

Stefani Hoffman  
Moscow, Munich, Tel-Aviv:  
Commonalities and Divergences

---

The worldwide Russian-speaking Jewish community represents an interesting variation on a topical subject. For some time, the concept of a diaspora, i. e., a center and dispersed peripheral settlements, has been fashionable in discussing the numerous migrations and displacements of ethnic and other groups. Russian-speaking Jews, on the one hand, could be regarded as part of the Jewish diaspora that, in large numbers, sought to return to their “historic homeland,” Israel. On the other hand, they are in some sense also part of a Russian-speaking diaspora, whose numbers grew at the time of the fall of the Soviet empire. This group seems better served by a term that, in a more globalized world, has figured more frequently in recent discussions—the concept of transnational communities that share a common language and culture and remain connected to each other in various ways although residing in different parts of the globe. In connection with Russian-speaking Jews (RSJs), this term minimizes the awkward question of which diaspora they belong to—Russian or Jewish.<sup>1</sup>

This essay examines in what way three prominent individuals exemplify RSJ intellectuals in Russia, Germany, and Israel. The three men, from a similar Soviet Jewish intelligentsia background

---

© Stefani Hoffman, 2014

© TSQ № 47. Winter 2014

<sup>1</sup> See Larissa Remennick, *Jews on Three Continents* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Transition Publishers, 2007); Eliezer Ben-Rafael, et al, *Building a Diaspora* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006); and Fran Markowitz, “Emigration, Immigration and Cultural Change: Towards a Transnational Russian-Jewish Community?” in Yaacov Ro’i, ed., *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Ilford: Frank Cass & Co., 1995).

and acquainted with each other in Moscow, subsequently followed diverging paths, formulating different outlooks, and, finally, establishing residence in different countries. The following questions will be addressed in both the Soviet and post-Soviet period: what united and differentiated these figures with particular attention to their views on 1) the Soviet regime, 2) the Russian people (narod), 3) Russian Jewry/Jewry in general, and its role in their identity and 4) the question of emigration and diaspora.

The three people are: Grigorii Pomerants, (b. 1918, d. February 2013), an intellectual and philosopher. Prevented from publishing in Russia from 1976—87, he subsequently published both abroad and in Russia on cultural, philosophical, religious, and other topics. Boris Khazanov (pen name for Gennadii Moisevich Faibusovich) (b. 1928) is a writer and former dissident who participated in the Jewish samizdat but chose Germany over Israel when pressured by the KGB to leave the country in 1982. The third person is Aleksandr Voronel (b. 1931), a physicist and one of the ideological leaders of the neo-Zionist Jewish movement<sup>2</sup> in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, who immigrated to Israel in 1975, co-founded the Israeli Russian-language thick (*tolsty*) journal 22, and continues to write on ideological, political, and other topics.

## The Soviet Period

In speaking of the Soviet period, it is important to note that Russian Jews did not see themselves as a religious group. Rather, as has been noted often, they tended to view themselves as an ethnic community sharing certain characteristics that developed in the course of their life in Russia/USSR.<sup>3</sup> This, indeed, applies to the individuals under discussion. The characteristics shared by Pomerants, Khazanov, and Voronel—dissatisfaction with the re-

---

<sup>2</sup> By this term we mean Zionism that did not develop from familiarity with historic or religious Jewish Zionist thought but evolved from an initial typically Russian intelligentsia outlook.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Michael Chlenov, "Patterns of Jewish Identity in the Modern World," *Midstream* (September/October 2000): 5. For a further discussion of this issue in the Soviet period see Zvi Gitelman, "The Evolution of Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union," in *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), pp. 3—26.

pressive order in the Soviet Union, a search for social justice, and an emphasis on individual choice, on moral responsibility, and on liberty—were all typical of the generation known in the USSR as the *shestidesiatniki*, men of the sixties [although Pomerants was indeed older], individuals who were born around the 1930s and received a Marxist-Leninist education, which they rejected at some point.<sup>4</sup> For the three men, arrest was both a consequence of dissatisfaction with the regime and a reason for further alienation from it. Pomerants got in trouble for remarks that he made while in the army and was arrested in 1949. Khazanov was also arrested in 1949 for alleged “slander against the Soviet order” while a student at the philology faculty at Moscow State University. Voronel, still a teenager, was arrested in Kharkov in 1946 for participating in a youth group that disseminated leaflets criticizing the regime's deviation from genuine socialism. Released in 1953 (rehabilitated in 1958), Pomerants worked first as a teacher in the provinces, and after his return to Moscow, as a bibliographer in the library of the Institute of Africa and Asia. Khazanov, fearing re-arrest, chose to study medicine, which he felt would be a useful profession if he was sent back to the camps. After working as a rural doctor for several years, he was permitted to return to Moscow, where he wrote for a medical magazine but also “for the drawer” and Jewish samizdat. Voronel, who spent four months in a penal camp for youth, subsequently pursued a successful career as a physicist before his open involvement in the Jewish movement in the 1970s.

Although the Jewish element in their identity varied, it figured in each of the three men's evaluation of Soviet reality and their debates whether to emigrate. The repressive post-Thaw period after Khrushchev's deposition in 1964 was particularly difficult for the typical intellectual of Jewish origin who, by this time had begun to see him/herself as more of a Russian intellectual than a Jew but now, in light of intensified antisemitism and anti-Zionism, found it harder to escape his or her Jewishness. The personal thus becomes intertwined with the theoretical in discussions. Pomerants, for example, engaged in an ongoing dispute in the 1960—70s with the *pochvenniki* (soil-based) trend in Russian intel-

---

<sup>4</sup> For an elaboration of this type see Petr Vail and Aleksandr Genis, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), p. 306.

lectual thought revived at that time by Alexander Solzhenitsyn and others. Pomerants' arguments were first elaborated in articles published abroad in the 1970s, reiterated during the perestroika period,<sup>5</sup> and mentioned later in his memoirs, published in post-Soviet Moscow.<sup>6</sup> Objecting to the worship of the Russian people or narod, Pomerants contrasts the land-based approach to the Jews' diaspora rootlessness, suggesting that the latter gave rise to their unique monotheism that formed the cradle of western religions. At the same time their lack of a fixed home encouraged the traits of greater self-reliance, energy, and competitiveness, pushing the Jews toward «apocalypse, chiliasm, utopia, and revolution» (*Zapiski*, pp. 248, 262, 279). These traits suggest a certain overlap between the Jew and the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, particularly the chiliasm or striving for an ideal society via revolutionary means; it is this merged identity upon which Pomerants clearly rested his hopes for a reformation of Soviet Russia on the basis of a spiritual, moral, and international orientation.

The personal element came out in Pomerants' memoirs. Describing certain incidents in Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* as wrongfully portraying Jews in a negative light, he wrote that he felt that he was being driven not only out of Soviet Russia but also out of a future Russia because: "I am a Jew and I have guilt that can't be washed away" (*Zapiski*, p. 226ff). This feeling of being pushed out by the «natives,» perhaps, prompted Pomerants to consider emigrating from Russia in the 1970s. Other factors, apparently, were the USSR's hostile reaction to the Six-Day War and the Russian people's support of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. In his memoirs he describes two years of vacillation concerning emigration before he finally decided to remain in Russia (*Zapiski*, pp. 298, 452).

There seems to be a contradiction between Pomerants' praise of rootlessness on the one hand and his own inability to tear himself away from the Russian land on the other. While alluding to his

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, "Chelovek niotkuda," *Neopublikovannoe* (Frankfurt/Main: Posev, 1972), pp.123—175 and an essay started in 1985, "Problema Volanda," *Vykhod iz transa* (Moscow: Iurist, 1995), pp. 146—202.

<sup>6</sup> Grigorii Pomerants, *Zapiski gadkogo utenka* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), p. 235, henceforth referred to in the text as *Zapiski*.

own need to remain in the Russian linguistic environment in order to develop spiritually (*Zapiski*, pp. 299, 452), at the same time, he expressed respect for the decision of his friend Vitalii Rubin, the Oriental scholar, to renounce his roots in Russia and immigrate to Israel.

Boris Khazanov, more strongly and consistently than Pomerants, linked his belonging to the Russian intelligentsia and to Jewry: «To me these two areas overlap each other like two circles as they are drawn in textbooks of formal logic and I am inclined to place myself right in the shaded (overlapping) part.»<sup>7</sup> In a review of Voronel's work *The Tremor of Judaic Concerns*, he again equated intelligent and Jew: «I am convinced that being a Russian intelligent today almost inevitably means being a Jew.»<sup>8</sup> Although throughout his long career as a fiction writer and essayist Khazanov has consistently adhered to this view,<sup>9</sup> the meaning imparted to this assertion has undergone some subtle shifts over time.

Khazanov's works, however, reveal tension between the Russian and Jewish parts of the equation. In the essay «A New Russia,» published in the samizdat journal *Jews in the USSR* in 1974, he pondered but rejected the idea of leaving a country that he compared both to a sinking ship and to an Augean stable with no Hercules to clean it out. Instead of singling out Jewish uniqueness, however, he equates the suffering and «spiritual isolation» of the Russian Jew with that of the country's intelligentsia in general.<sup>10</sup> His only solace was his belief in the Russian language, an approach that, with its emphasis on the Word, he concedes to be typically Jewish as opposed to faith in the narod. Khazanov forlornly concluded the essay with an appeal to found a Russian colony someplace else: «There, on the new land, as on a new pla-

---

<sup>7</sup> Boris Khazanov, "Letter from Afar," in David Prital, ed., *In Search of Self*, trans. Stefani Hoffman (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), p. 237; originally in *Sion*, no. 20 (1977).

<sup>8</sup> Boris Khazanov, "Idushchii po vode," *Evrei v SSSR*, no. 11 (December 1975), reprinted in *Evreiskii samizdat* (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Centre for Research and Documentation of East European Jewry, 1977), vol. 12, p. 207.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, a similar statement made in John Glad, ed., *Conversations in Exile: Russian Writers Abroad* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993), p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> Boris Khazanov, "Novaia Rossiia," *Evrei v SSSR*, no. 7 (May—June 1974) reprinted in *Evreiskii samizdat*, vol. 10 (1976), p. 113.

net, we shall cultivate our freedom, preserve our language, our way of thought, our culture, and our old motherland.»<sup>11</sup> While valuing the Russian word, Khazanov, like Pomerants, rejects idolization of the Russian narod, asserting that the Soviet period at least cured intellectuals of that misplaced faith.<sup>12</sup>

In “Letter from Afar,” Khazanov expanded on the meaning of Jewishness. Like Pomerants, he ascribes benefits to the Jews’ life in the diaspora, speaking of some vaguely-defined Jewish nation that exists despite its dispersion. He generalizes: “In a multilingual, multinational world, a certain ethnic group, a former nationality united by a common origin, but dispersed around the world, exists that upholds certain moral postulates in this world and the rituals that symbolize them—all of which is called culture—and in so doing upholds itself.... The Jews have no other bridgehead than their culture, they have no dry land, they float at sea in their little ships and carry all their possessions with them.” Khazanov expresses an almost biological affinity for this community and notes that were it not for certain circumstances, he would have followed the example “of better people” in leaving Russia. He concludes, “But if one speaks of whither to make one’s way, then of course, it can only be to Israel. My enthusiasm with regard to ‘New Russia’ was apparently not taken seriously by anyone. I do not renounce it even now, but perhaps it is somehow compatible with Israeli geography?”<sup>13</sup> Yet, in 1982, listing cultural and other reasons, Khazanov chose Germany over Israel.

Aleksandr Voronel grew up initially believing in the ideals espoused by Soviet propaganda but he renounced them as an adult.<sup>14</sup> His intellectual memoir *The Tremor of Judaic Concerns* (*Trepet zabor Iudeiskikh*)<sup>15</sup> and subsequent articles trace the path

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> Boris Khazanov, *Mif Rossii* (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 1986), p. 146.

<sup>13</sup> Khazanov, “Letter from Afar,” p. 240.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of this ideologically-motivated type, see Ludmilla Tsigelman, “The Impact of Ideological Changes in the USSR on Different Generations of the Soviet Jewish Intelligentsia,” in Ro’i and Beker, eds., *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*, pp. 42–72.

<sup>15</sup> First published in the Soviet Union in samizdat, *Trepet zabor Iudeiskikh* was reprinted in Israel (Ramat Gan: Moscow-Jerusalem, 1981) and again in a collection

that led him from his socialist views to neo-Zionism. Voronel's view of Jewishness—and Russianness—seems both biological and ideological, as if Jewish genotypes favor a certain kind of thinking and Russians' another. Like the other two men, he felt a deep affinity for Russian culture but firmly rejected idolization of the narod (*Trepet*, p. 39). He attributes to the Russian character—in its Russian Orthodox and Soviet Marxist hypostases—a Hellenistic fatalism and passive submission to historical necessity. In contrast, he depicts the essence of Jewish character as activism, non-conformism, rationalism, a struggle to assert one's free will (his prototype is Jacob's struggle with God's angel), and messianism (again suggesting a resemblance to the Russian intelligent).

Voronel indicated elements of convergence and divergence in the Russian and Jewish types that pointed to inevitable conflict: on the one hand, both held a belief in chosenness and the realization of God's kingdom on earth. On the other hand, the Russian, according to Voronel, envisioned an all-powerful state in which the individual largely gives up his free will, whereas the Jew dreams of the state that will give free reign to the individual's capacity to engage in scientific, social, and cultural creativity. Voronel, nevertheless, postulated a dialectic that justified the Jews' life in Russia: "I think that Jews must understand the Russian idea because it is their own temptation, an interpretation from which they must push themselves away (understand and overcome)" (*Trepet*, p. 158). Voronel, in contrast to the other two writers, at that time tried to separate the Russian and Jewish components of his personality. After participating in the Jewish samizdat and scientific seminars for refuseniks in Moscow, he received permission to immigrate to Israel and did so in 1975.

Voronel also devoted considerable attention to the professional and social aspects of Soviet Jews' desire to leave, emphasizing Soviet intellectuals' «religious obsession with professional interest,» which was intensified by the prevailing ideological and religious vacuum. This attitude was intensified among Soviet Jews, for whom professional excellence was practically the only way to

---

of Voronel's articles *I vmeste i vroz'* (Minsk: MET, 2004). References in the text refer to the latter edition.



gain societal acceptance, and thus further motivated them to immigrate to a place where their talents would be properly valued.<sup>16</sup>

### Period of Stagnation

In the closing decades of the USSR, a period of so-called stagnation and increasing restrictions on Jewish emigration, the three authors shared a common enemy, the “evil empire,” which each approached in his own way. Having chosen to remain in Russia, Pomerants expressed his rejection of the regime in articles published abroad that used the traditional Aesopian language. For example, an article published in Voronel’s Russian-language journal in Israel, 22, “The Price of Renunciation,” while ostensibly discussing the cases of Galileo and Giordano Bruno, raised the broader issue of the individual’s relationship with a tyrannical order that blocks freedom of expression.<sup>17</sup> In a thinly disguised reference to his own situation in the USSR, Pomerants suggests that sometimes by keeping silent, one can preserve inner freedom while apparently adhering to the accepted line. He also commented indirectly on ideological and political systems by writing about eastern religions and civilizations.

During this “stagnation” period, while still in the Soviet Union, Khazanov participated in the Jewish samizdat in Russia, published abroad, and studied Hebrew, all of which apparently aroused the authorities’ ire. Continually juggling such abstract concepts as time, reality, subjectivity vs. objectivity, and free will vs. determination, Khazanov at the same time playfully invites the reader to ascribe some personal meaning by including certain autobiographical elements in his fiction. In the late 1970s he worked for over three years on a novel that the KGB confiscated and never returned. In 1981 he published a story in 22, entitled “The Besht or the Fourth Person of the Verb.” The story links a legend about the Baal Shem Tov (i.e., the Besht, the founder of hasidism) with the

---

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Voronel, “Aliya of the Soviet Jewish Intelligentsia,” *In Search of Self*, pp. 123, 125. The article appeared in an earlier form in the journal *Sion*, no. 11, (1975).

<sup>17</sup> Grigorii Pomerants, “Tsena Otrecheniia,” 22, no. 21 (Sept.—Oct, 1981): 154—166.



fate of a Soviet citizen. In the tale, the Baal Shem Tov is able to overturn a divinely imposed exile on an uninhabited island by slowly and painfully reconstructing from memory—first letters of the alphabet, then words, and, finally, a holy incantation that brings him back home. The Soviet man, who has the same initials as the author, B. Kh, like him has endured a KGB search and the confiscation of a novel. In seeking the reasons for the KGB team's appearance, the anonymous narrator considers the author's camp past and publication of works abroad but concludes that the real reason was the writer's «odor of irony, of thought, of longing for hidden freedom...a hostile, Jewish, class alien, anti-popular and anti-state odor.» At the end of the story, the narrator visits B. Kh., who has a picture of the Baal Shem Tov hanging on the wall, and asks him whether he can recreate the confiscated novel. The writer claims not to remember a word: "Only the alphabet."<sup>18</sup>

Khazanov, indeed, recreated his novel before and after his departure to Germany; entitled *Anti-time: A Moscow Novel* (Antivremia: Moskovskii roman), it was first published in the West in 1985 and in Russia in 1991. After his emigration, he introduced a major change in the novel—an eerie late night meeting between the then young first person narrator and his strange-looking Jewish biological father, an ex-revolutionary whom he hadn't met before.<sup>19</sup> The father excoriates the revolution and the narod: "This was a revolution of slaves... This people (narod) is hypnotized by the imperial idea. And it will always prefer the regime that embodies this idea and the leader who expresses it."<sup>20</sup> The father asserts that the Jewish people have no future in Russia, which hates Jews. Retelling the same tale about the Besht on the desert island, the older man emphasizes the need to restore Jewish memory, which, he asserts, can be accomplished only in the soon-to-be created Jewish state in Palestine. Speaking of a rare opportunity to leave Russia, he pleads with his son to go with him to Palestine. The narrator's re-

---

<sup>18</sup> Khazanov, "Besht ili chetvertoe litsa glagola," 22, no. 22 (1981): 105.

<sup>19</sup> This character was based on the former revolutionary Mikhail Baitalskii (pseudonym Domal'skii). See John Glad's interview with Khazanov: "Iz besed," *Volga*, no. 4 (2000), <http://magazines.russ.ru/znamia/1998/3/hazan.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Khazanov, *Chas korolia. Antivremia* (Moscow: Slovo, 1991), p. 238.

sponse to this long tirade is monosyllabic: “No” (*Antivremia*, p. 248).

In a later essay, Khazanov claimed that the father’s views were “far from the author’s credo.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, a reviewer, pointing to the father’s unattractive appearance, exaggerated Jewish accent, and long-winded speech, considered him an entirely negative figure, a parody of an ideological demagogue.<sup>22</sup> Although space does not permit a more extensive analysis of the novella here, I would suggest that the situation is more complex. In an interview in 2011 on the occasion of the publication of his *Collected Works*, Khazanov stated: “All my life I tried not to write about myself. All my life I wrote about myself. Indeed literature is self-exposure. And, however, standing in front of the mirror, the writer sees another person. It would be more correct to say that he sees a diffuse mass—of many people: he multiplied and disappeared in that crowd.”<sup>23</sup>

*Antivremia*, as the very title suggests, is replete with themes of duality in which the theoretical duality is also replicated on the level of the characters. The biological father, indeed, makes this explicit, telling his son: “It turned out that you have two fathers and one of them, incidentally, is me” (*Antivremia*, p. 235). The Jewish and Russian parents in some sense are thus both vague projections of the author’s mind and they complement each other. The son, however, instantly rejects the Jewish side, and he is immediately arrested upon his return to his Russian step-parents.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, however, it is important to note that Khazanov is not advocating any particular philosophical or ideological stand: “...philosophizing in a novel in the framework of an artistic work mustn’t be

---

<sup>21</sup> Khazanov, “Ponedel’nik roz,” *Rodniki i kamni*, [http://imwerden.de/pdf/khazanov\\_rodniki\\_i\\_kamni.pdf](http://imwerden.de/pdf/khazanov_rodniki_i_kamni.pdf), p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> Abram Kunik, “Boris Khazanov. Argument k cheloveku,” *Sintaksis*, no 17 (1987): 135—136, [http://imwerden.de/pdf/syntaxis\\_17.pdf](http://imwerden.de/pdf/syntaxis_17.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Boris Markovskii interview of Boris Khazanov, “Dumaiu, mne povezlo...” *Kreshchatik*, no. 4 (2011), <http://magazines.russ.ru/kreshchatik/2011/4/ha28-pr.html>.

<sup>24</sup> To further blur the picture, it should be noted that some of the father’s views were, indeed, expounded by Khazanov in earlier samizdat essays. In addition, Khazanov described Baitalskii, the figure upon whom the father is based, as a “remarkable person” whom he knew through work on the Jewish samizdat (Glad, “Iz besed”).

taken absolutely seriously. ... In general, the assertions of a writer, even when they don't come from the mouths of his personages, must be perceived with the greatest caution."<sup>25</sup>

The third figure, Voronel, already out of the Soviet Union in this period of stagnation, devoted his attention to discussing the problems encountered by Soviet Jewish intellectuals after their arrival in Israel, further examining the qualities that made them alien in their first homeland, and discussing the plight of those who remained behind.

### A Period of Realignment

The period of perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet empire caused a shift in the global alignment. Communication and visits between Moscow, Munich, and Jerusalem became part of normal experience, and the Russian state preferred to regard Russian-language authors outside of the "mainland" as part of its own diaspora rather than as traitors. As a result, many authors who left Russia now choose to have their works published in Russia both for the sake of convenience and to ensure a wider audience.

Notable points of coincidence and dissimilarity continued to emerge among the three authors under the new circumstances, as can be seen, for example in the correspondence between Pomerants and Khazanov.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, all three continued to vent their hostility toward recent heightened Russian pochvennik patriotism. Pomerants saw it as a way of blaming others—"the West, elders of Zion, Yid-Masons" for perestroika period difficulties.<sup>27</sup> In a letter to Pomerants, Khazanov termed Solzhenitsyn's work *Two Hundred Years Together* a "vile [gnusnaia] book."<sup>28</sup> Voronel, who considers that the Jews' role in Russia is basically finished, is more understanding of Solzhenitsyn's views on Russian Jewry in the context

---

<sup>25</sup> B. Khazanov in conversation with Alla Latyna and Igor Kuznetsov, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 4, 1995 (5547), no. 16, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> See: G. Pomerants — B. Khazanov, "Perepiska raznykh let," *Vtoraia navigatsiia*, Almanakh no. 10 (Kharkov: Prava iludini, 2010): 294—331, [http://imwerden.de/pdf/vtoraya\\_navigaciya\\_10\\_2010.pdf](http://imwerden.de/pdf/vtoraya_navigaciya_10_2010.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> G. Pomerants, "Natsional'naia ozabochennost'," *Vek XX i mir*, no. 11 (1990): 34—36.

<sup>28</sup> G. Pomerants — B. Khazanov, "Perepiska raznykh let," p. 328.

of the writer's Russian patriotism and desire for a return to unambiguous moral and religious standards.<sup>29</sup> In reviewing the novelist's *Red Wheel*, Voronel wrote: "...I think that an Israeli can find much that is extremely important for him in Solzhenitsyn if he is able to overcome the first barrier of a lack of understanding connected to the difference in historical experience. The problem of common values and self-respect based on them is the greatest problem in our society composed of dozens of groups of different cultural orientation."<sup>30</sup>

In the post-Soviet period, Russian-language writers speak more openly about their Jewish identity and feelings about Israel. Pomerants continued to criticize antisemitic insinuations in the contemporary Russian press. Like Khazanov, he considered his Jewishness a certain advantage, affording an outsider's perspective, but he personally preferred a more ecumenical outlook. In an interview given in 1999, while showing understanding of those who now chose to leave for Israel, Pomerants also expressed regret that so many talented young people left Russia who could have been of benefit in rebuilding the country (*Zapiski*, p. 457—59) (a similar attitude to that of liberal dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov or Ludmilla Alekseeva). Writing positively about a trip to Israel in 2003, Pomerants used the essay as a platform to reiterate his call for understanding, respect, and a dialogue among all the great religions as the way forward to peace.<sup>31</sup>

Even in Germany, Khazanov continues to view himself as basically a Russian Jewish intellectual. He told interviewer John Glad: "Somehow I grew up in a Jewish milieu and noticed rather early that assimilation, as it was understood in the revolutionary years, was to a great degree an illusion. The first experiences of encountering antisemitism, popular and state, destroyed it [the illusion] entirely"<sup>32</sup> His Jewishness provides a privileged perspective: "Jewishness signifies the unique possibility of dual vision—from

---

<sup>29</sup> Voronel wrote a short introduction in 22 no. 122 (2001): 98—100 to two reviews of Solzhenitsyn's work *Dvesti let vmeste*.

<sup>30</sup> A. Voronel, "Chitaia Solzhenitsyna," 22, no 51 (Oct.—Nov. 1986): 166—167.

<sup>31</sup> G. Pomerants, "Polet v Ierushalim," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 15 (2005), <http://magazines.russ.ru/vestnik/2005/15/>.

<sup>32</sup> Khazanov, John Glad, *Dopros s pristrastiem: Literatura izgnaniia* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2001), p. 102.

within and without.”<sup>33</sup> Just as nineteenth century Russian thinkers such as Dostoevsky asserted that Russians uniquely embodied universal values, similarly, Khazanov sees his Jewishness as complementing rather than detracting from his Russian—and universalist qualities:

I’m a Jew, but I consider myself a Russian intellectual. And I couldn’t care less how those who proclaim themselves to be true Russians feel about that. I’m no less Russian than they are. We all live—or at least should try to live—in the great European community because Europe is our common motherland. And that motherland encompasses Russia, Germany, and Greece, as well as Judea.<sup>34</sup>

Like many Jews of his generation residing outside of Israel, the Holocaust, rather than Israel, occupies a central place in Khazanov’s Jewish consciousness. This can be seen in comments in journals<sup>35</sup> and in fictional variations on the theme of the wandering Jew.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, he chides Russian writers, including Pomerants, for ignoring Auschwitz: “Auschwitz is absence in the consciousness of the intelligentsia, and all the more so among the common people. Auschwitz is absence in the consciousness of the Church.... Auschwitz is absent in the consciousness of our writers, not excluding, alas, the most famous and worthy....”<sup>37</sup>

Once in Israel, Voronel explored whether the characteristics of Russian-Jewish identification that he had described earlier were meaningful in the Israeli context. He noted that the issue of freedom, which had been self-evident in the Jews’ exodus from the pharaonic Soviet empire, became more problematic because of both the changes in post-Soviet Russia and the hardships encountered in Israel. He saw a new kind of freedom however, in the re-

---

<sup>33</sup> Glad, *Dopros*, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Glad, *Conversations in Exile*, p. 118.

<sup>35</sup> B. Khazanov, “Dnevnik pisatel’ia,”

<http://magazines.russ.ru/october/2004/11/ha9.html>.

<sup>36</sup> B. Khazanov, “Khronika o Kartafile,” *Gorod i sny*. (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000), pp. 271–283.

<sup>37</sup> B. Khazanov, “Vozvrashchenie Agasfera,” in *Veter izgnaniia*, [http://imwerden.de/pdf/khazanov\\_veter\\_izgnaniya.pdf](http://imwerden.de/pdf/khazanov_veter_izgnaniya.pdf).

cent immigrants' ability to become an integral part of Israeli society, unlike in Russia, where they were a dependent minority, and thus help determine their own personal and national future.<sup>38</sup>

Although Voronel's thought is often logical and rational, he asserts that ultimately it is an emotional feeling that binds Jews, including RSJs, together as a community. While aware of the difficulties besetting Israeli society because of both internal and outside factors, Voronel expresses cautious optimism that, assisted by RSJ positive values, creative elements can forge a unified Jewish society capable of resisting disintegrating factors.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Each of the three writers discussed here emphasized one facet of his identity without renouncing the others, including the Jewish element: Pomerants—the Russian intelligentsia ecumenicist; Khazanov, the outsider émigré writer; and Voronel the Jewish nationalist. Curiously, they were beneficiaries of a changing transnational world that eased their identity problems because transnational communities, by definition, reduce the significance of geography. Having praised the advantages of the diaspora for the Jews, Pomerants, and Khazanov remained part of this Jewish diaspora and simultaneously part of another transnational group, RSJs. For Pomerants, however, a Russian-Jewish transnational community was only a piece of a larger mosaic that he hoped would become part of a worldwide ecumenical community integrating the best of the great religions.

For Khazanov, what once bound him to Russia now justifies his remaining in Germany. Describing not only the Jew / intelligent but the writer, in general, as always an alien figure, he affirmed that he had already been an internal émigré in the USSR, and the new Russia was also alien: "I, evidently, to a great degree am an individualist, to a great degree an 'emigrant' no matter where I would live, in Russia or abroad" (*Dopros*, p. 121). Moreover, he asserted that he himself had changed and broadened his outlook as a

---

<sup>38</sup> A. Voronel, "Paskhal'naia idilliia," *V plenu svobody* (Moscow—Jerusalem: Merkur, 1998), pp. 222—228.

<sup>39</sup> A. Voronel, "Bozhestvo i vdokhnovenie," *V plenu svobody*, p. 243.

result of his life abroad. In the context of these differences, Khazanov does not share his Moscow friend Mark Kharitonov's view about the existence of one unified Russian literature.<sup>40</sup>

Khazanov possesses only a spiritual "home"—"The sole and ineradicable fatherland, which an exile carries away with himself—is language."<sup>41</sup> At the same time, this home is a prison, hindering his integration into the society where he now lives.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps his choice of Germany over Israel is subconsciously connected to a desire to remain "alien," whereas Israel might be too much of a "home" to the detriment of his cherished Russian language and writing. Nevertheless, Khazanov has visited Israel and frequently alludes to Jewish themes in his work. Ultimately, he thus remains very much a Russian-Jewish intelligent in a transnational RSJ community.

While rejecting a total Russian-Jewish synthesis, Voronel admitted that the specifically Russian part of his identity led him to his Jewish nationalism. He views the RSJs in Israel as distinguished by the specific traits they developed in the USSR/Russia such as an extreme emphasis on knowledge and education, skepticism about overbearing social solutions, faith in progress via technological advances, respect for individual human rights, and a self image as bearers of a superior culture.<sup>43</sup> He expressed the hope that in retaining these qualities, the mass RSJ immigration can contribute to Israeli society. However, Voronel's sense of integration and identification with Israel has limits. He continues to write in Russian; his target audience thus remains the Russian-speaking community in Israel and abroad. As he explained in an interview in 2010: "I undoubtedly feel myself part of the Israeli people but in no way as part of Israeli culture."<sup>44</sup> Thus, even while in his Jewish

---

<sup>40</sup> Mark Kharitonov, "'Nam nuzhno vosstanavlivat' pamiat' (K 80-letiiu Borisa Khazanova)," *Vtoraiia navigatsiia*, no. 8 (2008): 310–311, [http://imwerden.de/pdf/vtoraya\\_navigaciya\\_08\\_2008.pdf](http://imwerden.de/pdf/vtoraya_navigaciya_08_2008.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> B. Khazanov, *Veter izgnaniia*, p. 82.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> A. Voronel, "My i oni," first published in Hebrew in 2002 and reprinted in Russian in *I vmeste i vroz'*, pp. 341ff. Also see Larissa Remennick, *Jews on Three Continents*, pp. 35–36; Eliezer Ben-Rafael et al, *Building a Diaspora*, pp. 291–311 and Fran Markowitz, "Emigration, Immigration and Cultural Change," p. 406.

<sup>44</sup> Mikhail Iudson, "Otpusti narod moi," *Okna*, April 1, 2010, p. 10.



hometown, Voronel feels communality with RSJs around the world, suggesting that they, too could help improve the societies in which they live.

No matter whether in Moscow, Munich, or Tel Aviv, all three figures are inextricably bound together by their common past—their antipathy to the Soviet order that cultivated a slave mentality and by their attachment to the Russian language, culture, and Russian intelligentsia. And, no doubt, in Moscow, Munich, and Tel Aviv, people will continue to ponder the significance of all this for years to come.