



European Migration in the Late Twentieth Century

Historical Patterns,
Actual Trends,
and Social Implications

Edited by
Heinz Fassmann
and
Rainer Münz

Chapter 13

Emigration from the Former Soviet Union: The Fourth Wave

Anatoli Vishnevsky and Zhanna Zayonchkovskaya

13.1 The First Three Waves of Emigration

Prerevolutionary Russia participated in the great intercontinental migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to some estimates, between 1861 and 1915, 4.3 million people left Russia, of which almost 2.6 million during 1900–15. Two-thirds of the emigrants left for the USA (Obolenskiy, 1928: 20). Compared with the whole population of Czarist Russia, this number of emigrants was not very significant; in contrast with many other European countries, the possibility of internal agrarian colonization provided an alternative to mass emigration.

The First Wave (1917–38)

After the 1917 revolution the Soviet Union experienced several waves of mass emigration. They were largely linked to specific political circumstances and greatly differed from the prerevolutionary economic emigration pattern. It has been estimated that between 1917 and 1938 some 4–5.5 million people left the country (Heitman, 1987: 10; 1991: 2; Vishnevsky and Zayonchkovskaya, 1991: 5–7; Tsaplin, 1989: 177).

Table 13.1. Emigration from the former Soviet Union, 1948–90.

	Jews	Germans	Armenians	Greeks	Others	Total
1948–70	25,200	22,400	12,000	—	—	59,600
1971–80	248,900	64,300	34,100	—	—	347,300
1981–86	16,900	19,500	6,300	1,300	—	44,000
1987–90	301,300	308,200	31,700	23,000	20,200	684,400
Total						
1948–90	592,300	414,400	84,100	24,300	20,200	1,135,300
Proportion of total (%)	52.1	36.5	7.4	2.1	1.9	100.0

Source. Heitman (1991: 2).

The Second Wave (1939–47)

The second wave of emigration occurred during and after World War II. According to some Western estimates, between 8 and 10 million people emigrated in this period, whereas recent Russian estimates put the figure at only 5.5 million. The main divergences are in the estimates of the emigration of Poles and Baltic peoples. Emigration studies were never priority research topics in the former Soviet Union and both public opinion and specialists know little if anything about it. However, they now have access to archives so their knowledge of the history of emigration will grow. However, one should not ignore the fact that emigration from the country during periods of political and military turmoil is not always recorded in the archives, so that much of the information is often irretrievably lost. During the same time about 600,000–700,000 immigrants (Ukrainians, Belarussians, Armenians, etc.) came to the USSR.

The Third Wave (1948–90)

The third wave of emigration, for the first time relatively voluntary, appears to have been much smaller (1.1 million emigrants) than the first two (*Table 13.1*). In using these estimates we have to bear in mind their approximate and illustrative nature, as is usually emphasized by the authors of publications.

Beginning in 1961, official data from the USSR State Statistics Board (see *Figure 13.1*) show that, in the 1960s during the Khrushchev regime and immediately afterward, there was some immigration to the USSR. They were mainly Armenians returning to their historical homeland, refugees from China, and a sharply increased flow of students who came to the USSR for extended periods from Asia and Africa. There

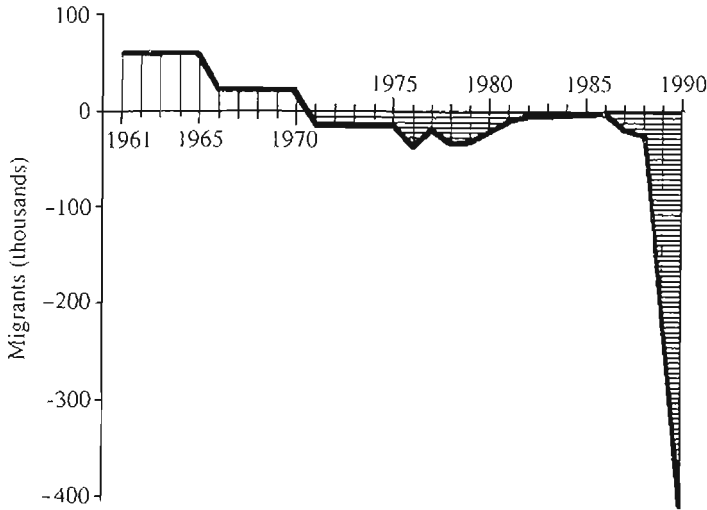


Figure 13.1. Net migration of the population of the former Soviet Union, 1961–90. Five-year averages for 1961–65 and 1966–70. Source: Vishnevsky and Zayonchkovskaya (1991).

was certainly a small outflow, too, but it was well compensated by immigration, thus making the migration balance positive.

During the later decades the inflow decreased sharply. There was also an outflow, but it was a thin stream limited by strict bans, so that the migration balance became negative. During the 1970s the figures of negative net migration were between 10,000 and 15,000 people, rising in certain years to 30,000 to 45,000, but during the 1980s emigration figures were even smaller.

A fundamental change took place in 1988 when almost free emigration of Jews, ethnic Germans, and Greeks and travel to the West by private invitation were allowed. The population quickly reacted to the greater freedom of movement. In 1988 emigration from the USSR increased 2.5 times compared with 1987 (108,000 against 39,000), again more than doubled in 1989 (235,000) and doubled again in 1990 (452,000). The reverse flow was not large. The distinctive feature of the USSR international migration exchange in recent years has been its strongly pronounced one-sidedness: a great increase in emigration while immigration has remained negligible.[1]

The main flow of emigrants in 1988–90 (about two-thirds) came, almost equally, from Russia, the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan (*Table 13.2*).

Table 13.2. Geographic origin of permanent emigrants (number of exit permits issued), in %.

Republics	1980	1988	1989	1990
Russia	19.1	19.1	20.2	22.9
Ukraine	18.5	16.4	21.3	21.1
Belarus	9.4	3.0	6.2	7.5
Moldova	10.8	2.0	3.2	4.6
Lithuania	3.0	0.6	0.8	0.8
Latvia	3.7	1.0	1.3	1.1
Estonia	1.2	1.5	0.7	0.2
Georgia	2.5	0.8	1.5	1.4
Azerbaijan	2.7	0.5	1.3	2.7
Armenia	14.9	14.6	5.2	1.2
Uzbekistan	1.9	3.3	4.3	9.3
Kyrgyzstan	2.6	9.8	7.1	4.0
Tajikistan	2.5	5.5	4.5	2.8
Turkmenistan	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Kazakhstan	7.0	21.8	22.5	20.4
Total (former USSR)	36,366	108,189	234,994	452,262

Considerable flows also came from Belarus (7.5%) and Moldova (4.6%). From the European part the emigrants were mostly Jews, and from Kazakhstan and Central Asia mainly ethnic Germans. The share of emigrants from Central Asia was only 16%. The most intensive emigration flow came from the capitals and their surrounding areas. In 1989–90 about 40% of emigrants from Russia were inhabitants of Moscow and from the city and province of St. Petersburg. In 1990 emigrants from the Ukraine came mainly from the city of Kiev and Odessa province, those from Belarus came from Gomel province and the city of Minsk, and those from Kazakhstan came from Karaganda province and the city and province of Alma-Ata.

In spite of great quantitative changes during the late 1980s, qualitatively we can still identify the same third wave of emigration consisting of representatives of several national minorities who were given the right of free emigration, most of whom returned to their historical homelands or to join powerful foreign diaspora. In fact it was only due to political and economic pressure at the international level and support from abroad that the third wave of emigration had become so numerous, and this is its distinctive feature. A variety of factors motivated these emigrants to leave the country – economic, political, ethnocultural, and religious – but they all had one thing in common: politically powerful bridgeheads abroad.

For certain parts of the population of the former USSR these specific "ethnic" factors of the third wave of emigration will continue in the future, but their importance will inevitably diminish, whereas economic and political factors are already becoming apparent. The Law on Emigration from and Immigration to the USSR adopted by the Supreme Soviet in May 1991, which came into effect on 1 January 1993 in Russia and probably in other states in the new federation CIS, guarantees freedom of travel and migration as a basic human right that will enable citizens of all CIS countries, regardless of their ethnic origins, to emigrate for economic and other reasons, such as to search for work. Considering the present state of the Russian, Ukrainian, Belarussian, and other CIS economies and the overall sociopolitical crisis, there is every reason to suppose that there is the potential for increased emigration, which may become a mass movement. Many, if not all newly independent states will face a new, fourth wave of emigration.

13.2 Potential Composition of the Fourth Wave of Emigration

It is already possible to identify the components of this future wave of emigration. It may include:

1. Continuation of the third wave of ethnic emigration of people dissatisfied with their position in the legal successor states of the USSR, primarily national or religious minorities.
2. New ethnic emigration which may conventionally be called "post-colonial" and which will affect major ethnic groups, particularly Russians who are forced to leave the regions where they do not belong to the new national majority.
3. "Economic" emigration of two groups. "European" emigrants will include the skilled labor force, creating a "brain-drain" from Russia and the European republics due to worsening economic conditions or simply because of the more profitable conditions of labor abroad. "Asian" emigrants will include unskilled workers from the Asian republics in response to the population explosion, agrarian overpopulation, and low rates of development in nonagrarian sectors of the economy, when it will be impossible or inexpedient to emigrate to Russia or other European republics of the former USSR.

4. Political and ecological refugees who may arise from situations of bitter political crises or ecological catastrophes.

13.2.1 Continuation of the third wave of emigration

The new Law on Emigration affects all citizens of the former USSR including, naturally, those who constitute the main part of the third wave of emigration, which will thus merge into the fourth. In the first place it is necessary to assess the potential of that part of future emigration flows.

According to our estimates, the number of national minorities who could be regarded as potential emigrants attracted by other countries and ethnic communities living abroad hardly exceeded 8 million people in 1989. The most numerous among them, according to the 1989 census, were ethnic Germans (2 million), Jews (1.4 million; including Jews from Central Asia and Georgia, 1.5 million), and Poles (1.1 million). In addition to these ethnic groups, Chesnais (1991a: 8) included in his list 178,000 Karelians and Finns, 439,000 Koreans, 385,000 Greeks, 171,000 Hungarians, 40,000 Persians, 25,000 Czechs and Slovaks, 262,000 Gypsies, and 208,000 Turks.

Since the 1989 census no fewer than 300,000 Germans, 400,000 Jews, and about 100,000 Armenians have left the country. Hence the maximum potential that existed in 1989 and which we estimated at 8 million people has now decreased by at least 10%. Considering the emigration that took place after the 1989 census, the four most numerous groups of potential "ethnic" emigrants – Germans, Jews, Poles, and Armenians – now include about 5–5.5 million people (see *Figure 13.2*).

Each of these national minorities has its own reasons for emigration, but a number of factors may also discourage emigration. Many of them have deep roots in the places of their present residence, most were born and sometimes have lived there for several generations, have never been to their historical homeland, often do not know its language, and have no permanent contacts with it. Moreover, they are not always particularly welcomed in their historical homelands.

In this sense, an article published in *Izvestia* under the headline "March of Soviet Poles to Warsaw will not take place" is significant. As is known, large numbers of Poles were repatriated to Poland during the postwar period, particularly in 1945–46. The 1950 census in Poland showed that 2.1 million residents had arrived from those regions which

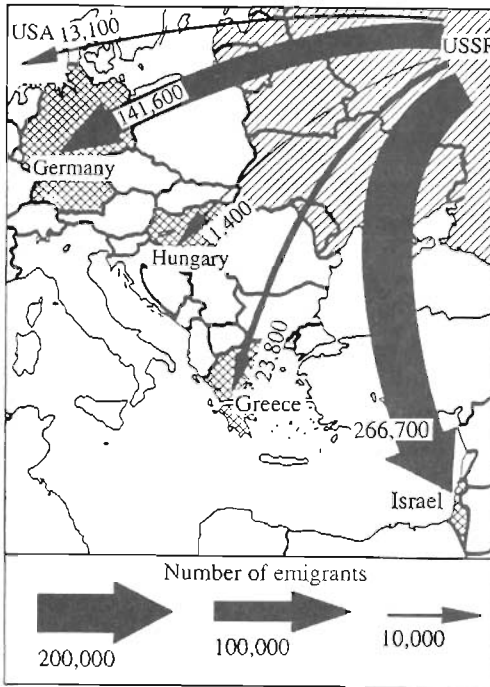


Figure 13.2. Emigration from the USSR in 1990 by countries of destination (number of exit permits issued). Source: Vishnevsky and Zayonchkovskaya (1991).

after 1939 had become part of the USSR (Marianski, 1969: 128) and in 1955–58 they were joined by 200,000 repatriated Poles. But according to the 1989 census there were still 1,126,000 Poles in the USSR, living in rather compact areas in Belarus, the Ukraine, and Lithuania, only 30.5% of whom consider Polish to be their mother tongue. In fact that they did not take advantage of repatriation in 1944–47 nor in 1956–57. No less important is the position of the Polish side. *Izvestia* quotes the Polish newspaper *Courier Polski*:

According to the Foreign Affairs Consular and Refugees Department it is impossible to agree to a mass emigration of Poles from the USSR in the present financial state of the country. Suppose one million Poles returned to Poland within five years; that would need from 20 to 30 trillion Polish zloty [\$2–3 billion]. . . . Emigration [to Poland] of a considerable number of Poles. . . would contradict the political interests of Poland. (*Izvestia*, 1991)[2]

Thus, if we talk about the continuation of the third wave of emigration, we might conclude that its actual potential seems to be much smaller than the annual 500,000 people estimated by Western experts (see Chesnais, 1991a: 11). In certain years this level may be achieved, but it is unlikely to continue for a lengthy period.

13.2.2 New ethnic emigration

The numbers of national ethnic minorities who are emigrating most actively now will inevitably decrease due to the fall in the overall number of potential emigrants in this category. However, this does not mean that such emigration will disappear completely; on the contrary, it will soon receive new impulses connected with serious changes in the migratory and also in the general political situation inside the country. The main nations – especially the Russians – are becoming new minorities in many regions and republics. Sooner or later many of them might find themselves involved in the emigration process, perhaps as a result of a process of “decolonization”.

Russian territorial expansion began several centuries ago and was driven by the desire to extend the borders of the Russian Empire. With the occupation and colonization of new territories it sharply increased in the nineteenth century as a result of both military expansion and agricultural colonization. The growth of demographic pressure and increasing overpopulation that forced peoples from many European countries to cross the ocean led in Russia to “internal” colonization, for she had enough free and sparsely populated territories available within her own borders.[3] Russians and many other ethnic groups took part in the peopling of Novorossia, the regions near the Urals, Siberia, the Far East, the steppes of Kazakhstan, etc. This internal colonization saved them from the necessity to emigrate overseas; thus even now there is no sizable Russian diaspora abroad.

In the present century the emigration of Russians to the peripheral regions of the country received a strong new impetus through urbanization. Before World War I and in the years of the first Soviet five-year plan, the urbanization occurred largely within the territory of Russia and the Ukraine, but after World War II it spread to include the economic and geographical peripheries of the USSR. The citizens of the central districts of Russia were most mobile at that time, and rushed to the growing towns in Belarus, Moldova, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and

Table 13.3. Increase in Russian populations living outside Russia, 1959–89.

Year	Number of ethnic Russians (millions)			Increase in ethnic Russian population (%)		
	In the (former) USSR	In Russia	Outside Russia	In the USSR	In Russia	Outside Russia
1959	114.1	97.9	16.2	—	—	—
1970	129.0	107.7	21.3	13.1	10.0	31.5
1979	137.4	113.5	23.9	6.5	5.4	12.2
1989	145.2	119.9	25.3	5.7	5.6	5.9

to several autonomous republics of the Russian Federation. A part of that flow was linked to the development of the natural resources of the outlying territories, such as mineral deposits, virgin lands, etc.

In the postwar period there was also an intensive flow of ethnic Russians to Latvia and Estonia, where the natural rate of increase in population in the 1960s was low and living standards were higher than in other areas of the country. That inflow resulted in serious changes in the ethnic composition of the population. In the mid-1930s Latvians made up 76.2% of the population in Latvia, Estonians 90.7% of the population in Estonia, and Russians 9.7% of the population in Latvia and 5.6% in Estonia (Marianski, 1969: 167). In 1989 the percentage of Latvians in Latvia had fallen to 52%, of Estonians in Estonia to 61.5%, while the Russian population had grown to 34% and 30%, respectively.

In the 1960s the growth of the Russian population outside the territory of Russia was 2.4 times greater than in the USSR as a whole, mostly as a result of migration. But the 1970s saw new trends. The inflow of ethnic Russians into other republics slowed down, while their number outside Russia increased by twice as much as in the USSR as a whole. In the 1980s it barely exceeded the USSR level. This means that their outflow from Russia had practically stopped and remigration was well under way (*Table 13.3*).

The migration processes of the 1960s and 1970s gradually prepared for the events of the 1980s, when the remigration of ethnic Russians into their republic replaced their territorial expansion. Strictly speaking, the process of ousting Russians began much earlier. It began in Georgia, from which the rapid outflow of Russians began in the 1960s: from 1959 to 1988 the number of Russians in Georgia fell by 18%, which means that emigration greatly exceeded the natural rate of increase of ethnic Russians. Azerbaijan was to follow. There the outflow of Russians

Table 13.4. Index of growth of Russian populations in (former) Soviet republics (USSR = 100).

Republics	1959-70	1970-79	1979-89
Russia	0.97	0.99	1.00
Ukraine	1.14	1.08	1.02
Belarus	1.26	1.14	1.02
Moldova	1.25	1.15	1.05
Lithuania	1.03	1.06	1.07
Latvia	1.12	1.09	1.04
Estonia	1.23	1.15	1.10
Georgia	0.86	0.88	0.86
Azerbaijan	0.90	0.88	0.78
Armenia	1.04	1.00	0.69
Uzbekistan	1.19	1.06	0.94
Kyrgyzstan	1.21	1.00	0.95
Tajikistan	1.16	1.08	0.93
Turkmenistan	1.05	1.05	0.91
Kazakhstan	1.23	1.02	0.98

started at the same time and their numbers began to decrease in the 1970s. Altogether, since 1959, it has decreased by 22%. The outflow of Russians from Central Asia started in the second half of the 1970s (*Table 13.4*).

Between 1979 and 1988 the remigration of ethnic Russians went on in most of the republics, although emigration to some republics continued, but at a much slower pace. The Russian population was already decreasing in Central Asia and in Transcaucasia, but emigration into the Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, and Moldova continued. In 1989 Russians left only for the Ukraine and Belarus, and only a few of them went to Estonia, whereas they were returning from other republics (*Table 13.5*).

Thus, the remigration of ethnic Russians is not a new phenomenon but a tendency that began in the early 1970s. But in recent times the pace of this process has been increasingly determined by the social and political developments in the various republics of the former USSR. As a result of the many years of migratory movements from the Russian center of the country to its developing peripheries, more than 25 million ethnic Russians (17.4% of their overall number in the former USSR) are now living outside Russia, almost 70% of them concentrated in the Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The number of Russians is highest among the population of Kazakhstan, and in Latvia, Estonia, and Kyrgyzstan (see *Figure 13.3*).

Table 13.5. Migrations of Russians to and from other (former) Soviet republics, 1989 (thousands).

Republics	Arrivals to Russia from other republics	Departures from Russia for other republics	Migration balance of ethnic Russians
Ukraine	102.1	136.1	-34.0
Belarus	17.5	23.0	-5.5
Moldova	6.8	6.8	0.0
Lithuania	4.8	4.4	0.4
Latvia	7.4	6.9	0.5
Estonia	4.9	5.2	-0.3
Georgia	7.8	3.4	4.4
Azerbaijan	11.1	4.0	7.1
Armenia	4.0	1.0	3.0
Uzbekistan	21.5	15.1	6.4
Kyrgyzstan	9.0	7.4	1.6
Tajikistan	6.9	4.7	2.2
Turkmenistan	4.7	4.3	0.4
Kazakhstan	63.0	52.5	10.5
Total	271.5	274.8	-3.3

A relatively new phenomenon is the appearance of ethnic Russian refugees from the areas of severe ethnic conflict. Thus, in April 1992 some 73,500 ethnic Russians, "forced to leave the places of their permanent residence" outside Russia were officially registered in Russia. Even when Russians leave other republics not because of direct danger arising from interethnic clashes, but in a relatively calm situation, their departure often appears to have been forced. A feeling of danger is driving ethnic Russians and other Russian-speaking peoples, i.e., those representing Russian culture, out of Central Asia and certain other regions of the former USSR, as is evidenced by the strong increase in net out-migration from some of these areas.

Similar to the period of Russian settlement migration (to Siberia and Central Asia), which also brought Ukrainians, Belarussians, Jews, Armenians, Tatars, etc., to the peripheries of Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union, today the current flow of remigrating ethnic Russians has been increased by people from these other groups.[4] At present it is evident that the exodus of Russians and the accompanying groups from the CIS and Baltic states is likely to continue. It is particularly true of those states where Russians are few in number and dispersed over large areas. It is more difficult to forecast the development of events in regions with more numerous and sufficiently concentrated Russian populations, such as eastern Ukraine, northern Kazakhstan, and Estonia.

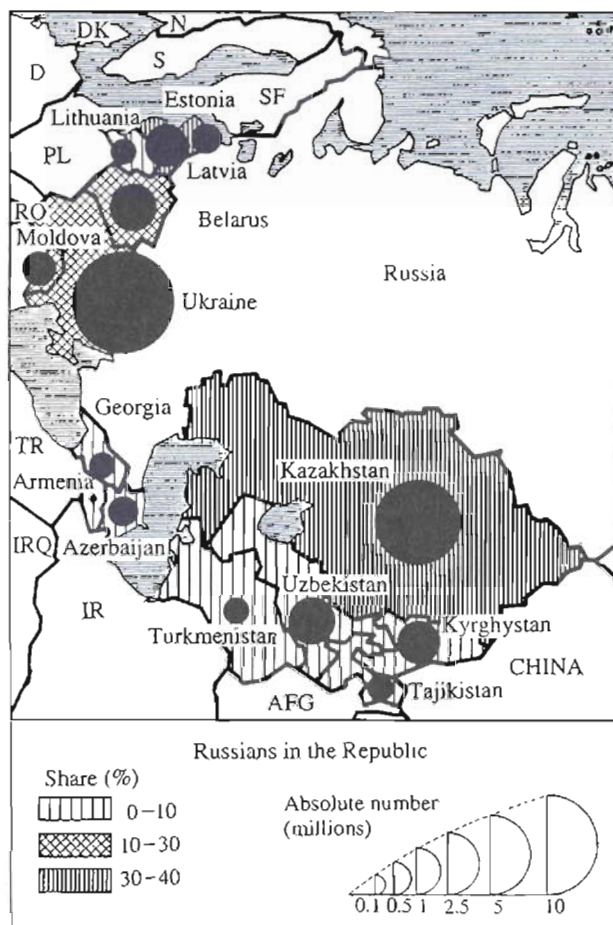


Figure 13.3. The number of Russians living outside the Russian Federation, 1989. Sources: Vishnevsky and Zayonchkovskaya (1991).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its transformation into 15 new states has meant that 60 million people have become members of new ethnic minorities. In many cases this will lead to voluntary or forced migration – a process that will reduce the ethnic heterogeneity of the CIS and Baltic states. The largest group consists of 25 million ethnic Russians who find themselves for the first time in the position of being a national minority. Many of them are willing to return to Russia, but for the time being conditions for considerable numbers of return migrants

in Russia are unfavorable. Russia is neither materially nor psychologically prepared to receive large numbers of ethnic Russians from the neighboring republics, let alone representatives of other nations. Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union even have difficulties accommodating the army contingents that are now being withdrawn from other countries.

Freedom of movement within Russia is still restricted. Moscow, St. Petersburg, most major cities, and many regional centers are trying to curb the inflow of population. The lack of a real housing market greatly complicates spatial mobility and the process of resettlement, so that many ethnic Russians who were forced to leave their former places of residence outside Russia remain homeless or without stable accommodation. In Russia most of them cannot settle in their familiar environments. In the suburbs of the bigger cities it is difficult to obtain plots of land on which to build houses, so that many of these return migrants are forced into outlying rural districts with shrinking local populations. It is clear that people used to urban life have tremendous problems in adapting to living conditions in these rural peripheries.

If the situation does not change many ethnic Russians (as well as Ukrainians, Belarussians, and other national minorities in similar situations) will start looking for opportunities either to settle in a state where their ethnic group forms a majority or to emigrate abroad. This has been confirmed by several opinion polls. According to the results of one of these polls 18% of the members of these ethnic minorities, mostly skilled workers, are planning to leave the country (*Mezhdunarodnaya Gazeta*, 1991: 159). A field survey of 945 ethnic migrants, conducted by the Center of Demography and Human Ecology of the Institute for Employment Studies (G. Vitkovskaya), showed that 27% of them would like to emigrate to another country. Of those who would like to emigrate, 42% are highly trained professionals. Comparing the intensity of the third and fourth waves of emigration, it is interesting to note that five times as many Armenian refugees desire to leave the former USSR as Russian refugees.

13.2.3 Emigration for economic reasons

“European” Emigration

Despite the prospect of new waves of “ethnic” migration, it is unlikely that they will determine the nature of the fourth wave of emigration. The

economic crises that all the new nation-states of the former USSR are now experiencing will increase the potential for mass emigration to the West, i.e., emigration that is not associated with ethnic tensions and the decolonization processes mentioned above. The main motives for the expected fourth wave of emigration are economic and to a certain degree social, i.e., the opportunity for improving living standards, individual incomes, working conditions, etc.

Under prevailing conditions, those who have higher skills and a good education are the most likely to emigrate to the West. One might call this brain-drain a "European" wave of emigration because these emigrants are more likely to come from the European part of the former USSR than from the Asian part of Russia. The populations of these western regions are much better prepared to adapt to the Western way of life, they are more spatially and occupationally mobile, and they have a better knowledge of West European languages.

It is extremely difficult to assess the possible scale of this "European" type of economic migration. Until now it has not been part of the international migration of labor. The first steps are being taken now to conclude intergovernment agreements that will permit a strictly limited number of Russian, Ukrainian, Belarussian, and Baltic citizens to go to West European countries for limited periods of time. However, this involves some tens of thousands of people, whereas according to the results of several opinion polls several million people appear to be ready to leave the country as labor migrants.[5]

In 1991 Tikhonov, a researcher from the Center of Demography and Human Ecology of the Institute for Employment Studies, conducted a study of 30 experts, representatives of the state government apparatus (high-ranking ministry employees), socioeconomics (heads of scientific institutions), and business (owners of enterprises and brokerage offices, members of stock exchange committees) to estimate their prospects of emigration from the territory of the former USSR. Half of the experts thought that about 2–4 million emigrants could be expected for the period 1992–97; and 20% of the experts thought emigration during this period will not exceed 2 million people, 30% expected 4–5 million emigrants. Estimates of the number of emigrants by the turn of the century were less definite, varying from 400,000 to 2 million emigrants per year, although almost half of the experts (40%) limited their estimates to 400,000–800,000 per year. Most of the experts agreed that the "ethnic" feature of emigration will weaken, and that the level of

skills and education will be the basis for the next wave of emigration. Most experts think that in the future emigrants will be dominated by representatives of specific professions with high and very high professional skills.

Thus, "European" emigration of labor, which is expected both by experts and by public opinion, has the characteristic features of a brain-drain from a poor country that nevertheless has a relatively high cultural, scientific, and technological potential. This forecast fully corresponds with developments that are now taking place. According to published information, some 70,000 scientists had already left the country by 1989. In 1990 one in six Soviet emigrants was a scientist, an engineer, or a medical doctor.

"Asian" Emigration

"Asian" emigration for economic reasons may have a different nature than the "European" type. Its basic cause is agrarian overpopulation and competition in the labor market, with rapid natural increases in the population and labor force.

In the new nation-states, such competition has so far led to the ousting of minorities and foreign borns by members of indigenous and majority populations, replacing them in many jobs. In Central Asia, for example, the number of workers of indigenous nationalities in all republics almost doubled between 1977 and 1987, whereas the number of workers of other nationalities increased by only 3–9%; in Turkmenistan it decreased by 12%. In all cases the share of indigenous nationalities within the labor force exceeded their share in the overall population. There has been a sharp rise in the spatial and socioeconomic mobility of members of the indigenous and majority populations, which is being pushed by rural overpopulation. Fewer and fewer jobs are left for other nationalities.

However, the ousting of newcomers and minorities does not, of course, solve all the problems raised by overpopulation and often precedes a considerable outflow of sections of the indigenous population. The former USSR experienced a series of such population outflows, but previously they passed quite peacefully and almost unnoticed. Over a period of 20 years there has been an exodus of Armenians from Armenia, and of Moldavians, Kazan Tatars, and Northern Caucasian people from their territories. This exodus became particularly visible in the intercensal period of 1979–89, particularly from Moldova, Central Asia,

Transcaucasia, and Northern Caucasus. Most active were Moldavians, who scattered throughout the country. Russia, the Ukraine, and the Baltic states all received immigrants.[6]

Nevertheless the outflows from these regions were smaller than could have been expected from the development of main economic indicators. The main cause seems to have been the low social and spatial mobility of Central Asian populations. This leads to a paradoxical situation described, for example, in an article in *Izvestia* (15 June 1991):

Tashkent needs workers. Local enterprises and construction works need 15,000 workers. . . . The aviation plant alone has about 2,000 vacancies, and the textiles group of enterprises 1,500. . . . This group, which has been taken on lease, is forced to shuttle temporary workers from the neighboring regions of Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, in the town itself, paradoxically as it may seem, about 25,000 of its citizens are considered to be unemployed.

Low occupational mobility, as described in this chapter, can only exist under the conditions of a rural economy with undeveloped monetary and market relations, a traditional economy preserved by the so-called socialist system. Sooner or later spatial and occupational mobility will also become an economic necessity in Central Asia. Then representatives of indigenous peoples, such as Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kirghiz, Turkmenians, and others, will to a larger extent occupy the internal labor market. But they will also start to move in larger numbers beyond the borders of their own nation-states.

Most of this labor force will be absorbed by the economic space of Russia, the Ukraine, and other parts of the former USSR; for it is easier for Uzbeks or Kazakhs to adapt themselves to the conditions of Russia or the Ukraine than to those of the West European labor market. However, other scenarios might also make sense.

Even now migratory streams are extremely sensitive to the aggravation of the crisis, to the flaring up of nationalism, ethnic clashes, and local wars, and to the decline in living standards. The analysis of the data for recent years shows that migrations have become more limited geographically. The growth of the spatial mobility of the population which had just started among the nations of Central Asia and reached a high level among Transcaucasian peoples, Moldavians, and Kazakhs has suddenly stopped. The national interchange has narrowed. All this has led to an increase in unemployment in Central Asia and eventually to the aggravation of both economic and national tensions.

Since 1988–89 competition in the labor markets and controversies over citizenship, political power, ownership, use of land, etc., have in

many areas led to nationalism and ethnic conflicts and even wars, not only between Russians and the new majorities but also between local nationalities and religious groups within the new states (e.g., the conflicts in the Osh region between the Kirghiz and Uzbeks; in the Fergana Valley between the Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks; in the Northern Caucasus between the Chechens and Ingushis; the civil wars in Moldova between the ethnic Moldavians, ethnic Russians, and Gagauz Turks; in Georgia between the Ossetes and ethnic Georgians; and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan). Political instabilities, which have most often acquired ethnic, sometimes ethno-religious overtones, have become one of the main push factors that have forced various ethnic and religious groups to flee. At the same time, these processes make it unsafe for them to go to other neighboring states. For historical reasons the main destinations for these refugees and emigrants from Transcaucasia and Central Asia are Russia and other states in the European part of the former USSR. However, the present economic and political crises in these states may reduce the pace of this migration process, but it urges other population groups to emigrate. This applies especially to Caucasians: Armenians, Georgians, and Azerbaijanis, but also Avarians, Darjenes, Chechens, Ossetes, Ingushis, and others. These populations are highly mobile, largely urbanized, and many of them are actively looking for jobs and opportunities in urban areas. In contrast, the indigenous peoples of Central Asia are still less mobile and rarely leave their republics, despite low living standards and unemployment. However, agrarian overpopulation is quickly growing there, so that interethnic conflicts that stimulate both ethnic cleansing and gradual resettlement may change the picture.

Since Russia's big cities are no longer safe havens for potential migrants of non-Russian descent, many of them have started to look for other destinations. For example, Meskhetian Turks are now more likely to emigrate to Turkey, whereas in many other cases the orientation is most often toward the West, although emigration to countries like Iran and Afghanistan could also become an alternative.

The economic opportunities for the various groups of would-be migrants are different. All nations and nationalities in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Northern Caucasia have elite groups with high levels of professional qualifications and education. Their emigration would lead to the same kind of brain-drain as the emigration of skilled labor from the European part of Russia, the Ukraine, or the Baltic states. But these elites might not only go to the

West; some specialists will probably migrate to Turkey, Iran, and some Arab countries. For the majority of the populations of these regions the situation is different: if they were to leave their countries of origin, their emigration would be comparable to the emigration of unskilled labor from the Third World. However, such labor migration from Central Asia to the West and to some Gulf states is unlikely to take place during the coming decade, for the following reasons:

1. The mobility of the indigenous populations of Central Asia and Azerbaijan is still low and is unlikely to grow very rapidly.
2. The geographical and economic position of Central Asia and Kazakhstan will not immediately enforce stronger ties with the West and with the Gulf states.
3. The populations of these regions lack traditional relations with the West, as do the people living in former British and French colonies, that would facilitate their entry to the European labor markets. Unlike Armenians, the predominantly Muslim peoples of Central Asia have no ethnic bridgeheads in the West. Therefore if emigration from the above-mentioned regions begins, the labor markets and economic niches of Russia and the Ukraine are most likely to be explored first.
4. The requirements of the Western economy are changing: the demand for long-distance unskilled labor migrants is falling, making it even less likely that people with no knowledge of English, French, or German will find ways to establish themselves in the West.

For all of these reasons, the appearance in Europe of larger numbers of Uzbeks, Kazakhs, or Azerbaijanis seems to be very unlikely.

13.3 In Search of a Reasonable Strategy

In the past, the media in the former Soviet Union, Russia, and the West have published estimates of the potential number of East–West migrants. Most of them were based on the extrapolations of the tendencies of ethnic migration in recent years (but, as we have seen, they cannot automatically be applied to other types of migration) or on public opinion polls (which inevitably reflect the lack of experience with migration). Most estimates were, as a rule, greatly exaggerated. It was said, for example, that there would be 5, 6, or even 20 million potential emigrants just waiting for an opportunity to leave for the West. It is sometimes

suggested that such estimates are purposefully aimed at frightening the West to increase and speed up financial aid to the former USSR. In reality, the serious restricting factors that exist in both the former USSR and in the potential countries of destination will undoubtedly limit East–West migration.

Shrinking economies and continuing crises are likely to force more and more people to look for better earnings, working conditions, and living standards. Moreover, political instability, if it continues for a long time, will contribute to this. On the other hand, new political and economic realities may act in the reverse direction. For instance, in some new nation-states the euphoria of independence and the growth of national sentiments may serve as counterbalances to economic push factors. The Baltic republics, which have large diaspora abroad, are even encouraging their former countrymen and their descendants to return from the USA, Canada, and Western Europe. In the larger states such as Russia and probably in the Ukraine, however, the new states and political situations are unlikely to reduce the push factors.

Emigration presupposes a certain degree of psychological readiness (and as we have seen, at present it is not very high since there are no appropriate traditions in the country), as well as a rather well-developed and complex infrastructure. For the time being, for purely technical reasons, emigration and even travel from Russia, Kazakhstan, or Central Asia to the West is almost impossible for a large majority of the population. Bus, rail, and air transportation capacities, visa-issuing embassies and consulates, frontier and customs services cannot cope with the flow of people who may want to travel or emigrate.

The lack of bridgeheads in the West also has an important impact. Usually a network of emigration linkages and a system of capillaries, facilitating the movement of people from habitual to unfamiliar economic and social environments, are necessary. Such a system is formed gradually alongside the accumulation of immigrants in the receiving countries, their self-organization, the formation of associations of compatriots, immigrant communities, etc. So far, most national groups and minorities living on the territory of the former Soviet Union cannot rely on such networks, a retaining factor that will probably reduce the build-up of the fourth wave of emigration in the years to come. The lack of support networks in the West will not only make emigration more difficult for the migrants of the fourth wave who do finally settle in the West, but their experiences will also lead to greater caution among those

potential emigrants who are now expressing their readiness to leave the country. This effect will also limit the emigration flows.

The anticipation of these difficulties has already had some impact on public debates and policies aiming at the formulation of new strategies for emigration. A growing number of senior civil servants, politicians and other opinion leaders are promoting the idea that emigration should not be impeded through travel restrictions and other prohibitive measures. It would be better to shape and channel unorganized emigration at one's own risk, as is practiced by some former Soviet citizens. The new strategy of the countries of departure should be aimed at a gradual transformation of a "crisis" emigration of parts of the labor force into a "normal" one, largely temporary, at the removal of all obstacles to departure and re-entry, and at the formation of stable flows of emigration and return migration. In the view of most CIS and Baltic states, inter-governmental agreements between the sending and receiving countries should become an element of this strategy.[7]

All this, however, points not only to the complexity of problems engendered by the probable large-scale emigration from the former USSR, but also to the particular geopolitical meaning of their solution. The phenomenon of this emigration itself needs to be better comprehended. It is not sufficient to treat it as "economic" or "ethnic" emigration. It is essential to regard it, perhaps first and foremost, as an indispensable and most important step on the way to the transformation of one of the largest industrial societies on Earth from a closed into an open one, and its inclusion in the world of Western civilization. If no such transformation takes place, and if internal stresses in the former Soviet society result in its new "closure", the implications may be very serious for the entire world.

Notes

- [1] For example, according to the former Ministry of Internal Affairs 235,000 people left the country for permanent residence in 1989, 452,000 in 1990, with only 2,000 people coming to the USSR for the same reason. As a result, net emigration increased 7.5 times in 1989, reaching 204,000 against 27,000 in 1988, and in 1990 it reached 413,000.
- [2] Another characteristic example is an interview given by a representative of the South Korean Embassy to a correspondent of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. When asked, "Would you like to see Soviet Korean repatriates in Seoul?", he answered, "Rather 'no' than 'yes.' We are a small country of more than 40 million people. We, of course, do not close the door to those of our countrymen who wish to return to the land of their ancestors, but we would not like to have a mass immigration of Koreans from abroad.

Soviet Koreans are citizens of the USSR and we would like them to stay in their own country" (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 1991: 6).

- [3] The scale of this colonization was rather large; the Polish geographer Marianski (1969: 152), referred to the peopling of the steppes of the south of Russia "mass colonization. . . that can be compared only with. . . the peopling of the North American prairies."
- [4] For instance, according to the results of a sample survey conducted by the State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, of those who came from outside Russia in 1991 and settled in new areas, 56% were Russians, 15% Ukrainians, 4.2% Armenians, 4.2% Belarussians, 3.2% Tatars, and 2.5% Azerbaijanis.
- [5] Several opinion polls have been conducted by the All-Union Center for Public Opinion Study (Moscow) and by the IOM (see IOM, 1993).
- [6] As a result in Russia the number of ethnic Moldavians in 1979–88 increased by 69%, against 10.5% in their own republic; ethnic Georgians and Armenians increased by 46% (against 10.3 and 13.2%, respectively, in their republics); Azerbaijanis by 220% (24%); Uzbeks and Turkmenians by 180% (34%); Kirghis by 29% (33%); and Tajiks by 210% (46%).
- [7] We should not overlook other aspects of emigration from the former USSR that are acquiring international political significance. It is worth recalling the reaction of the Arabs to the massive flow of emigrants to Israel from the Soviet Union and their settlement in the West Bank and Gaza. Another example is the anxiety of Western countries concerning the possible emigration of Soviet specialists possessing atomic and other military and industrial secrets to countries such as Iraq or Libya.