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Religion and Refugee Resettlement: Evolving Connections to Ukraine since World War II

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Abstract

Several waves of Ukrainian refugees have arrived in the United States since 1945, each following a remarkably different resettlement and assimilation path. This article offers a comparative analysis of the role of religious affiliation and transnational religious organizations and networks in shaping processes of resettlement, ethnic group formation and the creation of attachments to Ukraine to explain the lower than expected levels of engagement of the last two waves with the Ukrainian diaspora and with Ukraine. Evolving global forces and the social structures within them render diasporic identities, which are closely associated with a territorially anchored sense of national culture, less appealing than the highly fluid transnational networks of religious groups. The role of religious-based resettlement organizations and their networks in the United States is likely to exert an ever greater effect on refugee resettlement and migration more generally.

Keywords

refugee, religion, immigration, resettlement, Ukraine

Several waves of Ukrainian refugees immigrated to the United States after World War II. Each had distinctive religious affiliations: post-World War II Ukrainian refugees tended to be Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic; beginning especially in the late 1970s, numerous Soviet Jewish refugees arrived; and, in the final years of Soviet rule, refugees from various evangelical faiths settled in the US.[1] In spite of cross-cutting cultural, linguistic, and ethnic

[1)] An earlier version of this article was presented at the SSRC Migration Fellows Conference, and I thank all the participants who offered comments, especially Caroline Bretelle. I also thank Bruce Grant, Wsevolod Isajiw, Valentina Pavlenko, Nancy Ries, and Svitlana Slipchenko for their thoughtful suggestions on an earlier version.The best studies that address religion and refugee outmigration from Soviet Ukraine include: Susan Wiley Hardwick, *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), Fran Markowitz, *A Community in Spite of Itself: Soviet Jewish Emigrés in New York*

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commonalities, these three waves of refugees have followed very different assimilation trajectories once in the US. They have had minimal contact with each other although they have settled in concentrated urban locations, initially New York and Philadelphia, and more recently in the Pacific Northwest.

In this article I comparatively examine why refugees in the last two waves have not joined the ethnic communities and ethnically-based organizations that post-World War II refugees formed to the degree that many had expected. In a broader sense, I consider what the experiences of these three waves of refuges can tell us about the types of links and attachments émigrés have formed – or have not formed – to Ukraine after the collapse of communism and offer an explanatory analysis as to why. I consider how the transnational organizations and networks of each refugee group have shaped the pathways to incorporation in American society and laid the groundwork for identity formation, feelings of attachment and allegiance to Ukraine, their country of origin, after the collapse of communism. I argue that because of evolving global forces and the social structures located within them, diasporic identities that are closely associated with a nation-state and a territorialized sense of culture are likely to exert shrinking appeal compared to the transnational organizations and networks that ethno-religious and non-ethnically-based religious groups can offer, not just to refugees but to migrants more generally.

Ukraine is a particularly compelling site from which to comparatively examine the role of religion in refugee migration. In many ways, Soviet Ukraine was a microcosm of the multi-confessional, multi-national USSR. With a history of pronounced nationalist sentiment and exceptionally high levels of religious participation, many living in Soviet Ukraine incurred the wrath of Soviet authorities, which contributed to the high number of refugees from Soviet Ukraine compared to other former republics of the USSR. The US government does not track refugees according to religious affiliation or categorize the nature of political repression that led to the granting of refugee status. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the exact number awarded refugee status because of their religion. Yet, there is an undeniable

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(Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), Vic Satzewich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2002); Myron B. Kuropas, *The Ukrainian-Americans* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1991), and Lubomyr Luciuk, *Searching for Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons, Canada, and the Migration of Memory* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2000). All of these studies focus almost exclusively on the settlement side of the migration issue.

pattern of ethno-religious and religious affiliation among the last waves of refugees from the USSR. It is essential to note that I focus on the histories, migration, and settlement patterns of Ukrainian refugees, not on Ukrainian immigrants more broadly. The trauma of displacement that is usually associated with the awarding of refugee status generally yields a greater attachment to and ongoing engagement with the homeland after resettlement. Therefore, it becomes all the more pressing to explain the lower than expected level of engagement among the last two waves of refugees from Soviet Ukraine with the Ukrainian diaspora, as well as their evolving connections to Ukraine.

Both the existence and collapse of the Soviet Union have made the concept of homeland elusive to articulate for refugees, and this is the first of several factors I will analyze. Many are from a state that did not exist when they emigrated (Ukraine) or will never exist again (Soviet Union). Convulsive changes after the collapse of communism meant that the "homeland" of these refugees has evolved into something they never knew. Although migration disrupts notions of identity and belonging, religious belief is often a continuum. For all three waves religious-based organizations and networks have shaped the resettlement process, ethnic group formation once in the US, and attachments to Ukraine after emigration. If anything, belief for many deepened in the process of relocation, as is common among migrants to the US, prompting some scholars to call migration a "theologizing experience."[2] David Laitin reminds us of Alexis de Tocqueville's early observation of American political culture, namely, that "there is a deep-seated belief that linguistic diversity is harmful but a strong belief that religious diversity is healthy."[3]

Diasporic attachments are a critical element determining the vitality of refugee groups and the extent of their simultaneous activity with co-ethnics in their adopted country and in their homeland. The involvement of global voluntary organizations, and particularly religious organizations, I will argue, in shaping attitudes and involvement in one's homeland after migration is a

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[2] R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1998). See also Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, eds., *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002) and Kenneth J. Guest, *God in Chinatown*: *Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2003).

[3] David Laitin, "The De-cosmopolitanization of the Russian Diaspora: A View from Brooklyn in the 'Far Abroad'," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 13, no. 1 (2004): 5-35, here 8. In this article, because so many of the "Russian" Jews under consideration are from Ukraine and neither *russkie* (Russian by nationality) nor *rossiiane* (citizens of Russia), he refers to this population as "Russian-speaking Jews."

deepening trend throughout the twentieth century, albeit one that has received insufficient attention from scholars. These organizations, although not always overtly political, have the power to expand the possibilities to migrate by interfacing with state bureaucracies to facilitate, expedite, and even encourage migration.[4] In doing so, they have played a critical role in setting the stage for the "mode of incorporation" that has shaped resettlement patterns for these waves of refugees.

A great deal of immigration research has focused on the experience of acculturation, of being an ethnic "other" as it preceded – for white migrants – assimilation to mainstream culture. This focus placed enormous emphasis on the racialization of difference and forfeited consideration of ongoing ties to a migrant's place of birth. Globalizing forces of communication and transportation have created new ways of crafting multiple levels of identity that are manifest in community allegiance. Several scholars have explored how "long-distance nationalism," in evidence among postwar refugees from Ukraine, has tied immigrants to vibrant networks and political, charitable, and cultural projects in their homeland.[5]

Little research has been done, however, on how religious affiliation and the modes of incorporation it offers can begin to structure identity after resettlement and forge allegiances to a homeland as well as to transnational communities and networks. Nina Glick Schiller, Ayse Çaglar, and Thaddeus C. Guldbrandsen have argued that changing global forces and social structures have yielded new pathways to integration and new objects of migrants' allegiance. As a result, they conclude, "Comparative studies are needed to more fully theorize the frequency and distribution of different pathways of migrant incorporation, including various types of nonethnic pathways."[6] By examining the resettlement of Jewish and evangelical émigrés from Soviet Ukraine to the US, including their relationship to the Ukrainian Diaspora, we see that for certain groups the locus of allegiance toward the end of the twentieth century

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4) Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

5) The best studies of "long-distance nationalism" are Linda G. Basch and Nina Glick Schiller, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-Colonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Westport, CT: Gordon & Breach, 1993); and Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2001).

6) Nina Glick Schiller, Ayse Çaglar, and Thaddeus C. Guldbrandsen, "Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Locality, Globality and Born Again Incorporation," *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 4 (2006): 612-33, here 626.

is shifting. Perhaps the nation-state as an informant of identity and feelings of belonging after migration is waning precisely because the connection between a particular culture and a territorial anchoring has also been seriously weakened thanks to increased migration and communication. Participation and membership in transnational organizations and global networks (religious and nonreligious) constitute another focal point for the allegiance of émigrés. The recognition of this dynamic goes a long way in explaining why the last two waves of refugees from Soviet Ukraine have not followed the wave of refugees before them, as well as prior immigrants, and joined the Ukrainian Diaspora and diaspora communal, charitable, educational, and political organizations to the degree one could have expected.

The political underpinnings of refugee emigration: The role of Cold War politics

Although the collapse of communism and the comparative religious freedoms that are found in Ukraine today have all but eliminated the possibility to apply for refugee status, this was emphatically not the case as recently as two decades ago. The decision to emigrate may be an individual one, but the *option* to emigrate depends on social and political circumstances that are created or foreclosed by individual states. After World War II, US policies toward Soviet refugees were clearly a function of foreign policy interests that played out against the backdrop of Cold War ideological competitions between political and economic systems. The strong geopolitical implications of Soviet refugee resettlement take it out of the traditional rubric that considers refugees and migration in tandem with issues of development or conflict.

The adversarial relationship certain groups had to Soviet authorities ensured that the US government would view them favorably. Given the vibrancy of religious life in the US compared to other Western democracies, it is perhaps not surprising that groups from the Soviet Union who sought to emigrate in the name of religious freedom were preferentially selected for refugee status. Refugees from the former USSR provide a particularly dramatic example of the extent to which a receiving society can shape the geography of migration by selectively accelerating the inflow of refugees from certain areas of the world or grinding it to a halt. It also illustrates the compromised agency of individuals in determining equal treatment from state bureaucracies.

The experience of refugees from Ukraine mandates that we consider displacement on three distinct levels: foreign policy priorities that make

migration politically feasible; individual agency that capitalizes on this; and social institutions that affect the adaptation and incorporation processes. There is a mutually constitutive relationship among individual agency, the groups recognized as refugees, and their social institutions. Religious institutions have played a particularly prominent role among refugees from Soviet Ukraine by balancing the contradictory tensions between the inclination to assimilate and the desire to maintain cultural differences to keep a distinct identity attractive and allegiances to an ethnic community strong.

Cold War tensions partially explain the preferential treatment Soviet citizens received, along with the fact that they are Caucasian, of Judeo-Christian background, and educated or skilled. For Americans, defections from the socialist Soviet Union to the capitalist United States were an affirmation of the righteousness of the West's economic and political systems in spite of its social ills and shortcomings. For Soviet citizens, emigration had other equally significant politicized meanings. It was an emphatic rejection of the Soviet system, one of the few possible forms of overt political protest.

The focus on refugees from Ukraine also sheds light on the ramifications of statelessness for community formation. The Soviet state's practice of assigning each citizen a "nationality," such as Ukrainian or Jewish, *and* a supranational citizenship-based identity (Soviet) facilitated state-sponsored discrimination and ultimately expanded the possibilities to appeal for refugee status. It also complicated the dual processes of establishing a rapport to a homeland and maintaining an ethnic identity after relocation. The legacy of Ukrainian statelessness, combined with Ukraine's position as a "borderland," a buffer zone wedged between larger empires, meant that immigration officials over time often misidentified Ukrainians as Russians, Austrians, or Poles.[7] Ukrainians tended to self-identify in religious or regional terms to compensate for the disjuncture between their civic and national identities. Ukrainians were usually – and to this day still sometimes are – labeled "Russians," reflecting the widespread misconception that the multinational Soviet Union was a Russian state. Much like the blanket designations "Hispanic" or "Asian," "Russian" has become a projection of general regional origin and linguistic ability often mistakenly projected onto all three refugee groups, which creates the illusion of perceived cultural commonality among Soviet refugees where little often existed.

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[7] Timothy L. Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 5 (1978):1155-85.

Trauma and diaspora formation: Post-World War II refugees

The classical concept of Diaspora has been linked with Jewish and, later, Greek and Armenian traditions, and is used to evoke a group that has been subject to catastrophe, which resulted in forcible dispersion. In spite of this catastrophe, or perhaps because of it, the group maintains strong ties among ethnic kin and to the homeland which is manifest, in William Safran's words, in a "political obligation, or the moral burden, of reconstituting a lost homeland or maintaining an endangered culture."[8] Not surprisingly, postwar Ukrainian refugees who were forcibly expelled and fled Ukraine during the horrors of war felt, and continue to feel, this moral burden more acutely than other migrants, and more so than the latter two waves I am considering here, who relocated in part thanks to economic and professional incentives to emigrate. The post-World War II wave of refugees and subsequent generations constitute the core of the Ukrainian Diaspora.

To understand how the postwar wave of refugees crystallized into a diaspora that continues to maintain ties to Ukraine one must consider how and why they became refugees in the first place and which pathways for incorporation to the new society were available to them. This wave is distinct from the following two in several key respects. When Ukrainian Displaced Persons (DPs) began to arrive in the US after World War II, they encountered numerous immigrants who had already relocated from ethnically Ukrainian lands in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russian Empire, and later from Poland and other Eastern European countries. Prior to the closing of the Soviet borders in 1926, Ukrainian immigrants were primarily economically motivated, seeking to escape poverty and discrimination. The economic "push" factors that motivated earlier and subsequent migrants to immigrate did not compare, however, with the trauma of war and the imperative to flee during and after World War II.[9] The extent of displacement and devastation as a result of the war in Soviet Ukraine was utterly massive. Over 5.3 million people died, or one in six Ukrainians, and an additional 2.3 million Ukrainians were sent to Germany to perform forced labor. Over 700 cities, 28,000 villages, 16,000 industrial

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8) William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83-99, here 85.

9) On this point especially, see Wsevolod W. Isajiw, Roman Senkus, and Yury Boshyk, eds., *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992).

enterprises, and 28,000 collective farms were partially or totally destroyed, leaving over 10 million people homeless.[10]

In February 1945, the Allied powers signed a repatriation agreement guaranteeing the return of all displaced Allied nationals on a reciprocal basis, using force if necessary. The agreement defined Soviet nationals in terms of the Soviet border as of September 1, 1939, which qualified Ukrainians from Polish Galicia and Volhynia for resettlement as Displaced Persons, as these territories had been annexed to the Soviet Union. Ukrainians from further east, who were confronted with a policy that categorized them as "Soviet" and mandated forced repatriation to their "homeland," the USSR, fought to gain recognition as refugees. They argued that they were a persecuted Ukrainian minority, subject to cultural Russification via the annihilation of their language, ideological Sovietization, and official state policies of atheism that were particularly punishing to their religions because of their alleged nationalist agendas and subversive political activity.

Both the 1951 United Nations definition of a refugee and the current one refer to "a person who has fled his or her country of origin" because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.[11] The DP wave, which constitutes the core of the Ukrainian Diaspora, was granted refugee status because they actually fled their homeland. Of the 1.3 million Ukrainians who arrived in the US throughout the twentieth century, only a small percentage arrived as refugees. Most of the other Ukrainian immigrants to the US were subject to the limitations that the National Origins Quota System, a policy that regulated immigration from 1924-1965, imposed on admittance. Refugee status guarantees significant material benefits from the receiving state, which are usually denied to immigrants.

Of the 352,000 people admitted to the US under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, 15 percent were Ukrainian and most of these were Ukrainian speakers from Western Ukraine.[12] The Refugee Relief Act, passed in 1953, allowed an additional 210,000 refugees in Western Europe to relocate to the US and flatly stipulated that priority should be given to "refugees from communism."

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[10] Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 480.

[11] Jeremy Hein, "Refugees, Immigrants, and the State," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 43-59, here 44.

[12] Myron Kuropas, *The Ukrainian-Americans: Roots and Aspirations, 1884-1954* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 404.

By 1955 only about 250,000 of the 2.3 million Ukrainians displaced because of World War II were allowed to relocate abroad.[13]

The trauma of forced displacement sets this wave of refugees apart from others by fundamentally forging group solidarity, informing their engagement with their homeland, and creating reluctance among many to shed an "ethnic" identity in America. Members of the Ukrainian Diaspora had a common experience: internment in postwar refugee camps in Germany and Austria. During this hiatus period, which lasted for up to five years, the DPs recreated many religious, cultural, and athletic organizations and arrived in the US with networks anchored in them. The two Ukrainian national churches, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church[14] and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church,[15] were institutional bases for material assistance, ethnic identity retention, and ongoing political activity to protest Soviet rule in Ukraine. Although these religious communities validated the concept of nation-state and served as institutional bases for collective political action of a nationalist nature, like all others, they served as a means to divide Ukrainians by denomination, class, and political orientation. However, in recognition of the postwar rivalries between the two confessions, some postwar diaspora organizations were not church-based and took the form of professional, educational, artistic, or regional groups.

During the Soviet period, contact between the Ukrainian Diaspora and Ukrainians in Ukraine was highly limited. The impermeable borders of the Soviet Union crystallized a diasporic identity predicated on a frustrated desire to return home. The closed nature of Soviet society meant that efforts to affect change in Ukraine had to operate via influence on US politics. "Long-distance nationalism" became nationalist-inspired political activism in the US while Ukraine was under Soviet rule. Glick Schiller and Fouron define long-distance nationalism as a "claim to membership in a political community who stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland. It generates an emotional

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13) Satzewich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora*, p. 86.

14) This denomination formed when part of Ukraine was under Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth rule. It incorporates Orthodox rituals and congregational structure under papal jurisdiction. Ukrainian Catholic priests marry and therefore expand religious diversity in North America by strengthening an eparchy of Catholicism.

15) Following the nation-state institutional structure of Orthodox denominations, in 1917 the nascent Ukrainian state prompted the creation of a nationalized Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This church was heavily persecuted by Soviet authorities and eventually outlawed and driven underground in the 1930s. It thrived, however, in North America where it built a significant following among Diaspora Ukrainians.

attachment that is strong enough to compel people to political action that ranges from displaying a home country flag to deciding to "return" to fight and die in a land they may never have seen."[16]

Two projects of long-distance nationalism among many stand out for their current political significance in Ukraine today. The Ukrainian Diaspora spurred the US government to undertake an extensive oral history of the 1932-1933 Famine in the Soviet Union that killed over 7 million Ukrainians. This effort laid the groundwork for ongoing Diaspora initiatives, supported by the current President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko, to have the Famine recognized as "genocide," thereby beginning to redefine the relationship of Ukraine to the Soviet Union and Ukrainians to Russians. In a related effort, the Diaspora also launched a fierce campaign to recall the Pulitzer Prize from Walter Duranty, a *New York Times* reporter, who covered the Soviet Union in the 1930s and neglected to report on the Famine.

Other especially visible projects in which members of the Ukrainian Diaspora are engaged include the Children of Chornobyl, a program to offer medical assistance to children affected by the accident at the Chornobyl nuclear reactor in 1985, as well as several educational initiatives, such as the founding and expansion of the Ukrainian Catholic University, which is led by American-born Rev.-Dr. Borys Gudziak. In addition, several members of the Diaspora are directly involved in politics in Ukraine, including the first lady of Ukraine, Kateryna Yushchenko, who is from Chicago, and several who have been elected as representatives to the Verkhovna Rada.

Over the decades, Diaspora Ukrainians also strove to preserve and protect "real" Ukrainian culture, especially as it concerned religion, language, and history, from the ravages of Soviet ideological projects that threatened to transform it into something unrecognizable. The forced separation of Diaspora Ukrainians from Ukrainians in Ukraine over decades complicated the reunion process after the fall of the USSR. Scholars who have studied the encounters between Ukrainians and Diaspora Ukrainians after the fall of communism have argued that "diasporic tourism" and the "rituals of homecoming" ultimately reinforced a diasporic consciousness among these émigrés most of all.[17]

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16) Glick Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing*, p. 4.

17) Satzewich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora*, pp. 201-22; Natalia Shostak, "Making Ukrainian House Calls: On Diasporic Tourism and Rituals of Homecoming," in *Ports of Call: Central European and North American Cultures in Motion*, eds. Susan Ingram, Markus Reisenleitner, and Cornelia Szabo-Knotik (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 121-51; and Natalia Shostak, "Zustreech or the Encounters of a Transnational Kind: Negotiating Ukrainianness in Western Canada," *Ethnologies* 25, no. 2 (2003): 77-106.

Perhaps this should not surprise us. The experiences of this wave of refugees are as distinct as they are traumatic. Shared experiences yield solidarity, but it is largely a generationally-bound sense of solidarity. The inability to fully imagine these experiences separates this wave, not only from the next two I will examine, but also even from Ukrainians in Ukraine today. The traumatic events of World War II created a temporally and generationally bound Diaspora consciousness based on a "blood and tear-soaked heritage." The pain of exile, combined with feelings of victimization, created common repositories of meaning and common goals among World War II refugees that not only tied them to political projects to liberate Ukraine but to each other around the world as well. These same experiences and goals separated them from their children and grandchildren. The dream of realizing a nation-state homeland was not always as meaningful to successive generations given the social mobility most World War II Ukrainian refugees experienced. As white immigrants, they easily assimilated to the broader culture.

Although language fluency has waned among successive generations, for those of the second and third generations who retain a diasporic consciousness, religion continues to play a pivotal role in cultivating Diaspora loyalties. The nationalized denominations are inextricably linked with a Ukrainian identity and are firmly established in the countries these refugees and their successive generations have adopted. Ultimately, religion has played a key role in the reterritorialization, or the rerooting, of cultural identities and practices on new soil more so than it has in forging ties to Ukraine. Among second- and third-generation postwar refugees, the combination of religious affiliation and migration has yielded commitments to a nationalized vision of the homeland, often manifest in projects of long-distance nationalism. It has also kept alive memories of a scarring historical event that resulted in diasporic exile as well as changes to the religious landscape in the US.

Discrimination and "privileged identities": Soviet Jewish refugees

Along with the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel, many Jews count the outmigration of 1.3 million Soviet Jews among the three watershed events for world Jewry in the twentieth century. Approximately 57 percent of the total number of Jews who left the USSR were from Soviet Ukraine.

From 1948 to 1970 Soviet authorities restricted emigration to family reunification, and an average of only 2,700 refugees left annually.[18] Jews who were denied permission to emigrate became known as *refuseniks*. A compendium of pressures, including mounting international protest especially coming from the US over the growing number of *refuseniks*, prompted a change of policy. From 1970 to 1997, the key years of Soviet Jewish outmigration, over 422,000 Jews were allowed to leave Ukraine and another 308,500 left Russia.[19]

Until 1973 Zionism, religious activism and a desire to live in a Jewish state motivated Jews to leave, but the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and growing awareness of the difficulties of life in Israel among Soviet Jews dampened their enthusiasm. In response, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) began to offer the controversial option of settling in the US in 1976. The following year half of the Soviet Jews granted an exit visa chose to relocate to the US. Outmigration peaked in 1979 as 51,000 Jews emigrated, 28.7 percent of whom were from Soviet Ukraine.[20] By 1981, there were nearly 100,000 Soviet Jews living in New York City alone, and momentum to emigrate among Jews continued to mount.

Soviet authorities responded to the mass outmigration of Jews in the 1980s by cutting by 40 percent the number of Jews admitted to higher education, which, of course, only fueled the desire to emigrate.[21] As the noted *refusenik* Alexander Voronel said, "Having exchanged their traditions for this one value – education – when they are deprived of it, they are deprived of everything. When intellectuals who have built their lives on professional achievement perceive barriers to their advancement, they find themselves in a crisis that is tantamount to loss of the meaning of life."[22] Fran Markowitz has argued that Jews were primarily motivated to leave the USSR, not because of anti-Semitism, which of course existed, but because, even when they shed their Jewishness and felt Russian, they could never fully assimilate because of state-assigned "national" identities that labeled them as Jews, making them forever

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18) Annelise Orleck, *The Soviet Jewish Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 53 and Yaacov Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration, 1948-67* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 327.

19) Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2001), p. 262.

20) "Data of the Ministry of the Interior on Jewish Emigration," in Boris Morozov, ed., *Documents on Soviet Jewish Emigration* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 234-36.

21) Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, p. 185.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 188.

vulnerable to discrimination.[23] At any moment, their ability to advance educationally and professionally could have been compromised. In short, the initial émigrés were politically and sometimes even religiously motivated to live in Israel, whereas later refugees were progressively drawn to greater educational and professional opportunities abroad.

By 1989, 97 percent of Soviet Jews had asked for asylum in the US. Faced with a potential flood of refugees as the economic situation deteriorated in the Soviet Union, the United States reversed its policy of granting automatic refugee status to all Jews. After 1989 the primary means to relocate to the US with permanent residency status became "direct emigration" based on family reunification. Jews who chose the US over Israel tended to be secular and had little commitment to Israel, which frequently strained relations with the activist American Jewish communities that provided vocational counseling, English language training, and other resettlement services.[24] These services were available because these refugees were Jewish. Their country of origin was irrelevant in determining their eligibility. There are now approximately 400,000 Soviet Jews living in the US, and they constitute 6 percent of the American Jewish population.[25]

Overall, Jews from Soviet Ukraine have had little contact with the Ukrainian Diaspora and even comparatively little contact with each other, prompting Fran Markowitz to call them "a community in spite of itself."[26] They avoided institutional structures that could have united them, including Russian-language synagogues, because of their experiences with Soviet bureaucracy and its demands for "mandatory, voluntary" participation. Wary of hierarchical organizations, they preferred to rely on informal networks of friends and family to complement the considerable aid they received from NYANA and other agencies funded by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. Given the

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23) Fran Markowitz, "Criss-Crossing Identities: The Russian Jewish Diaspora and the Jewish Diaspora in Russia," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 201-11, here 203. See also Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004).

24) Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brym, *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s* (Toronto: York Lanes Press, 1991), and Rita J. Simon, ed., *New Lives: The Adjustment of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in the United States and Israel* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1985).

25) For a comparative study of how Soviet Jews have fared in the US, Canada, Israel, and Germany, see Larissa Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration and Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

26) Fran Markowitz, *A Community in Spite of Itself: Soviet Jewish Émigrés in New York* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

skills of working-age refugees, tight family networks, and the various forms of assistance they received, these refugees were generally able to find satisfying jobs and become self-supporting in a relatively short period of time.[27] In a global marketplace, the valued skills Soviet Jews possessed allowed them to join the transnational professional workforce, staffing academic institutions, laboratories, and engineering facilities around the world. While there were certainly "push" factors prompting Jews to migrate, these existed alongside powerful incentives to emigrate created by religious-based charitable and social service organizations that actively eased resettlement. Zvi Gitelman has argued that, among the welter of paradoxes that characterize post-Soviet Jewry, precisely at a time when Jews enjoy more political, economic, and cultural freedom than at any other time in history, they are leaving in droves.[28]

Even though they were allowed to emigrate because they were Jewish and the majority came from Ukraine, they, too, have also been labeled "Russian" once in the US, as they have been in Israel, Germany, and elsewhere that Soviet Jews have settled. Soviet Jews have a particular understanding of Judaism, largely devoid of religious content but shaped by the historical particularities of East European Judaism; of Russianness, clearly their cultural identity; and of being Soviet, now a unique experience that successive generations of immigrants will not know. They are not only Soviet Jews, not only Jews from Ukraine, not only Russian Jews, and not only Russian-speaking Jews, but some mixture of all these influences. Coming largely from major urban centers, these Jewish refugees from Soviet Ukraine tended to be Russian speaking and far more embracing of markers of Russian identity, such as the *kulturnost* that an intimate knowledge of Russian literature was thought to bequeath to members of the intelligentsia.

In many ways, they were the first wave of refugees from Ukraine to participate in the globalization of identity and globalized cultural, economic, and political activity. They arrived in the US as stateless refugees, already deracinated from a traditional, religiously based, linguistically distinct, and geographically bound Jewish community. First imperial and then Soviet russificatory policies promoted a Russian cultural identity among Jews, including those living in Ukraine, and at the same time assigned them a genetically-based, inherited Jewish identity. The Soviet Jewish encounter with America

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27) Rita J. Simon and Julian L. Simon, "Social and Economic Adjustment," in Rita J. Simon, ed., *New Liv*es, pp. 13-45.

28) Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 253-66.

has inevitably shaped a self-conscious awareness of being a Soviet Jew, but to a modest degree. Furthermore, any solidarity this sense of common background might have generated has resisted geographic concentration and institutional bases. If anything, their sense of simply being Jewish has been enhanced by the emigrant experience.[29]

In essence, Jewish refugees from Soviet Ukraine exemplify the fragmentation and displacement that has come to characterize postmodernism. They have little in common with Diaspora Ukrainians, American Jews, and even with each other. After relocation, they formed loose diasporic ethnic enclaves, linked to each other in multiple countries and to Ukraine through informal, personal networks that largely lack institutional bases. Other than kinship, these networks are dependent on a common language, Russian, and on common knowledge of literary works, past and present, written in this language. It will be difficult for successive generations to retain a diasporic consciousness of Soviet Jewishness, distinct from understandings of an assimilated, secular Jewish culture in their adopted country. Yet, for the first generation, it is precisely such a consciousness that connects the informal social networks of friends and family spanning multiple countries back to the country of their birth, back to Ukraine.

A moveable feast: The Soviet Christian emigration movement

Evangelical believers had long been subject to discrimination in education, employment, and housing before Nikita Khrushchev launched his antireligious campaign in 1959, proclaiming, "We will see the last believer!" to the Presidium of the Communist Party's Central Committee. As active and persistent practitioners of their faith, Baptists and Pentecostals were lumped together in the popular Soviet imagination and administratively as "sectarians." Heightened concern with the exposure of children to religious doctrine prompted authorities to revive a policy, initially aimed at Orthodox underground groups and then applied more widely to Baptists and Pentecostals, of forcibly taking children from their parents and placing them in state-run boarding schools to prevent religious indoctrination. For some believers this form of harassment prompted a more determined withdrawal from society and an even more strident reliance on God for protection. For others, as one

29) Laitin, "The De-cosmopolitanization of the Russian Diaspora", p. 32.

of the last and most unbearable raw forms of coercion used by Soviet state authorities, it prompted a worldly solution – emigration. Approximately 500,000 Soviet Evangelicals relocated.

After the Soviet Union signed the Helsinki Accords in 1975, agreeing to allow emigration and to respect freedom of conscience, 52 Pentecostals claiming to represent 20,000 others made a direct appeal to the pope for Christian unity and support for persecuted religious minorities in the USSR. Another appeal was presented to the World Council of Churches in 1976. Ninety-seven Pentecostals signed their names to a 48-page appeal to emigrate, but these actions yielded no tangible results. Just as Ronald Reagan assumed the US presidency in 1980 and became a powerful spokesperson for the interests of conservative Christians, Boris Perchatkin organized the "Christian Emigration Movement in the USSR," and amassed 30,000 members, most of whom were Pentecostals or Baptists striving to practice their religion elsewhere.[30] They staged a five-day hunger strike to coincide with the first week of the Helsinki Review Conference in Madrid in 1981.

This nascent Soviet Christian Emigration Movement vitally depended on affirmation from the West, which was not forthcoming. Its organizer, Boris Perchatkin, was rearrested in 1980, after escaping from prison the previous year, and received a new two-year sentence. From 1979-1981 thirty Pentecostals were arrested, some for refusing to serve in the Soviet Army but most for involvement in the Christian Emigration Movement. And in 1983, after a five-year residency in the US Embassy, a group that was dubbed the "Siberian Seven" was allowed to emigrate through exceptional means. Nonetheless, the overall campaign to emigrate failed and was extinguished in 1988 when, because of President Reagan's direct intervention, its organizer immigrated to the US.

The general aversion to meddling in worldly affairs among evangelicals further reduced any impetus among Westerners of similar faith to respond to the plight of Soviet evangelicals. The lack of Western response was not to be the end of their quest to emigrate, however. A sea change occurred as the Soviet Union prepared for the millennial commemoration of Christianity in Kyivan Rus. In 1987 Mikhail Gorbachev took the bold step of announcing that all victims of religious persecution could apply to emigrate as part of his greater campaign of *glasnost* (openness). Soon thereafter, in 1989, the US Congress

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30) William C. Fletcher, *Soviet Charismatics: The Pentecostals in the USSR* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), p. 136.

passed the Lautenberg Amendment, which made religion the cornerstone of Soviet refugee policy and extended the benefits Soviet Jews received to evangelical Christian, Ukrainian Catholic, and Ukrainian Orthodox believers. Anyone affiliated with one of these denominations who could demonstrate "well established histories of persecution" under the Soviet regime became eligible to emigrate to the US as refugees if they had family ties or some other form of sponsorship – usually a religious organization – in the US. Notably, Soviet evangelicals were not required to prove fear of *future* persecution, merely *past membership* in a persecuted religious group. Half of the over two million officially registered Baptists and Pentecostals lived in Soviet Ukraine.

Remarkably, in 1989 the Soviet Union was willing to let its citizens go and the US was willing to let them in. Approximately 500,000 Soviet Evangelicals relocated. In addition to economic decline, other linkages to the US were operative at this time. A barrage of American missionaries promising salvation, American media and popular culture displaying images of glamour and wealth, and American multinational corporations offering a plethora of longed-for consumer goods also served as magnets, as cultural bridges, transporting Soviet citizens from the "proletarian paradise" to the perceived land of milk and honey.

Soviet Ukrainian evangelicals settled extensively in Sacramento, California. Beginning in the 1950s, a radio station based in Sacramento hosted a Russian-language evangelical broadcast. For the earliest evangelical refugees without family ties, this suggested that Sacramento might be a hospitable new home. With this new influx of Soviet refugees, Sacramento became the site of the largest Slavic evangelical refugee community, followed by Portland and Seattle. This wave of refugees also settled in established Ukrainian enclaves, such as Philadelphia, where there are now thirteen Slavic evangelical congregations.[31] Overall, this wave is quite distinct in the scale of the cities they chose to settle in. Whereas postwar refugees and Soviet Jewish refugees settled mostly in "global" or "gateway" cities, such as New York or Philadelphia, notable for their cosmopolitan character, myriad economic opportunities, and histories of immigrant reception, the last wave of Soviet refugees consistently has privileged mid-level cities in choice of resettlement.

This last wave of refugees from Soviet Ukraine, compared to the two preceding waves discussed and other immigrant groups more generally, has lost

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[31] For a more comprehensive look at this last wave of Soviet refugee outmigration, see Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007).

extraordinarily little in the process of relocating, prompting a Jewish émigré to claim enviously that they have a "moveable feast."[32] Highly favorable emigration policies allowed nearly the entire membership of many Soviet congregations to relocate rapidly, preserving their tight webs of family, residential, and communal networks, which offer a continuum of meaningful social relationships. The last Soviet refugees were the first that could realistically entertain the prospect of returning home, temporarily or permanently, and of maintaining unencumbered contact with family and friends. Yet, no one practices "flexible citizenship," the way Aihwa Ong documents the Chinese capitalize on twofold economic and residential opportunities.[33] The goal for this last wave, as for the two others, was for the entire multigenerational family to leave and establish permanent residency elsewhere. The new possibilities for retaining ties to Ukraine and for returning there, combined with heightened consumer expectations, have stimulated outmigration in all its forms.[34]

As committed religious practitioners, Soviet evangelicals distanced themselves as much as possible from the secular Soviet world, including education, and were in turn discouraged from pursuing higher education. Therefore, they arrived in the US having received minimal education for several generations and were prepared to hold manual labor jobs. Given the low incomes and large families evangelicals usually had, they chose to settle in smaller cities where the cost of living, especially housing, might be more manageable. Many evangelical men have worked in construction brigades for companies that were started by a handful of evangelical entrepreneurs, and when necessary for other entrepreneurs from the former USSR. The women have usually been employed in minimum wage jobs as chambermaids, restaurant staff, or domestic servants.

Congregations serve as an effective institutional base from which to reproduce an ethnicized, religious identity that embraces multigenerational families and maintains feelings of belonging and connections to a homeland in the face of disruption to daily life brought on by migration. Clergy and informed networks of family and friends quickly connected recent arrivals

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32) Interview with the author, May 6, 2001.

33) Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: Cultural Logistics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1999).

34) Even though I focus on legal migration of a permanent nature to the West over the postwar period, since 1991 migration patterns from Ukraine are now dominated by "shuttle trade" (usually to Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, or China) and contract work (often to Portugal and Italy and to East European countries, such as Poland and the Czech Republic).

with government programs to help the working poor. Acquainting new non-evangelical immigrants with such services became a means of exposing them to the congregation, demonstrating the usefulness of church affiliation, and creating debt obligations.

The Southern Baptist Convention supports a Ukrainian pastor in Philadelphia whose specific job is to develop ethnic congregations by sponsoring and assisting immigrants from Ukraine who have no religious affiliation. The pastor meets them at the airport and spends a full week helping them find an apartment, gets children registered for school, helps parents find jobs, and shepherds them through the state social service sector by helping them qualify for government programs. The Pennsylvania state government gave a $25,000 annual grant to support a full-time social worker who is an evangelical believer from the former Soviet Union to help new immigrants resettle from the former Soviet Union who have no family in the US. The immigrants assisted by this program are not necessarily evangelicals, and not even always Ukrainians. The Southern Baptist Convention and individual evangelical communities have been able to attach religion from the start to the process of resettlement in the US. Individual communities assist new families with food and other basic necessities, such as furniture. In this way, new arrivals, most of whom are nominal Orthodox Christians, are evangelized and religion is made a fundamental part of their immigration experience.

The infusion of refugees after 1989 breathed new life into established Slavic evangelical communities that had formed throughout the twentieth century but had seen their memberships swell and depleted within the span of a generation thanks to assimilation. Current memberships of most evangelical communities are made up of Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians, and Poles. Any tensions over the use of Ukrainian versus Russian are dwarfed by the intrusion of English into communal life because of assimilatory pressures and the "outreach" impulse. In other words, churches adopt a national orientation, without being nationalist. Language becomes the central feature that distinguishes refugee and immigrant churches from other evangelical churches, and language forms the basis upon which they organize exchanges with other immigrant congregations and upon which they structure missionary activity. Yet, any militancy on issues of language or politics more generally is frequently overridden by the ever-present priority to expand membership. It is this impulse that often prompts some communities, especially those located outside Sacramento, to label themselves as "Slavic" as opposed to a narrower national or regional self-identifier.

Missionary activity in the contemporary period is a highly effective means of forging transnational ties that has received very little attention from the scholarly community. For evangelicals who emigrate, the obligation to proselytize remains. Migration and the ensuing language and cultural barriers turn the missionary impulse toward the country of origin and situate this basic activity in a transnational social field. Commitment to the homeland becomes the rationale for an extensive roster of missionary activities in Ukraine and helps maintain the ethnic character of the community. Nostalgia for Ukraine finds its outlet in charitable activities, which were sharply prohibited in the USSR, and have now become the centerpiece of ethnic communal life in the US.[35]

Religious organizations are allowed to distribute charitable assistance directly in Ukraine, and are not obliged to involve state authorities. Numerous Slavic congregations send parcels of goods, clothing, and foodstuffs at regular intervals to Ukraine as part of their charitable activities. In this way, ethnic congregations in the US supplement the resources of the state that serve the poor and disenfranchised in Ukraine. Individual congregations also make contributions to building infrastructure, including new churches, to expand evangelical religious life in Ukraine.

Almost all churches have a plethora of short-term missionary programs. Youth groups travel once or twice a year to Ukraine to work in evangelical summer camps, to "witness" in orphanages, prisons or hospitals, or provide some other kind of assistance, usually to children. While not mandated, a missionary trip is often something of a rite of passage. Individual missionaries deliver money, medicine, information, and other forms of charitable aid to evangelicals in Ukraine and thereby strengthen these social relationships. Given transnational familial networks, missionizing projects, youth group exchanges, and other connections, at virtually every church service, here and in Ukraine, there is extensive and ongoing informal transmission of information among believers who emigrated and those who stayed.

Migration combined with evangelical practice creates morally-empowered networks on a global scale that deliver a sense of identity and belonging that is at once grounded in a specific space and operative around the world. In this way, Ukrainian believers are integrated into a community that includes a

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35) If religion is the factor that made it possible to choose to emigrate, interestingly, it is also the factor that is almost always evoked to explain the choice not to emigrate. Those refusing to emigrate often claimed that the need for evangelization in Ukraine was more pressing because of the wounds inflicted by socialism. This overrode any desire for increased material comfort or fears of renewed religious persecution.

national component and integrative, global elements of a religious-based identity. Belonging in a transnational religious community that frequently meets face to face strengthens the allegiance members feel to each other.

Committed to responding to the current material needs of coreligionists and to the potential spiritual and material needs of would-be converts, these Ukrainian believers ultimately become more than emigrants. They become transmigrants. Gluck Schiller, Basch, and Blanc define a transmigrant as immigrants "whose daily lives depend on multiple and consistent interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state."[36] Their allegiance is to their faith but their cultural identity makes realization of this allegiance possible through interaction with other Ukrainian believers – on whatever continent they might find them. This commitment fundamentally structures their daily lives, their sense of self, and their connections to Ukraine.

Religion, displacement, and transnational social fields

After resettling in the US, religiously affiliated refugees from all three waves struggle to locate home. The main factor that has determined where they belong and feel at home is social networks of family and friends that are often inextricably embedded in religious communities. Religious institutions function as the nodes in interlinked networks that unite migrants spread across several continents. Assuming a particular religious identity, even if it is one gutted of religious content as we saw with Soviet Jews, is a powerful factor expanding the social relations and connections to a homeland that characterizes the lives of refugees from Ukraine in the second half of the twentieth century.

For the waves of dispersed peoples from Ukraine described above, their shared experiences of persecution, deciding to leave and refusing to return means that they are united by fate, even as they are divided by faith. Post-World War II Ukrainian refugees share several characteristics with other cultural diasporas: they have become dispersed due to negative circumstances; they retain collective historical and cultural memories; and they exhibit ongoing interest and support for their homeland, primarily in the

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[36] Nina Gluck Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48-63, here 48.

form of projects of long-distance nationalism. For these reasons, the communal organizations they formed, in addition to religious communities, meshed with those created by earlier immigrants from ethnically-Ukrainian lands. They had every hope that subsequent migrants from Ukraine would join their organizations and work for improvements in the lives of Ukrainians in Ukraine. Consideration of the role of religious organizations in shaping resettlement of subsequent waves of refugees from Ukraine helps to explain why this hope has not been fully realized.

Soviet Jews opted to emigrate because of entirely different circumstances, and this has shaped their mode of incorporation into American society. For Soviet Jews the decision to emigrate included consideration of some "push factors" but was also in response to "pull factors" in the form of greater educational and professional opportunities. As a deracinated, deterritorialized, Russified, and largely secularized group, membership in a globalized, professional workforce became extremely meaningful. Their access to ethno-religious organizations, services, and forms of assistance to realize these goals was predicated on their Jewishness, not on their country of origin. A sense of a common past filled with shared challenges formed the bedrock of informal social networks that span several continents and link Soviet Jews from Ukraine to other Russian-speaking Jews from the USSR.

The last wave of refugees rapidly relocated entire congregations and the multigenerational families that constituted their memberships. They have demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a broadly ethnic or "Slavic" church in the US and to providing charitable assistance in the former Soviet Union and engaging in evangelization there. They exhibit little or no desire to return to Ukraine permanently, but a strong commitment to return frequently to missionize.

Even though there is a growing tendency among scholars to refer to all dispersed peoples as constituting a Diaspora because of mounting possibilities to maintain connections with a homeland, a typology or further refinement of the concept is nonetheless mandated, one that takes into consideration cultural resources as well as the socio-political circumstances driving displacement. As this comparative study of Ukrainian refugee resettlement illustrates, even within the span of several decades, one cannot assume that refugees from a particular region will form a single Diaspora and embrace a single vision of home. Here, inter-confessional tensions were magnified by unequal access to resettlement assistance provided by religious organizations to coreligionists. Relocation is increasingly mediated by religious institutions or ethno-religious organizations, which are quite resilient. Supranational religious

denominations, such as Judaism and Evangelicalism, have brought Americans and American culture into the life of refugees, whereas the Ukrainian Orthodox Church or Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has linked ethnic coreligionists to a far greater degree to Ukraine.

Certain supranational religions, such as Judaism and Evangelicalism, lend themselves to forming "travelling cultures."[37] Replete with cultural practices and forms of social organization that are not tied to a specific place, these "traveling cultures," once embraced, deterritorialize identities, feelings of belonging, and communal membership. As groups become deterritorialized, states become borderless. Space becomes redefined and informs identities and allegiances in new and largely unbounded ways. The importance of religion and its transnational linkages as a force shaping the dynamics of diasporic migration and resettlement was considerable in the latter half of the twentieth century for Ukraine and for Ukrainians. Religion has fundamentally informed the vibrancy, intensity, and frequency of connections to Ukraine. The importance of religion for migration and resettlement patterns lies in the fact that it operates at multiple levels, forging intersections between the ethnic and the religious, the local and the transnational, the home and the adopted country. Ethno-religious communities incorporate new members alongside firm boundaries of exclusion. Transnational religious groups have collided with Soviet socialism to create highly dispersed mediated cultures and global religious communities of Ukrainians around the world. Massive outmigration of refugees and other migrants has created new transnational institutional linkages that have shaped new understandings of community and commitment in Ukraine and to Ukraine after communism.

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[37] Catherine Wanner, "Conversion and the Mobile Self: Evangelicalism as 'Travelling Culture'," in *Conversion after Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms, and Technologies of Faith*, ed. Mathijs Pelkmans (London: Berghahn, 2009), pp. 165-82 and James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997).