not just a socio-political measure to alleviate the widespread poverty among the elderly in the Jewish community, but is far more a historical and identity policy corrective. Between 1941 and 1945, 2.9 million Soviet Jews were murdered by Germans, and all survivors of the Shoah have therefore suffered from the aftermath of the war. Not only that: the culture of the Ashkenazy Jews and the Yiddish language spoken by them until well into the 20th century are an inherent part of the German cultural community.

Literary treatment

Aleksandr Iličevskij

"Literature is my homeland"

Alexander Ilchevsky on living, reading and writing in Israel and elsewhere

The writer Alexander Ilchevsky was born in Baku and grew up near Moscow, before moving to the US and returning to Russia. He has lived in Israel since 2013. During the day, he speaks Hebrew; in the evening, he writes in Russian. His books are published in Russia, and some are available in translation in Germany and France, such as the encyclopaedic contemporary novel "Der Perser" ("The Persian"). His work has not been translated into Hebrew, and only a few people read his books in Israel. It was a light-hearted attitude to life and a poem by Brodsky that turned the former physicist into a writer. Today, he earns his living as a radiologist. Another square root will have to appear in the sky before he switches to Hebrew.

Micha Brumlik

Nostalgia, sense of belonging, responsibility

Motifs in postmigrant Jewish literature

Today, Jewish culture is one of many facets of immigrant society in the reunified Germany. At the same time, it continues to be characterised by remembrance of the Shoah. It therefore connects Germany's National Socialist past with its open-minded, cosmopolitan present. This is expressed in the literary works of authors such as Katja Petrowskaja, Lena Gorelik, Olga Grjasnowa, Oleg Yuriev and Dmitrij Kapitelman. On the one hand, as immigrants from the Soviet Union and its successor states, they come from the same socio-cultural background, which differs significantly from that of the Jewish community in post-war Germany. On the other, in their postmigrant works, they process similar experiences in a very different way. Here, generational affiliation and gender roles play an important part.

Sergii Gurbych
Old and new homelands

The literary treatment of migration from the (post-)Soviet space to Germany and Israel

A series of writers who have come to Israel or Germany from the Soviet Union and its successor states are processing their experiences of migration in their novels. Some write in Russian, others in Hebrew or German. A shift to German means enlarging their readership, while switching to Hebrew tends to narrow it. A lot depends on the age at which the authors left their old homeland. Those who came to Germany or Israel as adults usually remain part of a Russian-speaking culture, while those who came as children often have a hybrid sense of identity that is usually connected to specific places. This is reflected in their literature.

Anja Tippner
Family stories as counter-stories

Jewish identity and contemporary Russian literature

Russian literature is currently experiencing a comeback of the family novel. In this genre, questions surrounding Jewish identity are also discussed. Particularly good examples are Ludmila Ulitskaya's *Jacob's Ladder*, Maria Stepanova's *Post-Memory* and Elena Chizhova's *A City, written from Memory*. The authors consider the relationship between family memory and the official culture of memory and show how Jewish self-identity in Russia is now unfolding in the field of tension between family origins, anti-Semitism and the culture of remembrance. It is precisely in the ambivalences, breaks and gaps in their autofictional texts that there lies a realistic core. They refer to the irreparable injuries of the past and the decline of Jewish culture in the present.

Life journeys

Alexis Hofmeister
Girl guides, poets and #RusRaelis

Brief articles on Israel as an eastern European event

Israel's political culture is dominated by ideas, practices and values that were already introduced by the first Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire, as well as from Poland and Romania in the inter-war years. Snapshots from the past and present show that this legacy and these influences still have an impact today.

Rebecca Hahn
Belief and belonging

First-person narration of a young Russian German

Among the Russian Germans who have arrived in Germany since the 1990s, there are also Mennonites. They have an intense common life. Religion and a strong

sense of community are at the same time resources and restrictions for integration. For members of the second generation, the values and expectations of the community can become a source of tension when they collide with worldly norms and ideals. In each case, the issue is identity and belonging to a group.

Darja Klingenberg

Notably unnoteworthy

Female Russian-speaking migrants in Germany

Female Russian-speaking migrants, who moved to Germany 30 years ago as late immigrants, Jewish quota refugees and education and labour migrants, are viewed as an unproblematic minority. Among the general public, attitudes towards these minorities are not without their contradictions. Occasionally, they are described as being over-adjusted, materialistic and reactionary. The way in which Russian-language migration is presented has changed over time. Initially, it was regarded as an exception; then, the problems of integration became the focus of attention. Today, it is the model integration of these people that is the main topic of interest.

Jonna Rock

Together alone

Communication and interaction between russian-speaking Jews, Russian Germans and Russians in Berlin

Three Russophone groups live in Germany: Russian-speaking Jews, Russian Germans and Russians. They arrived to the Federal Republic from Russia and other former Soviet states for a number of different reasons, and their legal status also differs. Yet how strong is the contact between Russian-speaking Jews, Russian Germans and Russians – within the respective groups and between the members of the three groups? This explorative study based on qualitative interviews illustrates with reference to this particular case that while a common language may be a binding factor, the social and cultural differences mean that there is little intercommunication, even when the groups are geographically close.

Yuri Nesterko, Heide Glaesmer

Affiliation and religiosity

Psychological wellbeing among Jewish migrants

Between 1989 and 2006, over 1.6 million people with Jewish roots migrated from the USSR and its successor states. Most of them moved to Israel, while Germany accepted over 205,000 Jewish immigrants. The political, socio-economic and ethno-cultural conditions differ in the two host countries. Differences can also be observed with regard to the cultural and ethnic affiliation and religiosity of the Jewish migrants. Despite this, the extent to which affiliation and religiosity affect the psychological wellbeing of these people cannot be empirically proven. Specific migration-related factors such as the degree of integration or the level of discrimination experienced have a direct influence on their psychological wellbeing.

Russia-Israel-Germany

Lidia Averbukh, Margarete Klein
Power politics and selective cooperation

Russia, Israel and the war in Syria

Russia and Israel share important elements with regard to their strategic culture. They pursue a decidedly interest-based *realpolitik* and can pragmatically cooperate in certain areas when their interests are compatible. Both regard themselves as a “fortress under siege”, both are oriented to the primacy of security policy, and both pursue a concept of power that is based on military might. The increased social and economic ties between Russia and Israel are of lesser importance for the rapprochement of the two states. However, the limits of this proximity are evident. They lie in the unpredictable dynamic of the war in Syria and in the conflicting positions of the two countries regarding the role that Iran and the US should play in the region.

Joshua Krasna
Moscow on the Mediterranean
Relations between Russia and Israel

Between 1967 and 1991, there were no diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel. Today, Russia and Israel take a pragmatic approach. Both sides are aware of the limits of cooperation. Some political interests are compatible, although the level of economic exchange is low. Moscow and Jerusalem share no common values. Yet strategist dialogue has gained a new level of importance since Russia intervened in the Syrian war in 2015 and supported the Assad regime together with Iran. Today, Russia plays a decisive role in deciding on the post-war order in Syria. Its policies have consequences for the position of Iran, developments in the Middle East and thus also for the security of Israel.

Joanna Dyduch
The Visegrád states and Israel
Dimensions and functions of a special relationship

The Visegrád states – Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – place great value on their separate policy towards Israel. Here, there are more than just economic interests at stake. The Israel policy of the four states also reflects the fact that they place particular importance on a nation state that is sovereign with regard to both domestic and foreign policy. Thus, their policy towards Israel is at the same time symbolic European policy and a part of the anything but uniform Israel policy of the EU. This applies in particular to Hungary and Poland, where the governments in power are also closest to Netanyahu's government in Israel both politically and in terms of their worldview. Poland, like Israel, also places great importance on its relations with the US. At the same time, the history policy in Warsaw is a source of conflict with Jerusalem, with its emphasis on Polish heroes and victims.

Tamara Or
The X-syndrome and anti-Semitism
 Tamara Or on German-Israeli relations

German-Israeli relations are suffering from an X-syndrome. For a long time, both states and societies moved towards each other, but for several years, they have grown increasingly apart. One reason is that the link between historical responsibility and the promise of security leads to false expectations. A further problem is the image of Israel in Germany, which helps enable the AfD, as an anti-Semitic, right-wing party, to style itself as a pro-Israeli, pro-Jewish bastion against anti-Semitism. When the interests of Germany and Israel are viewed impartially, it can be seen that they have much in common, and are already being realised today. The challenge is to view these relations in a global light and to put them into practice locally. For this purpose, the same population groups must become involved which are becoming increasingly important in both societies, but which play almost no role in terms of these relations. Not least among these groups are the Russian speakers in Germany and Israel.

Lev Gudkov, Natalya Zorkaja
The faraway life of others
 Germany and Israel in Russian awareness

Germany and Israel have accepted millions of Russian-speaking immigrants, who retain their ties to their original homeland. However, this has no impact on the collective perception of Germany and Israel. The Russian view of Germany is formed from two experiences: the trauma arising from the Second World War and the perception of the Federal Republic as a model of a well-run country that guarantees prosperity and freedom. The image of Israel is tied in with the notion of a utopia made real: a Jewish state that embodies the idea of an “organic unity of the nation”. Israel is seen as being a modern, dynamic country, which cultivates efforts to achieve freedom and social justice, rationalism and a belief in progress. The anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist Soviet stereotypes have disappeared.

Johannes Becke, Simon Weiß
Limits of the prohibition on annexation
 The Golan, Crimea and international law

International law prohibits the annexation of the territory of one state by another. However, the list of cases of illegal state expansion is long, and includes Israel’s annexation of the Golan and Russia’s annexation of Crimea. While the occupation of the Golan Heights was a defensive act committed as a result of war, the same does not apply to the annexation of Crimea. The governments in Jerusalem and Moscow are prepared to bear the political, economic and moral costs of international criticism. They have the support of their own population. The international community tries to convince Russia and Israel, to restore the status quo ante. The prospects of success, however, are limited, even though there are historical examples of states withdrawing from territories that they have annexed.

Steffen Hagemann
Distanced friends
Germany and Israel

German-Israeli relations are inseparably linked to the remembrance of the Holocaust. Despite this heavy burden, it has been possible to establish a relationship that is considered by both sides to be a friendship. It is based on shared values and the democratic order, and includes the willingness to show political solidarity with each other. However, it is not clear how much substance there is to this solidarity, or how far it might extend. Recently, Israel and Germany have moved further apart from each other. This is due to political differences, different interests and conflicting values. There are disagreements over attitudes to the two-state solution, the building of settlements, the Iranian nuclear programme and illiberal tendencies under Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Anders Persson
Staying on course

The EU and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

Despite very rapid changes in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and throughout the Middle East, the EU continues to support a two-state solution. During the 1970s, the member states of the European Community jointly developed this approach as a pioneering concept for a just peace in the Middle East. Today, the EU's Middle East policy is on the verge of becoming irrelevant. Furthermore, the member states are finding it increasingly difficult to agree on a common position. However, those that criticise the continued adherence to the two-state solution offer no alternative concepts for peace in the Middle East. The EU would therefore be wise, with its new concept of resilience, not throw what is regarded as being the right approach overboard.