The Gateway:
The Soviet Jewry Movement, the Right to Leave, and the Rise of Human Rights on the International Stage

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April 12, 2010
Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to all those who have helped me write this thesis over the past several months. I would first like to thank my thesis advisors, Professor Samuel Roberts and Professor Sam Moyn. In addition to reading and commenting on drafts and providing their invaluable guidance, Professors Roberts and Moyn always displayed enthusiasm when hearing about my thesis, which encouraged me throughout the process. That encouragement also came from my thesis seminar, whose camaraderie made the writing process an exciting challenge.

Next, I would like to thank my interviewees, who contributed their valuable time to answering my inquiries. Past World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman and his former political strategist, Steven Hebits, offered an intricate sense of how they and others wielded human rights legislation toward securing freedom of emigration. American Jewish Committee President David Harris shared his experience as a Soviet Jewry activist in the 1970s and 80s and provided a detailed portrait of the complications involved in emigrating from the USSR. Jacob Birnbaum and Glenn Richter, founders of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, captured the urgency that infused the early Soviet Jewry movement, and described how grassroots activists cultivated a more public campaign for Soviet Jewry. I am especially indebted to Richard Perle and Douglas Feith, former aides to Senator Henry Jackson, who informed the intellectual scope and framework of this thesis.

I also must thank the archives and individuals which offered significant contributions to my work, including the New York Public Library Dorot Jewish Division and the Columbia University oral history collection. I am particularly grateful to the staff at the Center for American Jewish History in New York and the American Jewish Committee archives, who assisted my research. I also received help from the librarians at the University of Washington, who went beyond their mandate to locate specific documents for me that proved integral to a main contention of my argument. Finally, I would especially like to thank to Gal Beckerman for generously providing a manuscript of his upcoming book on the Soviet Jewry movement.

My thesis would have been a much lonelier experience without my close group of friends, who provided moral support and, most importantly, reminded me to relax. To those who frequented our kitchen table—Daniel, Ron, Brandon, Nick, Sara, Danielle, and Caitlin—I’m sure this is the beginning of many such gatherings in the future. I especially want to thank Sarah for soldiering through the final weeks with me as she wrote her own thesis and for sharing her much-needed companionship.

I want to thank my parents, Michael and Jacqueline, who instilled in me a passion for reading, a ceaseless desire to learn more about the world, and a constant sense of the bigger picture. Lastly, I would like to thank my grandparents for giving me a tradition to carry forward.
Abstract

This thesis explores how the struggle to rescue Jews from the Soviet Union contributed to the rise and recognition of human rights in international affairs. Just as the United Nations General Assembly ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948—recognizing the equal and inalienable right to freedom of religion, nationality, and expression—the Soviet Union stripped its 2.5 million Jewish citizens of those very provisions. Even as it denied the basic freedoms of Soviet Jews, the USSR refused to grant their only potential relief, also enshrined in the Universal Declaration: the right to leave one’s country.

Jewish communal organizations in the United States soon initiated a movement to prevent the disintegration of Soviet Jewry. Wary of endangering their coreligionists by linking them to a broader campaign for freedom in the USSR, the American Jewish political establishment initially shunned reference to human rights, seeking to alleviate their coreligionists’ plight by conducting quiet diplomacy on behalf of civil rights. Meanwhile, a cadre of Soviet Jewry academics and human rights activists, operating on the fringe of the Movement, began formulating a legal foundation for the right to leave. This thesis first contends that the establishment political wing of the Movement converged with its scholarly contingent by embracing the 1972 Jackson Amendment, which linked U.S-Soviet trade to free emigration in the USSR. I argue that the establishment embraced the bill—which owed its conceptual inspiration to the body of work produced by Soviet Jewry Movement’s intellectuals—as a strategic response to two challenges: increased Soviet Jewish demands for emigration, and an attempt by militant Soviet Jewry activists, preaching violence and ethnic exclusivity, to co-opt the Movement.

I then examine how the Soviet Jewry Movement’s advocacy for the right to leave subsequently aided the transformation of human rights from rhetoric to reality. This thesis proposes that the right to leave served as a “gateway”—to assuring all other rights and freedoms for Soviet citizens; to legitimizing the notion that the Soviet Union’s internal affairs could not claim exemption from international oversight; and, ultimately, to fostering universal acceptance of human rights accords.
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<tr>
<td>ADL</td>
<td>Anti-Defamation League</td>
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<td>AJC</td>
<td>American Jewish Committee</td>
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<td>AJCSJ</td>
<td>American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry</td>
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<td>CBJO</td>
<td>Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPMAJO</td>
<td>Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (a.k.a. Conference of Presidents)</td>
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<td>JBI</td>
<td>Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights</td>
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<td>JDL</td>
<td>Jewish Defense League</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFN</td>
<td>Most-favored-nation status</td>
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<td>NACSJ</td>
<td>National Advisory Council on Soviet Jewry</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North-Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NCSJ</td>
<td>National Conference on Soviet Jewry</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>OVIR</td>
<td>Soviet Department of Visas and Registration (immigration agency)</td>
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<td>SSSJ</td>
<td>Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry</td>
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<td>UCSJ</td>
<td>Union of Councils for Soviet Jews</td>
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<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)</td>
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Personalities and Terms

**Morris Abram:** U.S. Representative to U.N. Human Rights Council, honorary president of American Jewish Committee (AJC), central organizer of Uppsala Colloquium on the Right to Leave and to Return in 1972.

**Morris Amitay:** Chief legislative aide to Senator Abraham Ribicoff; worked in tandem with Richard Perle to ensure Congressional passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

**Jacob Birnbaum:** Co-founder of Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) and leading grassroots Soviet Jewry activist.

**Rene Cassin:** Drafter of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a principle sponsor of the Uppsala Colloquium.

**Anatoly Dobrynin:** Soviet Ambassador to the United States from 1962 to 1986.

**Moshe Decter:** Managing editor of *The New Leader* in the 1950s and 60s whose articles concerning the plight of Soviet Jewry helped spark the Soviet Jewry Movement in the U.S.

**Meg Donavan:** Employee of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) who later served as a key member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and ensured that the Commission place high priority on the right to leave.

**Establishment Soviet Jewry Movement:** the effort initiated on behalf of Soviet Jewry by the existing Jewish communal organizations and institutions of the United States.

**Dante Fascell:** Democratic Congressman from Florida and chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

**Millicent Fenwick:** Republican Congresswoman from New Jersey who introduced the legislation which established the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

**Arthur Goldberg:** U.S. Supreme Court Justice, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., and U.S. Ambassador to the Belgrade Helsinki Review Conference; Goldberg convinced Jewish leaders to form an umbrella Soviet Jewry organization in 1963 and later publicly challenged the USSR regarding its human rights record at Belgrade.

**Jerry Goodman:** Executive Director of the NCSJ.

**Nahum Goldmann:** Head of the World Jewish Congress in the 1950s and 60s; preached quiet diplomacy vis-à-vis Soviet Jewry for fear of endangering the Soviet Jewish community.

**Grassroots/Activist Soviet Jewry Movement:** the effort initiated on behalf of Soviet Jewry outside traditional communal organizations; included the Student Struggle for Soviet
Jewry and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

Yossi Klein-Halevi: Early SSSJ activist whose later shift to the JDL represented the radicalization of the Soviet Jewry Movement in the late 1960s.


Jose Ingles: Philippine Judge who worked with William Korey to draft a landmark report on the status of freedom of emigration worldwide, with particular focus on Soviet emigration policies. Ingles’ formulation of the right to leave as a “gateway” to securing all other freedoms served as the foundation for the Uppsala Colloquium and, by extension, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Helsinki Final Act: The product of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—a consortium of thirty-three European nations as well as the United States and Canada established in 1975 to solidify continental détente. The Final Act struck a quid pro quo between the longstanding Soviet desire to solidify its control of Eastern Europe, and Western European insistence upon the improvement of Soviet human rights.

Henry Jackson: Senator from Washington who solicited the establishment Jewish community to support his amendment linking U.S.-Soviet trade with Soviet improvements on freedom of emigration.

Jackson-Vanik Amendment: Bill linking U.S.-Soviet trade relations to improvement of Soviet emigration policy by refusing MFN and “credit, credit guarantees, and investment guarantees” to the USSR as long as it denied its citizens the right to emigrate or imposed more than a nominal fee on emigration visas. Significantly, Jackson’s bill required the President to submit biannual reports to Congress regarding the status of emigration in nonmarket nations, forbidding him from granting a MFN waiver without approval from the legislative branch.

Jacob Javits: Jewish Senator from New York who served as a “patron” for Soviet Jewish issues in Congress; key ally of Jackson in securing the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Meir Kahane: Founder and leader of the Jewish Defense League.


Yasha Kozokov: Soviet Jew who renounced his USSR citizenship seven days after the conclusion of Israel’s Six-Day War, declaring that he sought to emigrate to the Jewish State.

Henry Kissinger: National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State to Presidents Nixon and Ford; Kissinger attempted to implement a strategy of détente and opposed the insertion of
human rights in U.S. foreign affairs. He became the chief opponent to Jackson-Vanik.

**Boris Kochubyevski:** Soviet Jew imprisoned for refusing to condemn Israel at local worker’s union meeting.

**William Korey:** International Director of B’nai B’rith and representative of the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations at the U.N.; Korey made a vital contribution to Jose Ingles’ report on the right to leave and championed the Soviet Jewry Movement as a human rights cause.

**Nehemiah Levanon:** Leader of the Israeli Liaison Bureau who quietly influenced the direction of the American Soviet Jewry Movement.

**Sidney Liskofsky:** Director of AJC’s Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights and initiator of the Uppsala Colloquium; played a vital role in

**Richard Maass:** Chairman of the NCSJ during negotiations over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

**Richard Perle:** Chief legislative aide to Senator Henry Jackson and lead advocate for the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

**Glenn Richter:** Co-director of the SSSJ.

**Lou Rosenbaum:** Founder of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ), the leading grassroots activist Soviet Jewry organization.

**Andrei Sakharov:** Father of Soviet nuclear bomb who later became a leading democratic dissident and ally of the Soviet Jewry Movement within the USSR.

**Anatoly Sharansky:** Leading Soviet Jewish refusenik who bridged the Jewish and dissident Movements in the USSR by serving as Sakharov’s spokesperson and co-founding the Moscow Helsinki Watch. He was later imprisoned for a decade on charges of espionage and released in 1986.

**Leonard Schroeter:** Seattle lawyer and confidant of Senator Henry Jackson who participated in the Uppsala Colloquium and brought its ideas to Senator Jackson, laying the foundation for the Senator’s Amendment.

**Tina Silber:** Aide to Senator Jackson who maintained a close connection with Schroeter.

**Charles Vanik:** Congressman from Ohio who cosponsored the Jackson Amendment.

**Elie Wiesel:** Holocaust survivor and respected author who toured the Soviet Union in 1966 and wrote a book that criticized American Jewry for failing to assist its coreligionists in the USSR.
Introduction

As the Aeroflot plane taxied to the gate at Smolny Airport in the Soviet Union at 8:30 AM on June 14, 1970, nine Jews prepared to board the aircraft, already resigned to their fate. Victims of state-sponsored anti-Semitic repression in all spheres of life—and forbidden by Soviet law from emigrating—these Jews, as the KGB already discovered, hoped to stage a desperate and symbolic act of defiance by hijacking the plane and flying it to the West. As the Jews walked onto the tarmac, a swarm of special agents enveloped them, battering the group with clubs and apprehending them for attempted illegal “flight abroad,” tantamount to treason. Six months later, on Christmas Eve, the Soviet Union declared that it would spare them no mercy. The two leaders of the failed hijacking received the maximum penalty for sedition—death.¹

The execution sentences stunned the Western world. The sheer brutality of the punishment appeared to confirm that, secure in its superpower status, the USSR cared little for international public opinion. Yet to Morris Abram, former U.S. Representative on the U.N. Human Rights Commission, the hijacking sentences reflected something far different than strength. Writing in the New York Times in January 1971, Abram contended that the “vengeful trial” of the would-be hijackers revealed that “the Soviet Government is afraid to honor a basic and internationally recognized human right: the right of everyone to leave any country and to return to his own country.” The seemingly mighty Soviets, according to Abram, were actually scared.

Abram’s article outlined a long history of Soviet resistance to freedom of emigration.

The inclusion of the right to free emigration in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

encountered fierce Soviet opposition, eventually spurring the Communist bloc to abstain from the document’s ratification. When a U.N. subcommission considered a study of discrimination “on the right of everyone to leave any country, including his own,” prepared by Philippine jurist Jose Ingles, the USSR “opposed [the study’s] publication,” and “demanded the deletion of material…giving instances of denials of the right to leave [Soviet] bloc countries.” Despite the fact that it had endorsed the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racism and Discrimination—which explicitly reiterated and endorsed the right to leave—the USSR continued to demonstrate “hypersensitivity” and “unreasoning” with regard to free exit. “The cruel fact,” Abram concluded, “is that the Soviet Union…is still in some ways a frightened, primitive nation.”

Abram’s interest in Soviet emigration policy sprung from his intimate association with the Soviet Jewry Movement—the three-decade struggle to ensure the survival of the Soviet Jewish community. His editorial foreshadowed the imminent convergence of two streams of the American effort behind the right to leave: one scholarly, which first provided the legal foundation for freedom of emigration; and the other political, which, as a response to growing radical activist influence, embraced that foundation and secured its central place both in American and international legislative arenas. I argue that the right to leave served as a “gateway” not only to achieving the emancipation of Soviet Jewry, but to initiating the transformation of human rights from contested principle to global practice.

* * *


3 At the time that he published the editorial on the right to leave in The New York Times, Abram served as honorary president of the American Jewish Committee and Chairman of the Administrative Council of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights (JBI), an AJC subsidiary which framed the Soviet Jewry movement within the context of human rights. Abram would later serve as Chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in the 1980s.
This thesis first proposes a modified interpretation as to why the mainstream Soviet Jewry organizations began to advocate for emigration—and why they elected to frame emigration as a human right—by emphasizing the influence of militant Soviet Jewry activists in the U.S., such as the Jewish Defense League, upon the establishment. Secondly, it offers new perspective to existing scholarship in seeking to demonstrate the Soviet Jewry Movement’s role in the development and implementation of human rights, by framing the right to leave as a nexus between them.

The sparse but growing body of research addressing the Soviet Jewry Movement accords little attention to its grassroots activist element—the effort initiated on behalf of Soviet Jewry outside traditional communal organizations. Most discussions of the movement’s mainstream organizational institutions glorify the establishment at the expense of activist groups. This thesis follows an effort to correct that imbalance and secure a place in Soviet Jewry Movement historiography for the grassroots organizations, one which began with William Orbach, and has continued in recent years with the contributions of Yossi-Klein Halevi. More importantly, accounts of the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement significantly undervalue the importance of Meir Kahane’s Jewish Defense League (JDL) in compelling the Soviet Jewry Movement establishment—advocacy for Soviet Jewry organized by existing Jewish communal institutions in the U.S.—to frame the struggle for Soviet Jewish emigration as a human right. I rely upon primary and secondary sources to demonstrate that nonviolent grassroots groups, as well as the militant JDL, forced the establishment to retake control of the Soviet Jewry Movement by adopting the language of human rights.

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While the fields of both general human rights history and the Soviet Jewry Movement occasionally reference the connection between the Soviet Jewry effort and the right to leave—either offering a small element of its overall history, or glossing it in passing—they fail to provide the comprehensive linkage sought by this thesis. Most general human rights scholarship rarely delivers more than a cursory mention to the Soviet Jewry Movement, and tends to ignore its involvement entirely. For example, prominent historian Kenneth Cmiel’s account of human rights politics in the U.S. demarcates a timeline for the rise of human rights, from 1973 to 1978, that closely matches the moment in which the Soviet Jewry Movement embraced and then championed the right to leave. Yet Cmiel devotes merely a single line to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment—the bill which tied U.S.-Soviet trade to improved Soviet emigration policy in 1975 and referenced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—let alone the Soviet Jewry Movement more broadly. Other such examples abound, rendering the Soviet Jewry Movement’s contribution to the evolution of human rights largely unrecognized within the broader discipline of human rights studies.

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5 See Michael Galchinsky, Jews and Human Rights: Dances at Three Weddings (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), and Sidney Schwartz, Judaism and Justice (New York: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), which both devote individual chapters to a general history of the Soviet Jewry movement’s relationship with human rights, but avoid detailed explorations of the subject. For example, Galchinsky’s book directly refers to the Uppsala Colloquium on the Right to Leave and the Right to Return as directly assisting with the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which, by extension, contributed to the Helsinki Final Act (p. 117). Yet it does not provide historical context for that statement and neglects to explore the intellectual heritage of the right to leave at any depth.


Soviet Jewry Movement histories also tend to minimize or entirely neglect the effort’s connection to human rights. Books and articles produced during the course of the Soviet Jewry Movement itself tend to document Soviet violations of Jewish rights rather than interpret the Movement more broadly. Fred Lazin’s work leads a collection of studies dedicated to addressing the “dropout controversy,” in which increasing numbers of Soviet Jews emigrated to the United States instead of Israel, causing a rift between the American and Israeli factions of the Movement. While he references important aspects of the human rights connection such as the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and Helsinki Final Act, Petrus Buwalda chiefly details the complexities of the Soviet Jewish emigration process and also devotes much of its space to the “dropout controversy.” Albert Chernin, Yaacov Ro’i, Paul Appelbaum, and William Orbach present broad historical overviews of the Soviet Jewry Movement that merely hint at its ties to the growth of human rights.

Paula Stern, Noam Kochavi, and William Korey offer intricate accounts of the legislative history contained within this thesis. Stern, who served on Capitol Hill during the time of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment’s passage, details the political negotiations behind the Amendment
as an exploration of the influence of ethnic groups upon American foreign policy. Her book serves as a critical resource for an account of the struggle to secure the bill’s passage, offering a particularly vivid recounting of the fierce battle between Senator Henry Jackson and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger over support from the American Jewish political establishment. Yet her work neglects to explore material outside the concrete political process behind the bill, and entirely avoids discussing the intellectual antecedents so crucial to its origins in the Soviet Jewry Movement. Kochavi’s article provides a succinct and balanced portrait of Kissinger’s strategy in opposing Jackson-Vanik, and ultimately faults him for political miscalculation, especially with regard to his attempt to woo the Jewish community away from Jackson’s camp.

Korey’s collection of materials regarding Jackson-Vanik stands among the only to emphasize the connection between the Jackson Amendment, Soviet Jewry, and human rights. He dedicates particular attention to the bill’s explicit reference to Article 13-2 of the Universal Declaration, the provision for the right to leave, and highlights the influence of Soviet democratic dissident Andrei Sakharov’s letter to Congress in September 1973, urging it to pass Jackson-Vanik an affirmation of human rights. Though Korey explicitly draws the connection between the Soviet Jewry Movement and its integral role in securing the passage of Jackson-Vanik in his histories of the bill, he, like Stern, disregards the intellectual history of Jackson-Vanik and its roots in the Soviet Jewry Movement, which this thesis, in part, aims to supply.


While Korey’s Jackson-Vanik literature does not address the Amendment’s legal history, his broader histories of the Helsinki Final Act and the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the U.N. serve as the most extensive basis upon which to explore the connection between Soviet Jewry, the right to leave, and human rights. Korey—who spearheaded initial efforts to tie the right to leave to Soviet Jewry during the 1960s and served as the Movement’s foremost human rights expert—traces the legal foundations of the right to leave and records the Soviet Jewry Movement’s lobbying efforts on behalf of free emigration, especially during the Helsinki review conferences. Korey’s contributions make the most extensive case to date for the relationship between the struggle to rescue Soviet Jews and the rise of human rights. I also draw heavily upon recent additions such as Gal Beckerman’s upcoming book on the Soviet Jewry Movement, which includes an extended treatment of how the Soviet Jewry Movement assisted in concretizing the Universal Declaration. This thesis utilizes their work as a launching point for a more extensive inquiry into the origins of the right to leave and its later application in legislative politics.

Several works aided my exploration of the origins and influence of the right to leave. Books by Hurst Hannum and Alan Dowty delineated the historical scope of the right to leave. Most significantly, however, the published proceedings of the Uppsala Colloquium on the Right to Leave and to Return outline the intellectual heritage and framework of free emigration as a

human right. It served as a source text for exploring the Colloquium, which, as I suggest, constituted the direct intellectual inspiration for the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and thus assisted in bridging the scholarly and political wings of the Soviet Jewry effort.

* * *

This project does not intend to present a sweeping history of the Soviet Jewry Movement, nor of the development of international human rights norms. Instead, it locates specific moments in history that illustrate how the Soviet Jewry Movement came to embrace emigration as a human rights struggle, and how its advocacy for the right to leave contributed to ascendance of human rights in international affairs. I also do not contend that the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement adopted right-to-leave activism solely as a result of the threat posed by the JDL. Rather, I aspire to integrate the JDL phenomenon within the variety of influences that likely induced the shift. Additionally, I do not argue that the Soviet Jewry Movement can claim full responsibility for the rising prominence and acceptance of human rights, but attempts to situate the Movement’s advocacy for the right to leave within a broader series of contingent factors.

While utilizing secondary literature as a historical frame with which to formulate my guiding questions, I grounded the central findings of my thesis in primary research. Newspapers and periodicals record the Soviet Jewry Movement in the media, documenting the prominence of the cause for Soviet Jewry and coloring the historical narrative. Personal interviews functioned in much the same manner, forming an essential aspect of my thesis by contributing first-person knowledge of Soviet Jewry activism and, perhaps most significantly, offering a broad intellectual scope with which to shape my central contentions.

I additionally relied upon former National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) executive director Jerry Goodman’s papers currently housed at the American Jewish Historical Society.
Goodman’s records provided key insight into the evolution of the establishment as it began to demand free emigration within the context of the right to leave. I then studied the “Ethnic Groups and American Foreign Policy” oral history collection at Columbia, whose testimonies contained an intimate account of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment campaign and the Soviet Jewry Movement’s central place within it.

Archives at the American Jewish Committee and especially at the University of Washington constitute an essential element of my thesis. They tell the story of the Uppsala Colloquium and Ingles Report, and sketch the role of one man—Leonard Schroeter—in transferring their legal foundation for the right to leave to Senator Henry Jackson. These papers form crux of my new findings: that the intellectual heritage for the right to leave, as established by Soviet Jewry advocates through the Ingles Report and the Uppsala Colloquium, directly informed the creation of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

* * *

Chapter I of this thesis recounts the repression faced by Soviet Jews in the USSR during the early years of the Cold War and formulates the early beginnings of the Soviet Jewry movement and its efforts to persuade the Soviet Union, through quiet diplomacy, to grant equal rights to its Jewish citizens. Chapter II features the development of both the establishment Jewish organizational effort for Soviet Jewry, and its grassroots activist counterpart. I outline the establishment’s inability to respond to grassroots demands for a more public campaign as Soviet Jews began to send pleas for emigration, and how activist frustration soon morphed into violence with the creation of Meir Kahane’s Jewish Defense League (JDL).

In Chapter III, I argue that the JDL briefly usurped control of the Soviet Jewry Movement, successfully incorporating elements of its political platform—public protest and
demands for Soviet Jewish emigration—into the movement’s agenda. I contend that to recapture its leadership, the establishment movement adopted the emigration battle and extracted it from Kahane’s framework of tribal victimhood by replacing it with the language of human rights—an opportunity provided to them by endorsing Senator Henry Jackson’s amendment linking U.S.-Soviet Trade to freedom of emigration in the USSR. I then establish the intellectual foundation for Jackson-Vanik and tells the story of its passage through Congress, expounding upon the meaning of the amendment for Soviet Jewry and human rights activism.

Chapter IV addresses the internationalization of the principle established by Jackson-Vanik—that a nation’s internal affairs are not only a legitimate topic of international relations, but in fact central to them—by investigating the Helsinki Final Act. In it, I suggest that the Soviet Jewry Movement’s role in Helsinki assisted in transforming the right to leave into an internationally recognized standard.

The conclusion considers the meaning behind the Soviet Jewry Movement’s sponsorship of the right to leave, for both the fate of Soviet Jews and the universal acceptance of human rights accords.
Chapter I: Deep Freeze

Twenty-Thousand Surprises

Israel’s first female Prime Minister, Golda Meir, earned a reputation for steely resolve and formidable toughness during her half-century political career. Yet in October 1948, Meir lost her legendary composure as she experienced the euphoric cries of over 20,000 Russian Jews. Shouting, “shalom, shalom!” and chanting “Nasha Golda” (Our Golda), the massive crowd clamored outside Moscow’s Choral Synagogue during the Jewish High Holy Days to glimpse Meir, the first ambassador appointed to the Soviet Union from the newly sovereign Jewish state of Israel. Overcome with emotion, Meir could only muster a single message to the throng surrounding her: “A dank eich vas ihr seit geblieben Yidden” (Thank you for having remained Jews).”  

Figure 1: Israel’s first Ambassador to the USSR, Golda Meir, stands amidst a crowd of an estimated 50,000 Jews who arrived to greet her at High Holiday services in September, 1948. In previous years, an average of only 2,000 Jews attended High Holiday services.

“We of course expected to attract attention,” related Modechai Namir, one of Meir’s assistants in the embassy who accompanied her, “but what happened was far beyond anything we could have imagined.” As the delegation made its way into the synagogue, Soviet Jews

thronged around it and said, “You’ve no idea how much Jewish pride and joy you’ve brought us. For the love of G-d, take us to Israel too—don’t dessert us.”

Meir’s visit to Moscow dramatically revealed that the Soviet Union’s Jews remained alive and unafraid to demonstrate their identity. The Moscow High Holiday gathering constituted a miraculous surprise for Jews in Israel and the Diaspora (all Jewish communities remaining outside Israel, centered in the United States), who feared that thirty years of Soviet government repression and forced assimilation directed toward its approximately 2.5 million Jews had all but eradicated their community.

Soviet policy regarding its Jewish population starkly contradicted its constitutional pledges of “equal rights for all citizens of the USSR, irrespective of nationality or race,” and laws forbidding “advocacy of racial or national…hatred and contempt.” Communist authorities forbade the publishing of Jewish religious materials, outlawed the study of Hebrew, restricted Jewish communal ties, and banned all contact with Jews outside the USSR. Prior to Meir’s appearance in Moscow, then, Jews in the United States and Israel feared that “Jews in the Soviet Union had become almost a lost tribe.”

Yet Soviet treatment of its Jewish population ironically ensured the community’s survival. The Soviet government sought to eliminate all national, religious, and ethnic attachments through propaganda and coercion. But Jews—or rather, Soviet attitudes toward them—presented a conundrum. While the Communist Party applied its assimilationist model to

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21 Decter, 423.
the Jews, stripping them of the opportunity to flourish as a distinct community. Yet official and unofficial anti-Semitism in the USSR specifically prevented Jews from assimilating, endlessly reinforcing their alien status.\textsuperscript{23} In Soviet society, “the Jew could not be a Jew but neither could be a non-Jew.”\textsuperscript{24}

Soviet Jews’ paradoxical position within the USSR—in addition to their connection with Jews in the U.S. and especially Israel—posed a particular threat to the Soviet system. Such ties suggested that Soviet minorities desired something beyond the USSR, a near-heretical notion only reinforced by Golda Meir’s visit to Moscow. Though he had recently recognized the State of Israel, Soviet Premiere Joseph Stalin feared the effect of Israel’s founding upon Soviet Jews in the wake of their passionate welcome for Meir.\textsuperscript{25} The Soviet regime accelerated a campaign of murder and suppression that had already begun early in 1948 with its assassination of S.M. Mikhoels, a central figure in Jewish theatrical life and head of the Jewish Antifascist Committee.\textsuperscript{26}

Thus began what Jews called the “Shvartze Yoren,” or Black Years, which lasted for the next half decade. Soviet authorities shuttered the remaining Yiddish-language magazine and theater, cleared Jewish books from library shelves and bookshop counters, and dismantled all Jewish schools. Meanwhile, Russian officials disbanded the Jewish Antifascist Committee and

\textsuperscript{23} In addition to enduring various forms of unofficial discrimination, Jews carried a separate nationality in the internal Soviet passport, which they needed to display when applying for jobs, registering at universities, or enlisting in the army. This very fact alone probably kept hundreds of thousands of Jews who felt no inherent connection to Judaism from integrating fully. See Gal Beckerman, \textit{When They Come For Us, We’ll Be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry}, Unpublished Manuscript: 89-90; Harry Feingold, \textit{Silent No More: Saving the Jews of Russia, the American Jewish Effort, 1967-1989} (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007): 40.

\textsuperscript{24} Elie Wiesel, \textit{The Jews of Silence} (New York: Schocken, 1966): 68..

\textsuperscript{25} Avidor Dagan, \textit{Moscow and Jerusalem: Twenty Years of Relations Between Israel and the USSR} (London: Abelard Schuman, 1970): 22.

\textsuperscript{26} The USSR established the Jewish Antifascist Committee during World War II to promote the Soviet Union among Jews in the West. The organization continued to function after the war as the de facto representative body of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union. For more on Stalin’s wave of repression against Soviet Jews, see Henry Feingold, \textit{Silent No More: Saving the Jews of Russia, The American Jewish Effort, 1967-1989} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008): 40-2.
The Gateway

imprisoned its members, then expanded its sweep of arrests to over a dozen prominent Soviet Jewish writers, who were later executed. The grim climax of the Black Years, the infamous “Doctor’s Plot,” came in January 1953, when the Soviets charged a number of doctors who had treated Stalin with conspiracy to commit murder. Their deaths—and perhaps wider reprisals against the Jewish population—were only averted by Stalin’s death soon thereafter on March 5.

The Communist regime merely furthered its repression of Jews in the post-Stalin era, continuing to discourage and punish all political, social, and cultural activity among Soviet Jews, who remained scattered and quiescent. Vocal Soviet Jewish opposition and organized protest would not arise for another decade, well after American and Israeli efforts to alleviate their plight had already begun.

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The American and Israeli Response

American Jews only slowly recognized the peril faced by their brethren in the USSR. As knowledge of Soviet anti-Semitic brutality reached the American Jewish organizational

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Note: Early Zionist activity did begin to occur in the mid 1960s, especially in Riga, Latvia, where a group of Jews gathered at Rumbuli, an area on the outskirts of Riga where the Nazis murdered 25,000 Jews and dumped them in a mass grave. Soviet authorities had done nothing to commemorate the site, and grudgingly allowed a small group of activists to excavate the remains and create a proper memorial. See Beckerman, 17.

Note: The lack of internal Soviet Jewish opposition to the USSR produced a condescending attitude toward Soviet Jewry among American Soviet Jewry supporters. Even after the emergence of overt Soviet Jewish agitation for emigration in the late 1960s—largely the product of Israel’s 1967 Six-Day War—the Soviet Jewry movement continued to adopt a paternalistic attitude toward Soviet Jews, portraying them as “silent” and “invisible,” incapable of independent organization. In its “Matzah (unleavened bread) for Hope” program for Passover, which called on Jews to affirm their commitment to the Soviet Jewish cause by setting aside a piece of Matzah at their Passover meals, the American Jewish Conference for Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ) described itself as “the voice” of Soviet Jews. Later, it revised the paragraph to read, “we add our voices to theirs (Soviet Jews).” See Shaul Kelner, “Ritualized Protest and Redemptive Politics: Cultural Consequences of the American Mobilization to Free Soviet Jewry,” *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* Vol. 14, No. 3 (Spring/Summer 2008): 26. The accusation of paternalism would return in the 1970s and 80s as well.
establishment, it neglected to educate the broad spectrum of American Jewry about the issue, let alone organize a collective effort aimed at marshalling public opinion against the USSR.  

While the U.S. Jewish establishment engaged in spasmodic and temporary reactions to Soviet repression of its Jewish population throughout the 1950s, the Israeli government more rapidly embraced responsibility for the fate of Soviet Jewry. It responded to Stalin’s oppression by establishing the Liaison Bureau, an organization dedicated to bringing Soviet Jews to Israel. Headed by Shaul Avigur, a veteran of the operation that illegally ferreted European Jews into Palestine past the British mandate blockade, the Bureau operated discreetly and reported directly to the Prime Minister. It sent three Russian-speaking Israeli families to its embassy on a mission to assist and maintain contact with Soviet Jews by providing them information, smuggling in Jewish cultural and religious material, and potentially assisting them with emigrating. 

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29 Historian Howard Sachar has suggested that, eager to escape their own “black years” of the Holocaust, many U.S. Jews devoted their energies to securing their place in American life rather than defending world Jewry, either in Russia or in Israel. Although some Jews in the United States continued to harbor sympathetic views toward the Soviet Union—either because they remained hardened Soviet supporters, or because they appreciated Stalin’s recognition of Israel—the majority of American Jewish leadership no longer held romanticized perceptions of the USSR. Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Jews in America* (New York: Knopf, 1992): 108.


31 Israel’s leaders believed that their fledgling state depended ideologically and pragmatically on the ingathering of Jewish exiles as rapidly as possible. The country’s Declaration of Independence embodies this ideology even today, stating that Israel must “be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of the dispersion.”

32 Levanon, 71-2
Following precise instructions issued by Avigur’s office, the Bureau agents toured the country and established contacts with Jews in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, and elsewhere—connections that inculcated Jewish national consciousness within the Soviet Union and that would later prove invaluable to the Soviet Jewry movement’s information network within the USSR. Nehemiah Levanon, one of the special delegates sent by Israel to establish communication with Soviet Jews and later expelled by the Soviet Union in 1955 on charges of espionage, returned to Israel convinced that the emergence of Israel had galvanized elements of Soviet Jewry. While Israel could not rescue the Soviet Jews community on its own due to its small size and delicate political reality vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, Levanon believed that in its post-Stalinist attempt to improve its global image, the Soviet leadership might prove susceptible to sustained pressure from public opinion in the United States. He recommended to the Liaison Bureau that “the time had come to launch a campaign in the West.”

Recognizing its limitations, the Bureau agreed. It organized a second branch meant to place Soviet Jewry on the public agenda in Western countries. The Bureau hoped that an aware and concerned American Jewish community, in particular, would influence the U.S. government to pressure the Soviet Union to permit Jewish immigration to Israel. Their message to American audiences sought to “separate the problem of Soviet Jewry from the ‘cold war’ between the Power blocs.” The Bureau thought that by divorcing the issue from the Cold War, it would potentially win the allegiance of the leftist individuals and other influential non-Jewish public figures. Concurrently, the Bureau utilized the Soviet constitution itself in assembling its case, contending that the Soviets had failed to uphold their legal pledges to permit Jewish cultural expression. Importantly, the Bureau also introduced the notion of Jewish emigration from the

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33 Levanon, 72.
34 Pinkus, 387.
Soviet Union. It contended that the USSR should allow Jews to exit the Communist bloc based on the principle of “family reunification,” the notion that relatives could leave to rejoin their family members abroad. American Jewish leaders would not prominently feature this element of the Israelis’ case into their own Soviet Jewry activism, preferring to lobby the Soviets directly for Jewish civil rights within the USSR rather than their emigration.

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A Slow Awakening

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) launched the first American Jewish diplomatic efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry in 1959 by securing a meeting with Soviet first deputy premier Anastas Mikoyan. The AJC arranged the summit to confront Mikoyan directly about reports that his government was considering a proposal to forcibly resettle a substantial portion of Soviet Jews—then mostly living in urban areas—to the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan in Siberia. When presented with a well-documented memorandum on the status of Soviet Jews, Mikoyan reacted indignantly, denying any intention to deport Jews and rejecting charges of official discrimination.

Though fears of a mass Jewish exodus to Birobidzhan proved unrealized, the incident cemented a growing realization among American and Israeli Jewish leaders that despite modest liberalization undertaken by Khrushchev to undoe Stalin’s legacy in the USSR, Soviet authorities did not intend to allow the rebirth of Jewish communal activity. At Mikoyan’s refusal to acknowledge the mistreatment of Soviet Jewry, American Jewish organizations concluded that they would need to enlist public intellectuals and the U.S. government in their enterprise.

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35 Interview with David Harris, February 2010.
37 Ro’i, 60.
The Liaison Bureau initiated the effort to broaden the Soviet Jewry coalition by recruiting Moshe Decter, the managing editor of The New Leader, a highly influential liberal anti-communist magazine in New York. Decter worked secretly alongside the Israelis to establish the Jewish Minorities Research Bureau, one of the first American organizations dedicated exclusively to Soviet Jewry. Decter utilized his contacts in liberal political spheres to elevate the status of the Soviet Jewry issue, cultivating support from such notable figures as Eleanor Roosevelt, Socialist Party leader and perennial presidential candidate Norman Thomas, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, National Association of the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) President Thurgood Marshall, and Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, each of whom signed a petition drafted by Decter and sent to Khrushchev on behalf of Soviet Jews.

Decter became an invaluable asset. His January 1963 Foreign Affairs article, “The Status of Jews in the Soviet Union,” signaled a turning point in the Soviet Jewry Movement. The piece detailed the uniquely precarious conditions faced by the Soviet Jewish community as the “only nationality deprived of the basic cultural rights accorded to all others in the USSR,” including restrictions on prayer, publishing, education, and employment opportunities. Decter noted that the 22nd Soviet Congress had recently reaffirmed the “complete freedom of each citizen of the USSR to speak and to rear and educate his children in any language”—those very rights specifically denied to Jews. In sum, he concluded:

Soviet policy places Jews in an inextricable vise. They are allowed neither to assimilate, or live a full Jewish life, nor to emigrate (as many would wish) to Israel or any other place where they might live freely as Jews...Soviet policy as a whole, then, amounts to spiritual strangulation—the deprivation of Soviet Jewry’s natural right to know the Jewish past and to participate in the Jewish present. And without a past and present, the future is precarious indeed.

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38 Lazin, 26.
39 Lazin, 27.
The article resonated widely among academics and intellectuals not previously aware of the unique predicament of Soviet Jewry. In fact, many of those who eventually became active in the struggle credited the piece with awakening their interest. Decter seized on the momentum generated by the piece to organize a Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews at the Carnegie International Center in New York in October 1963, the first American conference on Soviet Jewry. The assembly enjoyed the prestigious sponsorship of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, Martin Luther King, Jr., Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Miller, Linus Pauling, and Norman Thomas—all of whom signed an appeal to Soviet authorities to remedy their treatment of Jews.

The appeal issued seven demands on the USSR, demanding permission of Jewish education, cultural institutions, and contact with Jews worldwide. Their efforts demonstrated concrete non-Jewish concern for Soviet Jewry amongst America’s civil and religious rights luminaries, a critical ingredient in later attempts to fashion the Soviet Jewry Movement as a human rights campaign. More significantly, however, it indicated that the American Jewish establishment believed that it could assist in remedying Soviet Jews by lobbying for their civil rights. American Jewish leaders would remain wedded to this notion throughout the 1960s, even as Soviet Jews themselves began indicating that they had forsaken hope for equal station in Soviet society, and instead hoped to emigrate.

Decter’s conference coincided with a burgeoning Movement within the American Jewish establishment, spurred by Meir Rosenne and the Liaison Bureau, to establish an umbrella organization dedicated solely to advocating on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Indeed, the forum occurred just one week before a scheduled meeting between Senators Jacob Javits (R-NY),

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41 In Cleveland, Decter’s article inspired Lou Rosenblum and Herb Caron to form the Cleveland Committee on Soviet Anti-Semitism (CCSA), the first grassroots Soviet Jewry organization. It formed several days after Decter’s Soviet Jewry conference at Carnegie Hall in New York.
42 Orbach, 20.
43 Lazin, 28.
Abraham Ribicoff (D-CN) and Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg and Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin. Javits, Ribicoff, and Goldberg viewed the parlay as an opportunity to register official U.S. disapproval with Soviet policy toward its Jews, and provide the Soviets with a last chance at quiet diplomacy. After four hours of obstinate denials from Dobrynin regarding anti-Semitism in his nation, Goldberg decided that the American Jewish community should officially shift from backroom negotiations to responsible protest. The emerging fundamental changes in the approach of American Jewish leadership regarding Russia’s Jews would soon birth the first national association devoted to the Soviet Jewry Movement.

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44 Chernin, 32.


Chapter II: Battle Forge

Columbia’s many years of infamous student protests often define the school’s reputation. The University’s Philosophy Hall remained largely unscathed over the years, escaping occupation during the violent 1968 student takeover and retaining its reputation as a place of contemplation and philosophical inquiry. On April 27, 1964, however, about 200 college students from across New York City disrupted Philosophy Hall’s atmosphere of reflection to gather in room 301, where they declared the formation of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ). Glenn Richter, soon the organization’s co-director, later described the atmosphere in Philosophy Hall as “electric.”45 Students denounced the “silence” of the American Jewish community during the Holocaust, “vowing that their response to Jewish suffering would be different.” As SSSJ founder Jacob Birnbaum declared in the leaflet for the event, “the time has come for mass grass-roots Movement—spearheaded by the student youth… we believe that a bold, well-planned campaign…can create a climate of opinion, a moral power, which will become a force to be reckoned with.46

Several young activists demanded immediate action. Birnbaum and Richter agreed, planning to stage a rally outside of the Soviet Union’s Mission to the U.N. on May 1 (otherwise known as May Day, a major workers’ celebration in communist countries), just four days after the Philosophy Hall meeting. Despite hurried preparation, the SSSJ’s demonstration produced one of the first mass rallies of the Soviet Jewry Movement, as over 1,000 students from across Manhattan picketed the Soviet Mission for hours. The protesters marched two-by-two like the

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46 Gal Beckerman, When They Come for Us, We’ll Be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry, Unpublished Manuscript: 76.
early civil rights protests in the south and sang “Ani Ma’amin,” a repetition of the Hebrew phrase

*I Believe* over and over again.\(^{47}\)


The SSSJ came into existence less than a month after 500 delegates from 24 leading American Jewish organizations had convened at the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C. to discuss the creation of a new umbrella coalition to coordinate all efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry. In front of reporters from across the United States and even the Soviet Union, conference representatives announced the creation of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ).

The new national organization would draw upon the resources of its constituent groups to “bring to the attention of the world the facts about the oppression of Soviet Jewry, through every means at its command.” In its first resolution, the AJCSJ declared that “the approximately three million Jews of the USSR have a special claim on the conscience of all who are zealous of

securing human rights, and, more particularly, on the conscience of all Jewry.” It determined “to mobilize public opinion into a moral force that will save Soviet Jewry from spiritual annihilation.” Soviet leadership, it contended, “is not impervious to such world opinion.”48

Ostensibly, then, the AJCSJ’s inception marked a profound evolution in the philosophy and strategy of the Soviet Jewry Movement. The conference’s stated goal of mounting a vigorous public campaign to rally global sympathy seemed to discard old preferences for quiet diplomacy and shed fears that open dissent might spawn Soviet reprisals against Soviet Jews. American Jewish organizations appeared willing to launch a concerted effort “to protest the plight of [their] Jewish brethren in the Soviet Union.”49 The AJCSJ quickly became the representative of the established and organized Jewish community.50

Yet according to former SSSJ and Jewish Defense League (JDL) activist Yossi Klein-Halevi, Soviet Jewry advocates outside the AJCSJ quickly realized that its expressed dedication to “mobilize public opinion” and utilize human rights would “exist mostly on paper.”51 As a coordinating body of autonomous organizations, the AJCSJ suffered innate institutional handicaps. Its founding members, constantly jockeying for funds and supporters, did not easily welcome a new organization into an already crowded field. They felt it “neither necessary nor desirable” to form a completely independent body, and refused to provide the new Soviet Jewry conference with either a full-time staff or permanent budget.52

48 Resolution adopted by the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, April 6, 1964, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
49 Resolution adopted by the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, April 6, 1964, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
50 Lazin, 30.
51 Klein-Halevi, “Jacob Birnbaum.”
52 Jerry Goodman Meeting Minutes of May 26, 1964 AJCSJ meeting at Hotel Delmonico, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY. Note: Jacob Birnbaum and his lead SSSJ activists sat in on this very same meeting to request funding for educational initiatives. See p. 32 for further discussion.
In the most discouraging sign to the burgeoning activist wing of the American Jewish community, however, the AJCSJ immediately announced its intention to meet with the Soviet government for a “good-faith exploration” of the Soviet Jewry.\(^{53}\) In Klein-Halevi’s view, this sentiment represented a “lack of political self-confidence” and continued “ambivalence about a public campaign” among the American Jewish establishment, a sign that its rhetoric about capturing “world opinion” would remain unrealized.\(^{54}\)

The AJCSJ’s continued predilection for quiet diplomacy derived from traditional American Jewish reticence toward public protest. World Jewish Congress (WJC) president Nahum Goldmann, the elder statesman of international Jewry, opposed “emotional” protests and remained a strong proponent of private negotiations, believing he could obtain a personal meeting with Soviet leadership. The AJC—which constituted perhaps the most important organization within the AJCSJ—followed Goldmann’s logic and “was shaped by an organizational culture that had always been averse to emotional public displays and mass rallies,” preferring, like the WJC, to work through diplomatic channels.

The Israeli Liaison Bureau also played a significant role in exerting influence over the AJCSJ to follow its specific vision. The Israelis did not conceive of the struggle for Soviet Jewry as a humanitarian issue, but a Jewish problem alone. As Rabbi Sidney Schwartz notes in *Judaism and Justice*, because the Israelis viewed the Soviet Jewry issue “as primarily one to facilitate Jewish immigration to Israel” in continuation of the Zionist enterprise of ingathering Jewish exiles, they were not interested in “being drawn into a broader campaign to hold the Soviets accountable for other human rights abuses.”\(^{55}\) In addition to their ideological opposition to linking the SJM with a broader human rights appeal, the Israelis also feared that any such

\(^{53}\) Orbach, 26.

\(^{54}\) Klein-Halevi, “Joseph Birnbaum.”

association might hinder diplomatic efforts to elicit Soviet cooperation. Anxious to avoid antagonizing Moscow in the years before the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel still preferred a cautious, patient campaign that kept its own involvement hidden.

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**Louder and Prouder**

The SSSJ saw the AJCSJ as a colossal disappointment. Motivated by a sense of urgency that it saw lacking in the Jewish establishment effort for Soviet Jewry—and an acute sense of moral obligation only two decades removed from American Jewish silence regarding the Holocaust—the SSSJ fashioned itself as the Jewish version of America’s wider youth protest counterculture of the 1960s. Birnbaum captured the spirit of the new Movement:

“Just as we, as human beings and as Jews, are conscious of the wrongs suffered by the Negro and we fight for his betterment, so we must come to feel in ourselves the silent, strangulated pain of so many of our Russian brethren… We, who condemn silence and inaction during the Nazi Holocaust, dare we keep silent now?”

That Birnbaum’s stirring message helped to inspire 1,000 people to rally four days later at the Soviet UN Mission came as little surprise to his chief SSSJ deputy, Glenn Richter. In his view, “many Jewish college students were tremendously moved by the American civil rights Movement, then in its pristine, idealistic stage, but weren’t going to demonstrate for [civil rights]. We provided a Jewish alternative for that pent up emotion.”

Indeed, the SSSJ drew much of its vision and tactical doctrine from the civil rights movement. According to a 1973 study of the organization, nearly a third of its members had participated in the campaign for civil rights, including Richter himself. Their experience as

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56 Klein-Halevi, “Jacob Birnbaum.”
57 Interview with Glenn Richter, February 2010.
58 Kelner, 12; Beckerman, 77. Richter had worked at the New York office of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the youth civil rights group spearheading voter registration in Mississippi. He
civil rights activists led to a “transference of confrontational tactics” from one movement to another, as Birnbaum embarked on a campaign to “shame an apathetic American Jewry into action.”

Based on their civil rights experience, Richter noted, the SSSJ modeled activities “to attract media attention—creative demonstrations, marches, many news releases, talking to the press.” Cultivation of public opinion became “key” to the SSSJ’s efforts. Klein-Halevi agreed, writing that the SSSJ “appealed to “public opinion” as a galvanizing force. “The greater we could make the [Soviet Jewry] issue visible,” Richter recalled, “the more self-validating it became.” Visibility turned the cogs of public pressure envisaged by Birnbaum, forcing “Congress, the State Department, and the White House to respond to our demands and press the Soviets.” Rather than seek audience with Soviet officials, SSSJ members pamphleted college dormitories, flew to the Soviet Union to meet Soviet Jews, and staged demonstrations.

SSSJ’s boisterous activism rankled the AJCSJ, which sought to impose “discipline” upon the maverick group. The two shared their first encounter at an AJCSJ gathering in late May 1964, at which Birnbaum and his closest associates requested funds from the new conglomerate organization to print informational kits for Jewish summer camps. The AJCSJ agreed to supply

left the movement after the rise of Stokley Carmichael, whose more aggressive and exclusionary approach alienated non-black supporters.

SSSJ activists were not alone in drawing inspiration from the civil rights movement. William Korey, U.N. Director of B’nai B’rith and one of the earliest establishment Soviet Jewry activists, as well as Morris Abram, president of the AJC as well as later chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) both stated that they originally related to the Soviet Jewry cause through their civil rights activism. As Abram, a member of the US Commission for Civil Rights, stated in 1989:

“I saw this problem of Soviet Jewry in the context of my general feeling about civil rights. I saw the Soviet Jews as experiencing that which the blacks had experienced in the South and I saw the Soviets in violation of all the constitutional principles they say they adhere to, as we in the US were in violation, and it sort of reverberated to me with particular intensity because of the fact that it was a terrible totalitarian state—it is—and particularly against Jews.” See Reminiscences of Morris Abram (10/5/89), p. 37, AJCOHC.


Interview with Glenn Richter, February 2010.

Klein-Halevi, Memoirs, 53.

Interview with Glenn Richter, February 2010.
funds only on the condition that the SSSJ follow orders from the establishment. Birnbaum adamantly rejected the offer and refused to accept any form of oversight. Yet according to Richter, the AJCSJ set financial conditions on the SSSJ not only out of a desire to reign it in, but because “it could hardly fund itself.” When asked why the SSSJ chose not to enter the establishment fold, Richter was dismissive. “They weren’t doing much or achieving much,” he said. “Why join that crowd,” Richter asked, while the SSSJ went “barreling ahead with demonstrations, programs, printed material, [and] getting students involved?”

Despite their stormy initial meeting, the SSSJ’s growing success impelled the AJCSJ to assimilate grassroots public relations tactics. Already by June 1965, the AJCSJ flexed its considerable potential by staging a rally of 20,000 people in New York’s Madison Square Garden. Like the SSSJ and Moshe Decter before it, the AJCSJ fostered non-Jewish support, garnering a roster of speakers that included Robert F. Kennedy, Norman Thomas, and a taped

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63 Interview with Glenn Richter, February 2010.
64 Already at this rally, SSSJ students carried placards that read “Let My People Go,” a fact which greatly disturbed the quietist Nahum Goldmann. See Beckerman, 136.
message from U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson. It organized the first Soviet Jewry rally in the nation’s capital soon thereafter, integrating an interfaith component of Catholic and Protestant clergymen that uncannily resembled an SSSJ rally from the previous year.\textsuperscript{65} By December 1965, the rhetoric—if not yet the practice—of the AJCSJ could easily have been mistaken for an SSSJ manifesto:

The AJCSJ...seeks to bring about removal of the restrictions and deprivations imposed upon Jews in the Soviet Union through an intensive program...designed to expose those restrictions and deprivations to the world and thereby to bring an outraged world public opinion to bear upon the Soviet government...Soviet leadership is sensitive and troubled. Moscow is vulnerable; it is susceptible to the pressure of world opinion; it does move in response to it.\textsuperscript{66}

The AJCSJ even appeared to follow the SSSJ’s lead by introducing references to human rights in its campaign material. At a conference for Soviet Jewry in April 1966, it issued a Declaration of Rights for Soviet Jewry from Congress Hall in Philadelphia. The resolution, signed by the vast majority of the U.S. Senate, invoked the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its affirmation of “faith...in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women of all nations large and small,” to chastise the Soviet Union and “protest the violation of the human rights of three million [Soviet Jews].”\textsuperscript{67} Continuing to lend

\textsuperscript{65} AJCSJ Press Release Regarding Eternal Light Vigil Rally, Washington D.C., 9/19/65, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

Note: This followed several interfaith efforts, including the establishment of the Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews, which created a panel in 1965 and released its findings in 1966 regarding the situation of Soviet Jewry. The committee, headed by Bayard Rustin, an African-American civil rights leader, included Dr. John Bennett, president of the Union Theological Seminary; Father George Ford, pastor emeritus, Corpus Christi Church (on 121st Street); Samuel Fishman, head of United Automobile Workers; Telford Taylor, professor of law at Columbia; and Norman Thomas, the veteran socialist leader. It concluded that an official USSR campaign existed to eliminate the separate religious and cultural identity of Soviet Jewry. The report included a statement by Bertrand Russell, the British lord and philosopher who engaged in a series of letter exchanges with Soviet Premiere Nikita Khrushchev regarding the plight of Soviet Jewry. See AJCSJ Press Release, 3/19/66, Jerry Goodman Papers, Box #5, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

\textsuperscript{66} AJCSJ Interim Report,12/20/65, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

\textsuperscript{67} Declaration of Rights for Soviet Jewry in Congress Hall, Philadelphia, Papers of Jerry Goodman, 4/18/66, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #2, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
crucial moral legitimacy and publicity to the Soviet Jewry Movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a telephone address to AJCSJ community heads in late 1966 that confirmed the growing centrality of human rights to the Soviet Jewry issue. “No person of good will can stand by a silent auditor while there is a possibility of the complete spiritual and cultural destruction of a once flourishing Jewish community [in the Soviet Union],” he declared. “The denial of human rights anywhere is a threat to human rights everywhere.”

These tantalizing references to human rights served as one of the earliest indications that the Soviet Jewry Movement might begin to link its parochial concern for Jewish civil rights to a universalized appeal for the Soviet Union to uphold the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. The allusion to the Declaration offered the potential to redefine the focus and scope of the entire Soviet Jewry campaign, both broadening its appeal and positioning it in direct confrontation with the very underlying ideology of the USSR by holding it responsible for all human rights its domain, as opposed to advocating on behalf of Jewish rights alone.

Yet even with the marked increase in references to international human rights agreements, the AJCSJ had not completed the Soviet Jewry Movement’s transformation from parochial to universal. This evolution would later be defined by its insistence upon “right to leave” for Soviet Jews as its fundamental tenet. Instead, the AJCSJ continued to reference civil and religious rights in its 1966 Philadelphia Declaration, neglecting to reference free emigration in six demands made of the Soviet Union.

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68 Text of Address Delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr., to AJCSJ Community Leaders, 12/11/66, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #2, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
69 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/. Article 13(2) of the Declaration—“Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country”—would later come to play a vital role in the Soviet Jewry movement, and served as the legal lynchpin of the American and Israeli campaign to foster Jewish emigration from the USSR. Movement activists would not begin to utilize this provision until the end of the 1960s.
Six days in June 1967, however, would make the question of Soviet Jewish emigration unavoidable.

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A Mediterranean Awakening

At nightfall on June 4, 1967, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan appeared ready to launch a three-pronged military assault on Israel, with the declared intention of destroying the nascent Jewish state. By dawn, Israeli planes had wiped out the Egyptian air force. Israel’s pre-emptive strike guaranteed it air superiority for the next five days, as it not only defeated the combined Arab armies, but nearly quadrupled its size.

The overnight transition from an Israel besieged by Arab forces poised for its destruction to an Israel whose guns threatened Arab capitals and whose flag flew over Jerusalem’s Temple Mount catapulted world Jewry from a position of vulnerability to one of unprecedented empowerment. For Soviet Jews, Israel’s stunning victory tore a gaping hole through the small crack already opened by Khrushchev during the post-Stalinist liberalization, allowing Jews to imagine an alternate reality of empowerment without fearing arrest or death.\(^{70}\) Yet the USSR simultaneously severed diplomatic relations with Israel, providing impetus for renewed and ever more ferocious Soviet anti-Zionism. Soviet Jews decisively influenced the Movement in the United States, impelling it to greater activism. The very questioning of Jewish loyalty to the Soviet fatherland aggravated Soviet Jewish ambivalence, and Jews came to realize the incompatibility of life in a Soviet society. Emigration emerged as the solution.\(^{71}\)

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\(^{70}\) As noted earlier in Beckerman, Jewish cultural activity had already increased considerably during the mid-1960s. Zvi Gitelman writes that a Jewish *samizdat* (underground publications) developed, with materials of censored books passed form one city to another. Loosening Soviet restrictions permitted Jews to form Yiddish theater ensembles and to congregate at synagogues. Jews also began to gather at the sites of Nazi mass murders, such as Rumbuli. See Gitelman, 85.

\(^{71}\) Orbach, 36.
Indeed, Soviet Jews had already sought emigration visas from the USSR for several years, but with little success—Soviet authorities permitted only 2,436 Jews to depart for Israel prior to 1965. Soviet Premiere Alexei Kosygin sparked hope for increased emigration rates in December 1966, when he told a Paris press conference that “we, on our side, shall do all possible if some [Jewish] families want to meet or even if some among them would like to leave us…this does not raise here, actually, any problem of principles.” While Jews left the USSR at slightly higher rates in 1966 and 1967, the flow ceased immediately after the Six Day War began.

Yet the Soviets could not contain the energy released by Israel’s triumph. A young Jew from Moscow, Yasha Kozokov, ignited the first explosion of Soviet Jewish demand for emigration when he renounced his Soviet citizenship a mere seven days after the war, an unprecedented action that baffled the Communist party leadership. A year later, declared in a letter to Soviet leaders, “I consider myself a citizen of the State of Israel. I demand to be freed from the humiliation of Soviet citizenship.” Kozokov managed to smuggle the letter abroad, where it was published in *The Washington Post* and attracted immediate publicity. Unwilling to withstand international pressure, the Soviets relented and allowed Kozokov to emigrate in February 1969.

Meanwhile, a Kiev Jew named Boris Kochubyevski shocked Soviet officials when he refused to vote for a “unanimous” condemnation of Israel at a factory meeting. He penned an essay called “Why I Am a Zionist,” which circulated as *samizdat* (censored unpublished material) and declared that “as long as I am capable of feeling, I will do all I can to leave for Israel.” Yet Kochubyevski’s essay went unnoticed in the West for far longer than Kozokov’s,

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73 Quoted in Ro’i, 246.
allowing the Soviets to punish him without fear of global condemnation. Kochubyevski spent the next three years in a hard labor prison and became one of the first refuseniks—those Jews whose applications for exit visas to Israel were rejected by the Soviet administration.

Kozokov and Kochubyevski, however, fomented a gathering avalanche of Soviet Jewish resistance that dovetailed and began mingling with a broader intellectual revolution springing to life in the USSR. The image of Soviet tanks rolling into Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 to snuff out the Prague Spring—a short period of political and economic liberalization which ran counter to USSR desires—outraged the younger generation of Soviet citizens, who saw a post-Khrushchev Soviet leadership powerful enough to deploy an iron fist but deeply insecure about popular discontent. They formed protest groups throughout the mid to late 1960s that soon gained the endorsement of far more esteemed figures—most notably, the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb and democratic dissident leader Andrei Sakharov, who published his first groundbreaking essay on civil rights in the spring of 1968.\footnote{Beckerman, 108-109.}

Buoyed, perhaps, by the dissident fever spreading across the Soviet Union—as well as increased Jewish emigration, permitted in a Soviet attempt to decapitate the budding refusenik effort by exiling its leaders, which only served to boost Soviet Jewish desire to emigrate—eighteen Georgian Jewish families embarked on another boldly rebellious act in August 1969. They addressed a letter to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and Israeli Prime Minister Beckerman, 108-109.

Note: Sakharov’s first essay, “Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom,” called for “convergence,” which Sakharov described as “the rapprochement of the socialist and capitalist systems.” This, according to Sakharov, would involve “democratization, demilitarization, and social and technological progress.” He pointed to anti-Semitism as a stain upon Soviet society. His activism drew the ire of Soviet authorities, who removed him from his employment as a chief member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and stripped him of all state privileges. Also: Significant overlap existed between the democratic dissident movement and the Jewish refusenik effort—according to Leonard Schroeter, sixty to seventy percent of the democrats were either Jewish or married to Jews. More on the relationship between the democrat and Jewish activists will be discussed later. See Leonard Schroeter, The Last Exodus (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1979): 377.

Golda Meir which insisted upon the right to emigrate to Israel—the first instance of such a statement emanating from the lower economic classes rather than Moscow’s intellectual elite.\textsuperscript{76}

The letter did not receive a response from either the Israeli government or the United Nations for 100 days. Still determined, the Georgian Jewish families addressed another appeal—this time, to the U.N. Secretary General himself, in which they remarkably drew upon legal documentation to state their case. “We are convinced [of the right to return],” the Georgian Jews wrote, based on documents “well known” to the Secretary General: “The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, signed by the USSR as well. These agreements, they reminded the Secretary General, confirm “the right of everyone ‘to leave any country, including his own.’” The letter thus featured perhaps the first public connection between the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Soviet Jewry Movement—and came from Soviet Jews themselves.

Even so, neither the American Jewish establishment nor the Israeli government seemed to notice, let alone capitalize upon, the reference to the right to leave within the Georgian letter. The American Jewish establishment continued its dedication to lobbying for Jewish civil rights, largely ignoring the burgeoning emigration movement among Soviet Jews. This lack of awareness assisted in fomenting a rising sense of frustration among younger and more militant American Soviet Jewry activists seeking Jewish emigration from the USSR—one that would lead to a disaster for the establishment.

* * *

The Jews of Silence, No More?

Just as Israel’s Six-Day War seemed to release the floodgates of previously hidden Soviet Jewish energy and pride, the war released a crescendo of emotion among student-age American

\textsuperscript{76} Beckerman, 116.
Jews yearning to shed the specter of American Jewish silence during the Holocaust. Translated from Hebrew to English.

Revered Holocaust survivor and author Elie Wiesel brandished that burden of inaction against the broader American Jewish world when he published *Jews of Silence* in 1966. Reporting from a tour of the Soviet Union in which he visited with Jews across the empire, Wiesel excoriated American Jews for their indifference toward Soviet Jewry. For Wiesel, the Jews of silence were not the oppressed Jews of Russia, but the Jews of America who remained shamefully unconcerned about their brethren. “What torments me most is not the Jews of silence I met in Russia,” Wiesel wrote, “but the silence of the Jews I live among today.”

According to him, such apathy “[bordered] on the criminal.” His message especially shook the American Jewish community.

The Six-Day War empowered American Jews to respond to Wiesel’s admonishment with a burst of determined activism. Letters from Soviet Jews spurred an unprecedented level of assertiveness. The personal tribulations of those *refuseniks* such as Kozokov and Kochubyevski gave individual Soviet Jews a name and voice for the first time, allowing them to replace Matzah bans and synagogue closings as flesh-and-blood symbols of the Movement. The SSSJ, writes Klein-Halevi, felt that the Soviet Jewish awakening vindicated its “entire premise”—that young Soviet Jews still desired to maintain their Judaism, and that “with enough Western attention to their cause, the Kremlin would relent.”

The AJCSJ inched closer to the activist philosophy, adopting the strategy of exposing Soviet persecution of individual Jews by rallying behind

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78 Beckerman (140) writes that Wiesel “single-handedly represented the Holocaust,” becoming the image of the “quintessential survivor, righteous in his insistence that we never forget” with his autobiographical account of Nazi atrocities, *Night*.
79 Wiesel, 76.
80 Wiesel, 52.
Kochubyevski and the Georgian Jews in late 1969, organizing protests and vigils across the country on their behalf.\textsuperscript{82}

The revitalized connection with Soviet Jewry continued to propel the Soviet Jewry Movement in the United States toward embracing the struggle for the right to leave. The AJCSJ issued a crucially expanded demand for the right to emigrate in 1969, when it successfully lobbied U.S. representative to the U.N., Charles Yost, to announce his support for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate, an “elementary human right” according to then-AJCSJ chairman Lewis Weinstein.\textsuperscript{83} For a more militant brand of Soviet Jewry activists in the U.S., however, the establishment’s first calls for the Soviets to grant free emigration, came too little and too late.

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“A Yiddish Franz Fanon”

Underneath its increasingly fervent surface the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement lacked dynamism and direction. Its dramatic increase in activity, according to William Orbach, “merely demonstrated its unwieldiness.” Given its nature as a framework rather than an independent organization, the AJCSJ could act only on the funding and manpower whims of its 24 benefactor groups, an inefficient situation at best. “Semi-viable during the Movement’s first years,” wrote Orbach, the AJCSJ buckled under the increased energy and pressure in the aftermath of the Six-Day War.\textsuperscript{84}

The activists took note. To Klein-Halevi and his fellow grassroots comrades, The AJCSJ continued to behave as if it were “business as usual,” neglecting to mobilize its resources to

\textsuperscript{82} Chernin, 56.
\textsuperscript{83} AJCSJ Press Release, “Ambassador Yost Asked to Support Soviet Jewish Plea for Emigration,” 11/25/69, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #5, Folder #2, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY. When Rita Hauser, U.S. Delegate to the Human Rights Commission, attempted to read a letter from the refusenik associated with the AJCSJ campaign, she was interrupted three times by the Soviet and Ukrainian delegates. Though she could not complete the letter, the interruptions succeeded in garnering media attention. See Chernin, 57.
\textsuperscript{84} Orbach, 46.
galvanize the American Jewish community. While Soviet Jews “gambled their lives on the near-impossible prospect of an exit visa from the most sealed country in history,” American Jews remained “trapped by their easy lives, afflicted with an impaired sense of empathy.”

The frustration felt by the young activists toward the establishment had already boiled into righteous indignation by the Six-Day War. Yet in the seething dystopia of late 1960s America—with its burgeoning counterculture, radicalized identity politics, and concomitant violence—the activists’ disillusionment mutated into rage. The Jewish community turned inwards as civil rights coalitions between blacks and Jews disintegrated. Against the model of the Black Panthers and newly infused with ethnic and nationalistic pride, American Jews began to embrace a sense of tribal embattlement. This explosive, paradoxical sense of eternal victimhood and newfound power produced a Jewish version of the ethnic warrior in June 1968: donning a blue beret, army fatigues, and dark sunglasses, wielding a baseball bat in one hand while throwing a clenched fist into the air with the other, the Jewish Defense League (JDL) street brawler was born.

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85 Klein-Halevi, Memoirs, 71.
86 Beckerman discusses the breakdown of the black-Jewish civil rights coalition at length. He locates the an early rupture during the summer of 1966, when the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) voted to exclude white activists from leadership positions, frustrated with the slow pace of change and increasingly convinced that white liberals had imposed too much moderation and compromise. According to Beckerman, however, the definitive break occurred in the fall of 1968 during a battle over three local community education boards in Brooklyn. The battle—between African-American community organizers and the overwhelmingly Jewish teachers force—resulted in harassment of Jewish educators, three successive teachers’ union strikes, and anti-Semitic poetry being read over the radio. “The threat of riots hung like a noose over the whole city,” Beckerman wrote, as Black Panther activists in berets patrolled the streets with shotguns, and militant Jews responded by forming the Jewish Defense League. See Beckerman, 146-150.
The JDL—a motley collection of poor urban Jews on the frontlines of inter-ethnic strife, children of Holocaust survivors, and general misfits—first formed in reaction to black-Jewish tension in urban areas. Its charismatic founder, the 38-year old Rabbi Meir Kahane, dedicated the first several years of his new organization to fighting the Black Panthers, Neo-Nazis, and pro-Palestinian demonstrators while inculcating a message of Jewish self-reliance. The JDL’s political theater earned it condemnations from Jewish establishment organizations, but far more importantly to Kahane, elicited rapt attention from the media. Well aware of the JDL’s rising notoriety, right-wing Israeli Parliament member Geula Cohen visited Kahane in December 1969. A former operative of the Stern Gang, widely considered the most violent organization fighting for Jewish independence in Mandatory Palestine, Cohen despised the leftist Israeli government’s hesitancy with regard to Soviet Jewry. She urged Kahane to quit wasting his efforts on local political scuffles and turn his attention to Soviet Jewry.\(^8\)

The JDL struck three weeks later. Kahane and three teenagers began a simultaneous JDL assault at 1:00 PM on December 29th by breaking into the Rockefeller Center office of TASS (the Soviet press agency), spray-painting the walls with “Am Yisrael Chai” (“The Nation of Israel Lives”), while two other groups stormed the offices of Aeroflot (the Russian airline service) and Intourist (the Soviet travel agency). In their most “dramatic touch,” however, a group of JDL members raided a Russian passenger jet at Kennedy Airport, rushing onto the tarmac to spray graffiti on the plane and chain themselves to its front wheel.

The incident earned the JDL (and, by extension, Soviet Jewry) unprecedented publicity, but Kahane was far from finished. JDL activists returned the next day to spearhead a 200-person riot outside the Soviet UN Mission in which protestors attempted to break through the New York City police line that guarded the Mission compound. Law enforcement officers placed over twenty people in custody, including Kahane himself for the second night in a row. The next day, Kahane learned that the police would now permit demonstrators to picket on the block of the Soviet Mission itself, an action previously banned. Vindicated, Kahane announced that this would only constitute the “first shot” of a coming war. “Violence was always bad,” he reflected in his memoir, “but sometimes it was successful.”

The JDL capitalized on the establishment’s ineptitude. Both the AJCSJ and grassroots organizations stood dismayed as a Jewish version of the Weathermen commandeered the Movement and proffered its mystique to draw young Jews to its cause. “[Kahane] is ruining years of our work with wild acts of self-aggrandizement,” Jacob Birnbaum told Klein-Halevi at the time. “Meir is a violent soul, he dreams of chasms of blood.” But such chasms of blood finally converted many youth activists—including Klein-Halevi—in June 1970, when Soviet

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authorities arrested eleven individuals, nine of them Jews, for allegedly planning to hijack a Soviet aircraft to escape the USSR.91

Soviet Jewry activists immediately recognized Moscow’s intention. Troubled by the increasingly bold Soviet Jewish emigration movement, Kremlin officials attempted to strangle it in its infancy by exploiting international fears of terrorist skyjacking, and painting the Jews as radical extremists. Klein-Halevi thought that “a hundred thousand people” needed to flood the streets in protest—a number only the establishment groups could summon. Instead, the AJCSJ responded by organizing a meeting with State Department officials and staging a press conference covered by national media.92 When the Soviet State Court condemned two of the defendants to death on Christmas Eve, many Jewish activists resolved to answer Kahane’s charge: “It’s time to bury respectability before it buries us!”93 A frenzied crowd of nearly 2,500 people burst out of the Hunter College Auditorium where Kahane shouted those words on December 27th and raced toward the Soviet U.N. Mission to confront riot police. The cops forcefully dispersed the mob and arrested Kahane yet again.

The Soviets retaliated by warning the U.S. that because protection for Soviet citizens had not been secured, Americans “cannot expect that such conditions will be provided [for them] in the Soviet Union.” The U.S. responded angrily, announcing that it would consider staged retaliation by the Soviet government “most disturbing.” Kahane keenly recognized that he could wield considerable influence, despite his miniscule forces, by endangering what U.S. President

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91 Chernin, 57. For a detailed account of the hijacking plot itself, see Beckerman, 164-91. A group of dissidents and Jewish refuseniks spent over six months planning an operation to hijack a small airplane and fly it to Sweden. Soviet intelligence discovered the plot and laid a trap for the prospective hijackers, preventing them from committing the act. The two main conspirators were thus charged with murder without having committed a crime. See introduction of this thesis.

92 Klein-Halevi, Memoirs, 84; Chernin, 57. Despite Klein-Halevi’s disparagement of the AJCSJ’s press conferences, Chernin claims that they had “considerable impact.”

93 Kahane, 25.
Richard Nixon and Soviet Premiere Leonid Brezhnev desired most—détente.94 Détente hoped to construct a bridge of intersecting interests between the two superpowers, seeking Soviet support on strategic arms limitations (SALT) and Vietnam in return for desperately-desired economic assistance. Détente threatened to subsume Soviet Jewry under a framework that disregarded Soviet internal affairs.

Kahane, however, foresaw the potential fragility of détente. He understood before all other Soviet Jewry activists that the key to extracting Soviet concessions on emigration was not to appeal to the Soviets themselves, but to levy international pressure against the Communist bloc and threaten “what it wanted more than anything,” improved economic relations with the U.S. “Look, you want your détente, take your détente,” Kahane told the New York Times. “Pay us off. Give us 8,000 Jews, 10,000 Jews, 12,000 Jews.” Should the Soviets prove recalcitrant, Kahane warned, “we want the President and the Soviets to know is it doesn’t take much to plunge the world into a terrible, terrible crisis.”95 Caring little whether the Soviets would grant free emigration on principle, Kahane simply sought to barter economic prosperity for persecuted Jews.

Kahane’s marriage with violence bore fruit yet again. His antics filled newspaper headlines as the international community—including Communist parties across the world—

94 Numerous histories address the definition of détente, which according to the Princeton online dictionary, means broadly the “easing of tensions or strained relations (especially among nations).” Eminent Yale Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis defined détente in 1983 as “the calculated relationship of ends and means, whether in the realm of military, political, economic, ideological, or psychological competition.” Walter Isaacson concisely defined détente as the era in which “Washington and Moscow sought to modulate their global competition by pursuing areas of mutual interest and indulging in occasional displays of friendship.” The policy sustained heavy criticism from staunch anti-Communists, who believed Nixon had “gone soft” on the USSR, as well as those interested in a “moral dimension” for U.S. foreign relations, who felt that détente ignored internal affairs and human rights violations in favor of stability. See John Lewis Gaddis, “Rise, Fall, and Future of Détente,” Foreign Affairs Vo. 62 p. 354, 1983-1984 and Walter Isaacson, Kissinger (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993): 437. Discussion continues here on p. 57.

united to condemn the death sentences meted out to the two Soviet Jews. The outcry forced the Soviets to capitulate. On December 31, Soviet authorities announced that they had accepted the appeals of the two defendants sentenced to death and commuted their punishment to fifteen years’ imprisonment, while reducing the penalties levied against the other conspirators as well. The public relations campaign seemed to offer concrete proof that the loud tactics so long decried by the Jewish establishment actually succeeded. “I confess that I thought the Soviets too rigid to bend with the wind of world opinion in the Leningrad sentences,” wrote Max Lerner in the New York Post. “[Their leniency] suggests a new emerging force whose potency bears no relation to its lack of hard power.”

A growing realization that world opinion mattered to the Soviets—and ample evidence that violence cultivated world opinion—elevated Kahane to the top of the Soviet Jewry movement. He seized the initiative following Leningrad, announcing that his followers would begin harassing Soviet diplomats and their wives on the streets of New York, following them into supermarkets, stores, and movie theaters shouting Russian slurs. The Soviets responded by again targeting American diplomats and citizens in Moscow. JDL harassment and Soviet counter-harassment made headlines for weeks, and the JDL had caused a superpower crisis. On January 11, 1971, Soviet U.S. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin returned to the USSR for “consultations” without informing American officials, a breach of diplomatic protocol. A New

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96 Orbach (54), Beckerman (208), Chernin (56), and Feingold (81) discuss the worldwide outcry provoked by the Soviet miscalculation of sentencing two of the Leningrad hijackers to death. Among the protests, Italian longshoremen in Genoa went on a 24-hour strike, worshippers in Rome interrupted the Pope’s weekly address form St. Peter’s Basilica, and newspapers in the United States, France, and England called the sentencing outright murder. Meanwhile, The USSR received 24 diplomatic requests asking for clemency, while U.N. Secretary General U Thant issued an appeal on behalf of his organization. According to Feingold, the international outrage “was greater than that over the [Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968].”

97 As quoted in Chernin, 59.

98 Kahane documents press clippings, editorials, and public statements highlighting the JDL’s growing popularity. See p. 46-8.
York Daily News headline read the next day “Dobrynin Goes Home and Ice Gets Thicker.” Kahane—whom the FBI referred to as “a Yiddish Franz Fanon”—seemed to hold in his trigger-happy hands both the Soviet Jewry Movement and US-Soviet relations more broadly.

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A Belgian Nadir

The establishment leaders who eschewed mass movements and public attention watched helplessly as their ineffectual efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry hemorrhaged momentum to the JDL and the non-violent activist organizations. In a letter to the Washington Post after a JDL disruption of a Soviet cultural event in New York, the AJC vented its frustration to the media when it wrote that “a carefully planned, lawful peaceful demonstration is ignored by the press while the disruptive tactics of a mere handful of persons is noted. This…eventually leads to the argument that the only time that things get done in our country is when there is violence”—precisely what Kahane would have said himself.

Richard Maass, later chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, recalled that Leningrad and Soviet Jewish letters pleading for emigration forced the establishment to realize “that the old format could not apply anymore.”

Facing Kahane’s challenge as well as the energy produced by the Leningrad trials, Jewish leaders believed that the time was ripe to retake the Movement. The organizations comprising

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99 Kahane 32-3
100 Beckerman, 224.
101 AJCSJ letter to Washington Post, 9/30/70, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #7, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

While Kahane posed the most vocal threat, non-violent grassroots groups such as the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ), a coalition of local activists organizations across the country that formed under the direction of Cleveland Soviet Jewry leader Lou Rosenblum, also usurped establishment authority. As Kahane targeted Soviet officials and relished in spectacles of violence, Rosenblum established the first contact between American Jews and their Soviet coreligionists that circumvented the establishment framework. Rosenblum arranged for American Jews to call a network of Soviet Jews behind the Iron Curtain, personalizing the Movement in a way that rallies and policy papers likely could not. See Beckerman, 212-4.
the AJCSJ resolved to organize an international conference that would truly globalize the Soviet Jewish cause. The resultant Brussels Conference, held February 23-25, 1971, gathered 800 delegates from thirty-eight countries. The Soviets added publicity to the conference by launching a barrage of propaganda against it, even sending leading Soviet Jewish personalities to Brussels to speak with reporters and counter claims of Soviet anti-Semitism.103

Yet Kahane continued to haunt the establishment. He flew to Brussels to issue his own ten-point platform for the conference and win the allegiance of a majority of the delegates. Within ten minutes of arriving at the lobby where the conference convened, however, establishment leaders decided to expel Kahane and requested that Belgian police detain him for the remainder of the event.104 His incarceration dominated headlines, and the tame proposals announced by the establishment groups the next day—calling for direct contacts with the Kremlin and establishing a youth conference for Soviet Jewry—only added to the embarrassment caused by his arrival. It appeared that the “Yiddish Franz Fanon” had won again.

But Kahane’s theatrical appearance at Brussels marked the pinnacle of his efforts. The JDL’s January 1971 campaign against Soviet officials posed such a threat to détente that President Nixon asked the Justice Department and FBI to wage war upon the JDL.105 Kahane decided to flee the U.S. and move to Israel in September 1971. With him went the JDL’s

103 Beckerman, 218.
104 Kahane, 51-5
105 An unexpected and much-maligned alliance between the JDL and the Italian-American Civil Rights League, founded by new York Mafioso Joe Colombo, alienated many erstwhile JDL supporters. Though Colombo bailed Kahane out of prison once, the coalition seemed to mock Jacob Birnbaum’s vision of the Soviet Jewry movement uniting Jews and gentiles in a human rights struggle when he proclaimed the coalition “a human brotherhood,” despite its obviously cynical nature. Klein-Halevi recalled feeling an increasing sense of doubt toward Kahane’s leadership, unable to stomach the “alliance of despair” with fellow outlaws. See Klein-Halevi, Memoirs, 105.
momentum. The organization soon devolved into an undisciplined gang of youngsters committing random acts of violence over the next two years that increasingly tapered off. While bloodshed eventually “sowed the seeds of [the JDL’s] own destruction,” according to SSSJ leader Glenn Richter, “Kahane and JDL got publicity for the cause in a way neither SSSJ nor the Establishment could.” Indeed, Richter even admitted that the JDL “shamed the Establishment, and in doing so, pushed them harder than we at SSSJ could.” The number of emigrants permitted to leave the USSR during the peak moment of JDL activism seem to validate Richter’s assertion—whereas a little over a thousand Jews had left in 1970, an unprecedented 13,000 Jews had emigrated by the end of 1971, more than in the previous ten years combined.

The JDL ended the question of whether public pressure against the Soviet Union might prove worthwhile and precipitating action from the establishment to retake control of the Soviet Jewry effort. Though Kahane’s violence never gained complete hold of the Movement, elements of his political platform of fighting for Soviet Jewish emigration—as opposed to the prior establishment battle for civil rights emancipation—survived the JDL’s downfall. In a confluence of time, place, and action, the establishment groups, seeking at last to reclaim ownership of the Soviet Jewry Movement, incorporated the public campaign and the right to emigrate as core tenets of its effort. At the urging of a principled U.S. Senator from Washington State and his

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106 A Washington D.C. rally organized by Kahane in March 1971 also bankrupted the JDL. Even so, it sparked the largest mass arrest in the capital in American history, with over 1200 JDL protesters taken into custody after blocking traffic. Weeks later, 10,000 people broke the new record in a Vietnam War protest. Later that year, a suspected JDL sniper fired for shots into the Soviet U.N. mission, while in January 1972 the JDL bombed the offices of Sol Hurok, an American businessmen who facilitated the performance of Soviet ballet troupes in the U.S. The bombs killed a young Jewish secretary, permanently marginalizing the JDL’s reputation. For a detailed account of the JDL’s demise, see Beckerman 224-235.

107 Interview with Glenn Richter, February 2010.

108 Beckerman, 235.
energetic aides, the establishment would extract the emigration battle from Kahane’s framework of tribal victimhood and exclusivity, and replace it with the language of human rights.
Chapter III: Linkage and Leverage

Senator Henry M. Jackson—the Lutheran son of Norwegian immigrants who had settled in the Pacific Northwest—took to the floor of the United States Senate on March 15, 1973, to commandeer the Soviet Jewry Movement and link it irrevocably with human rights.\textsuperscript{109} Backed by 75 senators and 272 congressmen, Jackson introduced an Amendment to the East-West Trade Relations Act of 1971 which had provided the President with the authority to negotiate commercial agreements, including the granting of most-favored-nation (MFN) status, to “nonmarket economies,” or communist countries, the Soviet Union chief among them.\textsuperscript{110} Senator Jackson, however, did not believe that the United States should grant MFN to the Soviet Union without obtaining a concession in return—namely, increased emigration rates for those wishing to leave the USSR, in the name of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

I am today joined by more than 70 of my colleagues in sponsoring legislation which will help secure a basic human right for thousands of human beings behind the Iron Curtain. We propose to deny the benefits of our abundant economy—most favored access to our market, credits, credit guarantees, and investment guarantees—to any nonmarket economy country that denies its citizens the right or opportunity or imposes more than nominal taxes on emigration.\textsuperscript{111}

The Amendment constituted one of the first attempts by the U.S. government to condition its legal and economic policy on performance of human rights in another nation.\textsuperscript{112} Jackson immediately established the centrality of human rights to his proposal. “Our tradition and the


\textsuperscript{110} According to the \textit{Financial Times} “Lexicon” database, most-favored-nation (MFN) status is granted when a country is given the same advantages, such as import taxes and higher quotas (numbers of goods it is allowed to import), as the best ones given to other countries, putting it on the same level as these other countries. The United States is forbidden by law to grant MFN status to communist countries that do not have free-market economies. The practical effect is that imports from these countries are subject to much higher tariffs. The 1971 East-West Trade Bill sought to provide President Nixon with the authority to circumvent that law and grant the USSR MFN status, which would have boosted trade between the two nations. \textit{See Financial Times} Lexicon, \url{http://lexicon.ft.com/term.asp?t=most_favored-nation}. Accessed March 10, 2010.

\textsuperscript{111} Congressional Record, 93\textsuperscript{rd} Cong., Vol. 119, Rec. 8071, March 15, 1973.

\textsuperscript{112} Interview with Richard Perle, December 2009.
course of history have placed upon us a most awesome responsibility, and our economic and technological advantages have now given us a unique opportunity to help secure a basic human right for those who are already risking everything in its pursuit,” he stated in his Senate speech. But most significantly, Jackson articulated the very first piece of American legislation that expressly drew its inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{113}

We are upholding our traditional commitment to individual liberty—a commitment that was enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights unanimously adopted by the United Nations more than 25 years ago. That declaration, in article 13, affirms the deep conviction of the American people that “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”

As a Senator from Washington, a state whose Jewish community constituted half-a-percent of its total population, Jackson initially seemed an unlikely figure to become the primary patron for Soviet Jewry in Congress, let alone spearhead the Soviet Jewry Movement’s shift from a parochial to universal cause. Indeed, along with the Jewish community, he would debunk the détente-era doctrine that a nation’s internal affairs did not represent a legitimate subject of international diplomacy.\textsuperscript{114} Yet a number of dynamics combined to place “Scoop,” as he was best known, at the forefront of three rapidly converging streams: the Cold War, the rise of human rights upon the international stage, and the plight of Soviet Jewry.

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\textbf{The Cold Warriors from the West}

By March 1973, when he formally introduced his Amendment, Jackson had cemented his famously principled stance as the “quintessential Cold War Liberal—at home a supporter of civil rights, organized labor, and activist government, abroad a supporter of a strong military and of

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\textsuperscript{114} Jewish Population in the United States, \textit{American Jewish Yearbook} (1974-5): 306. Jackson’s chief aide, Richard Perle, later described Jackson’s early exposure to Jews as extremely limited. He grew up in the Pacific Northwest, an area with very few Jews, I would be surprised that there was a “minyan” in his home town. There may just have been a “minyan” in his hometown. See Reminiscences of Richard Perle (2/7/1975), p. 4, CUOHROC.
\end{flushleft}
the readiness to intervene in order to check Communist expansionism.” Jackson’s views defined him as a mainstream Democrat during the early and mid-1960s, but the Vietnam War alienated him from the increasingly leftward party base, resulting in his disastrous presidential run in 1972. His loss reinforced his image as a maverick politician adamant in his worldview. As Nixon embarked on détente—seeking quid-pro-quo arrangements with the Soviets on issues such as trade policy and arms control by linking them together—Jackson grew increasingly concerned with the direction of U.S. foreign relations. He suspected that the USSR merely pursued détente as roundabout means of achieving hegemony rather than reconciliation, and would thus swindle the U.S. into making disadvantageous concessions. To Jackson, the goal should not have been détente-inspired stalemate, but the Soviet Union’s collapse. 


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Most significantly, however, Jackson disagreed with détente’s attempt to deemphasize the role of ideology in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. According to later Jackson aide Douglas Feith, the Senator “saw the Cold War as, in part, an ideological clash between totalitarian communism and liberal democracy.” This stood in stark contrast to the “so-called realist view that underlay détente,” which tended to stress “power politics” and dismissed the notion that the internal policies of the Soviet Union mattered to international affairs or America’s national interest. Jackson, in contrast, believed that the Soviet Union’s internal structure played a key role in determining its international behavior, and that as long as the USSR remained totalitarian, it would continue to challenge the U.S. Jackson thus felt deeply motivated, on a pragmatic and moral level, by the need to “damage détente” as well as defend human rights. In early August 1972, the Soviets would provide him the opportunity to fulfill both aspirations simultaneously.

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An Education in Taxing

President Nixon spent the summer of 1972 basking in perhaps the peak of détente. During his May visit to Moscow, he and Soviet Premire Leonid Brezhnev signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) limiting antiballistic missile sites, and struck a preliminary agreement which stipulated that the U.S. would extend MFN to the Soviet Union in return for repayment of the USSR’s World War II lend-lease debt. Heralding a “new relationship between the two most powerful nations on earth,” Nixon returned home promising Soviet Jewry activists concerned about his seeming disregard for Soviet internal affairs that his preferred method of “quiet diplomacy” had secured greater numbers of Jewish emigrants. Initially, Nixon enjoyed

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117 Interview with Douglas Feith, December 2009.
numbers to support his contention, with a record-setting 13,000 Jews leaving the USSR in 1971, a number which would more than double to 31,000 by the end of 1972.\textsuperscript{119}

Two months later, however, the Soviets committed what proponents and detractors of détente would universally recognize as an extraordinary blunder. On August 15, Jewish refusenik sources reported to the \textit{New York Times} that Soviet authorities had enacted a decree requiring potential emigrants who had acquired a higher education in the USSR to pay a “diploma tax,” as it became known, as repayment for their state-financed education. The refuseniks, mainly “highly qualified scientist and educated Jews,” according to the \textit{Times}, read a statement in a rare news conference which declared that Jews were in danger of becoming “a new category of human beings—the slaves of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.”

The refuseniks had good reason for alarm. The measures implemented by the Soviet Union virtually entrapped Jews with higher-education degrees. Government officials tied the diploma tax to the aspiring emigrant’s level of education—from $5,400 for a graduate of a teachers’ institute to $13,200 for a university degree and over $25,000 for the Soviet equivalent of a Ph.D. With teachers and scientists earning less than 300 rubles per month, the exit fees would more than bankrupt any potential émigré. Fearing a drain of intellectual talent, the Soviets meant to intimidate the elite refusenik movement into submission.\textsuperscript{120}


Despite the higher numbers, Nixon’s Moscow summit provided early ammunition to Jackson and other human rights critics of the administration. In anticipation of the President’s arrival, hundreds of Soviet dissidents and refuseniks signed letters requesting to meet with him. Eager to prevent such contact, the Soviet government isolated the dissidents and refuseniks, cutting their telephone lines, jamming radio stations from the West, and arresting and detaining their leaders for the duration of Nixon’s visit. As he began to express unhappiness with the pace of détente and skepticism regarding Soviet intentions, Senator Jackson simultaneously started receiving advice from Soviet Jewry experts concerning the oppressive domestic conditions inside the Soviet Union. The widely publicized detention of democratic and Jewish activists belied Nixon’s claim that his visit had assisted both movements. See Beckerman 258-60.

The diploma tax represented the latest impediment in a convoluted and dangerous process for Soviet Jews seeking to emigrate, referred to by Russian Jews as “the ten circles of hell.”

Emigration for most Soviet citizens, let alone Jews, contradicted Communist ideology, which deemed treasonous any individual seeking to leave the Soviet “workers’ paradise.” Soviet authorities ostensibly permitted emigration only in cases of “family reunification.” Russian Jews only received the opportunity to leave once they received a vom (literally, “summons”) from a family member abroad. This often meant receiving a manufactured invitation from the Israeli government, ferried through the Dutch Embassy in Moscow in the wake of the Six-Day War.

Those Soviet Jews able to obtain a vom presented their invitation to the OVIR, the Soviet Ministry responsible for emigration requests. OVIR required applicants to complete a detailed questionnaire which demanded data concerning immediate family members and friends. The most significant obstacle for most Soviet Jews—especially the educated class targeted by the diploma tax—came with attaining security clearance. Soviet authorities forbade anyone privy to “state secrets” from emigrating, a term which they applied liberally, citing three-quarters of their refusals to emigrate based on “national security.”

The consequences for applying for emigration often proved severe. The OVIR requested character references from a would-be emigrant’s co-workers and employers, who were required, as loyal Communist Party members, to condemn those seeking permission to exit as traitors. Jews often lost employment and suffered social ostracism as a result, with scientists and

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121 Buwalda, 47.  
122 According to Buwalda, a former Dutch Ambassador to the Soviet Union, such invitations from Israel were often fictitious, given that many Soviet Jews did not have direct relatives in Israel, let alone ones with whom they maintained contact. The Soviets cared little, satisfied with the veneer of a legitimate explanation for Jewish emigration. Buwalda writes that when Soviet authorities wanted Jews to emigrate, they accepted any vom as long as that veneer remained in place. As soon as Soviet officials wanted to restrict the number of Jewish emigrants, vom received a far more thorough background check and often were rejected.  
123 Buwalda, 49-51; Interview with David Harris, February 2010. The theme of “state security” would later be addressed in by Jose Ingles and the Uppsala Colloquium on the Right To Leave and to Return; see p. 62 of thesis.
engineers forced to take jobs as window cleaners and security guards. Their children sometimes suffering harassment at the hands of school administrators and fellow students if their school discovered emigration attempts. This social and economic demotion often proved permanent if the OVIR refused to grant an exit visa, creating a new *refusenik* family.\(^{124}\)

The Soviet diploma tax seemed to confirm Jackson’s twin fears about Communist brutality aided and abetted by détente and Nixon’s disregard of human rights. Indeed, Jackson declared it “reminiscent of the Nazi practices.”\(^{125}\) The Senator’s office had already begun investigating methods to undermine the East-West Trade Bill negotiations before the announcement of the head tax. The new Soviet decree, however, offered Jackson the opportune “political climate” to combine his attempt to slow the development of trade between the U.S. and Soviet Union with a new initiative to liberalize Soviet emigration policy.\(^{126}\) Although Jackson’s staff has claimed ownership of the notion of drafting legislation to secure free emigration, the Senator’s effort, in fact, emanated directly from an intellectual foundation that carries an unheralded but significant history.

* * *

**Right Building**

On the periphery of the Soviet Jewry Movement’s more public struggles during the 1960s and early 1970s, a small cadre of intellectuals, academics, and legal scholars collaborated to construct a case against the Soviet Union rooted in the universal language of human rights—and

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\(^{124}\) Interview with David Harris, February 2010. For a detailed description of the emigration process in the USSR, see Buwalda, 47-56. A separate discussion in the next chapter addresses Soviet Jews who used Israeli *vysovs* to emigrate to the United States rather than Israel, in what became known as the “Dropout Controversy.” See introduction for explanation.

\(^{125}\) Senator Henry Jackson Speech on Soviet Emigration, August 1973, Leonard Schroeter Papers, Special Collections, Box #6, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Washington.

\(^{126}\) Reminiscences of Richard Perle (2/7/1975), p. 4, CUOHROC.
in particular, the right to leave.\textsuperscript{127} Their efforts began in 1960, when B’nai B’rith, the oldest functioning Jewish service organization in the world, assigned Dr. William Korey to represent its interests at the U.N. as part of the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations (CBJO—
comprised of B’nai B’rith, the British Board of Jewish Deputies and the South African Board of Jewish Deputies). B’nai B’rith chose Korey for his previous experience as a leading civil rights and integration advocate in Washington D.C., where he had served as regional director of the Anti-Defamation League. A doctoral graduate of the first class of Columbia’s Russian Institute (later the Harriman Institute), Korey offered exactly what B’nai B’rith sought: “somebody that had a kind of combination of skills, who knew international and Soviet affairs, and who also knew civil rights and human rights.”\textsuperscript{128}

Korey immediately played a vital role in preparing a seminal U.N. report on the status of the right to emigrate.\textsuperscript{129} The study, conducted by Philippine judge and statesmen Jose Ingles for the U.N. Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, sought to explore the “background, condition, and future” of Article 13(2) of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{130} Ingles’ investigation—spurred largely by the issue of Soviet

\textsuperscript{127} The first effort on behalf of the right to emigrate began in June September 1971 as a grassroots Soviet Jewry initiative. The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ), the leading non-violent grassroots organization in the Soviet Jewry movement, first introduced the notion announcing in its platform that “a condition of any exchange or agreement with the Soviet Union [should] include a guarantee of the right of free emigration for Soviet Jews.” It even established an office in Washington D.C. and initiated an earnest lobbying campaign in Congress attempting to establish the trade-emigration linkage through various pieces of legislation. Though the effort faded by middle of 1972, the trade-emigration concept may have germinated throughout the Senate, reaching the ears of aides who soon began drafting the Jackson Amendment. See Orbach, 130-1; Stern, Paula, \textit{Water’s Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy} (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979): 10-12.

\textsuperscript{128} Reminiscences of William Korey (9/12/89), p. 5, American Jewish Committee Oral History Collection, Dorot Jewish Division of New York Public Library (hereafter AJCOHC).

\textsuperscript{129} Reminiscences of William Korey (9/12/89), p. 1-2, AJCOHC. According to Ro’i (138), Korey was recruited and funded by the Israeli Liaison Bureau.

\textsuperscript{130} Ronald I. Rubin, “Soviet Jewry and the United Nations: The Politics of Non-Governmental Organizations,” \textit{Jewish Social Studies}, Vol. 29, No. 3 (July, 1967): 139. According to Rubin, the provisions for human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration remained in the realm of rhetoric for much of the U.N.’s early history. Indeed, the U.N. itself issued a press release in 1962 describing the Universal Declaration as “a statement of what ought to be, not necessarily what is.” Rubin noted that the human rights provisions of the U.N. Charter remained unfulfilled due to “the inability of the world organization to intervene and redress the balance between...
Jewry—represented the first time that the question of the right to emigrate was raised at an international forum.

Ingles began his endeavor in 1960 and spent the next three years collecting information on the status of the right to leave across the globe. He relied on research from over thirty Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with consultative status at the U.N., drawing most heavily from Korey’s CBJO, which contributed “substantive data” regarding official Soviet discrimination against Jews. According to Korey, Ingles’ decision to feature NGO research represented a “courageous departure from tradition” and set a “valuable [new] precedent” at the U.N., where the legitimacy of NGO testimony remained limited through the 1960s. Korey estimated that the report marked “one of the first if not the only time” that NGO material was directly included in a U.N. Subcommission study.

Yet as Ingles demonstrated, only a third of the ninety countries investigated in his study guaranteed some level of formal or informal right to leave. Nations that prevented certain individuals from emigrating, he discovered, often discriminated against their other elementary rights, preventing them from practicing a certain form of religion, marrying other nationalities, and to solve the perennial debate about intruding upon a country’s “internal affairs.” As a result, he contended, the U.N. needed to rely upon non-state actors to provide it with human rights oversight—a role played by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).See Rubin, 140-2.

The Jewish organizations contributing to the Ingles report besides the CBJO included the Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations (CCJO), which represented, among others, the American Jewish Committee; the Agudas Israel World Organization, an Orthodox Jewish advocacy group; the World Jewish Congress, chaired by Nahum Goldmann; and the World Union for Progressive Judaism, a political arm of the Reform Jewish movement. All except for the CBJO were known to prefer quiet diplomacy and had not raised the issue of Soviet Jewry publicly at the UN. See Rubin, 143-4.

NGOs granted consultative status participated in U.N. sessions as observers at the discussions of various committees and commissions, and could submit material to U.N. bodies upon invitation. Korey’s CBJO played an integral role from the beginning of Ingles’ effort, in emigration and specifically upon the question of Jewish emigration from the USSR. See Ro’i, 166, 138 and Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration, 63-4.

Korey, quoted in Rubin, 146. The Soviet Union continued to criticize the role of NGOs in the UN through the end of the decade, with an April 1969 Izvestiia (Russian state newspaper) article calling NGOs “rubbish which should be thrown out” and “weeds in the field” that desecrated the UN landscape and required uprooting. Still angry as a result of the Ingles report, perhaps, the Soviets also launched a concerted and nearly-successful effort to ensure that the CBJO did not obtain consultative status upon its standard review in 1969. See Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration, 77-89.
and freely associating with all members of society. According to Ingles, then, disregard of the right to leave “frequently gives rise to discrimination in respect of other human rights and fundamental freedoms, resulting at times in the complete denial of those rights and freedoms.” As a result, he declared, the right to leave is “an indispensible condition for the full enjoyment by all of other civil, political, economic, and social rights.” Ingles thus established the notion of the right to leave as a “gateway right”—a prerequisite for the protection of all other civil freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration.

While the actual content of Ingles’ draft largely avoided referring to countries by name, his structures and attached reports, including Korey’s on Soviet anti-Semitism, clearly targeted the USSR. Communist bloc delegates reacted swiftly, attacking Korey’s documentation in particular as “slanderous” and “colored by cold war accusations.” Likely fearing the potential impact of Ingles’ recommendations—an unequivocal restatement of the right to leave, a call to eliminate financial requirements for exit and provisions for expeditious emigration, among them—the USSR successfully blocked its consideration in the full Commission on Human Rights at every session until March 1971, when it again was deferred due to “lack of time.”

The Soviet Union’s desire to quash the Ingles Report proved prescient. Soviet Jewish activists seized upon Ingles’ work by the end of the 1960s and cited article 13 (2) of the Universal Declaration in appeals and letters addressed to Soviet and world leaders expressing their desire to emigrate—including the eighteen Georgian Jewish families who petitioned Israeli

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133 Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration, 65.
134 Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration, 66.
Prime Minister Golda Meir and the U.N. Secretary General U Thant in 1969.\textsuperscript{136} Despite the USSR’s best efforts, Ingles’ legal foundation for the centrality of the right to leave, and suggestions for its implementation, planted an intellectual seed among activists in the USSR and across the globe. In Korey’s words, it offered “the first study of its kind to demonstrate how Soviet Jews were deprived of the right to leave their country,” and constituted “a landmark in the evolution of human freedom” that is “still considered in various quarters as one of the most important human rights analyses ever published.”\textsuperscript{137}

By early 1971, the U.N.’s inaction regarding the report convinced then-director of the American Jewish Committee’s Foreign Affairs Department, Sidney Liskofsky, that the “NGO community and academia” needed to “fill a serious gap in the human rights work of the U.N.” by “[resuming] the public dialogue” on the right to leave and attempting to implement the Ingles’ recommendations.\textsuperscript{138} Soon appointed as the founding director of the AJC’s Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights (JBI), Liskofsky undertook a project to rekindle the Ingles Report. He and honorary AJC president Morris Abram—author of the January 1971 \textit{New York Times} editorial on the right to leave—collaborated with Karel Vasak, the Secretary-General for the International Institute for Human Rights in France, to develop a conference of NGOs and intellectuals who would elevate the question of the right to leave upon the international stage.\textsuperscript{139}

Despite its initial conception as a method of improving Soviet Jewish emigration, the symposium—later known as the Uppsala Colloquium on the Right to Leave and the Right To

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Korey, \textit{NGOs and the Universal Declaration}, 66; for the Georgian Jewish letter and its citation of article 13 (2), see p. 22-3 of thesis.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Sidney Liskofsky, “The Contribution of Jose D. Ingles,” in \textit{The Right to Leave and to Return}: 491-2.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} Abram later served as the Chairman of the Administrative Council for the Jacob Blaustein Institute and participated in the right to leave conference planned by Liskofsky. See introduction.
\end{itemize}
Return—embraced a distinctly universal tone on Liskofsky’s orders. While JBI “was especially concerned with the fate of Soviet Jews barred from leaving their country,” an AJC pamphlet noted, it “perceived the problem as a far more universal one, affecting many people across the globe.”

Liskofsky himself outlined a strategy of placing his particular concern about the plight of Soviet Jews into a broader context at the colloquium:

Since the conference would be concerned with the right [to leave] in general and not alone with the Soviet Jewish situation, it has, presumably, a better chance, than a project concerned solely with Jews, of eliciting the interest and participation of “experts” from a variety of interest groups (religious, legal, human rights, civic) from as many geographic regions as possible.”

The Colloquium, held at Uppsala University in Sweden in June 1972, vindicated Liskofsky’s belief that the Soviet Jewry Movement could secure international alliances by situating itself in the language of human rights. Featuring seventy scholars and human rights experts from twenty-five countries, the gathering aimed “to elucidate the background of the right to leave” and formulate a “declaration to serve as the expression of expert opinion on the status of the right.” The conference preamble, directly echoing Ingles, asserted that the protection of the right to leave “is essential for the effective enjoyment of other human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Led by Rene Cassin—President of the International Institute of Human Rights, recipient of the 1968 Nobel Peace Prize, and an original drafter of the Universal Declaration—

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140 American Jewish Committee Pamphlet, “The Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights,” AJC online archives, 1984. According to the pamphlet, JBI “has sought to narrow the gap between the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human-rights agreements—and the realization of those rights in practice.” Later on, it notes that the JBI has sought “from its earliest days… to clarify the concept of the ‘right to leave’ one’s country—or to return to it if one chooses—and to ensure the observance of this freedom in international law.”


142 Text of Colloquium Aims, in The Right to Leave and to Return, xix, xxi.
and Judge Ingles himself, the Colloquium issued a Declaration of the Right to Leave which
represented a concrete platform for implementing the right to leave across the globe.\textsuperscript{143}

Indeed, the Uppsala Declaration remains a standard in the field of human rights.\textsuperscript{144} The
prominence of the conference’s members garnered international attention, with its proceedings
translated into several languages and published in numerous journals worldwide. Russian
émigrés themselves joined the Colloquium and forwarded its conceptual foundation and
Declaration to dissidents still within the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{145} Rene Cassin led a public charge in the
United States and Europe, publishing an editorial in the \textit{New York Times} in March 1973 which
stated that the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva had considered the Uppsala
Declaration due to its “particular meaning…for Russians (both Jews and non-Jews) who are
being held within national borders and people detained in other countries.” “Our intent,” he
wrote, “is to encourage the liberal application” of the right to leave.\textsuperscript{146}

![Figure 6: Rene Cassin (far right), French representative to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and co-author of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, joins Eleanor Roosevelt for an interview in June 1947 at the U.N.’s temporary headquarters in Lake Success, New York. N. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute website for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, \url{http://www.udhr.org/history/Biographies/biorc.htm} (accessed 3/15/10).](http://www.udhr.org/history/Biographies/biorc.htm)

\textsuperscript{143} The Conference rapporteur noted plans to introduce the recommendations of the colloquium through official channels at the UN, and discussed disseminating the Declaration to international organizations and governments (552-3). See AJC Pamphlet on Jacob Blaustein Institute, 1984: 10.

\textsuperscript{144} See Hurst Hannum, \textit{The Right to Leave and Return in International Law and Practice} (Boston: Martinus Nijoff Publishers, 1987).


Perhaps most importantly to the Jackson Amendment, however, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the Uppsala Colloquium in Congress two weeks before Senator Jackson brought his bill to the Senate floor in March 1973. Kennedy placed Uppsala’s Declaration on the Congressional Record and hailed it as “a good example of current nongovernmental efforts in the field of human rights,” and a “forthright statement on the freedom of movement...of interest to Members of the Senate.”

Kennedy’s speech lends credence to both internal AJC documents and historians who claim that the Uppsala Declaration “served as a resource for the drafters of the Jackson Amendment” and “played a significant role in persuading Congress to pass...the Amendment.” It seems clear that Uppsala stimulated discussion and consideration of the right to leave in academia, the public sphere, and Congress. Jackson himself echoed the Declaration in the Senate on March 15, 1973, declaring to his colleagues that

One might well ask why we are moving to secure the right to free emigration when there are so many other fundamental liberties that continue to be denied behind the Iron Curtain. We believe there is a unique international quality to the right of free emigration—the right and opportunity to emigrate...offers a kind of ultimate relief. No matter what the cause of the desire to emigrate—whether it be for the right to worship or to dissent, to publish or to speak...all of these and any of them can be realized by emigrating. Of freedoms, the right to emigrate is first among equals.

147 Congressional Record, 93rd Cong., Vol. 119, Rec. 5825-6, February 28, 1973. Kennedy was an early and constant supporter of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, though he was at some points suspected of wavering on his endorsement. See Stern, Water’s Edge, 31.

148 AJC Pamphlet on JBI, “On the Cutting Edge of Human Rights: Twenty-Five Years,” AJC online archives, 1992; Galchinsky, 117. Galchinksy later contends that Jackson-Vanik then helped convince the Soviet Union to engage in the Helsinki process, resulting in its pledge in the Helsinki Final Act (1975) to permit both freedom of movement within its territory, and family reunification.

Note: an AJC document written by Sidney Liskofsky in November 1972 explicitly connected the Soviet diploma tax and the Uppsala Declaration, arguing that the tax directly violated several articles of the Declaration and thus “general international norms,” and encouraging readers to reference the Declaration in combating the tax in the public sphere. See Sidney Liskofsky, “The Soviet ‘Head Tax’ and International Human Rights,” November 1972, American Jewish Committee Archives, Box #205, Folder #3, Collection of AJC, New York, NY.

Yet an even more tangible connection existed between Uppsala and Jackson, one which may have contributed directly to the Washington Senator’s specific emphasis on emigration as a human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration.

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**Jackson’s Marching Orders**

As the diploma tax remained in effect through September 1972, a Seattle lawyer recently returned from a clandestine visit to the Soviet Union began to pressure the Nixon administration to act. Leonard Schroeter, a former advisor to Israel’s Minister of Justice on mobilization of world opinion regarding Soviet Jewish human rights, believed that Nixon’s most recent visit to the USSR earlier that year constituted a “disaster for Soviet Jews and intellectuals,” and believed that the President “gave the green light for [further] repression.”\(^{150}\) He spent early September lobbying Leonard Garment, Nixon’s Special Counsel and unofficial White House liaison to Jewish organizations with regard to Soviet Jewry, to employ the Soviet desire for trade as leverage for the withdrawal of the diploma tax. Despite the fact that Schroeter’s proposal garnered “wide publicity in the press,” the Nixon administration shunned his entreaties, likely in the interest of preserving the spirit of the East-West Trade Act.\(^{151}\)

Dedicated to battling for the Soviet Jewish right to leave, Schroeter turned to his friend and Senator from Washington, Henry Jackson.\(^{152}\) Though Schroeter hardly stood alone in persuading Jackson to pursue linkage between trade and emigration, documentary evidence and

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confirmation from Schroeter himself via interview demonstrate that he shared an intimate working relationship with Jackson.\textsuperscript{153} Schroeter’s personal files, held within the Henry M. Jackson collection at the University of Washington, contain the draft of a speech later delivered by Senator Jackson regarding his Amendment, upon which Schroeter had provided comments and corrections. Schroeter strikes an authoritative and friendly tone in his notes, making no qualms about specifying where the draft language is “wrong” or “misleading,” and adding detailed information about Soviet emigration policy where Jackson remained sparse. This suggests that Schroeter’s familiarity with Jackson gave him the liberty to be blunt.\textsuperscript{154}

Most critically, however, Schroeter specifically referenced the Ingles Report and the Uppsala Declaration. In comment on a section of the speech in which Jackson cites the “unique international character of the right of free emigration…recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human rights and a number of other international conventions,” and calls the right to emigrate “first among equals,” Schroeter urged Jackson to insert the following citation of the Ingles Report:

As the Ingles Report states from p. 9-13: ‘Denial of the ultimate right to move elsewhere, to a man seeking to leave a country because he is being persecuted, may be tantamount to the total deprivation of liberty, if not life itself.’\textsuperscript{155}

Schroeter’s knowledge of Ingles’ intellectual foundation for the right to leave likely derived from the Seattle lawyer’s contribution to the Uppsala Colloquium, whose records list him as a chief participant.\textsuperscript{156} His citation of the Ingles Report strongly indicates that Senator Jackson was not only aware of the precedent for the right to leave, but employed its principle

\textsuperscript{153} Interview with Leonard Schroeter, March 2010. Though the interview was brief due to Schroeter’s ailing health, he did manage to confirm his close relationship with Jackson, especially regarding the Soviet Jewry campaign.

\textsuperscript{154} Senator Henry Jackson Speech on Soviet Emigration, August 1973, Leonard Schroeter Papers, Special Collections, Box #6, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Washington.

\textsuperscript{155} Jackson Speech, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{156} Vasak and Liskofsky, \textit{Right to Leave}, 570.
logic—as defined by Ingles and Uppsala—when he declared that the right to emigrate offers “for the right to worship or to dissent, to publish or speak… a kind of ultimate relief.” 157 Schroeter’s comments on the speech and his broader connection to the Senator, then, demonstrate a compelling connection between the Jackson Amendment and the intellectual antecedents of the right to leave.

Schroeter also developed a close association with Jackson’s staff. Handwritten notes in his personal papers record a conversation between Schroeter and Tina Silber, a member of Jackson’s Subcommittee on International Security Operations and key aide, regarding establishment Jewish organizational reluctance to continue supporting the Jackson Amendment following Israel’s Yom Kippur war in October 1973. 158 Silber disclosed intimate details about meetings between Jackson and Jewish leaders and strategized with Schroeter about how to retain the allegiance of those seeming to waver from Jackson’s position.

Schroeter’s contact with Silber seems to suggest that he potentially worked alongside Jackson’s actual legislative assistants in convincing the Jackson to sponsor the linkage concept. By mid-August, the famously tenacious Richard Perle met with other Senate aides to explore a strong response to the diploma tax announcement, convening Morris Amitay, advisor to Senator Abraham Ribicoff, and Peter Lakeman, foreign policy aide to Senator Jacob Javits—to deliberate a legislative proposal. 159

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157 Jackson Speech, p. 5.
158 Silber, a former AIPAC employee, played a key role in liaising between Senator Jackson and the Jewish community and worked closely with Richard Perle. See Stern, 39, 98.
159 For more on Perle’s biography, see Beckerman, 268-69 and Alan Weisman, Prince of Darkness, Richard Perle: The Kingdom, The Power, and The End of Empire in America (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2007). According to Beckerman, Perle “shared Jackson’s worldview completely and wasn’t afraid to throw his elbows around in the service of his boss.” Perle co-lead Jackson’s team with Dorothy Fosdick, a chief advisor to Jackson for decades previously and another loyal advisor who shared Jackson’s political perspective. They formed
Perle and Amitay, in particular, would lead the charge for Congressional action against the education tax over the two months and indeed throughout the two-and-a-half-year course of the Jackson Amendment’s passage. Already in their first meeting, Perle recalled, one of the advisors suggested linking a piece of legislation on emigration to the Trade Act (which later became the Trade Reform Act of 1974). The idea cleverly borrowed from détente theory, which proposed that the superpowers assist each other in areas where their political goals overlapped—another form of linkage. Understanding that any trade agreement with the Soviets would require Congressional approval, the solution seemed readily apparent: grant the Soviets MFN status and trade credits upon condition of removing the diploma tax and freeing emigration.

As offered by Jackson on October 4, 1972, the Amendment refused MFN and “credit, credit guarantees, and investment guarantees” to the USSR as long as it denied its citizens the right to emigrate or imposed more than a nominal fee on emigration visas. Significantly, Jackson’s bill required the President to submit biannual reports to Congress regarding the status of emigration in nonmarket nations, forbidding him from granting a MFN waiver without the nucleus of Jackson’s closely-knit foreign policy team, known in Washington as the Bunker because of the cramped, windowless office where its members worked. See Beckerman, 269 and Kaufman, 83-5. Javits (R-NY) and Ribicoff (D-CN) represented the two senior Jewish members of the Senate and thus were respected voices on the question of Soviet Jewry. Amitay, later the Chairman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), later made an off-the-record comment about the role of Jewish Senate aides in pursuing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment which was nonetheless quoted by Steven D. Isaacs book Jews in American Politics. “There are now a lot of guys at the working level up here who happen to be Jewish, who are willing to make a little bit of extra effort, and to look at certain issues in terms of their Jewishness, and this is what has made this thing go very effectively in the last couple of years. These are all guys who are in a position to make the decisions in these areas for these Senators.” The statement would be cited by critics of the pro-Israel and Jewish lobby in the United States as evidence of its wide-ranging influence. See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, The Israel Lobby (New York: Macmillan, 2007): 153.

160 Included in the first meeting with Perle, Amitay, and Lakeman were AIPAC representative I.L. Kenen, National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) executive director Jerry Goodman, Conference of Presidents director Yehuda Hellman, and the Senate aides to Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, and Birch Bayh. All except for Perle and Amitay rejected the notion of linkage at the first meeting, including the representatives of the Jewish organizations, which preferred to exhaust moderate methods first.

approval from the legislative branch. Jackson and his team considered the requirement for
periodic reevaluation and presidential restriction the key element of the Amendment.162

Jackson needed a powerful base of support to defeat his more conciliatory challengers.
The natural answer lay in the American Jewish community. Though the UCSJ and other
grassroots Soviet Jewry organizations had already endorsed the trade-emigration linkage, Perle
realized that the bill required the vast resources and institutional support of the establishment
organizations. Fortuitously for the Jackson Amendment, the establishment seemed ready to join
the battle.

The February 1971 Brussels Conference debacle, in which the establishment experienced
the twin shame of witnessing Jewish Defense League head Meir Kahane usurp its publicity and
failing to pass a single substantive resolution to strengthen the Movement, further convinced
American Jewish leaders that their current system could no longer sustain itself. Still powerless
after Brussels, the establishment could only issue helpless consternation as the JDL continued to
dominate the headlines and control the momentum. As current president of the American Jewish
Committee and key Soviet Jewry activist David Harris recalled, “those of us that practiced
nonviolence were seen as meek.”163 Richard Davies, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European
Affairs in the State Department, articulated the frustration of both Jewish establishment leaders

162 Congressional Record, 92nd Cong., Vol. 118 Rec. 33658-60, October 4, 1972.
Note: According to Korey, the Soviet Union largely considered MFN status as a matter of prestige rather
than trade benefit. U.S. tariffs were imposed on finished or partially finished goods, not raw materials. Since most
Soviet exports to the U.S. were raw materials, MFN did not often apply to Soviet-American trade, especially since
Soviet finished goods were “unlikely to find a market in the U.S.” even with lower tariff rates. Credits, Korey
wrote, offered a “more concrete and significant” advantage to the USSR. The Soviet Union was then seeking to
import quantities of American products, including advanced technological equipment and even entire factories. As
it had little to sell the U.S., the Kremlin was interested in sizeable amounts of credits for completing large-scale
transactions at low interests rates. Therefore, it needed credits far more than it needed MFN status—a factor which
would later play a crucial role in the breakdown of negotiations over the Trade Bill in 1974 and 1975, and its
ultimate rejection by the Soviets. See Korey, “Jackson-Vanik and Soviet Jewry,” The Washington Quarterly Vol. 7,
163 Interview with David Harris, February 2010.
and the White House at continued JDL violence in a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing in late 1971:

The influence…of American public opinion and of the United States Government can only be sadly and substantially diminished when a few American citizens break the law and resort to vigilante tactics against Soviet…diplomatic officials and commercial personnel and their wives and children. Acts of violence…advance no one’s cause…Violence can only lessen the cohesiveness of world public opinion [regarding Soviet Jewry].

In the same speech, Davies cited the positions of major American Jewish leaders on the JDL’s tactics. The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry declared that “anyone who applauds bombing or its perpetrators violates all principles of responsible behavior in a civilized society,” while an internal Anti-Defamation League Memorandum declared the JDL a “G-d send to the Soviet Union.” B’nai B’rith agreed, announcing that “it is morally reprehensible and politically self-defeating… the Soviets will seize upon the threats of the JDL as a pretext for its own misdemeanors.” While Jewish leaders could issue sanctimonious condemnations of the JDL, it spoke to their powerlessness that Davies spent the over half of his testimony decrying Kahane’s organization rather than addressing the issue of Soviet Jews themselves.¹⁶⁴

The establishment organizations agreed to address their weakness by reconstituting the decrepit AJCSJ into an independent umbrella organization with its own financial resources and staff. The newly reconstituted National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) began its operations in August 1971 with a yearly budget of $250,000 and an enthusiastic duo at the helm—former AJC official Jerry Goodman as executive director, and foreign policy expert Richard Maass as chairman.

¹⁶⁴ Richard T. Davies, “Hearings on Denial of Rights to Soviet Jews,” November 9, 1971, American Jewish Committee Archives, Box #210, Folder #2, Collection of AJC, New York, NY; Anti-Defamation League Memorandum Regarding Meeting of Council of Jewish Organizations, July 1971, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #7, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
After forming the NCSJ, American Jewish leaders felt compelled to shift focus from encouraging minority rights for Soviet Jews to demanding their free emigration—both to co-opt Kahane’s stringent demands and respond to Soviet Jewish activists themselves. William Korey stated that once the establishment understood the magnitude of the Soviet Jewish desire to emigrate, it began, under pressure from activist groups, to emphasize emigration rather than civil rights.165 Beckerman concurred, noting that while a campaign for Soviet Jewish civil rights “had real resonance at the time of the civil rights movement,” post-1967 Soviet Jewish pleas for emigration revealed that “Soviet Jews themselves wanted to get out.” The establishment, then, appeared ready to struggle for the right to leave, but still lacked an agenda and legitimate influence with the White House.166

Jackson provided the establishment the remedy that it sought. The NCSJ convened an emergency summit on September 26, 1972 in Washington, D.C. to address the Soviet diploma tax. Perle knew of the conference and arranged for the Washington Senator to address the gathering.167 Jackson arrived with the text of his proposed legislation and delivered a rousing twenty-minute speech that electrified the convention. He offered nothing less than to lead the Soviet Jewry Movement in to battle:

> The time has come to place our highest human values ahead of the trade dollar by firm and immediate action that the Russians can understand. You want to know what you can do? I’ll give you some marching orders. Get behind my Amendment. And let’s stand firm.168

The speech brought the applauding audience to their feet. Despite attempts by Senator Javits and President Nixon himself to prevent an endorsement of the Jackson Amendment, the

165 Reminiscences of William Korey (9/12/89), p. 7-8, AJCOHC.
166 Email Correspondence with Gal Beckerman, March 2010; Lazin, 37; Beckerman, 271.
167 Stern relates that Jackson actually violated an agreement that he made with Senator Javits not to send any staff to the NCSJ meeting. See Stern, 32.
NCSJ voted to back the initiative in the wee hours the following morning. By utilizing the concepts of an earlier intellectual and legal movement on behalf of Soviet Jews—one which, despite a firm connection to the establishment, failed to define its agenda for over a decade—a non-Jewish lawmaker proposed to transcend all previous establishment American Jewish efforts for their Soviet brethren. By embracing the Jackson Amendment, the establishment had at last resolved to recapture the Soviet Jewry Movement from its more radical elements by battling for the emigration as a universal human right rather than a tribalist imperative.

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Two Henrys Collide

The animosity between Senator Henry Jackson and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger simmered on the surface of letters they exchanged on October 18, 1974. Kissinger closed his letter with a curt “Best Regards,” while Jackson signed his with an even less amiable “Sincerely Yours.” Yet this exchange, completed in the Oval Office, heralded what the New York Times described as the “Pact of Two Henrys.” It represented the final victory of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment after two years of battle between Jackson and Kissinger, two fervent ideologues who sought to demarcate the position of human rights in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs by capturing the support and defining the nature of the Soviet Jewry Movement.

A German-born Jew who escaped Nazi persecution in 1938, Kissinger seemed as unlikely a foe of a public, legislative effort on behalf of Soviet Jewry as Jackson did a sponsor. Yet Kissinger’s first-hand encounter with Hitler’s regime triggered a life-long pursuit of international stability as a cure for catastrophe. Given a choice of order or justice, he often said, he would choose order. The architect of Nixon’s foreign policy, Kissinger believed that

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169 Albright, “The Pact of Two Henrys.”
170 Isaacson, Kissinger, 31.
détente and its mission of preventing global nuclear war transcended human rights issues. He insisted that the plight of Soviet Jewry—no matter how terrible—must not interfere with the international stability fostered by his outreach to the USSR. Kissinger’s contention that quiet diplomacy could best facilitate Jewish emigration thus constituted the last challenge to Jewish communal acceptance of the Soviet Jewry effort as a human rights cause—and thus the final obstacle to human rights assuming an integral role in U.S. diplomatic relations.

Kissinger initially dismissed the Jackson Amendment with a combination of “malign and neglect.” Indeed, NCSJ chairman Richard Mass recalled the State Department and White House “generally telling the Russians not to worry and to sit tight” about the Jackson Amendment throughout the end of 1972, deeming it merely an “election ploy” that would not carry over to the next Congressional session in January 1973. The administration so underestimated the potential impact of the Jackson Amendment that it linked provisions for Soviet MFN (which would become Title IV of the Trade Bill) into the larger Trade Bill, thus granting Jackson immeasurable control over the fate of the entirety of U.S.-Soviet commerce.

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171 Stern, 46. Noam Kochavi notes that Kissinger’s dismissal of the Jackson Amendment resulted for intentional as well as unintentional reasons. Constantly emphasizing Moscow’s status sensitivity and need to “save face” and avoid international embarrassment, Kissinger believed that the best chance of Soviet backtracking on the diploma tax lay in giving the Soviets time to extract themselves from the decision without appearing to have backed down to public American pressure. Yet Kochavi argues that much of Kissinger’s conduct through April 1973 is more attributable to “overextension and ineptitude” rather than design, a combination of his preoccupation with Vietnam negotiations and disdain for Congress and its influence in foreign policy-making. See Noam Kochavi, “Insights Abandoned, Flexibility Lost: Kissinger, Soviet Jewish Emigration, and the Demise of Détente,” *Diplomatic History* Vol. 29, No. 3 (June 2005): 515-16.


The Soviets seemed to trust Kissinger’s dismissals. They made minimal modifications to the diploma tax—exempting payment from all age 55 and above, and reducing the tax payment to correspond with the number of years the would-be emigrant had worked for the state. But even as it did so, the USSR hardened its line by publishing and thus solidifying the diploma tax decree in the *Bulletin of the Supreme Soviet*. According to Korey, this seemed to signal that the Soviets, having made concessions, would go no further, especially after having made a fixed public decision from which it would prove difficult to retreat. See Korey, “The Struggle Over Jackson-Mills-Vanik,” 205.

173 Stern, 61.
Meanwhile, Jackson quickly capitalized on the early endorsement of the Jewish establishment. His Jewish supporters began “sending letters and telegrams to constituent agencies and local communities,” lobbying for the Amendment’s passage.\textsuperscript{174} Momentum continued to build as the bill soon gained the co-sponsorship of Ohio Democratic Congressman Charles Vanik. Vanik represented a district in Cleveland that reported an eleven percent Jewish population—among them, Soviet Jewry activist Lou Rosenblaum, founder of the grassroots UCSJ—as well as many Soviet-bloc refugees interested in securing open emigration from the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{175} He introduced a bill mirroring the Jackson Amendment in October and utilized the Congressional recess through January to launch a furious campaign for its endorsement, relying, much like Jackson, on the efforts of the NCSJ and the grassroots Soviet Jewry organizations to collect signatures.\textsuperscript{176} He soon added his name to the bill, thereafter known as the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Moscow appeared to understand the threat once Senator Jackson formally reintroduced it in the Senate on March 15 with large majorities in both Houses of Congress standing beside him. Only five days later, the Soviets announced through Victor Louis, a Soviet journalist with KGB connections, that the diploma tax would “no longer be enforced.” Though the law would remain “on the books” according to a \textit{New York Times} report, it would be “suspended indefinitely.”\textsuperscript{177}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{174} Reminiscences of Richard Maass (3/5/1975), p. 10, CUOHROC.
\item\textsuperscript{175} Stern, 54; Beckerman, 276.
\item\textsuperscript{176} Mark Talisman, Representative Vanik’s administrative assistant and new ally of Perle and Amitay, launched a marathon effort to acquire support for the House version of the bill. He personally called the offices of all 435 members of the House to ask them to co-sponsor the House version of the Jackson Amendment, calling some offices as many as 15 times. Meanwhile, the NCSJ launched a campaign that sent a steady stream of mail and phone calls to Congressmen across the nation, even those with few Jewish constituents. See Stern, 54; Albight, “Pact of Two Henrys,” and Beckerman, 276-8.
\item\textsuperscript{177} \textit{New York Times}, March 21, 1973. Perle and Beckerman relate the sense of confusion and panic in the Kremlin at the result of the Jackson Amendment vote on March 15\textsuperscript{th}. At a meeting of the Politburo, Soviet Premiere Brezhnev expressed dismay that “in the last few months, hysteria has been whipped up [in the U.S.] around this so-called education tax on individuals emigrating abroad.” He asked whether the headache of the tax was worth the money collected from the tax, and ordered his government officials to think more creatively and “find a solution.” See interview with Richard Perle, December 2009; Beckerman, 279-80.
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Senator Jackson welcomed the apparent concession but insisted that the wider issue of Soviet emigration policy—and the right to leave—remained at stake. As Richard Maass noted, the unofficial removal of the diploma tax failed to address “the more fundamental problem of the denial of the basic human right to emigrate without arbitrary restrictions or procedures.” Yet the Soviet decision to waive the diploma tax provided Kissinger with the ammunition to launch an offensive at Jackson and his most important source of support: the establishment Jewish community.

The President invited fifteen American Jewish leaders to the White House on April 19, 1973—the first time an American commander-in-chief had chosen to dedicate such time to the issue of Soviet Jewry. Armed with two letters from Soviet U.S. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin affirming the indefinite suspension of the tax, Kissinger rattled his audience’s confidence in the Jackson Amendment. Nixon’s assurances that Brezhnev would never bow to the public pressure levied by the Jackson Amendment and that emigration rates would reach 35,000 with the end of the diploma tax further enticed them away from Jackson’s bill. “We’re not battling the battle of Sakharov, and the dissidents” American Jewish Congress president Arthur Hertzberg later declared, echoing the sentiment of two men particularly open to Nixon’s viewpoint: Conference of Presidents chairman Jacob Stein, and Jewish Republican Max Fisher.

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178 Perle elaborated in our interview: “Many of us felt that the future was so uncertain that it was worth making an effort to stabilize [emigration], and by agreement to get a predictable long term outflow, that no matter how good the situation appeared to be at any moment, it could turn dramatically worse in the next.”
180 Beckerman, 283.
181 Orbach, 139. Fisher was a longtime Republican activist who, as former president of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, was credited with lifting Nixon’s support among the U.S. Jewish population. He became an “unofficial Jewish advisor” to the president. As the chairman of the Conference of Presidents, Stein also enjoyed close relations with the Nixon administration that he did not want to jeopardize.
Kissinger leveraged his origins as a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany with the assembled Jewish leaders, exploiting their assumption that he would undoubtedly understand and sympathize with the persecution of Soviet Jews. He easily persuaded Fisher of his concern and preferred method of quiet diplomacy. Fisher controlled post-meeting deliberations between the Jewish leaders and convinced them to adopt a conciliatory line on the Jackson Amendment. The group released a vague statement which praised the President’s commitment to Soviet Jewry but neglected to mention the Jackson Amendment, a conspicuous absence which infuriated Jackson, undermined unity among establishment leaders, and immediately left the Jewish community “caught in the middle” between the administration and Congress.

Figure 7: Nixon and Kissinger (far back, below portrait) meet with Jewish leaders at the White House on April 19, 1973. The meeting ultimately failed to persuade the Jewish establishment to abandon its support for Jackson-Vanik. See Kochavi, 519.

The resolution to the crisis demonstrated both the continued importance of the grassroots Soviet Jewry groups and the newfound centrality of human rights to the Movement. An enraged Richard Perle enlisted the UCSJ and SSSJ, who battered the establishment over their sudden vacillation and “provoked an insurrection” and “posed a threat” that Maass, Goodman, and others could hardly ignore. Yet Soviet Jews themselves provided the decisive blow to the

\[\text{182} \text{ Korey, “The Struggle Over Jackson-Mills-Vanik,” 224.} \]
\[\text{183} \text{ Reminiscences of Richard Maass (3/5/1975), p. 16, CUOHROC} \]
momentary collapse in support for Jackson-Vanik. After 105 Soviet Jewish activists signed an open letter to Congress on April 12 encouraging it to remain behind the Jackson-Vanik Amendment—including budding refusenik and democratic dissident Anatoly Sharansky—they sent a direct appeal to Jewish communal leaders, urging them to reiterate their commitment to the bill. In stark terms, they told Jewish leaders in America that their “firmness and steadfastness” were the “only hope” of Russian Jewry.¹⁸⁵

The letter all but buried Fisher and Stein’s effort to reverse the Jewish establishment on Jackson-Vanik and temporarily ended Kissinger’s courtship of the Soviet Jewry Movement away from human rights.¹⁸⁶ Buoyed by his solidified coalition, Jackson restated the centrality of human rights—and particularly the right to leave—to the cause of his Amendment while delivering a commencement address to Yeshiva University, a base for the SSSJ:

> Of all the human rights contained in the Universal Declaration of the United Nations none is more fundamental than in Article 13—the right to free emigration. And as we assess the developing détente there is no more basic measure than its impact on the free movement of people. The importance of free emigration stems from the fact that whatever other liberties may be denied—speech, press, religion, employment—any and all of these can be restored by emigration to the free countries of the West. Of human rights, emigration is first among equals.¹⁸⁷

Yet the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, in which Egypt and Syria invaded Israel, provided Kissinger one final opportunity to detach the Jewish establishment from Jackson-Vanik. With the Amendment’s final vote in the House scheduled for late October, Nixon aide Leonard Garment invited Jacob Stein, Max Fisher, and Richard Maass for a meeting to discuss

¹⁸⁶ The National Interreligious Task Force, an interfaith Soviet Jewry organization founded by the AJC, echoed the solidified establishment position when it announced that it would “re-affirm [to Jackson its] commitment to the continuing struggle which will not end until every Soviet Jew can either live as a Jew or leave for the nation of his or her choice.” See National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry Memo, “Task Force Meets with Senator Jackson and Congressmen Drinan and Vanik, American Jewish Committee Archives, Box #210, Folder #2, Collection of AJC, New York, NY.
¹⁸⁷ Henry Jackson commencement address to Yeshiva University, June 4, 1973, from NCSJ Archives, Box 31, Folder 6. As quoted in Beckerman, 286.
the cease-fire between Israel and the Arab states, then perilously close to collapse. Kissinger unexpectedly arrived at the meeting and informed them that persistence with the Jackson-Vanik Amendment might “slap the Soviets in the face” at a moment when he required their cooperation to solidify a cease-fire between Israel and the Arab nations. Painting Jackson-Vanik as an “essentially Jewish issue,” Kissinger forged an intentional linkage between Israel’s security and Soviet Jewish emigration at a moment of high anxiety for the American Jewish community.188

Fisher accepted Kissinger’s argument and partially convinced Maass and others that the Jewish establishment should retract support for Jackson-Vanik in Israel’s interest. He scheduled a meeting with Jackson on November 5 hoping to request that the Senator eliminate his Amendment from the Trade Bill in the midst of Middle East negotiations. A wavering Maass consulted with the NCSJ executive leadership, which countered Fisher by informing Maass simply to report Kissinger’s request for a temporary withdrawal of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and seek Jackson’s advice.189 Alerted that some Jewish leaders had begun leaning toward Fisher’s approach, Jackson expanded the scheduled meeting to invite the most prominent supports of his Amendment, including Senator Ribicoff and his assistant Amitay, Jackson staffers Perle and Tina Silber, and Vanik aide Mark Talisman.190 By rallying his most dedicated allies, Jackson set the stage for a pivotal showdown between those Jewish leaders fully invested in his human rights approach, and those clinging to the efficacy of Kissinger’s quiet diplomacy.

The meeting in Jackson’s office on November 5, 1973, constituted the apogee of the Senator’s struggle with Kissinger for the allegiance of the Soviet Jewry Movement. Jackson assured the Jewish establishment that his Amendment would ensure continuing emigration without risking Israel’s security. “If we back down now,” Jackson said, “the Soviets will take

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188 Stern, 95; Reminiscences of Richard Perle (2/7/1975), p. 31, CUOHROC.
189 Orbach, 146.
190 Stern, 96; Albright, “Pact of Two Henrys.”
advantage” of an obvious betrayal of Soviet Jewry and democratic dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov. Rejecting Kissinger’s connection between Israel and Soviet Jewish emigration, Jackson argued that “the Russians aren’t making the linkage, only Henry [Kissinger] is.” When he told Maass and others that “the administration [was] always using [them],” Senator Ribicoff interjected to call Kissinger a “liar.”

Jackson’s case had recently received an invaluable boost from Sakharov himself. Encouraged by Soviet Jewish refusenik and dissident advocate Anatoly Sharansky, Sakharov entered the Jackson-Vanik controversy in September 1973 by publishing an “open letter” to Congress which unequivocally endorsed the Amendment by invoking the right to leave in the Universal Declaration and echoing the logic of the Ingles Report and the Uppsala Declaration on the Right to Leave:

I consider it my duty to express my view on…the protection of the right to freedom of residence within the country of one’s choice. That right was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There are tens of thousands of citizens in the Soviet Union—Jews, Germans, Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Armenians, Estonians, Latvians, Turks, and members of ethnic groups—who want to leave the country…I am appealing to Congress to give its support to the Jackson Amendment, which represents in my view and the view of its sponsors an attempt to protect the right to emigration of citizens in countries that are entering into new and friendlier relations with the United States.

Sakharov explicitly rejected Kissinger’s argument that Jackson-Vanik might represent interference in the Soviet Union’s internal affairs and thus imperil détente. “The

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191 Stern, 99. Perle explained Jackson’s rationale, recalling that “we felt at the time that a sign of weakening would be read by the Soviets as an indication that the influence of the Jewish community in America was declining in the aftermath of the [Yom Kippur] War, and so we thought it could not only be bad for Russian Jews, but bad for Israel as well if there was a falling off on the [Jackson-Vanik] Amendment.” See Reminiscences of Richard Perle (2/7/1975), p. 16, CUOHROC.

192 Reminiscences of Richard Maass (3/5/1975), p. 27, CUOHROC; Stern, 99. Leonard Schroeter’s notes on his conversation with Tina Silber address this meeting, and speak to the animosity between Jackson and some of the more reluctant Jewish leaders. Silber told Schroeter nine days after the meeting that Jackson “never wants to see [Conference of Presidents chairman] Jacob Stein again,” and described the Jewish establishment leaders who sided with Kissinger as “abominable.” See p. 72 of this thesis for original reference; Telephone Conversation between Tina Silber and Leonard Schroeter, 11/14/73, Leonard Schroeter Papers, Special Collections, Box #6, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Washington.
Amendment is simply a defense of international law, without which there can be no mutual trust,” he wrote, and thus no basis for détente itself. He especially derided the notion of the Amendment as a specifically Jewish issue whose passage would spawn anti-Semitism. “Here you have total confusion,” he said, “either deliberate or based on ignorance…it is as if emigration affected only Jews…as if the techniques of “quiet diplomacy” could help anyone, beyond a few individuals in Moscow.” “The abandonment of a policy of principle,” Sakharov concluded, “would be a betrayal of thousands of Jews and non-Jews,” a capitulation with potentially dire consequences for détente that could lead to “stronger [Soviet] repression.”

Sakharov’s letter combined with Jackson’s impassioned appeal to persuade Maass, who informed Kissinger that the establishment would continue to champion the Amendment. As Maass unequivocally stated in 1974, Jewish support for Jackson-Vanik “[remained] as firm as it was seventeen months ago, when the issue was first raised.” Clearly influenced by the testimony from Soviet refuseniks and Sakharov, NCSJ executive director Jerry Goodman spoke in more earnest terms when he told a partner Jewish organization that “to abandon the Jackson Amendment would be an abandonment of Soviet Jews, as they see it. If it is rejected…this would be seen by Soviet authorities as a defeat for the Movement in this country, and for Soviet Jewry activism.” Meanwhile, Kissinger’s maneuvers forever tarnished his image in the eyes of Jewish leaders. His attempt to establish a tradeoff between Jackson-Vanik and an American

194 The letter also broadened the Jackson coalition in Congress, granting it an increasingly humanitarian edge which gained the support of more liberal Senators and Congressmen. “If we don’t interfere in internal affairs,” Senator George McGovern declared on the Senate floor a week after the letter was published, “then what the hell are we doing in Vietnam?” See Korey, “Struggle Over Jackson-Mills-Vanik,” 226 and Feingold, 128.
resupply of Israel’s military arsenal seemed like a cynical ploy, one which could no longer frighten an increasingly confident Jewish establishment.\textsuperscript{197}

More significantly, like Sakharov, both Jackson and the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement strenuously denied Kissinger’s attempt to portray Jackson-Vanik as a solely Jewish concern. “Not once did Jackson ever describe [the Amendment] as a Jewish issue,” Perle asserted. “Scoop believed very much that the right to free emigration was a seminal right, a source of pressure on governments to treat their citizens well enough so that they wouldn’t leave…it might have been easier to get a deal affecting only Jews, but it would have been untenable in terms of the principle we were seeking to establish.”\textsuperscript{198} Senator Jacob Javits concurred, arguing that “it was felt by many [Senators] that it would open the [Soviet Union] up…and [demonstrate] to other minorities in the Soviet Union that the USSR would not be a closed corporation as far as we were concerned, that we should give them an appeal to public opinion in the Soviet Union.”\textsuperscript{199}

Perhaps most significantly, Maass understood the transformation that the Soviet Jewry Movement had undergone in the wake of Meir Kahane’s challenge, and recognized its new potential to elevate the importance human rights in international politics. “We knew that if we were successful [in pursuing Jackson-Vanik],” he stated, “it would have far greater impact worldwide on non-Jews than it would on Jews.”\textsuperscript{200} Later NCSJ chairman Stanley Lowell underscored the evolution of the NCSJ’s approach to human rights—and particularly the right to leave—telling the Senate Finance Committee in April 1974 that the Jackson Amendment

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\textsuperscript{197} Kochavi, 520-1.  
\textsuperscript{199} Reminiscences of Senator Jacob Javits (11/12/75), p. 1-2, CUOHROC.  
\textsuperscript{200} Reminiscences of Richard Maass (3/5/1975), p. 36, CUOHROC.
Symbolizes and gives substance to America’s continuing commitment to human rights...[it] envisions a realistic formula to employ American economic resources and capabilities to secure the fundamental human right to emigrate... The right to and opportunity is not exclusively a domestic or national concern, but rather a concern of all mankind. This transnational concept is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is recognized throughout the international community.\textsuperscript{201}

Lowell would proceed to cite Sakharov’s letter to Congress as a response to Kissinger’s latest argument—that Jackson-Vanik would “most likely result in the termination of Soviet Jewish emigration.” “The Soviet Union wants billions in foreign trade,” Lowell noted before the Committee. “All we want are some human rights. Is this so uneven a trade?” Congress soon delivered its answer, passing the Amendment in the House and eventually the Senate later that year. The direction of U.S.-Soviet relations would now hinge as much on human rights as on the status of weapons treaties and armed conflicts.

After another year of negotiations between Senator Jackson, Secretary Kissinger, and the USSR, complicated by Nixon’s demise and ultimate resignation in August 1974, Jackson-Vanik at last appeared ready for passage. Jackson and Kissinger exchanged a convoluted series of letters that elucidated the obligations incumbent upon the USSR to achieve a waiver on MFN and their desired amount of credits—which included, most notably, a requirement for the Soviets to issue 60,000 exit visas per year.\textsuperscript{202} Just before the Senate approved the Trade Act with the Jackson-Vanik Amendment attached on December 20, however, Senator Adlai Stevenson (D-IL) added a condition to the Act placing a ceiling of only $300 million on credits to the USSR. The

\textsuperscript{201} Statement of NCSJ Chairman Stanley H. Lowell on Jackson Amendment Before Senate Finance Committee, 4/10/74, Papers of Jerry Goodman, Box #7, Folder #3, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY. Lowell would also cite Dr. William Korey’s then-recently-published book, The Soviet Cage, as evidence that Jackson-Vanik furthered not only “an internationally accepted norm” regarding human rights, “but also a long American tradition of tangible action on behalf of human rights.”

\textsuperscript{202} According to the agreement, the Soviets could not issue punitive conscriptions or criminal prosecutions against those seeking to emigrate, or their families; they could not require that adult visa applicants must receive permission of their parents or other relatives to emigrate; they could not deny exit visas to those who had access to sensitive secret information for more than three years beyond their last exposure to such secrets; they could not interfere with communication by telephone, cable, or letter to interfere with verification of compliance; and they could not place an unreasonable impediment in the path of a visa applicant, especially an exorbitant tax. See Albright, “Pact of Two Henrys.”
new Amendment ensured that the President could only waive the restriction at the behest of Congress, pending Soviet moderation in a variety of foreign policy areas.203

The bill blindsided both Kissinger and Jackson. As Perle recalled, Stevenson’s Amendment robbed Jackson-Vanik of its “carrot”—access to high amounts of credit—and left it only with its “sticks.” “As long as the Soviets entertained the possibility that the economic relationship might flourish,” as a result of Jackson-Vanik, Perle noted, they might accept its demands in return for a fruitful amount of cooperation. Yet as Kissinger later put it, $75 million credits per year amounted to “peanuts” for the Soviets, who had already received half a billion from the credit bank since 1972.204 When President Gerald Ford signed the Trade Bill into law in early 1975, the Soviet Union announced that it intended to withdraw from the original 1972 agreement that led to the Bill’s enactment.

The Soviet renunciation of the Trade Bill initially seemed to render Jackson’s victory hollow. Though emigration rates rose to an all-time high of 51,000 in 1979, they never reached the 60,000 stipulated by Jackson’s bargain with Kissinger, and indeed sank to the lowest levels in two decades by 1984.205 While Soviet abrogation of the trade treaty temporarily limited the leverage offered by Jackson-Vanik, the bill galvanized Jews and democratic dissidents in the Soviet Union, who felt “intoxicated with the optimism” of the Jackson’s human rights legislation and increased their activism against the Soviet government as a result.206 Perle recalled having

203 Korey, “Jackson-Vanik and Soviet Jewry,” 123; see footnote 177 for earlier explanation.
204 Interview with Richard Perle, December 2009; Beckerman, 298.
205 Lazin, “Freedom of Choice,” 410, Appendix 2. From the high of 51,333 exit visas granted in 1979, numbers lowered precipitously by 1981 to 9,448, followed by 895 in 1984. The number of emigrants rose again with the beginning of Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (promotion of a more open society) in 1987. A discussion of doubts relating to Jackson-Vanik’s efficacy will occur in the following chapter. In our interview, Perle compared the drop in emigration rates to “climate change,” arguing that while numbers dipped for several years, they soon resumed at substantial levels.
met “any number of Soviet Jews who said they believed they owed their freedom to the Amendment.”

In addition to stimulating resistance within the Soviet Union, Jackson-Vanik established a clear precedent for the United States—and soon the international community—to pressure the USSR publicly into permitting emigration by citing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In an effort initiated by NGOs and intellectuals, propelled by Senator Jackson, and embraced by American and Russian Jews, the Soviet Jewry Movement played a critical role in establishing the fundamental premise of human rights activism: that the internal affairs of countries are not only a legitimate topic of international relations, but in fact central to them. That notion combined with several other factors to expose the Soviet Union’s crumbling infrastructure—both economic and ideological—that increasingly plagued the Communist empire throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and ultimately contributed to its eventual demise.

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Chapter IV: A New Kind of Pressure

Undoubtedly to their later regret, Russian authorities failed to note the white, taxi-like Volga sedan as it departed the Sovetskaya Hotel in Moscow, then hosting nineteen members of the U.S. House of Representatives on an official tour of the USSR. Had the KGB paid careful attention, they would have spotted New York Times Moscow bureau chief Christopher Wren at the driver’s seat. Known for facilitating Western contacts with Soviet refuseniks and dissidents, Wren planned to escort another foreign dignitary to the headquarters of Moscow’s human rights activists, an apartment located in the Southern part of the city.209

Wren quickly realized that his passenger that day in early August 1975—Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ), head of the Congressional delegation’s committee appointed to investigate emigration and human rights issues—would prove a unique guest.210 Upon arriving at the apartment, Fenwick met Valentin Turchin and Yuri Orlov, leaders of Moscow’s embattled chapter of Amnesty International, and Veniamin Levich, a prominent Jewish refusenik. Though she merely intended to fulfill her responsibility as committee chair to record accounts of Soviet repression, Fenwick realized that documentation alone would no longer suffice. “I felt, my G-d, it’s like being on a transatlantic steamer in the middle of a terrible storm, and seeing people go by in rafts, and we are trying to pick them up, but can’t,” she later recalled after the meeting. “But at least we have our searchlights on them.”211

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209 Christopher S. Wren, “House Delegation Sees Soviet Jews,” The New York Times, August 11, 1975. This particular Congressional delegation was led by then-Speaker of the House Carl Albert (D-OK). The Sovetskaya Hotel in Moscow, reserved for official visitors to the USSR, became a frequent meeting point for U.S. Congressional representatives and Soviet dissidents, who would travel to the hotel to introduce themselves. 


211 William Korey, The Promises We Keep: Human Rights, the Helsinki Process, and American Foreign Policy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993): 22. As Wren recounts, eighteen Jewish refuseniks soon validated Fenwick’s conviction. Having heard of her visit to Turchin, Orlov, and Levich, they flocked to the Sovetskaya Hotel to meet with Fenwick and her fellow members of Congress. Shocked by their courage in defying Soviet
Signing Into a Human Rights Trap

Fenwick soon resolved to provide the dissidents and *refuseniks* with a more permanent searchlight.\(^{212}\) At their gathering in Moscow, Fenwick and Orlov had discussed means to pressure the USSR to comply with the human rights provisions of a recently-signed treaty: the Helsinki Final Act. The product of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—a consortium of thirty-three European nations as well as the United States and Canada convened in 1973 to solidify continental détente—the Final Act struck a quid pro quo between the longstanding Soviet desire to solidify its control of Eastern Europe, and Western European insistence upon the improvement of Soviet human rights.\(^{213}\)

The Act contained three sections, or “baskets,” with the first two covering security and economic affairs and the last addressing humanitarian issues, as well as a later crucial provision

\(^{212}\) Equally significant to Fenwick’s thinking, Korey, Beckerman, Shapiro, and Wren all note, was her visit with a specific *refusenik*, Lilia Roitburd of Odessa—a meeting arranged by the NCSJ. Roitburd told Fenwick how her husband had been fired from his engineering job and publicly denounced as an “imperialist puppet” by their town’s local newspaper after he applied for an emigration visa. Soviet authorities then arrested him at the Odessa airport for attempting to meet U.S. Senators Jacob Javits and Edward Kennedy, then touring the USSR, and charged with striking a militia officer. Though Soviet officials informed Lilia that her husband would be held for a week, they quickly filed a criminal case against him which threatened five years in prison. Lilia pulled out a photograph of herself from before her family’s ordeal began and showed it to Fenwick. The striking distinction between the young and healthy woman in the picture and her ravaged appearance as a result of her predicament—a difference of only six months—brought tears to the Congresswoman’s eyes. “I still have nightmares about it,” Fenwick later recounted. Upon returning to Washington, Fenwick told herself, “We’ve got to do something for Lilia.” See Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 22-3; Beckerman 338-9; Shapiro 170; and Wren, “House Delegation Sees Soviet Jews.”

\(^{213}\) The CSCE began as a Soviet initiative in 1954 and floated as a notion between the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) and Warsaw Pact for fifteen years. Moscow hoped to prevent the emergence of West Germany as a military power, reduce the presence of the United States in Europe, and, most significantly, gain recognition for and assure the status quo of Soviet control over Eastern Europe. Initially opposed by NATO, the idea gained traction as the desire for détente prevailed in both the USSR and Western Europe. Early communiqués and preparatory meetings established that Western nations would agree to meet the Soviet demand for “inviolability of borders” in exchange for negotiations over freer movement of people, information, and ideas. The conference officially assembled in Geneva in September 1973 and lasted through July 1975, culminating in the signing of the Final Act. See Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 5-6.
for “review conferences” to track implementation of the treaty. Basket III called for European nations to permit free flow of information across borders, cooperate in cultural and educational initiatives, and, perhaps most significantly, “facilitate freer movement and contacts” and pay “particular attention” to reunification of families,” a clause which served as euphemism for free emigration.

The Soviets unsurprisingly disclosed their intention to disregard Basket III after the signing of the Final Act on August 1, 1975. Likely believing it could easily shirk the Act’s human rights elements, however, Moscow treated the Helsinki as if it enjoyed juridically-binding character. Soviet Premiere Leonid Brezhnev repeatedly declared his nation’s intention to implement every understanding reached by the CSCE, while State newspapers and journals declared that the Helsinki principles should be “made a law of international life” and take on the significance of “a binding international document.” Soviet leaders felt so confident in securing a positive outcome from the Helsinki process that they republished the entire Final Act in the official paper, Izvestiia, without removing the Basket III conditions.

Orlov keenly recognized that Western nations could exploit the USSR’s enthusiastic attempt to legalize and obligate itself to Helsinki. He told Fenwick that while the Final Act’s language remained disappointingly vague regarding human rights—especially lacking a clear call for the right to leave—it offered an unprecedented opportunity to engage the Soviets on

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215 Korey, The Promises We Keep, 11-12. Soviet desires to elevate the Final Act to the status of a binding treaty came despite explicit indication otherwise. Both the United States and Britain opposed any notion of a legally binding treaty. Britain coined the term “Final Act” to create the presumption that the final document did not take on the character of a legally binding treaty, and both countries ensured that qualifications regarding its non-binding nature be inserted throughout the process.

216 Beckerman, 315. Soviet dissidents and refuseniks were reportedly stunned by Helsinki’s humanitarian provisions. See Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration, 232.
rights violations because they had signed it and declared it important. Moscow’s perception of Helsinki, he told Fenwick, “[gives us] something to work with. If the Soviet government said that [Helsinki] [is] important, it [is], in fact, important.”

The Congresswoman from New Jersey wasted no time upon returning to the U.S. On September 9, 1975, she introduced a bill in the House which proposed the formation of a “Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,” designed “to monitor international compliance with the [Helsinki] Final Act” and provide Congress and its constituents with “the wherewithal to evaluate compliance with the Helsinki declaration.” She suggested that the Commission comprise of bipartisan Congressional membership and include representatives from the executive branch—one from the State, Defense, and Commerce Departments. Fenwick believed that the Commission should “concentrate its efforts” on evaluating compliance with “those intangible humanitarian elements of the declaration.” “I believe the success of the Conference…can only become evident through the [monitoring and] implementation of the agreements,” she told her colleagues. Fenwick hoped that by ensuring a significant role for human rights in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs more broadly, the Commission would solidify the precedent recently set by Jackson-Vanik.

217 Additionally, the Preamble to the Final Act’s guiding principles section declares the “determination” of the participating states “to respect and to put each [basket] into practice,” and expressly states that “all [baskets] are of primary significance.” The Act also required signatory countries to act “in conformity with…the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” which included a far more stringent demand for the right to leave in Article 13-2. Though the Soviets had never ratified the Universal Declaration, they now seemingly obligated themselves to it through Helsinki. Brezhnev himself seemed to anticipate trouble on the human rights front several weeks after the Accords were signed, telling Fenwick’s Congressional delegation that the first two baskets of Helsinki held a “binding nature,” while the human rights clauses would be “fulfilled according to the agreements reached on the part of the participating states.” See Sidney Liskofsky, “Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Declaration),” American Jewish Committee Reports on the Foreign Scene, No. 14 (January 1976): 5, in American Jewish Committee Archives, Box #206, Folder #4, Collection of AJC, New York, NY, as well as Korey, The Promises We Keep, 10, 12.

218 Congressional Record, 94th Cong., Vol. 121, Rec. 28036, September 9, 1975. Fenwick noted that the establishment of the Commission was particularly important given that the first Helsinki evaluation conference was scheduled to take place in Belgrade in 1977. She hoped the Commission would provide Americans with the “clear
Soviet Jewry Sets the Stage

Much as Soviet Jews themselves inculcated Fenwick’s interest in enforcing the Helsinki Accords as a lever against Moscow, the Soviet Jewry Movement in the United States would prove integral to her Commission’s creation. The bill initially rode Congressional discontent with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s indifference toward human rights, earning rapid endorsement from 96 co-sponsors in the House and Fenwick’s fellow New Jersey Republican, Senator Clifford Case, who introduced her legislation in the Senate.219 Yet momentum for the Commission soon stalled.220 The National Conference on Soviet Jewry—fully converted to the Jackson-Vanik approach of publicly leveraging human rights against Moscow to secure Jewish emigration—entered the fray to resuscitate Fenwick’s bill. Jon Rotenberg, the NCSJ’s Washington director and a Capitol Hill veteran with intimate ties to the House and Senate, lobbied both halls of Congress and ensured hearings in both chambers.221

and accurate information as to the progress in implementation of the accord” in preparation for the Belgrade Review.


219 When introducing the bill before the Senate, Case emphasized the role that “Congress should be able to play...in the all-important area of human rights, which all too often appear to be of only secondary concern to the executive branch.” See Albright and Friendly, 292.

220 The bill languished in the House Committee on International Relations through November 1975. It faced opposition from two angles. First, President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger feared the Commission’s proposed overlap with the executive branch, and considered the Commission an undue attempt to intrude upon the executive’s prerogative to set foreign policy. Secondly, skeptical Cold Warriors believed that Helsinki represented a Western capitulation to the Soviets. In their view, Western nations received vague, unenforceable promises regarding human rights improvements in return for conceding the concrete right to protest Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Indeed, a Wall Street Journal editorial on the eve of the Helsinki signing exclaimed “Jerry, Don’t Go!” urging President Gerald Ford not to attend, while a New York Times editorial declared that “nothing signed in Helsinki will in any way save courageous free thinkers in the Soviet empire.” See Beckerman, 339; Albright and Friendly, 289; Editorial, Wall Street Journal, July 23, 1975; Editorial, New York Times, August 1, 1975.

221 Albright and Friendly, 293-4.
The NCSJ doubled its efforts on behalf of the bill once discussions regarding its passage began. Jerry Goodman testified in its favor before Congress, informing a House subcommittee that “the Final Act...has begun to contribute to the advancement of human rights generally—and to oppressed Jews in the Soviet Union in particular.” Given that the Soviets declared their intention to comply with all of the Final Act’s provisions, Goodman noted, their continued denouncement of Jackson-Vanik as “interference in internal Soviet affairs” seemed at best “inconsistent.” Goodman, like Fenwick, recognized that the Soviet Union’s “primary [advocacy]” for the Helsinki Conference offered an opportunity to “contrast Soviet behavior with the obligations it undertook in signing the Declaration.” He unequivocally endorsed Fenwick’s bill as a means “to monitor the Helsinki Declaration with particular regard to the provisions relating to Cooperation in Humanitarian Fields.” The AJC agreed, referencing both the Ingles Report and Uppsala Colloquium on the Right to Leave and To Return as precedents for the “establishment of intergovernmental and governmental mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Helsinki Declaration’s human rights principles.”

Goodman’s testimony proved crucial to the bill’s eventual approval in June 1976. Congressman Dante Fascell (D-FL), chair of the Committee before which Goodman spoke and later the first head of the proposed Commission, told his colleagues that the NCSJ’s evidence highlighting Soviet intimidation of exit-visa applicants “provides the reason for the legislation now before us.” The moral coup that secured the bill’s victory, however, came again from Soviet Jewry activists. Just before the bill’s final vote in the House, Fenwick announced that a

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222 The NCSJ believed that Basket III of the Final Act offered a crucial new frame of reference for pressing Moscow on the question of the right to leave. See Korey, The Promises We Keep, 25.
few days earlier, several Moscow human rights activists—Yuri Orlov, Andrei Sakharov, and Anatoly Sharansky chief among them—had declared the creation of the Moscow Helsinki Watch, established to review Soviet human rights practices from within the USSR. Fenwick told Congress that the *refuseniks* and dissidents in Helsinki Watch “are hoping [like us] that [Helsinki] will not just be another empty piece of paper.” Both Fenwick and Helsinki Watch sought to wield the Final Act against Moscow’s human rights violations with public vigor rather than diplomatic delicacy.

![Image of Fenwick and Case observing Ford signing legislation](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/exhibits/case/Ethics/Ford_Fenwick.jpg)

Figure 8: Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ) and Senator Clifford Case (R-NJ) observe as President Gerald Ford signs legislation authorizing the creation of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, better known as the Helsinki Commission. Fenwick and Case were the only two members of Congress present, due to the administration’s attempt to downplay a bill which it had consistently opposed as an intrusion on its authority. Clifford Case archives, University of Rutgers.

The Commission established by the bill—soon called the Helsinki Commission—formed a symbiotic and often dependent relationship with the Soviet Jewry Movement once it began

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225 Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 28. Soviet Jews had already recognized the potential impact of the Helsinki Accords before the official founding of either Moscow Helsinki Watch or the U.S. Helsinki Commission. According to Korey, throughout the end of 1975 and into 1976, more than one-third of the total number of petitions and appeals sent by activists to the Kremlin or abroad framed their arguments for exit visas within the context of Helsinki. See Korey, “From Helsinki: A Salute,” 125-6.

Note: for more information on the formation, activities, and demise of Moscow Helsinki Watch and its sister chapters across the USSR, see Sharansky, *Fear No Evil*; Beckerman, 317-337; Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 48-52.
operations in October 1976 under the direction of Congressman Fascell. Commission staff leader Spencer Oliver promptly hired longtime NCSJ employee and emigration expert Meg Donovan, who ensured that the Helsinki Commission adopted her former organization’s commitment to advocating for the right to leave. Indeed, the Commission’s first extensive research project and opening hearing addressed Soviet emigration policies. After Moscow rejected the Commission’s request for a formal visit—citing interference with its internal affairs—Oliver hired eight researchers fluent in Russian and decided to travel to Israel to interview recent Soviet émigrés instead, producing thoroughly-researched statistical data regarding Soviet restrictions on the right to leave. The report established the Commission’s reputation as a respected repository on Soviet human rights violations.

Human rights assumed a pivotal role in U.S. foreign relations when Democratic President Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency in January 1977. His election removed any latent tension between the White House and the Helsinki Commission. Indeed, Carter utilized language proposed by Commission Chairman Fascell in his inaugural address, emphasizing the importance of Helsinki’s human rights provisions. After Carter entered office, Meg Donavan took charge of the Commission’s rapidly expanding caseload, and recommended that the it place special emphasis on the right to leave. To overcome the Final Act’s deliberately ambiguous treatment of the emigration issue, Donovan and her fellow staffers prepared a careful analysis of Helsinki’s

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226 The Helsinki Commission also established close relations with Yuri Orlov’s Moscow Helsinki Watch. Orlov wrote to the Fenwick in September 1976, informing her that his organization would forward its findings to the newly-established Commission. Fascell replied in late November that his Commission looked “forward very much to receiving more of [Orlov’s] reports in the months to come.” See Korey, The Promises We Keep, 35.


228 Carter declared the importance of Helsinki in his speech, whose text was in all caps: “The promises made in Helsinki must be kept—especially those that promise to recognize basic human rights and to provide for greater movement of people, information, and ideas among nations.” Fascell became a close advisor to both President Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, with whom he consulted regularly. See Beckerman, 341; Korey, The Promises We Keep, 36-8.
text, which demonstrated that the Final Act’s drafters clearly sought to imply the requirement for free emigration within the document.\textsuperscript{229}

Thanks to the NCSJ and Donavan, the Helsinki Commission incorporated the study into its Final Act implementation records, permanently elevating the right to leave among all of its human rights concerns. By carving “a place on the international agenda for questions of human rights,” Fascell declared during an early Commission session, Helsinki ensured that “the right to leave one’s country and to return to it…is now a right whose observation is as much a key to good standing in the international community of nations as the right of one government to be safe from attack…from its neighbors.” The NCSJ and its devotion to the cause of emigration, Fascell stated, “is the father—or at least the godfather—of the [Helsinki] Commission.” Soviet Jewry, it seemed, had become synonymous with human rights.\textsuperscript{230}

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“A World Court in Continuous Session”

The establishment Soviet Jewry Movement played an important role in the rise and solidification of human rights as a central factor in U.S. foreign relations. The next decade, however, would determine whether Soviet Jewry organizations and the U.S. government would extend that contribution to the international arena. The first test of the new U.S. dedication to human rights occurred at the initial Helsinki review conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, from October 1977 to November 1978. There, the U.S. delegation combated Soviet intransigence to establish the preeminence of human rights to the Helsinki process.

\textsuperscript{229} Korey, “From Helsinki: A Salute,” 128-9.
\textsuperscript{230} Remarks by Representative Dante Fascell (D-FL) to NCSJ On Early Achievements of Helsinki Commission, 10/26/76, Jerry Goodman Papers, Box #7, Folder #4, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY; Beckerman, 342.
President Carter emphatically signaled his commitment to addressing Basket III by appointing former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg to lead the U.S. delegation to Belgrade. A prominent Soviet Jewry advocate for several decades and known for his often-confrontational style, Goldberg’s nomination represented a potential departure from the traditional U.S. negotiating stance during the Helsinki process. The State Department officials preferred quiet diplomacy, adhering to the diplomatic norm of eschewing direct condemnation of a country by name or referencing specific violations of Basket III. Goldberg, however, insisted that “the East account for its failure to honor the accord’s [human rights] promise,” which he believed “[ranked] above all others.” In Goldberg’s view, Western countries bore “heavy responsibility” to the dissidents in the USSR who drew inspiration from Jackson-Vanik and the Helsinki Accords. By emphasizing Basket III, he later argued after the Conference, “We have given hope to dissenters in Prague and the Soviet Union and others in Eastern Europe that they are not overlooked.”

Goldberg debuted his new confrontational approach as soon as private sessions between the participant states began on October 18. Breaking all convention, he took to the podium to condemn the trial of four members of Charter 77, Czechoslovakia’s Helsinki Watch organization founded by Vaclav Havel. The chamber erupted in shock as the Czechoslovakian and Soviet representatives vigorously protested, with the delegate from the USSR telling his peers that the

231 Carter’s choice of Goldberg came by accident. Carter initially invited Goldberg to the White House to discuss ongoing peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt, given Goldberg’s expertise as the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. during the 1967 Six-Day War and his key role in drafting Resolution 242, which ushered in the end of the conflict. Carter immediately sought to appoint Goldberg as his envoy to mediate the negotiations, but faced resistance from both Secretary of State Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, who thought the outspoken Goldberg would undermine their efforts in the region. Persuaded, Carter attempted to save face by shifting Goldberg, who had already agreed to the Middle East posting, to lead the American delegation to Helsinki. Korey, The Promises We Keep, 69; Beckerman 356.


233 Beckerman, 358-61; Korey, The Promises We Keep, 79.
explicit citation of the Charter 77 case “does not make us smile here.” Goldberg’s statement, he proclaimed, “is nothing other than an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of [the USSR]. This is not the forum for such statements.”

Goldberg refused to capitulate. While the number of cases he chose to cite remained low—totaling a mere eight throughout the rest of the conference—he raised sensitive cases and devoted particular attention to persecution of Jews and dissidents across the Soviet bloc who collaborated in forming Helsinki Watch associations. Most controversially, perhaps, Goldberg challenged the Soviets to answer for their incarceration of Anatoly Sharansky—a Soviet Jew who bridged the refusenik and dissident communities by serving as spokesperson for the Moscow Helsinki Watch. Arrested on charges of colluding with the CIA, Sharansky spent months in prison forbidden from contacting the outside world or retaining counsel for his defense. Despite repeated Soviet objections, Goldberg incessantly demanded that the USSR answer for its “semi-blackmail policy” of using a leading Soviet dissident to force President Carter to forsake his human rights campaign.

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234 Korey, The Promises We Keep, 82-3.
235 Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Scharansky Trouble Upsetting Soviets?” Sarasota Herald-Tribune, December 26, 1977. Sharansky’s case quickly transformed into a beacon for multiple constituencies interested in securing greater human rights in the Soviet Union. Originally a Jewish refusenik whose emigration application to Israel had been denied by Soviet authorities, Sharansky soon entered the broader Moscow dissident community and acted as a link between the two factions. He first served as an assistant to Andrei Sakharov, offering assistance as an English translator, and later became founder and spokesmen of the Moscow Helsinki group with Sakharov’s blessing. While some in both communities distrusted or resented the ease with which Sharansky traveled between the two communities—the Israeli Liaison Bureau, in particular, thought Sharansky’s insistence on linking human rights and the Jewish emigration movement might undermine the Jewish effort—Sharansky believed that “embracing [his] identity in the name of freedom secured” both movements. By forming Moscow Helsinki Watch, he became the most visible link to the outside world for both refuseniks and democratic dissidents.

Sharansky’s subsequent arrest for espionage—he would soon face trial for treason—created an international sensation, and made Sharansky the defining symbol of both Jewish emigration and human rights. President Carter himself issued an unprecedented public announcement that Sharansky had “never had any sort of relationship, to our knowledge, with the CIA.” See Beckerman, 300-20; 354. For more on Sharansky’s biography and role as refusenik and dissident, see Sharansky, Fear No Evil and Sharansky, Defending Identity: It’s Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

On a Columbia-related note, several prominent U.S. public intellectuals and Congressmen organized an Ad Hoc Commission on Justice for Sharansky as the Belgrade Conference commenced in October 1977. The chairman of the commission was Columbia University President William McGill, who stated in his opening address that “with
Goldberg’s public stand, however, did not produce the concrete effect that he sought. The Soviets merely agreed to reaffirm the original Accords and rejected the over 100 American proposals for additions to Basket III, while neutral states and even NATO allies expressed discomfort with his citations of individual cases such as those of Sharansky and Orlov. Goldberg returned home discouraged, believing that any further salvos against the USSR on human rights would require greater public awareness in the United States concerning Soviet Basket III violations. Yet by establishing the primacy of *refusenik* and dissident plight to the fate of détente with the support of establishment Soviet Jewry Movement, Goldberg broke “the silence barrier” surrounding open discussion of human rights. Through Helsinki, he began the process of internationalizing the principle pioneered by Jackson-Vanik—that a nation’s internal affairs constitute an essential aspect of international diplomacy.

respect to matters involving fundamental freedom, there is a growing sense in the world that our concerns no longer may be isolated by national boundaries.” See Proceedings of the Ad Hoc Commission on Justice for Anatoly Sharansky, Senate Hearing, 10/20/77, Jerry Goodman Papers, Box #18, Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

Goldberg returned to the United States convinced that ignorance in the United States of the plight of Soviet and Eastern European dissidents could be alleviated by an American NGO that borrowed its example from the Helsinki Watch groups. He met with President of the Ford Foundation and former Kennedy and Johnson National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy, and convinced him to fund a new NGO that would provide detailed information about Communist repression in the West. Bundy allocated $400,000 per year to the newly constituted U.S. Helsinki Watch, run by Robert Bernstein and Jeri Laber. The U.S. Helsinki Watch collaborated closely with Helsinki Watch groups in the Soviet bloc and published careful research regarding Soviet human rights violations. Vaclav Havel, the head of Czechoslovakia’s Charter 77 and later the country’s first post-Communist president, visited the offices of Helsinki Watch in New York upon his first state visit and told them that “perhaps without you, our revolution could not be.” Helsinki Watch would later change its name to Human Rights Watch, and remains one of the leading human rights NGOs in the globe. See Korey, *NGOs and the Universal Declaration*, 237-239.

Massachusetts Congressman Robert Drinan noted the Jewish establishment embrace of Helsinki in a speech before Congress about the second Brussels Conference for Soviet Jewry, telling his colleagues that “the big development at Brussels II was the beginning of the exploitation by the delegates of the implications of the Helsinki agreement.” See Representative Robert Drinan on The Next Milestone for Soviet Jews: The Meeting of 35 Helsinki Nations in Belgrade, 1/26/77, American Jewish Committee Archives, Box #205, Folder #1, Collection of AJC, New York, NY.

U.S. Helsinki Commission Chair Dante Fascell, as quoted by Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 98.

The NCSJ contributed to Goldberg’s presented evidence and continued its close cooperation with the U.S. Helsinki Commission, especially vis-à-vis the right to leave. The organization strongly endorsed Goldberg’s public castigation of Soviet human rights abuses. Jerry Goodman testified before Congress in June 1978 that “by securing rights for Jews in the USSR, we are in fact helping secure the rights for all people, in the USSR and elsewhere. Their struggle becomes our struggle.” Later, he declared that “the fight for free people was a commitment expressed by Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg and the U.S. delegation at the recent Belgrade
Goldberg’s replacement at the next Helsinki review Conference in Madrid, Max Kampelman, ensured that public diplomacy on human rights remained a dominant feature of international affairs. As the session commenced in November 1980, Kampelman announced his intention to arraign the Soviet Union in a “world court in continuous session,” recognizing that Helsinki was “playing an increasing role in the US-Soviet Relationship and in East-West relations.”239 The new Ambassador drastically expanded upon Goldberg’s eight case citations at Belgrade, working with his staff to cite a total of sixty-five named cases in the first six weeks of the conference, many of them Helsinki Watch Group members. Kampelman devoted particular attention to freedom of emigration, teaming with several other Western allies to criticize various restrictions on the Jewish emigration from the USSR—marking perhaps the first time in an international setting that so many nations pledged their allegiance to shame the Soviets regarding the right to leave.240

The establishment Soviet Jewry Movement’s far more concrete presence at Madrid contributed to these unprecedented efforts. Jerry Goodman announced at the outset of the review conference an “acceleration” of NCSJ coordination with the U.S. government during the conference, in an attempt to “bolster” human rights advocacy.241 Both the NCSJ and activist Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry established permanent offices nearby the conference hall,

239 Korey, The Promises We Keep, 115. Wives and relatives of jailed Soviet dissidents and trapped refuseniks gathered at Madrid and mingled with representatives of Western NGOs in rallies, demonstrations, press conferences, and review sessions. Leaflets and posters covered Madrid, which the French newspaper Le Monde dubbed the “city of dissidence.” Korey attributes the rise in activism to Spain’s democratic character (as contrasted to Yugoslavia’s dictatorship), as well as changed Western public opinion toward Moscow in the wake of further internal repression and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. See Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration, 240-1.

240 Remarks from Max Kampelman to Congress, 3/24/82, Jerry Goodman Papers Box #9 Folder #5, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York NY.

241 NCSJ Program Highlights, December 1980, Jerry Goodman Papers Box #9 Folder #1, Collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, New York NY.
utilizing the forum to advocate publicly and lobby quietly for Soviet Jewish emigration.

Kampelman himself regularly visited the centers to confer on strategy, obtain new
documentation on Soviet abuses, and communicate with refuseniks via telephone.\textsuperscript{242} In a telling indication of the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement’s transformation since it countered
Kahane by embracing freedom of emigration as a universal value, the AJC produced a fact sheet
which exclaimed that “human rights are not an internal affair!” “The right of any individual to
leave his country,” the document continued,

Is an internationally recognized human right, upheld by the Helsinki agreement and international law, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was ratified by the Soviet Union. Human rights are self-evident and transcend political boundaries.\textsuperscript{243}

America’s continued struggle to secure the right to leave—spurred by the persistent encouragement of the Soviet Jewry Movement—secured the ultimate dream of right-to-leave advocates during the 1989 Helsinki review conference in Vienna. The session’s document rebuked former Soviet emigration practices by obligating governments to inform applicants refused exit visas as to the reason for refusal and provide them with judicial and administrative remedies. It further urged nations to abjure from invoking “national security” justifications to deny exit visas arbitrarily—a tactic employed by the Soviets for decades that served as the most frequent excuse to prevent free emigration.\textsuperscript{244} Vienna’s most sweeping revolution, however, came in far simpler terms: for the first time during the Cold War, the Soviet bloc and all other Final Act signatories recognized that “everyone shall be free to leave any country.”\textsuperscript{245}

\textsuperscript{242} Beckerman, 454.
\textsuperscript{243} AJC Fact Sheet on Soviet Jewry (undated), American Jewish Committee Archives, Box #205, Folder #3, Collection of AJC, New York, NY.
\textsuperscript{244} See p. 60 of this thesis for discussion of Soviet emigration restrictions and the use of “national security.” The Soviets denied three-quarters of emigration visas based on national security concerns.
\textsuperscript{245} Korey, The Promises We Keep, 259-60.
Soviet recognition of the right to leave dovetailed with its increasing liberalization to produce the most significant wave of Jewish emigration since the beginning of the Cold War. While only 914 Jews left the USSR in 1986, nearly 100,000 exited amidst the Vienna proceedings in 1989. The struggle initiated by Jose Ingles, William Korey, and young Jewish activists, bolstered by the Uppsala Colloquium, utilized by Senator Henry Jackson, and then embraced by the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement, at last appeared complete. The right to leave now constituted a fully international standard.

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**Conclusion**

The atmosphere in Washington D.C. seemed miraculously warm on December 8, 1987. As Soviet Premiere Mikhail Gorbachev entered the White House that morning, U.S. President Ronald Reagan welcomed him jovially. “My first name is Ron,” he said. “We can call each other [by our first names] when we’re in private session. “Mine is Mikhail,” Gorbachev genially replied. Reagan’s disarming informality suited the agenda of the leaders’ impending summit—the first nuclear weapons reduction treaty in the history of the Cold War.²⁴⁷

As the two men took their seats, Gorbachev undoubtedly expected to discuss arms control. Rather than launch nuclear negotiations, however, Reagan opened the discussion with a deceptively casual remark. “You know, there was a rally on the Mall the other day,” he told his counterpart. A visibly perturbed Gorbachev understood the reference. Two days previously, 250,000 people from across the United States rallied outside the nation’s Capitol in an unprecedented display of solidarity for Soviet Jewry. Singing “Let My People Go,” the demonstrators roared as Vice President George Bush, Senator Al Gore, Elie Wiesel, and recently freed refuseniks such as Anatoly (now Natan) Sharansky stood on stage together.²⁴⁸

Gorbachev sought to avoid the subject. “I heard about [the rally],” he answered, “Why don’t you go on and talk about arms control?” “Mikhail,” Reagan responded,

More than 250,000 people walked past this building two days ago of all different stripes and varieties. Both [Houses of Congress] and both parties spoke to them. The American people spoke—as much to me as to you. They told me that [freedom of emigration] must be an issue an issue of priority for the U.S. as it must be for you. What are you going to do about it?²⁴⁹

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²⁴⁸ Interview with David Harris, February 2010. Now president of the American Jewish Committee, Harris served as the national coordinator for the Washington Soviet Jewry rally.
The President’s ultimatum represented the apotheosis of human rights upon the international stage. To Reagan, the legitimacy of any nuclear accord depended on the Soviet Union’s ability to “keep its word with respect to existing international obligations on emigration.” As he told Morris Abram—organizer of the Uppsala Colloquium fifteen years previously and Reagan’s close confidant—if the USSR refused to comply with human rights provisions, it could not “be trusted with respect to arms.”\(^\text{250}\) With a significant de-escalation of the Cold War at stake, Reagan placed the right to leave above the most urgent challenge to superpower relations. Human rights had become integral to matters of global security.


Abram’s voyage from Uppsala to Washington captures the critical role played by the Soviet Jewry Movement in advancing human rights by advocating freedom of emigration. Only recently the providence of activists and legal scholars, the right to leave now defined the agendas of diplomats and heads of state. His journey from ivory tower to oval office also reflected the Soviet Jewry Movement’s multifaceted contribution to free emigration: one scholarly, the other political. Upon converging, these two streams combined the intellectual foundation and

\(^{250}\) Beckerman, 465.
institutional influence necessary to concretize the right to leave and render it—and by extension, human rights—such a consequential force in international affairs.

The mainstream Soviet Jewry Movement did not readily embrace the emigration battle, let alone its contextualization as a human right. Initially viewing the plight of Soviet Jewry within the framework of the African-American civil rights struggle, establishment leaders sought to persuade the USSR—quietly, if possible—to fulfill its constitutional pledges of equal rights to Soviet Jews. Yet the increasingly apparent desire of Soviet Jews to emigrate combined with the disintegration of the American civil rights movement to render the civil rights paradigm increasingly irrelevant. Meir Kahane’s Jewish Defense League entered the vacuum and usurped the establishment’s authority by bathing the Movement in violence and tribal exclusivity. Kahane irrevocably altered the effort by demonstrating that quiet diplomacy would never enjoy the same influence on the Soviet Union as public pressure, and introducing the first open demand for total Jewish emigration from the USSR.

The establishment belatedly responded to the yearnings of Soviet Jews for emigration and the threat posed by Kahane’s JDL when it established the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) in 1971. Though it easily eclipsed the JDL in financial security and mainstream appeal, the NCSJ failed to confront the JDL on its most potent level—that of ideology. It could not combat Kahane’s theoretical platform with sanctimonious condemnations of violence alone. Directionless, the potentially influential political machinery of the NCSJ floundered as Kahane continued to offer the only compelling—albeit bloody and revanchist—vision for the Movement.

Senator Henry Jackson soon rescued the NCSJ from its malaise by requesting its political support for his Amendment linking U.S. trade to Soviet freedom of emigration. Yet Jackson offered the NCSJ more than a legislative agenda. His bill packaged the demand for free
emigration from the USSR in the revolutionary language of human rights, granting the establishment the ability to co-opt Kahane’s tribalist conception of emigration with a universal appeal. The NCSJ neutralized the JDL by dedicating its support to the Jackson Amendment. The establishment recaptured the Soviet Jewry Movement from Kahane, then, through the realm of ideas.

Yet the Soviet Jewry Movement did not simply contribute its political support to the Jackson Amendment, but provided its legal foundation. Over ten years previously, a cadre of activists and scholars—many who operated within the establishment Soviet Jewry Movement but enjoyed little impact on its public agenda until 1972—began formulating a sophisticated body of thought regarding the right to leave. Soviet Jewry experts such as William Korey offered vital contributions to Jose Ingles’ landmark U.N. report on the status of free emigration, which established the notion of free emigration as a “gateway” to securing the “effective enjoyment of other human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Soviet Jewry activists collaborated with human rights advocates and legal specialists from across the world to champion that notion nearly a decade later at the Uppsala Colloquium on the Right to Leave and the Right to Return. This thesis demonstrates that Ingles and Uppsala—both borne from the periphery of the Soviet Jewry Movement—provided direct ideational inspiration for the Jackson Amendment, and, soon thereafter, the Helsinki Final Act.

Indeed, the Jackson Amendment crystallized the Soviet Jewry Movement’s political machinery with its intellectual innovation. The NCSJ lobbied aggressively throughout the 1970s and 80s to unite a broad coalition behind the right to leave, which served as a “gateway” not only to secure a plethora of additional rights, but an entry point for every concern with Soviet internal policy. The alliance eventually included anti-Communist hawks such as Jackson and European
nations seeking a tangible quid pro quo from the USSR in return for détente; Western and Soviet
democratic activists who, like Ingles, saw the right to leave as an assurance of all other basic
rights; and of course, Soviet Jews themselves, who drew extraordinary inspiration from Jackson-
Vanik and Helsinki. By exploiting Soviet desires—trade credits with the Jackson Amendment,
and recognition of status quo borders in Europe with Helsinki—the NCSJ-built coalition utilized
the right to leave as a means of wielding concrete instruments toward ethical ideals.

The Soviet Jewry Movement’s efforts, both politically and intellectually, established a
broad consensus surrounding two essential notions: that the Soviet Union’s internal affairs
constituted a valid international concern, and that the USSR would only improve treatment of its
citizens in response to sustained public pressure. The repeated, continuous, and precise
recitation of repression in the USSR, especially regarding restrictions on emigration, would
expose the bankruptcy of the Soviet system. As a Soviet bloc diplomat admitted to Morris
Abram in his 1971 New York Times editorial on the right to leave, “The USSR…is proclaimed
by its leaders as the perfect society. If anyone chooses to leave, this is a blot on the claim.”

The Soviet Jewish Movement’s struggle for emigration undermined the basic tenets of the
Communist system. It forced the Soviet Union to accept its international obligations and
abandon its long-held faith in the inviolability of borders. The right to leave, then, offered one
final “gateway”—in securing the emancipation of Soviet Jewry by the end of the Cold War, it
served as a means of fostering universal acceptance of human rights accords.

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Policymakers and intellectuals continue to deliberate the role of human rights in foreign
affairs, both in the United States and in the international community. The debate remains fraught

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with complexity, carrying a bevy of examples to bolster both human rights supporters and skeptics. Yet the Soviet Jewry Movement and its promotion of the right to leave offers a compelling example of NGOs and governments successfully wedding practical politics with moral ends. In securing the freedom of Soviet Jews—and, on some level, the Russian people more broadly—the Movement demonstrated that while bullets, money, and diplomacy mattered, they failed to overshadow the power of ideas.
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