

Jewish Acculturation and the Soviet Immigrant*

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"All" we can do with the newest arrivals is to begin the development of a (Jewish) interest (or even better, begin to establish what Rabbi Posner called a "Jewish need") during the initial resettlement period.

Potential of Jewish Consciousness Among Soviet Jews

Let me lay to rest at the very outset of this presentation any false expectations that may exist. We have seen no single, clear pattern of absorption for Soviet immigrants, Jewishly speaking, and certainly, no clear prescription for success has emerged, at least in the reports we have received.

Not only is success not in hand, but on every outstanding issue there seem to be at least two emphatic and fairly unrelenting sides. I am reminded of a remark by an old professor of mine at Hebrew University, "There are two kinds of people in the world," he said, "1) those that tend to see things as a simple, unbroken unity, and 2) Jews, who are forever dividing everything up into at least two kinds."

In the last few months, it has become apparent that acculturation in general, and Jewish acculturation in particular, is beginning to emerge as a major priority in communities. If it is not today on a par with "employment" and "maintenance," it soon will be. A part of this may be attributed to the fall in numbers we are experiencing. This has allowed us the luxury to 1) move into an atmosphere characterized more by planning than crisis, and 2) shift a higher proportion of staff time off the time-consuming tasks associated with the initial period and onto the main item of communal

agenda, i.e. welcoming Soviet refugees back into the Jewish community.

However, I suspect that even if it were not the case that a growing percentage of the refugees we deal with are over the initial resettlement traumas, that is, even if the numbers remained the same or even grew, the emergence of Jewish acculturation issues was an inevitable part of the "maturation" of our community program. Before we begin to deal with a few of the issues involved in Soviet Jewish acculturation, we should put the whole matter in a broader context in order to help us understand the "Jewish baggage" brought to the U.S. by Soviet Jewish immigrants.

There are many preconceptions about what the Soviet immigrant is, in Jewish terms, which influence both our attitudes and programs. Generally, reports to us are prefaced or concluded by a clear position concerning the prospects for Soviet Jewish acculturation. (The majority of written reports are generally positive, while the oral reports tend to be much more cynical).

Now may be the time to review some of the facts that we all knew once concerning these Soviet immigrants.

The so-called assimilation of Soviet Jews is not to be equated with the assimilation of substantial portions of American Jewry. American Jews can choose to completely forget their identity, whereas the Soviet Jews are punished to the extent they express their Jewishness. Therefore, observable Jewish commitment in the Soviet Union

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would be an act of pure masochism.

It is less than 28 years since "the night of the murdered poets" when twenty-three of Soviet Jewry's leading writers, poets and artists were murdered on Stalin's orders in Lubyanka Prison. This night signalled the start of the systematic slaughter of nearly every prominent Jewish artist and intellectual in the Soviet Union—the literal murder of a whole culture was completed in one year.

The cut-off date from the possibility of cultural Jewishness in the Soviet Union may be said to be not 60, but less than 30 years ago, a relatively short time ago. The wounds are still quick. Since then, the anti-Jewish campaigns, as most of us here know, have been waged so fiercely and with such constancy that, to a considerable extent, Jewish self-expression, except in selected geographical areas, was reduced to the fact of having *Yevrei* stamped on the internal passport of those born to Jewish parents. Yet this *Yevrei* brands Soviet Jews with their Jewishness in a most inescapable manner, and on more than one level of their existence.

Despite a relative lull in the campaign during the Khrushchev years, there has been more than ample proof that the present Soviet leaders have completely rededicated themselves to an anti-Jewish policy. Recent Samizdat disclosures report that not one Soviet Jew may have been allowed to enter the prestigious Moscow State University since the academic year 1977-78. Jewish enrollment in all institutions of higher learning has been reduced from 111,900 in 1968-69 to the approximately 44,000 today. While Jewish professionals constituted 11 percent of the Russian professional class in the late sixties, today's level has been reduced to around 5 percent.

One of the most shocking of recent revelations was made by Dr. William Korey in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*. He quotes a secret party directive discouraging the employment of Jews "at responsible

levels" and adds that such institutions have been directed to exclude "even those listed as Russian in their internal passport but whose mother or father was Jewish."¹ Thus even those who have desperately tried to hide their nationality are forced to live with the burden of their Jewish blood.

Dr. Korey expands on this theme in a recent issue of the *London Jewish Chronicle* (5/16/80). "Ineluctably there will be those who will seek to eliminate all vestiges of Jewish identity so that they might 'pass' in order to enter the university or obtain desirable jobs. But the internal passport remains an obstacle. And the *Nuremberg Factor* constitutes a new obstacle in various institutions. Officials want to know whether a single parent was Jewish."

What do the Russians want from the Jews? "A leading Soviet hate-monger, Vladimir Begun, some months ago was asked: 'What is the future of the Jewish people, then? Assimilation?' He responded: 'I don't believe in assimilation. There always remains something Jewish in a Jew anyway.' When queried as to what Jews should do, Begun replied: 'Live quietly and that's it.'"²

The turbulent effect that the relentless anti-Jewish assaults have caused in the minds of the ordinary Soviet Jew can only be imagined. One effect is certain. His Jewishness, if only in the negative sense, has to be felt as one of the central factors controlling his personal destiny.

Even without recourse to research or studies, common sense tells us that there were two possible directions for this Jewish identification to go. The Soviet Jew could redouble his attempts to Russify himself and his children, or strike back with a Marrano-like refusal to be negated. How does a *secular* Jew in a ruthlessly anti-Semitic country make a clandestine

¹ William Korey, "The Future of Soviet Jewry: Emigration and Assimilation," *Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, Fall, 1979.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Marrano statement? By association with Jews, by justified pride in Soviet Jewish achievements, by hoping his child will marry a Jew, by celebrating with Israel after the 6-Day War and fearing for her during the Yom Kippur War, by deciding to give up the Soviet Union.

It is probable that the Soviet Jewish family unit has functioned as the sole transmitter of positive Jewish associations; its three generational composite creating a bridge between the children, educated as Russians, and the grandparents, rooted in the pre-Stalin period of Soviet Jewry. This accords well with the fact that the most "positive" Jewish identities seem to be found, according to a slew of recent articles, on both ends of the age spectrum. There should be significant implications for us in this, as our immigration has been, by Russian Jewish standards, *extremely* young.³

For a description of the full extent of these "positive" feelings, consider a rather startling article issued as a press release from Tel Aviv University in April of 1979.⁴ The article outlines the findings of Professor Robert Fain, a refusenik, who while in Russia did a survey of 1500 Soviet Jews from 20 different cities. The sample *did not* include *any* refuseniks, activists or people who had declared an intention of emigrating. The questionnaire was given, in fact, only to those who stated that they considered themselves primarily as Russians and were content to stay in Russia. 70 percent were university graduates. Here are some of the results:

1) 96 percent of those surveyed said they

would buy a book on Jewish history if it were available.

2) 87 percent said they would visit a Jewish restaurant if there were one.

3) 80 percent expressed a desire to learn the Jewish language. (60 percent wanted to know Hebrew).

4) 50 percent of those questioned would have wanted their children to attend Jewish schools or courses.

5) The survey indicated a strong Jewish revival among the youths, with the younger and older Jews bearing similar Jewish feelings and attitudes.

6) 34 percent said *all* five of their closest friends were Jewish, and the great majority of the remainder of those sampled said that at least three of their closest friends were Jewish.

7) 32 percent had a *strong* preference for their children marrying Jews, while the remainder constituted a continuum range from "no-objection-to-intermarriage" (22 percent) to "clear preference for marrying Jewish." (46 percent)

8) Positive attitudes towards holidays, religion and synagogues were a significant factor in the responses.

9) "Even Soviet Jews who . . . wanted their children registered on their passports as non-Jews, were in large majority favorable to knowing more about Jewish heritage, frequently a Jewish restaurant, wanting Jewish education for their children, and viewing Judaism and Jewish identity in a positive light." I think that the above statistics would compare quite favorably with statistics from a comparable sampling of American Jews.

Finally, we should remember that even when the Soviet Jew has decided on immigration for reasons that he believes have nothing to do with his Jewish birth (as if he doesn't realize, on one level or another, that economic reasons and Jewish reasons are the same), the entire experience of emigration and resettlement has to re-awaken an awareness of his Jewish identity.

³ Compare the HIAS Statistical Abstracts, fourth quarter, 1979, p. 16 with figures given by Dr. William Korey, *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴ Elissa Allerhand, "Professor's Survey Reveals: Soviet Jews Harbor Strong Jewish Identity Feelings," Tel Aviv University, Information and Public Relations Department, Ramat Aviv, April 4, 1979. Press Release No. 249.

To quote Dr. Jerome Gilison of Baltimore Hebrew College, "It was only by asserting his Jewishness that he could acquire the exit visa from the Soviet government, and from the time he arrives in Vienna he is given help *because* he is a Jew, and this help comes exclusively from Jews. The net result is that Jewishness, from being something of a disadvantage in the Soviet Union, suddenly becomes the one essential element of his identity which automatically confers advantages."⁵ Thus one would expect that the incoming refugee, whatever his attitudes, is more open to things Jewish than ever before in his life and this very probably accounts for why so many of the Russians immediately buy Mogen Davids upon arriving in Rome.

Much of the research done over the last few years among the refugee communities in the United States corresponds well with relatively optimistic result of the Fain sample, taken in Russia. In a remarkable study by Roberta Markus, nearly 60 percent of the respondents ranged in a continuum from *not objecting* to their children becoming more religious to *wanting* their children to be more religious.⁶

A comprehensive report on Baltimore's refugee community developed by the Baltimore Hebrew College reported that 4 percent said they wanted a Jewish education for their children. 58 percent of the Russians claimed to have learned about Judaism from their parents, even if to a very modest degree. 64 percent acknowledged that they had observed Jewish holidays. 82 percent reported that the majority of their Soviet friends were Jews, and 83 percent said that

they "feel" Jewish but not religious.⁷ The Baltimore report concludes, "It is hard to escape the conclusion that the *feeling* of being Jewish can be crucial in a person's life even without that person *knowing* anything about Jewish history and religion." The report described in this group as ethnic Jews with "the most tenuous connection to *observable* Jewishness."⁸

Some local agencies may be confused by these statistics and conclude that they have been sent only "tough cases." To that lament let me say a number of things.

1) Obviously, we are dealing with a large immigration. We cannot pretend to account for individual Soviets. We can at best provide a general profile of the group. Communities, particularly communities that receive only a small number of families, may for many reasons find themselves with a disproportionate representation of persons from one end of the scale or the other. There are even many communities that register surprise at how "fantastic" nearly *all* their refugees have been. I have long suspected that negative reactions may as often be a problem of staff's perception of the emigres, as it is a problem of the emigres themselves.

2) Perhaps most importantly, the arriving Soviet Jews have been dropped from the sky into an alien environment. It has often been reported that many seem to go into a period of active mourning for the rich Russian culture they loved and lost. This obviously deepens the resettlement trauma and severely decreases their receptivity to new "American-Jewish" ideas.

3) In addition, the trauma of resettlement in an utterly strange culture is further compounded by having to deal with material needs to the exclusion of all else. The earliest contacts with Jewish agencies re-

⁵ Jerome Gilison, "Problems and Prospects of Soviet Jewish Emigration." Presented to the Advisory Committee on Soviet Jewish Resettlement of the Council of Jewish Federations, Friday, June 17, 1977, p. 6.

⁶ Roberta Lander Markus, *Adaptation: A Case Study of Soviet Jewish Immigrant Children in Toronto 1970-1978*. Toronto: Permanent Press, p. 44.

⁷ Jerome M. Gilison, "Summary Report of the Survey of Soviet Jewish Emigres in Baltimore," Baltimore Hebrew College, p. 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

volve almost exclusively around maintenance.

They have come here with no understood language, both in the usual sense and in the profounder sense of shared symbols and referents. Yet the first language they are taught is to secure them employment and often concentrates on professional nomenclature.

The refugee's openness to things Jewish, to the extent that it ever existed, has been pushed way down in his order of priority. In the cases where the refugee's attachment to his Jewishness was very fragile, the thread may very likely be broken during this process. A large part of this appears inevitable, particularly during periods when the refugee intake is very nearly beyond the capacity of staff and volunteers.

However, some communities have begun to address this problem. The New York Federation is attempting to deal with it by building a strong Jewish component into their ESL program. Other communities are putting one or two mornings, afternoons, or evenings aside for the purpose of doing Jewish programming with the refugee at the ESL site (so as not to require him to take the initiative of returning) and communities are more and more sensitive to the fact that particularly during this initial period when Jewish programming cannot always have the highest priority, the selection of staff that have themselves a strong Jewish identity, *and can transmit their commitment*, will have a powerful impact on the refugees even to the extent of partially neutralizing the inadvertent reinforcement of the emigres' materialistic emphases.

Still, despite all of these efforts, if the "Maslowian" hierarchy of needs is correct, we should not be disappointed if we do not see a full blown "search for identity" until after the refugee is well settled.

4) Lastly, the Soviet Jew often comes to a community where the average American Jew is not a committed Jew. He has little

Jewish education and his children have less. He rarely, if ever, attends synagogue and then does it more for social reasons than not. He is active on no committees and gives meagerly to Jewish institutions, if at all.

It probably doesn't take long for the emigre to grasp the level of commitment and identification of average American Jews in many of our communities. In fact, in most communities, we should be able to use the more settled emigre community as a mirror for ourselves as Jews. If the Soviet Jew disappoints us, it may be we who are disappointing.

Recently, comments from a number of communities contain reflections about this process of identification with the community's level of involvement. "Newcomers identify with the Jewish community, but not in a religious sense, which is, no doubt, a reflection of the general tenor of American Jewish life" (Washington, D.C.). San Francisco reported that there is involvement in the JCC but not in religious activities or organizations. Los Angeles states its concern that "unless special efforts are made, the Russian's rate of disappearance to the Jewish community will probably be similar to that of our American born Jews."

It is interesting to see how, in some cases, preconceptions changed about the arriving immigrants. From Savannah, this report: "We had received many warnings and read many learned articles that had given us to believe that we would find Jewish knowledge and identification minimal around the Russian immigrants. We were pleasantly surprised by their . . . seeking to identify with Jewish traditions and customs." Communities of course, have also registered shock at the extent of the lack of Jewish knowledge. One community stated that its refugees didn't know about such basic things as Yom Kippur, Brit Milah or Bar Mitzvah, yet again, I am left wondering if the happily surprised communities weren't more open to being happily surprised. It

may be, after all, a question of "whether the glass is half-empty or half-full."

New Jersey 'Y' Camps had an interesting summer last year. They absorbed 50 Soviet Jewish youngsters into their camp of 1200. They expected a rough time. Pre-camp staff meetings dealt with how they would handle the Soviet youngsters' separation anxiety, their manipulateness, resentment against staff authority and, of course, their resistance to all things Jewish. The outcome was the kind of "pleasant surprise" described by Savannah above. The Soviet children behaved, more or less, like their American peers—except better. They integrated well, were well-behaved and very mature and, surprise again, seemed to relate to Jewish activities with the same degree of interest as their American peers, which meant, moderately. This year the Jersey 'Y' Camps will be taking in 150 to 200 emigre children.

Until just a few months ago, there was very little reporting to us on Jewish programs. This was because 1) many of the programs were not fundable under our block grant monies and thus communities did not feel obliged to report and 2) not too much was going on. My proof of the second point is that we are now beginning to receive reports and questions about this area despite the fact that we still cannot fund many of the programs.

At this point the questions about Jewish programming still far outnumber the reports, and typically, issues have developed faster than programming.

The first cluster of issues revolve around day schools, as opposed to Hebrew Schools or Sunday Schools. I must say that we should be proud of how far the Jewish community has come in the last twenty years. In no single report that we have seen has this issue been discussed in terms of Americanism versus Jewish particularity. It is usually a question of how much, in resources, can the community commit to this very expensive program area.

Nearly all the larger communities con-

tinue to provide scholarships for emigre children during their first year. There is considerable variation with respect to the second year however. Some communities treat the youngster like any other American child in determining scholarships. Others, such as Cleveland, offer scholarships on a sliding scale, with the Federation absorbing the deficit. A variation of this policy calls for a fixed payment by the emigre family with the *remainder* to be paid on a sliding scale.

The Soviet parents' reaction to the day schools has been generally, although not always, positive. Being good Jews, they are of two schools of thought. Markus' Toronto study, cited above, quoted a significant number of parents as being concerned that the two-stream character of day school education was an unfair burden on children who need to come to grips with both English and an entirely new system of education.

However, as indicated in a recent report on Soviet children and day schools by the American Association of Jewish Education, the majority of Russian parents with children in day schools prefer them to be there. For them, as well as for the Federation, the only issue appears to be money. The AAJE concludes with this interesting observation: "The day school also represents a challenge in terms of learning discipline which approximates the climate of regimen to which the immigrant students were accustomed. During the years of acclimation to an atmosphere of greater freedom, the day school is a most valuable transition."⁹

During a recent conference in Waterbury, Conn., a former Soviet Jew described how, while earning only \$10,000 per year, he sent his child to a day school, paying a tuition of \$1,000. This same emigre said with authority

⁹ "The Financial and Educational Integration of the Russian Immigrant Jewish Students," May, 1979, American Association for Jewish Education, Department of Community Services, pp. 9-10.

that he did not leave the Soviet Union for "Jewish reasons" since he was not interested in Jewish matters. He left, he said, only because there was no economic future for him and his child in the Soviet Union. Again, the very same Soviet Jew continued on to say that he took his child to synagogue *every* Saturday, because he wanted his child to be comfortable there in a way he couldn't be.

We can see in these remarks the conflict and confusion characteristic of so many refugees. While they frequently deny any Jewish expression for themselves, they, at the same time, very much desire their children to be their Jewish surrogates.

It is in this light that day schools take on their enormous potential significance. They are frequently alone in being able to reach out to the adult generation through a connection made with their children. They do this through the unthreatening activities of a P.T.A. or through, (more threateningly) adult education programs that parallel what the youngsters are learning, particularly during holiday periods, or simply through encouraging a child to bring home new Jewish ideas and experiences.

The role of the children in this process is not, by the way, intrinsically different from what it was in previous immigrations, except perhaps that this time, rather than public school-education children bringing "Americanism" into traditional Jewish homes, day school—"savvy" youngsters are bringing *Yiddishkeit* home to their old-world parents.

As an aside, I would suggest that the informal or experimental programs that appear to be most successful usually have involved the whole family. Holiday programs are a well-known draw. Several JCC directors have noted that "the Russians always come to a holiday program or a special event." There is no question that the adults primarily come for the child's sake, but also let me add that a good Russian will never miss a party.

An interesting attempt to develop relationships with Soviet Jewish families through an afternoon school program is being carried out in L.A. The JFCS supplies the initial referral and consultation services "to help the congregation better deal with the students and their families." The JCC is involved in a consulting capacity and is a resource for recreational programming. The objective of this program is to "involve and integrate the family and children into the congregation."

Directive versus Non-Directive Acculturation

The non-directive approach to Jewish acculturation believes "you can't force it on them" in special programs. As Houston puts it "we should educate the institutions and organizations in Houston to view them as unaffiliated Jews (with a little more guidance and cooperation from JFS than would normally be the case). "JFS philosophy," they continue, "is to help the newcomer gain his/her independence as quickly as possible. The process takes three to four months. They are then ready to make choices, a very new experience for them. They then have the opportunity to discover their Jewishness." Many communities express a non-directive position (whether they know it or not), when they make such complaints as "they have shown little initiative regarding involvement in the Jewish community" (Pittsburgh).

The directive approach, I believe, is more common. This position holds that it is the communities' responsibility to "initiate" with regard to Jewish acculturation. While this position is held by many professionals and lay people who do not consider themselves religious, nearly 100% of the Orthodox community is in this camp.

In a recent interview, Rabbi Zalman Posner of Nashville put it rather well. He compared the emigre to *teenock she-nishba*, that is, a Jew who was raised in captivity

from infancy. The obligations towards this Jew, as regard Talmud, are clear. *One must educate him from Aleph-Bet*. However, the obverse side of this obligation must be felt by those performing it: the *joy* we are to feel in the returning home of a Jew. That is, this teaching must also be a joyous celebration and not merely a rote teaching.

Rabbi Posner says we have to "create a Jewish need in him," just as we would with a child, while at the same time understanding that this is *no* child, being certainly not *tabula rasa*. It is a matter of retraining he says, just as you would retrain someone for suitable employment.

He tells of an individual Soviet Jew in Nashville who had no Passover food in his house on the eve of the holiday. When asked why, he replied; "In Rome they gave me matzo so I used it. Here they didn't, so I don't." We have to make sure, the rabbi states, that we, *at the very least*, don't let them fall "below" the level of community observance. The most important thing, re-emphasized the Rabbi, is that religious interventions be made with warmth and caring.

Naturally, some resent the Orthodox group and its role as the primary champions of the directive approach and a few communities have cautioned Orthodox elements to coordinate their efforts with the rest of the community. However, many seem to breathe a sigh of relief that the religious component of Jewish acculturation is being taken out of their hands.

A few communities, such as Seattle, have indicated that the *only* Jewish organization willing to take responsibility in the area of Jewish acculturation is Chabad. Lubavitch or Chabad has Russian programs in nearly all large cities and in a large percentage of the large-intermediates as well. It attempts to develop a wide range of programming usually encompassing one or more of the following elements: drop-in centers, day-schools, summer camps, lending libraries, ESL, gifts of necessary Jewish items such

as *talesim*, *tephilin*, kosher pots and dishes, *mezuzahs*, etc. It is generally reported that their activities are very well attended.

The success of Chabad probably can be attributed to several factors:

- 1) They court the emigres aggressively.
- 2) Being Hassidim, and originating in Russia, they naturally make their holiday activities the spirited celebrations in which the emigres feel at home.
- 3) They are role models with integrity. That is, they are not asking the emigres to be more Jewish than they are. Being *as* Jewish will be sufficient.

I was touched by this quote from Cleveland, "girls from the Hebrew Academy adopted Soviet students, take them on field trips to places of Jewish interest and invite them into their home to experience Shabbat and put into practice the Jewish tradition which they study in the classroom."

From Salem, Mass. comes this observation, "they are most likely to participate in Jewish life when there is an active interest in them by volunteers. If the volunteer finds Jewishness important, the Soviet adoptee will identify because of a desire to be accepted."

Cultural Judaism *should* be a viable competitor for religious Judaism, particularly as Soviet Jews, as we described them earlier, generally feel themselves to be ethnically but not religiously Jewish. Ernest Kahn of Philadelphia remarks "the role model presented by most indigenous U.S. Jews does not bode well for a religiously-based Jewish identity for Soviet Jews, and an identity based on culture requires the development of a foundation for such."

Memphis' healthy resettlement program has typically attempted to compromise the religious and cultural positions. "Many of the immigrants have no real conception of and are not yet ready and willing to accept the G-d concept. Thus, while it is a worthwhile venture to involve them in holiday celebrations and discussions of diverse lifestyle alternatives, the application of *tephilin*,

for instance, may be a 'strained exercise' . . . one Orthodox Rabbi put it in terms of religiosity being a long range goal for the second generation. In the interim, cultural-communal involvement may have to stand in as the only preventative for assimilation."

Until now, no single non-religious community agency has elected to take the responsibility for giving the Russians the Jewish cultural foundation that Ernest Kahn refers to as necessary. Yet I think it is fairly obvious that it should have been the JCC that took up this mantle. This is yet another issue to be worked out. In the first place, it would certainly be far less problematic to apply federal dollars to Jewish content programming in a religiously neutral Jewish agency. In the second place, the Center can present Jewish life "authentically," experientially, as lived by a community—and not create the illusion that Jewish community functioning is synonymous with the perpetual dispensation of services.

The Center movement now seems to be preparing to come to center stage on this matter. The reasons that it has not, until now, done so are too numerous and complicated to deal with here. Suffice it to say, that we expect that programming for Soviet Jews will increase sharply in the 1980's.

We have very briefly touched on the role of the synagogue in Jewish acculturation process. Since it is an issue that is only now becoming defined, we will simply indicate that it will undoubtedly be on many community agendas this coming year.

Coordination of Programming

Apparently, several communities have recently fought this issue out. In the cases reported to us, community-wide committees, generally staffed by Federation staff, were formed. In most cases, most of the following parties were incorporated into the committees: The congregational rabbis, day schools, bureaus of Jewish

education, Center and JFS staff. The objective was to plan and coordinate in an orderly fashion for Jewish acculturation. Bridgeport, Savannah, Chicago, L.A. and Cleveland all may provide models for this kind of coordination.

To quote Savannah, "We had from the start decided that the committee of the Federation would take care of all their Jewish needs. While most of the members were leaders in the various synagogues and communal organizations, they were asked, and they agreed, that this was a community committee and as such the community and not the individual organizations or synagogues, would have sole control of the immigrant's integration . . . The Russians were never part of any intercommunal strife or competitions between rabbis and synagogues, which are part and parcel of small town Jewish life."

The Soviet Jewish Resettlement Program is facing some enormous challenges in the near future because of Jewish content programming primarily as a result of the First Amendment prohibitions against the use of federal monies in the support or establishment of religion. The issue is extremely complex but it is one on which we will be doing some rethinking very soon. Part of that re-thinking is being done by the Task Force on Jewish Identity. The Task Force has been assembled from leading Jewish community professionals, including educators and rabbis. The main task will be to identify basic problems, suggest general directions and develop program ideas in response to identified needs.

We will have awarded substantial sums of money this year for demonstration programs that will involve Jewish acculturation. These programs should provide model experiences for other communities. It seems highly significant that 12 communities, *or approximately 10% of the total amount of block grant communities*, sent in formal proposals on various Jewish acculturation themes. Frankly, that is a rather incredible

response and must be indicative of the high degree of interest recently developed in this area.

In Conclusion

"All" we can do with the newest arrivals is to *begin* the development of an interest (or even better, begin to establish what Rabbi Posner called a "Jewish need") during the initial resettlement period. And we can above all, maintain positive contact with the refugees until a later stage.

The Jewish acculturation programs and activities for Soviet Jews will undoubtedly continue long after the block grant monies are no longer applicable to the refugees. Concerned communities must begin planning now for a Jewish acculturation period extending from four to six, or even eight years; in fact, a period far longer without

block grant funds than with.¹⁰ The entire community—the Federation, the JCC, the JFS, the Bureau of Jewish Education, the day schools, all synagogues big and small, Orthodox or Reconstructionist—will be required ultimately to chip in their resources to the Soviet Jewish in-gathering.

If this cooperation is in fact achieved, then the resettlement program will have heaped blessings on the American Jewish community that will last much longer than this present immigration, and our *mitzvot* will have been amply rewarded in the "here-and-now" of our community fabric.

¹⁰ Dr. Barry N. Stein, "The Refugee Experience: An Overview of Refugee Research," Paper Presented at Conference Sponsored by Royal Anthropological Institute, London, February 22, 1980, P. 17.