

No. 414 5 Tishrei 5760 / 15 September 1999

THE ROLE OF POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN ANTISEMITISM

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In recent months, since shortly after the collapse of the Russian ruble in August 1998, an upsurge of antisemitism in Russia has generated a startling increase in emigration of Russian Jewry. Among Jews in Israel and many diaspora countries, concern has grown about the fate of those Jews remaining in Russia, the largest of the post-Soviet states.

The level of antisemitism in contemporary Russia appears to be higher than at any time since the anti-Zionist and antisemitic campaigns of the early and mid-1980s. Antisemitism of that period was controlled by the Soviet regime and was manipulated according to the needs of the Soviet leadership. Their needs focused on the demand for educated Jews in the Soviet labor force, regime requirements for fidelity to established doctrine, and, to a lesser degree, government objectives in the foreign policy arena.

Sources of Contemporary Russian Antisemitism

On one level, contemporary Russian antisemitism is simply a particular aspect of the intolerance and bigotry prevalent in Russia today. Discrimination against peoples from the Caucasus Mountain area (such as Chechens, Ingush, Azerbaidzhanis, Georgians, and Armenians) and other minorities, most of whom are darker-skinned than most Russians, is more widespread and more brutal than that against Jews. In common with antisemitism in Russia, its practice is generally unprotested.

On another level, extremist political thought responds to a need by some for a simple explanation of the economic catastrophe and social upheaval that has consumed their lives since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The everyday difficulties of life in Russia generate an atmosphere of pervasive, enveloping tension. Political and economic uncertainty combine to create a milieu in which bigotry thrives and scapegoats are sought.

Expression of contemporary Russian antisemitism is determined by the political marketplace. It is manipulated, i.e., it is suppressed or elicited, according to the perceived needs of current and potential leadership - those who control, or wish to control, the Presidency of Russia and the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament. Antisemitism and official tolerance of antisemitism have become political tools in elections to the Duma on December 19th of this year and to the Presidency next year. The two elections are critical to the fate of Russian Jewry. The political campaigns preceding the elections are important in themselves as they provide public forums in which various political views are expressed.

The Setting

In the national political arena, Russian President Boris Yeltsin often appears faltering and disoriented. Multiple news sources report that he is subject to considerable influence from a mafia-type family of relatives and advisors. He has appointed four different prime ministers in 17 months, each of the first three falling from favor as he became threatening to the Yeltsin coterie. Neither Yeltsin nor any other individual in his various governments has articulated a national vision providing a sense of direction in this time of uncertainty. Russians have yet to agree on the goals of reform. No serious political candidate is a forceful proponent of a free-market economy, strong relations with the United States and other Western democracies, or freedom and constitutional government in general.

The Russian government often appears to be disintegrating as regional bosses undercut policies and decisions issued by Moscow. Among the national powers usurped by regions (*oblasts*) is the distribution of tax revenues. The refusal of regions to remit tax payments to the national center has been an important factor in the erosion of national financial authority.

The collapse of the greatly overvalued ruble in August 1998 led to a currency devaluation of about 75 percent, a decline in real individual income of about 30 percent, and the entry of a substantial portion of the Russian population into the ranks of the impoverished. The hardest blow was dealt to the

emerging middle class - entrepreneurs, professionals, and skilled workers. Government employees and retired persons already were victims of a government that was months in arrears in paying salaries and pensions.

The post-Soviet economy had been built on tight domestic money and large government deficits. Banks pulled in cash and sent it abroad for various fraudulent purposes. Estimates of the amount of capital flight since 1992 vary, but most are in the range of \$200 billion. Unlike banks in the West, Russian banks do not serve as instruments of local investment. Little money has been available as working capital, for payment of taxes, or as compensation to suppliers, government employees, or pensioners. Consequently, about 60 percent of the Russian economy was based on barter in 1998.

As of mid-1999, some amelioration of economic conditions has occurred. Devaluation of the ruble made exports more competitive and imports less competitive. Several local industries are experiencing a modest revival, especially in intermediary goods, such as chemicals and construction materials. Certain manufactured goods - such as automobiles, machinery, textiles, and shoes - also are doing well. Some increase in tax revenues is reported, and a boost in international oil prices has brought in new hard currency. The Russian government has made significant progress in reducing arrears in government salaries and pensions. The non-monetary share of the economy has fallen to about 45 percent.

In lieu of a functional banking system, industrial enterprises are using their own profits to fund themselves and related businesses. For example, manufacturing concerns are providing financing to their suppliers and subsidiaries. However, industry cannot replace banks for the long term. To survive and to service the Russian economy, local banks must assume an appropriate role as engines of investment. Such a transformation is unlikely in the coming months as the majority of banks appear to favor foreign transfers over local investment and do little to earn the trust necessary to use money effectively at home. Similarly, many foreign investors appear more interested in speculation than in genuine economic development.

The banking crisis is only one aspect of an economic system whose limited recovery is likely to wither once the scope for import substitution has been exhausted. Political instability, pervasive organized crime and corruption, an underdeveloped legal system and lack of a legal culture, and dependence on oil for export income portend continuing economic difficulty for Russia. Further, neither the impending 1999 and 2000 elections nor the cash windfall

generated by current high oil prices encourages development of effective reforms.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Russian economy, ethnic tensions in several areas of the country, chronic corruption, and diminished stature abroad combine to humiliate many Russians with a strong sense of national pride. They feel degraded and resentful. Many are looking for scapegoats to explain their plight.

Antisemitism Across the Political Spectrum

Some observers of contemporary Russia use the terms "nationalist socialism" and "neo-fascism" to describe the atmosphere in Russia today. Similarities between contemporary Russia and Weimar Germany have been noted: a collapsed economy, an electorate that feels bitter and betrayed, a weak central government, national humiliation, and a yearning for an "iron hand" to curb rampant crime and the excesses of the super-rich (many of whom are Jews).

Such conditions have generated several extremist groups. The largest appears to be the Russian National Unity party, established in 1990 and led by veteran racist Alexander Barkashov. Estimates of its membership range from 6,000 to 20,000 individuals scattered across Russia and among Russians in other former Soviet republics. In some areas, it is subsidized by municipalities or oblasts (regions) and/or is the beneficiary of military training by local units of the Russian army. Its personnel may participate in patrols of local police. It distributes virulently antisemitic literature. Russian National Unity and other neo-fascist groups, some attired in military uniforms adorned with Nazi-type regalia, stage noisy marches and make threatening gestures.

More frightening because it is larger and less marginal is the nationalist faction of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. In considering the Communist role in contemporary Russian society, it would be wise to shed traditional notions of right wing and left wing political forces and recognize that the CPRF is among the most reactionary influences in Russia today. (It may be easier to accomplish this ideological leap if the notion of "wings" is discarded, for the use of such terminology suggests great distance from one extreme to the other. If images are required, it may be more useful to think of a horseshoe with a bulge in the middle and the ends a short distance apart at the bottom.) Albert Makashov, the leader of the CPRF nationalist faction, is a retired general who has denounced Jews in flamboyant rhetoric, blaming

Jews for Russia's economic distress and advocating a quota on the number of Jews permitted to live in Russia.

Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the overall CPRF and considered less extreme than General Makashov, has denounced antisemitism, but has declined to censure the anti-Jewish bigotry of General Makashov. He has labeled Zionism "a blood relative of fascism." He has written that the "spread of Zionism in the state government in Russia is one of the reasons for the current catastrophic condition of the country, the mass impoverishment and the process of extinction of its people." Zyuganov's attempts to draw a distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism echo Soviet propaganda from the late 1940s to the late 1980s when Soviet authorities attempted, with little success, to conceal official state antisemitism under a mask of "anti-Zionism."

All factions in the CPRF are strongly opposed to economic reform. The Communist party as a whole claims 20 to 30 percent of the electorate, finding its chief support among the many who are economically displaced, such as pensioners trying to survive on grossly inadequate pensions, blue- and white-collar workers who were not paid for months, farmers, and the unemployed. However, its strength may be challenged in forthcoming elections by the new center-left coalition (All Russia/Fatherland) led by former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. The Primakov-Luzhkov alliance, joined by a group of powerful regional governors, may be sufficiently appealing to attract all but the most hardline of Communist sympathizers.

By mid-1999, public antisemitism in Russia had crossed the line from expression by individuals associated with extremist groups to public statements by mainstream politicians. In July, Viktor Chernomyrdin, former Russian Prime Minister and subsequent President of the Russian gas monopoly Gazprom, commented on a high-profile feud between oligarchs Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gousinsky, saying, "Two Jews have clashed, and now the whole country has to watch this farce." Chernomyrdin had not previously been associated with public antisemitic statements.

Chernomyrdin's public statement made visible the growing acceptance of anti-Jewish bigotry within mainstream Russia. Many Jews were already aware of the migration of antisemitism from the political extremes to the Russian center.

Forms of Russian Antisemitism

Post-Soviet antisemitism is expressed through various media and forums. Anti-Jewish slurs on the street, in public transportation, schools, and workplaces are common. Employment quotas, though no longer centrally orchestrated, remain, apparently implemented by individual institutions. Attacks on Jewish property - principally synagogues and Jewish cemeteries - have increased substantially since the collapse of the ruble in August, 1998. Anti-Jewish slogans and swastikas are spray-painted on buildings and gravestones, and several synagogues have been firebombed. Attacks on individuals associated with the organized Jewish community also are multiplying. At least 120 anti-Jewish periodicals exist - some say as many as 300 - most of which are limited in circulation; however, one daily newspaper (*Sovietskaya Rossiya*, a holdover from the Soviet period) and seven to ten weekly newspapers and monthly journals filled with antisemitism have gained more substantial circulation. Russian-language translations of *Mein Kampf* are readily available and the number of indigenous antisemitic books appears to be increasing. As in other countries, some hate groups have developed Internet sites. Among the Russian organizations with Internet sites is the Black Hundreds, a contemporary version of the fanatically xenophobic and antisemitic movement of late nineteenth century tsarist Russia.

Few antisemitic acts generate public condemnation from key government figures or major political candidates. Instead, officials may express concern to selected groups of local Jews or to foreigners demanding Russian government action against acts of bigotry, including prosecution of perpetrators in conformance with existing Russian laws. The political atmosphere within Russia is not conducive to explicit public statements censuring antisemitism.

Themes of Contemporary Russian Antisemitism

Five major themes dominate the antisemitism that has taken root in contemporary Russia. First, Jews are perceived as influencing the Russian government, economy, and media at levels disproportionate to their demographic share of the Russian population. Many Russians feel that the collapse of the Soviet Union deprived them of their own social and cultural identity. They feel dispossessed, degraded, and bereft of self-respect as citizens of a superpower. This loss has been exacerbated by the rise of non-Russians, mainly Jews, to positions of enormous authority in critical areas of Russian life. That the Russian political, economic, and social systems remain ill-defined only increases their anxiety.

Second, Jews are perceived as being the major beneficiaries of privatization of the Russian economy and, thus, are believed to be responsible for the serious economic and social problems afflicting Russia today. The next three themes all play on the old Soviet/Stalinist perception of Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans." Jews are seen as conduits of Western influence and deeply hostile to Russian culture and Russian (i.e., Russian Orthodox Christian) spirituality. Jews are perceived as agents of Western and Israeli imperialism. (Westerners may think that the Cold War is over, but Russians still think of themselves as besieged and in competition with the United States for international influence and prestige.) Finally, the high rate of Jewish emigration to Israel has convinced many Russians that all or most Russian Jews are more loyal to Israel than to Russia and that educated Jews are abandoning Russia in a time of crisis. Several of these themes bear further examination.

The Oligarchs

That Jews control a disproportionately large share of the Russian economy and Russian media certainly has some basis in fact. Between 50 and 80 percent of the Russian economy is said to be in Jewish hands, with the influence of the five Jews among the eight individuals commonly referred to as "oligarchs" particularly conspicuous. (An oligarch is understood to be a member of a small group that exercises control in a government. The five oligarchs of Jewish descent are Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Friedman, Vladimir Gusinsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and Alexander Smolensky. The other oligarchs are Vagit Alekperov, Vladimir Potanin, and Rem Vyakhirev.)

Perhaps the most famous (and simultaneously the most infamous) of the oligarchs is Boris Berezovsky. In common with most of the other Jewish oligarchs, Berezovsky controls industries in three critical areas: the extraction and sale of a major natural resource, such as oil, as a source of great wealth; a large bank (useful in influencing industry and transferring assets abroad); and several major media outlets (useful for exerting influence and attacking rivals). He also controls a significant share of the Aeroflot airline and the Moscow automobile industry. He is a long-time, close associate of the Yeltsin family and is often perceived as a Rasputin-type figure in his relationship with Tatiana Dyachenko, Yeltsin's very influential daughter. Berezovsky's leading lieutenant is another Jew, Roman Abramovich, a shadowy individual in his early 30s. Abramovich manages Berezovsky's vast oil interests (Sibneft and related companies), arranges major financial and industrial positions in the Russian Cabinet, serves as cashier to the Yeltsin family, and controls access to Berezovsky himself.

Vladimir Gusinsky owns a large stable of media outlets through Media Most, including NTV, several newspapers, and a news magazine; interests in oil, construction, and pharmaceuticals; and a bank (Most Bank). He was the leading organizer in financing the 1996 election campaigns of Boris Yeltsin and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

Mikhail Friedman and his Jewish colleague Peter Aven are the principals in a large bank (Alfa Bank) and also are prominent in construction materials and food processing. The banking interests of Alexander Smolensky (SBS Agro) and Mikhail Khodorkovsky (Menatep) were damaged severely in the 1998 financial crisis. However, Smolensky shares holdings in some media and oil concerns with Berezovsky, and Khodorkovsky remains influential in an oil company (Yukos), mining and construction enterprises, and businesses producing chemicals, textiles, and paper.

Jewish oligarchs made their considerable holdings in Russian media available to the Yeltsin and Luzhkov 1996 political campaigns. The victory of the oligarchs in the elections - and it was as much their victory as it was victory for Yeltsin and Luzhkov - empowered them to lobby the President and the Mayor for business-friendly policies and various privileges. President Yeltsin and Mayor Luzhkov have responded accordingly.

However, whereas almost all oligarchs were united in support of Yeltsin and Luzhkov in 1996, they are bitterly divided in 1999. Vladimir Gusinsky is backing the All Russia/Fatherland coalition led by former Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. Boris Berezovsky will support whomever preserves the control now exercised by "the family." A vicious media war has erupted, with the television channels and print publications of each oligarch attacking the other.

The Road to Oligarchy

How did the oligarchs achieve their power? Here we must review *Soviet* history and *Soviet*antisemitism. All of these individuals were born in the postwar years. Berezovsky, in his mid-50s, is the oldest among them. Antisemitism had closed off positions in government and industry to most Jews during the Soviet period. Typically, energetic Jews found outlets in academic institutions (second-tier if they were bright, first-tier if they were brilliant and lucky); culture (Gusinsky had been a theater director); medicine; engineering; and as tradesmen, such as repairmen and dressmakers.

Because advertising was forbidden in the Soviet Union, skilled trades people turned to unofficial brokers (*fartsovshchiky*) who could obtain key items, such as tools or spare parts, that were "in deficit," i.e., in short supply. Other brokers could find gifted surgeons for private patients or arrange stays at elite vacation resorts. Many of these brokers were Jews.

A similar field of work on a larger scale was that of a *tolkach*, an expediter or fixer in industry. These were the underground wheelers and dealers who performed vital roles in addressing the failures of the centrally planned Soviet economy. They found the raw materials that the behemoth central planning system had lost, they arranged transportation links, they cleared bottlenecks. Most had the protection offered by a conventional job, perhaps as an engineer, but their wheeling and dealing skills became known and every competent factory manager had at least one on the payroll.

When Mikhail Gorbachev permitted the development of cooperatives and private trade as components of his *perestroika* policy in 1987, the expeditors were well-positioned to step forward. Many of them fashioned their contacts together into cooperatives. Within a short time, the cooperatives developed into conglomerates.

The non-Jewish oligarchs, on the other hand, acquired their assets through earlier positions in government agencies that provided insider contacts. The three named individuals all held key posts in the former Soviet economic apparatus - such as the Ministry of Energy and Fuel, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, or in the Soviet State Bank - positions that were closed to Jews. One is the son of a prominent Soviet diplomat. Simply stated, the non-Jews just took personal control of industrial sectors for which they had had prior public supervisory responsibilities.

The Oligarchs and Jewish Identity

The various Jewish oligarchs occupy a range of positions regarding Jewish identity and identification. Vladimir Gusinsky is the founding president of the Russian Jewish Congress, the largest indigenous Jewish organization in the successor states today. His deputy in business, Boris Khait, is a vice-president, as is Mikhail Friedman of Alfa Bank. Alexander Smolensky, however, has converted to Russian Orthodoxy, is a generous contributor to the Orthodox Church, and has requested that he not be listed in the *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia*. Mikhail Khodorkovsky shows considerable irritation whenever his Jewish origins are noted. Boris Berezovsky sought Israeli citizenship as protection during the initial period of his life as a tycoon, but

subsequently renounced it when his loyalty to Russia was questioned. He now suggests that he has converted to Russian Orthodoxy, although he continues to regard himself as an ethnic Jew.

However they relate to their Jewish heritage, all of these men are regarded as Jewish by the Russian public, and all of them are resented for their Jewish origins and for their success. Their influence, however, may be waning. The ruble devaluation in August 1998 was a major turning point in the role of the oligarchy. All of the oligarchs lost money - their own and that of their businesses - in the crisis surrounding the collapse of the ruble. With their decline in financial power, the political power of all but Boris Berezovsky also has decreased. Former Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov successfully appointed his cabinet in 1998 through bargaining with President Yeltsin and the Russian legislature, rather than seeking approval of the oligarchs, as had been the case in the recent past. He appointed many of his left-leaning colleagues to critical posts, and these men dominated political reality in Russia for the remainder of his tenure. With the exception of Boris Berezovsky, the oligarchs also were less influential in the appointment of officials to top positions in the Putin government. Notwithstanding his current influence in the Yeltsin family, Berezovsky also has foes within the Russian government and among others in the Russian power elite.

A number of former Russian government officials of at least partial Jewish origin remain active in Russian national politics. Former Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko is collaborating with two former deputy prime ministers, Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, in a new center-right coalition. Grigory Yavlinsky, an important economic advisor to Yeltsin, is a presidential candidate on the slate of his own Yabloko party, a rival liberal group.

Antisemites have pointed to these and other individuals as "proof" of undue Jewish influence in the Russian government. None has a particularly positive image in the eyes of the Russian public and one, Anatoly Chubais, frequently is referred to as "the most hated man in Russia" for his management of the privatization process, regarded even by Russian standards as extravagant in its level of corruption.

A singular individual among prominent Russian Jews is Yevgeny Primakov, former prime minister and a current candidate on the center-left All Russia/Fatherland slate to succeed Boris Yeltsin as President of Russia. Primakov was born as Yonah Finkelshtein in Kyiv, acquired a more useful name while still a youngster, became an Arabist in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the KGB, and remains an ardent friend of Saddam

Hussein. In the curious world of Soviet antisemitism, Primakov has been the target of a relatively small number of antisemitic slurs. His Jewish origins appear not to be a major issue, probably because he favors a heavily regulated economy and because his Arabist credentials are so strong.

In the current Duma, which is up for re-election this year, eight of 450 legislators are Jewish. Six, none of whom is prominent, are associated with liberal, pro-reform slates. The other two are unusual, almost exotic, individuals. The best known is Vladimir Zhirinovsky, head of the Liberal Democratic party, which is neither liberal nor democratic. Zhirinovsky, it will be recalled, denies his Jewish origins, explaining that his mother was a Russian and his father was a lawyer. He is reactionary, antisemitic, confrontational, and boorish. The second Jew, Iosif Kobzon is a popular singer known as the Russian Frank Sinatra because of a similar singing style. He resembles the late Sinatra in other ways as well in that he is said to be associated with criminal elements. In fact, the United States government has declared him *persona non grata*. Kobzon identifies strongly as a Jew and has spoken out in protest against the failure of the Duma to censor antisemitism.

Russian Jews, Ukrainian Jews, and several Israelis are the dominant figures in the international money laundering scandal that captured world attention in the waning days of summer in 1999. Initial mainstream Russian press reporting was defensive in nature and did not dwell on the ethnic background of alleged participants. However, the extremist press was quick to note the Jewish surnames of individuals linked to the news accounts. The occurrence of large-scale capital flight is ripe for anti-Jewish abuse by Russian antisemites eager to criticize those who exploit Russia.

The Role of the Russian Government

The notion of antisemitism as manipulated, i.e., suppressed or elicited, according to the perceived needs of the leadership, those who control, or wish to control, the Presidency of Russia and the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, requires further examination. Boris Yeltsin has played no active role in the growth of antisemitism in Russia. Yet he and his team bear some blame for its expansion because they have pursued a policy of non-interference that serves Yeltsin's immediate political needs. He has failed to suggest or implement policies that oppose bigotry. Neither he nor his appointees have insisted on enforcement of existing anti-hate laws or development of more precise legislation in this area. He has condemned nationalism and extremism on several occasions, such as the 57th anniversary of the Nazi invasion of the then Soviet Union, and he also

attended the 1998 opening of the Moscow Holocaust Memorial and Synagogue. Yet he and other Russian leaders have failed to issue public condemnations of antisemitic incidents in Russia.

Boris Yeltsin and other post-Soviet politicians seek a broad base of support; therefore, they tolerate extremist organizations. At the same time, Yeltsin has accused these organizations of destabilization and has presented his administration as a hedge against fascism. Neither in words nor in deeds do post-Soviet politicians encourage the development of those institutions of a civil society that would serve to diminish bigotry.

Further, elected officials in Russia are immune from prosecution, a fact that suggests the likelihood of continuing antisemitic rhetoric in the Duma. It also may explain why Boris Berezovsky is seeking a seat in the Duma.

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov has banned Russian National Unity from staging demonstrations in the Russian capital. He also has denied residence permits to individuals from the Caucasus Mountain area and has ordered mass arrests and deportations of people based on their ethnic appearance. He advocates the annexation to Russia of the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Sebastopol. Former Prime Ministers Primakov and Chernomyrdin both favor reassertion of Russian influence over Ukraine. In their anxiety over the activities of the Russian National Unity party and the Communist Party of Russia, observers would do well to remember that even those politicians in Russia considered liberal or democratic speak of the restoration of Russian prominence and of Russia as a great power. They perceive Russia as surrounded by real or potential enemies. Their policies regarding antisemitism are hostage not to principle but to expedience, to their perceptions of larger political needs.

On July 27, 1999, the Russian Jewish Congress (REK) issued a statement condemning a new round of specific antisemitic attacks on Jews and Jewish property. It drew attention to: (1) the growing number of politicians issuing antisemitic statements to gain political support; (2) public indifference to attacks on Jews and other minorities; and (3) the inability and/or unwillingness of Russian authorities to prosecute those accused of incitement and racism. It had not gone unnoticed that most major Russian media had printed or aired antisemitic statements by an individual who had stabbed a Jewish official in a synagogue. The same media failed to carry any statements protesting such attacks. REK asked Russian leaders to denounce racists and antisemites, recognize the dangers of unpunished bigotry and antisemitism, and denounce, identify, and convict those guilty of such crimes. In other appeals,

REK observed that Russia was not enforcing its existing anti-hate laws. It was further noted that Russian inability or unwillingness to protect its Jewish citizens compelled REK to establish its own Security Foundation, an action that, paradoxically, absolves the Russian government of its own responsibility to protect its citizens.

Political Antisemitism and the Future of Russian Jewry

In the recent past, antisemitism appeared to play a negligible role in the decision of Jews to emigrate from Russia. Economic opportunities, concern for the future of one's children, and family reunification were the primary motivating factors as tabulated by the Jewish Agency for Israel in periodic surveys of Jews leaving the post-Soviet states for Israel. However, beginning in late 1998, that is, following the ruble devaluation and associated economic collapse in Russia, antisemitism emerged in these periodic Jewish Agency surveys of Israel-bound post-Soviet Jews as an important reason for their departure. The number of Jewish immigrants to Israel from Russia has more than doubled on an annual basis since the August 1998 events.

Recent instability in Russia suggests caution in predicting the future of Russian Jewry. Nonetheless, few circumstances in contemporary Russia provide a foundation for optimism. Russian Jewry has been in demographic decline throughout the postwar era due to aging and high mortality, low fertility, assimilation, and emigration. As has become clear, antisemitism generates even greater emigration.

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The *Jerusalem Letter* and *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints* are published by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 13 Tel-Hai St., Jerusalem, Israel; Tel. 972-2-5619281, Fax. 972-2-5619112, Internet: jcpa@netvision.net.il. In

www.jcpa.org

U.S.A.: Center for Jewish Community Studies, 1515 Locust St., Suite 703,
Philadelphia, PA 19102; Tel. (215) 772-0564, Fax. (215) 772-0566. ©
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