

The Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies

DAVID W. BELIN LECTURE IN AMERICAN JEWISH AFFAIRS

University of Michigan

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American Jews, Israel, and the
Struggle for Soviet Jewry

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presented March 5, 2009



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Printed in the United States of America.

Lazin, Fred A.
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ISBN 978-1-881759-15-7

FOREWORD

The David W. Belin Lectureship in American Jewish Affairs provides an academic forum for the discussion of contemporary Jewish life in the United States. A generous gift in 1991 from the late David W. Belin of Des Moines and New York established the lectureship. Mr. Belin, a graduate of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, the Business School, and the Law School of the University of Michigan, had a distinguished career in law and public service. He served as counsel to the Warren Commission, which investigated President John F. Kennedy's assassination, and was executive director to the Rockefeller Commission, which investigated CIA activities within the United States. Mr. Belin similarly played a significant leadership role in Jewish public affairs. He served the American Jewish community as a founding Chairman of Reform Judaism's Outreach Commission and founding member of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. His service and leadership reflected his commitment to the viability of American Jewish life and concern for the future of American Jewry, and stimulated him to endow this annual lectureship to provide a forum for the discussion of contemporary Jewish life in the United States.

Since the founding of the lectureship in 1991, the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies has been fortunate to host an illustrious list of scholars. The 2009 Belin lecturer in American Jewish Affairs, Fred Lazin, is uniquely positioned to explicate the complicated subject of Israeli and American Jews' struggles over how best to rescue Soviet Jews. Fred Lazin holds the Lynn and Lloyd Hurst Family Professorship in Local Government, which reflects his dedication to "action-oriented research" and collaboration between the university and community. A native of Massachusetts, he grew up within the indigenous American Zionist movement of Young Judaea and spent a year in Israel before entering the University of Massachusetts, where he majored in Government and History. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate, Lazin also served as chair of the university Hillel organization. He then received his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago and in 1975 joined the relatively new Ben Gurion University. Bringing his American expertise to the challenge of pioneering as an academic in Israel, Fred Lazin helped to establish both an interdisciplinary program

in urban studies and a program of general studies. He has also chaired the Department of Political Science and served as director of the Hubert H. Humphrey Center of Social Ecology.

Fred Lazin's scholarship reflects his involvement in research at the intersection of communal politics and academia. In 1994 he published a volume on Project Renewal in Israel, a study of policy and its implementation. The American Jewish communal initiative called "Project Renewal" sought to reconfigure Jewish support for Israeli localities and to focus on specific social problems. It represented part of an evolving relationship of American Jews with Israeli Jews, a subject to which Fred Lazin returned in subsequent volumes. His lecture "We Are Not One: American Jews, Israel and the Struggle for Soviet Jewry" reflects his research on the Soviet Jewry Movement and extends issues that he explored in his eighth book, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewry in American Politics: Israel versus the American Jewish Establishment* (2005). Lazin received the Israel Political Science Association's award for the outstanding English-language book. This award-winning volume focuses on issues of Jews in American politics, the influence of the Holocaust on American Jewry and the changing relationship between Israel and American Jews. All of these issues are limned in the lecture, providing a provocative overview of a complex, charged topic.

Deborah Dash Moore, *Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History*
Director of the Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies

INTRODUCTION

From 1968, when the Soviet Union began to let some of its Jewish citizens leave for Israel, until 1989, when the gates opened for all Jews who wished to leave, a serious conflict ensued between the Israeli government and leaders of major American Jewish organizations regarding the preferred destination of Soviet Jewish émigrés. Whereas until 1973 almost all émigrés immigrated to Israel, after 1976 most preferred to relocate in the United States. Israeli officials wanted all émigrés to resettle in Israel. While endorsing the Israeli position in principle, the American Jewish leadership — including the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (CJF)¹ — supported “freedom of choice,” arguing they would support those Jews wanting to resettle in the United States. Later, in 1989, the leadership of the American Jewish community abandoned this position and supported policies that resulted in most Soviet émigrés resettling in Israel.

The American Jewish organizations studied here were mostly long-standing and well established, with much of their funding coming from the federations. These organizations played major roles in two umbrella organizations committed to the struggle for Soviet Jewry in the United States: The American Conference on Soviet Jewry (ACSJ), established in 1964, and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ), founded in 1971.

Less attention is given to other well-established organizations, including the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC),

the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (AKA Presidents Conference), the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the American Jewish Congress, as well as the policies and activities of two other relevant organizations, the non-mainstream Union of Councils and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (sssj).² Their neglect here is not intended to minimize their role in the Soviet Jewry movement. The emphasis here on a few well-established organizations reflects archival sources used by the author.³

The analysis of the response of American Jewish leaders to the plight of Soviet Jewry provides important information about the political behavior, influence, and style of a well established minority in the United States. American Jewry came of age during the Soviet Jewry movement.⁴ According to the political scientist Benjamin Ginsberg, since the 1960s American Jews “have come to wield considerable influence in American economic, cultural, intellectual, and political life.” By the 1980s and 1990s, he argues, they played “a major role in electoral politics and public policy....”⁵ This case study also sheds information about the role of Israel in American politics. It shows how Israeli government operatives mobilized American Jewish organizations to influence American government policies on behalf of Soviet Jewry and the State of Israel. It also documents the behind the scenes efforts of the Israeli government to influence American immigration and refugee policy.

THEMES AND CONTEXTS

First, the government of Israel initiated the Soviet Jewry movement in the United States. Its agents in the United States brought about widespread Jewish (and American) consciousness about the plight of Soviet Jewry and influenced major American Jewish organizations to act on behalf of Soviet Jewry. This involved having Jewish leaders (and their organizations and members) working to influence the American government to protest to the Soviet government in hopes of either restoring the cultural rights of Soviet Jews or allowing them to emigrate to Israel. This argument about the pivotal role of Israel in no way belittles the important contributions of grassroots organizations associated with the Union of Councils, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (sssj), and Rabbi Meir Kahane. Rather it recognizes the

crucial role played by Israel's agents in fostering a communitywide effort by American Jews on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

Second, American Jewish leaders' understanding of themselves as Americans and Jews partially influenced their political behavior. In sharp contrast to the insecurity of leaders of the American Jewish Committee during the crises of the 1930s, when German Jews sought refuge from Nazism in the United States, American Jewish leaders in the Soviet Jewry movement were confident about their identity. They were comfortable acting in the American political arena on behalf of "Jewish interests." Not all leaders, however, shared this high comfort level; for example, at times there was a generation gap with some older people urging greater caution.

Third, the government of Israel, particularly after the events of the June 1967 War, strongly influenced American Jewish political behavior. Israel contributed to a sense of pride and security among American Jews that made them more active and aggressive within the American political system.

Fourth, while the leadership of the more established organizations generally followed the lead of Israeli officials in joining the struggle on behalf of Soviet Jewry, the Soviet Jewry movement and its American Jewish leaders by the mid 1970s became more independent and acted out of their own self-interest as American Jews. The American Jewish self-interest clashed with the interests of Israel. Of particular interest is the "freedom of choice" debate in the mid to late 1970s when Soviet Jews began to prefer resettlement in the United States. In November 1976 and several times thereafter, American Jewish leaders rejected Israeli demands that they stop aiding Soviet Jewish émigrés resettling in the United States.⁶ The leadership of most major American federations and of most mainstream non-Zionist Jewish organizations preferred the principle of "freedom of choice" for Soviet Jews at the expense of Israeli interests. Later, in 1989, when American Jewish leaders supported a U.S. quota on Soviet Jewish refugees that resulted in mass Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel, serving Israeli interests was not those leaders' chief motivation.

The findings here confirm an observation made by the Israeli journalist Nahum Barnea in January 1977 that the Soviet Jewry issue is the "start of a challenge to Israel's preeminence in American Jewish communal affairs." In effect, involvement in the struggle for Soviet Jewry made Israel less important to American Jews.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: A COMPARISON TO THE 1930S

In researching the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and B'nai B'rith I found that American Jewish leaders were unable to influence their government to act on behalf of German Jews and German Jewish refugees. The leadership of the AJC sought to obtain a protest by the American government against Hitler's anti-Jewish policies and to facilitate the entry of German Jews into the United States within the immigration quota, but they lacked the influence to produce these actions. The United States government refused to intercede on behalf of German Jews and only condemned Hitler following the events of Kristallnacht on November 10-11, 1938. Also the German immigration quota in the U.S. was not filled until 1938.⁷

The failure and shortcomings of the American Jewish response on behalf of German Jewry is often explained by the difficult economic and political times. The United States was in an economic depression with millions of people out of work. The mood of the country was isolationist, and anti-Semitism among Protestant and Catholic groups was widespread and increasing. Public sentiment opposed almost any increase in immigration, even of children.⁸ But the self-perception of American Jewish leaders also influenced their response. Many of the men in the American Jewish Committee were insecure as American Jews. They understood that Jews were an outsider minority, and they opposed the idea of Jews participating in public demonstrations, let alone criticizing the president or secretary of state for inaction on behalf of German Jews. The American Jewish Committee in 1935 worried that if Roosevelt were to break diplomatic ties with Germany in protest over the Nuremberg Laws it could lead to anti-Semitism and charges that Jews control the American government.⁹

In sharp contrast to the 1930s, the organized American Jewish community in the 1970s and 1980s was more influential in national politics, succeeding in getting Congress to act on behalf of Soviet Jews. First, the community's efforts led the U.S. government to pressure the Soviet Union to allow all Jews who wanted to emigrate. Second, American Jews succeeded in persuading the United States to provide financial aid to Israel to resettle Soviet Jews.¹⁰ Third, American Jews won refugee status for Soviet Jews and the opportunity to settle in the United States for those who desired it. In addition, the United States government reimbursed Jewish organizations for the costs incurred in providing Soviet Jewish refugees

temporary housing in Europe, transportation, and initial resettlement in the United States.¹¹ In fact, Soviet Jews seeking refugee status to enter the United States would enjoy preferential treatment vis-a-vis almost all other potential refugee groups for twenty years, from 1968-1988. Once the gates of the Soviet Union opened completely under Gorbachev, Soviet Jewish émigrés lost their special status.

Finally, American Jewish activists of the 1970s and 1980s were comfortable with being American Jews. They lacked the various insecurities characterizing the leadership of the 1930s. For example, whereas in the 1930s many Jewish leaders opposed public protests and criticism of American officials, in the 1970s (as will be seen below) the leadership of the American Jewish community took on the president of the United States in the struggle over the Jackson-Vanik amendment.

INITIATING THE SOVIET JEWRY MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Prior to the late 1960s there was little awareness of a Soviet Jewry problem among American Jews and among Americans in general. In the 1950s and 1960s most Jewish organizations and religious institutions paid scant attention to the plight of Soviet Jews. A possible exception involved the Jewish Labor Committee, which each year marked the suffering and persecution of Soviet Jews. Its events, confined to New York City, rarely attracted more than a few hundred persons at best.¹²

In the 1960s, local groups of American Jews in Cleveland, New York City, and elsewhere organized to protest the status of Jews in the Soviet Union. Several students in New York City organized the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry in the early 1960s. Later, Rabbi Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League protested at Soviet diplomatic missions and Soviet cultural events in the U.S. Yet these activities obscure the importance of Israeli initiatives. Israelis began and initially directed the Soviet Jewry movement among major American Jewish organizations, including the defense organizations, federations, Zionists, and the major synagogue movements.

In Israel in the 1950s several veterans of the Aliyah Bet (illegal immigration) movement — which had operated in Europe and was responsible for moving Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe to the Western zones

of Germany and then to Palestine — looked for a new challenge. They were concerned about the current and future demographic mix of Israeli Jews. Fearing the “Levantinization” of Israeli society due to the large influx of Jews from Arab lands, they wanted to increase the percentage of Ashkenazi Jews among the population.

The Aliyah Bet veterans saw two potential sources of large numbers of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants: the U.S. and the Soviet Union. They doubted that American Jews would ever leave and immigrate to Israel; their lives were too good and secure. On the other hand, they believed that despite Stalin and the Iron Curtain, Soviet Jews could and would someday immigrate to Israel. Though few Aliyah Bet leaders expected this to happen in their lifetimes, under Prime Minister Ben Gurion in 1952, they established the Liaison Bureau whose objective was to foster the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel.¹³ Shaul Avigur was its guiding force. Nehemiah Levanon took over in the late 1960s.

The Liaison Bureau initially sent emissaries to the Soviet Union as members of the Israeli Embassy in Moscow. All members of the first group of three (with three spouses) were fluent in Russian. Their objective was to establish contacts with Jews throughout the Soviet Union and to let the Soviet Jews know that Israel cared and wanted them. Information on Soviet Jewry was collected and sent to Israel where the Liaison Bureau analyzed it for the future.

In 1959 the Liaison Bureau established a special unit named BAR. Its representatives operated in Western Europe and the United States. Believing that Israel lacked influence over the Soviet Union, Isser Harel, Shaul Avigur, and Nehemiah Levanon sought to influence the Western European and American governments to intercede on behalf of Soviet Jewry. They focused on the United States.

BAR argued that Soviet Jews were being denied cultural rights guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution. Liaison Bureau leaders wanted Western governments to pressure Moscow either to grant Jews these rights or let them immigrate to Israel. The Liaison Bureau tried not to appear anti-Communist; it did not seek a regime change in the Soviet Union. In the 1960s and thereafter it tried to enlist support of members of the Communist parties in Western Europe to protest to Moscow on behalf of Soviet Jews. For this reason it would later urge Soviet Jewish activists seeking to immigrate to Israel not to associate with the Soviet dissident movement.¹⁴

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Liaison Bureau stationed a senior representative at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. He worked with Congress, the State Department and national media. A second representative joined the Consular staff in NYC where he was responsible for cultivating leaders of American Jewish organizations and the media. Over the years additional representatives served at times in Israeli consulates in other cities including Los Angeles and Chicago.

The Liaison Bureau's emissaries in the United States worked to put the Soviet Jewry issue on the public agenda. They charged the Soviet state with committing "cultural genocide" against its Jewish citizens. They demanded that the Soviet government honor its Jewish citizens' rights or allow those citizens to leave for their homeland.

While referring to "cultural genocide" the Liaison Bureau emissaries generally did not suggest a potential Holocaust. Yet, others in the Soviet Jewry movement sometimes hinted about a potential slaughter of Soviet Jews. Many activists and scholars have suggested that the American Jewish response to Soviet Jewry was motivated by guilt over the failure to rescue European Jews during the Holocaust.

The American psychiatrist and Soviet Jewry activist Paul Appelbaum claims that early on advocates for Soviet Jewry emphasized the theme of a potential Holocaust in the Soviet Union.¹⁵ As early as 1965 Rabbi Joachim Prinz, chairman of the Presidents Conference and a refugee Rabbi from Hitler's Germany, told Congress that the Soviets, like the Nazis, want "to bring to a close the long Jewish religious and cultural expression."¹⁶ The philanthropist Max Fisher noted "the emotion energizing the community as a combustible fusion of sorrow and guilt over the failure to rescue millions of Jews from Nazi brutality. 'Never again' was the shibboleth of the Jewish Defense League, and though most of American Jewry scorned the JDL's militant tactics, this intense emotional commitment to deterring any semblance of a Holocaust was common in the community."¹⁷

The following three examples illuminate the Liaison Bureau's efforts to get the plight of Soviet Jewry on the public agenda in New York City and the USA in general.

During the regime of Nikita Khrushchev hundreds of people in the Soviet Union were arrested for economic crimes. Some were sentenced to death in the early 1960s. Soviet Jews were overrepresented in both groups. Although some people charged anti-Semitism, the issue did not become

important to most Americans including most American Jews. The situation resulted in little if any protest in the United States.

Moshe Decter, who had previously edited the *New Leader*, which published a double issue in September 1959 on the Jews of the Soviet Union with materials supplied by the Liaison Bureau, had been hired by the Liaison Bureau.¹⁸ His identity as an employee of the Liaison Bureau was not revealed until many years later. Under the Bureau's surreptitious auspices he headed a research organization on Soviet Jews that was housed in a carriage house on the grounds of the American Jewish Congress in Manhattan.¹⁹

Decter drafted a letter of protest to Khrushchev about the arrest of Jews for economic crimes. He convinced Martin Luther King Jr., Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr to sign the letter. The story made the front page of the *New York Times*, thus publicizing the alleged persecution and anti-Semitism. Decter's research organization became the Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews, a "private group of eminent intellectuals, academicians, scientists and artists, labor and civil rights leaders, founded in 1963 by... Norman Thomas, Walter Reuther, William O. Douglas, Martin Luther King Jr., and Arthur Miller." Decter's operation sponsored many academic and public conferences and meetings on the subject of the persecution of Soviet Jewry.

The second example of the Liaison Bureau's efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry concerns Eugene Gold, then district attorney of Brooklyn and later president of the NCJS.²⁰ In coordination with the Liaison Bureau he arranged for the National Association of District Attorneys to sponsor reciprocal national tours with their Soviet counterparts in 1978. Joint meetings were arranged for district attorneys from both countries in cities throughout the USSR and the U.S. In each meeting, several of the Americans would raise the issue of the denial of legal rights to Soviet Jews. Such issues often made the local press, especially during the tour in the United States.

In addition, with the assistance of Liaison Bureau representative Izo Rager, Eugene Gold enlisted Telford Taylor, the chief U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, to contact his Soviet counterpart Roman Rodenko about the alleged persecution of Jewish prisoners of conscience in the Soviet Union. He agreed to appeal some of the cases provided that the Israelis were not involved. The Liaison Bureau's Yitzhak Rager, operating out of the

Israeli consulate, raised funds for the project and hired Alan Dershowitz to co-head the legal team. Eventually Taylor authored a book on the trials in the Soviet Union.²¹

The third example of the Liaison Bureau's efforts involves Elie Weisel and his book on Soviet Jews²², of which anthropologist Fran Markowitz writes, "In the 1960s Elie Weisel shook the Western Jewish world by alerting it to the tragic situation of Soviet Jewry. Wiesel's compelling portrait of the Jews of Silence became the definitive statement of Soviet Jews and their plight. ...[I]t ignited and intensified movements to free Soviet Jews, to stop the ethnocide or cultural denudation of this people."²³

In an interview Wiesel explained that as a New York correspondent for an Israeli newspaper he would have had good reason to go on his own to the Soviet Union to do a story on Soviet Jewish refuseniks. Yet the Liaison Bureau encouraged him to travel, probably funded his trip, arranged for his meetings with Jews in the Soviet Union, and helped him find a publisher for his book.²⁴

Significantly, the translator of Wiesel's manuscript, which was written in French, thanks Moshe Decter for supplying information for the afterword, which provides fifteen or more pages of facts showing how the Soviet Union denied cultural rights for Jewish minorities in several republics.²⁵ If it came from Decter then it came from the Liaison Bureau — all of this without mentioning its name.

The above three examples can be multiplied by tens, hundreds, or possibly thousands, which are the numbers of activities that the Liaison Bureau and its supporters initiated, aided, and conducted in an effort to get American Jews and non-Jews interested in the plight of Soviet Jewry.

In April 1964 several American Jewish organizations gathered in Washington, D.C. to establish the American Conference on Soviet Jewry (ACSJ). The Liaison Bureau played a major role in establishing this organization.²⁶ Two Jewish Senators, Jacob Javits (Republican, New York) and Abraham Ribicoff (Democrat, Connecticut), addressed the group. The ACSJ became an umbrella organization devoted to ending the cultural genocide of Soviet Jews, but it suffered from insufficient funding and a lack of professional staff. Nevertheless, it was a start and attracted most major players in organized American Jewry — and Israeli Liaison Bureau emissaries formally participated in all executive and board meetings.

By 1970 the NJCRAC, which handled community relations in Jewish communities from coast to coast, had come to dominate the American Conference on Soviet Jewry. Liaison Bureau emissaries had a problem with its longtime executive director. They distrusted his Bundist roots and feared he would focus on the revival of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union. Moreover, they feared that he did not care whether Soviet émigrés resettled in Israel or in the United States.²⁷ In addition, it was clear that the structure of the ACSJ was too weak to deal with growing problems and issues of the movement following the alleged failed hijacking of a Soviet plane in Leningrad and subsequent trial. Those events had escalated the public awareness of the Soviet Jewry issue in the United States.

This led to the establishment in 1971 of the larger, better organized and funded National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ). This, too, was an umbrella organization. Among its 38 member organizations were the three synagogue movements, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), B'nai B'rith, and Hadassah. In addition, over 200 local federations, community relations councils, and local Soviet Jewry Committees were affiliated with it. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and NJCRAC both had special standing in the new organization. It had a small permanent staff and regular funding from the CJF.²⁸ At this time, although CJF funded a portion of NCSJ activities, it did not control the organization. Over the years, however, the CJF influence increased and by the late 1980s it was the dominant force in the organization. As with the ACSJ, the Liaison Bureau played an important role in setting up and running the NCSJ. Its emissaries participated in all important meetings and decisions, but their role and influence decreased as the CJF's increased.

The existence of both the ACSJ and NCSJ indicated that there were Soviet Jewry activists and committees in temples and synagogues, Hadassah groups, and B'nai B'rith lodges in all 50 states. This strengthened the lobbying efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry in Congress. For example, the CJF held four annual quarterly meetings that brought hundreds of lay and professional leaders together for a two- or three-day conclave. It would hold one of the quarterlies in Washington, D.C. and on the final day delegates from all over the United States would visit their Congressmen and Senators to lobby them on behalf of Soviet Jewry. The NCSJ also set up an office in D.C. in 1972²⁹ and helped to organize professional advocacy groups for Soviet

Jewry consisting of college professors, medical personnel, Catholic nuns, Christian clergy, and congressional wives.

Evidence of how significant Soviet Jewry became in American politics can be seen in the issues surrounding the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in the early 1970s. Proposed by Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson (Democrat, Washington) and Representative Charles Vanik (Democrat, Ohio), the amendment would deny the Soviet Union Most Favored Nation (MFN) status in trade with the U.S. until it agreed to allow Soviet Jews to emigrate.

The idea for the amendment did not originate with Jackson.³⁰ He took up the cause in response to a Soviet policy to impose an education tax on Soviet Jews wishing to immigrate to Israel.³¹ In exchange for permission to leave the Soviet Union, Jews had to repay the Soviet government for the higher education that they had received. The tax was prohibitive. When it came into effect, Jackson approached several Jewish groups, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the NCSJ, and asked them to support his proposed amendment.³²

At the time President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had proposed extensive trade with the USSR, which they considered vital for America's interests. They appealed for American Jewish opposition to the proposed amendment. Later, they hinted that their opposition might influence U.S. support for Israel at a time when it was vital after the Yom Kippur War of October 1973.

At a special joint meeting, members of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the NCSJ debated the pros and cons of supporting the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. The head of the Presidents Conference and Max Fisher supported President Nixon's position. Rabbi Balfour Brickner of the Reform Movement urged support for Jackson. Brickner won, and both groups went on record supporting the amendment, which Congress subsequently enacted.³³

Significantly, the issue of Soviet Jewry had helped to waylay efforts by the Nixon administration to open extensive trade ties with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Jewry movement and its allies had succeeded in putting the Soviet Jewry issue on the public agenda; support for the free emigration of Soviet Jews helped to block a renewal of trade between Moscow and Washington.

J.J. Goldberg concludes that the struggle over Jackson-Vanik was important for American Jews because they took on both the Nixon ad-

ministration and Kremlin and won. "Jews had proven to the world and to themselves that they could stand up and fight for themselves. The stain of Holocaust abandonment had finally been removed." Hereafter, the American Jewish community would assume a new activism in American politics. For example, they would work to pass legislation against the Arab boycott (1977) and to hunt down Nazi war criminals. Most importantly, they would become politically active to "regularize the entry of Soviet Jewish refugees in the United States..."³⁴ Murray Friedman concurs, arguing the struggle over the amendment transformed a Jewish lobby into a Washington powerhouse in the 1970s and later,³⁵

THE DROPOUTS AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE DEBATE

Because Israel did not have diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union after June 1967, those given visas to leave for Israel travelled to Vienna, where they were flown to Israel. After 1973 an increasing number of émigrés arriving in Vienna chose to go elsewhere. Israeli officials and many American Jewish leaders referred to émigrés who chose not to go on to Israel as "dropouts."³⁶ By March 1976 a majority of those leaving dropped out. This phenomenon led to a conflict known as the "freedom of choice" debate between the Israeli government and the leadership of the American Jewish community. While Israel wanted all Soviet Jews to resettle in the Jewish homeland, many American Jewish leaders supported the right of Soviet Jewish émigrés to choose where to resettle. Moreover, they provided political and financial support for those emigres who chose to resettle in the United States.

Evidence suggests that Soviet policy on Jewish emigration was influenced mostly by Soviet-American relations and to a lesser extent by Soviet-Western European relations. When the Soviet Union wanted to present a more liberal image, it would allow more people to emigrate. When relations became tense, as for example, following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent American boycott of the 1980 Olympics, then the Soviets restricted Jewish emigration.

In December 1966 Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin visited Paris. At a press conference he announced that his government would facilitate reunification of families separated by World War II. This was interpreted to mean that the USSR would allow some of their citizens (Jews and others)

to leave the country for the purpose of family reunification. Soviet authorities published Kosygin's comments in the Soviet press and as a result tens of thousands of Jews registered to leave. The process involved receiving a letter of invitation (Vysov) from a close relative abroad. The relative's government had to stamp the letter indicating that it would allow for the resettlement of the relative in that country.³⁷

Soviet authorities interpreted Kosygin's comments to mean family reunification in one's homeland. The emphasis on homeland served Soviet interests by limiting the right of family unification to those nationalities, ethnic groups, or minorities that had homelands outside of the USSR. This excluded most ethnic groups within the Soviet Union, including Russians, Ukrainians, and White Russians, but it included Jews, Germans, Koreans, and Greeks.

The Dutch government handled visas for Israel. Israeli authorities instructed the Dutch not to exclude anyone who applied for a visa. It was understood that Soviet authorities would use Israeli visas to facilitate the departure of "undesirable" non-Jews. The Soviets rarely allowed any Jewish citizens to leave for countries other than Israel. As noted, until 1973 almost all Jews leaving on Israeli visas continued on to Israel. Beginning in 1973 some began to drop out and by March 1976 most dropped out.³⁸

Several factors account for the dropouts. First, prior to 1973 the Liaison Bureau emissaries took charge of Soviet émigrés when they entered Austria and sent them on to Israel. It was difficult to drop out even if someone wanted to.³⁹ Following a Palestinian terrorist incident in September 1973 involving a train of Russian émigrés in Austria, Austrian authorities altered procedures; they guaranteed the émigrés in Vienna the choice of not going on to Israel. Second, the issues of terror, war, military service, and a hostile Rabbinate (for intermarried families) influenced many to avoid resettlement in Israel. Third, by 1973 more émigrés were coming from Moscow and the Soviet heartland with a lower level of Jewish and Zionist consciousness; they sought the greater economic opportunities offered by the West. Finally, once a few dropped out and received aid from American Jewish organizations to resettle in the U.S., others followed knowing that assistance would be forthcoming.

The organized American Jewish community acted on behalf of the dropouts. HIAS and CJF via Max Fisher, and others pressured the U.S. government to admit Soviet Jews as political refugees or under parole status.⁴⁰

These efforts proved successful.⁴¹ By the end of 1988 almost every Soviet Jewish émigré who applied to enter the U.S. did. They clearly had priority over other potential refugee groups.⁴²

Israel and its Liaison Bureau played a role in American Jewry's involvement with the dropouts. When the number of dropouts increased and posed a potential problem of remaining in Vienna without aid, the Liaison Bureau urged the Israeli government to invite HIAS and JDC to remove them from Vienna. The Liaison Bureau felt that a potentially large and destitute Russian émigré population in Vienna might provoke Austria to close its borders to Russian émigrés on their way to Israel. Later, some Israelis argued that involving the American Jewish groups contributed to an increase in dropouts.

HIAS and JDC decided to transfer the dropouts to Rome, where they applied for refugee visas to enter the United States. JDC provided care and assistance and HIAS handled the application for visas and entry and resettlement in the United States. HIAS coordinated resettlement with CJF and with the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA).

HIAS was one of several organizations which contracted with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to transport and resettle political refugees in the United States. If HIAS refused to assist these émigrés, as the Israelis requested, other organizations could have done so. They, like HIAS, were eligible for reimbursement by INS.⁴³

FREEDOM OF CHOICE DEBATE

A debate arose between Israel and the American Jewish establishment over support for Soviet Jewish émigrés who sought resettlement in the United States. Steven Windmueller of Hebrew Union College has described this debate as reflecting two views or outlooks concerning the future of the Jewish people.⁴⁴ On the one side were Zionists who focused on the rebirth of the Jewish state and argued that all Jews, especially those leaving the Soviet Union on visas for Israel, had an obligation to resettle in the Jewish state. On the other side were those who envisioned principles associated with an age "where free individuals could make independent choices, allowing them to define their own destinies."⁴⁵ Thus if Soviet émigrés preferred the

United States to Israel, American Jewry had an obligation to help them relocate in the country of their choosing.

The debate was complex and did not necessarily pit Zionists and Israelis on one side against more "liberal" Jews on the other. The positions of both sides were more nuanced. For example, while committed to the principle of settling Soviet Jews in Israel, Prime Minister Menachem Begin exhibited flexibility; he sometimes placed matters of family reunification above the interest of homeland. On the other hand Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, and Yitzhak Shamir fit the model proposed by Windmuller, although they, too, often exercised restraint.⁴⁶ On the American side, as early as 1976 several major federations opposed resettling Soviet Jews in their communities because of the demands upon limited communal resources.⁴⁷ Some even favored requiring Soviet Jews to go to Israel.

Israeli officials protested American Jewish aid and assistance given to the emigrants, which they claimed attracted Soviet Jews who otherwise would resettle in Israel. The state of Israel, they believed, could not compete with the United States. Moreover, they argued that Israel needed this group of potential immigrants; whereas in the 1950s and 1960s Israel absorbed poor and uneducated Jews from Arab lands, potential Soviet immigrants were well educated and highly skilled in areas beneficial to Israeli economy and society. The officials also argued that the Soviets limited the number of émigrés. With so many preferring the United States, fewer places were available for those wanting to come to Israel. Finally, the Liaison Bureau warned that if the Soviet Jewish émigrés went to the West then Soviet authorities might charge fraud (they issued visas for resettlement in Israel) and use the situation as an excuse to close the gates to all Jews wanting to leave.

The American position on "freedom of choice" had many sources. One strand focused on Holocaust guilt, arguing that the U.S. had closed its gates in the 1930s to Jews fleeing Hitler and now Soviet Jews were being faced with the ironic prospect that American Jews and Israel would pressure American authorities to close its gates to them. For example, Jim Rice of the Jewish Federation of Chicago wrote Prof. Leon Jick at Brandeis: "Shall American Jewish organizations put themselves in the position of going to our government to say 'We want this door closed to Jews?'"⁴⁸ Also evident in this position was a liberal tradition of human and individual rights. Sim-

ilarly, there was the Jewish tradition of *Pidyon Shvuim*, the ransoming of prisoners. Accordingly, the obligation was to rescue; where those rescued chose to resettle was of secondary importance. Finally, some American Jews were concerned about the charge of hypocrisy. The story is told of an American Jew visiting Soviet Jewish émigrés waiting for visas in Ladispoli, Italy. In response to the question as to why he was not going to Israel the Soviet Jew asked: "Und du?" ("And you?").

When the dropout rate reached almost 50 percent in March 1976, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin acted to stem the flow. At the June 1976 board of governors meetings of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, Rabin held a special session on the dropout issue with senior lay leadership and professionals of HIAS, JDC, CJF, and the United Jewish Appeal (UJA). In cooperation with Max Fisher, he appointed a joint Israeli-American committee of eight professionals to make recommendations concerning the dropout problem. Nehamia Levanon, head of the Liaison Bureau, and Ralph Goldman of JDC co-chaired the committee. Members included Yehuda Avner (Office of the Prime Minister), Uzi Nakiss (Jewish Agency), Zeev Szek (Foreign Office), Phil Bernstein (CJF), Gaynor Jacobson (HIAS), and Irving Kessler (UJA).⁴⁹

The Committee of Eight met in Geneva Switzerland in the summer of 1976. Its report recommended a temporary cessation of aid from HIAS and JDC for emigrants wanting to resettle in the United States.⁵⁰ After the summer, some evidence suggests that both JDC and HIAS were willing to implement the Committee of Eight proposals for a temporary halt in aid followed by a reevaluation of the situation.⁵¹ Nevertheless, HIAS officials had argued all along that even if they stopped aiding emigrants that other non-Jewish agencies with contracts with the INS could assist Soviet Jewish emigrants to get visas and resettle in the United States.⁵² One Liaison Bureau official naively commented that Soviet Jews would not seek the assistance of non-Jewish refugee groups.⁵³

The media leaked the story that American Jewish organizations would cease to assist emigrants to enter and resettle in the United States. The news angered supporters of "freedom of choice," which resulted in pressure on HIAS and JDC not to go ahead with supporting the Committee of Eight proposals. The controversy resulted in the issue being raised at the General Assembly of the CJF held in Philadelphia in November 1976. Several thousand lay and professional leaders from the more than 200 fed-

erations around the country participated. Max Fisher chaired the session in which the Committee of Eight proposals were discussed.

Fisher may not have been prepared for the occasion. Someone from the floor (probably Professor Leonard Fein of Boston) rose and spoke against the Committee of Eight proposals. He made an emotional reference to the 1930s and the U.S. being closed to Jews fleeing persecution. He suggested that the Committee of Eight proposals would again close America's gates to Jews fleeing persecution. In the end no vote was taken and the status quo continued. The historian William Orbach viewed the events of the General Assembly in 1976 as an "American Jewish declaration of independence" from Israel.⁵⁴

It is significant that as early as 1976 and continuing through 1979, when most of the 51,000 Jews leaving the Soviet Union resettled in the U.S., many federations restricted the resettlement of Soviet Jews in their community. Some offered to fund those without first-degree relatives in their specific community to resettle elsewhere. For many federations there were too many refugees and the cost of absorbing and resettling them proved to be prohibitive. Some found the Soviet émigrés barely Jewish, concerned only about money and materialism.

By 1982 in response to a deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations partially in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union closed its gates to Soviet Jewish émigrés. This was a difficult period for Soviet Jewry and the Soviet Jewry movement in the U.S.

THE GORBACHEV YEARS

Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union in March 1985. He opposed free emigration of Soviet Jews on grounds that it would constitute a costly brain drain, which the Soviet Union would have difficulty dealing with. He wanted most of the well educated and productive Soviet Jewish citizens to remain in the country. However, he also wanted détente and a reduction of nuclear weapons pact with the United States. U.S. president Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz made it clear that free emigration for all Soviet Jews was a prerequisite for improved ties and cooperation with the U.S. government.

Gorbachev and Reagan held a series of summits during which they discussed détente, disarmament, and human rights issues including the right to emigrate and cultural and religious rights for those Jews that remained. The summits took place in Geneva (November 1985), Reykjavik (October 1986), Washington (December 1987), and Moscow (May 1988). Prior to the first meeting the White House invited many individuals and groups with interests in the Soviet Union to attend a briefing with President Reagan. Among those invited was Morris Abram, president of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. In his brief presentation Abram focused on the issue of trust. He asked President Reagan to convey to the Soviet leader that many Americans were concerned about the commitment of the Soviet Union on the issues of disarmament since it had signed the Helsinki agreements of 1971 but disregarded the provisions that guaranteed the right to emigrate for all citizens of the signatory nations. How could, he asked, the American people now trust the Soviet signature on a document calling for nuclear disarmament? Reagan responded that he would give the message to Gorbachev. Thereafter, the issue of the treatment of Soviet Jews within the USSR and their right of free emigration was raised consistently by President Reagan, Secretary of State Schultz, and other senior American officials at meetings with their Soviet counterparts.⁵⁵

By the end of 1987 it became clear that the Soviet Union would soon open its gates to most Soviet Jews who wanted to leave.⁵⁶ In addition, cultural rights and freedoms would be respected for those who chose to remain. Several reliable sources estimated that over 90 percent of those planning to leave preferred to resettle in the United States and other Western countries.⁵⁷

At this time most Jews who chose to leave did so because they wanted a better life for themselves and their families. Many believed that the United States had the most to offer. They thought they could provide more opportunity for their children in the United States than in Israel or the Soviet Union.⁵⁸

As the gates of the Soviet Union began to open wider for its Jewish citizens, the United States began to close its doors to Soviet Jewish émigrés. Since 1968, Soviet Jews had enjoyed preferential treatment as political refugees seeking asylum in the United States. In sharp contrast to the experience of Jewish refugees in the 1930s, Soviet Jewish émigrés found it easier to enter the U.S. than to leave the USSR. Historian David Reimers writes "whereas the main problem for German Jews in the 1930s was finding a home to escape

Hitler, forty years later Russian Jews had little difficulty being admitted to the United States..."⁵⁹

This situation changed in the late 1980s. For example, in May 1988, the U.S. government announced that it would cease (temporarily) processing refugee applications in Moscow. Officially, funding had run out. On August 4, 1988, Attorney General Edwin Meese wrote to Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Colin Powell, informing him that the government had to enforce the 1980 law that all refugee applicants had to prove "a well founded fear" of persecution. While aimed at Armenian applicants from the Soviet Union, the same rule applied to Soviet Jews who sought refugee status entry to the United States. This led to many rejections in Rome and in Moscow. Overall, about 16 to 20 percent of the Jewish applicants were rejected. Rejection also increased costs for HIAS, JDC, and the federations that cared for these people in transit.

Some activists and leaders in the U.S. struggle for Soviet Jewry, especially in the Union of Councils, charged that American consuls in Rome and in Moscow were acting like their predecessors in Germany and Europe in the 1930s when anti-Semitic attitudes contributed to the rejection of German Jewish applicants for U.S. visas.⁶⁰ This position apparently led to a general American Jewish response in favor of the Lautenberg Amendment. Named after Senator Frank Lautenberg (Democrat, New Jersey) and passed in November 1989, the amendment appeared to grant all Soviet Jews and two evangelical Christian groups refugee status. This was justified by their membership in a particular ethnic or religious group, which in the context of the history of the Soviet Union and Czarist Russia was sufficient cause to meet the requirement of "fear of persecution." Nevertheless, eligible entry as political refugees still depended on available refugee slots.

Support for the Lautenberg Amendment, however, served as a smoke screen for the position taken by the major mainstream Jewish organizations. Rather than fight U.S. policy these organizations accepted the need for a quota on Soviet Jewish refugees. They apparently sought to temper the decision while giving it support. Most likely the Israeli government was pressuring the U.S. to close its gates entirely to Soviet Jewish émigrés.⁶¹ The CJF and its allies opposed this and sought to keep the annual entry level at about 40,000, if not higher.

Each year the White House consults with members of Congress and sets the number and allocation by country of funded refugee slots for the

coming fiscal year. As part of this process Max Fisher sought to influence the level of the proposed quota on Soviet Jewish émigrés. He organized a group to help him negotiate with the U.S. government and Congress.⁶² Also involved in the consultations were representatives of Israel and the Soviet Union. The latter's approval and cooperation were essential for the new U.S. policy to work. Max Fisher had the support of CJF, NCSJ, the Presidents Conference, and the Israelis. He consulted directly with Israeli officials during the negotiations.

In September 1989 the U.S. government announced a new policy toward Soviet Jewish émigrés that would go into effect October 1, 1989. It would provide 50,000 slots for political refugees from the Soviet Union, with Jews being allocated 40,000 of these slots. The U.S. government would fund only 32,000 slots; the remaining 8,000 slots would have to be funded entirely by the American Jewish community. In addition, to be eligible, refugees had to have first-degree relatives in the United States. The plan also established a dual-track system in Moscow. Soviet Jews wanting to come to the U.S. had to apply in Moscow. Those wanting to go to Israel would also apply in Moscow. After October 1, 1989, Soviet Jews could not obtain American visas outside of Moscow. In other words, they could not leave the Soviet Union on visas for Israel and drop out in Vienna and then obtain a visa to America. Those Soviet Jews in the pipeline in Rome and Vienna were given priority for visas in the first two years of the program. Soviet Jewish émigré facilities in both cities closed.

There was little publicity about the new policy given the sensitivity toward the issue of quotas to for Jewish refugees into the United States.⁶³ For example, Pamela Cohen of the Union of Councils called the new policy a "selection plan" that would exclude those Soviet Jews not having close relatives in the United States.⁶⁴

As a consequence of the new policy most Soviet Jews who decided to leave chose to go to Israel. Between 1989 and 1992, over 400,000 arrived (see appendix). Israel flew most of these potential immigrants via Eastern Europe to discourage them from changing their minds. The Eastern European regimes in Romania, Hungary, and Poland insured that no one would be allowed to drop out. Israel closed down a Helsinki transit station when the Finnish government insisted on offering all those in transit the choice of going on to Israel or not. Such practices went against freedom of choice.

However, the NCSJ, the Union of Councils, and most other major American Jewish organizations supported these policies.⁶⁵

WHY DID AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT THE QUOTA?

Most of the leadership of major American Jewish organizations supported the quota on Soviet Jews wishing to enter the United States as political refugees for several reasons.⁶⁶

First, they did not want to challenge the President of the United States and the leadership of Congress, which enacted the new policy. They were aware of the ending of the Cold War and with it the overall justification for giving Soviet Jews preferential treatment (they were fleeing evil; i.e., a Communist state). In general the Cold War may explain much of non-Jewish congressional and public support for the Soviet Jewry movement. Also many Americans had become aware of changing conditions in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev that allowed for greater expressions of Jewish cultural and religious rights. Many American Jewish leaders probably believed the fight to alter the policy could not be won.

Second, several Jewish organizations, most notably HIAS, were part of a coalition on immigration and refugee issues. They were aware of resentment by many allies over past preferential treatment given to Soviet Jews often at the expense of refugee communities they serviced and represented. In December 1988, for example, the Reagan administration reallocated 7,000 refugee admission slots from Southeast Asia and the Near East and transferred them to the Soviet Union to handle a backlog of Armenian and Jewish applications. Interestingly, several American Jewish organizations, almost out of a sense of embarrassment, joined Asian American refugee advocates in protesting the transfer.⁶⁷

Third, several prominent American Jewish leaders believed that Soviet Jews were not political refugees as defined in American law. They expressed these views at closed meetings and off the record. In March 1989, then-chairman of the Presidents Conference Morris Abram said of Soviet Jews, "...they are not refugees, in my judgment. If you come out of a country and have access and automatic citizenship to a free country,

you're not a refugee. They came here because they are 'refugees' and get the benefits of being refugees, payments of cash, money, and medical services and other things."⁶⁸ According to Micah Naftalin of the Union of Councils at a London meeting of the World Conference of Soviet Jewry, Abram stated that the Soviet Jews have no right to immigrate to America as a persecuted minority. Their goal, he argued, is economic advantage. Phil Baum, long-time American Jewish Congress executive vice president, felt that deep in their hearts American Jews do not believe that Soviet Jews are refugees in the classical sense of the word because they did not suffer like political refugees in the Soviet Union. He resented "devoting my energies and efforts... to persuading Congress to make funds available so that they can be more comfortable when they come here."⁶⁹ David Harris of the AJC called them "privileged refugees" having a choice.⁷⁰ Another slant on the matter was expressed by then-CJF executive vice president Martin Kraar: "The implication for the Federation field is that if they're refugees, we still continue to get federal funding. If they're immigrants, then the federal funding dries up and the Federation system have [sic] many more financial obligations."⁷¹ His predecessor, Carmi Schwartz, claimed that he had reservations in the 1980s as to whether? Soviet Jews were refugees but that the CJF leadership overruled him.⁷²

Fourth, the costs involved were important. The American government indicated it would not have funding for all those it was willing to accept as refugees, which meant that the federations and Jewish organizations would have to pay for more of the expenses.⁷³ They would also have to fund many of those coming in as non-refugees. Many federations, as far back as 1976, had found it difficult to raise the funding and resources necessary to absorb Soviet émigrés in their communities. The large number of Soviet Jewish émigrés arriving in the U.S. threatened the fiscal well-being of many federations and Jewish organizations. Moreover, the federations found it easier to raise money to settle Jews in Israel than in the United States.⁷⁴ Thus many federation leaders recognized that it would be cheaper to resettle Soviet Jews in Israel.

Fifth, the option of Soviet Jews being resettled in Israel was acceptable to most leaders of mainstream organizations including the federations. In contrast to the 1970s, most American Jewish leaders in 1989 were more willing to support the Israeli demand that Soviet Jews be resettled in Israel. Many felt Israel needed the emigrants and that Israel provided a better

opportunity to insure that they remained Jewish and part of the Jewish people. Even if the gates of the United States were closed to some, if not most, potential Soviet Jewish immigrants, they still had the option of going to Israel. This possibility did not exist in the 1930s for German Jews who were denied entry into the United States. Israel with all its problems and shortcomings was a modern and Jewish country. As a worst case scenario, it was acceptable.

An important policy shift in American Jewish organizations occurred in 1989 when the ADL publicly favored restricting Jewish communal funding of travel and resettlement for Soviet Jews to those going to Israel. Its leaders held that American Jewry had an obligation to help free Soviet Jewry, but once free, American Jewry could condition their continued financial support on Soviet Jewry going to Israel. Rather than forcing Soviet Jews to go to Israel, the ADL argued, it had decided where to send their aid.⁷⁵

In recalling this period from a few years' distance, several Jewish lay leaders and professionals argued that they and the majority of American Jewry remained committed to freedom of choice; that Soviet Jews were entitled to choose where they wanted to live. We may have preferred that they go to Israel, they argued, but we could not decide for them and once in the USA we could not allow them to become destitute.⁷⁶ To a great extent, however, by 1989, the leadership of the CJF and most of the mainstream Jewish organizations had qualified and then abandoned their support for "freedom of choice."

In abandoning its support for freedom of choice, American Jewry acted more out of self-interest rather than following orders from Israel. In supporting the quota on Soviet Jewry in 1989, they supported the Israeli position of limiting entry into the United States in principle because that position served American Jewish interests. They did not want to fight a political battle against the President, Congress, and immigration allies on behalf of unlimited Soviet Jewish entry, they did not want to pay the resettlement costs that would be higher in the United States, and they doubted the refugee status of Soviet Jews. These findings support historian Steven Rosenthal's thesis that "despite emotional support of Israel, American Jews' priorities remained overwhelmingly American."⁷⁷

Ironically, the participation of American Jews in the Soviet Jewry movement helped direct them away from concern with Israel to focus first on Jews elsewhere and eventually on their own communities. They came

to see their "Jewish interests" as differing from those of the Israelis. Many American Jewish leaders put freedom of choice before Israel's national interest. Some even challenged Israel's claim of needing Soviet Jews and put forth an American claim for a maximum number of Soviet Jewish émigrés.⁷⁸ This contributed to an awareness of a new type of Jewish identity (more inward than Israeli-oriented) among American Jewry. When the Soviet Jewry movement had achieved success by 1990, the centrality of Israel had given way in the American Jewish community to local and internal concerns.

CONCLUSIONS

Many of the findings here are relevant for understanding American Jews today as an ethnic group and as actors in the American political system. The study confirms substantial Jewish influence and power in American politics. In contrast to the reserve, weakness, and ineffectiveness of the American Jewish response to the plight of European Jews during the Holocaust, the American Jewish community of the 1970s and 1980s was assertive, influential, and effective in lobbying on behalf of Soviet Jews. Leaders of major American Jewish organizations influenced Congress and then the executive branch to pressure Soviet authorities to allow freer emigration for Soviet Jews and cultural and religious freedom for those who remained, accept most Soviet Jewish émigrés as refugees (until 1988), and fund their resettlement in Israel and the United States. These efforts along with their support of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment attest to J.J. Goldberg's assertion that "... a powerful machine has arisen (in the United States) in the last quarter-century to advance Jewish interests."⁷⁹

Yet at the height of its power, the American Jewish community exercised restraint. While pushing and pressuring for entry of the maximum number of Soviet Jews into the United States when the gates of the Soviet Union opened, American Jews accepted a quota on Soviet Jews allowed to enter the United States. They were not inclined to challenge the administration on this issue.

The agreement to accept a quota may have surprised and even shocked some observers. Revelations by Arthur Morse, Henry Feingold, and David Wyman contributed to a collective American Jewish awareness of American Jewish inaction and official indifference toward the persecution and death

of millions of European Jews.⁸⁰ This awareness haunted many American Jewish leaders in the 1970s and 1980s. Countless activists and leaders in the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement recounted the tragic times when American Jews did nothing as six million Jews perished. Rabbi James Rudin of the AJC at the December 1987 Soviet Jewry demonstration in Washington, D.C. recalled that "... the [Holocaust] guilt was there, and there was a sense of 'God damn it, we're going to do in '87 for the Soviet Jews what we could have done and should have done or might have done earlier.'⁸¹ These sentiments helped to defeat Israeli-generated proposals to cease aiding emigrants at the CJF General Assemblies in 1976 and in 1980. Despite wanting most Soviet Jews to go to Israel, many American Jews felt it wrong to support a policy that would deny Jews entry into the United States. The collective memory of the Holocaust, however, would fade quickly. What is often overlooked is the evidence presented here that as numbers of Soviet Jewish immigrants to the United States increased in the late 1970s, many major Jewish federations began to retreat from their support of "freedom of choice." They restricted resettlement in their communities to persons with first-degree relatives. They preferred Soviet Jews to be resettled in Israel. If Soviet emigration had not tapered off in 1981 and 1982, it is likely that more and more federations would have supported policies to restrict the entry of Soviet Jews into the United States. This controversy ended temporarily when the Soviet Union closed its exit gates in 1982.

By the late 1980s, however, when Mikhail Gorbachev proposed free emigration for Soviet Jews, the Jewish establishment initially retreated from support of freedom of choice behind the cover of "direct flights" via Bucharest. This denied Soviet Jews the option of dropping out en route to Israel. Shortly thereafter, they agreed to a quota on Soviet Jewish refugees allowed to enter the United States.

The general lack of publicity that American Jewish organizations gave negotiations between Max Fisher's "no-name" Committee, Congress and the U.S. government indicates the sensitive nature of American Jewry supporting a quota on Jewish refugees. As Steven Nasatir, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, argued, "...American Jewish people, who remember a time in our history when the doors of this country were not open during the Hitler years, resulting in the death of many people, and as a community, we could never, set a quota...we kind of acquiesced to what the government thought was fair... We can't ever

go public in terms of saying, we don't want these people..."⁸² Mark Talisman, the CJF lobbyist, continued to deny that a quota had been adopted; technically the annual ceiling of Soviet refugees would be renegotiated each year between the White House and Congress.⁸³

The abandonment of "freedom of choice" casts doubt on the political significance of Peter Novick's conclusion that the Holocaust had become the primary concern among many American Jews and organized local Jewish communities by the 1980s.⁸⁴ American Jewish leaders had learned to distinguish between emotional awareness and collective memory of the Holocaust and pragmatic political interests. In dealing with Soviet Jewish advocacy and especially issues of resettlement after 1985, American Jews worried more about their own well-being and prosperity as a community. This took precedence over the desire by Soviet Jews to resettle in the United States since they had the option of going to Israel or remaining in the Soviet Union, which by the late 1980s was offering Jews greater cultural, religious, and organizational freedom.

An interesting issue today would be the response of American Jewry to a decision by the president of the United States to actively oppose a policy of the government of Israel. How would the American Jewish establishment react? The experience of the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement suggests a preference by American Jewish leaders to pursue the self-interest of the American Jewish community regardless of whether it is supportive of Israeli interests.

- 1 HIAS helped Soviet émigrés get visas to Western countries and coordinated their resettlement in the United States with the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA) and the federations (Ronald Sanders, *Shores of Refuge: A Hundred Years of Jewish Emigration* (NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1980, 181-193, 589-591 & <http://www.hias.org/splash.html>, August 23, 2004). HIAS would be a major actor in setting American Jewish policy toward Soviet Jews in the early- and mid-1970s. JDC provided care and maintenance for Russian émigrés in Europe (J. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), 106 & <http://www.jdc.org>, August 23, 2004). JDC also funded many of the Liaison Bureau activities in the Soviet Union including the packages program. Its lay leadership and professionals played a major role in the American Soviet Jewry movement. CJF represented almost 200 federations (Goldberg 1996, 52, 105). In the mid 1970s its general assembly became a sounding board for advocacy policies on behalf of Soviet Jews. David Biale notes that the general assembly is "considered by those involved in Jewish politics as the yearly national congress of American Jews" (David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (NY: Schocken Books, 1986, 187-188). In 1976 CJF established a Washington Action Office that lobbied for immigration and resettlement legislation and funding (Joel Carp, "The Jewish Social Welfare Lobby in the United States" in *Jewish Polity and American Civil Society*, ed. Allan Mittleman, Jonathan D. Sarna and Robert Licht (Lanham, Boulder, NY, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 208. CJF also played a major role in the resettlement of Soviet Jews in the United States.

In 1935 JDC and the American Zionists established the Allied Jewish Appeal which became the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) for Overseas Relief in 1939 (Goldberg 1996 & Charles Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (NY: Summit Books, 1985), 186. In the late 1990s the CJF, UJA, and United Israel Appeal (UIA) merged to form the United Jewish Communities (UJC) (<http://www.ujc.org>, August 23, 2004).

- 2 The National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) was established in 1944 by the general assembly of the CJF (Goldberg 1996, 105 & Albert Chernin, "Making Soviet Jews an Issue: A History," in *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free*

Soviet Jews, ed. Murray Friedman, and Albert Chernin (Hanover, NH and London: Brandeis University Press (Published by University Press of New England, 1999), 17 & http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org/publications/JPP_94-95_appendix.html), August 23, 2004. In 1969 it became the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council or NJCRAC (Goldberg 1996, 123-125). In 1998 it became the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. It is an umbrella organization that coordinates the policies of 13 national organizations, including major defense and synagogue groups, with 120 local Jewish community relations councils (Jerome Chanes, "Jewish Advocacy and Jewish Interest," in *Jews in American Politics*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel and Ira N. Forman (Lanham, Boulder, NY and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 109; Chernin 1999, & Goldberg 1996).

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, established in 1955 by Nahum Goldmann, Philip Klutznick of B'nai B'rith, and Israel's ambassador to the USA, Abba Eban, to bring together leaders of major American Jewish organizations to coordinate their position on issues relating to Israel (<http://www.conferenceofpresidents.org/fence.html>), August 23, 2004). Many view it as an Israeli front (William W. Orbach, *The American Movement to Aid Soviet Jews* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 72 & Goldberg 1996: xviii).

The American Jewish Committee was established in 1906 by German American Jews to deal with the plight of Russian Jews following the pogroms of 1905 and to fight anti-Semitism at home (Goldberg 1996, 101; Sanders 1988, 235; Steven Windmueller, "Defenders" National Jewish Community Relations Agencies,," in Mittleman, Sarna, and Licht, 2002, 40-41 & <http://www.ajc.org>, August 23, 2004). During the 1970s and 1980s it remained an elite organization, very active on the issue of Soviet Jewry. It generally cooperated with the Liaison Bureau representatives. It played a pivotal role in establishing the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry and the NCJS.

The American Jewish Congress was initially set up in December 1918 to seek national rights for Eastern European Jews at the Paris Peace Conference of April 1919 (Sanders 1988, 349; Goldberg 1996, 102, 103 & <http://www.ajcongress.org>, August 23, 2004). Rabbi Stephen S. Wise revived the organization

in 1922. It became "personal platform for his private blend of Jewish nationalism and militant liberalism." During this period Soviet Jewry became a major concern of the Congress. It also cooperated with the Liaison Bureau.

Formed in 1970, the Union of Councils was an umbrella organization of 22 local Soviet Jewry committees (in 1978) (Walter Ruby, "The Role of Nonestablishment Groups" in Friedman, and Chernin, 1999, 204; Micah H. Naftalin, "The Activist Movement," in *Ibid.*, 229 & <http://www.fsmonitor.com/>, August 23, 2004). In 1985 it moved its headquarters to D.C. In 1988 it claimed 100,000 members and overseas affiliations in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, France, Israel, and Moscow. In 1988, three major refusenik groups became affiliated with the Union of Councils and they held their annual meeting in Leningrad and Moscow in 1989 (Naftalin 1999,233). It defined itself as non-establishment; most committees did not receive funding from the local federations and the Councils usually did not coordinate its efforts with the Israelis (Ruby 1999:200–203). They perceived of themselves as being the "American voice" of the refuseniks. Freedman (1989:95) credits them with challenging Israeli leadership on Soviet Jewry issue by calling for a more active policy.

The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (sssj) was a student group in New York City of college age (and older) activists. Although outspoken and critical (Yossi Klein Halevi, "Jacob Birnbaum and the Struggle for Soviet Jewry," *Azure* 17 (2004), 1–21) it accepted funding from federations, often coordinated their activities with the Liaison Bureau, and belonged to the NCSJ. Glen Richter, Yaacov Birnbaum, Art Green, and James Torcyna founded the Student Struggle. On April 27, 1964, hundreds of students met at Columbia University to hear Mark Brafman of the American League for Russian Jews, which called for emigration and improved Jewish life in the Soviet Union (Paul S. Appelbaum, "The Soviet Jewish Movement in the United States," in *Jewish American Voluntary Organizations*, ed. Michael N. Dobkowski (NY, Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 1986), 615–617). Participants decided to demonstrate on May 1, 1964. Over 1100 marched and the event made the second page of the *New York Times*. In October 1964 it had a rally on the Lower East Side with 2000 persons addressed by Senators Keating and Javits and presidential counselor Meyer Feldman. Its Menorah March in December 1965 became an annual event.

A subsequent geulah (redemption) march in 1966 attracted 15,000 persons. Nehemia Levanon helped them get funding (Nehemia Levanon, *Testimony* (NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, December 3, 1989). In the 1980s Rabbi Avi Weiss assumed leadership of the sssj.

- 3 The findings here are based on archival research. The author had access to the files of the CJF and JDC. HIAS provided some archival materials. The author made extensive use of the interviews of Soviet Jewry movement activists done by the AJC and stored in the Dorot Archives in the Jewish Room at the New York Public Library. He also reviewed papers in the archives of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. He conducted open-ended interviews with members of the Liaison Bureau and several American Jewish leaders and professionals. A complete list of references and archival sources is in Fred Lazin, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewry in American Politics: Israel versus the American Jewish Establishment*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005.
- 4 Murray Friedman, "Introduction: The Jewish Community Comes of Age," in Friedman, and Chernin, 1999, 1–2.
- 5 Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 1,2, 139.
- 6 At the general assembly in Detroit in November 1980 a request by Prime Minister Begin on dropouts was rebuffed (Lazin 2005, 141).
- 7 Fred Lazin, "The Response of the American Jewish Committee to the Crisis of German Jewry, 1933–1939," *American Jewish History* 68 (1979), 283–304 & "The Non-Centralized Model of American Jewish Organizations: A Possible Test Case" *Jewish Social Studies* 44 (1982), 299–314.
- 8 The Wagner-Rogers bill proposed the admission outside the quota of a 20,000 children from Germany during 1939 and 1940. It had the support of key Protestant and Catholic lay leaders and labor leaders. Public opinion was against Hitler. The bill died in Congress (Lazin 1979, 301).
- 9 *Ibid.* 288.
- 10 In 1973 the United States gave Israel \$25 million to help resettle Soviet Jews because that "movement of Soviet Jews from Soviet Union

is a matter of United States foreign policy and as such it deserves close support" (Edwin Shapiro, *Testimon* (NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, April 24, 1984). At the time, Soviet Jews were the only refugees that moved with full financial support of the American government. Previously, the United States provided some en route care and maintenance for Soviet Jewish émigrés under the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 (PL 87-510). Through June 1977 the United States government spent \$156 million on programs to resettle Soviet Jews, with \$122 million being spent in Israel, \$24 million for resettlement in other countries, and \$10 million for transportation.

- 11 While Goldberg (1996, 182) refers to obtaining U.S. government aid for resettlement of Soviet Jews as being "audacious," historian David M. Reimers (*Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), 65, 158) documents the American tradition of aiding the resettlement of Hungarian, Cuban, and Vietnamese refugees in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, since the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, the United States has provided aid for refugees outside the United States (Reimers 1985, 158).
- 12 Over 1500 persons attended a Jewish Labor Committee protest against Soviet anti-Semitism in December 1952 (Lazin 2005, 22).
- 13 In Hebrew the Liaison Bureau was the *Lishkat Hakesher*. Its code name in Hebrew was Nativ. Nehemiah Levanon, "Nativ" Was the Code Name, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1995 (Hebrew), 71.
- 14 Later the Union of Councils would take a more pronounced anti-Communist position. Natan Sharansky's ties with Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents soured his relations with the Liaison Bureau (Alan M. Dershowitz, *Chutzpah* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1991).
- 15 Appelbaum 1986, 619.
- 16 Gunther Lawrence, *Three Million More*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970), 10.
- 17 Peter Golden, *Quiet Diplomat: A Biography of Max M. Fisher*, (NY: Cornwall Books, 1992), 279. Also see Naftalin (1999, 225). At a meeting between Senator Henry Jackson and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry on September 25, 1972, Jackson's aide Richard Perle reminded the audience of the "consequences of official Jewish silence during the Nazi Holocaust" (Paula Stern, *Water's Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 32.
- 18 Phil Baum, *Testimony*, (NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, May 24, 1989 & Appelbaum 1986, 615.
- 19 The American Jewish Congress provided the building and the Liaison Bureau emissaries arranged for the funding of this operation. The leaders of the American Jewish Congress had to be aware of the Israeli connection. The Liaison Bureau operated this facility and funded it through 1989. Its role was not publicized.
- 20 Lazin 2005, 44. He served as DA from 1968-1981 and as chair of the NCSJ from 1977-1979.
- 21 Telford Taylor, *Courts of Terror: Soviet Criminal Justice and Jewish Emigration*, (NY: Random House, 1976).
- 22 Elie Wiesel, *The Jews of Silence*, (Philadelphia, JPS, 1967).
- 23 Fran Markowitz, "Emigration, Immigration and Cultural Change: Towards a Transnational 'Russian' Jewish Community?" in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i. (Ilford, Essex, England and Portland Oregon: Frank Cass, 1995), 404-405.
- 24 At the encouragement of the Liaison Bureau the AJC may have underwritten the costs of publishing the book.
- 25 The Liaison Bureau helped the Union of American Hebrew Congregations organize a tour for Reform Rabbis to the Soviet Union and then helped Guenter Lawrence publish a book on the tour and the situation of Jews in the Soviet Union (Lawrence 1970).
- 26 Lazin 2005, 28.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 28 Funding, nevertheless, remained an ongoing problem (*Ibid.*, 37).
- 29 The Union of Councils also had its main office in D.C. NCSJ headquarters were in New York City.

- 30 See Lazin 2005, n.153, 72. According to Stern (1979, 22) the key players along with Senator Jackson were Senate aides Richard Perle and Morris Amitay.
- 31 The Soviets announced the tax on August 3, 1972 (William Korey, "The Struggle Over Jackson-Vanik" in *American Jewish Year Book*, 1974-75 (75), ed. Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb (Philadelphia and NY: AJC and Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1974), 202,203.
- 32 Stern, 1979, 22.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 80 & Korey 1974:218.
- 34 Goldberg 1996, 175-179.
- 35 Friedman 1999, 5.
- 36 The Hebrew word for dropouts is *noshrim*. Some American Jewish proponents of freedom of choice objected to the term "dropouts."
- 37 The Liaison Bureau established a cottage industry to supply letters. Evidence indicates that Soviet authorities were aware that many of the invitations were fictitious and forged. Those wanting to go to the United States needed a similar invitation from an American relative (Memo, Gaynor Jacobson (HIAS) to Cooperating Agencies, March 29, 1971 (JDC files).
- 38 According to Dominitz (Yehuda Dominitz, "Israel's Immigration Policy and the Dropout Phenomenon," in *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and Resettlement*, ed. Noah Lewin-Epstein, Yaacov Ro'i and Paul Ritterband (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 118) during 1969 and 1970 there was not a single dropout case. Only 58 persons dropped out in 1971. Out of the 32,000 Jews who left in 1972, 251 dropped out. In 1973 when 35,000 Jews left, the number of dropouts reached 1500 (Letter, J.K. Fasick (Government Accounting Office) to Jaynor (sic) Jacobson, October 15, 1976 (CJF files). By the end of the decade the dropout rate reached more than two thirds.
- 39 Until mid-1973 the Liaison Bureau collected passports of émigrés upon their entry to Austria. Some evidence suggests that until 1973 Israeli authorities coerced some émigrés to go on to Israel against their wishes. This was confirmed by a former Liaison Bureau agent in 2002. Also see Charles Jordan, Administrative Report, March 1, 1966 (JDC files).
- 40 Sec 212(d) (5), "The Attorney General may in his discretion parole into the U.S. temporarily under such conditions as he may prescribe for emergency reasons or for reasons deemed strictly in the public interest any alien applying for admission to the U.S..." This included persons fleeing Communist countries, the Middle East, Asia, and Cuba (Letter, Fasick to Jacobson, October 15, 1976). During the 1980s the attorney general paroled over 1 million persons, mostly Cubans and Vietnamese (Reimers 1985, 155, 161, 172).
- 41 With the increase in Soviet Jews coming to the United States, HIAS and CJF lobbied their government for financial assistance for resettlement. Aid for Soviet Jewish refugees was "not a hard sell" (Goldberg 1996,182). The American Congress had supported freedom for Soviet Jews.
- When domestic resettlement expenses increased after 1975 "To ease the burden, (CJF lobbyist Mark) Talisman proposed getting the federal government to match the Jewish community's expenditures" (Goldberg 1996, 182). He and Stuart Eizenstat of the White House initiated and drafted legislation and nursed it through Congress. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii sponsored the bill in the Senate. The legislation provided a block grant to CJF that allocates a per person fee for refugee resettlement to federations. Phil Bernstein (*To Dwell in Unity: The Jewish Federation Movement in America Since 1960* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1983, 75) suggests that the bulk of the cost of maintaining and transporting refugees was met by the United States government.
- 42 Gregg Beyer, "The Evolving United States Response to Soviet Jewish Emigration," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, (1991), 139-156.
- 43 The Rav Tov organization, associated with the anti-Zionist Satmer Rebbe, also contracted with the State Department to assist and resettle political refugees. HIAS and other American Jewish groups tried unsuccessfully to prevent its 1976 accreditation by the State Department (Letter, Carl Glick to Congressman Joshua Eilberg, March 9, 1976 (HIAS files); Minutes of JDC Executive Committee, February 22, 1977; Memo, Eliezer Shavit to Charles Jordan, RE: "decision in Mr. Pincus's office on January 26, 1967" February 9, 1967. (JDC files) December 24, 1976).

- 44 Steven Windmueller, 2002.
- 45 Steven Windmueller, "The 'Noshrim' War: Dropping Out" in *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews*, ed. Friedman and Chernin, 1999, 161.
- 46 Lazin 2005, 91.
- 47 By the summer of 1976, HIAS reported that six of the 12 communities with Jewish populations above 75,000 and several medium-sized Jewish communities "restricted their acceptance of new refugees to those people who have first-degree relatives in that community." This created a problem for those persons not having first-degree relatives and for those with special vocational, psychiatric and medical needs (*Ibid.*, 87).
- 48 Letter, Jim Rice to Leon Jick, June 1, 1976 (JDC files).
- 49 Grisha Feigin, a leader of Russian immigrants in Israel, protested his exclusion from the Committee of Eight (*Daily News*, July 7, 1976); Agenda, Committee of Eight, July 15, 1976 (JDC files); JDC Executive Committee Meeting, September 21, 1976. Dominitz may have replaced Narkiss. Also see Lazin 2005 n.89 p. 122.
- 50 The HIAS representative did not show up to the final meeting when recommendations were made.
- 51 JDC was more willing than HIAS to agree to a temporary cessation. Carl Glick, former HIAS president, opposed the Committee of Eight proposals but he was outvoted. See Lazin 2005, 100ff..
- 52 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 53 *Ibid.*, n42, 116.
- 54 Orbach 1979.
- 55 In October 1986 Secretary of State George Shultz spoke before 300-400 Jewish leaders in the Department of State. He quoted article 13, paragraph 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "everyone has the right to leave a country, including his own." Then Shultz turned dramatically to the back of the document and said "I see here the signature of Mr. Brezhnev. I believe that we have a right and a duty to monitor adherence to these provisions and insist that they be complied with" (Statement of Morris Abram at Reykjavik, October 10, 1986 (CJF file, box 667).
- 56 Richard Schifter, "American Diplomacy 1985-1989" in Friedman and Chernin, 1999, 144, 145 & Lazin 2005.
- 57 Michael Parks, "Soviet Emigrés to the United States in '89 to hit 60,000," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1989 & CJF Washington Office "Soviet Jewish Emigration: The Current Situation," Jewish Agency archives.
- 58 Nehemiah Levanon of the Liaison Bureau wrote in 1999: "We could not reach the Jewish masses with all our efforts including those of American Jews. We reached very few Jews out of the millions of Soviet Jews. The mass of Jews were very different from the refuseniks and activists with whom the Jews from the West met." Laurie Salitan, *Politics and Nationality in Contemporary Soviet-Jewish Emigration, 1968-89*, (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 34, 154) argues that affirmative action programs in many Soviet Republics in the 1970s and 1980s hurt ethnic Jews. Many Jewish members of the Soviet intelligentsia believed that their children would have significantly fewer opportunities than they had.
- 59 Riemers 1985, 240.
- 60 Lazin 1979, Henry Feingold., *The Politics of Rescue* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970 & David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Amherst: University of Mass Press, 1968). It is important to note that the Israeli government favored the change in American policy to deny Soviet Jews refugee status and entry into the United States.
- 61 This issue is beyond the scope of this paper. In February 1987 Yitzhak Shamir, prime minister of Israel, publicly suggested that the United States not consider Soviet Jewish émigrés as political refugees. He called on American Jewish leadership and organizations to support the Israeli position and called upon the American government to "institute more restrictive measures with regard to immigration and refugee status for Soviet Jews wishing to be resettled in the United States" (Robert O. Freedman, "Soviet Jewry as a Factor in Soviet Israeli Relations," in *Soviet Jewry in the 1980s: The Politics of Anti-Semitism and Emigration and the Dynamics of Resettlement*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Durham: Duke

- University Press 1989), 86-90). Shamir told Gur-Gurevitz (Baruch Gur-Gurevitz, *Open Gates: The inside Story of the Mass Aliyah from the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency for Israel, 1996), 18) that he raised the issue twice with President Bush and discussed it with Undersecretary of State Richard Schifter as well (Interview, Richard Schifter, Washington D.C., August 2, 1995). According to HIAS, Secretary of State George Shultz told Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir that he would not act on the request "unless it receives a clear signal from the American Jews that this is what they want" (Letter, Robert Israeloff to HIAS Board, March 24, 1987 (JDC files). The CJF responded that there was a clear consensus among American Jewish leaders and organizations "that indicates that American Jews will not undertake such an assignment—quite to the contrary, American Jewish leaders and organizations will continue to be committed to more liberal United States immigration and refugees policies and will seek to have such policies implemented on all United States government levels" (Notes for re: Soviet Jewish Immigration, Refugee Status and Direct Flight Issues April 8, 1987 (CJF files, box 667).
- 62 Fisher referred this group as the "no-name committee". It included CJF Washington lobbyist Mark Talisman, NCSJ chairperson Shoshana Cardin, and CJF president Mandell Berman.
- 63 Evidently some key congressional supporters, including Representative Barney Frank, had not been briefed on the negotiations (Lazin 2005, 280).
- 64 *Ibid.* 277.
- 65 Ten organizations signed a petition in favor of direct flights that appeared in the New York Times. It was understood that those wanting to come to the USA could apply for visas in Moscow (*Refugee Reports* ix (7) July 15, 1988).
- 66 Most mainstream American Jewish leaders, excepting HIAS professionals and some federation personnel, abandoned the demand to resettle a maximum of Soviet Jewish émigrés in the United States.
- 67 Judith Golub, "The Dilemmas of Rescue: Current Policy Issue in Soviet Jewish Migration to the u.s." (NY: American Jewish Committee--Institute of Human Relations, c. January 1989). Arnold Liebowitz (Interview, August 1995) said that the transfer angered the Vietnamese in the United States. Several American Chinese language newspapers attacked HIAS. This sensitized HIAS. Later, when HIAS would request additional refugee slots for Soviet Jews, they would emphasize that at least 20 percent be for non-Jews. At congressional hearings in April 1989 HIAS president Ben Zion Leuchter stated that "HIAS opposed the transfer of these numbers, however needed, as bad refugee policy with unfortunate domestic consequences." (Processing of Soviet Refugees, Joint Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, 101st Cong., 1st Sess. 54 (1989), 180.
- 68 Morris Abram, Testimony, NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the American Jewish Committee, March 6, 1989, 30.
- 69 Baum 1989, 50.
- 70 David Harris, Testimony, NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, March 7 and October 2, 1989, 73.
- 71 Martin Kraar, "Oral History," in *The Response of the North American Federations To the Emigration of Jews from the Former Soviet Union to the United States and Israel: The Growth of Collective Responsibility*, ed. Lawrence Kotler (NY: CJF, 1993), 340.
- 72 Interview, New York City, September 6, 2001.
- 73 According to Lawrence Grossman. ("Jewish Communal Affairs." in *American Jewish Year Book*, 1991 (91) ed. David Singer (NY and Philadelphia: AJC and JPS, 1991), 189, 190) "organized American Jewry strained to absorb the cost of Soviet Jewish resettlement... American Jewish agencies felt overwhelmed by the financial burden of resettling immigrants in their communities gradually became more receptive to the Israeli argument that the Soviet Jews should be channeled to Israel." American Jewish leaders "declared frankly that in light of the financial burden of resettling the Soviet Jews in the us, they would not fight the new arrangements." At the time Malcolm Hoenlein feared collapse of social service networks for settlement and absorption if the federations did not receive \$95 million from the federal government.

- 74 Malcolm Hoenlein, Testimony (NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, June 14, 1989), 15 & Sara Frankel, Testimony (NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, November 20, 1989).
- 75 Abraham Foxman, Testimony (NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, November 9, 1989) & Carp 1989. Shoshana Cardin recalled going to an ADL meeting in 1989 and convincing them to endorse the idea that Jewish communal aid should only be used to resettle Soviet Jews in Israel. Mendel Kaplan of the Jewish Agency argued that we in Israel do "not believe in Soviet Jews going to America—in moving them from one Diaspora to another." Jews should have right to move where they want but not "use public Jewish funds to do it" (Golden 1992, 471; Gur-Curevitz 1996, 22).
- 76 Shoshana Cardin (interview, January 27, 2003); Henry Taub (interview, May 29, 2003; Max Fisher (interview, February 1996 and February 2001); Golden 1992, 470 & Kraar 1993.
- 77 Steven T. Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, Published by the University Press of New England, 2001), 33. Raffel (2002, 121) notes that the American Jewish community was never a rubber stamp "for decisions made in Jerusalem."
- 78 Jim Rice, Comments at Board of Trustees, VAHC, Los Angeles, December 4, 1976 (CJF files). Rice argued that American Jewry had a legitimate right to resettle a maximum number of Soviet Jews because the 1924 restrictions on U.S. immigration had prevented the replenishing of the American Jewish community. The wave of Soviet immigrants was an opportunity to regenerate the declining American Jewish communities.
- 79 Goldberg 1996, 16.
- 80 Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died* (NY: Random House, 1968); Feingold 1970 & David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1984).
- 81 James Rudin, Testimony, NY: William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the AJC, April 12, 1990), 15.
- 82 Stephen Nasatir, "Oral History" in *The Response of the North American Federations to the Emigration of Jews from the Former Soviet Union to the United States and Israel: The Growth of Collective Responsibility*, ed. Lawrence Kotler (NY: CJF, 1993).
- 83 Interview, October 3, 2002.
- 84 Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 168.



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