

tarian if it maintained a demand for cultural-national autonomy in its program. These issues were the subject of constant contemporary political and propagandistic manipulations, in the context of which any disagreements or deviations were considered political acts.

Nevertheless, neither these nor differences on other issues of principle were included in the *mea culpas* published by the *Dictionary's* editorial board, nor did they figure in the philippics of *Pravda*. It is unclear whether they were taken into consideration in the behind-the-scenes trial where the fate of the *Dictionary* was decided. An element which suggests that Jewish issues were *not* part of the accusation is the fact that, despite the destruction of the edition, none of the publishers or editors were subject to personal repressions. It is unknown, however, how events would have developed if the editor-in-chief, M. B. Vol'fson, had not died at that time.

Despite a certain vagueness with regard to direct causes, the fact remains that an entire encyclopedic edition was destroyed. It was a work which was superior to other Soviet encyclopedias in its informativeness and efforts to preserve objectivity and relatively independent judgments and opinions, certainly in regard to Jewish history and culture.

DOCUMENTS AND TESTIMONIES

Jewish Newspaper in Moldova Participates in Dialogue with the Authorities about the Fate of the Jews

Introduction

Nash golos, the newspaper of the Jewish Culture Association of Moldova, began publication in March 1990. It is officially registered and appears twice monthly, in Russian and in Hebrew (two pages out of eight), with a press run of 12,000 copies.

The newspaper began publication during a period of mass emigration of Soviet Jews, which has become a topic of controversy involving discussion and evaluation of the policy of the Soviet authorities toward the Jews. The latter includes antisemitism on the part of the state, while popular antisemitism is not ignored. Both types of anti-Jewish attitudes and practices are considered to have contributed to the Jewish exodus.

Noteworthy now is the participation of the new independent Jewish press in such discussion or "dialogue," in which the Jews now have an opportunity to express publicly their own position or positions. Thereby the Jews cease to be merely the object of discussion and become participants in the discussion.

The fact that one of the first public appearances in print of the new prime minister of the Republic, Mircea Druk, after his elevation to this post in May 1990, was the interview he gave to the editor of *Nash golos*, Alexander Brodskii, is an indication of the significant place that the Jewish newspaper and Jewish opinion appears to play in the fluid situation in Moldova today. Furthermore, Sovetskaia Moldova, the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Republic, based an article of its own criticizing antisemitism on a survey of emigrating Jews conducted by the Jewish newspaper.

The interview with Prime Minister Druk focused on the Jewish question, "which is becoming more serious as the number of the Jews in the Soviet Union is becoming less." One key question posed was whether the prime minister sees in the near future the possibility of establishing normal relations between Jews and the native population of the republic. Selections from his remarks follow.

Nash golos, No. 8, June 16–30, 1990, p. 2.

"THE MAIN THING IS TRUST"

I believe that I have never concealed my repulsion at antisemitism. . . . Let people act [in regard to emigration] as their heart requires—that is their right. But I would like to address them in any of the languages that I know, including Ladino, and say: let's try to find a common language. The Jews are truly an unfortunate people. Having suffered from Sovietization and Russification, here in Bessarabia they have lost not only Hebrew and Yiddish, but also

Romanian, which before the war they all know quite well. Thus, the most important—the linguistic—contact was broken with their hosts and neighbors and that is the basis for cooperation. Hence there is a double distrust and alienation. But things were really quite different! The Jews of Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and, of course, of Romania rightly were considered the greatest ethnic community in Europe, one that had created a great culture which naturally flowed into the culture of the region. I don't have to recall to you the numerous Jewish schools, high schools, *yeshivot*, and famous synagogues, the poets and wise men of this area. To recall with what enthusiasm the great [Romanian poet] Tudor Arghezi wrote about the courage and military daring of Jews. To recall how [the Romanian literary historian] George Călinescu, despite the howls of the fascists, included in his classic work *The History of Romanian Literature* [1941] not only [the Romanian] Anton Pann [1796–1854] but also [the Jew] Cilibi Moise [1812–1870], the joyful peddler of both kingdoms.¹

... It is not only Jews who are sitting on their suitcases—everyone is waiting for changes. Independent Moldova—I am not speaking about secession, but about the right of the republic to make decisions for itself—very much needs Jewish thinking and Jewish determination. It is imperative that all those who wish so in the republic are able to receive a Jewish education, including a religious one. I do not know how the famous dispute between Hebrew and Yiddish will be resolved among you, but personally I am for Hebrew. For kindergartens, classes and schools in Hebrew and, if you wish, in the state language as well. For Jews from Russia, Belorussia, and the Ukraine, from the whole country, coming to Moldova to receive such an education. For Bessarabian Jews to have three quite equal opportunities: to leave if they want, to stay if they want, to leave and return here to work when they are citizens of Israel. ... The essence of the matter lies in the restoration of an ancient tradition of good-neighborliness, which today turns out to be most actual. Moldova should enter the European home and Europeanism is measured today, among other things, by one's relation to one's Jews and to Israel, as indicated by the example of all the former socialist countries. One way or another, Moldova is interested in having friendly relations with Israel on all levels. And that state in turn, I am certain, knows well and appreciates the possibilities being opened here.

... Let diplomatic couriers discuss diplomatic relations, meanwhile who is standing in the way of intensive cultural exchange and joint humanistic and economic undertakings? Who would prevent the establishment of contacts with the Bessarabian community in Israel, as is the case with other Bessarabian communities in Europe and America? Gorbachev congratulated [Meir] Vilner on his reelection to the post of general secretary of the Communist

1. Both Pann and Moise were popular writers who wrote in Romanian and sold their works in the marketplace.

Party of Israel; why can you not find other, less frivolous grounds for correspondence?

Understand me correctly: of course, we need foreign currency and technology, we need very many things, but the sole thing we really can not do without is an atmosphere of mutual good will and respect which determines all the rest. The Jews in Bessarabia, like all citizens in our republic, have the right to feel at home.

And in that connection I should say now, as head of our government: we shall undertake, in accordance with the law, the most harsh measures in regard to antisemitism. I have seen to it that the heads of the ministry of internal affairs and national security personally report to me about all incidents of such a nature. I am also turning to public organizations of the republic with a call not only to come out with statements against antisemitism, but also to require from all their supporters to actively oppose this shame of the 20th century. Finally, one has to see that the infection of Judeophobia is not imported here from elsewhere in printed, organizational, or any other form. I sincerely trust my fellow citizens. Together with them we shall not allow fascism to penetrate Moldova.

Nash golos, No. 12, August 16–31, 1990, p. 3.

EXODUS—THE ONLY WAY OUT?

Respected readers:

Below you will find the study of the journalist M. Dreizler, which was prepared on the basis of the questionnaire which he compiled for emigrants who read the column "Zondazh" (Survey).

The author analyzes replies from 170 respondents. To some this sample may appear insufficiently representative. However, we should like to recall that the questionnaire was addressed direct to people who are at various stages of arranging their emigration from the USSR and only to them, rather than to all readers of *Nash golos*. If one also takes into consideration the natural fear of any person who is undertaking a difficult, vitally important matter and is concerned that it might fail (and that does happen!), then we have the right to speak of a definite activism on the part of those who did reply.

In regard to lacks in regard to the questionnaire itself and M. Dreizler's analysis, I would note a certain excess of pragmatic orientation. It appears that the journalist might have elaborated more profoundly the questions relating to the psychological and spiritual aspects of emigration which play, I am certain, a not insignificant role in this tragic mass movement. . . .

On the whole the work of M. Dreizler should be evaluated quite positively. He has done what many before him did not dare to undertake.

I. Tabak, ethnodemographer

"An organized retreat to previously unprepared positions"—thus one might refer to the present mass exit of Jews from the country. What impels thousands of people to abandon their native locations? This is what we have attempted to clarify via the sociological survey in the form of a questionnaire "Zondazh!" which we published in *Nash golos* No. 7. . . .

Almost all participants are five minutes short (or "five months short")—of actually leaving. Seventy respondents (41%) at the present time are actively preparing for emigration; 41 (24%) have already made the decision to leave, but have not yet implemented it; almost 25% of the first two groups (70 people) until quite recently had not considered the possibility of emigration, but now are increasingly inclined toward this idea.

Only for one-sixth (27 people) of those responding to the survey was emigration their intention for some time; for the vast majority (149 people or 87.5%) it was a reaction to events which occurred quite recently in the country (or republic). One might add that eight people noted a further point, besides what has already been indicated: "submission to external pressure (threats, blackmail, etc.)." The number of such was not great, but apparently was symptomatic.

What does the potential emigrant seek in a distant country? For some time it has been the practice to refer to a single, weighty reason recognized by the authorities—the reunification of families. Today, when the need for mutual hypocrisy of citizens and OVIR has practically been dropped, it turns out that only a small percentage of those emigrating (in our case, around 7%) are leaving the USSR in order to be reunited with relatives or in order not to break up a family. A slightly larger number of those (12% of our respondents) attribute their departures to the desire to live in the homeland of their ancestors. The motivational range today is quite broad. Three percent aspire to political freedom, 6% want to see the world, 9% desire to more fully realize their creative potential, 14% to improve their material situation. . . .

Most important for the majority of those surveyed (133 people or 79.5%) was a different reason: they had become tired of feeling themselves second class due to ethnic or other factors. Many who gave such a response, overall more than half of the respondents (98 people or 57.5%), are opting for emigration in the hope of guaranteeing the future of their children.

In the latter two cases, as we see, participation in the survey allow us not only to learn what the respondent is seeking in a distant country, but also, to no less a degree, what he is abandoning in his native country (i.e. lack of rights and fear about the future) . . . not wishing that the same lot fall to their children, people flee the country because they no longer believe that changes for the better are possible.

This assertion is confirmed by responses to the fifth question.

Two out of five people surveyed (68 people) admit that their choice was affected by disenchantment about the governmental and social structure of the USSR; 51 respondents (30%)—by their disillusionment in regard to eco-

omic possibilities. Almost half of the questionnaires filled out (81 people or 47.5%) expressed a lack of optimism about the political direction of the current leadership of the country (republic).

What are the specific reasons for the particular concert of participants in the survey? The following data provide a clear idea.

The growth of chauvinistic and nationalistic attitudes most disturb 87.5% of the respondents. Further, in descending order: the moral decline of society—20.5%; the ineffectiveness of the fight against crime—17%; the economic crisis, inflation, the rises in prices—16.5%; the activation of conservative and reactionary forces—12%; the stagnation of *perestroika*, the lack of guarantee of the irreversibility of changes that have taken place—11%; the staying power of the administrative-command system—8%; the unfavorable ecological situation—7.5%; the aspiration of republics to secede from the USSR—6.5%; the lack of full democratization and *glasnost*, attacks from "above" and "below" on proponents of reform—3.5%; concentration of power in the hands of a single person—3%.

It will surprise few that among the factors disturbing dozen of people were the increase in crime, the moral, ecological and economic crises which affected to the same degree both those emigrating and those remaining. However, considering today's catastrophic situation on the consumer market, one might suppose that the economic crisis would be the major factor. And responses to the eleventh question of the questionnaire (here we jump a bit forward) indicate the serious concern of people about the socioeconomic difficulties: 27.5% note the lack of conditions for spiritual development; 26.5% complain about poor medical services; almost one-fourth of the participants in the survey express dissatisfaction about the lack of commodities and medicine; 21% are worried about possible unemployment (actually—about being banned from specific professions); every sixth person notes that his standard of living was lower than the national average or even below the poverty level; a similar number of people believe that the work they do does not correspond to the level of their expertise or creative potential; 14.5% are disturbed by the lack of food products; 8% do not have apartments or any expectation of receiving one, etc. And still, let me reiterate, the point about "economic crisis" came only in fourth place.

Nor were any of the five points about attitudes of the respondents to purely internal political problems among the major factors, despite the fact that these points were noted in 47 questionnaires, i.e., in 25% of them. As one sees, those emigrating are not at all indifferent to the halting of democratic transformation, the possible disintegration of the USSR, the threat of a new dictatorship, etc.

However, general alarm is really evoked by the extremely serious situation which has developed in the field of inter-ethnic relations. A total of 146 people (86.5%) give priority just to this factor as the most dangerous one, while 132 people (77.5%) state that they themselves or people close to them have

suffered persecution or discrimination in rights due to their national origin.

Among the specific manifestations of nationalism which affected people's decision to leave the USSR, by a long shot antisemitism leads the field, it was noted in 1134 (79%) of the questionnaires; 74 times (44%) there was reference to local nationalism while great-power [i.e., Russian] chauvinism came in third, indicated by 30 people (17.5%).

It is quite revealing that the opinion about the presence of one or another form of nationalism, the extent of its danger etc. was formed by almost half (81 people or 47%) on the basis of situations which they themselves either witnessed or were victims of; slightly more than one quarter (43 people) relied on facts communicated to them by relatives or acquaintances; only 10 people referred to information from the foreign media, while for two-thirds of those who filled out the questionnaires (105 people, including some from the three groups mentioned above) the source of their "information for pondering" was their own press and state television and radio.

The authorities also made their own contribution to the increased flood of emigration. Was it not from their, as the expression goes, "light hand" that almost half of our respondents (80 people or 47%) and not these alone, of course, were deprived of the possibility of studying their native language; approximately 10%—noted that they were not allowed to follow the religion of their ancestors, over one-third (63 people)—to enjoy the culture of their people, approximately one-fourth (40 people)—to express criticism about these issues in the case of the deprivation of their own or someone else's rights.

Even now, when from high republic tribunes loudly (and, let us hope, sincerely) one hears declarations of readiness to promote the development of the cultures of all ethnic groups living in Moldova (including Jews), as is evident from the questionnaires received, far from everyone is convinced that this is sufficient guarantee for the future. . . .

Let us now attempt to assay a collective profile of our respondents on the basis of the information they themselves conveyed.

Among the 170 who responded to our "survey" (and with them over 600 family members are emigrating), there were 92 men and 78 women; 64.5% were married, 34.5% divorced, unmarried, or widowed; two did not respond to this question.

There were very few, i.e., 5% of very young respondents (teenage boys and girls); 17.5% were 20–29; more than one-third (34.5%) were 30–44; while the middle-aged (45–60) constituted 24.5%, and old people above age 60 constituted 9%.

Some 92 people (54%) have higher education; 2.5%—incomplete higher education; 23.5%—middle specialized education; 9.5%—middle education; 3%—incomplete middle education; 6.5% did not indicate education.

Among those emigrating or preparing to emigrate there is a preponderance of specialists in fields important to the economy, including 39 engineers, 11

economists and bookkeepers, 7 technicians, 2 agronomists, and 2 white-collar workers. A large proportion work in culture, education, and health: there are 21 physicians, 16 teachers, 8 cultural workers, 7 nurses and orderlies, and 4 scientific workers. There are 14 workers, 10 pensioners and housewives, 6 drivers of vehicles, 6 university students, 5 students, and 3 employees in commerce and services.

The majority of those who replied to the questions (118 people) lived in major cities; 34—in small cities, 4 in medium sized cities, while 1 each live in a settlement and a village. The residence of the others is not known.

The ethnic composition of the respondents is quite homogeneous: 158 Jews, 8 Russians, one each—Ukrainian, Moldavian, Romanian, and Azerbaijani.

A total of 145 people are leaving for Israel, despite the fact that only 99 people want to do so. The reverse is true for the United States (16 are going there, but 41 would like to) and for Canada (three are going there, eight would like to). One person is departing for Sweden, where he wants to go, and three did not indicate their destination. Among the countries where respondents would like to go there also appear: Australia (11 aspirants), South Africa, and New Zealand; five others indicated that they are willing to go anywhere.

Particularly interesting and in a way tragic is the response of 17 respondents (exactly 10% of the total emigrating), who stressed that *they would like to live in the USSR*.

Finally, we should like to cite the answers to the third question [about citizenship], which we have intentionally kept for last. Slightly less than one-quarter of the respondents (39 people) stated that they did not intend to retain their Soviet citizenship, and another 12 declare that they do not care about this or have not yet decided this question; the remaining 119 people (70%) would like while living abroad to remain citizens of the USSR—and, let us admit it, this fact is significant.

It would not hurt for those who still quite impassively react to the drain of brains, hands and souls and for those who, to all appearances, pity neither these people nor their own country which, perhaps, has yet to feel fully the irreparability of such losses to think about all this, as well as about the other information cited above.

M. Dreizler

Sovetskaia Moldova, October 16, 1990, p. 3

IS THERE ANTISEMITISM IN MOLDOVA?

E. Zamura

A Jewish woman who had taught Russian language and literature in a Moldavian school all her life came to speak to the editors of our newspaper. She

told how for many years her family had been suffering the insults of an anti-semitic neighbor. On more than one occasion she had turned in vain to the *prokurator's* office. Finally, the head of her family had had enough. When the next row occurred, this man grabbed a stick and hit the insulter. The latter took him to court.

Another story. A journalist I know handed a prescription to a pharmacist. The name on the prescription was Jewish. The medicine was not provided, the explanation was: "We are not obliged to heal you with our medicines." The matter was taken care of only via the intervention of the pharmaceutical administration.

These cases are alarming. However, there are different ones—it is to the latter that the newspapers refer when they write that there is no antisemitism in Moldova. In the Republic there has been established a Jewish culture association with branches in various cities and regions. The newspaper *Nash golos* is published and part of it is in Hebrew. Jews are free to attend the synagogue and courses in their native language. No one hinders their emigration to their historic homeland Israel.

So is there antisemitism here? On the level of state policy, apparently it no longer exists. And that is very fortunate for our country, where this black flower of evil which for so long had been well fertilized and irrigated by the rulers, first the tsarist ones, *de jure*, then by the Stalinist and Brezhnevite ones, *de facto*. Today a government which espouses hostility to Jews has no chance of establishing business contacts with the civilized world. To be an antisemite "officially" is both uncivilized and non-utilitarian.

Unfortunately, decades of spiritual and physical decimation have not passed without consequence. Jews have been compelled to petty and major betrayals of themselves. The state criminally forced people to be ashamed of themselves from birth to death. The weak ones surrendered and assimilated. Moreover, very often Jews were pushed to other shores not by pressure and fear, not by desire for advantage, as people think. It was due to a powerful spiritual outburst transcending the narrowly nationalistic and striving toward the universally human. Bitter also are these lessons of assimilation! Those into whose embrace the Jews trustingly threw themselves were cold and merciless to the "aliens."

In 1894 approximately 20% of the inhabitants of Kishinev were Jewish; this was more than the percentage of Russians or Ukrainians. Here there were thirty two Jewish houses of prayer. In 1979, even before the mass exodus began, this people were [already] only 8.5% of the capital's population. How many Jews will remain in Kishinev after this wave of emigration is over? By all indications—very few. Our countrymen who wanted to preserve their national identity became known in Europe, America, and Israel. The names of talented poets, prose writers, physicians, and scholars are too many to list. I shall mention only one. In 1918 there left for Paris the Kishinev-born Jewish poet David Knut (real name Fiksmán, in the national [Yiddish] way he spelled

his first name with an *o* [Dovid, reflecting the Yiddish pronunciation]).

Knut's poem "Kishinev Burials," which is full of longing for Bessarabia, has been printed in many anthologies of Jewish poetry. In France he married Ariadna, the daughter of the famous Russian composer Scriabin. In protest against the persecution of the Jews she converted to Judaism and began to call herself Ariadna Sarah Scriabin Fiksmán Knut. During the war this woman was brutally killed by the Nazis. In Toulouse a monument has been erected to her as a hero of the Resistance. The poet himself died in Tel Aviv in 1955.

Knut has been written about by G. Struve, Khodasevich, Nina Berberova and, recently, by the Latvian journal *VEK*. We, his countrymen, have never devoted a single line to him. And only to him? For how many years have we been silent about those who perished during the war? In 1944 the fascists' planes bombed the Jewish ghetto in the lower part of Kishinev and many Jews were shot. On the site where thousands of people were killed a maternity home has been constructed (on Molodezh Prospect). This is symbolic, but also the promised memorial or, at least, a memorial plaque has still not been placed there.

In Kishinev there has to be a memorial for the Jewish victims! A book of eyewitness accounts was to serve as a memorial of the pogrom of 1903. They were collected by the famous Jewish poet Bialik, but he did not publish the manuscript. Perhaps it would have been too terrible for him to tell people about how Christians drove nails into the eyes of Jewish infants. The Moldovans, Russians, and Ukrainians of Kishinev are not responsible for these events, which were instigated by the tsarist secret police. But they ought to know what happens when free rein is given to mutual hostility, behind which there lurks self-serving political calculations.

Decades of state antisemitism firmly implanted ordinary antisemitism in the mass consciousness. Among the responses to the article "Pridi iz zemli tvoei. . ." (Come from your land) in *Sovetskaia Moldova* there were those like the 10-page letter of Aneniia Noi. With fervor worthy of a better use, she attempted to convince the editors of the existence of a notorious "Jewish mafia" and that Jews leaving the USSR are even taking with them treasures of the tsarist family which they managed to get their hands on.

"Too unified" is a reproach commonly leveled at the Jews. Once Sholom Aleichem observed: "Have you ever seen two Jews with one opinion? Two Jews have three opinions: if one says something, then the other one replies: 'Yes it is that way, but not quite. . .'" And still that unity, which so upsets and intimidates others, exists. One may be envious of it or not; it is "the unity of people who group together in the face of blows which come from every side, and firmly hold on with nervous hands to any relic. This two-millennia self-defense, ordinary, silent, continuous, is the greatest national feat in the world." Thus wrote Vladimir Jabotinsky, a St. Petersburg journalist; under the impact of the Kishinev pogrom he decided to devote himself totally to the national revival of the Jews.

Some 86.5% of those now leaving Moldova forever cited the crisis in inter-ethnic relations as the main reason for their exodus; 79% cited specific manifestations of antisemitism, 44% — local nationalism, 17.5% — great-power [Russian] chauvinism; 77.5% indicated that they themselves or people close to them had been persecuted or discriminated against in regard to their rights because of their national origin. Rises in prices and the increase in crime did not affect the decision [to leave] of the majority. Around 10% of those polled would have liked to live in the Soviet Union, and 70% to retain their Soviet citizenship. The data from the survey conducted by the journalist Mikhail Dreizler are depressing. They provide the best answer to the question asked by the title of this article.

The bitter experience of the Jewish people has taught it to relate with skepticism to the favor of a state providing it refuge. Thus it was in the 18th–19th centuries in Germany in the age of the so-called Enlightenment. In their haste to joyfully take the hand outstretched to them, whole communities of Jews began to give up their native language, to reform their synagogues on the model of German churches. German culture thus got Heine, Marx, and Bernstein, while the Jews ended up with the horror of the Holocaust.

Ordinary consciousness and “state” consciousness are connecting vessels. Who can promise that one will not flow into the other? Under conditions of the mutual hatred which has engulfed the peoples of our Republic, the Jews do not dare believe that they are “chosen,” that they are the only ones in our region whom the cup of violence will pass by. They are leaving. That is degrading for us non-Jews since, as was noted by the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev, the basis of antisemitism is a lack of talent. In regard to the claim that Jews play “too large” a role in science, philosophy, [and] education, he stated: “Make great discoveries yourselves, be great scholars and philosophers. One can fight against the preponderance of Jews in culture only by creating culture oneself. Freedom is a test of strength. And it is degrading to think that freedom is always favorable to the Jews and unfavorable to the non-Jews.”