

**JEWISH INFLUENCE IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: AMERICAN JEWRY, ISRAEL AND THE ISSUE OF SOVIET JEWRY, 1968-1989**

In their recent book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt claim that the Israel Lobby has hijacked American foreign policy in the Middle East to serve the interests of Israel rather than those of United States<sup>1</sup>). They describe the Israel Lobby as having three components: American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), most of whose members are American Jews, the neo-cons (most of whose members are also Jewish) and the Christian Right (the largest of the three and non-Jewish). In effect, the authors suggest that American Jews have significant influence over US foreign policy issues relating to Israel and the Middle East. They also imply that American Jewish leaders follow the lead of the Israeli government.

The authors<sup>2</sup>) make use of considerable anecdotal evidence. For example they recite the claim of an AIPAC staffer that in 24 hours he could get signatures of 70 Senators in support of Israel. In sharp contrast they heard no such claims from the oil lobby. Is this proof of the power of AIPAC in Washington DC?

The purpose of this paper is to show that the issue of Jewish influence in American politics in general and in foreign policy in particular is much more nuanced than Mearsheimer and Walt suggest. It focuses on actual efforts by major Jewish organizations to influence their government to act on behalf of Jews in the Soviet Union. The government of Israel also became involved. The American Jewish organizations lobbied to have their government intervene with the Soviets to let Soviet Jews emigrate if they chose and to allow those remaining to practice their religion and cultural heritage. Comparisons are also made to the 1930s when American Jewish leaders lobbied their government to protest Hitler's persecution of Germany Jews and to allow for the entry of German Jewish refugees into the United States.

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<sup>1</sup>) MEARSHEIMER, J. and WALL, S., *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

<sup>2</sup>) *Ibid*, pp. 10, 11.

## Comparisons with the 1930s

An earlier study by Lazin<sup>3)</sup> of the response of leaders of the American Jewish Committee to the crisis of German Jewry in the 1930s found sick and old men, lacking influence in the American political arena, insecure about being Jews and often more busy with business and family than with the plight of German Jewry. In sharp contrast Lazin's *The Struggle for Soviet Jewry in American Politics: Israel versus the American Jewish Establishment*<sup>4)</sup> presents a very different picture of Jewish leaders and organizations in the 1970s and 1980s. At least four major differences are worth noting.

First, a single organization, the American Jewish Committee, had an initial advantage on access and ties to the Roosevelt Administration in Washington. It was the major Jewish organization in American politics. Other establishment organizations on the scene including the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith (with its Anti-Defamation League) and the Jewish Labor Committee had with considerable less influence. While Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress had access to President Roosevelt he had little influence.

In the 1970s there were many Jewish organizations, establishment and grass roots, operating actively on local, regional and national levels in the struggle for Soviet Jewry. Many had influence and access in Washington DC. There was active competition between the grass roots and the establishment and within the establishment. For example National Conference for Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) competed (and cooperated) on the national and local levels with Council for Jewish Federations (CJF), National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Councils (NJCRAC), the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Coalition for Soviet Jewry as well as with the Union of Councils, representing grass roots organizations on behalf of Soviet Jews. All of these organizations had varying degrees of access and influence with Congress and the Administration.

A second significant difference is the quality of leadership. The top echelon of the American Jewish Committee of the 1930s consisted of very wealthy and professionally successful men. Many however were older, often sick and over extended; other commitments both professional and personal limited their time and involvement with concerns and activities of the Committee and with issues of threats to German and European Jews. For example, the American Jewish Committee failed to find members to represent it „at home and abroad in meeting and conferences on the German Jewish crisis. The wealth and position of its members sometimes facilitated contact with Europe and European Jewry, but when business did not permit a trip or vacation, the Committee was not

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<sup>3)</sup> LAZIN, F.A., „The Response of the American Jewish Committee to the Crisis of German Jewry, 1933 – 1939.“ *American Jewish History* 68, no. 3, 1979, pp. 283 304.

<sup>4)</sup> LAZIN, F.A., *The Struggle for Soviet Jewry in American Politics: Israel versus the American Jewish Establishment*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2005.

represented. Family concerns also interfered<sup>5</sup>). In May, 1939, realizing that the situation of Jews in Germany was desperate, the Committee wished to schedule additional meetings on Sunday. The plan failed, however, because in the spring so many of the members went to the country for weekends<sup>6</sup>).

Most of the organizations in the 1970s and 1980s had an overabundance of qualified and capable lay leadership, both men and *women*, with countless replacements waiting in the wings. Persons active in Jewish organizational life, often persons of means dominated the lay leadership of the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement in the 1970s. Unlike their counterparts in the 1930s, however, most took leave from their other organizational, professional and business pursuits and committed themselves full time to the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement. Importantly, for many their personal, peer and communal status was earned via activism in a particular Jewish organization.

Many of these organizations in the 1970s and 1980s had extensive and expanding professional staffs especially in existing and long established organizations like CJF, NJCRAC, American Jewish Committee, American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). In sharp contrast the ad hoc and newer organizations were hampered by staff shortages reflecting a lack of fiscal stability. The NCSJ, for example, suffered from a shortage of staff throughout which adversely affected its activities and effectiveness.

Third, and most importantly, establishment Jewish leaders during the 1930s were insecure as American Jews. They often refrained from pressing Jewish issues and Jewish causes. They sought Christian allies to fight anti-Semitism „without American Jews appearing in ... the struggle“<sup>7</sup>). The American Jewish Committee, for example, adopted „quiet diplomacy“ „believing it to be the most effective and preferable to more public approaches which lent themselves to anti-Semitism and general public criticism of Jews and their cause“<sup>8</sup>). At one point the President of the Committee feared that if his own government were to criticize Hitler that it „might give substance to anti-Semitic charges that the American Jews controlled the government“<sup>9</sup>).

In contrast most leaders and professionals in the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement felt comfortable with being both Jewish and American.

They took up the cause of Israel and Soviet Jewry without concern as to what non-Jewish Americans thought. They did not see a conflict between Jewish and American concerns. They were comfortable in pressuring their government to act on behalf of Soviet Jews. They believed that the well being of Soviet Jews was a legitimate demand to make on their Congressmen and President. They

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<sup>5</sup>) LAZIN, F.A., note 3, p. 303.

<sup>6</sup>) Ibid, p. 304.

<sup>7</sup>) Ibid, p. 291.

<sup>8</sup>) Ibid p. 285.

<sup>9</sup>) Ibid p. 288.

justified their Jewish interests in terms of national interest and democratic and American values. To some extent, American Jews were no longer a minority but part of a majority in a psychological sense. Representative is Mark Talisman, the CJF lobbyist in Washington DC. When asked about pressing for the entry of Soviet Jews as refugees, he claimed that he was not concerned about what non Jews would think. He acted on behalf of the principle of family reunification.

The Cold War helped their case on behalf of Soviet Jewry since American Jews were seeking support and benefits for a population being persecuted by a Communist regime. This created general sympathy for the Soviet Jews in the United States. Many members of Congress were strongly anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. Senator Henry Jackson, for example, was a Cold War warrior fighting evil in the guise of the Soviet Union. Many American politicians saw the Soviet Union as evil. The issue of Soviet Jewry attracted them and their support required very little and had few political liabilities. Refugee resettlement became a key instrument in the fight against Communism and „Emigration from the former Soviet Union—or the lack of it—was a major concern of United States foreign policy during the cold war era“<sup>10</sup>). Newland suggested that in the Cold War refugee policy was a „handmaiden of foreign policy... meant to contribute to... damaging and ultimately defeating Communist countries.“<sup>11</sup>)

Ironically, Israeli policy on Soviet Jewry complicated the „Cold War“ context of the Soviet Jewry advocacy struggle. Israel's Liaison Bureau, a clandestine intelligence unit in the Office of the Prime Minister dedicated to working for the immigration of Soviet Jews consistently chose not to be anti-Soviet even in the face of persecution of Jews and refusal to allow emigration. Its objective was to get Communist Parties in Western Europe to protest the treatment of Soviet Jews. Thus it did not push for regime change. It opposed contact between Jewish activists in the Soviet Union and Soviet dissidents who wanted to reform the Soviet regime. Led by NCSJ, the American Jewish establishment adopted this position. In sharp contrast the Union of Councils often favored the anti-Soviet line.

Another factor influencing the political behavior of American Jewish leaders in American politics in the latter period was the existence of Israel. In Ralph Goldman's words: „...the establishment and impact of the State of Israel psychologically changed the Jewish image from that of victim to victor. Jews around the world identified with Israel's struggles, its needs, its institutions, and its emissaries. Jewish political power and Jewish pride, whether real or

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<sup>10</sup>) RUSSELL, S. S., „Migration patters of U.S. Foreign Policy Interest.“ In *Threatened Peoples, Threatened Borders*, edited by Michael Teitelbaum and Myron Weiner, 39-87. NY: W. W. Norton, 1995, p. 81.

<sup>11</sup>) NEWLAND, K., "The Impact of U.S. Refugee Policies on U.S. Foreign Policy: A Case of the Tail Wagging the Dog?" Pp. 290-214 in *Threatened Peoples, Threatened Borders*, edited by Michael Teitelbaum and Myron Weiner. New York: W. W. Norton, 1995, p. 190.

perceived, escalated with the establishment of the State of Israel”.<sup>12)</sup> Many of the leaders of the Soviet Jewry movement confirmed that Israel’s existence and its 1967 victory had instilled in them a sense of pride and security.

Nevertheless, some leaders exhibited a certain restraint about emphasizing Jewish interests. Ralph Goldman of JDC, perhaps representative of an older generation who grew up in the 1930s, often urged caution. Citing this sensitivity does, not however, confirm assertions by Goldberg<sup>13)</sup> that many American Jews still see themselves as „isolated, vulnerable minority“. He emphasizes a growing awareness of rising anti-Semitism, insecurity and a lack of self confidence. He describes this as „...the gap between the Jews' self-image of vulnerability and the reality of Jewish Power.“ Ginsberg<sup>14)</sup> raised a similar theme. Writing in the early 1990s he argued that in contemporary American life anti-Semitism “has begun to reemerge as a prominent political force, and in all likelihood will grow in importance in the coming years“.<sup>15)</sup>

While these feelings may have surfaced in the 1990s; they were not central themes in the deliberations of the American Jewish establishment in the 1970s and 1980s. Possibly, the comfort and security felt by American Jewry in the 1970s and 1980s and described best by Charles Silberman<sup>16)</sup> may have been a passing phenomena. The situation of American Jews today may be significantly different from the 1980s and much closer to the descriptions of Goldberg and Ginsberg. For example, Frank Rich wrote in 2004 in response to Mel Gibson's „The Passion“: „...speaking as someone who has never experienced serious bigotry, I must confess that...the fracas over „The Passion“ has made me feel less secure as a Jew in America than every before“.<sup>17)</sup>

A final difference between the two periods concerns the personalities of those holding public office. President Franklin D. Roosevelt did not “protest” Germany’s persecution of its Jews until after the *Krystallnacht* pogroms in November 1938. His protest involved recalling the American Ambassador for consultations. Later, although he may have been less indifferent than other allied political leaders toward the plight of European Jews he did little or nothing to deter or prevent the German genocide against the Jews of Europe. In comparison several American Presidents in the 1970s and 1980s willingly spoke directly with Soviet leaders about Soviet Jews. President Ronald Reagan, for

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<sup>12)</sup> GOLDMAN, R., “The Involvement and Policies of American Jewry in Revitalizing European Jewry, 1945-1995.” Unpublished manuscript, 1995, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>13)</sup> GOLDBERG, J. J., *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1996, pp. 3 – 7.

<sup>14)</sup> GINSBERG, B., *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>15)</sup> Ibid, p. 224.

<sup>16)</sup> SILBERMAN, CH. E., *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today*. NY: Summit Books, 1985.

<sup>17)</sup> New York Times, March 7, 2004.

example, placed their right to emigrate and cultural and religious freedom on the agenda for summit meetings with his Soviet counterpart. He even met with refuseniks while on an official state visit to the Soviet Union.

The difference in Secretary of States is even starker. In the 1930s American Jews could barely get an off the record comment about the persecution Jews in Germany from Secretary of State Cordell Hull (1933-1944). He was aloof, cold, indifferent and formal on all matters relating to Jews and Germany. With respect to Soviet Jews, President Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz (1982-1989) was passionately involved in trying to pressure Soviet authorities to improve their well being and allow them to emigrate. His sympathy touched on philo-Semitism. He took a personal interest in the plight of many Soviet Jews. According to his memoirs<sup>18)</sup>, the release of Ida Nudel was „one of the most moving moments of my years as Secretary of State.“ On missions to the Soviet Union he visited Soviet Jews denied exit visas, attended a Passover Seder with well known refuseniks and encouraged Soviet Jews to persevere in their struggle for freedom. This would be the equivalent of Roosevelt's Secretary of State Cordell Hull visiting Germany after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 and urging German Jews he met to struggle on with reassurances of United States government support.

### **Jews in American Politics Today**

Many of the findings in Lazin's<sup>19)</sup> study of the Soviet Jewry movement in the US are relevant for understanding American Jews today as an ethnic group and as individual actors in the American political system. The study confirms substantial Jewish influence and power in American politics. In contrast to the reserve, weakness and ineffectiveness of the American Jewish response to the plight of European Jews during the Holocaust, the American Jewish community of the 1970s and 1980s was very assertive, influential and effective in lobbying on behalf of Soviet Jews. The American Jewish establishment influenced Congress and then the Administration to pressure Soviet authorities to allow free emigration for Soviet Jews and cultural and religious freedom for those that remained, accept most Soviet Jewish émigrés as refugees (until 1988), and fund their resettlement in Israel and the United States. These efforts along with their support of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to deny Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to the Soviet Union attest to Goldberg's assertion that "... a powerful machine has arisen (in the United States) in the last quarter-century to advance Jewish interests"<sup>20)</sup>.

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<sup>18)</sup> SHULTZ, G., *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*. NY: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1993, p. 990.

<sup>19)</sup> LAZIN, F. A., op. cit., note 4.

<sup>20)</sup> GOLDBERG, J. J., op. cit. note 13, p. 16.

Goldberg explains Jewish power in terms of political influence. He describes Jewish votes as an electoral prize. While less than three percent of the voters they are a “key swing bloc. They are concentrated in a few populous states that control nearly half the Electoral College votes. They are also energetic volunteers. Perhaps more important, they are prodigious givers, providing between one fourth and one half of all Democratic campaign funds“. Several important members of the House and Senate have strong backing from activists in the American Jewish establishment.

Also of importance was the growing presence of Jewish members of both Houses of Congress. Whereas Stephen Isaacs<sup>21)</sup> (1975) argued that in the 1960s and 1970s many American Jews may have been too timid to run for office, by the 1980s „Jewish members of Congress had become one of the most important bases of organized Jewish political power in the United States. Working frequently as a solid bloc, they formed the core of pro-Israel activity in Washington. They led the efforts to maintain and increase foreign aid ... for Israel. . . . They won passage for legislative initiatives to extend American help to oppressed Jews in the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. They crafted and fought for laws to guarantee U.S. visas for Soviet Jewish refugees. They led the fight against school prayer, year after year...“<sup>22)</sup>.

In addition Jewish men and women served as senior staff to members of Congress and on various Congressional Committees. Some of these staffers gave the Soviet Jewry issue a sensitive ear. Congressional staffers Richard Perle (of Senator Jackson's staff) and Morris Amitay (of Senator Ribicoff's staff), for example shaped the Jackson-Vanik legislation to link Soviet Jewish emigration and trade. Another example is Mark Talisman. As a member of Congressman Vanik's staff he also played an important role in the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Later, as a CJF lobbyist, he worked on the matching grant program for resettlement of Soviet Jews, the 1980 Refugee Act, briefed Congressional staff on Soviet Jewry and led orientations for freshman members of the House and Senate.

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

The agreement to accept a quota may have surprised and even shocked some observers due to the recent experience of the Holocaust when restrictive quotas limited the entry of European Jews trying to flee Nazi persecution. Revelations

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<sup>21)</sup> ISAACS, S. D., *Jews and American Politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.

<sup>22)</sup> GOLDBERG, J. J., op. cit., note 13, pp. 253 – 254.

by Arthur Morse,<sup>23)</sup> Henry Feingold<sup>24)</sup> and David Wyman<sup>25)</sup> contributed to a collective American Jewish awareness of American Jewish inaction and indifference of American officials toward the persecution and death of millions of European Jews. These realizations haunted many American Jewish leaders in the 1970s and 1980s. Countless activists and leaders in the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement recounted the tragic times when American Jews did nothing as six million Jews perished.

This collective memory had made American Jewish leaders more concerned about Jewish survival and the situation of Jews in the Soviet Union and in Israel. „Never Again“ a term used by Meir Kahane had been adopted by mainstream American Jewish leaders. In fact the Liaison Bureau and the American Soviet Jewry movement used the memory of the Holocaust and Holocaust guilt to pressure American Jews to act on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

These sentiments helped to defeat Israeli generated proposals to cease aiding dropouts at the CJF General Assemblies in 1976 and in 1980. During the 1970s Soviet Jews were allowed to leave only on visas for Israel. Since there were no direct flights between the USSR and Israel following the 1967 break in diplomatic ties, most left by train to Vienna where Israeli authorities flew them to Israel. In mid-1973 a growing number of Soviet Jewish émigrés in Vienna chose not to go on to Israel. They sought visas to the United States and other Western countries. By March 1976 the majority of émigrés chose not to continue on to Israel.

Despite wanting most Soviet Jews to go to Israel, many American Jews felt it wrong to support a policy which would deny Jews entry into the United States of America; after the Holocaust how could the American Jewish community ask its government to close the gates of freedom to Jews from the Soviet Union? The collective memory of the Holocaust, however, would fade quickly.

What is often overlooked is the evidence presented by Lazin<sup>26)</sup> that as numbers of Soviet Jewish immigrants to the United States increased in the late 1970s that many major Jewish federations began to retreat from their support of “freedom of choice”. Several federations restricted resettlement in their community to persons with first-degree relatives. They preferred for Soviet Jews to be resettled in Israel. If the Soviet emigration had not tapered off in 1981 and 1982 it is likely that more and more federations would have supported policies to restrict the entry of Soviet Jews into the United States. This controversy ended temporarily when the Soviet Union closed its exit gates in 1982.

By the late 1980s however, when Mikhail Gorbachev proposed free emigra-

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<sup>23)</sup> MORSE, A. D., *While Six Million Died*. NY: Random House, 1968.

<sup>24)</sup> FEINGOLD, H., *The Politics of Rescue*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970.

<sup>25)</sup> WYMAN, D. S., *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. New York, Pantheon Books, 1984.

<sup>26)</sup> LAZIN, F.A., op. cit., note 4.

tion for Soviet Jews, the American Jewish establishment initially retreated from support of freedom of choice behind the cover of „direct flights“ via Bucharest. This denied Soviet Jews the option of dropping out en route to Israel. Shortly thereafter, they agreed to a quota on Soviet Jewish refugees allowed to enter the United States.

The reluctance of their government to accept more Soviet Jews, the limited federal funding and overall economic burden of resettlement, the desire not to alienate other groups sponsoring refugees and Israel's willingness to accept all Soviet Jewish émigrés explain their support of the quota of 40,000 Soviet Jews for FY90 based on family reunification. Nevertheless, the general lack of publicity that American Jewish organizations gave the negotiations over the quota between American Jewish groups led by Max Fisher and the State Department indicates the sensitive nature of American Jewry supporting a quota on Jewish refugees. As Steven Nasatir, the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, argued, „... American Jewish people, who remember a time in our history when the doors of this country were not open during the Hitler years, resulting in the death of many people, and as a community, we could never, set a quota...we kind of acquiesced to what the government thought was fair... We can't ever go public in terms of saying; we don't want these people...” Mark Talisman continued to deny that a quota had been adopted; technically the annual ceiling of Soviet refugees would be renegotiated each year between the White House and Congress.

The abandonment of „freedom of choice“ casts doubt on the political significance of Michael Novick's<sup>27)</sup> conclusion that the Holocaust had become the primary concern among many individual American Jews and organized local Jewish communities by the 1980s. The concern about „never again“ may not have been as profound or deep as evidenced by the willingness, if reluctantly, to support a quota on Soviet Jewish refugees in 1989. American Jewish leaders had learned to distinguish between the emotional awareness and collective memory of the Holocaust and pragmatic political interests. In dealing with Soviet Jewish advocacy and especially issues of resettlement after 1985, American Jews were more concerned about their own well being and prosperity as a community and as individuals. This took precedence over the desire by Soviet Jews to resettle in the United States. Importantly, they had the option of going to Israel or remaining in the Soviet Union which by the late 1980s was offering Jews greater cultural, religious and organizational freedom.

An interesting issue today would be the response of American Jewry to a decision by the President of the United States to actively oppose a policy of the government of Israel. How would the American Jewish establishment react? The experience of the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement suggests a pre-

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<sup>27)</sup> NOVICK, P., *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999, p. 168.

ference by American Jewish leaders to pursue the self interest of the American Jewish community regardless of whether it is supportive of Israeli interests.

### Israeli Involvement in American Politics

The findings here about the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement in the United States also provides important insights into understanding “sponsored politics”<sup>28)</sup> in which the “old country” organizes new immigrant groups in the United States to further its own interest. Newland argues that „The impact of refugee policy on broader U.S. foreign policy objectives is often magnified—and in some cases virtually created—by concerted political action on the part of refugee communities resident in the United States. A number of Diaspora groups have developed sophisticated political lobbyists with strong influence on politics and policies in the countries where they or their forebears found refuge“<sup>29)</sup>.

Even though most American Jews did not come from Israel, Israeli political leaders and most American Jewish establishment leaders assumed a special political relationship with Israel resembling that of “sponsored politics”. Therefore, the findings of Lazin's study should be relevant for comparison with other immigrant groups in the United States, especially those on the rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century who are mobilized and directed to act in the American political system by their “native” countries. This case may be all the more interesting for comparison because the powerful Jewish group of the 1970s was very marginal and weak politically four decades earlier.

Rosenthal describes the strong identification among American Jews for Israel after the 1967 War. He writes that „by 1975, American Jews' identification with Israel and their loyalty to the Jewish state had become so strong that such emotions appeared unremarkable and routine. American Jews had embraced Israel as the culmination of Jewish history, as the highest expression of Jewish virtue, and as an indispensable component of modern Jewish identity. They saw their roles as providing automatic financial and political support for whatever goals or policies the Jewish state chose to pursue. Critics of Israel were simply read out of the organized American Jewish community“<sup>30)</sup>.

In the struggle for Soviet Jewry in the United States, Israel used American Jews to further its own interests within the American political system. They urged, cajoled and at times manipulated the American Jewish community to pressure its government to act on behalf of Soviet Jews with the ultimate goal

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<sup>28)</sup> PORTES, A. and RUMBAUT, R., *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, p. 109.

<sup>29)</sup> NEWLAND, K., op. cit., note 11, pp. 203, 204.

<sup>30)</sup> ROSENTHAL, S. T., *Irreconcilable Differences: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*. Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, Published by the University Press of New England, 2001, p. 1.

being immigration to Israel. Personnel of the Liaison Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office in New York, Washington DC and elsewhere catalyzed the Soviet Jewry movement in the United States. They placed the issue of Soviet Jewry on the agendas of American Jewry and the American public. Once the American Jewish establishment organized an umbrella organization for Soviet Jewry, Liaison Bureau personnel played active roles in its executive and policy making bodies. Leaders of the NCSJ consulted with Liaison Bureau personnel on important decisions.

At a certain point, however, the sponsored became independent of the sponsoring country. This occurred in the mid 1970s when most Soviet Jewish émigrés arriving in Vienna chose to resettle in the United States rather than immigrate to Israel. This caused a disagreement between American Jews and Israelis over the issue of whether Soviet Jews should exercise „freedom of choice“ or be forced to go to Israel and whether the American Jewish community should assist and subsidize the resettlement of those not going to Israel. The Israeli government supported by Max Fisher and other American Jewish leaders and organizations proposed that HIAS and JDC cease aiding dropouts. Carl Glick, President of HIAS, opposed the Israeli position. Alone, Glick and HIAS lacked the resources and clout to defeat Israeli pressure on the American Jewish leadership. It was the local federation leadership, lay and professionals, motivated by memories of the Holocaust and an America closed to Jewish refugees who defeated the Israeli proposals at the CJF General Assemblies in Philadelphia (1976) and in Detroit (1980). They favored freedom of choice.

After 1976 the CJF, representing federations throughout the United States, and not NCSJ, played a controlling role in the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement in the American Jewish establishment. Importantly, the Israelis had far less control in this organization than they had in the NCSJ.

By the 1980s both Rosenthal and Goldberg explain a growing gap between Israel and the American Jewish community marked by greater American Jewish independence vis a vis Israeli political leaders. Rosenthal points to the settlement policies, the War in Lebanon, demographic changes in Israel and greater assimilation in the United States to explain the chasm. Goldberg focuses on the debate over the issue „Who is a Jew“ in 1988.

Both authors present the American Jewish community as being reactive; it defined its relationship to Israel in response to Israeli politics and policies. Lazin suggests a more pro active American Jewish community which defines its relationship to Israel in terms of its own interests and at times independently of what is happening in Israel. He argues that the Soviet Jewry movement led to a greater willingness for United States Jewish leaders to challenge Israel (except for defense issues). While Israel used its exalted position in the minds of mainstream American Jewish leaders to bring the American Jewish community into the Soviet Jewry movement, involvement in the movement changed American Jewish attitudes toward Israel. It was a not a quick change but one that developed over the years.

American Jewish leaders in CJF, United Jewish Appeal (UJA), the federations, JDC and HIAS were very pro-Israel in the late 1960s following the Six Day War. The entire community was involved in fund raising efforts and communal activities in which Israel was the center. Israel easily tapped this good will and involvement and Holocaust guilt to foster the Soviet Jewry movement among the American Jewish community. Ironically the participation of American Jews in the Soviet Jewry movement helped direct them away from concern with Israel to focus on Jews elsewhere and eventually in their own communities. By the 1970s while raising money to help Israel they were also funding resettlement services for Soviet Jews who had recently arrived in their own communities. They came to see their „Jewish interest“ differing from that of the Israelis. Some even challenged Israel's claim of needing the Soviet Jews and put forth an American claim for a maximum number of Soviet Jewish émigrés to replenish a dwindling American Jewish community; Congress had closed the gates to America in 1924. Many American Jewish leaders put 'freedom of choice' before 'Israel's national interest. This contributed to a new awareness a new Jewish identity (more inward than Israeli oriented) among American Jews. To a great degree the centrality of Israel gave way to local and internal concerns.

Symbolically, the CJF had come to control the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement in the United States by the 1980s. It had also become the major „Jewish“ organization in American politics. In the conflict over turf, function and leadership in Soviet Jewry advocacy in the United States between the National Conference of Soviet Jewry and the NJCRAC, the CJF arbitrated. When Max Fisher negotiated with the American government over a quota for Soviet Jewish refugees, he coordinates his efforts with the CJF. In contrast with the NCSJ which the Israelis had initiated and guided the CJF was an American organization whose leaders and professionals placed the interests and concerns of American Jews first. While many had sympathy for Israel and defined themselves as Zionists, they were more concerned about the needs of the American Jewish community. For some in fact, the more Soviet Jews that came to America, the more American Jewry and the Jewish people benefited.

Israel had begun the struggle for the liberation of Soviet Jewry and their immigration to Israel. Its leaders realized that success required the support of the American government. They achieved this through the mobilization of an American Jewish community whose leaders at the time were more than willing to follow the lead of Israel. Involvement in the Soviet Jewry advocacy movement shifted the interests of American Jewish leaders away from concern with Israel. Initially, American Jewish leaders defended freedom of choice against Israeli pressure to cease aiding dropouts to enter and resettle in the United States. When Gorbachev opened the gates of the Soviet Union to most Soviet Jews who wished to emigrate in 1989, the American Jewish leadership abandoned freedom of choice, supported a quota and favored Soviet Jews resettling in Israel. In doing so they were not bending to Israeli demands. Rather, they had

succumbed to pressure from their own government and other sponsors of refugees and to the enormous economic expense of resettlement in the United States. It was cheaper to resettle them in Israel.