



The Altneuschul (Old-New Synagogue), built ca. 1270, the oldest building in Prague's Jewish Quarter and the oldest preserved synagogue in Europe. From *Antiquitates Judaicae Pragenses* (Jewish Antiquities in Prague), a postcard album printed by M. Schulz for the Gomel Hasidim Burial Society in Prague, ca. 1920s. (YIVO)

cordance with Psalms 130:1 (“Out of the depths I call you, O Lord”), the floor level of the vestibule and main hall is several steps below the surrounding terrain. The interior of the Altneuschul (measuring 8 x 14 m) is arched by six bays of five ribbed vaults supported by two large octagonal pillars. The brackets, capitals, and keystones feature ornamental plant motifs; the vine-leaf decoration of the tympanum above the Torah ark is the most ornate artistically. Based on the similarity of the stone ornamentation to that of other early Gothic buildings in Bohemia, the construction of the Altneuschul can be dated back to the last third of the thirteenth century (ca. 1270).

The Torah scrolls are kept in the holy ark (*aron ha-kodesh*) located on the eastern wall of the synagogue. The ark is covered by an embroidered valance (*kaporet*) and curtain (*parokhet*). In front of the ark hangs the eternal light (*ner tamid*), and to the right is the cantor's desk (*'amud*). In the center of the main hall is a raised platform (*bimah*, *almemar*) with a stone desk (*shulhan*) that is separated from the surrounding space by a late Gothic grille. To

this day, the Altneuschul has retained its original seating arrangement along the walls of the main hall. The interior ornamentation is complemented by brass sconces and bronze chandeliers dating from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. The synagogue also contains the large banner of the Prague Jewish community, which was remade in 1716 following the design of the original sixteenth-century one. Unlike virtually any other European synagogue dating from this period, the Altneuschul has an impressive exterior.

The Altneuschul enjoyed tremendous prestige in Prague's Jewish Quarter and was the subject of numerous legends and tales. Its structure has survived to this day without serious damage. The first major renovation was carried out in 1883 by Josef Mocker; additional repairs were made in 1921–1926, 1966–1967, and 1997–1999.

• Richard Krautheimer, *Mittelalterliche Synagogen* (Berlin, 1927), pp. 199–212; Zdenka Münzer, “The Altneuschul in Prague: Its Architectural History,” in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia: Historical Studies and Surveys*, vol. 2, pp. 520–546 (Philadelphia, 1971); Arno Pařík, *Prague Synagogues* (Prague, 2000), pp. 13–37; Milada Vilímková, “Seven Hundred Years of the Old-New Synagogue,” *Judaica bohemiae* 5.1 (1969): 72–83.

—ARNO PAŘÍK

Translated from Czech by Stephen Hattersley

**AMERICA.** The United States of America became home to the largest Jewish community of the Diaspora because one-third of the Jews of Europe emigrated there over the course of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century. The transformation of a peripheral outpost of Jewish civilization into its major hub outside the boundaries of Israel was a long-term process that was keenly observed as it took shape. Still, the catastrophic finality with which history bestowed that distinction on American Jewry, after the Holocaust, cast new light on its importance and on the participation of European Jewry in its creation—with East European Jewry contributing by far the greatest share. All the while, Old World Jewry had, in turn, been affected by the growing Jewish presence in the New World and by the rise of the United States as a world power. The orbit of Jewish life in Eastern Europe was partly shaped by the magnetic force exerted by America.

The first Jewish author to mention the United States in terms of its potential for

absorbing Jewish immigrants was probably the Kraków physician Eli'ezer Sinai Kirschbaum (1798–1870) in his *Hilkhot yemot ha-mashiah* (Rules for Messianic Times; 1822). Thus, for nearly two centuries Jewish public discourse in Eastern Europe included efforts to promote emigration, with America playing a key role. By 1850, there were six “Polish” congregations in the United States, and six more were founded in the 1860s. The urge to live elsewhere must therefore be reckoned a constitutive element of Jewish life and culture in Eastern Europe, reflecting both a perception of the local environment as inhospitable as well as an enduring, idealistic desire for a better life.

In the context of East European Jewish history, America has represented an alternative world and a catalyst for change—desired and welcomed by some, rejected by others. These contested views reflect the disquiet that lay at the heart of the modern East European Jewish experience: a rich, inner development of spiritual authenticity on the one hand, and an avid reaching out for secular salvation on the other. Either way, America's “otherness” has been the country's most significant and enduring quality in East European Jewish eyes—aptly symbolized by early images of America as a place on the far side of the globe where people walk about with their feet pointing “up” and their heads facing “down” (see *Sefer ha-berit* [Book of the Covenant; 1797] by Eliyahu Pinhas ben Me'ir of Vilna). Between Eastern Europe and America, a web was woven of continuities and crucial discontinuities.

#### Information and Image: 1800–1881

America's existence barely registered among Jews in Eastern Europe until the end of the eighteenth century. While the country was winning its independence and adopting a new form of government, East European Jewry was more concerned with the ideological struggle surrounding the rise of Hasidism and the changes wrought by the dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. Although American Jews came to celebrate Hayim Solomon (1740–1785)—an immigrant from Poznań who helped finance the American colonies' War of Independence—as their representative Revolutionary War hero, this found no resonance in Eastern Europe.

Within a generation of the founding of the United States, however, the New World began provoking literary and public interest. In 1797, Naftali Herts Schul-

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man of Shklov, a transitional figure between traditional and modern Jewish scholarship, republished Manasseh ben Israel's seventeenth-century treatise, *Mikveh Yisra'el* (Hope of Israel), a work that saw messianic hope in the alleged identification of Native Americans with the Ten Lost Tribes. For Schulman, the booklet's chief value to Jews of his own day lay in the geographical and anthropological knowledge that it imparted about the New World, knowledge that came from outside the sanctified works of Judaism. This link between America and the broadening of Jews' intellectual horizons is what attracted other writers associated with the Haskalah movement. Thus, Mordechai Aharon Gintsburg (1795–1846) translated Joachim Campe's popular history, *Die Entdeckung von Amerika* (The Discovery of America), into Hebrew (*Sefer galot erets hadashah*; 1823). America was not a distant discovery, Gintsburg argued, but a part of everyday life (“having given us the potato, which feeds tens of thousands in times of hunger”); it represented the achievements of modern science (America provided “quinine bark, which yearly cures thousands” of malaria); and the educated person ought to be conversant with such matters.

Inscription mentioning the discovery of America “by the great genius Columbus” from *Tsofnas paneakh* (Revelation of the Hidden), translated by Khayim Khaykl Hurwitz (Berdychiv, 1817). This Yiddish rendition of a book about the discovery of America by German author Joachim Heinrich Campe was the work of a pioneer of the Haskalah in Russia. It was one of the first books published in modern Yiddish and the first in Yiddish about America. (YIVO)



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Gintsburg's translation of Campe was followed by that of David Zamość (1789–1864), *Metsi'at Amerikah* (The Discovery of America; 1824). A free Yiddish rendition by Khayim Khaykl Hurwitz (1750–1822), titled *Tsofnas paneakh* (Revealer of Secrets; 1817, republished 1857) was widely read. In popular fiction, the Yiddish writer Ayzik Meyer Dik (1807/14–1893) published a tale of a Jewish sea captain from Quebec and his whaling expeditions to Greenland (*Pil'e adonai* [The Wonders of the Lord]; 1856), replete with information about the north Atlantic and Arctic region, “the better to know the Creator and His great deeds.”

In due course, such knowledge became increasingly widespread. The period from 1820 to the end of the 1860s represents a watershed during which East European Jewish society experienced accelerated modern development and, in that context, “America” served as a barometer of the tension over cultural, social, and economic modernization. Its “discovery” by Jewish readers was warranted on the grounds that secular knowledge and scientific understanding were essential to a well-rounded education; that they enhanced the contemplation of God's works (rather than implanting spiritual doubt); and that they possessed utility.

The value of utility, of practical and productive work or business, was a preeminent issue in mid-nineteenth-century Haskalah literature, which criticized the dysfunctional “otherworldliness,” ignorance, poverty, and self-insulation of traditional East European Judaism. The West was portrayed as a place of prosperity and the source of beneficial values, and America was also depicted in this fashion.

Practicality and worldliness were not the only positive values to be sought across the Atlantic, however. The prolific Ayzik Meyer Dik published a Yiddish version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (*Di shklafaray, oder, Di laybegenshaft*; 1887) to air the issues of slavery and freedom, incidentally Judaizing the story (Uncle Tom and his emancipated family convert and join the Jewish people!). The moral philosophy of Benjamin Franklin, a key figure in early American culture, found its way into Jewish culture via the militant Galician *maskil* Mendl Lefin Satanower (Menaḥem Mendel Lefin; 1749–1826), in his influential book *Heshbon ha-nefesh* (1812). Through Satanower, ironically, Franklin's program of moral self-improvement also helped shape the Musar (ethical training) ideology developed by Yisra'el Salanter

(Lipkin; 1810–1883), an Orthodox foe of secular Haskalah.

Information about America, and the images that were formed around it, eventually became more varied. In the mid-nineteenth century, a handful of accounts dealing with Jews in America were published in Russian newspapers, ranging in subject from Jews in California's Gold Rush economy to the lives of crypto-Jews (Marranos) in historic Mexico. The Jewish press, which emerged in the early 1860s, also began publishing scattered articles about Jews in the Americas. In the 1870s, America featured also in the plans of Russian radicals, Populists, and Christian religious dissidents, who fostered projects to found utopian, collectivist colonies in the wide-open prairies of America. Through the influence of these groups, some of which included Jewish participants, several organizations of radical Jewish students with similar intentions, calling themselves the Am Oylom (“Am ‘Olam) movement, immigrated to America in 1881–1882.

Firsthand accounts of America became much more frequent after 1881, when Jewish emigration from Russia to the United States jumped from about 1,000 people to more than 15,000 per year. Such reports ran the gamut of immigrant experiences, some optimistic, others disheartening. By this time, too, shallow materialism rather than impractical otherworldliness had become the target of literary and intellectual social criticism. Younger Haskalah writers, including Perets Smolenskin (1842–1885) and Mosheh Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), pilloried the crass vulgarity of the nouveaux riches, deplored the cynicism of the stock exchange, lamented the heartless exploitation of migrant workers, and denigrated the anti-intellectual character of bourgeois Jewish life. Such criticism applied equally to the newer centers of Jewish settlement in southern Russia (such as Odessa) and to the New World. The social-critical approach to migration and its attendant ills reflected the engagement of Jewish intellectuals with the issues of poverty, the globalizing economy, class conflict, exploitation, and demoralization, and was expressed in such literary works as Sholem Aleichem's short story “A mentsh fun Buenos-Ayres” (A Man from Buenos Aires; 1909).

This secular criticism joined an anxious—even hostile—Orthodox religious discourse that worried about the decline of faith, tantamount to apostasy, among



“Shlof mayn kind” (Sleep, My Child). Words by Sholem Aleichem. Arrangement by Max Persin (New York: Jos. Y. Katz). The words to the lullaby include the claim that in America, where the child’s father is, everyone is happy and Jews eat challah even on weekdays. (YIVO)

Jewish emigrants. In the early 1880s, three prominent Lithuanian and Polish rabbis—Shemu’el Mohilewer (1824–1898), Eliyahu Meisel (1821–1912), and Yosef Soloveichik (1820–1892)—issued a public warning against emigration to America. They dismissed the idea that Jews would find a haven from antisemitism, even in America, and warned that the country was lawless and immoral, a disaster for Judaism. Yisra’el Me’ir Hakohen (1838–1933; known as the Hafeṣet Ḥayim), who feared for the spiritual fate of the emigrants, published a book of religious instruction that urged Jews to stay within the fold despite the spiritual perils around them (*Nidḥe Yisra’el* [The Scattered Ones of Israel; 1890]).

Ambivalence about America found expression in Yiddish folk songs of the period. In one, a wife left behind by an emigrant husband laments: “My husband has gone to seek his fortune / in Columbus’s land. / Oh, if he had only granted me a divorce first / I wouldn’t be so miserable now. / Oh people, people, you are leaving, / you are going on boats and on trains. / Ask him why he deserted me / should you meet my husband there.” But other popular songs held out hope for new lives or for true love fulfilled, and declared it better to be “a slave in America” than to remain in Russia. Sholem Aleichem himself penned one favorite song about the blessings of America and helped to bring America into the growing

Yiddish fictional canon through his novel *Motl Peyse dem khazns* (Motl, the Son of Cantor Peyse; 1916).

The turmoil, contradictions, changing mores, and social strains of East European society—and the urge to find something better—were evident to at least one discerning observer, immigrant-scholar Israel Friedlaender (1876–1920), in the cultural “baggage” that East European Jews brought with them to America. He took note of “[the Jew’s] intellectualism and greed of knowledge, his idealism and the lack of a practical sense on the one hand, and his materialism and the lack of a social sense on the other.” Yiddish journalist and Labor Zionist leader Louis Miller (1866–1927) commented on the expectations and images of America, fostered in Eastern Europe, that continued to affect the lives of Jewish immigrants long after their arrival. He noted that to the Jewish imagination, America was “a new world in quest of an explorer, a perfect, absolute world, not a half-truth, a world of freedom without limitations. They came to America full of both *Weltschmerz* [burdened by the pathos of the world] and their own *Schmerz*.”

#### The Great Migration: 1881–1921

With the advent of regular steamship travel across the Atlantic after the American Civil War, a “new immigration” brought millions of Europeans to the United States. More than 2 million Jews migrated to America from Eastern Europe between 1881 and 1914: about 1.6 million from the Russian Empire (including Poland), 380,000 from Austria-Hungary (mainly Galicia), and 80,000 from Romania. These represented about three-quarters of the total Jewish emigration flow out of Eastern Europe (other destinations included Western Europe, Palestine, Latin America, and southern Africa). The nineteenth-century population explosion in East European Jewry fueled this outpouring (from 1850 to 1880, the annual net increase was 1.7 percent—17 more births than deaths for every 1,000 persons—enough to double the population in just 41 years). This growth tended to exacerbate the endemic poverty that plagued communities in the region. Added to this were the increasingly bloody outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence and discriminatory government policies, which heightened Jewish motivations for departure.

The leading notables of Russian Jewry in the early 1880s did not favor a policy of mass emigration, as this smacked to \_\_\_\_\_S  
 them of disloyalty, and they refused to as- \_\_\_\_\_R  
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contrast, many intellectual figures in the community were outraged by the timidity of the established leaders. The controversy catapulted a new Jewish leadership to the fore, considerably reshaping East European Jewish politics. Western Jewish philanthropists, including Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845–1934) and Baron Maurice de Hirsch (1831–1896), also helped fill the leadership gap by fostering emigration and resettlement schemes, with Palestine and Argentina as well as North America featured as projected sites for Jewish colonization.

This turn of events sparked a new debate over the relative worthiness of various destinations. Hebrew writer Yehudah Leib Levin (1844–1925) argued in favor of America, a free and democratic land, in comparison with Ottoman Palestine, where the inertial religious and social conservatism of the existing Jewish community and the resistance of the Turkish government would certainly doom any chances of establishing a modernized, progressive Jewish society. Likewise, another leading poet, Yehudah Leib Gordon (1831–1892), aroused bitter resistance from followers of *Hibat Tsiyon*, the “back to Palestine” movement, when he supported an exodus to America (expressed in his poems “*Ahoti Ruhamah*” [My Sister Ruhamah; 1882] and “*Erets hadashah*” [A New Land; published 1892, written 1859]). The popular Yiddish writer Shomer (Nakhum Meyer Shaykevitch, 1849?–1905) wondered whether even in the Land of Israel the Jews’ ancestors ever lived as well as they did now in New York, but he also stressed that America still had antisemites.

Mass emigration continued apace without regard to intellectual concerns. Letters home from previous emigrants as well as advertising by travel agents furnished a steady stream of information about America. Despite periodic lulls, the migration steadily mounted in intensity. In Romania, the year 1899 marked the beginning of a truly mass exodus of Jews, especially after a pogrom in Iași in May of that year. Groups of *fusgeyers* (wayfarers) were formed, composed of young men and women who trekked on foot to Hamburg and on to America by ship. After training for months, each such group would depart, carrying personal belongings, water supplies, and tents, often sporting a special group uniform. Some even had their own press, in which they

S appealed for assistance, bade farewell to  
R their old homes, and published their own  
L poems.

Emigration from Russia reached its peak after the pogroms of 1903–1906, when the Jewish influx to the United States soared to more than 118,000 per year. In response to the increased need—and in view of mounting cases of fraud and financial abuses in the emigration and travel business—the Society for the Regulation of Jewish Emigration was founded in Saint Petersburg in 1907.

Emigration had a wider impact than statistics alone reveal, for not everyone who thought about going actually left. In the late 1880s, for example, historian Simon Dubnow wrote in his diary: “A terrible, vile time! If I were physically healthy and single I’d be off to America for good. I’d rather chop wood in a land of liberty than be a writer in a land of tyranny.” Others were prevented from leaving by the outbreak of World War I. Mass emigration had other ramifications, too:

younger adults and children formed the great majority of the emigrant stream, halting the rapid growth of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe and leaving behind a Jewry shorn of a great proportion of its younger cohorts.

The higher rates of emigration among those of working age and from poverty-stricken areas suggest that more than the pogroms of the period or the hope of finding relief from antisemitism and despotism lay behind the mass Jewish emigration. Opinions differ over the relative weight of local factors, networks of communication among relatives and friends, the desire to escape conscription and onerous poverty, and the fear of pogroms in the decisions of given individuals to emigrate. Looking at the broad context of the global economic system, economic interests favoring a transfer of cheap labor from underdeveloped regions of the

A family separated by World War I: the Dobrakin family, including the mother, wife, and three daughters of a man who had immigrated to America, Russia, 1915. (YIVO, courtesy of Sonia Bronthman)





“Clothing for Jews in Soviet Russia.” Cartoon, *Forverts* (New York, 5 February 1921). The Yiddish tag on the package bears the address of the People’s Relief Committee, founded in the United States during World War I to provide aid to Jews in Eastern Europe. (YIVO)

world to fast-growing and more highly developed industrial labor markets, such as the United States, may offer a better explanation of the timing, size, and composition of the flow of migration than does a narrative of spontaneous decision making by individuals, families, and ethnic groups.

That still leaves open the possibility that a combination of economic, historical, and cultural factors—including the attractive image of America built up over the nineteenth century and never truly modified, even by religious and social criticism—encouraged Jews to take up the call to America. This is suggested by the high discrepancy between the very intensive Jewish emigration rates and relatively less massive non-Jewish emigration (Jews comprised an estimated 50–70% of all Russian immigrants between 1881 and 1910, and almost 90% of Romanian emi-

grants between 1899 and 1911), and by the similar discrepancy between the high volume of non-Jewish return traffic from America and the very low rate of reemigration among East European Jewish immigrants.

The mass immigration was ended by the adoption of restrictionist quota legislation by the American government in 1921 and, with greater stringency, 1924. The flow of Jewish emigrants from East Central Europe then turned toward France, Palestine, and Latin America, while in the Soviet Union younger Jews from provinces of the old Pale of Settlement now headed for the industrial cities of the Russian heartland, especially Moscow and Petrograd (later Leningrad; today once again Saint Petersburg).

America’s function as a repository of emigrants’ hopes and destinies does not exhaust its role in the history of East

European Jewry. As early as the 1880s, America began exporting culture back to Eastern Europe. The use of Yiddish speeches and press to spread the socialist message among the “masses,” and high-profile strike campaigns that focused on economic grievances—tactics pioneered in the immigrant socialist circles of New York and London—were afterward imitated by Jewish radicals in the Pale of Settlement. Proletarian protest songs written in New York by immigrant poet David Edelstadt (1866–1892) quickly became familiar “here in Russia,” wrote Avrom Reyzen, another socialist Yiddish poet (1876–1953): “[Edelstadt] is spoken of with reverence . . . and workers sing his songs with tears in their eyes.”

Similarly, Yiddish theater, though pioneered in Romania and Russia, was subject there to censorship and prohibition. It flourished in the open society of America, however, and then made its way back again across the Atlantic. In the 1920s and 1930s, American Yiddish films were popular in Poland, and Poland was an important market for American Yiddish writers and poets.

The major Jewish publishing project in Russia prior to World War I was undoubtedly the 16-volume Russian-language Jewish encyclopedia, *Evreiskaia entsiklopediia* (1908–1913). Its direct prototype and inspiration was the American-produced *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–1906). The two editorial committees collaborated closely and much material was translated directly from the English for the Russian-language publication. The *Evreiskaia entsiklopediia*’s entry for “America” was one of its major articles (spread over 51 densely printed double-column pages). It focused mainly on the United States and contained a comprehensive analysis of Russian Jewish immigration. Subentries such as “Jewish writers in American literature” and “Canada” were also included, as well as a large selection of photographs.

#### The Soviet and Post-Soviet Period: 1917–2000

The Russian Revolution altered the common reception of “America” as a fact of East European Jewish life, insofar as significant factors divided Soviet Jewry from the rest of East European Jewry in the interwar years. The United States (along with Britain) engaged in a short-lived armed intervention against the Bolshevik regime in 1918 and 1919 and did not recognize the Soviet government until 1933. American influence was mi-

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Alexander Harkavy (seated, center) a representative of HIAS, with delegates of various community groups, Iwie, Poland (now Iyve, Bel.), ca. 1920. The Yiddish inscription reads, "Greetings to America via Mr. A. Harkavy." (YIVO)

nor, if not entirely absent, in the period up to World War II. In the new states of East Central Europe and the Baltic region, however, America (and its Jews) continued to play a significant role in communal life, culture, and the destiny of individuals and families.

Relief funds for war-torn East European communities became a major instrument by which Jewish immigrants in the United States continued to reach out to and sustain relationships with those left behind in their hometowns. This work was institutionalized through *landsmanshaftn* (immigrant associations) as well as larger Jewish organizations, such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, or "Joint"). Throughout the increasingly difficult interwar years, this assistance became a mainstay of Jewish communal life, poverty relief, education, and health care in Eastern Europe.

Despite the political sensitivity of the situation, and long before diplomatic relations were established with the Soviet government, American Jewish philanthropists also sought to extend aid to Jews in Soviet Russia. Assistance took the form of JDC funding for Jewish resettlement in agricultural colonies in Ukraine

and Crimea, beginning in 1924, through appropriate channels approved by both governments. It is estimated that perhaps as many as 200,000 people were ultimately involved in this effort, and some \$24 million was invested in more than 200 collective settlements (attracting even a few recruits from Palestine). Asso-

ciated with these colonies were health care projects and, in time, small factories. By the early 1930s, however, the Soviet government's priorities were rapid industrialization and mass, forced collectivization of agriculture. The Jewish project became superfluous for both reasons, and Jews were increasingly absorbed into the modernized economy. The involvement of American capitalists became a political liability to those involved in the projects, and the connection was shut down. Ironically, trade provided the main basis for American recognition of Soviet Russia in 1933 and would figure, once again, in negotiations in the 1970s over Soviet Jewish emigration.

Stripped of the remnants of prerevolutionary culture, Soviet Jewry under Stalin (1927–1953) retained little if any of its distinct preoccupation with America. The United States, the distant ideological enemy of their country, became to Soviet Jewish citizens more or less what it represented to Soviet society at large—to be precise, what it represented in the urbanized, European, more highly educated segments of Soviet society. To be sure, some developed a positive attitude toward America by default, based on their hatred for the Soviet regime, while others followed the regime's lead in identifying all capitalists and "bourgeois liberals" with the world's forces of reaction, fascism, and warmongering.

With the German invasion of the So-



Joseph Baskin, a leader of the Workmen's Circle, a Jewish fraternal and labor-oriented organization in North America, on a visit to the site of the Y. L. Peretz folk house, a cultural center affiliated with the Bund, Lublin, 1937. The Yiddish-Polish banner welcomes supporters of the construction of the building. Many communal projects in Eastern Europe received support from Jews and Jewish organizations in America. (YIVO)

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viet Union in June 1941, half a year before the United States entered World War II, it became crucial for the Soviet regime to win American support, and it entertained notions that Jewish spokespersons might carry weight in American public opinion. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) was brought together in autumn 1942, composed of prominent cultural figures. Two key leaders of the Bund in Poland who had found refuge in Russia, Henryk Erlich (1882–1942) and Wiktor Alter (1890–1943), had apparently played a role in proposing the idea, but they were soon executed, on Stalin's personal order, because of their previous anti-Bolshevik political record. JAC members Solomon Mikhoels (1890–1948) and Itsik Fefer (1900–1952) toured the United States (now officially an ally), Canada, Mexico, and Britain in 1943 on a fundraising and propaganda campaign. The high-profile nature of the committee, its politically correct security clearance—Fefer was a deputy of the NKVD—and the links it forged with “progressive” Jewry in the West did not prevent the eventual suppression of the group and the liquidation of almost all its members between 1948 and 1952.

The committee's fate reverberated afterward, in 1959, when the Khrushchev regime, conscious of Western opinion, authorized a hundredth-anniversary celebration of the birth of Sholem Aleichem and published a small Yiddish commemorative volume of his works; similar volumes on Mendele Moykher-Sforim and Y. L. Peretz also appeared. Paul Robeson, the prominent African American singer who had a popular following in Russia (and had had close contact with Fefer) came especially for the occasion. It was Robeson, protected by his status as a distinguished American visitor, who spoke of the martyred Jewish writers and proceeded, despite efforts to silence him, to sing the anthem of the Jewish partisans (*Zog nit keynmol* [Never Say That You Have Reached the Very End] by Hirsh Glik [1922–1944]).

In the postwar years, Holocaust survivors in the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe sought to reestablish a variety of Jewish communal activities, and funding from American Jewish groups such as the JDC and ORT enabled welfare work and schools to operate in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. From 1948 until 1953, however, at the height of the cold war, most Soviet-bloc countries clamped down on Western contacts.

During 1952, “show trials” particularly targeted Jewish Communist figures, and the crimes for which they were executed (as in the case of Rudolf Slánský [1901–1952], ex-secretary general of the Czechoslovak Communist Party) included their alleged association with the JDC. American Jewish philanthropic efforts were not resumed until after 1956.

During the years of the post-Stalin cultural “thaw” in Russia, America became something of a vogue among students and intellectual circles. There was even an officially approved magazine called *Amerika*. Carl Sandburg toured Russia at the time, as did New York literary critic Alfred Kazin, who visited with a delegation of American writers. Kazin found a popular enthusiasm for writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Dreiser, Lillian Hellman, and Arthur Miller, but embarrassed his hosts by lecturing on “possibly sinister” writers such as William Faulkner, T. S. Eliot, and Saul Bellow; by inquiring after the embargoed Nobel laureate, Boris Pasternak; and by striking up a Yiddish conversation with a couple in Tashkent who had been evacuated from Odessa during the war.

A positive image of America was cultivated within the incipient Soviet “bohemia” or counterculture of the 1960s. An American-influenced lifestyle—part utopian aspiration, part literary and artistic temperament, part in-group etiquette opposed to pretense and hypocrisy—was identified with the Russian *shestidesiatnik* (“sixties person”), and influenced such writers as Vasilii Aksenov (1932–), Petr Vail’ (1949–), and Aleksandr Genis (1953–), who “did not know America, but believed in her.” Vail’ and Genis, who connected their Jewishness with their ambivalent posture within Soviet society (“like sex,” they said, “it” was not spoken of in polite company except by euphemism), emigrated to America in 1977, to be followed by Aksenov in 1981 (a promoter of freedom of speech, he was stripped of his Soviet citizenship while on a lecture tour in the United States). They were the nucleus of a group of ex-Soviet writers, mainly in New York, who continued to publish in Russian.

In the waning years of the cold war, the Soviet regime, despite its policy of coexistence with the United States, supported vicious “anti-Zionist” propaganda (especially after 1967) in which Israel and Jews in general were depicted as imperialist agents of world domination working hand-in-hand with the United States. The

equation of Jews, America, and espionage was turned against Natan Sharansky (1948–), a prominent human rights activist in the 1970s, who was arrested in 1977 as an alleged agent of America's Central Intelligence Agency. Released after nine years of imprisonment, he immigrated to Israel, where he became a national political figure, serving as cabinet minister in several Israeli governments.

A high-profile public campaign was waged in the West on behalf of Soviet Jewry, and the Soviet authorities, aware of the negotiable value of Jews in its relations with the Americans, hoped to use Jewish emigration as a lever for enhancing their economic position in the United States. Jewish emigration first grew to significant numbers in 1970, and the flow increased while the Soviets successfully negotiated for Most Favored Nation trading status and access to favorable credit programs. They cut the flow again, however, in 1974–1975, when the U.S. Congress passed two amendments to the trade statutes: one introduced by Senator Henry Jackson of Washington and Congressman Charles Vanik of Ohio, which made favorable trade status conditional upon liberal emigration rights—conditions that Soviet government policy opposed; and another, backed by Senators Frank Church of Idaho and Adlai Stevenson III of Illinois, which established restrictive U.S. credit limits for the Soviet Union. The Soviets perceived this as inadmissible interference in their domestic policies and, in addition, realized that little was now to be gained in their search for easier credit terms. Similarly, when the Jackson-Vanik Amendment came up for reconsideration in 1979, the emigration flow was considerably increased; but when the amendment remained in force, a veritable freeze on Jewish emigration ensued, lasting until 1987, when Soviet leader Gorbachev relaxed restrictions as he pursued new policies to restructure and democratize the Soviet polity (*perestroika*). [See Jackson-Vanik Amendment.]

Most of the early Soviet Jewish émigrés immigrated to Israel, but by the mid-1970s a significant proportion of those leaving (some 30 to 40% between 1976 and 1980) chose to resettle in the United States, where they were admitted under newly established favorable refugee-immigration statutes.

Because Soviet authorities would only permit Jews to leave the USSR with Israeli

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nized the validity of “family reunification,” it was impossible for potential immigrants to apply for American visas before arriving in Vienna, en route to Israel. Emigrants who decided at that point to apply for entry to the United States were transferred to Rome, where they were cared for by HIAS and JDC. Controversy arose in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s as to whether Israeli and American Jewish agencies ought to facilitate “freedom of choice” for Soviet émigrés in choosing their ultimate destination, or should reserve Jewish communal and public funds only for those who in fact settled in Israel. Matters of principle as well as conflicting political and institutional interests were at stake in this internal Jewish debate. In practice, the government of Israel did not wish to deter Jewish emigration from the USSR, and thus did not consider withholding its visas, even when emigrants increasingly tended to settle in the West; the JDC, HIAS, and the American Jewish communities, for their part, continued to uphold the idea that Israel was the preferred destination for former Soviet Jews, but supported those immigrants who sought to go to America.

By 1990, when the Soviet system of government came to an end, former Soviet Jews in the United States totaled between 120,000 and 170,000. Jewish federations were faced, at that point, with a new reluctance on the part of the U.S. government to continue favoring a large-scale influx of Jews from postcommunist Russia, given U.S. commitments to provide a haven to various other groups, many of which lacked the substantial remedies and resources available to Russia's Jews. The American Jewish community also considered the prospects of successfully absorbing a new, post-Soviet Jewish immigration wave many times the size of the original cohort, and decided, instead, to underwrite massive ex-Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel. Since 1990, almost three-quarters of the emigrants have gone to Israel (totaling some 1 million), but the United States (though no longer granting favored refugee status to all émigrés from the former Soviet Union) had absorbed an additional 300,000 as of the year 2000. Ukraine supplied the largest proportion of these immigrants, with the Russian Republic in second place. Émigrés have cited various motivations for leaving, including economic and living

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to improve their and their children's lives in the United States.

The fall of Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern and East Central Europe at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s was clearly the most important turn of events in the region since the Holocaust. It was precipitated by many internal factors, but America loomed as one important external factor. As long as the Soviet Union sought to be strategically and economically self-sustaining, American policies and interventions were of relatively little consequence to the stability of the regime. Once Soviet policy sought greater gain from and engagement with the world system, however, America's technological, economic, and strategic power must be reckoned as an important destabilizing factor.

In the final decade of the twentieth century, American Jewish efforts to stimulate and support Jewish communal activity in the former Soviet bloc accelerated. While a large number of Diaspora Jewish organizations have become involved in these efforts (including the three main Jewish denominations, the YIVO Institute, the American Jewish World Service, and many others), the two most influential and active groups have undoubtedly been the JDC and the Lubavitch movement.

[See also American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.]

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**AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE**, the largest non-political organization dedicated to helping Jews in distress all over the world. Generally known as the JDC or “Joint” and headquartered in New York, the organization (until 1931) was called the Joint Distribution Committee of (the American) Funds for Jewish War Sufferers. It was founded on 27 November 1914 with the aim of centralizing allocations of aid to Jews adversely affected by World War I.

The JDC's resources came from funds collected by the American Jewish Relief Committee—organized on 25 October 1914 and headed by wealthy Reform Jews of German origin, including Louis Marshall (who served as president), Jacob H. Schiff, and Felix M. Warburg; and the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews Suffering through the War (Central Relief Committee)—organized on 4 October 1914 by Orthodox Jews of East European origin and chaired by Leon Kamaiky. These groups were joined in August 1915