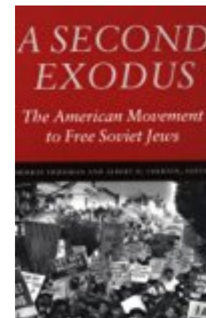
H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Murray Friedman, Albert D. Chernin, eds.. ***A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.*** Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1999. vii + 265 pp. $45.00, library, ISBN 978-0-87451-912-9.



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Published on H-Judaic (January, 2000)

Between 1988 and 1994, 776,867 legal emigrants left the Soviet Union, including almost 200,000 Jews who settled in the United States, and nearly 500,000 who settled in Israel, adding to the more than 200,000 Jews who made it to Israel in the two decades prior to 1988. In total nearly 1.3 million Jews fled the Soviet Union between 1968 and 1994. These figures leave little doubt as to why this mass movement of peoples has been termed "the Second Exodus."

The achievements of the world Jewish community in accommodating and integrating this population, despite more than occasional setbacks, are truly remarkable. Even more remarkable, though, are the efforts that were undertaken over the past forty-five years by numerous groups and individuals throughout the world to free Soviet Jews. Now that the USSR is defunct and organizations aimed at freeing Soviet Jews have switched their mandates from petitioning for greater Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union to combating anti-Semitism in the Soviet successor states, it is time to ask what role the "Soviet Jewish movement" played in the Soviet Jewish saga. [1]

A Second Exodus consists of thirteen essays, written by twelve contributors: eight former and present activists in the Soviet Jewish movement (Albert D. Chernin, Rabbi Douglas Kahn, Dr. William Korey, Nechemia Levanon, Micah H. Naftalin, Richard Schifter, Myrna Shinbaum, and Steven F. Windmueller); three academics (Murray Friedman, Dr. Zvi Y. Gitelman, and Marshall I. Goldman); and one journalist (Walter Ruby).

Among the activists, whose articles comprise the vast majority of this volume, the consensus is that the American Movement to Free Soviet Jews was instrumental in leading to the ultimate freedom of the 1.3 million Soviet Jews who now reside in the West. This conviction is particularly acute in the articles by Chernin and Korey. In his article, "Making Soviet Jews an Issue," Chernin, who is Executive Vice Chairman Emeritus of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, a former member of the Presidium of the World Conference on Soviet Jewry, and one of the editors of this volume, recounts in great detail the early efforts undertaken by the

American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ), in which he served as a coordinator, to raise public awareness of the fate of Soviet Jewry and to lobby Congress and the State Department to pressure the Soviet Union to end its discrimination of the Jewish population and to allow Jewish emigration. In both goals, Chernin claims a great deal of success. In his zeal to applaud those Americans who helped make Soviet Jewry an issue, however, Chernin sometimes dismisses the role played by the very people whose interests he claims to have represented. As Walter Ruby writes in his thoughtful piece on the role of nonestablishment groups: "Not only did the American Jewish establishment groups fail to consult sufficiently, but all too often they evinced an arrogant and paternalistic attitude toward the refusniks, treating them like impetuous children who needed to be guided and even dictated to" (203).

Among the most compelling evidence that the American Jewish establishment was not acting as a faithful advocate of the Soviet Jews was their treatment of the Noshrim, those Soviet Jews who chose to emigrate to North America rather than Israel. In a revealing article, Steven Windmueller shows how the drop-out issue divided the Soviet Jewish movement between organizations, like the division between the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, which believed the emigrants should be permitted to settle in America if they so chose, and the Jewish Agency, which worked to prevent emigration to America. In 1987, Windmueller informs us, Yitzhak Shamir even sought to convince the American government to deny refugee status to Soviet Jews so that they would be forced to emigrate to Israel (168). Many of the same activists, who for twenty years had been fighting for the right of individuals to choose their place of residence as outlined in the Helsinki agreements, suddenly switched positions as they tried to channel the emigrants into Israel.

William Korey, former director of the Anti-Defamation League office in Washington, DC, similarly believes that the rescue of Soviet Jewry was secured by the intervention of American officials. His article on the Jackson-Vanik Amendment of 1974, which denied Most Favored Nation status to the Soviet Union unless it liberalized its emigration policies, portrays the amendment as a stellar success: "More than a million and a quarter Jews have emigrated from Russia and the former Soviet Union since Jackson-Vanik was first introduced, a testament to its power..." (114) he writes. Yet elsewhere in the same volume, we are given the figure of a million and a quarter to refer to all Jews who emigrated since 1967 -- and not since 1974, as Korey implies. In the absence of footnotes, it is difficult to determine Korey's sources. Further, many of these emigrants fled after 1991; surely the collapse of the Soviet Union was a more important factor in this emigration than Jackson-Vanik. In fact, as Marshall Goldman points out in his thoughtful dissenting article on Jackson-Vanik, "the sudden and remarkable widening of the emigration doors" occurred in 1972 and 1973 -- that is, before Jackson-Vanik became law in December 1974. Indeed, after the passage of the amendment, emigration from the Soviet Union actually dropped (116-117). It was the threat of Jackson-Vanik rather than the act itself, Goldman argues, that prompted the Soviet Union to acquiesce.

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975, which demanded that signatories approve exit visas for the purpose of achieving "reunion of families," is the subject of Korey's second contribution to this volume. In this article, Korey not only credits the American movement to free Soviet Jews with the mass emigration of Soviet Jews following the collapse of Communism, but in fact credits the movement with the collapse of Communism altogether. He writes of the Helsinki Final Act: "It helped, in a major way, to facilitate a vast exodus of Soviet Jews even as it sparked popular revolutions throughout Eastern Europe that torpedoed the hated symbol of Soviet dominance: the Berlin Wall" (124). Later he expands on this argument, writing that "democratic revolutions in Czechoslo-

vakia and elsewhere in East Europe, spurred by the Helsinki process with its increasing focus on human rights, swept away Communist rule altogether, except for the Soviet Union itself" (133). Once again, Korey attributes the mass exodus of 600,000 Jews from the Soviet Union and its successor states between 1989 and 1995 to American lobbying rather than to the decline and fall of the Soviet Union.

By focusing exclusively on the American role to free Soviet Jews, many of the articles in this volume give the impression that the Soviet Jews themselves were merely passive entities, waiting to be saved by their American counterparts. For instance, in a single paragraph Chernin mentions the Hebrew classes, holiday celebrations, study groups on Jewish history, clandestine translations of books on Israel, and pro-Zionist underground publications that emerged in the 1960s, but not before crediting his own campaign with motivating these activities: "Little by little," he writes, "the response in the West emboldened the embryonic Jewish movement in the Soviet Union" (55). Yet he provides no evidence that these activities, many of which had been taking place for decades, were stimulated by the AJCSJ or any other American organization. Similarly, when in June 1970, a group of Soviet Jews took matters into their own hands and attempted to hijack a plane from Leningrad to Israel, an event that probably led to the relaxation of Soviet emigration restrictions in 1971-1972, it is not the hijacking itself that Chernin heroizes, nor does he mention the defiant statements made by the accused during the trial, which were subsequently published in the West. [2] Rather, it is the reaction of American Jewry to the trial of the hijackers and the delegation of the AJCSJ that met with "key State Department officials" that he believes were instrumental in effecting Soviet policy. In fact, the activities of the hijackers are limited to the single sentence: "On 15 June 1970, nine Soviet Jews and two other Soviet citizens were arrested at Leningrad's Smolny Airport for allegedly planning 'to seize a scheduled aircraft'" (57). Gitelman is alone among the contributors in recognizing that the Leningrad hijackers were acting consciously and with political motives (88).

In fact, Gitelman, Ruby, and Naftalin are the only contributors who recognize that, in the words of Naftalin, "Soviet Jews -- refusniks and Prisoners of Zion (a.k.a. Prisoners of Conscience) -- ignited the sparks themselves" (228). In his short but informative piece, Gitelman surveys the role of Soviet Jews in "creating a cause and a movement." He tells us of the numerous petitions written by Soviet Jews demanding the right to emigrate, the Soviet Zionists who formed clandestine study groups, the role that synagogues played in the national life of Soviet Jews, the gatherings of Soviet Jews to commemorate the Shoah, and the efforts of numerous Jews to emigrate, either illegally or legally. [3] The Soviet Jewish movement, he writes, was "the outcome of a process that combined the courage of a very small number of Soviet Jews; the desperation of a larger number; the willingness to take a gamble of an even larger number; changes in the mentality of Diaspora Jewry; the existence of a Jewish state; and a subtle, but profound change in the nature of the international system and its influence on domestic politics, including Soviet politics" (85).

Nehemiah Levanon, in his article on Israel's role in the campaign, reveals that the Mossad set up a Liaison Bureau in 1952 with the responsibility of working through the embassies behind the iron curtain in order to establish contact with Jews in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and to stimulate aliyah. By 1965, the bureau had not only succeeded in fueling Jewish nationalism in the Soviet Union, but had also, in Levanon's words, "laid the foundation for a worldwide network" (75). Levanon himself was posted in Washington, where his "main task was to keep the State Department, Congress, and influential news media informed on the fate of the Jews in the Soviet Union, and to seek sympathetic and active sup-

port from them for our cause" (77). This fascinating article may help provide valuable information on the origins of Soviet accusations of a Zionist-American conspiracy that began to be aired in the spring and fall of 1952.

A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews is a mixed bag of articles, dealing with American, Israeli and Soviet movements to promote Zionism and aliyah among Soviet Jews. The recollections of some of the movement's leading figures will be useful for future scholars who seek to document the movement's goals and techniques. A number of their conclusions, however, need to be examined by less partisan observers. Some articles, though, do provide useful reminisces and analyses of the tactics pursued by American grassroots and establishment organizations in bringing Soviet Jewry to the attention of the world.

Notes

[1]. For some other books that have looked at this question see Petrus Buwalda, *They Did Not Dwell Alone: Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union, 1967-1990* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Edward Drachman, *Challenging the Kremlin: The Soviet Jewish Movement for Freedom* (New York: Paragon House, 1991); Robert O. Freedman, ed., *Soviet Jewry in the 1980s: The Politics of Anti-Semitism and the Dynamics of Resettlement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989); Victor Zaslavsky and Robert J. Brym, *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Soviet Nationality Policy* (New York: St. Martin's 1983); William W. Orbach, *The American Movement to Aid Soviet Jews* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979).

[2]. In her final statement before sentencing, for instance, one defendant, Sylva Zalmanson reportedly declared: "Next Year in Jerusalem! And now I repeat: If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right arm lose its cunning," while at the end of the sentencing, all of the defendants and their families who were present in the courtroom are said to have begun singing "Am Yisroel Chai" (The People of Israel Live) for seven minutes. A full report on the trial, including excerpts of the statements made by the defendants was published in Richard Cohen (ed.), *Let My People Go! Today's Documentary Story of Soviet Jewry's Struggle to Be Free* (New York: Popular Library, 1971).

[3]. For more on these movements see Yaacov Ro'i and Avi Beker (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union* New York: New York University Press, 1991; Elie Wiesel, *The Jews of Silence: A Personal Report on Soviet Jewry*, translated by Neal Kozodoy, (New York: Schocken Books, 1987); and Rebecca Rass with the collaboration of Morris Brafman, *From Moscow to Jerusalem: The Dramatic Story of the Jewish Liberation Movement and its Impact on Israel* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1976).

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Citation: Jeffrey Veidlinger. Review of Friedman, Murray; Chernin, Albert D., eds. ***A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews.*** H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews. January, 2000.

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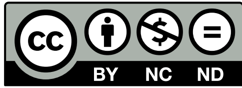

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