



This paper is taken from

*The Experience of Citizenship
Proceedings of the sixth Conference of the Children's
Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2004

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 378 6

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- multiple copies may be made only by
 - members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
 - a official of the European Commission
 - a member of the European parliament

If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as

Berg, W. (2004) Citizenship à la carte - a new paradigm of immigration policy? in Ross, A. (ed) The Experience of Citizenship. London: CiCe, pp 203 - 208

© CiCe 2004

CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Citizenship à la carte - a new paradigm of immigration policy?

Wolfgang Berg

University of Applied Sciences, Merseburg (Germany)

Facts and figures

Since 1991 about 180,000 people have migrated from former USSR territories to Germany, officially and legally highly welcome refugees. The available official figures are:

to December	1993	25,132	1998	17,788
	1994	no data available	1999	18,205
	1995	15,184	2000	16,538
	1996	15,959	2001	16,711
	1997	19,437	2002	19,262

(Beauftragte 2004, p37)

The immigration is still taking place.

This type of immigration should have given rise to many questions in public debate in Germany about immigration, because these immigrants

- do not have not - as required by *ius sanguinis* - German ancestry (like the German-rooted *Aussiedler*)
- are not required to prove that they have been persecuted individually for political or racial reasons (like asylum seekers)
- need not have close relatives already living in Germany with advanced status as residents (as do Turks)
- are not citizens of EU-15 member states or from new or Accession EU member states and self-employed.

They are acknowledged in the first instance as ‘contingency refugees’. There is no lack of support for them in terms of language courses, social assistance, counselling, and all of them have the prospect of becoming German citizens within seven years. Why is Germany supporting and encouraging this immigration so much?

The immigrants

The immigrants are people whose nationality was indicated as “Hebrew” in official documents such as passports issued during the Soviet era. The last GDR government first gave access for Jewish people to East Germany in spring 1990. After German unification this practice was formalised by a joint decision of the federal and state governments (9 January 1991), which declared that the law giving access to particular refugees for humanitarian reasons was applicable to this group. This law (the official abbreviation is HumHAG) guarantees refugee status according to the Geneva Convention, with an unlimited permit of residence, full access to social security and promotion as for German citizens. The immigrants are mostly from the European part of

the former Soviet Union, that is, the Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the Baltic states, Belarus and Moldova (Beauftragte 2004, p.37).

According to the current rules potential immigrants can apply to German embassies and will be accepted provided they are registered with Jewish nationality or have at least one parent with Jewish nationality. (In the Soviet era Jewishness was defined as a nationality and all documents included the category “*evrei*”.) At the end of a longer procedure, in which the Central Council of Jewish Communities in Germany is also involved, the German embassy awards the visa for Germany. Initially the permit of residence is restricted to one *lander* in order to distribute the immigrants throughout Germany fairly; this restriction ends with any type of employment, as soon as social benefits are no longer necessary.

The Jewish community in Halle (a city in Saxony-Anhalt with 230,000 inhabitants) has recently published the following figures: there are 333 members with Ukrainian citizenship, 196 Russians and 54 Moldovans, from Kiev (77), Dnepropetrowsk (58), Charkow (51), Odessa (30) in Ukraine, St.Peterburg (70) and Moscow (64) in Russia, Chisinau (28) in Moldova and Baku (23) in Azerbaijan. The Halle community also has members from almost every other state of the former USSR/ Confederation of Independent States (Nachrichten 2004, p. 2).

What motivates this emigration?

There is a mixture of motives for migration, which differ according to individual circumstances and living conditions. General motives have to do with the lack of prospects due to economic crises and unstable political conditions. Some parents 'activated' their nationality because their children needed appropriate medical care following the Chernobyl catastrophe. There is also a collective memory of the long history of anti-Semitism and pogroms against Jews in the Russian Empire and oppression under the communist regime. This hostility against Jews has not ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union: emigrants report that it is still existent and virulent. Although there are strong ties to relatives and friends in a poor but familiar environment, many decide to escape the threats, hidden or manifest prejudices and even violence from nationalist-chauvinist groups - the experience of daily anti-Semitism - to seek a better future for their children.

Such wishes and hopes for a better life are not fulfilled immediately, however. These immigrants are provided with an intensive language course for six months, the same as is provided for the *Spätaussiedler* (German-origin immigrants from the CIS), and while they tend to have a relatively high level of education (many are medical doctors, engineers, scientists or artists), their integration into professional life is far from successful. A restricted knowledge of the German language, the status of qualifications acquired in Russia, the problems of the German labour market (and in particular in former East German) are important reasons for this. Children who immigrated with their parents and who are in early adolescence are already 'too old' to succeed in the German system of higher education (Gymnasium), despite their high intelligence and ambitions.

Immigration policy

In the West European context there had been a relatively relaxed immigration policy since 1955, but in the 1970s the socio-economical situation changed and immigration was deemed a 'problem'. It is only recently that Germany and other West European states have again begun to promote immigration, often in order to recruit experts in information technology. There have been debates about encouraging immigration from a demographic point of view, but it soon became evident that immigration will prevent European societies from ageing, since immigrants tend to adopt the low birth rates of western Europe.

The interests of the immigrants are a necessary condition for migration, but this type of immigration only works where there is a particularly policy in favour of that immigration. Why? What is the German interest?

If immigration policy since 1990 is considered together with the involvement of the Jewish communities and official speeches and statements (Laurence 1999, p13) it becomes evident that these refugees from the former Soviet Union are expected to revitalise Jewish life in Germany, helping mainstream society to develop a new, normal relationship to Jews. The presence of Jews in Germany will be both symbol and instrument of 'normalisation' in post-Cold War, unified Germany.

Before 1990 there were about 30,000 Jews living in the Federal Republic of Germany. Whereas they served German society as evidence that Jews accepted to live 'again' in Germany, Jews from Israel or the United States blamed them for 'staying in the land of the murderers'. With the fall of the Soviet bloc fifty years after the *Shoah* - the Nazi genocide - an opportunity to attract Jews and thus normalize Jewish life in Germany arose and was appreciated by all political parties.

Jewish immigration has had a dramatic impact on Jewish communities in Germany. To take Halle as an example: in 1933 about 1,000 Jews lived in Halle. Twenty-seven survived in 1947, and in 1990 only seven remained. In 2004 the community in the region of Halle (including Merseburg and some rural areas) had grown to 715, of whom 35 held German citizenship - the remainder are still Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans and Latvians (Nachrichten 2004). The development in East German cities like Halle, Leipzig, Dresden or Erfurt (where more than 300 Jews are currently resident) is particularly important: in 1989 not more than 400 Jews resided in the whole of the German Democratic Republic. The united Berlin of today has a Jewish community of more than 12,000, which indicates indeed a new vitality.

According to a German expert there are about 200,000 Jews in Germany, of whom 175,000 have immigrated since 1990 (Schoeps 2003, p.11).

Political achievement

If the revitalisation of German Jewish communities is the aim, its achievement has met more problems than was anticipated. Firstly, not all of the Jewish immigrants joined the

Jewish communities. Schoeps estimates that only 40% of all immigrants have become members of a Jewish community (Schoeps 2003, p.11). As well as those who are part of the Central Council of Jewish Communities there are also smaller communities of liberal Jews, but many immigrants have chosen to join neither, as they are not religious at all and do not wish to become so. Under the USSR regime, the Jewish 'nationality' did not necessarily include religious education or practice within the family. Community life was heavily restricted by the communist government, frequently interdicted or discriminated against. Immigrants who were Jews according to Soviet law are not necessarily Jews under Jewish law (*Halacha*). The latter recognises as Jews only those whose mother is Jewish, but in the Soviet 'evrei' nationality could be acquired through the father and also by marriage. Thus an estimated 30-40% of the immigrants are not Jews according to Jewish law (Schoeps 2003, p.11). In communities like Halle communication takes place in the Russian language. A large number of community members prefer not to participate in Sabbath services because they do not understand Hebrew texts like the *Torah*, and it is a major task to educate the newly-arrived members and familiarise them with religious songs, prayers and customs. Thus the communities are heavily occupied, possibly even suffering from an over-demand to provide internal community stabilisation (Schoeps 2003, p.11) and are generally neither interested in nor able to communicate with mainstream society, for example in terms of Jewish-Christian activities.

Secondly, the integration has not worked in terms of participation in the labour market. Native-born Germans older than 50 who lose their jobs face severe difficulties in finding new employment, and the difficulties are much greater for Jewish immigrants who have not been employed before in Germany and whose qualifications appear to be lagging behind technological developments. For the generation younger than 50, job opportunities are a little better, but in general employment is only possible at a level below that indicated by the immigrants' formal qualifications. For example, it is not unusual for a medical doctor from Russia to be working as an assistant or secretary in a hospital; a nurse as room cleaner; a construction engineer as an 'unskilled' worker. As far as primary or secondary schools are concerned the prospects may be better. Unfortunately there are no official figures about immigrant unemployment, either from the communities themselves or governmental agencies. There are informal estimates that 60-70% of Jewish immigrants of employable age are unemployed and therefore have to rely on social assistance. Employment, however, is a prerequisite for application for full German citizenship after seven years of residence.

Thirdly, mainstream society is largely unaware of the Jewish immigrant communities. In relation to other immigrant groups, the group is small, not extrovert nor the focus of the media. In many cases the Jewish immigrants are accommodated in the same buildings (dormitories) as the *Aussiedler* (German-origin people from Russia or Kazakhstan) and are perceived of as 'Russian' without further distinction. As has been described above, the Jewish communities are fully occupied in supporting the newcomers in social and religious education, so there is little time or capacity for dialogue with others. As the Jewish immigrants have not chosen their city of residence, mobility is high: if job opportunities appear elsewhere, the active generation moves on.

Fourthly, communication with Jewish people is severely restricted by security measures. The community office in Halle is open for everybody, but in large cities like München or Berlin the Jewish infrastructure is totally controlled and there is no free access: it is not possible for members of the wider community to stroll around and visit the Berlin community out of interest.

A new paradigm of immigration policy?

Is this a new model for an immigration policy? Yes and No. Yes - insofar as it is a model for a collective approach with generally unbureaucratic procedures, and – at a first glance – a carefully elaborated integration programme. No - in that in practice these immigrants have not gained access to the labour market, are often dependent on social assistance and have no communication with mainstream society.

A good paradigm of immigration policy?

These Jewish immigrants do like to move to Germany, even where there are other options available, such as migration to Israel or the USA. German policy stands in the tradition of policies made from self-interest, but in this case it is not the labour market which encourages immigration: indeed, the reverse is the case. The German self-interest is not materialistic but moral. The motivation has is reminiscent of the promotion of German-Israeli youth exchanges since the 1960s and in particular in 1970s and 1980s. As a sort of substitute for the lack of communication between Jews and Germans, youth exchange programmes have to be seen as a response to anti-Semitic tendencies and activities in Germany, thus serving an educational purpose (Berg 1991).

The migration policy described above is also a form of instrumentalism (Laurence 1999, p.4) but it is not working properly, at least in the short run. Jewish immigration as part of the 'new history' policy ('the end of the post war period') is neither fair nor honest towards the people concerned. The invitation to migrate to Germany is not primarily motivated by humanistic or humanitarian reasons. If it were so, there would be a simple question: why those people, why not others? There are people in Chechniya, or Moldova, or Albania, or Bangladesh or Burkina Faso, all of whom live in worse conditions.

The 'revitalisation of Jewish communities' in Germany is calculated not only as an instrument to modernise the image of Germany as a multicultural society, in which 'even Jews' can live comfortably (which is an optimistic if not euphemistic attitude, in a state where there is still anti-Semitism and hostility to foreigners), but also to offer an educational approach. In order to combat anti-Semitism it is helpful to have Jewish communities so that mainstream people can experience them and become accustomed to them. It is true and comprehensible that hostility and violence against foreigners is higher when the number of foreigners is smaller (as is found, for example, in the difference between rural areas and small towns in East Germany and cities like Hamburg or Stuttgart), but instrumentalism is not fair. Anti-Semitism is not the problem of the Jews or something they have to fight against or assist in dispelling - it is the problem of mainstream society.

It is an illusion to think that through immigration Jewish life and culture can have a rebirth and somehow compensate for the Holocaust. Genocide cannot be compensated: the culture of German Jews was destroyed by the Nazis. In a best-case scenario the new Jewish community in Germany will be a community of Russian Jews.

Conclusion

Insofar as the immigration policy I have discussed is based on the attitude that vulnerable people and groups who were formerly discriminated against and persecuted must be acknowledged and supported, I agree with it. I refuse, however, to accept any distinction between 'useful' foreigners, who are allowed to immigrate and stay, and 'not useful' foreigners who are prevented from immigrating at all, or expelled as soon as possible. Humanitarian immigration policy can only be founded on human rights, and must be defined and carried out according to the needs of the people concerned – if the help they need is immigration, then immigration should be made possible. Immigration, even if motivated by humanitarian reasons, is only equitable if the immigrants have full access to society and equal opportunities with other members of that society. Immigration has to be legitimated by citizenship.

References

- Beauftragte (2004) der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration (ed.): Migrationsbericht der Integrationsbeauftragten im Auftrag der Bundesregierung. Berlin und Bonn, Januar 2004
- Berg, W. (1991): Begegnungen mit Juden: deutsch-israelischer Jugendaustausch. In: Presser/Schoßig: Junge Juden in Deutschland. München, S.95-101
- Laurence, J. (1999): (Re)constructing Community in Berlin; Of Jews, Turks and German Responsibility. Discussion Paper. Science Center Berlin for Social Research. Berlin
- Nachrichten (2004) der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Halle, 16/2004, Halle 2.4.2004
- Schoeps, J. (2003): Mehr Juden kommen nach Deutschland als nach Israel. Interview. Das Parlament 31-32, 28.7./4.8.2004, S.11