POLITICS AND PROTEST

The American Advocacy Movement for Soviet Jews

A STUDY GUIDE

by Jerry Goodman

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This Study Guide is dedicated to the former ***refuseniks*** in the Soviet Union and their advocates in America.

PREFACE

Writing in the New Yorker magazine Jelanie Cobb observed that movements are born "when abstract principles become concrete concerns." This concept was dramatically illustrated in the last half of the 20th century when a Jewish activist cohort emerged in the Soviet Union. Their decades-long struggle sought to achieve the right to leave for Israel, or else to study their culture and religious traditions.

Small clusters of Jews, notably in Moscow, Leningrad, and Riga, challenged an intransigent bureaucracy and a brutal security system. Virtually unknown for years the activists, in a Jewish population that numbered about 3 million, became public figures when they secured support from an advocacy movement in the West, as they sought to secure the fundamental human rights that had been violated for decades.

Politics and Protest provides a brief history of events in Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States. It also includes an annotated timeline that begins with the period before the two revolutions in 1917 Russia and concludes with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. To assist with education programs and discussions, a six-session curriculum is provided as well as a bibliography.

This Study Guide is designed for those seeking to learn about the American Advocacy Movement for Soviet Jews and the parallel Jewish resistance movement from within the Soviet Union.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: 1917-1945

In the last half of the 18th century, the Russian Empire included a huge swath of today's Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania. Three different partitions of Poland, beginning in 1772, brought hundreds of thousands of Jews into an enlarged Russian state, greatly expanding the size and scope of the small, domestic Jewish population. The dilemma facing Russia's Empress Catherine II and the prelates of the powerful Russian Orthodox Church, who had been hostile to Jews for decades, was how to absorb an alien and unwanted people.

In response to this influx of Jews, official government decrees (***ukazi***) were issued, severely restricting their movement to Russia's newly acquired lands, designated as the Pale of Jewish Settlement, a term coined under the reign of Tsar Nicholas I. By the end

of 1885 an estimated 4 million Jews were living in the Pale, mainly in poor villages (*shtetels*) and towns, where they faced sporadic, often violent, pogroms as well as large-scale, targeted, and recurrent anti-Jewish riots. Most lived in fear or uncertainty while struggling to earn a living and maintain their close-knit communities governed by their religious leaders.

One solution was emigration, setting an example for the future. In the last half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, many chose that option. Of the two million Jews who left Tsarist Russia, more than one million came to America.

Even as this migration was taking place a major industrial revolution stimulated impressive economic growth in the West. The Russian economy, however, one of the largest in the world, began a downward spiral. Tsar Nicholas II was blamed for the misfortunes, especially after he elected to join other nations to fight against Germany in World War I, further depleting Russia's dwindling resources. The number of wounded and dead mounted. The war became increasingly unpopular and as industrial and agrarian production diminished, the country found itself on the verge of collapse.

A series of changes among top officials reflected a lack of strong national leadership by the Tsar and fueled future chaos. Severe shortages of food and supplies were common; thousands deserted the army and navy. Masses of conscripts and reservists demonstrated their disaffection in public protests and by discarding their weapons. In this climate the public became angry and restless; riots broke out in major cities.

By 1917 the Russian state was in disarray. In February a revolution, led primarily by social democrats, workers, and disillusioned soldiers, met with little serious resistance from the weakened regime. Within a month the Tsar was forced to abdicate, and a Provisional Government was formed under Prince Georgy Lvov, the first Russian leader to grant full equality to Jews. All restrictions were lifted, and the Pale of Settlement was abolished.

Three months later, unable to resolve pressing demands, Prince Lvov was replaced by Alexander Kerensky, who proved to be weak and indecisive in meeting the many challenges facing a restless people. Jewish emancipation was deferred when, in October, a powerful faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, the Bolsheviks ("the Reds"), seized power under Vladimir Lenin. His priorities included battling counter-revolutionaries and Tsarist sympathizers ("the Whites"), in a bloody civil war, as well as stabilizing society. During the conflict, thousands of Jews became trapped in the war zones; pogroms by the local populace were common, especially in Ukraine.

Five years after the Revolution, the turmoil had ceased and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (aka the USSR or Soviet Union) was founded under Lenin's watch. It consisted of Russia and surrounding republics which, until 1991, included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia (now Belarus), Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Lenin's government imposed severe restrictions on the free movement of people and created a new intelligence and security apparatus to regulate and control society. The government also struggled to establish stability and launched its New Economic Policy (NEP), which was designed to ease some restrictions and support the tottering economy.

Lenin died from a stroke in January 1924, and by 1927 -- after eliminating his competitors including Leon Trotsky, Lev Kamenev, and Grigory Zinoviev -- Josif Stalin became the unquestioned ruler of the Soviet Union. During the next decade, Stalin's government forced the people to renew industries, modernize agricultural output, and rebuild an antiquated infrastructure. He also pressed writers, poets, artists, composers, and photographers to adopt an ideologically driven "Socialist Realism." More ominously, in his zeal to consolidate power, he imprisoned or had killed those whom he perceived as a threat to his hegemony.

In 1938, on the eve of World War II, Soviet authorities unleashed a campaign that would have completely obliterated the remaining Jewish religious and cultural institutions and forced the Jews into surrendering their identity as a distinct national minority. That threat was interrupted, however, by the Soviet Union's entry into the war and Stalin's call for "national unity."

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: 1946-1967

The post-World War period, dominated by Stalin, was a time of madness and despair. People throughout the country such as government officials, Communist party members, journalists, and academics, were arrested and often executed or murdered, including prominent Jews. During that era, and in the years that followed, by dint of policy and practice, Soviet Jews faced the likelihood of losing any surviving remnants of their religious and cultural traditions. Widespread restrictions on Jewish communal life were imposed, initiating an anti-Jewish purge.

From 1948 to 1953, a period described by the wartime journalist, Vitaly Grossman as the "Black Years of Soviet Jewry", nearly all Jewish religious and cultural institutions were systematically shuttered. Anti-Jewish posters, newspaper articles, and publications appeared throughout the country.

This campaign reached its zenith on August 12, 1952 on what has become known as the “Night of the Murdered Poets.” Prominent Jewish writers, scientists, poets, and political figures were executed in the basement of Moscow's notorious Lubyanka prison. In July, at a secret trial, they had been charged with being "enemies of the Soviet Union,” agents of America, and "guilty of Zionism," as well as trying to create a Jewish republic in Crimea and severing it from the Soviet Union.

The arrests and secret trials of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAF) reflected Stalin's post-war paranoia about Jewish loyalty to the Soviet Union, in particular their alleged endorsement of "anti-Soviet nationalistic activities" such as supporting the Jewish state. The subsequent killings demolished what remained of the Committee, created in 1942 to help mobilize worldwide Jewish support for the Soviet anti-Nazi war effort. The Committee was the last remaining national Jewish institution and had been led by Solomon Mikhoels, the central actor and director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater. He was murdered on Stalin's orders in January 1948, while visiting Minsk.

The post-war anti-Jewish campaign ended with Stalin's death in March 1953, on the eve of the Jewish holiday of Purim, traditionally linked to the rescue of Jews in ancient Persia. The events are recounted in Yehoshua Gilboa’s book, *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry*, as well as in Joshua Rubenstein's study, *The Last Days of Stalin*. Despite the cessation of the more pernicious forms of anti-Semitism that had marked the 1950’s, by the early 1960's Israel and the U.S. Department of State identified Moscow as a major source of anti-Semitic books, pamphlets, posters, and articles in popular journals and newspapers.

Soviet Jews had been under the dark shadow cast by the Holocaust during Nazi Germany's war on Western civilization. Roughly six million Jews, or one-third of the world's Jewish population, were annihilated, primarily in Poland and the Soviet Union. This included the wartime killing of 1.5 million men, women, and children within the Soviet Union's traditional borders, a number compounded by the loss of an additional 1.5 to 2 million in the prewar annexed territories of Poland and the Baltic States, primarily in Lithuania and the former Pale of Settlement.

In the decades that followed, especially in cities where mass killings had taken place, Jews fashioned Holocaust remembrance into acts of resistance to the Soviet regime's anti-Jewish policies. In Kyiv, honoring the murder of more than 30,000 Jews at the nearby Babyn Yar ravine, Jews quietly met at the site and organized informal holiday and commemorative events. Jews in Riga uncovered mass graves in the forests of Rumbala and met regularly to clean the area. Such activities gave birth to an underground Zionist group in the Latvian capital that included Silva Zalmanson and her brothers, as well as the young, religiously oriented Josif Mendelevich.

As a result of Moscow's policy of restricting contact with the West, news of Jewish ferment remained sporadic. When Israel achieved independence in 1948, securing information was assigned to designated operatives at the Israeli Embassy in Moscow. In addition to reaching out to individuals, they scanned national and local newspapers for references to Israel or Jews. Reports from other diplomats, as well as occasional visitors, together with accounts from journalists and visiting scholars, became sources of information and also provided a much-needed profile of the local Jewish world.

THE SIX DAY WAR

In the wake of the June 1967 Six-Day War in the Middle East and Israel's victory over the attacking armies from neighboring Arab states -- including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria -- Moscow severed diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. The Soviet Union had supplied arms, military equipment and training, and international political support to the Arab world, in the hope of building an anti-Western bloc. It now mobilized its citizens on behalf of its client states and unleashed an aggressive anti-Israel campaign.

Prominent Jews were forced to participate in public events condemning Israel, as were Jewish factory workers, faculty members still teaching at universities, and patients at hospitals. Articles condemning Israel appeared in newspapers, magazines, and books, as well as on radio and television broadcasts. Vicious anti-Semitic cartoons vilifying the Jewish people, Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel were common. Well-known Jewish personalities, such as the ballerina Maya Plisetskya, were brought before the public to denounce Israel. The full force of the state's propaganda ministry had now been unleashed.

Many young Jews were so enraged or mystified that they began to think about their own Jewish identity. Scores of young Jews sought answers in a desire to leave for Israel. As explained by Alla Rusinek in her memoir, ***Like a Song, Like a Dream: A Soviet Girl's Quest for Freedom***, Israel's defeat of a powerful Arab coalition was viewed as a strategic defeat for the Soviet Union.

Many Soviet Jews, including those who had not previously been involved in protesting anti-Jewish policies and had little understanding of Israel as a Jewish state, began to question whether they had a future in the Soviet Union. Hillel Butman, a former prisoner of conscience, ironically noted in his book, *From Leningrad to Jerusalem*, that "anti-Semitism in Russia was creating Zionism." A number of those who had become part of unofficial Hebrew study groups now embraced the emigration movement, creating additional pressure to leave.

With the memory of the Holocaust still fresh, the potential loss of nearly 3 million Jews resulting from Moscow's state policies weighed heavily on the emotions of American Jews, a major impetus for thousands of people in hundreds of cities across the United States to become advocates for Soviet Jews.

THE IMPETUS FOR ADVOCACY

Concerned about the news trickling out of the Soviet Union, local community and national groups in the United States coalesced in the 1960's and set in motion a broadbased American campaign. The efforts of a cohort of Israel's special representatives played a central role, albeit offstage. They were assisted by the activities of an unprepossessing center in New York City directed by Moshe Decter, a journalist, writer, and Zionist activist. Decter's mission was to convince national Jewish organizations and individuals to undertake active, albeit modest, public efforts such as circulating the information he provided and strengthening contacts with the media and government agencies.

The steady cultivation of international contacts and a trickle of departing Jews took place as part of a Soviet effort to encourage much-needed foreign investment and tourism. Concomitantly, it resulted in the gradual admittance of Western visitors to the Soviet Union who were able to communicate with Soviet Jews, thereby increasing the availability of information. Reports and written appeals from individual Soviet Jews were brought out by Western travelers, transmitted via telephone conversations, or circulated by Israeli authorities, with details about Jews repeatedly denied permission to leave for Israel and harassed by the security forces. These Soviet Jews who had been denied the right to emigrate to Israel became known as ***refuseniks***.

In America, a small network of volunteer activists transferred the information they had received to local Jewish community relations councils and newly created Soviet Jewry committees. The case histories of ***refuseniks*** now available gave the growing movement a sense of personal identification with individual Soviet Jews. Linking the two communities necessitated a review of tactics that could capture the imagination of a broad public. Without public support for the budding advocacy movement, success would not be possible.

New initiatives were developed. For example, young American Jews who reached their bar or bat mitzvah age of thirteen were "twinned" with a counterpart in the Soviet Union, who could not participate in a similar rite of passage. A centuries-old religious ceremony was now reimagined to include "absent" young Soviet Jews and their families.

The twinning project was designed to highlight a particular family's plight and simultaneously to engage or, at least, sensitize officials in Washington and the public at large through synagogue bulletins, letters, meetings, and media accounts. Envisioned as a protective technique for the family in the Soviet Union and a person-to-person partnership device, it evolved into a tool for educating synagogue members and the public about the constraints under which Soviet Jews were living.

Personal testimonies from the Soviet Union provided additional evidence concerning abuses against the religious, cultural, and civil rights of Soviet Jews. Religious training centers were shuttered, while the handful of remaining synagogues were not permitted to create mutual aid associations even though such options were available to the powerful Russian Orthodox Church. Hebrew studies remained proscribed, although a few Jewish publications -- notably the quasi-Yiddish periodical "***Sovietische Heymland***", were permitted so long as they promoted official doctrine.

Soviet policy had placed restrictions on other religious, ethnic, and national minorities, but Jews were especially vulnerable. The institutionally weak Jewish community was notoriously susceptible to increased pressure by the authorities. By the early 1970's, there were fewer than a dozen, mostly aging, rabbis throughout the Soviet Union. Without such religious leaders, and with the nation's one remaining Jewish theological seminary, in Moscow, closed, Judaism seemed destined to wither away.

As much statements of defiance as sincere petitions, appeals from ***refuseniks*** to Soviet authorities mounted in the late 1960's and early 1970's. They demanded the right to leave the Soviet Union to reunite with family in Israel. Although a great number lacked actual family ties, arranging for and sending the prerequisite invitations was a responsibility the Israeli government took upon itself.

Soviet authorities became increasingly alarmed by the mounting expressions of a Jewish national identity. When scientists and academics applied to leave for Israel, they were often punished by being fired from their places of employment, leaving them open to charges of "parasitism", a punishable offense. Others were accused of possessing "state secrets" and were, therefore, ineligible to leave, regardless of their specialties.

At the same time, an increasing number of Jewish students were denied entry to preeminent universities in the urban centers of Moscow and Leningrad. Some were told to apply to remote Central Asian or Siberian universities, thus isolating them from the greater Jewish population. On occasion, Jewish students were expelled from schools after applying to leave for Israel, thereby losing student-based exemptions

from military service. No longer students and unable to find work, they too were left vulnerable to charges of parasitism.

Arrests of the most outspoken Jewish activists mounted, as did severe sentences in labor camps or internal exile to Central Asia. To suppress this activism, which had included public protests, homes were searched for ***samizdat*** or self-published documents. Known Hebrew teachers who had led study groups at home were periodically arrested. Broadcasts from the American-sponsored Radio Free Europe and Israel's *Kol Yisrael* (Voice of Israel) were jammed, and Jewish educational or religious materials were confiscated. Frustration and anxiety escalated.

In a mounting climate of intimidation, the pressure to depart for Israel grew, even though most applicants were rejected. While some restrictions were lifted, ostensibly in response to increasing critical condemnations from the West, the Soviet Union's ideologically motivated policy continued to severely restrict the departure of Jews and maintain tight control of its citizens. For Moscow to have countenanced even the idea that Jews would want to emigrate would have been an admission that assimilating its Jewish minority had failed. Furthermore, it would have encouraged dissent by other religious minorities, such as Pentecostals and Seventh Day Adventists, seeking to redress official harassment of their communities.

ORGANIZING FOR ADVOCACY

The primary sources of information about Soviet Jews had been Israeli diplomats, visiting scholars, and reports from tourists and business travelers. This was enhanced by State Department and Congressional documents, Israeli specialists, foreign news accounts, and the careful scanning of the Soviet media.

Still, in the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement's early phase, there was virtually no direct contact with Soviet Jewish activists. Soon enough, most of them would become ***refuseniks***, whose personal histories became known through their various appeals to the West. To help create a sympathetic climate, American correspondents in Moscow had been contacted by activist individuals and groups in the United States.

Simultaneously, briefings of foreign news editors in American cities took place. Major newspapers, including The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Baltimore Sun were alerted to the growing number of arrests of ***refuseniks*** as well as plans for hunger strikes and public protests, in the hope that news accounts would serve further notice to Soviet officials that they were being closely watched.

While much of the useful data needed by the pioneering American efforts had come through Israel, long the center of international Jewish advocacy, within a few years, supplementary material was provided by other sources. It was difficult for the Soviet authorities to suppress all links forged by travelers since foreign contacts were useful to the local economy and Moscow's long-range political agenda. Furthermore, it was impossible to identify all "contact tourists", even after exposing suspect travelers to harsh questioning or invasive searches.

The Soviet authorities attempted to stem the bleeding of information by restricting the same human contacts they had previously welcomed. Among other tactics, they blocked international telephone calls to or from Soviet Jewish activists. A rapid response was necessary, and groups with ties to, for example, the domestic labor movement asked the Communication Workers of America to intervene. Strongly anticommunist, and sympathetic to the ***refuseniks***, the labor group threatened to break all transatlantic links to Moscow. The result was a hasty retreat from telephone intimidation by the Soviet authorities.

The experience demonstrated how influential groups or individuals could be brought into the campaign to exert pressure on Soviet officials whenever and wherever feasible. The determining factor was the ability to identify and engage those sectors, including labor, church, academic, scientific, and trade associations.

Until the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with Israel in June 1967, the Jewish state was reluctant to tip the scales of an already fraught balance by overtly encouraging public campaigns aimed at Moscow. Although relations between Jerusalem and Moscow were generally tense, the Israeli Embassy staff still enjoyed limited freedom of movement. They quietly met with Jewish activists and Hebrew teachers, and in turn provided educational materials, especially to communities distant from Moscow.

The government of Israel had assumed the task of establishing links as early as 1953 when Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion called for his country's intelligence apparatus to develop a means of communicating with Soviet Jews. This led to the creation of the ***Lishkat Hakesher*** (Contact Office or Liaison Bureau), known simply as *The* ***Lishka***, with the code name ***Nativ***. Several members, notably its initial chief, Shaul Avigur, had participated in ***Aliyah Bet***, the postwar underground Jewish immigration to Palestine. The embassy operatives in Moscow drew upon their experience and helped expand the impact of Jewish study groups in scores of cities and towns which, in turn, offered ***Nativ*** information about local Jewish life.

In addition to providing data to academics, the media, and multiple Moscow-based international agencies, ***Nativ*** sent specialists to work with Jewish organizations abroad and encourage them to accelerate advocacy. Some Jewish leaders in America, however, were initially concerned about entanglement in the tensions between the two world powers, fearing that public agitation on behalf of Soviet Jews would feed the Cold War and be counterproductive. On the other hand, activists on the local and national levels often cited the Holocaust and agitated for militant activism.

References began to appear in rabbinic sermons, as well as in letters and columns in the local American media. Grassroots committees evolved, notably the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, and gave voice to growing concerns. At the same time, a few national organizations such as the Jewish Labor Committee, the American Jewish Committee, and the American Jewish Congress initiated educational projects to raise public awareness of the crisis facing Soviet Jews.

The most politically involved advocates understood that the government in Washington needed to be actively engaged in pursuing policy changes in the Soviet Union. This meant accelerating efforts to have local and national media broadcast community concerns as well as news from the Soviet Union, notably the profiles of Jewish activists. Some groups began to explore methods for utilizing the political, economic, and diplomatic tools at their disposal, to generate strong public support.

Several prominent personalities, including U.S. Senators Jacob Javits (R., NY and Abraham Ribicoff (D., CT and Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, finally provided the impetus for community-based organizing. They were joined by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who, in pursuing social justice issues, had established a presence in the U.S. civil rights movement. They and leaders in the Jewish community were encouraged by ***Nativ*** to become more involved while Rabbi Heschel, in turn, was vocal in urging a more aggressive approach toward Moscow.

Their voices resonated among Jewish leaders already aware of some of the restrictions facing Soviet Jews, notably the fierce opposition to their right to leave, by Soviet authorities. After much hesitation, the agencies agreed to meet in Washington, D.C., and in April 1964 the first national conference on advocacy was convened.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANIZES

The outcome of the initial advocacy efforts was the launching in 1964 of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ), an ad hoc body to coordinate public activities and serve as an information clearinghouse. The decision represented progress in forging a common front in the effort to assist Soviet Jewish activism, with more than

two dozen national organizations signing an agreement. (1) Nevertheless, the AJCSJ lacked a permanent staff and a regular budget, severely limiting its range of options.

A director, chosen from among member groups on a rotating basis, reflected the ambivalence of several organizations about committing to the open-ended allocation of resources. Others, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (later, the Jewish Council on Public Affairs, or JCPA), were extremely cautious about sharing their carefully nurtured influence in the Jewish community on such matters as civil rights, social issues, and Israel. Their hope was to fold the AJCSJ under their umbrella while otherwise retaining the facade of unity to the greater Jewish-American community.

Despite these operating constraints, the AJCSJ nevertheless was able to develop a national strategy, including the creation of contacts with members of Congress and the State Department, briefing the print and broadcast media, and organizing or participating in academic conferences. It became a universal masthead under which its constituent organizations could establish links to known ***refuseniks*** and Hebrew teachers in the Soviet Union. Equally significant, it became a means of cooperating with emerging groups in other countries, notably England, France, Canada, the Netherlands, and Israel.

Targeting elected officials to exert their influence on the White House and Soviet leaders became a cornerstone of the Soviet Jewry movement. The early effort was marked by such events as the staging of a dramatic, weeklong "Eternal Light Vigil" in the U.S. capital, organized by the AJCSJ together with the Washington-based Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism. Symbolic of the "eternal light" over the holy ark in synagogues, an artist's rendition of the theme would later become the torch of freedom emblem for the AJCSJ and its affiliates in the advocacy movement. Contacts with ***refuseniks*** increased, local meetings and protests were generated, sympathetic academics wrote articles in journals and participated in conferences, and the engagement of Christian clergy was expanded. This was done through an Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry supported by the American Jewish Committee.

The newly formed Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) initiated a university-based program to organize students and provide its members and supporters with a platform for engaging in greater activism. The SSSJ brought the experiences and tactics some of its leaders had learned from the civil rights movement. In April 1965, it held its first major public demonstration, a "Jericho March" to the Soviet Consulate in New York

City, in which thousands participated. For the next three decades, similar dramatic actions marked the broader SSSJ advocacy campaign.

The advocacy movement was further strengthened with the creation of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ) in 1970. This nationwide coalition was the initiative of an active group of synagogue members, scientific professionals, and academics in Cleveland, Ohio. At its peak, the UCSJ integrated nearly three dozen similarly minded local groups throughout the country. The UCSJ stressed the creation of personal links with the growing network of Jewish activists and ***refuseniks*** in the Soviet Union. Like the AJCSJ, it engaged members of Congress whose support was vital to the campaign. With the help of contacts in Montreal, London, and Israel, the UCSJ forged an independent channel for receiving and disseminating information from the Soviet Union. Although this initiative gave it additional leverage in its work, it also reflected divisions in the overall advocacy effort.

POLITICIZING THE CAMPAIGN

Periodic crackdowns by Soviet security forces on underground Hebrew teachers and politically emboldened ***refuseniks*** were met with mounting protests and demonstrations in the West. The Jewish activists in the Soviet Union learned of game changing events in America from visitors and radio broadcasts, such as the official *Voice of America*, the *BBC*, and *Radio Free Europe*, as well as the more political *Radio Liberty* and Israel's Kol Yisrael (Voice of Israel). To undermine their impact, Soviet authorities launched broad-based propaganda efforts in the mass media, disparaging the protesters in America and elsewhere as "cold warriors", "hooligans", and "enemies of peace".

In the context of international advocacy, the American Jewish community became a major public force, reflecting its size, wealth, and organizational infrastructure. An utmost consideration was the knowledge that Washington, in its contacts with Moscow, had leverage. This brought additional responsibilities to the advocacy movement in America, thus necessitating new tactics. Most important were the spontaneous, as well as organized, initiatives to strengthen relations with the White House and the Congress, the institutions empowered to negotiate with Soviet diplomats on such issues as arms control, cultural exchange, trade, and the Middle East.

Engaging the president was a top priority of such planning. It was tested in 1963 by the same trio of insiders who had first urged Jewish leaders to become more involved in advocacy on behalf of soviet Jews. Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Arthur J. Goldberg and Senators Jacob Javits and Abraham Ribicoff were persuaded to

approach President John F. Kennedy with a request to intervene with Soviet leadership. They were discouraged, however, by State Department officials who were sympathetic but urged caution given the prevailing Cold War environment. Unwilling to accept such dismissal by bureaucrats, the two senators took advantage of an invitation to the White House to seek President Kennedy's intervention with Soviet authorities. However, any significant action that could have been taken by Kennedy was prevented by his assassination in November of that year.

Undeterred, Jewish organizations and community leaders agreed that, thereafter, the practice of engaging the President would be a central part of the campaign's strategy. When this was not possible, meetings with White House staff, including the national security advisor, or top-ranking State Department personnel -- all of whom were receptive -- proved equally effective. Individual hardship cases, emigration trends, and evidence of human rights violations were always on the agenda.

Whenever the White House hesitated to intervene directly, ostensibly to avoid upsetting the delicate balance in Soviet-American relations, other options were explored. In order to demonstrate broad-based public support for engaging Soviet leaders to change their policies, a massive, nationwide petition campaign was organized by the AJCSJ, gathering over a million names, with the help of the NJCRAC. Addressed to Richard Nixon on the eve of a May 1972 summit meeting with Leonid Brezhnev, the appeal was designed to provide the American president with a strengthened position in discussing the status of the Jewish minority with his Soviet counterpart.

OPERATION WEDDING

A major shift took place with the June 1970 arrest of fourteen ***refuseniks*** and two non-Jewish dissidents, including the human rights activist and academic Yuri Orlov. A swelling number of refusals for permits to leave had led to increased frustration among both current and prospective applicants. In a radical response, a group of young people from Riga and Leningrad developed a plan to steal a small plane and escape to Israel via Sweden, ostensibly to attend a wedding. The daring plot, appropriately dubbed “Operation Wedding”, was doomed from its inception. Israeli authorities, who were made aware of the plot and its risks, urged its cancellation. In fact, having been infiltrated by the KGB, the group was arrested on its way to Leningrad’s Smolny airport, an outcome the members had foreseen as a possibility.

At a secret trial six months later, the plot’s leaders, former Soviet Air Force pilot Mark Dymshitz and Eduard Kuznetsov, an outspoken critic of the regime, were sentenced to

death for treason. Others received up to fifteen years in a labor camp. The First Leningrad Trial, as it was later referred to in the West, was quickly followed by a nationwide series of arrests and trials, including scores of activists and informal Hebrew teachers.

The harsh pronouncement by the court, widely reported in the Western media, caused an international furor. The trial, and the additional arrests, energized advocacy groups in many countries, and public rallies, prayer vigils, and demonstrations took place. The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry convened an emergency national meeting in Washington D.C. It urged its constituent organizations to accelerate their activities. It also empowered Max Fisher and Jacob Stein, two prominent figures in the Republican Party and respected Jewish communal leaders, to meet with President Richard Nixon and secure his willingness to intervene. The pair reported back to the meeting that the President had been sympathetic, albeit non-committal.

In a surprise move, and prior to the acceleration of a public campaign, the Soviet judiciary reduced the death sentences to fifteen years hard labor. Prison terms of four to fifteen years were imposed on the other members, including Silva Zalmanson, the only woman in the group. In spite of Nixon's expressions of sympathy, it was speculated that even if an intervention by the White House had taken place, it might not have been the primary cause of the reduced sentences. A parallel trial of Basque nationalist separatists in Spain, where the court had handed down death sentences, may have been a significant factor. After all, Soviet leaders were sensitive to any parity being drawn between the sentences at the First Leningrad Trial and those by General Francisco Franco's fascist government. Historical documents offer little clarity.

Nevertheless, anger at the ensuing arrests of Soviet ***refuseniks*** and Hebrew teachers resulted in calls by Jewish advocacy groups to accelerate efforts to engage the American administration on a regular basis. This led to a demand for a restructured AJCSJ that could undertake a more aggressive nationwide campaign. Within a few months, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) emerged out of this restructuring and began to actively engage the Jewish community, the American political establishment, and the mass media.

THE MOVEMENT EXPANDS

With a modest budget, the NCSJ was given a mandate to integrate national Jewish organizations and their network of hundreds of local chapters, community relations councils, and federations. It immediately focused on congressional outreach, local and national public protests and events, media contacts, newspaper advertisements, and

basic research. Funding from private sources and the Jewish Agency for Israel helped launch the Soviet Jewry Research Bureau, whose mission was to monitor and publicize Soviet policy shifts and the status of ***refuseniks***.

Accurate and up-to-date information was critical for effective advocacy, and for the regular reports submitted to government agencies, the mass media, and congressional leaders. The reliance on the Soviet Jewry Research Bureau, as well as on the UCSJ's contacts in the Soviet Union, for case histories and emigration statistics was an important factor in maintaining the integrity of the campaign. As such, advocacy for Soviet Jews began to assume new forms.

To help overcome the sense of isolation among Jewish activists and ***refuseniks***, major advocacy groups and rabbinic seminaries, among others, sent travelers to the Soviet Union to meet with families who had suffered retribution by the authorities. Those with special skills served as transmitters of Jewish traditions, rituals, and history. Still, others provided kosher food and news of activities in America, a vital morale booster. Some supplied material goods, an important supplement for those forced into unemployment due to political persecution. Much of this was coordinated through a special program known as Operation Lifeline.

One weakness of the campaign became apparent with the travel initiative. No person or agency was tasked with coordinating or integrating the efforts of the various national programs. ***Nativ***, with operations in many countries, attempted but was unable to overcome these obstacles. Recognizing that traveler initiatives helped overcome a sense of isolation among Soviet Jews, it also personalized the campaign for those who could now identify with ***refuseniks*** and bring back useful information. Nevertheless, there remained many soviet Jewish activities who were overlooked, due to unresolved organizational and logistical problems.

The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews remained independent, with a primary focus on the community level as well as in Washington. The UCSJ fostered extensive person-to-person efforts in the media, drawing attention to individual or family cases, but with little coordination with the NCSJ. Nevertheless, it did prevail upon a cohort of congressional members to become engaged through public advocacy on behalf of ***refuseniks*** and their families.

The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, with its activist program to engage students and adults, no longer limited itself to college campuses. In the end, it chose to join the NCSJ. This decision gave its leadership increased opportunities to be heard and become participants in the broader campaign for Soviet Jews.

As advocacy campaigns arose around the globe, ***Nativ*** saw value in demonstrating that America was not the only center of political and community action. It therefore promoted the idea of an international conference. The response from groups in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and South Africa agreed to convene an international gathering in Brussels in February 1971. The city, home to such international agencies as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), had already become a symbol of political globalization. The decision met with virulent protests from Soviet authorities, who unleashed a stream of media attacks lambasting the proposed meeting as a "tool of the Cold War."

The leading Soviet newspaper, ***Pravda***, labeled those supporting the conference as "enemies of the Soviet people." Unable to prevent the event, and to ensure that there was broad awareness of its antipathy, Moscow sent several trusted Jewish personalities, including Samuel Zivs, to the Belgian capital to disparage it. This tactic merely provoked greater interest among Western journalists and encouraged them to attend. The result was that scores of media representatives came to Brussels, as did more than eight hundred delegates.

Nothing that emanated from Moscow, including diplomatic threats, diminished the political and media success of the Brussels Conference. The broad globalization of the advocacy campaign undermined Soviet criticism of the gathering as an instrument of "international Zionism," a favored trope to demean advocates acting on behalf of ***refuseniks*** and other Jewish activists.

NEW STRATEGIES

Though the movement had become increasingly transnational, with committees in different countries exchanging data and experiences, a review of strategies underscored the need to broaden the campaign. The Brussels Conference had been useful in helping unite the various groups and reviewing tactics, but it was insufficient for a protracted campaign.

In America, President Nixon's policy objectives included the expansion of bilateral trade with the Soviet Union and achieving consensus on disarmament to diminish Cold War tensions. This agenda, however, threatened to set the stage for a confrontation with the Jewish community. Advocates sought to minimize any reported opposition to the President but were adamant in continuing their criticism of Soviet human rights abuses regarding its Jewish minority.

A new strategy called for a broadened effort, notably the recruitment of new allies, including scientists, academics, writers, educators, and medical professionals – those

generally seen as supportive of human rights. Special interest and affiliated groups, such as the Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry, provided a valuable channel to Catholic and Protestant clergy and lay leaders.

A uniquely fashioned and independent Committee of Concerned Scientists, which had hundreds of members, enlisted colleagues who traveled to the Soviet Union urging them to meet with their academic and professional counterparts, and to also establish contact with ***refusenik*** scientists forced into unemployment. Their primary mission was to conduct study sessions in the apartments of unemployed activists eager to learn about developments in their respective fields.

At the request of prisoner families, volunteer lawyers were brought together to represent their relatives, self-described as ***Assirei Zion***, Hebrew for "prisoners of Zion". At least one group was formed, chaired by Columbia University Professor Telford Taylor, who had served as chief counsel at the post–World War II Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. Although none of the lawyers could claim legal status before the Soviet judicial system, all readily agreed to be involved. The group was assisted by NCSJ's Soviet Jewry Research Bureau, which provided details on individual cases, together with information from the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Drawing on Soviet law, Professor Taylor and his associates traveled to Moscow armed with meticulous legal briefs and petitions on behalf of the prisoners, meant for judges, lawyers, and the judiciary ministry officials. The Research Bureau lent credence to the effort by providing valuable case histories, often provided by the families of the prisoners, and data on the violations of international human rights standards.

Rebuffed by the Soviet legal authorities, the delegation issued a final report upon its return to New York. Their efforts and documents served as the basis of Taylor's seminal "Courts of Terror", published in 1976, which became a primer for activists and helped enhance the campaign for ***refuseniks*** imprisoned on fabricated charges.

Operating on a parallel track, the Union of Council's Boston affiliate created a formidable legal center, built around a group of specialists focused on legal issues affecting ***refuseniks***. A key function of the center was to provide up-to-date information on imprisoned activists, including ***refuseniks*** and unofficial Hebrew teachers, often obtained from families and friends in Israel.

THE WASHINGTON OPTION

A major strategic move for the advocacy movement was the establishment of a regular

presence in Washington to strengthen contacts with members of Congress and their staff, arrange briefing sessions with State Department officials, and engage the office of the president.

Several major organizations operating in Washington were in unique positions to provide support to the NCSJ. This included, most notably, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, the National Council of Jewish Women, the America Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism.

This ad hoc coalition focused on how best to coordinate and implement national policy and program guidelines in the country's power center. Within that framework, the primary targets were Washington-based government officials, members of Congress, the media, labor unions, and Christian clergy.

Following a protest held opposite the Soviet Embassy, the Washington Jewish Community Council instituted a daily vigil which was sustained for more than twenty years, to the chagrin of Soviet officials. The vigil forced embassy personnel to face the participants and their protests on a regular basis. "Never Forgive" and "Never Forget" became catchwords for the campaign, while visitors to the city were invited to carry word of the vigil to their local communities.

The UCSJ, while still out of the mainstream of the Jewish world, was most effective when it marshaled its international resources and fact-finding capabilities. Though it focused a good deal of energy on Capitol Hill and the State Department, it continued to engage its grassroots and community support.

Despite this whirlwind of activity, Moscow was not ready or willing to significantly alter its policies regarding the status of the Jewish minority. A wider spectrum of Americans, spearheaded by Jewish groups, would be needed if the campaign was to have an impact. Advocacy planners understood that for this aspect of the campaign to succeed, it would need to be more dramatic and that implementing a broader outreach would be neither quick nor facile.

An assessment of the possibilities led to the decision to involve America's corporate world, particularly executives who interacted with their Soviet counterparts and government officials. The views of stockholders and customers who had expressed their concerns about Soviet Jews in various public forums were brought into the general campaign.

This initiative was being negotiated through the NCSJ Business Advisory Council, as

well as other organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee. Some American corporate executives agreed to become private messengers to Moscow, a rare initiative that helped maintain pressure on their Soviet counterparts. However, it wasn't until the next national election in which President Richard Nixon hoped to announce a foreign policy reset with Moscow, that this strategy took a decisive turn.

THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT

In April 1972 Nixon returned from a summit meeting with Leonid Brezhnev. On the eve of Passover, he met with Jewish organization leaders to inform them that he had reached an "understanding" with Moscow to facilitate greater Jewish emigration. The president's gesture reflected the important role played by prominent Jewish donors and advisors in the Republican Party who had helped arrange the meeting. It also signaled a growing realization that the Jewish electorate, which had traditionally voted heavily for the Democratic Party, should be courted by the Republicans, especially during that election year.

The Jewish leaders at the White House meeting were wary of verbal "understandings" and therefore sought a signed and verifiable pledge from Brezhnev. They recalled that the Soviet Union had reneged on other previous "understandings", such as support for Israel.

During this time, the Soviet Union was suffering from a faltering economy. It wanted access to American trade, investments, and technology to help overcome its shortcomings in producing consumer goods and strengthening its military-industrial complex. To help bridge the economic shortfall, Moscow sought a "most-favored-nation" status, which would have granted the Soviet Union lower credit terms equal to those of America's best trading partners, thereby expanding economic growth.

Nixon viewed this request favorably in the context of a desire to scale back the Cold War, increase domestic exports, and elicit Moscow's help in ending the war still raging in Vietnam. The President anticipated that achieving these goals would secure his place in history.

A mere two and a half months after the summit meeting, the Soviet Union issued an edict to discourage the increasing number of applications from Jews desirous of leaving for Israel. It was a major blunder. It demanded "reimbursement" for the cost of educating and training Soviet citizens before they could depart the country. The levy, as high as $25,000 for an individual, would have had a profound, negative impact on innumerable Soviet Jewish students.

The authorities may have expected this emigration levy to curtail the growing tide of applications, but they had miscalculated. The edict instead caused an international uproar, especially in America. Announced so soon after Nixon's return from the summit meeting with Leonid Brezhnev, it was seen as a personal affront to the President and thwarted his hopes of achieving a mutually acceptable agreement with the Soviet Union.

In an act of defiance Soviet Jews insisted that Western Jews not consider paying what they viewed as a "ransom tax." Furthermore, even if such sums were available, there was no guarantee that Soviet authorities would not introduce new obstacles to Jews seeking the right to leave.

In America, some members of Congress and a core group of Jewish representatives in Washington had been considering extending, quid pro quo, economic incentives to "non-market" countries -- command economies such as the Soviet Union – in exchange for guarantees of the rights of Soviet Jews to emigrate.

The most acceptable proposal came to be known as "the Jackson-Vanik Amendment" to the Trade Act of 1974. This approach was recommended by several Jewish staff aides to Senators Jacob Javits and Abraham Ribicoff, among others. In order not to appear capricious or discriminatory, the amendment did not specify the Soviet Union. However, in public comments and Congressional debate, the sponsors were clear about the linkage. This elicited a remarkable response throughout the country, one that was to color the advocacy movement for many years to come.

Leadership of efforts in the Senate, including sponsorship of the amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, was assumed by Senator Henry Jackson, a Democrat from the state of Washington. A campaign to turn the amendment into law, which lasted from 1972 to 1974, drew active support from every national Jewish organization. Endorsements came from human rights groups, anti-communist labor unions, and sympathetic Christian clergy. Representative Charles Vanik, a Democrat from Ohio, soon joined Jackson's effort, cementing the passage of the amendment.

As the major arms supplier to Israel and its most powerful supporter, the United States was anxious to maintain it delicate geopolitical equilibrium with the Soviet Union. Moscow was the primary arms supplier to the Arab world, and its Middle East partners understood that expanded emigration from the Soviet Union would only serve to strengthen the Jewish state. Though the President and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had repeatedly affirmed the right to freedom of movement, they viewed the amendment as disruptive to presidential prerogatives in foreign affairs and a threat to the improvement of East-West relations.

The public clamor in support of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment caused unease in some Jewish circles regarding the possibility that Washington might curtail its aid to Israel, or that Moscow would launch new initiatives against Jewish activists in the Soviet Union. High-profile ***refuseniks***, including Vladimir Slepak and Yuli Kosharovskii, viewed the legislation as an effective opportunity to pressure Soviet leadership. In telephone conversations with American advocates, probably overheard by KGB monitors, these Soviet Jewish activists urged its acceptance. To those concerned about the endangerment of Israel's security, ***Nativ*** argued that Washington had not applied any pressure on Israel's government and supported the amendment's passage.

With rates of emigration from the Soviet Union stagnant in spite of the demands of many Soviet Jews, Jewish organizations were determined to mobilize their constituents and actively endorse the new trade legislation. Opposing a sitting president's political will was risky, and there was some apprehension that the Kremlin, as well as the White House, would seek retribution. This fear was exacerbated when the leaders of a few Jewish organizations were approached by the White House to meet and discuss the pending amendment.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, whose chairman was a stalwart among Jewish Republicans, initially hesitated about supporting the Amendment, but the major national Soviet Jewry groups and their local affiliates held fast. With the approval of an overwhelming majority of Congress, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, as it came to be known, was attached to the Trade Act of 1974 and signed into law in January 1975 by President Gerald Ford. This firmly linked U.S. trade with non-market economies to the liberalization of emigration policies and practices.

This outcome was critical. Although the Soviet Union continued its pursuit of favorable credit terms and increased bilateral trade, it showed disdain for the new initiative. Its immediate response was to repudiate a Nixon-era trade agreement with the U.S. and reduce to a trickle the number of Jews permitted to leave. Not until after 1991, when the Soviet Union imploded and a new government assumed power, did emigration actually grow in any meaningful amount.

The passage of the Amendment was nevertheless a seminal moment in the history of Soviet Jewish advocacy. It proved a valuable tool to apply pressure on Moscow. Furthermore, it reflected a new awareness of the Jewish community's political power, and strengthened the partnership between activists in the Soviet Union, who bore the brunt of abusive and sometimes violent treatment, and their American advocates.

THE HELSINKI PROCESS

For decades, the Jewish community had been sensitive to accusations that it did not prod its leaders into more aggressive action to save Jews during World War II. Despite the existing racism, anti-Semitism, and hostility to foreign immigrants in many parts of America at the time, critics insisted that greater activism might have prevented the Holocaust. The capability of American Jews to have effectively altered American policy in the 1930's and 1940's continues to be debated.

What was not arguable, however, was the sense of accomplishment that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment gave to local Jewish communities across America, the spinal cord of the advocacy effort. Public demands and private interventions, to ensure that the Amendment became law, had transformed the Jewish community into one better prepared to engage the political system. Equally important, the effort demonstrated that with a common objective, a unified and highly motivated alliance could sustain a winning campaign.

If the Amendment was a significant domestic triumph, it was complemented on the international level by the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, signed by thirty-five European and North American countries, including the United States, Canada, France, and Great Britain. What would later become known as the "Helsinki Process", with its human rights components, was not what Soviet leaders had anticipated when Leonid Brezhnev signed the pact.

The agreement encompassed several significant international concerns, including economic relations and human rights. The primary strategic objective for the Soviet Union was the fixing of European borders that had been redrawn in the aftermath of World War II—a provision of the Act. For advocates in the West, the use of the Act, notably its provisions on the reunification of families, became a platform for monitoring and exposing violations of human rights in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Jewry advocacy community, together with Human Rights Watch and Freedom House, worked with Congress to create a monitoring mechanism—the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), also known as the Helsinki Commission. The CSCE was designed to keep a spotlight on Moscow and, hopefully, encourage changes in its human rights record. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, however, viewed the commission as another intrusion into the White House's constitutional role in foreign policy matters. Despite his opposition, the State Department reluctantly became a commission member.

Periodic international meetings of the signatory nations to the Helsinki Final Act were convened to review progress under the provisions of the Act designed to protect individuals from human rights violations. American Jewish groups recognized the need for coordination and for maintaining a constant watch, leading to a loosely constructed World Conference on Soviet Jewry.

This was especially critical in the early 1980's, when bilateral contacts between Moscow and Washington were minimal. Invariably, Soviet delegates at meetings under the provisions of the Final Act, protested the intervention of non-governmental critics, signifying that the efforts of the advocacy campaign were irritating the Soviet government, a strategic objective.

Ironically, the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act created a moral dilemma for the inner circle that had gradually come to dominate the ***refusenik*** world. When the Act was signed, many political dissidents in the Soviet Union expected Moscow to "democratize" society. They not only ramped up their campaign against Moscow's repression of writers, academics, and scientists, but also sought closer cooperation with Jewish activists, a move that would have been viewed by the security agencies as seditious, and a threat to the Soviet state. At great risk, the dissidents took advantage of the new atmosphere created by the Final Act to organize the Helsinki Watch Group. However, this never achieved the same level of public support as the broad-based Soviet Jewry advocacy movement.

After much internal debate, the ***aliyah*** movement in the Soviet Union chose not to join with the democratic dissidents, a decision that caused great anguish in both camps. Their decision was based on tactical as well as philosophical grounds. They viewed their struggle as inconsistent with undermining the Soviet system. Although they faced constant harassment and harsh prison sentences, the punishment for outspoken ***aliyah***-minded ***refuseniks*** was often less severe than that meted out to the pro-democracy dissidents. To demonstrate solidarity between the two movements, however, some ***refuseniks*** agreed to join the Helsinki Watch Group.

The move to link the emigration movement to the Helsinki Watch Group's modus operandi was opposed by others at the center of the ***aliyah*** movement, such as the outspoken Hebrew teacher and emigration activist Yuli Kosharovskii, who argued that it would endanger their own efforts. In the end, the ***refuseniks*** compromised and endorsed the move by those colleagues with close ties to the dissidents, including Vladimir (Volodya) Slepak and Anatoly Shcharansky (later, Natan Sharansky), who nevertheless remained committed to the Jewish struggle.

For the Soviet security apparatus, the potential cooperation between the two movements was seen as a threat to internal stability. It was not by coincidence that Shcharansky and Slepak were subsequently arrested and put on trial. In June 1978 Slepak was sentenced to five years of internal exile in Siberia.

Meanwhile, Sharansky, who was sentenced to hard labor, became an international cause célèbre when, at his June 1979 trial, he was falsely accused of spying for the United States. His sentence was cut short, however, following a steady campaign on his behalf, including appearances by his wife, Avital, at public and private events, notably a meeting with President Ronald Reagan and Vice President G.W. Bush arranged by Jewish communal leaders.

In February 1986, under the leadership of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, a period of ***glasnost*** (openness) was ushered in. Sharansky and other political prisoners were exchanged for convicted Czechoslovak spies and Soviet agents. He was taken to Berlin and flown to Israel, where he became involved in political life.

Slepak, who died in April 2015, received an early release from his five-year sentence in exile. He and his wife, Maria (Masha), who died in 2017, were finally permitted to leave for Israel, where they were reunited with their two sons, who had been granted permission to leave much earlier.

A CHAPTER CLOSES: Freedom Sunday

On December 6, 1987, an estimated 250,000 people gathered on the Mall in Washington, D.C. They had come together on Freedom Sunday on the eve of the first summit meeting in the United States between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. The rally reflected an expectation that the two leaders would hear their message—one of hoped-for change.

Although organized with only six weeks' notice, the initial plans had been formulated by the NCSJ and the NJCRAC a year and a half earlier, as rumors of a possible summit meeting began circulating. During the intervening period, the two agencies issued a constant stream of alerts and notices to sustain interest. Taking part in the effort to mobilize the Jewish community was the recently released Sharansky, who had been touring the United States and Canada.

Over the ensuing years, marches and public rallies were staged across the country, as well as protest meetings in synagogues, Jewish community centers, and churches. In the New York City region, with its large population of Jews and sympathetic non-Jews,

public demonstrations grew. Organized by the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry (later the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews), annual Solidarity Sunday rallies brought together people from all sectors of society throughout the region.

What made Freedom Sunday unique is that Jews and non-Jews traveled hundreds of miles, carrying signs and banners on behalf of individual ***refuseniks*** or protesting basic human rights violations. People marched slowly to the Mall, with the Washington Monument at one end and the Capitol at the other, joining with elected officials, entertainers, advocacy stalwarts, and Jewish and non-Jewish community leaders.

The most electrifying aspect of Freedom Sunday was the participation of former "prisoners of Zion", recently released from Soviet labor camps, prisons, or internal exile, including Natan Sharansky, Vladimir Slepak, and Josif Mendelevich. Vice President George H. W. Bush spoke, articulating the Reagan administration's resolute support--a significant political message to Gorbachev, the visiting Soviet leader, who at that point was also President of the Soviet Union.

Those who gathered that day could not know they were participating in the advocacy campaign's final phase. The next day President Ronald Reagan reportedly mentioned the demonstration to Gorbachev, impressing upon him the widespread support for changes in Soviet human rights policy and, specifically, for allowing Jews the right to study, worship, and leave.

For years the Jewish community had encouraged its members to organize and forge personal ties with ***refuseniks***. Scientists, educators, rabbis, nuns, priests, ministers, writers, journalists, lawyers, doctors, students, and cultural icons were especially effective participants. Their major role was to encourage and support Jewish activists in America and ***refuseniks*** in the Soviet Union, while exposing Moscow's violations of international practices and legal norms.

Gorbachev, in his desire to initiate economic and social reforms in Soviet society, rebuild a weakened infrastructure, and strengthen ties with the United States, began to allow Jews to emigrate in modest increments. The departures peaked in 1990 when 190,000 Jews left the Soviet Union. But Gorbachev was unable to manage the demands for improving the economy, besting his political opponents, or granting greater personal freedom to the general populace.

In 1991, following a brief but violent struggle by Gorbachev's political opponents, the Soviet Union imploded and ceased to exist—a profound, historic development. The factors leading to its collapse included economic stagnation, increasing unrest among national, ethnic, and religious minorities, widespread alcoholism, political dissent, and

restlessness in neighboring communist-ruled countries. Political analysts suggested that pro-Jewish public agitation and private interventions in America and the West, on behalf of Soviet Jews, also functioned as a lever bringing about the implosion of the Soviet Union.

Out of the wreckage of the Soviet Union emerged a weak and loosely constructed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). After nearly eight decades of communist rule, the various republics that constituted the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics declared their independence. The Russian Federation, under Boris Yeltsin and then Vladimir Putin, emerged as the largest and most powerful of these newly independent states. Jews were soon able to depart for Israel and, increasingly, America, without serious obstacles.

In the decade that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, nearly 2,000,000 Soviet Jews came to Israel; 600,000 to 800,000 settled in the United States, and some 125,000-150,000 arrived in Germany, Australia, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, and South Africa. Equally significant state-sponsored anti-Semitism was halted. Furthermore, religious and cultural rights were slowly restored.

As a result of its success, the advocacy movement in the West, especially in the United States, gradually diminished. But even as state-sponsored hostility in the former Soviet Union faded, populist anti-Semitism, with some neo-fascist undertones, surfaced in some of the successor states, including Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Latvia.

In achieving basic rights for Soviet Jews, advocates had written a dramatic success story. Jews who had pressed for the right to leave for Israel and other welcoming countries could finally build new lives. Those Jews who were able to do so left for Israel with mathematics, engineering, or technology backgrounds and helped it become the technology-centered "Startup Nation" that it is today, expanding both its economic base and its global reach. Jews who remained in the former Soviet Union now had the opportunity to choose their own individual and community-based destiny.

For those who participated in the advocacy movement, whether in the Soviet Union, the United States, or elsewhere, it was a transformative experience, demonstrating the political strength of an organized movement.

(1) Among other national organizations the AJCSJ included the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Labor Committee, the America-Israel Political Action Committee, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Rabbinical Council of America, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith International, Hadassah—the Women's Zionist Organization, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the World Zionist Organization, American Section.

(2) Twenty-four national Jewish organizations took part in the Washington conference. Lacking a consensus, it adopted a program that would not be controversial or threatening to any member organization. Each one pledged minimal funds and staff to implement activities on an ad hoc basis. Though the structure was loose, the AJCSJ did launch major public activities, involve the mass media, and engage with federal and local officials. In 1971 it was reorganized into the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

For a more detailed account of the Jewish movement in the Soviet Union and the American advocacy movement, see the annotated Timeline of Historic Events, 1917–1991, as well as the Bibliography, accompanying this narrative.

POLITICS AND PROTEST
The American Advocacy Movement for Soviet Jews
A STUDY GUIDE

TIMELINE: 1917-1991

The Timeline begins with the abdication of Tsar Nikolai II, who ruled the Russian Empire until 1917. In that year, the Romanov dynasty was overthrown by two successive violent revolutions, just months apart. Within a few years, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), aka the Soviet Union, was declared.

The Soviet Union imploded some 72 years later, in 1991. It buckled under internal political, social, and economic stress. In its place, most of the former Soviet republics formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a loose, weak coalition with Russia at its core. This Timeline focuses on significant historic and political developments, the efforts of Soviet Jewish activists and ***refuseniks*** (those refused permission to leave for Israel), the advocacy movement in the West, notably in America, and the role of the State of Israel.

Like many social and political movements, advocates and activists in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and America were beset by internal conflicts, offering differing views on strategy and tactics. Nevertheless, they shared the same core objectives. Ultimately, the success of the campaign altered the profile of the Jewish world, as an estimated 1.8–2 million Soviet Jews were able to leave for Israel, America, Germany, and elsewhere.

1917

- February Revolution: Following a history of arbitrary and authoritarian rule, Tsar Nikolai II is forced to abdicate, and a liberal Provisional Government assumes power. Initially led by Prince Georgy Lvov, it was replaced in July by Aleksander Kerensky and the Mensheviks, a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.
- After centuries of discrimination and oppression, Russian Jews are emancipated. The Pale of Settlement, a large territory in the western part of the Russian Empire is formally abolished. The Pale included Poland and Lithuania and was set aside by Catherine the Great as an area to which Jews were restricted.
- October Revolution: On October 25 (November 7, according to the Gregorian

calendar) the Bolsheviks, a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky, overthrow the Provisional Government and declare a Soviet republic. The promulgation of the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia by the Bolsheviks is intended, at least in theory, to guarantee basic rights for the majority population of Russians, as well as all minority national and religious groups.

1917-1920

- Civil war erupts between the Bolsheviks, aka the "Reds", and an opposition coalition of "Whites", which includes pro-tsarist sympathizers, rebellious army units, and peasants. The war ravages Russia, while British, French, and American troops intervene in the north, capturing Murmansk and Arkhangelsk; Japanese, Chinese, and American forces occupy the eastern port of Vladivostok. The counter-revolutionary Whites use the turmoil to stage anti-Jewish pogroms; they eventually lose the struggle to the Reds.

1918

- January: The organization of the first Commissariat for Jewish National Affairs (*Evkom*), the official Jewish section of the People's Commissariat for Nationality Affairs, is headed by Semion (Shimon) Dimanshtein. Created by the Bolsheviks to integrate the newly liberated Jewish minority into mainstream political life, the project is halted nine months later.
- September: Among the several cultural initiatives permitted, the ***Habimah*** Theater moves to Moscow under the auspices of the Moscow Art Theatre. Founded in 1912 by Nahum Zemach in Bialystok, Poland, as a Hebrew-language Jewish drama company, ***Habimah*** had met with persecution by the Polish government.
- October: At Lenin's suggestion, **Evkom** is replaced by a Jewish section of the Communist Party, the ***Evsektsia***, to mobilize and strengthen Jewish support for the new government.

1919

- ***Habimah*** presents David Pinski's classic play, ***The Eternal Jew***.
- February 15: More than 1,000 Jews are killed in a pogrom in Proskurov, Ukraine.
- A general anti-religious campaign mounts. Religious marriage and divorce laws are repealed and religious education for youth under 18 is restricted to homes.

1921

- The implementation of a New Economic Policy (NEP) signals a partial return to a market economy in an effort to create stability.

1921–22

- Jewish Bundists (a left-leaning, Yiddish-speaking organization), Mensheviks, and other "non-Bolsheviks" are expelled from the Communist Party. The pro-left *Poalei Zion* is declared illegal.

1922

- January 31: ***Habimah*** presents S. Anski's famous play, ***The Dybbuk***.
- April 3: Josif Stalin becomes General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).
- December 30: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a federation of socialist republics, is formally established. It includes Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, and the Transcaucasian Federation (divided in 1936 into Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). Also known as the Soviet Union.
- The ***Evsektsia*** promotes state funding of Yiddish culture as part of the continuing effort to combat "bourgeois Zionists" and engage the Jewish masses in a socialist culture. It encourages "anti-religious activities" among Jews.

1923

- The 12th Congress of the Communist Party grants official cultural autonomy to national minorities throughout the country, including Jews, allowing them to express national identities banned under Tsarist rule.

1924

- January 21: A stroke fells Lenin. Stalin succeeds in outmaneuvering competitors and assumes party leadership.
- A nationwide purge of several thousand known Zionist activists takes place. Those arrested are sent to labor camps in Siberia.
- The Chabad Orthodox religious movement creates a network of underground ***yeshivot*** (Jewish theological seminaries) that continue to operate for decades.
- July 15: The Communist Party's Central Committee affirms the equality of Russian, Belorussian, Polish, and Yiddish as major, national languages.
- August: Creation of the Commission for Settlement of Jewish Workers on the Land (***KOMZET*** in Russian; ***KOMERD*** in Yiddish).
- November: Organization of Agro-Joint (American Jewish Agricultural Corporation), to help resettle Jews.
- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or "Joint") signs an agreement with Soviet leaders to resettle thousands of impoverished Ukrainian Jews in Crimea. (In the years between 1948 to 1953, the height of brutal anti-

Jewish policies, the move is used as a pretext for the arrest of Jews allegedly seeking to sever Crimea from the Soviet Union.)

- The 3rd Congress of the regional Soviets includes representatives of national minorities, such as Jews, in all elected local institutions.

1925

- November 15–20: During a conference of party activists, Mikhail Kalinin, the philo-Semitic head of the Russian SSR, declares that "it is completely natural that the Jewish population discovers itself (and) strives to find its national place in the Soviet Union."

1927

- To contain mounting Jewish national and international aspirations, Hebrew publications in the USSR are suspended, reflecting another shift in official policy. Approximately one third of all synagogues are closed.
- Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is arrested and sentenced to death. Worldwide interventions and protests result in a 3-year sentence.

1928

- January: Leon Trotsky is exiled to Kazakhstan by Stalin. A Jew (née Bronstein), and a leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Trotsky is viewed by Stalin as a competitor for power.
- March: Birobidzhan is designated as the Jewish Autonomous Region. Located in the Soviet Far East, it is created as a "homeland" for Soviet Jews, and an alternative to Jewish national aspirations (Zionism). Few Jews move to this remote area on the Chinese border near the Amur River, although some Jewish families from abroad, including the United States, move to the region seeking to escape their collapsing economies. Jews remain a minority in Birobidzhan until today, representing less than 15 percent of the population.

1928–1933

- The first Five-Year Plan is launched as a series of nationwide efforts developed by state committees to strengthen the struggling economy.

1929

- Yiddish schools are closed—except those in Birobidzhan.

1930

- February: Reflecting the failure to integrate Jews as a distinct ethnic minority in secular Soviet society, the ***Evsektsia*** is dissolved, coinciding with Stalin's efforts to seek greater central control over society.
- April 25: The Soviet Union establishes the Gulag administration to coordinate the network of penal labor camps for criminals and political prisoners. (Gulag is the Russian acronym for the government agency that administered the camps under the NKVD (secret police; predecessor of the KGB). In the ensuing three decades, countless Zionist, religious, and cultural activists will perish in the labor camps.

1932

- A new internal passport system is introduced. On identification documents, Jews are categorized as a Jewish ethnic or national minority ("***Yevrei***"), along with other (non-religious) national minorities.

1933

- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt extends diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union.

1934

- December 1: Assassination of Sergei Kirov, formerly a close associate of Stalin but now viewed as a potential threat to his power.

1935

- Attempting to demonstrate success, the Soviet Union declares that more than 370,000 acres are under cultivation in the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan.

1936–38

- During the period known as the "Great Terror", Stalin and associates launch a brutal purge of alleged opponents and plotters; several thousand are executed or sent to labor camps. This includes a disproportionate number of Jews, indicating an anti-Jewish bias.

1938

- A major purge of Yiddish cultural leaders and members of other cultural and ethnic minorities takes place.

- District leaders in Birobidzhan are singled out and accused of "Trotskyism", a reference to Leon Trotsky's views on organizing revolution in all countries. He was a political opponent of Stalin.
- Also deemed "anti-State" are those with past ties to certain Jewish parties or organizations, including the left-leaning, Yiddish-speaking ***Bund***, and the left Zionist party ***Poalei Zion***. The groups had been rendered illegal in 1921 and were viewed as promoting Jewish national autonomy, as well as creating obstacles to the full assimilation of Jews into Soviet society.

1939

- The last state-sponsored art exhibition devoted to Jewish culture, at Leningrad's State Museum of Ethnography, is closed. During an escalating anti-religious campaign, nearly all remaining synagogues are closed.
- August 23: Germany and the Soviet Union sign a Non-Aggression Pact that includes the creation of separate spheres of influence in Europe and the division of Poland.
- September: The launching of German attacks on Poland marks the beginning of World War II and the first step in a proposed division of Europe into German and Russian spheres.

1940

- July 23: The Soviet Union invades and annexes the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) and Bessarabia, as part of its Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany, absorbing hundreds of thousands of Jews.
- Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is granted permission to leave Riga, the capital of Soviet-dominated Latvia, where he had established his headquarters after being released from imprisonment. He relocates to Brooklyn, New York, which becomes the center of the worldwide Lubavitcher Hasidic movement.
- August 20: At Stalin's behest, Leon Trotsky is assassinated in Mexico, after having left the Soviet Union, thus removing him as a major symbol of opposition.

1941

- June 21–22: Nazi Germany breaks its Non-Aggression Pact with Moscow and invades the USSR (Operation Barbarossa), enlarging the geographic scope of World War II. Special units (*Einsatzgruppen*) are sent into the Soviet Union, alongside regular forces, to exterminate Jews.
- August 24: Prominent Jewish cultural figures are organized by the Soviet government for an international radio appeal seeking support for the war effort.

- September 29–30: The open-air massacre by the Nazis and their Ukrainian supporters of an estimated 33,000 Jews takes place at Babyn Yar ravine near Kyiv. For decades, Soviet authorities refuse any memorial marking the event or the mass grave, as a means of minimizing Jewish victimization and peoplehood. During the war, other mass killings of Jews take place throughout the western Soviet republics, notably in the Baltic region, Ukraine, and Belorussia.

1942

- April: The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC), headed by the noted actor and director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater, Solomon Mikhoels, is launched to mobilize global Jewish support for the USSR during World War II.
- November: The JAC begins publication of an official Yiddish newspaper, *Eynikeit*.

1943

- April: Solomon Mikhoels and the Yiddish poet Itzik Pfeffer travel to the United States, Canada, Mexico, and England to raise money and enlist public support for Moscow's war effort. Jews are the primary audience, based on an exaggerated notion of Jewish influence. Pfeffer is reportedly primed to secretly "watch" Mikhoels for the Soviet security apparatus.
- June 8: The largest pro-Soviet rally in the United States, with Mikhoels as the focus, is organized by Jewish organizations at New York's Polo Grounds.
- October: The Soviet Union's ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky, visits Palestine, then a British Mandate.

1945

- May 9: Germany surrenders and World War II ends. Nearly 30 million Soviet citizens, including 2.5-3 million Jews, were killed.

1947

- November 29: The Soviet Union's foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, addresses the United Nations General Assembly and supports the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Moscow hopes to replace Great Britain as the major force in the Middle East and foster influence in a future socialist Jewish state.

1948

- The beginning of the infamous Black Years (1948–53) in Soviet Jewish history, during which Soviet policies shift once again. An aggressive dismantling of the remaining Jewish institutions takes place, including newspapers and journals.

- January 12: Acting on Stalin's orders, the chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Solomon Mikhoels, is killed by KGB agents in a staged accident in Minsk. Within a year, the Yiddish theater is liquidated as part of the spreading anti-Jewish campaign.
- Alleged "Zionists" are arrested as threats to the state in response to a new wave of underground Jewish activism.
- May 18: Paradoxically, Moscow grants de jure diplomatic recognition to the newly declared State of Israel to satisfy its own international, political objectives.
- October 16: Ambassador Golda Meir heads an Israeli delegation to the Soviet Union. She visits Moscow's Great Choral Synagogue on Rosh HaShanah and is greeted by a huge crowd of some 50,000 Jews. The event causes great concern among Soviet officials, who see it as a vestige of Jewish national sentiment. She also visited the synagogue on the preceding Shabbat and on Yom Kippur.
- The effort to expand the Jewish experiment in Birobidzhan is halted. The goal of a special Jewish geopolitical entity under Soviet control had failed to attract large numbers of Soviet Jews.
- November 20: The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, the last vestige of organized Jewish cultural life, is dissolved and many of its leaders are imprisoned.
- The Yiddish newspaper, ***Einikayt***, is closed.

1949

- Jews throughout the Soviet Union, notably those who had achieved fame in arts and sciences, are targeted as anti-Soviet nationalists and "rootless cosmopolitans" sympathetic to the West. Key Jewish personalities in Birobidzhan are swept up in the campaign; many are sent to prison or labor camps.

1950

- Israel's Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, reflects his country's concern for the right of Jews to leave the Soviet Union, based on the concept of the family reunion. He and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett intervene with Soviet delegates at the United Nations, in New York, but are rebuffed.
- Arrests of Zionist activists spread, this time in Moscow, the center of Jewish life in the Soviet Union.

1952

- August 12. Dubbed the "Night of the Murdered Poets", the execution of 13 prominent Jewish writers, poets, scientists, and political figures, leaders of the defunct Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, takes place in Moscow's Lubyanka prison.

- As a reflection of concern, David Ben-Gurion creates a special high-level secret bureau, ***Nativ***, publicly known as the ***Lishkat Hakesher*** (Contact or Liaison Office), to coordinate Israel's efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews.

1953

- January 13: A new anti-Jewish campaign is launched, and Jewish medical professionals are arrested. Those targeted in the infamous Doctors' Plot are accused of planning to poison Stalin and other Soviet officials. They are also labeled "agents" of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the international social welfare agency, in a conspiracy to subvert the Soviet Union.
- February 12: In another shift of political objectives, the Soviet Union seeks to gain a Middle East foothold by supporting Arab ambitions, as well as unify East European members of the socialist bloc behind anti-Zionism. Moscow recognizes its failure to bring a "socialist" Israel into the Communist orbit and severs diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Three days earlier, a bomb explodes at the Soviet legation in Tel Aviv, the pretext for Moscow's action.
- March 1: Stalin falls ill prior to the Jewish holiday of Purim and dies 4 days later.
- April 4: The Doctors' Plot is disavowed by Stalin's successors, and the trial of the Jewish medical personnel is canceled.
- July 21: The new Soviet leadership restores diplomatic relations with Israel, hoping that the Jewish state will forge strong links with Moscow. Israel welcomes the move, which helps the young state establish international legitimacy and strengthen its position vis-à-vis neighboring Arab states.
- September 7: Nikita Khrushchev becomes First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

1954

- The Israeli legation in Moscow is upgraded to embassy status, while the situation for Soviet Jews remains unchanged.

1955

- The noted poet Yevgenii Yevtushenko, publishes his poem "Winter Station", containing criticism of Soviet anti-Semitism.
- July 11: A dozen Jewish activists are arrested and accused of maintaining ties with the Israeli Embassy.

1956

- February 24: Nikita Khrushchev, considered in the West as a "reformer", addresses the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party. He denounces the

personality cult of Stalin and his excesses but refrains from acknowledging state anti-Semitism.

- June: A delegation of rabbis from the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) visits Moscow to ascertain reports about the harsh and discriminatory conditions facing the Jewish community.
- Shortly after the RCA visit, authorities permit the printing of a "Peace Siddur" (Prayer Book), in an effort to demonstrate that religious freedom exists.
- August: Three Israeli diplomats, accused of having established contacts with Soviet Jews and arrested the previous year, are expelled. They include Nehemiah Levanon, from Kibbutz Kfar Blum in Israel. Levanon would later go on to head ***Nativ***, Israel's special bureau dealing with Jews in the Soviet Union.

1958

- The arrests of Jewish activists who had been in contact with the Israeli Embassy continues.

1959

- September 25: During a meeting at Camp David, President Dwight D. Eisenhower urges Nikita Khrushchev to resolve issues concerning the status of Jews in the USSR. Eisenhower cites the "deep concern" expressed to him by Jewish groups.
- October 4: Moscow's Malakhovka synagogue is burned, and anti-Semitic flyers are posted in the vicinity.
- A groundbreaking cover story by Moshe Decter, in the New Leader magazine, documents discrimination against Soviet Jews. It is viewed as a major publishing event in the Jewish community by a writer known as a social activist, editor, pamphleteer, and staunch Zionist working with *Nativ*.

1960

- January 25: Reflecting an easing of conditions in the post-Stalin era, the special Gulag office is closed.
- October: A study by Dr. William Korey for B'nai B'rith International on the Right to Leave and Return is submitted to the United Nations. By 1964 would come to be adopted by the newly organized American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ) as a legal argument for the rights of Soviet Jews.
- Yevgenii Yevtushenko publishes his poem "**Babyn Yar**", an attack on official silence about Jewish martyrdom in World War II and on popular anti-Semitism. The work resonates among intellectuals, primarily in the West, and is cited by advocates for Soviet Jewry.

1962

- Australia's chief delegate at the United Nations, Douglas White, states that the Soviet Union is obligated, under the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to permit emigration. He is encouraged by Isi Leibler, an Australian Jewish community leader.

1963

- Moshe Decter organizes Jewish Minorities Research, a project initiated by Nativ to engage the American public on behalf of Soviet Jews.
- September 4: Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, a noted Jewish teacher, activist, and philosopher, addresses the Rabbinical Assembly at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. He uses the opportunity to focus on the plight of Soviet Jews and issues a plea for massive public action. The resulting publicity puts pressure on Jewish organizations to be more proactive.
- September 13: US Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Dutton issues a report indicating that the situation of Soviet Jews is of "continuing concern." He commits the United States to intervene on their behalf, through the United Nations, to improve conditions. He notes that Soviet Jews are being placed under increasing restrictions affecting religious worship.
- October 29: As news trickles out of the Soviet Union, Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, with Senators Abraham Ribicoff and Jacob Javits, meet with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. They challenge him about Moscow's treatment of Jews, but no policy changes are forthcoming.
- October: The Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism, under the leadership of Louis Rosenblum and Herbert Karon, is launched. Together with similar independent local committees, it eventually (1970) creates the nationwide Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.
- Trofim Kichko's anti-Semitic book, "**Judaism Without Embellishment**", appears during an ongoing anti-religious campaign in the Soviet Union. It is made available to the United Nations by Morris B. Abram, a member of the US delegation and a leader of the American Jewish Committee. Copies of the book, with its virulent anti-Jewish text and graphic images, are circulated by the AJC; Kichko is denounced in the West.

1964

- April 5: Six months after Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel issued his call to American Jews, national Jewish organizations meet at the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C. They agree to create an American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ), a loosely structured coordinating body of national

organizations and local community relations councils. It is designed to advocate and coordinate nationwide activities.

- April 27: The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) is launched at Columbia University for the purpose of involving college and university students in the advocacy movement.

1965

- April: Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach debuts his song "***Am Yisrael Hai***" at a New York City "Jericho March" rally organized by the SSSJ. It becomes a signature anthem for the Soviet Jewry advocacy campaign.
- September 19–24: Thousands attend a National Eternal Light Vigil, the first public demonstration in Washington, D.C., organized by the AJCSJ with the participation of national and local leaders and activists. Some remain around the clock at the symbolic Freedom Light. An artist's rendering becomes a central symbol of the advocacy movement.
- October 15: Nikita S. Khrushchev is removed from power, and Leonid Brezhnev becomes First Secretary of the Communist Party, the beginning of the 18-year "Brezhnev era". In 1966 his title is changed to General Secretary.
- October 28: The largest protest rally for Soviet Jews, organized by the AJCSJ, attracts 20,000 people to New York's Madison Square Garden.

1966

- Elie Wiesel's book "**The Jews of Silence"** is published. It highlights his encounters with Jews in the Soviet Union and stresses the apparent silence of Jews in the West in the face of their plight.
- February: Dissident writers, essayists, and critics Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky are placed on trial for "anti-Soviet propaganda" in the first of a series of trials of human rights activists and democratic dissidents.
- August: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing Reform rabbis, undertakes a 5-week East European mission to explore the status and condition of Jews, primarily in the Soviet Union. Most Soviet sources are closed to the delegation.
- Public hearings are held in New York City by an Ad Hoc Commission on the Rights of Soviet Jews, organized by Jewish Minorities Research and endorsed by interfaith clergy, including the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- December 3: At a Paris press conference, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin startles the West when he declares that Jews could leave the Soviet Union, under the international principle of family reunification. However, permits issued are a small fraction of those seeking to emigrate.

1967

- June 5–10: After near defeat by an alliance of Arab states, Israel's victory in the Six-Day War stirs ethnic pride among Soviet Jews. Applications to leave for Israel escalate, and Jewish activists meet secretly, especially in Moscow, Leningrad, and Riga. This marks the beginning of the active phase of the Jewish movement.
- In the wake of the war and the defeat of Moscow's Arab allies, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries sever diplomatic relations with Israel. The trickle of Jewish emigration is closed off.

1967–68

- Restrictions on Jewish enrollment in top Soviet universities expand, leading to career deprivations and stimulating additional applications to leave for Israel, despite continuing refusals.

1968

- May: House Minority Leader Gerald Ford introduces a congressional amendment in Congress supporting Soviet Jews. During the next few decades, members of Congress draw attention to Jewish activists suffering harassment, especially those demanding the right to leave for Israel and the restoration of religious and cultural rights.
- Soviet authorities begin accepting new documents from Jews hoping to leave for Israel.
- The Academic Committee for Soviet Jews, soon to be chaired by Professor Hans Morgenthau, launched. The group enlists thousands of academics in America and focuses on Jewish scientists and academics forced into unemployment after applying to leave for Israel. Prime organizers are Moshe Decter, head of Jewish Minorities Research, and William Korey of B'nai B'rith International.
- The Chronicle of Current Events is launched in the Soviet Union by dissidents, as a ***samizdat*** (self-published) journal on human rights.

1969

- May 16: Boris Kochubievsky, a *refusenik* whose father and grandfather were shot and buried at the infamous Babyn Yar killing ground, is sentenced in Kyiv to 3 years hard labor for "anti-Soviet slander." It is the first known trial of a Jewish activist who demanded the right to leave for Israel. In the next few years, the arrests and trials of Jewish activists accelerate. Soviet intellectuals defy the authorities and petition the United Nations, protesting the Kochubievsky sentence.

- August 6: A public appeal to the United Nations from 18 Georgian Jewish families calls for their right to leave the Soviet Union. It is released by Israel, attracting wide media attention and new advocates for Soviet Jews.
- The United States takes a more aggressive stance on the plight of Soviet Jews when Rita Hauser, the U.S. delegate to the United Nations, raises the topic before the General Assembly.
- In an act of defiance, an underground national coordinating committee (VKK) is created by Soviet Jewish activists. They undertake a campaign of open protests and public appeals to the West.
- December: The Jewish Defense League, led by Rabbi Meir Kahane, launches a militant and often violent effort on behalf of Soviet Jews.

1970

- March 3: Local independent groups in the US launch the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, seeking to spur national Jewish organizations to greater activism.
- March 11: Thirty-nine Soviet Jews from across the country protest to the Foreign Ministry against the continuing anti-Israel and anti-Zionist campaign. Their letter, an "open declaration" to the West, unleashes a wave of public protests in Europe and America targeting Moscow.
- June: A heavily publicized propaganda campaign to condemn Israel is organized by Soviet authorities. Prominent Jewish cultural, artistic, and scientific personalities, including prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, are enlisted.
- June 15: Sixteen activists, mostly Jews, are arrested at Leningrad's Smolny Airport, in a daring effort dubbed Operation Wedding. Frustrated by the many rejections to their efforts to leave, they attempt to steal a small airplane, fly to Scandinavia and onward to Israel. The participants, from Riga and Leningrad, had been trying for years to secure exit visas. The arrests ignite an anti- Zionist campaign throughout the Soviet Union, culminating in widespread searches and interrogations of Jewish emigration activists and underground Hebrew teachers
- Human rights activists create a committee for human rights, led by Valerii Chalidze and Andrei Sakharov.
- December 10: A daily Soviet Jewry Vigil staged opposite the Soviet Embassy, in Washington, D.C., is launched on Human Rights Day. It is spearheaded by the local Washington Jewish Community Council and lasts twenty years.
- December 21: In Moscow, authorities prevent the opening of a symposium on Jewish culture by detaining the ***refuseniks*** planning to participate, a sign that Jewish cultural activities would not be permitted.
- December 25: The First Leningrad Trial, which opened on December 15, concludes. The mostly Jewish defendants are accused of hijacking an airplane to

escape to Israel and receive sentences up to 15 years. The leaders, Mark Dymshits and Eduard Kuznetsov, are sentenced to death, which is reduced to 15 years after strong international protests and an intervention by the White House.

1971

- February 23–25: The first World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry opens in Brussels, attended by 800 delegates from 38 countries, including prominent Israeli leaders David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin. Moscow launches a media campaign against the event. Rabbi Meir Kahane, a non-delegate, seeks entry and is rebuffed by security personnel. The meeting adopts the Brussels Declaration, with a commitment to strengthen the advocacy movement that includes the creation of an ongoing World Conference on Soviet Jewry to coordinate efforts.
- March: As a follow-up to the Brussels Conference, an International Consultation on Soviet Jewry is held in London, focusing on the broad advocacy effort.
- April: Jewish activists in the USSR issue The White Book of Exodus, a samizdat document filled with scores of personal letters and appeals. It is smuggled out and published by the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry.
- May 11-20: The Second Leningrad Trial of nine ***refuseniks*** takes place. All are sentenced to the Gulag. In the following weeks arrests and trials take place in Odessa, Kishinev, and Samarkand.
- June 6: Following the widespread arrests of ***refuseniks*** and Hebrew teachers, national Jewish organizations, together with local Jewish federations and community relations councils, endorse a reorganized AJCSJ. Reflecting a more assertive program, it morphs into the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ), with a mandate to spearhead activist programs throughout the country.
- The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) joins the NCSJ; the Union of Councils remains independent. A separate Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry (GNYCSJ), later renamed the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews, is created.
- June 22: Raiza Palatnik, an librarian in Odessa, is arrested on her 35th birthday and sentenced to two years imprisonment. The case leads to the creation of the dynamic "35's Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry", especially active in England, Canada, and the United States, referencing Palatnik's birthday.
- Moshe Decter dissolves Jewish Minorities Research, and the NCSJ assumes the bulk of its public and private initiatives.
- October 8: In cooperation with the American Zionist Youth Foundation, and the National Jewish Community Relations Council, the NCSJ organizes a nationwide

tour of a Soviet Jewry Freedom Bus. It includes former ***refuseniks*** and college students, who take the bus to campuses and community groups.

- December 13: Linked to the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah and the struggle for freedom, the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry, in cooperation with the SSSJ, organizes a Freedom Lights for Soviet Jewry rally. It fills Madison Square Garden and attracts major publicity.

1972

- April 30: On "Solidarity Sunday", thousands participate in a march and public demonstration for Soviet Jews in New York City's Dag Hammerskj ld Plaza, near the United Nations, organized by the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. Some 100 local communities across the country organize parallel demonstrations. It becomes an annual event organized by the GNYCSJ and is discontinued in 1988.
- Soviet Jewish activists issue The White Book of Exodus, which is smuggled out and published by the AJCSJ.
- May 22–30: Richard M. Nixon is in Moscow for a summit meeting with Leonid Brezhnev. Prior to his departure, the president is given a petition with over 1 million signatures, organized by the NCSJ with the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), urging him to raise the issue of Soviet Jewry. Some Soviet Jewish activists are placed under house arrest during the meeting, as their situation is covered broadly by Western media.
- July 3: Weeks after the Nixon-Brezhnev summit meeting, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR introduces a higher education levy on would-be emigrants, ostensibly to recoup education costs for those who might depart the country. It is viewed in the West as a "ransom" tax and meant to deter Jews from seeking to leave for Israel. News of the tax stirs protests in the West and embarrasses the White House, coming so soon as it were after the summit meeting.
- September 16: In an act of resistance, 200 Moscow Jews file a 116-point document on emigration procedures with the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.
- September 25–26: Following the announcement of the education tax, an emergency meeting is convened by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry at B'nai B'rith headquarters in Washington, D.C. Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson attends and proposes legislation pegging, quid pro quo, trade incentives for "non-market" (i.e., communist) economies to the liberalization of that nation's emigration practices.
- October 4: Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson submits a provisional form of his amendment to the 1974 Trade Reform Act as Washington's response to Moscow's education tax.

- October 31: A two-page ad in The New York Times denounces the education tax. It expresses solidarity with Jewish academics and scientists unable to work in the Soviet Union. Thousands of academics from 100 campuses sign the ad, sponsored by the Academic Committee for Soviet Jews.

1973

- February 7: Congressman Charles Vanik co-sponsors legislation in the House of
- Representatives, joining Henry M. Jackson's effort in the Senate to amend the Trade Reform Act so as to punish the Soviet Union. The campaign for the Jackson-Vanik Amendment is launched. The future of Soviet Jewry becomes a matter of continuing relations between Washington and Moscow.
- March 11–14: U.S. Treasury Secretary George Shultz visits Moscow and meets with Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, who informs him that the education tax has been dropped.
- March 15: Notwithstanding Secretary Shultz's admonitions, Senator Jackson submits a final version of the amendment linking trade between the US and non-market (i.e. socialist or communist) countries to liberalized emigration policies.
- March 21: The Soviet Union provides an unsigned letter to President Richard M. Nixon affirming the cancellation of the education tax. Nevertheless, the U.S. Congress proceeds to debate the trade amendment.
- April 19: Fifteen Jewish leaders meet with President Nixon, who reaffirms his commitment to helping Soviet Jews yet criticizes the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which he deems an obstacle to détènte between the two superpowers.
- May 2–9: New York City's mayor, John Lindsay, visits Moscow and discusses Jewish emigration with Soviet officials.
- May 4–8: Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, on a trip to Moscow, transmits to Soviet officials a list of more than 700 Jews repeatedly refused exit visas. No significant movement takes place.
- June 17: Leonid Brezhnev arrives in Washington, D.C. for a meeting with President Richard M. Nixon and is greeted by a demonstration of 13,000 people, organized by the NCSJ with the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC). Moscow's policies toward its Jewish minority are severely condemned. The actor, activist, and folk singer Theodore Bikel, with the civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, lead a protest march to the Soviet Embassy.

1974

- February 13: Despite receiving a Nobel Prize for Literature, the prominent author and dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn has his Soviet citizenship revoked and is exiled to West Germany. He and his family eventually leave for America

but is permitted to return to the Soviet Union in 1991, after its formal dissolution.

- March 24: The Soviet newspaper Pravda warns the U.S. to avoid the emigration issue and accuses "international Zionism" of attempting to disrupt détènte and cooperation between the U.S. and the USSR.
- June 27: Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev hold their third summit meeting, in Moscow. The question of the deprivation of rights for Jews is not resolved.
- August: After Nixon's mid-term resignation as president, and in the wake of the Watergate scandal, President Gerald M. Ford meets with Senators Henry Jackson, Abraham Ribicoff, and Jacob Javits to discuss the issue of Soviet Jewry, including the pending Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act.
- August: Silva Zalmanson, a Jewish activist arrested during Operation Wedding, the plot to steal an airplane and fly to Israel, is released from prison. The only woman at the First Leningrad Trial, in December 1970, her release is linked to an international campaign on her behalf.
- December 20: After a strenuous public campaign, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment is overwhelmingly approved by Congress, making U.S. trade concessions and low-interest loans to any "non-market" country conditional on "respect for the right to emigrate."

1975

- January 3: President Gerald M. Ford signs the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Reform Act into law, ignoring Soviet objections.
- January 14: The Soviet Union repudiates a 1972 trade agreement with the U.S., in retaliation for the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.
- March 20: Professor Telford Taylor, a former prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trial of Nazi leaders, and a group of U.S. lawyers issue a report on the failure of private negotiations to secure the release of the *assirei zion* (prisoners of Zion) following a visit to Moscow by the legal team on behalf of the prisoners and their families.
- July 29: Dissidents and ***refuseniks*** meet with a group of visiting US senators in Moscow, led by Hubert Humphrey. No visible progress is made with Soviet authorities on internal liberalization, on the release of prisoners, or the right to leave or reunion with family in Israel.
- August 1: Despite strong opposition in the prestigious Wall Street Journal and among conservative members of Congress concerned with "states' rights" and possible intervention in America's internal matters, such as allegations of racism in Southern states, President Gerald Ford signs the Helsinki Final Act (aka as the Helsinki Accords). Among other things, the Act codifies the concept of "human

contacts" and the free movement of people, as well as the reunification of divided families, as basic rights. Leonid Brezhnev signs for the Soviet Union; the document is utilized as a major instrument for pressing the issue of human rights, including the right to leave.

- October 10: Parliamentarians from 12 Western European countries form a committee supporting Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union.

1976

- February 17–19: 1,000 delegates from 32 countries attend the Second World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry, in Brussels. The Soviet Union protests to the Belgian government.
- May 12: The first Helsinki Watch Group in the Soviet Union is organized in Moscow. It includes dissidents whose goal is the monitoring of Soviet conformity to the Helsinki Final Act.
- June 3: President Gerald M. Ford signs into law a bill creating a U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (aka the Helsinki Commission), to monitor conformity to the Helsinki Accords. The Commission has the active support of American Soviet Jewry organizations and human rights groups.
- July 8: An officially approved memorial is unveiled at Kyiv's ***Babyn Yar*** ravine, omitting any reference to the thousands of Jews killed and buried there by German troops with help from Ukrainian units.
- October: The First Review Meeting of the Helsinki Final Act is held in Belgrade. The U.S. delegation, led by Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, presses human rights issues, notably family reunification for Soviet Jews. Soviet delegates maintain a hard line on the free movement of people.

1977

- March 15: Anatoly Shcharansky, a young Jewish emigration activist and a participant in the human rights movement, is arrested on charges of treason and spying for the U.S. This is seen by Washington as a challenge to the humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and an obstacle to détènte.
- Following Shcharansky's arrest, Congressional Wives for Soviet Jewry is formed in Washington, D.C., to serve as a public advocacy group. The initial co-chairs are Helen Jackson, Jeanette Williams, Paula Blanchard, and Joanne Kemp. The group enlists Theresa Heinz Kerry and Dolores Beilenson and will go on to advocate for Soviet Jewish "Prisoners of Zion", aka "Prisoners of Conscience".

1978

- June 21: Vladimir Slepak, a prominent Soviet Jewish emigration activist with strong links to the dissident democratic movement, is placed on trial. Ida Nudel, who helped care for and advise other ***refuseniks***, is arrested. Both are exiled to Siberia. Nudel is championed by the Washington-based Congressional Wives for Soviet Jewry.
- July 14: Following a lengthy trial, Anatoly Shcharansky, accused of spying for the U.S., is sentenced to three years in prison plus ten years in a forced labor camp. His trial attracts world attention, and his fate becomes iconic for advocates on behalf of other ***refuseniks*** and Prisoners of Zion.

1979

- April 27: As a result of behind-the-scenes negotiations, five Soviet dissidents and Jewish ***refuseniks***, exchanged by the United States for two Soviet spies arrested in the U.S., arrive in New York City. At the request of National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Jewish prisoners, Mark Dymshits and Eduard Kuznetsov, sentenced at the First Leningrad Trial in 1970, become the responsibility of the NCSJ. They appear at the GNYCSJ's annual Solidarity Sunday before leaving for Israel.

1980

- January 22: Andrei Sakharov, noted physicist and human rights advocate, is exiled from Moscow to Gorky after protesting the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. He is an outspoken supporter of ***refuseniks*** and their right to leave for Israel.
- March 15: The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews convenes international consultations in London and Israel, meeting with officials and local groups to coordinate efforts and discuss strategies.
- November 11: A major forum to review the Helsinki Final Act opens in Madrid. The U.S. delegation is headed by Ambassador Max Kampelman, who is sympathetic to efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews. The National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, Helsinki Watch, and allied groups from Europe circulate documents, organize briefing events for delegates, and meet with the media. The review conference concludes its work in September 1983.

1981

- September: An open letter from ***refuseniks*** to the "U.S. Congress and U.S. Jewish organizations" on emigration issues and arbitrary restrictions is made available by advocacy groups.
- October 12: More than 100 Hebrew teachers and students in the Soviet Union, working in unofficial groups, protest to the Supreme Soviet about steps taken to stamp out their efforts by way of harassment and arrests.

1983

- March 15: The Third World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry is convened in Israel, with a large US contingent. Long-range plans are contingent on ongoing developments in the Soviet Union.
- April 1: The Anti-Zionist Committee of the Public, headed by Samuil Zivs, a Jewish lawyer, is formed in Moscow to thwart Jewish emigration activities.

1984

- February 10: Yuri Andropov's death is announced and, within days, Konstantin V. Chernenko is selected as the next General Secretary of the Communist Party.
- A wave of arrests of Hebrew teachers and cultural activists stretches into 1985.

1985

- March 10: Konstatin V. Chernenko dies, and the next day Mikhail S. Gorbachev is appointed Communist Party General Secretary, promising a policy of glasnost (openness).
- November 19: Prior to a Geneva summit meeting, Israel Prime Minister Shimon Peres appeals to President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, seeking free emigration for Soviet Jews.

1986

- February 11: Anatoly Shcharansky, after an early release from prison, arrives in Israel to a tumultuous welcome. He changes his name to Natan Sharansky at the suggestion of Prime Minister Shimon Peres.
- March: Edgar Bronfman, President of the World Jewish Congress, and Morris B. Abram, Chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, fly to Moscow in a failed effort to negotiate freedom for Jews to leave and observe Jewish culture. The undertaking is criticized by ***refuseniks*** in Moscow, and NCSJ leadership, who were not consulted.
- October 11–12: An "interim summit" meeting between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev is held in Iceland. Despite its remote location, a delegation of leaders from the NCSJ, World Jewish Congress, and NJCRAC flies to the

island's capital, Reykjavik, to brief delegates. Colleagues from Israel participate in parallel events.

1987

- December 6: Freedom Sunday march and rally, with 250,000 participants, takes place in Washington on the eve of the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit meeting in America. Organized by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and its constituent member organizations, with local Jewish federations and community relations councils, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, the demonstration marks the peak of the advocacy movement in the U.S.

1988

- In the wake of changes in the Soviet Union and the massive Freedom Sunday event, New York's Coalition to Free Soviet Jews (formerly the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry) ends its annual Solidarity Sunday demonstrations near the United Nations.

1989

- January: Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Vienna, which opened in 1986, concludes with an address by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz on human rights and emigration. Mikhail Gorbachev also addresses the forum. The Soviet delegation approves the Final Declaration, reiterating the principle of family reunification, and reaffirms the right to leave and return to one's self-identified homeland.
- As evidence of changes unfolding in the Soviet Union, the Solomon M. Mikhoels Jewish Cultural Center opens in Moscow with the assistance of the social welfare agency, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (aka the JDC or the "Joint").
- December: More than 700 Soviet Jews, with observers from other countries, meet in Moscow at the first national meeting of Soviet Jews in 70 years.

1990

- Mikhail Gorbachev becomes President of the USSR; nearly 190,000 Jews leave for Israel and America.
- December 10: Twenty years after it was launched, the daily Soviet Jewry Vigil opposite the Soviet Embassy in Washington has ended victoriously.

1991

- December 24: Following an aborted coup, Mikhail Gorbachev resigns and is succeeded as President by Boris Yeltsin. The Soviet Union is dissolved into independent republics and becomes the loosely structured Commonwealth of Independent States.

POLITICS AND PROTEST

A CURRICULUM FOR THE COMMUNITY

BY SARAH ZARROW, Ph.D.**

This curriculum focuses on key events and issues related to the American Advocacy Movement for Soviet Jews. It is best utilized in conjunction with the Historic Overview in "Politics and Protest: The American Advocacy Campaign for Soviet Jews. A Study Guide" as well as with the suggested readings.

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Lesson 1:

Jews in Tsarist Russia, after the Bolshevik Revolution, and through WWII

Introduction

To understand the American advocacy campaign, it is best to review the situation of Jews before the 1917 February and October (Bolshevik) Revolutions, during the ensuing Civil War, and the early years of the Soviet Union.

What was the Pale of Settlement, and the social and legal status of Jews who lived there? What differences were there between Jews in cities and towns, or between Jews in different parts of the Tsarist Empire? What did Jewish religious life look like? What were the major social, economic, and political trends among Jews? Were there any significant changes after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II? How did the rise of Josif Stalin affect Jewish daily life? Discuss Soviet anti-Jewish measures from 1948 until Stalin's death in 1953.

Essential Questions

- What were the major features of Jewish life in Tsarist Russia?
- What were the political and social options open to Jews?
- In what ways did Jewish life change after 1917?
- What were the major features of Jewish life in the Soviet Union under Vladimir Lenin and Josif Stalin?

By the end of this lesson, students will understand

- The options available to Jews in Tsarist Russia
- The appeal of various emancipatory and revolutionary movements in Tsarist Russia
- The major programs of the early Soviet Union (aka USSR)
- The appeal of Communism for some Jews, notably in the USSR
- The founding and fate of Birobidzhan

Introduction for the Teacher or Discussion Leader

- Introduce the course: the aims, the structure, and related readings
- Ask students what they already know about the American advocacy movement for Soviet Jewry? What aren't they clear about? What do they want to find out?
- Ask students to list 3-5 words that come to mind when they think about the movement. The result can be compared with a similar experience at the end of all sessions.

Jewish life in Tsarist Russia before the 1917 Revolutions

- Prior to the class meeting, the instructor should introduce the historical context. The early pages of the Guide are relevant.
- Read: The May Laws (see the Jews in the Modern World reader, as well as the bibliography)
  - What were the restrictions placed on Jews under these laws?
  - Imagine possible Jewish responses.
- Discuss: Options for Jews in Tsarist Russia: Emigration, Bundism, Zionism (the YIVO Encyclopedia entry for the Russian Revolutions of 1917 has a helpful overview): http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Russian_Revolutions_of_1917)
  - What gave rise to the Zionist movement in Tsarist Russia? Who were the major players? What were their initial goals?
  - Compare the Zionist, Bundist, Socialist movements—create a diagram that charts the appeal of these movements, their goals, their major successes, and setbacks.
  - Examine a primary source, viz., the YIVO Encyclopedia, or "The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets", by Salo Baron.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution

For background information on the February and October Revolutions see http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Russian_Revolutions_of_1917.

- Discuss: reasons for some initial Jewish support of the Bolshevik Revolution
  - ► It is useful to explore the ideological underpinnings of such support. Choose a source (or sources).
  - ► Students can read in small groups, such as Tony Michels' Jewish Radicals: A Documentary Reader, Parts I: "Awakenings" or II: "In Struggle".
  - ► Ask the question: Who wrote this source and when? What are the main points? What is the purpose of the source (depends on genre)?
- To see another example of initial Jewish support for early Communism, have students view the online exhibit about Birobidzhan, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast: https://www.swarthmore.edu/Home/News/biro/.
- There is a short film available at: https://rtd.rt.com/films/birobidzhan-jewish-autonomous-region/
- Archival footage is available at: https://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=4935.

Between the Bolshevik Revolution and World War II (1939-45)

- Initial high hopes for the liberation of the Jews under Socialism faded quickly. Why?
- In 1937 the dreaded secret police, the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, later the KGB, Federal Security Service, began deporting national minorities from the borderlands of the Soviet Union. Soon afterward a decree stipulated that all passports have a photo of the bearer, as well as a declaration of nationality, according to the parents' nationality. (Internal passports were mandated in 1932. A

decree that year allowed bearers to self-declare, and "Soviet" was an accepted nationality.

► Find images of passports from this era online. Examine a copy.

❖ Discuss: The potential implications of this passport law. In a state predicated on the ostensible equality of all citizens, what does categorizing citizens by nationality achieve?

► If Jews ("***Yevrei***") were listed as a nationality, what about the concept of "Judaism"?

► What are the potential implications for the power of the state with this passport regime? (From 1937-1955, 455,000 Soviet citizens were arrested for violating passport laws).

► The Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories (AHEYM) has a digital exhibit of oral histories of life between the wars. Students might watch and listen at: http://www.iub.edu/~aheym/index.php

Wrap-up

❖ Either in writing or orally students might reflect on the most surprising thing they learned, as well as something about which they still have a question.

❖ Reading:

► Study Guide

► David Shneer, Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War and the Holocaust, Chapter 5.

► Zvi Gitelman, A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union.

► Susan Tumarkin Goodman, Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change: 1890-1990.

- ► See, also, the online site of the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS): https://www.ajhs.org/

❖ Listen to:

- ► Russia Reports radio broadcasts (on tape) from the American Jewish Committee archive.

Lesson 2:

From Hot to Cold War: The 1940's through the 1950's

Introduction

This unit focuses on the "Great Patriotic War" (WWII), as self-described in the Soviet Union, and the representation of the Holocaust in the postwar years. Discuss the official suppression of Jewish wartime memory, and the clandestine Jewish memorial activities at Rumbola, or Babyn Yar. Most significantly examine the beginnings of the movement for Soviet Jewry in the Cold War context.

Essential Questions

- What are some of the experiences of Soviet Jews during World War II and the Holocaust?
- How was the Holocaust commemorated in the USSR?
- What did Stalin's death mean for Soviet Jews?
- To what historical moment can we trace the origins of the advocacy movement for Soviet Jews?
- How did the Cold War affect Jews in the Soviet Union, if at all?

By the end of this lesson, students should understand

- How the Holocaust was commemorated, as well as erased, in the USSR
- The effect of Stalin's death in 1953, and de-Stalinization, on Jews in the Soviet Union
- The stirrings of a movement in the USSR, and then in the United States.

Brief Reflections on the Reading and Listening

- Take time to address any questions
- - Solicit suggestions for a short list of important points.

- Students should familiarize themselves with Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union: https://www.ushmm.org/learn/timeline-of-events/1939-1941/operation-barbarossa and https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005164, as well as the anti-Jewish Einsatzgruppen.
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has historical footage online. While it doesn't specifically deal with Jews in the Soviet Union, it is instructive: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/gallery.php?ModuleId=10005164&MediaType=F

Soviet Experience of the War

- Students might listen to testimony from either the Visual History Archive (https://sfi.usc.edu/vha). or the AHEYM Project (http://www.iub.edu/~aheym/), choosing a Soviet citizen who lived through the war. Sketch out their biography.
- Have students share what they learned with the rest of the class or group
- How many common elements run through the stories? What are they? Can one generalize about Jewish life in the Soviet Union during the Nazi German occupation?

Commemoration

As students read in the Study Guide, the "Great Patriotic War" was considered a tragedy for the Soviet people, but not necessarily for Jews. Nonetheless, in the post-war era, individual Jews and groups organized clandestine commemorations of wartime tragedies. We will look at the case of Babyn Yar, and compare it with other. commemorations outside the Soviet Union.

- Familiarize the class with Babyn Yar's history: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005421
- View clips from this 1985 film (n.b. some of the captions do not match the images): https://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=4419

- Jewish commemoration of the Babyn Yar massacres was prohibited; a 1976 memorial paid tribute to "Soviet citizens" murdered there. Have students view http://www.friends-partners.org/partners/beyond-the-pale/eng_captions/60-8.html for another example of erasing Jewish specificity
- Students may wish to read an account of memorializing efforts at Babyn Yar: http://www.jta.org/2016/03/22/news-opinion/world/at-babi-yar-locals-revive-plans-to-memorialize Jewish-victims.
- In 1961 the noted Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko made a more public attempt to memorialize Babyn Yar in poetry. (Dmitri Shostakovich's 13th Symphony is based on this poem).
- Students should read and discuss Yevtushenko's poem: http://wwwtc.pbs.org/auschwitz/learning/guides/reading1.4.pdf
- A comparison might be made with memorials in Poland, viz. the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters memorial, which showcased Jewish heroism, and the Auschwitz memorial, which erased Jewish specificity by alphabetizing the nationalities of victims and placing Jews last. See:
  - http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/30/rapoports_memorial.asp
  - http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/2009/06/poland-monuments-andmemory-in-warsaw.html
  - https://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=4634
  - http://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/17/world/poland-agrees-to-change-auschwitz-tablets.html

Wrap-up

- As a lead-in to the following lessons, students might speculate on the importance of Holocaust experience and commemoration for Jewish group identity and solidarity, as well as potential conflicts with an unsympathetic or hostile regime.
- Reading:
  - Study Guide

Lesson 3:

The State of Israel and the Soviet Union

Introduction

This unit examines the shifting relations between the USSR and the State of Israel, from initial recognition to the severance of ties after the Six-Day War in June 1967, including the impact of the war on Soviet Jews. Participants will discuss the formation of networks of Jews in the USSR and the development of a national movement.

Essential Questions

- What was the impact on Soviet Jews of the creation of the State of Israel?
- What was the relationship of the USSR and Israel, and how did it change?
- By what means did Soviet Jews organize and communicate?
- What was the impact of the 1967 war on Jewish life in the USSR? In the United States?

By the end of this lesson, students will understand

- The effect of the creation of the State of Israel on Jews in the Soviet Union
- The importance of social networks on Jewish activities in the USSR
- The impact and importance of ***samizdat*** (self-published) publications on underground movements
- The experience of at least one *refusenik*? How did the term evolve?

Soviet-Israeli Relations through the 1960's

- Based on the reading and the accompanying Annotated Timeline, students could create their own timeline, outlining major shifts in Soviet-Israeli relations from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 until the 1967 Six-Day War.

  ► To what might we attribute changes in relations?

- In Lesson 2, Holocaust commemoration was explored. The early 1960's saw clandestine commemorations of the Holocaust experience in the Soviet Union. One such commemoration occurred in the Rumbala Forest, near Riga, the capital of Latvia.
  - In late 1941, about 25,000 Jews were murdered in the Rumbala forest.
  - A memorial erected by the Jewish community in 1962 was taken down by authorities because it "singled out Jews". A permanent stone memorial was finally erected in 1964.
- Discuss the ways in which the confluence of events in the 1960's in the Soviet Union and elsewhere might have affected Jews, personally and collectively.
- Film or Hosted Visit
  - After the introductory activities, show the film *Refusenik* (2007) or invite a former *refusenik* to speak to the class. If possible, invite a Riga survivor living in the area, or contact the organization, Jewish Survivors From Latvia (see the internet).

Wrap-Up

- Reading:
  - Study Guide

Lesson 4:

Social and Political Factors in the United States

Introduction

Explore the activism of the anti-Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movements in America, and the influence of ethnic and racial pride movements. We will consider the development of the category of *refusenik*, and the impact of person-to-person tourism to the USSR.

Essential Questions

- What developments in the United States broadly impacted on the development of the advocacy movement?
- How did the category of "*refusenik*" (*otkaznik* in Russian) develop?
- What was the nature of contacts between the US and USSR? How did they influence the developing advocacy movement?

By the end of this lesson, students will understand

- The effect of the Six-Day War on Jewish identity in the Soviet Union and in America.
- The effect of the Six-Day War on Soviet-Israeli relations
- The types of increased communication between the West and the USSR, and their effect on the American Advocacy Movement for Soviet Jews.

Discussion

Depending on the group's demographics, students may have a personal familiarity with movements in the 60s and 70s, from the *havurah* movement to Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights and anti-War movements. Solicit memories of the period.

- Using the Study Guide, clarify the shifts in Soviet-Israeli relations, culminating in a total break after the 1967 Six-Day War.

- Ask the group about potential connections between the Six-Day War in Israel, the Black Power movement in the United States, and the American Advocacy Movement for Soviet Jews.
- See the Timeline in the Study Guide, as a primary step in examining the movement.

Organization Mapping

- The constellation of American Jewish organizations, and their relationship to the movement, can be confusing. Choose one of the relevant organizations from the Study Guide and answer the following questions. Consult the digitized archival materials at the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), found at http://www.ajhs.org/aasjm
- When was the organization established?
- What were its stated goals? its political/social/religious orientation?
- Did the organization have a unique position regarding the plight of Soviet Jews? Clarify.

Material Culture and Trip Reports

In addition to participating in organized and public activities, individuals demonstrated support for Soviet Jews by personalizing activism such as *refusenik* pins, tee shirts, banners, bracelets, and other items viewed in the online digitized collections at the AJHS (under "visual material" and in its online exhibits).

- What was its use? What might it do for the owner? What did it signal to others?
- View trip reports in the collection. What was the impact of person-to-person trips? What were the dangers of these visits? What information was gathered? What do American visitors stress about their visits?
- Examine personal or media reports of bar/bat mitzvah "twinning," another means of publicizing case histories and personalizing the movement.

- ► See: http://www.nytimes.com/1988/06/26/nyregion/bar-mitzvah-twins-meet-after-2-years.html

Wrap Up

- ❖ Reading:
  - ► Study Guide
  - ► Emphasis on Jackson-Vanik Amendment in the bibliography

Lesson 5:

Diplomacy and the Growth of the Movement

Introduction

Review the beginnings of various U.S. groups to aid Soviet Jews, and the development and passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to trade legislation. Examine the ways in which grass-roots popular movements can influence diplomacy, and vice versa.

Essential Questions

- Describe the differences in how major American Jewish organizations reacted to the plight of Soviet Jews.
- What were the diplomatic, political, or economic means available to the United States to influence the status of Soviet Jews? Were they utilized?
- What was the Jackson-Vanik Amendment? How did it happen? What were the reactions in Washington and in Moscow? among American Jews?

By the end of this lesson, students will understand

- The platforms and tactics of the major American Jewish organizations in the 1970's and 1980's.
- The text and impact of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in America and the Soviet Union.
- The confluence of official diplomacy and grassroots organizing in the United States.

Wrap Up

- Reading:
  - Review the text of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Reform Act of 1974.

- ► See the controversial views on the legislation in the writings of Paula Stern and Marshall Goldman, in the Bibliography.

❖ Interview the Washington representative of a Jewish organization and evaluate the group's role, if any, in passing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Lesson 6:

Perestroika and Contacts: Varied Perspectives

Introduction

Consider the nature of changes made by Mikhail S. Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin and the "post-history" of the movement for Soviet Jewry. Read critiques of the movement from contemporary literature and consider its legacy.

Essential Questions

- What was the significance of Mikhail S. Gorbachev coming to power? Boris Yeltsin?'
- What was perestroika and how did it affect Jews in the Soviet Union?
- What are the critiques of the advocacy movement?
- What is the lasting impact of the movement in America? In Israel? In the Former Soviet Union?
- Where are most former ***refuseniks*** today? Are any still activists in Israel or America? Cite some who have achieved significant positions in Israel or America.

By the end of this lesson, students will understand

- The importance of personal relationships in the American Advocacy Movement.
- The significance of Freedom Sunday, December 6, 1987.
- The multiple perspectives on the Movement and its legacy.

Media Coverage

- Using the New York Times archive, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency archive, and Jewish periodicals, as well as images from the AJHS online collection, examine the coverage that demonstrations, such as Freedom Sunday, received in the national or

regional press. What elements of the struggle are emphasized in the reports? How is the movement represented?

- ❖ Film:
  - ► See the 2017 film, *Operation Wedding*, by Anat Zalmanson-Kuznetsov, with its story of a 1970 plot to steal a Soviet airplane and escape to Israel. The arrest and trial of her parents and their group transformed the international advocacy campaigns.
  - ► See the Israeli film, ***Pur***, which treats the lives of former ***refuseniks*** now living in Israel.

Aftermath

In the immediate years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, in August 1991, the number of Jews able to leave for Israel, the United States, Germany, and elsewhere, rose dramatically. Others remained. Not all who emigrated were former ***refuseniks***; many simply wanted a better life and freedom to live elsewhere as Jews.

- ❖ Recent years have seen the restoration of some Jewish institutions in Russia and Ukraine. What might this mean for the future?
- ❖ Discuss the impact of the Movement on American Jewish life and on the lives of former Soviet Jews. What were the Movement's most significant contributions? What were its shortcomings? What is its lasting impact?

Wrap up

Students should share their answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What was the most surprising thing you learned in the course?
- ❖ What is the single question you still have?
- ❖ Name one thing you learned that you'll retain, or that will be useful in the future.

POLITICS AND PROTEST

SUPPLEMENTARY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Provide a religious profile of the 19th-century Russian Jewish world. How does it compare with the 20th-century Russian Jewish world? Give reasons.
2. What role did Zionism play in pre-World War I Russia?
3. In the 18th and 19th centuries most Russian Jews in the Tsarist empire lived in the Pale of Settlement. Describe the Pale and the conditions for Jewish life. What does "beyond the Pale" mean?
4. What changes in Russian Jewish life took place after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution? After 1937? After World War II and during the "Black Years of Jewish life"? Clarify.
5. Why was a Jewish Autonomous Region created in the distant Russian area of Birobidzhan? How did Jews fare? What happened to the Jewish population?
6. Define the term "ethnic nationalism"? Did this apply to the Soviet Jewish minority?
7. What is a "*refusenik*"? Did they relate to advocates in the West? Describe. How did Soviet officials treat them?
8. Could Jews study Hebrew? Attend religious services? Provide details.
9. Who were the "democrats", aka called "dissidents"? What were their objectives? How did the authorities treat them? What was their relationship to Jewish activists, ***refuseniks*** or unofficial Hebrew teachers?
10. It has been said that the Campaign for Soviet Jews was inspired by the American civil rights movement. Do you agree? Provide examples.

11. What motivated American Jews to campaign for Soviet Jews in the 1960's, 70's and 80's? Have you read any accounts about domestic activists? Did you know any? Compare such efforts to the Holocaust decade.
12. Describe the role of the US Government in advocacy efforts? The Congress? The Media?
13. What tools were crafted by the campaign to assist Soviet Jewish activists? Economic? Political? Personal? Where did the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to trade laws fit?
14. Were public demonstrations effective? Cite examples.
15. Describe the domestic campaign? Why were there different advocacy groups?
16. What happened to Jews in the Soviet Union after the country imploded in 1991? Why? Did this have any impact on their ability to leave for Israel? America? Explain. What changes have taken place for those who remained?
17. It has been over three decades since Freedom Sunday, in December 1987. What is the legacy of the American Soviet Jewry Advocacy Campaign? Has it changed the American Jewish community? Explain.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Following are ideas for programs in the classroom, on campus, in the local Hebrew High School, at a synagogue study program, or in a college Jewish/Russian studies program. These are meant to enhance a formal study curriculum but should be screened as appropriate for the age and experiences of the audience.

1. Invite a speaker who participated in or studied the Advocacy Campaign. Try your local synagogue, college or university. Look for Russian, Jewish, or

diplomatic history programs. Try your local Jewish Community Relations Council or Federation for suggestions.

2. Contact someone who was active in the Civil Rights Movement, including SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. Have that person compare significant experiences from their involvement.
3. Invite someone who participated in Freedom Sunday on December 6, 1987, in Washington, DC. Why did they participate? How did they get involved? What did they carry away? Did it have any impact on their lives?
4. Act out a situation in the 1970's and 1980's where one person is a Soviet official deciding on an application (*vyzof*) to leave for Israel, and the other is an applicant. How would the interchange proceed?
5. You want to study Hebrew in the Soviet Union during the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. How was it done? Report to your class or group on the research.
6. If you wanted to pray with a religious community, at a time when the authorities were actively fighting religious practices and preventing rabbinic training institutions from functioning, what would you do? Simulate an application to the Ministry of Culture or Education.

POLITICS AND PROTEST

A Selective Bibliography

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POLITICS AND PROTEST

PHOTO GALLERY

The following photos portray the scope of the advocacy movement. They reflect activists and *refuseniks* in the former Soviet Union as well as demonstrators in America. Government officials who supported the movement are also included. Some photos came from *refuseniks* finally granted permission to leave for Israel, and a few appeared in domestic publications and periodicals.

South Florida Billboards

Local activists in South Florida erected billboards advertising the cause of Soviet Jewry. This event involved the local Member of Congress as well as local Jewish leaders. The group was affiliated with the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Memorial Riga

The Holocaust memorial at Rumbala in the forest near Riga became a site where young activists met and helped forge an underground Zionist movement.

UN Protest

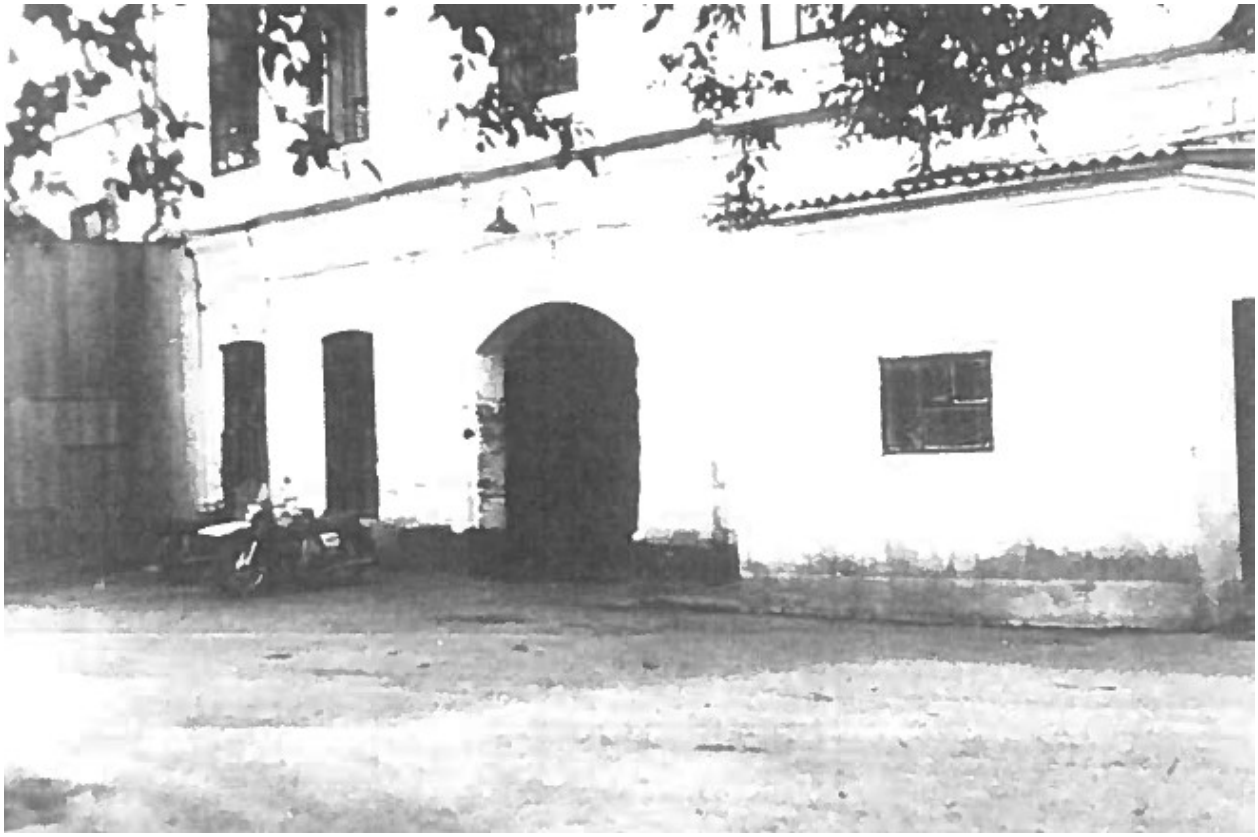
Crowds gathered at Dag Hammerskjold Plaza, near the United Nations, after marching down Fifth Avenue. The Solidarity Sunday event was an annual protest rally as well as a demonstration of solidarity with Jewish activists in the Soviet Union.

Protest Soviet UN Mission

The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry continued an activist program which appealed to many people. Here a demonstration was held opposite the Soviet UN Mission.

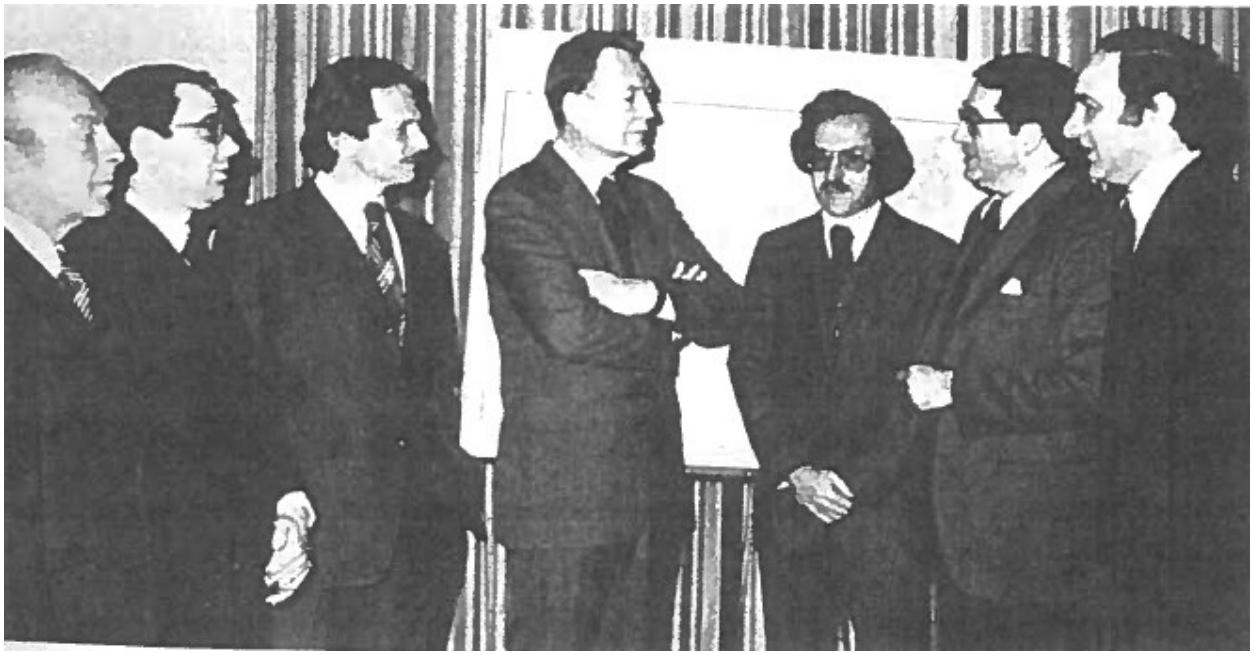
Memorial Ceremony 1963

Jewish activists at a memorial ceremony in April 1963 marking the wartime uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto. The ceremony took place at the site of the Nazi-led Rumbala massacre, near Riga. Due to official opposition, rehabilitation of the site took place over several years.



Chistopol Prison

The entrance to Chistopol Prison where Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky was taken after his sentencing. His brother, Leonid, took the photo in secret.



US Lawyers

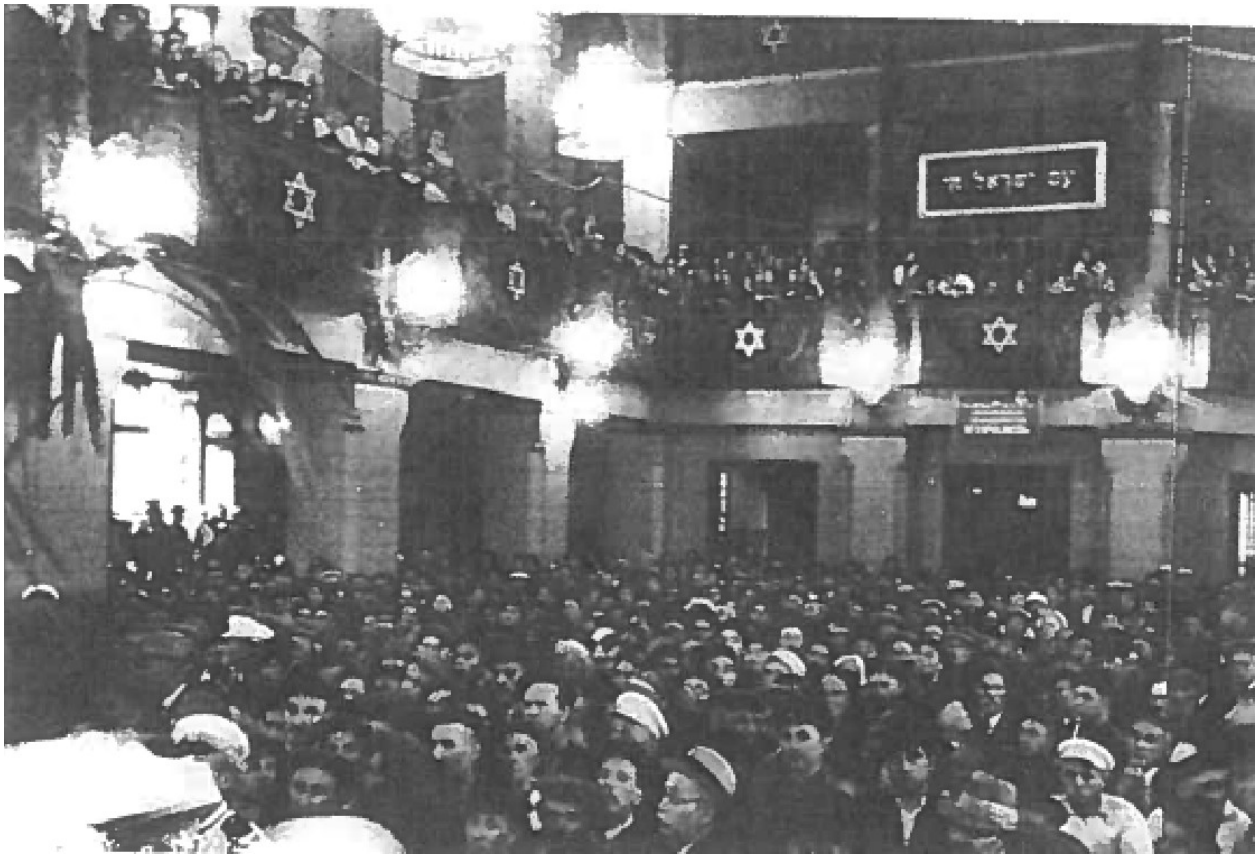
A group of American lawyers and legal scholars that had volunteered to represent the Jewish Prisoners of Conscience. Prof. Telford Taylor, in the center, a prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi War Criminal was the team's chairperson. Team members traveled to Moscow and intervened with Soviet legal officials.

Soviet Consulate NYC

Utilizing religious artifacts, including the shofar (ram's horn) and prayer shawls, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry mounted a vigil at the Soviet Consulate in New York City focusing on the denial of religious and cultural rights to Soviet Jews.

Memorial for Solomon Mikhoels

Memorial service for Solomon Mikhoels' at Moscow's Novodevichy cemetery. Mikhoels was the chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, a noted actor, and director of the Yiddish theater. Mikhoels was murdered in 1948 while on a trip to Minsk. This was a blow to the Committee and the theater, signaling official action to close both institutions.



A Holocaust Memorial Moscow

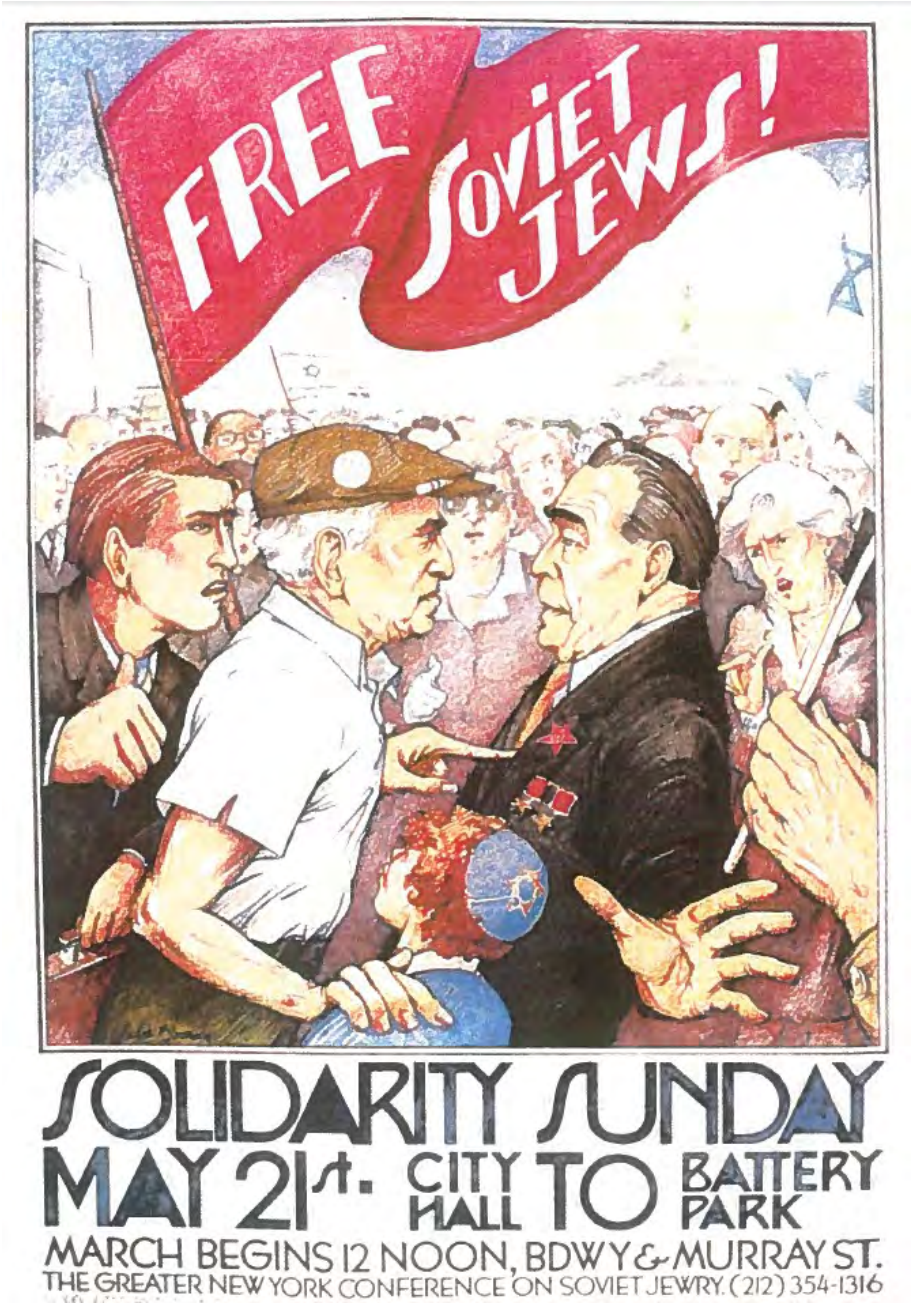
A Holocaust Memorial Service at Moscow's Choral Synagogue, the city's largest functioning prayer site. Within a decade such services were discontinued. However, thousands of *refuseniks* and activists in defiance of restrictions gathered at the synagogue on Simhat Torah that also attracted visitors from abroad..

***Refuseniks* and Israelis**

***Refuseniks* at a forest gathering with visiting Israeli athletes. Vladimir Slepak, a leader of the Jewish movement, and his wife Masha are in the back row. Such gatherings were social events as much as opportunities to share news and strengthen ties among *refuseniks*.**

Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

A plenary session of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee held in April 1944. The last vestige of any Jewish national entity in the Soviet Union, the Committee was closed during the reign of Josif Stalin. Its leaders, including writers, poets and scientists, were put on trial and executed on August 12, 1952.



New York Conference on Soviet Jewry created posters

A graphic call to mobilize on Solidarity Sunday, an annual public protest. The Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry created posters designed to encourage popular participation.

Western Wall Jerusalem

Thousands gathered at Jerusalem's Western Wall in solidarity with hunger strikers in Moscow protesting the First Leningrad Trial in December 1970. The trial and harsh sentences helped stimulate aggressive advocacy efforts in the West.

Prisoners of Conscience

Former Prisoners of Conscience, from the First Leningrad Trial, in December 1970. Nine years later the 5 men were waiting to leave for Israel.

Purim

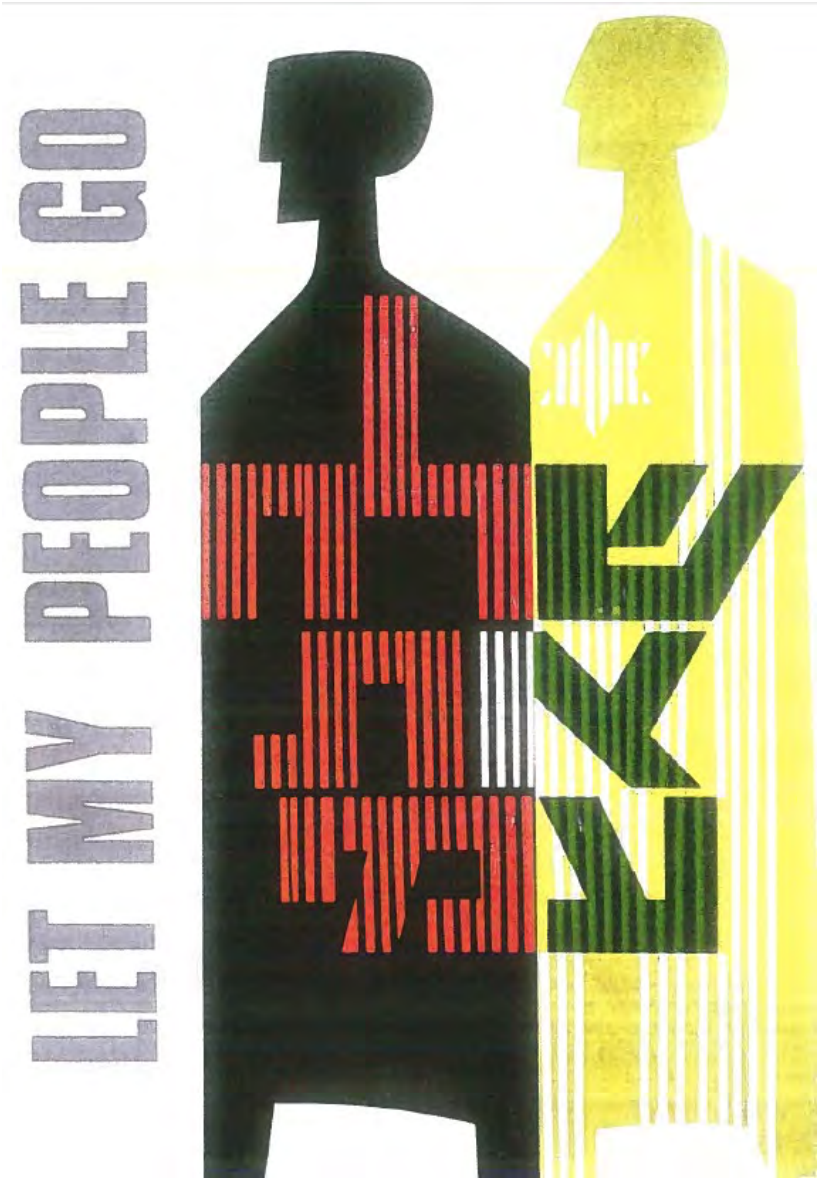
***Refuseniks* in costume gathered to celebrate Purim at home. Whenever possible Jewish holidays were celebrated in the apartments of different *refuseniks*.**

Leningrad *refuseniks*

Leningrad *refuseniks* protested near the Smolny Institute and local Communist Party headquarters in Moscow demanding they be "sent home" (to Israel).

Hunger Strike in London, England

Members of the 35's-Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry staged a hunger strike in sympathy with Soviet Jewish scientists on a similar hunger strike. The 35's were especially active in England, Canada and the United States.



Let My People Go Poster

Artist's rendition of the biblical injunction to "Let My People Go" in English and in Hebrew, designed as a demand to Soviet authorities and to stimulate Involvement in the advocacy movement.

Bar Mitzvah

David Dafilou, an American Bar Mitzvah, “twinned” with David Schwartzman, a counterpart in Moscow, as a means of publicizing the plight of a single refusenik boy and his family.

Prisoners of Zion poster

Putting faces on the Prisoners of Zion in the Soviet Union (aka Prisoners of Conscience) by the Israel Public Council for Soviet Jewry.
The Council worked in cooperation with similar groups in other countries.

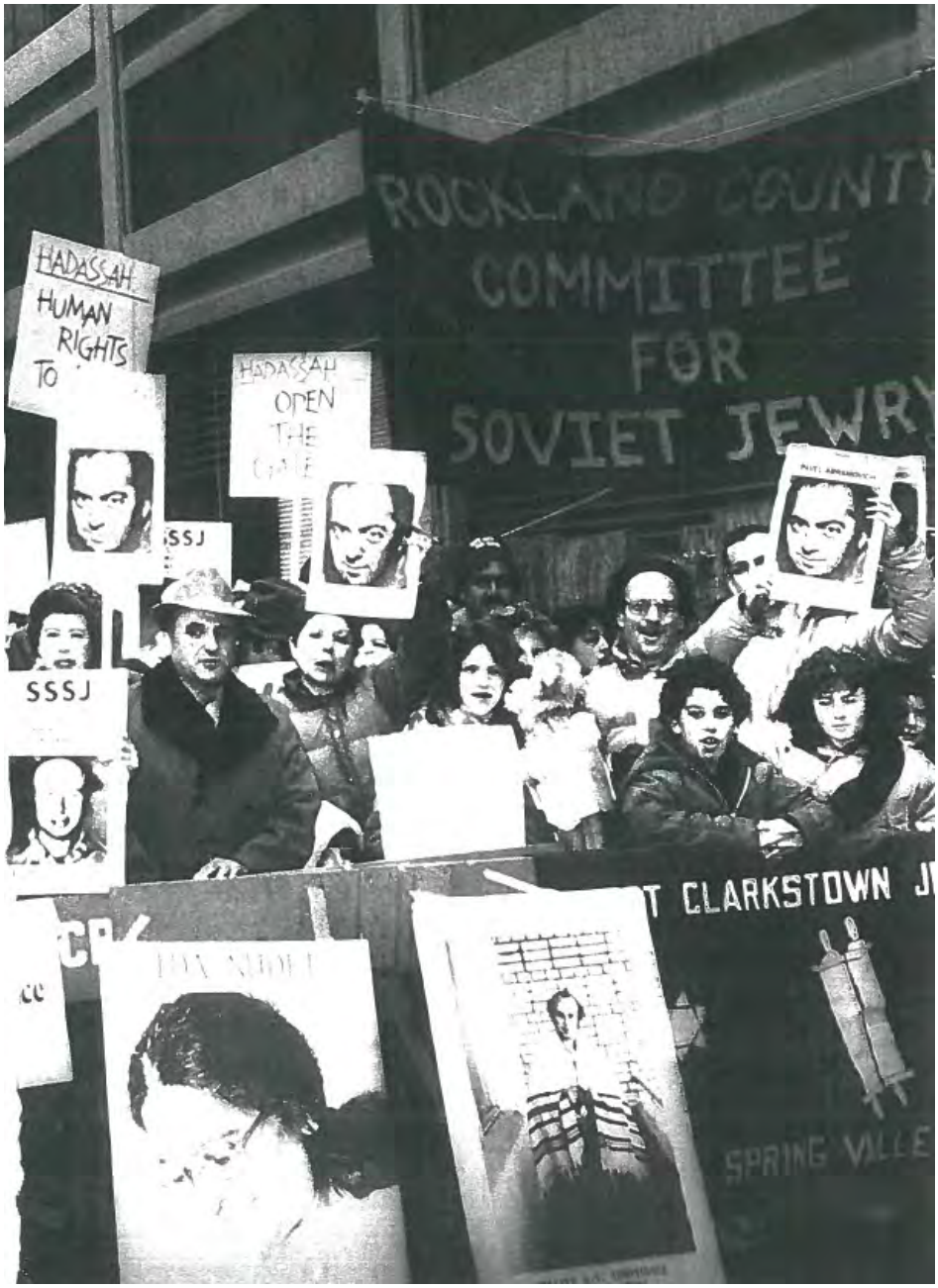
NYC activists

Local New York City activists gathered near the Soviet Mission to the United Nations to protest the treatment of Soviet Jews and demand the release of individual *refuseniks* and prisoners.

For Iosif Mendelevich
With warm good wishes,
Ronald Reagan George Bush

Mendelevich and Sharansky in WhiteHouse

Former Prisoner of Zion Iosif Mendelevich and Avital Sharansky at a White House meeting with President Ronald Reagan and Vice-President George Bush seeking their intervention on behalf of Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky and other Jewish prisoners of conscience.



Student Demonstration

A Student Struggle for Soviet Jews demonstration, joined by community groups, protesting the refusal by emigration officials (OVIR) to grant emigration permits (vizofs) for Jews to reunite with families in Israel.

Meeting with Senator Jackson

(Left to right). Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, the major Senate sponsor of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to a pending trade bill, on relations with communist countries, Sarah Frankel, a representative in America from Israel's special bureau, *Nativ*, Nehemia Levanon, head of *Nativ*, and Arye Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency.

Poster from the National Conference on Soviet Jewry

Poster from the National Conference on Soviet Jewry promoting the historic Solidarity Sunday rally and march, in Washington, DC in December, 1987 prior to the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit Meeting. Over 250,000 people participated.

Hebrew Teachers in Leningrad

Hebrew teachers in Leningrad attempted to recruit students among the city's Jews, including *refuseniks*. The activity was considered illegal, but the underground teachers persisted.

New York Rally

At a New York City rally protesting the religious and cultural discriminatory practices targeting Soviet Jews.

Demonstrators in solidarity with Jewish prisoners

A group of demonstrators, in prison uniforms, marched in solidarity with Jewish Prisoners of Conscience (aka Prisoners of Zion).

Soviet Jewish Prisoners- Poster

The Anti-Defamation League, in cooperation with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, circulated a poster drawing attention to individual Jewish Prisoners of Conscience.

A poster by Paul Davis

A poster by Paul Davis issued by the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry urging Jews and non-Jews to join a protest march and rally.

Aliyah Activists

As an act of defiance, and under the watchful eyes of KGB officers, aliyah activists posted a display in the Ovrazhki Forest near Moscow, marking Jerusalem Day.

***Refuseniks* gather at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport to bid goodbye to Alex Goldfarb**