Rebuilding Jewish Europe after the Fall of Communism, 1989-2000: a case of transnational circulation of narratives, resources and knowledge

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Abstract

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the communist regimes in Europe represented a radical change for Judaism on the continent. The most striking change occurred, naturally, in Central and Eastern Europe, that is, in those countries that were behind the Iron Curtain, such as Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia or the German Democratic Republic. There, while the political decomposition of the Soviet bloc was gaining traction, thousands of people rediscovered their Jewish origins – forbidden, concealed, or silenced under communism, giving rise to a process of Jewish revivalism. In this context, numerous Jewish philanthropic organizations came to the region to support these developments with the mission of renewing local Jewish communities.

The process involved a multitude of actors – Jewish agencies, organizations and foundations based in the United States, Europe and Israel – and entailed the mobilization of professionals, specialists and financial resources.

This thesis explores the concrete dynamics of this cross-border mobilization of Jewish philanthropic bodies in favor of the Jewish communities of East Central Europe after the fall of communism in 1989. It studies in-depth the historical origins and evolution of transnational Jewish solidarity in modern times, enquires about the Jewish agencies and organizations that started to operate in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, especially, but not only, their sources of financing and the circulation of economic resources. Finally, it gives an account of the narrative corpus that emerged about European Jews before and during this process, identifying those actors who created and mobilized these narratives.

Keywords: Faith-based philanthropy, transnationalism, Jewish solidarity, Eastern Europe, European Judaism, post-communism, Jewish communities, Jewish revivalism, narratives

Resumen

La caída del Muro de Berlín y la desaparición de los regímenes comunistas en Europa supusieron un cambio radical para el judaísmo en el continente. El cambio más profundo se produjo, naturalmente, en Europa Central y Oriental, es decir, en los países que estaban detrás del Telón de Acero, como Hungría, Polonia, Checoslovaquia o la República Democrática Alemana. Allí, mientras la descomposición política del bloque soviético cobraba fuerza, miles de personas redescubrieron sus orígenes judíos, prohibidos, ocultados o silenciados bajo el comunismo, dando lugar a un proceso de revivalismo judío. En este contexto, numerosas organizaciones filantrópicas judías acudieron a la región para apoyar estos avances con la misión de renovar las comunidades judías locales.

El proceso implicó a multitud de actores -agencias, organizaciones y fundaciones judías con sede en Estados Unidos, Europa e Israel- y supuso la movilización de profesionales, especialistas y recursos financieros.

Esta tesis explora la dinámica concreta de esta movilización transfronteriza de organismos filantrópicos judíos en favor de las comunidades judías de Europa Central y Oriental tras la caída del comunismo en 1989. Estudia en profundidad los orígenes históricos y la evolución de la solidaridad judía transnacional en la época moderna, indaga sobre las agencias y organizaciones judías que empezaron a operar en Europa tras la caída del Muro de Berlín, especialmente, pero no sólo, sobre sus fuentes de financiación y la circulación de recursos económicos. Por último, da cuenta del corpus narrativo que surgió sobre los judíos europeos antes y durante este proceso, identificando a los actores que crearon y movilizaron estas narrativas.

Palabras clave: Filantropía religiosa, transnacionalismo, solidaridad judía, Europa del Este, judaísmo europeo, poscomunismo, comunidades judías, revivalismo judío, narrativas

Resum

La caiguda del Muro de Berlín i la desaparició dels règims comunistes a Europa van suposar un canvi radical per al judaisme en el continent. El canvi més profund es va produir, naturalment, a Europa Central i Oriental, és a dir, en aquells països que estaven darrere del Teló d'Acer, com Hongria, Polònia, Txecoslovàquia o la República Democràtica Alemanya. Allà, mentre la descomposició política del bloc soviètic anava guanyant força, milers de persones van redescobrir els seus orígens jueus, prohibits, ocults o silenciats sota el comunisme, donant lloc a un procés de renaixement jueu. En aquest context, nombroses organitzacions filantròpiques jueves van arribar a la regió per donar suport a aquests desenvolupaments amb la missió de renovar les comunitats jueves locals.

El procés va implicar una multitud d'actors –agències jueves, organitzacions i fundacions amb seu als Estats Units, Europa i Israel– i va comportar la mobilització de professionals, especialistes i recursos financers.

Aquesta tesi explora les dinàmiques concretes d'aquesta mobilització transfronterera de cossos filantròpics jueus a favor de les comunitats jueves de l'Europa central i oriental després de la caiguda del comunisme el 1989. Estudia en profunditat els orígens històrics i l'evolució de la solidaritat jueva transnacional en els temps moderns, indaga sobre les agències i organitzacions jueves que van començar a operar a Europa després de la caiguda del Mur de Berlín, especialment, però no només, les seves fonts de finançament i la circulació de recursos econòmics. Finalment, dona compte del corpus narratiu que va sorgir sobre els jueus europeus abans i durant aquest procés, identificant aquells actors que van crear i van mobilitzar aquestes narratives.

Paraules clau: Filantropia religiosa, transnacionalisme, solidaritat jueva, Europa de l'Est, judaisme europeu, post comunisme, comunitats jueves, revivalismo jueu, narratives

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Part I Introduction

This thesis is about faith-based philanthropy. In concrete, it deals with the cross-border mobilization of Jewish philanthropic bodies in favor of the Jewish communities of East Central Europe after the fall of communism in 1989.

Across centuries, Jews displayed a strong ethos of ethnic and religious solidarity directed to their own people, those who were less fortunate, were more vulnerable or whose lives were imperiled. This particularistic, in-group practice has its roots in ancient Biblical and Talmudic notions, such as *tsedakah* (Hebrew for charity, צדקה), *Klal Israel* (Hebrew for peoplehood,כלל ישראל) and *Kol Israel arevim ze la'ze* (All of Israel are responsible for one another, כל ישראל ערבין זה לזה). Taking these concepts as a point of departure, this thesis explores how they evolved over time by focusing on a specific place and time: post-1989 Europe. As it will be shown, the practice of Jewish in-group solidarity had become by 1989 a multi-million-dollar transnational enterprise, embodied in a myriad of agencies, featuring professional staff and holding very specific know-how.

I began writing this dissertation a little more than ten years ago. At that time, I was living in Paris, where I had arrived in 2009 from Argentina to take on a unique professional challenge. Moving to Paris meant a totally new life for me, in which I had the opportunity, among other things, to get to know first-hand the Jewish communities of Europe. My professional involvement with Jewish Europe ultimately led me to write this dissertation. During these last ten years, the thesis has had periods of progress and others of quietness. Until I met Dr. Miriam Diez Bosch and the Observatory of Media, Culture and Religion of Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations at Ramon Llull University in Barcelona, who awakened in me the desire to bring it to a successful conclusion.

Thinking back, the first approach to the topic of this thesis happened, inadvertently, in 2008. That year, I was finishing my degree in social anthropology in Argentina and obtained a scholarship from the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) for a short research stay in Berlin. Interested as I was back then in the interplay between urban space and collective memory, my goal was to immerse myself in the city's unique

urban fabric –with its monuments, memorials, museums, and buildings shaped by the experiences of Nazism and Communism. Still, it was another thing that ended up capturing my attention. Soon after arriving in Berlin, I learned that a festival of Jewish culture organized by a group belonging to the local Jewish community would soon take place. “Jews?” “Germany?”, I asked myself. That combination –Jews *and* Germany; Jews *in* Germany– immediately intrigued me, so I decided to sign up and attend. The festival was a three-day gathering of members of the Jewish community, during which they learned from each other about Judaism, Jewish history and culture, and other issues relevant to their communal life in workshops, panels, and book readings. It took place on the outskirts of Berlin, in a somewhat rustic tourist resort by a lake, which was used during the German Democratic Republic’s (GDR) times to accommodate groups of children that belonged to the pioneer movement formed by the communist party. Upon arriving at the festival, I learned that the event was called Limmud, which in Hebrew means “to learn” (למד), that it was born in the United Kingdom in 1980 and that, over the years and due to its success, many Jewish communities and groups across Europe began to import the format to their own countries and give to it their local color. Suddenly, during the 2000s, many *Limmuds* began to appear - Limmud Deutschland, Limmud France, Limmud Polska, Limmud Baltics... and it was often the case that those festivals became integral parts of the Jewish community landscape.[1] But there is something more. Reflecting on that experience, I realize this was my first encounter with what I would later understand as a transnational process of rebuilding European Judaism. True, the expansion of Limmud was possible thanks to local enthusiasts who volunteered and dedicated time to establish this festival in their own communities. However, they were not alone: international Jewish organizations and foundations supported financially this expansion, particularly in Eastern Europe, as part of their efforts to renew Jewish life in post-communist countries. However, I admit that I only became aware of this upon the second approach to the subject of this thesis.

Moreover, this took place in a much more direct way. In February 2009, I started working for the European office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (called simply Joint or JDC), an international humanitarian organization dedicated to

[1] On Limmud, see Steven Cohen and Ezra Kopelowitz, *The Limmud International Study: Jewish Learning Communities on a Global Scale*, Limmud International, 2011 and Keith Kahn-Harris, *The Limmud Impact Study. Exploring Volunteers’ Jewish Journeys*, Limmud, 2018. Limmud’s UK website is https://limmud.org/ [Last access, October 27, 2023].

strengthening Jewish communities around the world. In my new professional role, I could appreciate the enormous influence that international organizations have had - and still have - on Jewish life in Europe. Without them in the picture, it would be impossible to understand much of contemporary Jewish Europe. I had arrived at the Joint almost twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and, nevertheless, this event was still very present in the daily life of the organization. It was as if it had happened only a few weeks before. And indeed, the impact that it had on European Judaism was decisive...

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the communist regimes in Europe represented a radical change for Judaism on the continent. The most striking change occurred, naturally, in Central and Eastern Europe, that is, in those countries that were behind the Iron Curtain, such as Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia or the German Democratic Republic. There, while the political decomposition of the Soviet bloc was gaining traction, thousands of people rediscovered their Jewish origins – forbidden, concealed, or silenced under communism, giving rise to a process of Jewish revivalism.[2] This process, in addition to restoring local Jewish life, which was deemed to have either disappeared or become dormant during communist years, allowed for the incorporation of "new" Jews into the "new" Europe, redefining the landscape and perspectives of European Jewry as a whole. For the first time since the Shoah (Holocaust), Jews across the continent could freely rethink their history, their identities, their relationship to Judaism and their future in Europe. "Jews - noted at the time the French-Italian Jewish intellectual Diana Pinto - now have the opportunity to *belong* to Europe as never before."[3]

The specialized scholarship in contemporary Jewish Europe took note early on about the resurgence of new Jewish identities, the religious revivalism and the increasing

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[2] Victor Karady, "Jewish Identity in Post-Communist East Central Europe", Monitor ZSA Ljubljana IV (1-2), 2006, pp. 92-105; Geneviève Zubrzycki, *Resurrecting the Jew: Nationalism, Philosemitism, and Poland's Jewish Revival*, Oxford: Princeton university Press, 2022; Daniel Monterescu and Rachel Werczberger, *Jewish Revival Inside Out Remaking Jewishness in a Transnational Age*, Wayne State University Press, 2022; András Kovács, "Jewish Revival in Post-Communist Hungary: Expectations and Reality", In: *Becoming Post-Communist*. Edited by: Eli Lederhendler, Oxford University Press, 2023.

[3] Diana Pinto, *A new Jewish identity for post-1989 Europe*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 1996, p. 2, emphasis in the text.

institutionalization of the memory of the Shoah, which have been taking place since the collapse of the communist regimes and the consolidation of the EU.[4] However, less importance has been given to study the actual modalities in which Eastern European Jewish communities were reconstructed during the post-communist transition period, much less to exploring their "supranational" or "transnational" dynamics.

The process involved a multitude of actors - Jewish agencies, organizations and foundations based in the United States, Europe and Israel – and entailed the mobilization of professionals, specialists and financial resources. The investment in millions of dollars for the reconstruction of these "new" communities, the transfer of specialized know-how in community matters to local Jewish leaders, and the bringing-in of an array of new elements connected with foreign Jewish life—such as knowledge, identity markers and practices, which only a few years earlier were absolutely unknown by these populations—are some of the elements that started to be crucial in this novel transnational flux.

At the same time, new narratives about European Jews began to appear in the public arena and played a crucial role in this process.

This thesis will try to answer the following questions: How was aid from Jewish agencies and organizations structured in post-1989 Europe? What were its central features? To what extent does this process represent continuity and to what extent something radically different from previous interventions? With respect to the narratives, what did these new narratives consist of and who was behind them?

1.1 Research goals and hypothesis

RESEARCH GOAL 1 (RG1): To analyze the making of Jewish transnational solidarity in order to determine whether that of post-1989 Jewish Europe gained in intensity, depth and transnationalism.

[4] See Jonathan Webber (ed.), *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, London, Washington: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994; Régine Azria, « Réidentification communautaire du judaïsme », in: Grace Davie et Danièle Hervieu-Léger (dir.), *Identités religieuses en Europe*. Paris: La Découverte, 1996, pp. 253-267; Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin and András Kovács (eds.), *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003; David Graham, *European Jewish Identity at the Dawn of the 21st Century: A Working Paper*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2004.

• **Hypothesis 1.1 (H1.1)**: During the 20th century, modern Jewish solidarity became a *field of activity*, in the sense given by Pierre Bourdieu, a very specific arena of inward-looking ethnic and religious solidarity defined by its own dynamics: the changing relationships between organizations, professional bodies, and ideological and programmatic agendas as well as by the changing relevance of Jewish centers capable of mobilizing resources and people in favor of less fortunate brethren.

• **Hypothesis 1.2 (H1.2)**: The Jewish solidarity that unfolded after the fall of communism could only have been possible thanks to the existence of a sophisticated transnational system of ethno-religious philanthropy and mutual aid forged during the previous one hundred and fifty years.

RESEARCH GOAL 2 (RG2): To analyze the narratives produced by Jewish activists and overseas organizations, scholars, professional journalists, and intellectuals about Central and Eastern European Jews between 1985 and 2000.

• **Hypothesis 2.1 (H2.1)**: During this period, a radical transformation took place in the narratives portraying Jews living in Central and Eastern European countries.

• **Hypothesis 2.2 (H2.2)**: Such a change in the narrative is a central element that explains the mobilization of various actors and resources for the reconstruction of the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe.

RESEARCH GOAL 3 (RG3): To examine the transnational dynamics of Western Jewish organizations present in Europe after 1989.

• **Hypothesis 3.1 (H3.1)**: The reconstruction of Jewish communities and Jewish life in general in the post-communist countries of Europe in the period between 1989 and 2000 has been a collective, transnational enterprise and involved the mobilization of people, resources, knowledge and narratives from other Jewish centers of global importance, but it has been characterized by the absence of centralized coordination, by high degrees of compartmentalization and by the dialectic between competition and collaboration.

• **Hypothesis 3.2 (H3.2)**: It is in the analysis of the circulation of money used to finance field operations that the eminently transnational character of the intervention can be observed and attested.

• **Hypothesis 3.3 (H3.3)**: In post-1989 Jewish philanthropy it began to coexist "old" or "traditional" forms of philanthropy, which were expressions of different segments within the Jewish collective, representing ideological, religious or national differences, with philanthropies of a new type, based on individual and/or family fortunes.

1.2 Theoretical framework

1.2.1 Transnationalism

The concept of "transnationalism" has been lately enjoying a certain resurgence in many academic fields. Sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and specialists in cultural studies, all agree in pointing out that today's globalized and interconnected world is producing a series of emerging phenomena that deserve to be studied from a transnational perspective. This concept seems to pose an open challenge to the "nation-state centered" paradigm in social sciences, also called "sociological nationalism," by questioning and relativizing the importance of national borders. Thus, a transnational point of view would allow a better perspective of contemporary phenomena, such as mass migrations and their process of diasporization, social and political movements acting on a global scale, the corporate world and international NGOs, as well as the formation of global memories and deterritorialized identities.[5] Ewa Morawska defined transnationalism as "the combination of civic-political memberships, economic involvements, social networks, and cultural identities that links people and institutions in two or more nation states in diverse, multilayered patterns."[6] From an international relations perspective, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye formulated the term as "contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state

[5] See Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo (eds.), *Transnationalism from Below*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998; Patricia Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism", Contemporary European History, vol. 14, No. 4, Theme Issue: Transnational Communities in European History, 1920-1970, Nov. 2005, pp. 421-439; Alexis Cloquell Lozano y Joan Lacomba Vázquez, "El transnacionalismo revisitado. Aportes y límites de una teoría de alcance intermedio para el estudio de las migraciones", Revista Española de Sociología, Vol. 25, Nº. 2, 2016, pp. 227-240; Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg (eds.), *Transnationalism. Diasporas and the advent of a new (dis)order*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009.

[6] Ewa Morawska, "Immigrants, Transnationalism, and Ethnicization: A Comparison of this Great Wave and the Last", in Gary Gerstle and John Mollenkopf (eds.), *E Pluribus Unum? Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*, New York: Rusell Sage, 2001, pp. 175-176.

boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments."[7]

Also in history, the trend towards approaching historical processes from a transnational perspective has been developing in recent years. Historians started to reassess themes such as immigration processes and the ties maintained between immigrants and their *Heimat*, the role of ethnic collectives and associations, commercial connections across regions or continents, and the dissemination of technical and scientific knowledge through networks and communities in light of such novel approach.[8] "Transnationalism is about exploring connections," stated historian Patricia Clavin, "[the term] enables history to break free from the nationally determined timescales that dominate the historiographical landscape."[9]

It is no surprise then that the Jews, their history, and their nature as a quintessential "deterritorialized" people, engage into a fruitful dialogue with the transnational perspective. And it is a dialogue that flows in several directions. For on the one hand, the Jewish experience becomes a sort of ideal type or mirror where to reflect that of other minorities in the contemporary world. For example, political scientist William Safran advocated in favor of expanding the use of the term "diaspora" as an analytical tool to think about other minorities and immigrant communities around the world. Diaspora traditionally had a very specific meaning: the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands.[10] Yet, Safran argued, Cubans and Mexicans in the United States, Pakistanis in Britain, Maghrebis in France, Turks in Germany, Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, and Indians and

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[7] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972, p. xi.

[8] See Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad and Oliver Janz (hrsg.), *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006; Phillipp Gassert, "Transnationale Geschichte", Version: 2.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 16. 2.2010, URL: https://docupedia.de/zg/Transnationale_Geschichte_Version_2.0_Philipp_Gassert; David Thelen, "Rethinking History from Transnational Perspectives", in Ben-Rafael and Sternberg (eds.), Op. cit., pp. 169-180; Cornelia Aust, *The Jewish Economic Elite: Making Modern Europe*, Indiana University Press, 2018; Daniel Soyer, "Transnationalism and Mutual Influence. American and East European Jewries in the 1920s and 1030s", in Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (eds.), *Rethinking European Jewish History*, Oxford, Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009, pp. 201-220. Moshe Rosman, "Jewish History across Borders", in Cohen and Rosman (eds.), op. cit., pp. 15–29.

[9] Clavin, op. cit., p. 427 and p. 429.

[10] Liliana Feierstein, "Diaspora", *Lo Sguardo - rivista di filosofia*, N. 29, 2019 (II) - Memoria e filosofia, vol. 2: memoria collettiva, pp. 513--524

Armenians in various countries, just to name a few, they all seem to share several characteristics with the *Jewish* diaspora such as being dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions; retaining a collective memory or myth about their original homeland; the belief that they are not fully accepted in their host countries; the belief that they should be collectively committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homelands; and the fact that they continue to relate to that homeland in one way or another. "Today," Safran concludes, "'diaspora' and, more specifically, 'diaspora community' seem increasingly to be used as metaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities tout court—in much the same way that 'ghetto' has come to designate all kinds of crowded, constricted, and disprivileged urban environments, and 'holocaust' has come to be applied to all kinds of mass murder."[11] Interestingly, the consequence of these theoretical and methodological underpinnings is that the Jewish experience is removed from its *uniqueness*. Israeli political scientist Gabriel Sheffer couldn't have said it more clearly, as he titled one of his papers "Is the Jewish Diaspora unique?"[12]

On the other hand, the dialogue between the Jewish experience and the transnational approach goes in the other direction as well, that is, reassessing Jewish history and experience through a transnational lens. In 1989 political scientist Daniel Elazar proposed understanding Jews as a "commonwealth that transcends territorial limits": "In many respects the Jews are the modern tribe par excellence, the tribe that has kept pace with the movement of civilization without sacrificing its kinship structure while still managing to create a commonwealth that transcends territorial limits."[13] With this definition, Elazar seemed to anticipate historiographical debates that gained momentum a decade later. For example, echoing the criticisms against the "nation-state centered" approaches in social sciences, historian Moshe Rosman claimed for a "(trans)geographical turn" when examining Jewish history.[14] In his view, previous

[11] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", *Diaspora* 1:1, Spring, Boulder: University of Colorado, 1991, pp. 83–84.
[12] Gabriel Sheffer, "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora's Current Situation". *Israel Studies* 10 (1), 2005, pp. 1-35.
[13] Daniel Elazar, *People and Polity. The Organizational Dynamics of the World Jewry*, Detroit: Wayne State University, 1989, p. 9.
[14] Moshe Rosman, "Jewish History Across Borders", in Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (eds.), Rethinking European Jewish History, London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009, pp. 15–29.

generations of scholars of Jewish history tended to overemphasize the role of political borders where Jews lived and dwelled and understate other types of spatial arrangements, being the most serious limitations of the omission of communities' interconnectedness. "Over the past fifty years scholars have, however, largely refrained from viewing Jewish communities as interconnected irrespective of political borders. The political boundary between Poland and Germany, for example, has proven to be a research boundary as well. Jewish historians specializing in either Germany or Poland (myself included) have done precious little to probe the contours of the Ashkenazi 'network of networks'."[15] Hence, Rosman advocated for "non-politically" based Jewish geographies, putting forward a transgeographical conception of Jewish history. "There is a cultural geography of Jewish history that transcends national political boundaries. It may not reveal a monolithic culture, but it will probably lend insight into one that resembles a rope with multicoloured strands all intertwined."[16] In a similar vein, Shulamit Volkov showed how, even if "Jewish history is inherently transnational," it was only recently that scholars devoted to Jewish history began to delve more seriously with "transnational" topics such as, for example, the numerous contacts, interactions and mutual influence that characterized Christian-Jewish relations in Europe since the Middle Ages, networks and connections within the Sephardic diaspora in Western Europe, or the impact of the European Enlightenment movement in Jewish thought, just to name a few.[17] It is within this perspective that we will frame our study object.

1.2.2 Jewish solidarity

In fact, one of the elements that best reflects the transnational *ethos* among Jews is the group solidarity that they have been able to display over the centuries. In order to achieve a better understanding of the process of reconstruction of Judaism in Europe, our analysis must necessarily take place within the framework of the responses that Jews have given, throughout history, to problems that affected other Jews living in other latitudes. Collective responses to "supranational" problems affecting Jews such as famines, persecutions, "ritual murder" trials, forced migrations as well as projects

[15] Ibid. p. 25.
[16] Ibid. p. 28.
[17] Shulamit Volkov, "Jewish History. The Nationalism of Transnationalism", in Gunilla, Conrad and Janz (hrsg.), *Transnationale Geschichte*…, op. cit., pp. 190–201.

seeking their economic and social rehabilitation often emanated from Jewish centers capable of mobilizing financial resources and human and political capital in favor of their co-religionists.[18] During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, transnational Jewish solidarity has developed various organizational forms and action strategies. While until the first half of the nineteenth century a model of discreet diplomacy was practiced by wealthy and politically influential Jews from Western Europe, the second half of the nineteenth century saw the creation of the first organizations specially dedicated to helping less fortunate co-religionists from other countries. In 1860 the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was founded in Paris, becoming the first organized expression of transnational Jewish solidarity in modern times. Shortly thereafter, Jews from other European centers created their own relief agencies such as *Israelitische Allianz zu Wien* (1871), *Anglo-Jewish Association* (1873) and the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* (1901).[19]

One of the goals of this thesis is to analyze the trajectory of transnational Jewish solidarity in its modern sense, which began to develop in the mid-nineteenth century, in order to try to determine to what extent the aid that arrived after 1989 can be understood as part of this tradition. We will also try to identify ruptures and continuities in this field after 1989 and how this affected European Jews.

1.2.3 Narratives about Jews in Europe

Simultaneously with the reconstruction cycle, a series of narratives began to emerge that shaped a new public view of European Jewry. In fact, the trend had begun a few years earlier, in the mid-1980s, with the publication of scattered and fragmentary information on the situation of Jewish communities in Soviet countries. This information appeared in specialized media, carried by a devoted circle of specialists and observers who, for decades, had been monitoring the situation of the Jews of the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. However, this initial trickle of information was followed, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, by a veritable flood of

[18] See Ilan S. Troen and Benjamin Pinkus (eds.), *Organizing Rescue. Jewish National Solidarity in the Modern Period*, UK: Frank Cass, 1992; Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe*, University of California Press, 2001.

[19] See Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affaire: "ritual murder", politics, and the Jews in 1840*, Cambridge University Press, 1997; Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred bonds of solidarity: the rise of Jewish internationalism in nineteenth-century France*, Stanford University Press, 2006.

new insights and perspectives. What did these new narratives consist of and who was behind them?

In this thesis we will review the corpus of narratives produced mainly by foreign observers, that is, Jewish activists and overseas organizations, scholars, professional journalists, memory activists and intellectuals during the period that goes from the years immediately before the fall of the Berlin Wall until the mid-1990s. The aim is to identify the central elements that began to emerge and circulate in what constituted a renewed vision of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe first and of the continent thereafter. These narratives have been produced by a heterogeneous constellation of actors (scholars, activists, journalists, memory entrepreneurs), in diverse settings and responding to different contexts and purposes. Some were realized country by country, while others through pan-European approaches.

In this sense, we follow the postulates of Hinchman & Hinchman regarding narratives.[20] Narratives are discursive forms that place events in a sequential manner, with a beginning, middle and end. Unlike other forms of presenting the past, such as annals and chronicles, narratives aim to reconstruct meaning, to offer an explanation, "they organize and endow the narrator's experiences in that world with meaning."[21] Thus, narratives are defined as discourses that present a clear sequential order, that connect events in a meaningful way for a specific audience and, in doing so, offer a perspective on the world and/or on people's experience. In turn, narratives can have an identity function (presenting and constructing a "self"), a memorial function (reconstructing a past) or a communal function (aimed at social cohesion). The register that will predominate in our corpus will be the memorial, that of providing an account and reconstructing a recent past in order to give meaning to it.

In order to understand the heterogeneity of our narrative corpus, we will also follow the analytical tools provided by the French historian Lucette Valensi on the mechanisms of the formation and transmission of collective memories. Starting with a specific historical case - a military defeat of the Portuguese army on Moroccan soil in 1578 -

[20] Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences*. State University of New York Press, 2001.
[21] Ibid. p. XV. On the different historical narratives, see Hayden White, *El contenido de la forma. Narrativa discurso y representación histórica*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1992. On contemporary's crisis of narration, see Byung-Chul Han, *The Crisis of Narration*, Polity Press, 2024.

and by adopting a long-term perspective, the author investigates not only how the memory of these events was elaborated and transformed on both sides of the Mediterranean, but also the mechanisms and supports that made it possible to share and transmit this knowledge over the centuries - texts, poems, letters, chronicles, monuments, commemorative coins. Thus, the author highlights the interpretative and memorial diversity that this fact has acquired and, along with it, the proliferation of transmission channels according to the religious group and the nationality of the actors involved.[22] Our narrative corpus is characterized, in effect, by a plurality of channels and narrative content: reports produced by Jewish organizations, academic research, journalistic accounts, photographic essays, among others.

1.3 Methodology

To explain transnational Jewish solidarity in rebuilding Jewish Europe and to explore the ways in which Jewish overseas organizations intervened in the region, this study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, resorting to historical and sociological methodologies as well as to analysis of narratives. Each of the three chapters included in this dissertation claimed its own specific methodological approach.

In chapter 1 I delve into the making of modern Jewish transnational solidarity from a historical perspective. There's no one single study encompassing the whole history of modern Jewish solidarity spanning one hundred and fifty years, rather there are multiple works focusing on a myriad of issues pertaining the topic –institutional histories, works on specific periods, conjunctions, problematics, and events. Thus, the chapter builds on this corpus of scholarly studies. My goal was to articulate into one single narrative the making of Jewish transnational solidarity; discuss its unique trajectory and evolution and identify its main tenets and salient features.

In chapter 2 I analyze the narratives that started to emerge and circulate about central and eastern European Jews in the immediate years before, during and after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Communism. I consider a variety of published materials: specialized academic journals, scholarly works, reports, journalistic accounts and chronicles, novels, tourist guides, and photographic essays. All these

[22] Lucette Valensi y Josefina Cuesta, "Autores de la memoria, guardianes del recuerdo, medios mnemotécnicos. Como perdura el recuerdo de los grandes acontecimientos". *Ayer*, No. 32, MEMORIA E HISTORIA, 1998, pp. 57–68.

materials are analyzed both as historical sources, that is, as documentary evidence about a given period, but also as cultural artifacts that conveyed and made possible these emerging narratives. Therefore, I combine a methodology based on source-analysis as conceived by the discipline of history as well as analysis of those items as cultural artifacts as it is understood by social sciences such as sociology and anthropology. In addition, I conducted open-ended interviews with key actors, most of them involved in the production of the abovementioned materials and incorporated their voices into my analysis.

In chapter 3 I explore the transnational dynamics of Jewish solidarity that unfolded in the post-1989 context. The first part of the chapter is devoted to mapping and classifying the organizations involved. To do this, I relied on reports, brochures and publications, scholarly works, institutional histories, archival sources as well as interviews with key professionals. In the second part, and based on the data collected, I resort to a sociological approach where I analyze, among other things, the varied nature of the organizations and their geographical distribution and, notably, inquire about the global circulation of money in order to understand the transnational phenomenon.

1.3.1 Gathering a corpus of data

As already noted, the approach of this thesis is multidisciplinary, drawing on methodologies from (contemporary) history to a greater degree, and from sociology to a lesser extent. Therefore, the main corpus of data of this thesis is documentary sources, both primary and secondary. Among the former, there are reports, brochures, financial statements, and other relevant materials published by different Jewish relief organizations and charitable bodies. Most of these documents can be found online, searching through the different agencies' websites. Because of my professional work, I was able to have access to a significant number of such reports and financial statements stored at my working space. It is mandatory for most of these organizations to make their financial statements and other key data public domain as most of them are registered charities. Other primary sources such as the journal Soviet Jewish Affairs (see Part III, chapter 4) was consulted in two different repositories, the library of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris and the BDIC- Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, renamed in 2018 as La Contemporaine.

Bibliothèque, archives, musée des mondes contemporains, located in the campus of University of Paris-Nanterre.

In terms of secondary sources, I resorted to specialized academic literature on the topics covered by this dissertation (history of cross-border Jewish solidarity, history of the different Jewish relief organizations, historical accounts of certain events and conjunctures) as well as other type of literature such as organizational histories, journalistic accounts, photographic essays, tourist guides, etc.

Semi-structured interviews complemented this documentary corpus of data. In total, 23 interviews were conducted in person (the majority) or via Zoom. To gather relevant data for my research, interviews were conducted with relevant individuals: former and current professionals of different organizations and relief agencies, executives, board members, rabbis, activists, as well as other scholars and intellectuals with intimate knowledge of the field of contemporary European Jewry. In addition, interviews with journalists who have covered the period in different capacities, some of whom authored relevant and influential books on the topic, were also conducted. These interviews are "expert" or "practitioner" interviews. Below are some methodological notes on how I approached this kind of interview.

1.3.2 Expert interviews

Guided by the principles outlined in Bogner, Littig, and Menz's (2009) seminal work "Interviewing Experts," semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse array of experts or practitioners.[23] The so-called "expert interviews" can play a pivotal role in qualitative research, particularly in fields where specialized knowledge is essential. They provide researchers with a means to access insights, perspectives, and expertise that might not be readily available through other methods. In recent years, more scholarly attention has been paid on the topic of expert interviews encompassing various facets, including methodological and epistemological considerations, their value in generating rich qualitative data, the ethnographic embedding of such research practice and the ethical considerations involved in conducting such interviews, just to

[23] Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig and Wolfgang Menz (eds), *Interviewing Experts*. Research Methods Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009.

name a few issues.[24] Central to these debates is the question of whether expert interviews can justifiably be considered a distinctive and autonomous method for data collection. Indeed, certain specific methodological considerations are worth mentioning when dealing with expert interviews.

Expert interviews are often conducted using purposive sampling, as discussed by Michael Quinn Patton, wherein participants are selected based on their expertise relevant to the research topic. According to Patton, purposive or, as he puts it, *purposeful* sampling "focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study," ensuring that the insights gained are informed by deep knowledge and experience within the field under investigation.[25] For the case of our research, expert interviews were conducted, as already mentioned, with an array of individuals considered as "experts": former and current professionals of different organizations and relief agencies, executives, board members, rabbis, and other scholars, intellectuals, and journalists with intimate knowledge of the field –post-communist European.

I would like to mention two of the distinct methodological challenges posed by expert interviews, which resonated in my own interviews for this dissertation.

1) The definition of "expert" and "expert knowledge". The status of expert, that is "who" and "what" is an expert, constitutes a widely discussed topic within the framework sociology of knowledge. Putting into question the classic definitions of an "expert" as someone who possesses specific stocks of knowledge, or a set of accumulated knowledge and experience[26], the discussions are based on the ascription to a more pragmatic or constructivist perspectives when defining who an expert is. Pragmatic positions tend to assert that it is the researcher who, according to his or her research objective, decides who she or he wants to interview as an expert. To this initial

[24] See Stefanie Döringer, '"The problem-centred expert interview": Combining qualitative interviewing approaches for investigating implicit expert knowledge', International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 24 (2021): 265–278; Katariina Parhi, "Experiencing experts: Notes on expert interviews in historical research", available at: https://doi.org/10.58077/JAE2-AG32 [Last access, March 21, 2024].
[25] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edition, London: Sage Publications, 2002, p. 230.
[26] See, for example, Thomas M. Skovholt, et. all. "A Brief History of Expertise", in Thomas M. Skovholt, and Len Jennings (eds), *Master Therapists: Exploring Expertise in Therapy and Counseling*, 10th Anniversary Edition (New York, 2016; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Sept. 2016), https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780190496586.003.0001, accessed 27 Apr. 2024.

postulate, Meuser and Nagel point out to the importance of *institutionalization* when defining an expert, indicating that "this is not an arbitrary choice but is related to the recognition of an expert as expert within his own field of action." Therefore, they suggest that experts are those who possess an "institutionalized authority to construct reality."[27] In this sense, they stress the fact that the notion of expert as well as that of expert knowledge has been widely affected by a scope of societal changes that brought about new ways of knowledge production. According to the authors, a "transition to a pluralized, heterogeneous mode of knowledge production," has sensitized expert knowledge "regarding stocks of knowledge generated outside the scientific world and acquired, experienced (and suffered) in extra-professional practice."[28] In their view, the definition of expert should be extended in light of new (global) network-like negotiation processes of knowledge production to include the people actively involved in shaping public affairs. These include, for example, NGO representatives who have (often) acquired their expertise outside their professional role.

On their part, Bogner and Menz advise against relying exclusively on the *knowledge* dimension when defining an expert. For them, there are both relational and social-representational elements at play when determining expertise. "Expert is anyone who is made into an expert by societal processes, that is who is seen as an expert in social reality. From this perspective, the expert can be described as a trained and specialized professional. […] In research practice, who is to count as an expert (and who is sought after as an expert) is always defined via specific research interests and simultaneously through the social representativity of the expert."[29] Among the typology of expert interviews they identify, I find two of them especially relevant for this thesis. The *systematizing expert interview*, which is

> related to the exploratory variant in that it is oriented towards gaining access to exclusive knowledge possessed by the expert. The focus here is on knowledge of action and experience, which has been derived from practice, is reflexively accessible, and can be spontaneously communicated. This kind of expert interview is an attempt to obtain systematic and complete

[27] Michael Neuser and Ulrike Nagel, "The Expert Interview and Changes in Knowledge Production", in Bogner, Littig and Menz (eds), Interviewing Experts, op. cit, pp. 18—19.
[28] Ibid., p. 25.
[29] Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz, "The Theory-Generating Expert Interview: Epistemological Interest, Forms of Knowledge, Interaction", in Bogner, Littig and Menz (eds), *Interviewing Experts*, op. cit, p. 50.

> information. The expert enlightens the researcher on "objective" matters. This means that the expert is treated here primarily as a guide who possesses certain valid pieces of knowledge and information, as someone with a specific kind of specialized knowledge that is not available to the researcher. […] From this methodological perspective it is not the experts themselves who are the object of the investigation; their function is rather that of informants who provide information about the real objects being investigated.[30]

The second type of relevant expert interview is the *theory-generating interview*,

> The essence of the theory-generating interview is that its goal is the communicative opening up and analytic reconstruction of the subjective dimension of expert knowledge. Here, subjective action orientations and implicit decision-making maxims of experts from a particular specialist field are the starting point of the formulation of theory.[31]

In this dissertation, expert interviews were framed using the above-mentioned methodological underpinnings. Interviews resulted in a combination of systematizing expert interviews and theory-generating ones.

2) A second methodological element I would like to mention is the ethnographic *embeddedness* of the interview. Expert interviews pose very particular ethnographic challenges when considering the specificity of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Authors seem to agree with the fact that since the expert's impression of the interviewer influences the type of knowledge he/she will communicate in the interview, relevant expert knowledge can only be obtained through professional reference to the expert's actual relevance system. Michaela Pfadenhauer considers this specificity of the interaction, which requires that the interviewer become a "quasi expert" to successfully carry out an expert interview, as a central constitutive element of such interviews. She also points out that an extraordinary level of prior knowledge of the subject matter – obtained essentially through an ethnographic "inventory" of the field of research – is required to guarantee their productiveness.[32] On their part,

[30] Ibid., pp. 46—47.
[31] Ibid., p. 48.
[32] Michaela Pfadenhauer, "At Eye Level: The Expert Interview — a Talk between Expert and Quasi-expert. In: Bogner, A., Littig, B., Menz, W. (eds.) op. cit., p. 81—97.

Meuser and Nagel advise against adopting a "naïve" perspective when conducting the interview with an expert: "For the interviewer it is a must to prepare the interview topics thoroughly and build up a knowledge base of the field the experts are moving in. Different from the narrative interview, in the expert interview naivety would involve the risk of presenting oneself to the expert as an incompetent."[33] Drawing on this, Bogner and Menz call for an expert interview "interaction model" in which the so-called interaction effects (normally considered as interfering variables) are seen as constitutive and productive elements in the data production process. They go on to offer a sketch of some selected interaction situations that are typical of expert interviews, and which are shaped by certain perceptions, ascriptions, and suspicions about competence in relation to the interviewer. In this sense, the interviewer can be seen by the interviewee whether as a *co-expert*, that is, sharing the same level of knowledge and competences and hence treated as a "colleague"; or as an *expert from a different knowledge culture* — the interviewee assumes that the interviewer possesses significant specialist competence and knowledge but from another professional background; or as a *layperson*, that is, lacking all expert knowledge; or as an *authority* —a superior specialist in the field, just to name a few "ideal types." Each of these ideal types of interaction, according to the authors, has different effects on the interview itself. Thus, they conclude by saying that,

> When we interpret data collected in interviews, we need to reflect that the data cannot be understood as an expression of abstract, general "expert knowledge" but also as a variable produced by the interaction, and that the interviewee's statements are responses to a person seen as having concrete competences and interests – and thus as statements that would have been different had the interviewee had a different conception of the interviewer […] Which role expectations and competence ascriptions are dominant depends on a range of factors – the interviewer's age and sex, specialist knowledge as evidenced by an ability to use specialist terms, linguistic competence, institutional background, academic titles, and so on. The most significant factor, though, is the way in which the researcher presents him or herself and

[33] Meuser and Nagel, op. cit., pp. 31—32.

his or her research interest, both in the interview itself and in preparatory contacts with the expert.[34]

[34] Bogner and Menz, op. cit., p. 70.

Part II State of the Art

2.1 Jews, Judaism and Jewishness in post-1989 Europe

There is a large body of literature focused on analyzing various aspects related to Jews, Judaism and Jewishness in post-1989 Europe. For reasons of length, I will only refer to the most relevant topics for this thesis. One of the first elements to be quickly addressed from a scholarly perspective is the phenomenon of Jewish revival that took place in post-communist Europe once the barriers and impediments to free religious practice and ethnic identification fell.[35] Growing evidence showed how, from the 1990s onwards, Jewish practices, celebrations and communities revived in a context of rediscovery of Jewish identity by Eastern Europeans of Jewish descent. Undoubtedly, this ethno-religious resurgence was possible thanks to a combination of factors: the almost total disappearance of state pressure for assimilation (something that had been commonplace in the West since the post-war period), the emergence of an environment favorable to "multiculturalism," expressed not only rhetorically but also through specific legislation, the crisis of grand narratives brought about by the fall of communism and the growing influence of international agencies and organizations. For many scholars and observers, the concept of *revivalism* seemed to be the most appropriate term to describe the renaissance of Jewish identity in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. Recently, anthropologists Rachel Werczberger and Daniel Monterescu placed the very term of *Jewish revival* under scrutiny, pointing out how it became both an *etic* and an *emic* category, that is, a notion that is used by social scientists to describe a phenomenon but also by religious and political actors who are immersed in it. "Indeed, the trope of a Jewish renaissance has become both a *descriptive category* of an increasingly popular public and scholarly discourse across the globe and a *prescriptive model* for social action. The urgent call to revive Judaism has engulfed all realms of Jewish culture, education, and modes of devotion, replacing

[35] Jonathan Webber (ed.), *Jewish identities*…, op. cit.; Victor Karady, "Jewish Identity in Post-Communist…", op. cit; Gitelman, Kosmin and Kovács, *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*…, op. cit.; Geneviève Zubrzycki, *Resurrecting the Jew*…, op. cit.

older categories of practice with the promise of innovation, authenticity, and relevance."[36]

Debates around the revivalist phenomenon quickly became part, in turn, of broader discussions about "new" Jewish identities in contemporary Europe. British sociologist and demographer David Graham asserted that the issue went beyond what it could be understood as revivalism. According to him, a general redefinition of what it meant to be Jewish was taking place. "People are finding new ways to express their identity as Jews by adapting traditional practices, customs, and behaviors to fit in with their new social realities."[37] That meant that the increasing rates of synagogue attendance or celebration of Jewish traditional rituals were attached to ethnic meanings rather than to religious ones. Or in the words of Graham, "the meanings attached to the celebration of Jewish holidays have changed from an expression of religious commitment to an expression of a bond with Jewish tradition."[38]

It is important to point out that while this "revivalism" did imply a strong legitimation of Judaism, it did not bring with it an adoption of Jewish traditions in their entirety. In fact, "revivalism" in this sense was the highly individualized application of conscious and unconscious forms of cultural selection where any possible combination was valid as long as it expressed a personal identity, chosen *à la carte* and elaborated in a "free market" of cultural-religious choices. This tendency towards "ethnic selectivity" – already identified previously in the West and thus not exclusive to Judaism – was according to French sociologist Régine Azria, "characteristic of the religious modernity of Western societies in general, and of Jewish modernity in particular," relying on "individual, selective, multiple and non-exclusive choices."[39] Following these conceptual tenets and adopting an anthropological perspective, social researcher Ruth Illman proposes approaching these "theologically unsystematic life-views" adopting the methodological framework of "vernacular religion", that is, focusing in the interplay and dialectics between personal experiences and narratives with socio-religious structures.

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[36] Daniel Monterescu and Rachel Werczberger, "Introduction. Riding the Jewish Renaissance: Survival, Revival, and Renewal", In Monterescu and Werczberger (eds.), *Jewish Revival Inside Out…,* op. cit., pp. 1–2.

[37] David Graham, "European Jewish Identity…", op. cit., p. 17.

[38] Ibid. p. 18.

[39] Régine Azria, "Réidentification communautaire du judaïsme", in Davie, Grace and Danièlle Hervieu–Léger, *Identités religieuses en Europe*, La Découverte, Paris, 2006, p. 266-267.

In other words, how European Jews "find ways of 'being and doing Jewish' that feel historically embedded and religiously meaningful but simultaneously meet their personal needs and correspond to the secular lifestyle of their contemporary surroundings."[40]

The necessary consequence of this ethnic-religious deregulation and individualization is that Judaism became a "non-exclusive" identity and with that the traditional communal model tended to lose its centrality. The synagogue, the Jewish Community Centers and the Jewish day schools are no longer the "natural" places for secularized Jews. In 1994, during a general assembly of European Jewish Communities held in Budapest, a French observer stated that: "the problem arises from the fact that we have not accepted nor begun to work on our grief for the loss – the death — of Jewish-organic communities. We still think and speak in terms of communities in which everybody has a close physical relationship to another Jew. Yet such a community does not exist anymore in the Diaspora."[41] In other words, the community has ceased to be the all-embracing framework for Jewish socialization: "when faced with the severe competition of globalized societies, [the community's] capacity to function as a socializing structure has given way to that of a simple provider of alternative services […] for a more or less loyal consumer population."[42] However, these elements do not point to a progressive disappearance but more to a re-signification and re-composition of Jewish identity and experience.

Beyond the debates on Jewish identities, other works began to problematize the place and image of "the Jew" in the public arena. On the one hand, the aim was to understand the perception that European civil society had about the Jews. Diana Pinto emphasized the special place that Jews came to occupy in Europe, a group whose symbolic importance was given by their tragedy on European soil: "We [the Jews] are instead

[40] Ruth Illman, "Researching vernacular Judaism. Reflections on theory and method", in *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2019, pp. 91–108.
[41] Intervention of Meir Weintrater in Michael May (ed.), *Hopes and Fears: Jewish identities in the New Europe*. Proceedings of an international symposium at the General Assembly of the European Council of Jewish Communities on 19 November 1994 in Budapest, Hungary, published by the European Council of Jewish Communities, London, 1995, p. 29.
[42] Azria, op. cit., p. 260. "face à la concurrence implacable des sociétés globales, sa fonction socialisatrice a cédé la place à celle de simple prestataire de services alternatifs […] auprès d'une population de consommateurs plus ou moins fidélisés".

perceived by non-Jews as possessing an inherent moral and cultural strength precisely because of our historical suffering."[43]

In part, this was due to the process of institutionalization of the memory of the Holocaust that has operated across the continent and has been expressed through the inauguration of museums, the renewed importance of historical sites and spaces for memory and reconciliation, the building of monuments and memorials and the commemoration of national days of mourning, among others.[44] This process placed the Jews in the unequivocal role of the victim.

The folk aspect of "Jewishness" began to be rediscovered, as a way for Jews to access the past – one that is now lost – and to cover the non-Jewish population's growing need to respond to its own negated past that was kept secret for so many years. As Ruth Ellen Gruber has shown, old Jewish neighborhoods, Klezmer music and synagogues are now identified as objects of curiosity and sometimes veneration – regardless of whether actual Jews are present to legitimize them.[45] In fact, Geneviève Zubrzycki has shown how for the case of Poland, the revival of Jewish history and traditions, driven mainly by non-Jews, is a way for progressive Poles to engage in a cultural struggle that seeks to break the association between Polishness and Catholicism.[46]

Nonetheless, several authors agree that the emergence of a "Jewish space" – in other words the presence and manifestation of Jewish life, thought and sentiments in a public space regarded as tolerant and open to multiculturalism – is one of the most relevant developments of post-communist Europe.[47]

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[43] Diana Pinto, "The Jewish Space in Europe". In: Lustig, Sandra and Ian Leveson (eds.), *Turning the Kaleidoscope. Perspectives on European Jewry*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006, p. 185.
[44] See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, 1994 and by the same author *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, Yale University Press, 2000.
[45] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, University of California Press, 2002.
[46] Geneviève Zubrzycki, *Resurrecting…*, op. cit.
[47] Michal Y. Bodeman, "The Return of the European Jewish Diaspora. New Ethno-National Constellations since 1989" in Julius H. Schoeps and Olaf Glöckner (eds.), *A road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011; Diana Pinto, "Asemitism. Or a society without antisemitism or philosemitism: Dream or Nightmare?" (in press), 2010; Eszter B. Gantner and Jay (Koby) Oppenheim, "Jewish Space Reloaded: An Introduction"*, Anthropological Journal of European Cultures,* 2014: 1-10.

2.2 Jewish solidarity: Background in Europe

As it has been pointed out above, there is a long tradition of responses that Jews, as an ethno-religious group, have given in the face of difficulties and emergencies that affected their brethren around the world. In this section we will refer to bibliographical works focused on describing and analyzing "transnational" interventions that have taken place in Europe during the twentieth century, that is, the most immediate antecedents to the period covered by this thesis. In this sense, it is the turbulent years that go from the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany until the end of World War II when interventions to address the needs of Jewish refugees and escapees first and then that of the Jewish armed resistance in the occupied countries, the survivors and the so-called Displaced Persons (DPs) multiplied.[48] The debates are mainly focused on discussing the efforts that world Jewry, in particular American Jewry, made to save Jews in Europe. In this regard, the *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee* (also called Joint or JDC), a Jewish philanthropic organization founded in New York in 1914, emerged as the main body responsible for channeling and carrying out transatlantic aid on behalf of American Jewry, and it is for this reason that it received most attention from researchers.[49] Clearly, the Joint played a crucial role in this period, particularly after the war, taking care of a huge span of activities, such as helping refugees to get repatriated, immigrating to the US or Palestine, providing food and first aid to the surviving inmates of camps, and supporting the DPs camps in all possible aspects (education, job training, medical care, supporting religious life, culture and sports, as well as intermediating between the DPs and the American military authorities).

The American involvement in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Jewish life in post-Holocaust Europe has also been the subject of attention. These works are less concerned in analyzing the fate of European Jewry during the immediate aftermath of the Shoah, than offering an account of the sometimes middle-to-long term role that the

[48] After World War II, many Holocaust survivors, unable to return to their homes, lived in refugee camps set up by the Allied forces in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Those camps were called "Displaced Persons' camps" and, hence, the people living there were to be known as Displaced Persons or just DPs.

[49] See Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the Ashes. The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1989*; Diane Afoumado, *Exil impossible : l'errance des Juifs du paquebot « St.-Louis »,* Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005; Noam Waldoks, "The Triumph of Politics: The Joint Distribution Committee and Illegal Immigration Policy 1933-1946", Yale College History Department, New Haven, CT, April 2004, (mimeo); Josep Calvet Bellera, *Huyendo del holocausto. Judíos evadidos del nazismo a través del Pirineo de Lleida*, Milenio Publicaciones, 2015.

various American Jewish organizations had in the rebuilding of the Jewish communities in some European countries. Thus, a series of "case studies" has centered on different countries. Among them, France is a sort of paradigm because of the size of the community and the amount of money invested by the Joint in rebuilding the community.[50] Like the Holocaust-studies, these works are also preoccupied in analyzing the American (Jewish) presence in post-Holocaust Europe, however, their questions and approaches are different. One of the central debates here is the type of policies that organizations such as the Joint envisaged and put into practice *vis-à-vis* the local communities. In other words, the question that many researchers have asked is in what way could the presence of a Jewish-American-funded body of professional social workers and policymakers be considered as a "foreign intervention" if not directly as "cultural imperialism" from one Jewry to another. It is not a coincidence that the term "Jewish Marshall Plan" has been used widely to describe those years, a term that epitomizes the ambiguity of the help offered during those years. As Maud Mandel pointed out: "Like the promoters of the Marshall Plan, who flexed their financial muscle in France (where they invested 2,629 million dollars) to impose their own objectives, the Joint used its tremendous financial power coupled with its extensive experience in the areas of social service, communal organization, and fund-raising to introduce great changes into the French Jewish communal landscape. As such, it functioned like many American philanthropic organizations of the twentieth century, spreading its own cultural agenda through its activities abroad".[51] Laura Hobson Faure unfolds on the

[50] See David H. Weinberg, "The reconstruction of the French Jewish community after World War II", in Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf (dir.), *She'erit Hapletah, 1944-1948; Rehabilitation and Political Struggle. Proceedings of the Sixth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference, Jerusalem, 1985*, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1990, pp. 168-186; Isabelle Goldsztejn, "Le rôle de l'Américain Joint dans la reconstruction de la communauté", *Archives Juives*, n. 28, 1995, 1, pp.23-37; Maud S. Mandel, "Philanthropy or Cultural Imperialism? The Impact of American Jewish Aid in Post-Holocaust France", *Jewish Social Studies* 9, 2002, 1, pp. 53-94; Laura Hobson Faure, *Un « Plan Marshall juif » : La présence juive américaine en France après la Shoah*, *1944-1954*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2013. For Poland see Yosef Litvak, "The American Joint Distribution Committee and Polish Jewry, 1944-1949", in S. Ilan Troen and Benjamin Pinkus (eds.), op. cit., pp. 269-312. For Germany, Ronald Webster, "American Relief and Jews in Germany, 1945-1960. Diverging Perspectives", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XXXVIII, 1993, pp. 293-321; Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997. For Italy, Sonia Menici, "Opera del Joint in Italia. Un 'Piano Marshall' Ebraico per la Ricostruzione", *La Rassegna Mensile de Israel*, LXIX, 2003, 2, pp. 593-617.

[51] Mandel, op. cit., pp. 54–55.

other hand a more nuanced view on this matter, emphasizing essentially the “agency” of local Jews in this process.[52]

A last way of approaching Jewish transnational activities in Europe is by portraying the often-conflictual relationship that existed between competing Jewish organizations during the post-Holocaust years in Europe, especially those responding to American Jewry and to Israel. In his depiction of fifty years of involvement of American and Israeli organizations with post-Holocaust European Jewry, David Clayman renders the tensions, conflicts and differences that existed between the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Joint, the World Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Agency, among others.[53] For example, in the immediate aftermath of the Shoah an ideological conflict arose over where the remnants of European Jewry should go. American Jewry considered that Jews who wanted to remain in Europe should be assisted and those who didn’t want to go to Israel were entitled to seek a new life in any Western country. On the contrary, Israel firmly advocated for survivors to settle in Israel. Clayman, himself Israel director of the AJC at the time of publishing this article, stresses the fact that European Jewish communities played, most of the time, the passive part of American Jewry and Israel’s agenda, seen either as recipients of material and spiritual aid, as victims of the latent and always persevering European anti-Semitism or as hostages of the communist rule.[54] Echoes of this dynamic will make their presence in the post-1989 context as well.

[52] Hobson Faure, op. cit.
[53] David Clayman, “Cooperation and Tensions between American Jewry and Israel over Selected Problems Confronting European Jewry”, in Ilan S. Troen (ed.), op. cit., pp. 355-371.
[54] Ibid. pp. 359–360.

Part III

3. Cross-border Jewish solidarity in Europe: from the Damascus affair to 1989

> *"Israélites !*
>
> *Si, dispersés sur tous les points de la terre et mêlés aux nations, vous demeurez attachés de cœur à l'antique religion de vos pères, quelque faible d'ailleurs que soit le lien qui vous retienne […] Si vous croyez qu'un grand nombre de vos coreligionnaires, encore accablés par vingt siècles de misère, d'outrages et de proscriptions, peuvent retrouver leur dignité d'hommes, conquérir leur dignité de citoyens […] israélites du monde entier, venez, écoutez notre appel, accordez-nous votre adhésion […] Nous fondons l'ALLIANCE ISRAELITE UNIVERSELLE !*
>
> Appel de 1860, Alliance Israélite Universelle

This thesis explores the role of transnational Jewish organizations in the rebuilding of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. The analysis will be necessarily inscribed within the history of modern responses by world Jewry to what were perceived as Jewish transtate or transnational problems. Throughout history, the ethos of solidarity and commitment among Jews adopted various modalities and often emanated from Jewish centers that were able to mobilize financial, political and human resources on behalf of their brethren.[55] The modern incarnation of Jewish solidarity was born in nineteenth-century Europe, thus, in order to better understand transnational Jewish involvement with Central and East European Jewry in the aftermath of communism, this chapter will

[55] See Ilan Troen and Benjamin Pinkus (eds.), *Organizing Rescue Jewish National Solidarity in the Modern Period*, Routledge, 1992; Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred bonds of solidarity: the rise of Jewish internationalism in nineteenth-century France*, Stanford University Press, 2006; Jonathan Dekel-Chen, "Philanthropy, Diplomacy, and Jewish Internationalism." In *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 8. Edited by: Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels. Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 505–528.

provide an historical overview of how modern Jewish solidarity was born and how it later evolved throughout a century and a half. Although 1989 represented a moment of radical change regarding European Jewry, offering a propitious moment for transnational Jewish agencies to operate, it is certainly not less true that the process of reconstruction of Central and Eastern European Jewry can be placed in a long list of modern transnational Jewish interventions in the region. Whether because the Jews there were politically oppressed and were bound to suffer continuous acts of discrimination and violence, or because they faced severe economic hardships, Jewish Europe was the ground for multiple initiatives of relief and rehabilitation as well as for moral and productive regeneration experiments. During this period of time, multiple organizations and agencies were created by Jewries living in different countries and coming from diverse social, economic, and ideological extractions. The life-span of these organizations, as well as their operational capacities and their place in the concert of Jewish transnational agencies was regulated not only by internal dynamics taking place within the Jewish world, but also by the course of historical events (political and financial crisis, world wars, famines, persecutions, the Holocaust, the foundation of the State of Israel, globalization and the expansion of liberal democracies) which led to geopolitical changes affecting both the Jews to be helped and those providing it.

This chapter will open in nineteenth-century Europe with what could be considered as the rise of modern Jewish awareness towards the unfortunate brethren living elsewhere, triggered by the Damascus Affair in 1840[56]. Two decades later, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, one of the first organized expressions of Jewish transnational solidarity, was founded in Paris. The chapter will close in 1989 when, as the communist regime in the USSR was about to implode, world Jewry, led by American Jews and Israel, was providing assistance to thousands of Soviet Jews who were now able to emigrate after more than a three-decade long political and grass-roots mobilization in the Western world.

What happened with modern Jewish solidarity during this lapse of time is the subject of this chapter; how organized Jewry felt compelled to react facing real or perceived

[56] On the Damascus Affair, see pages below.

threats affecting fellow Jews living elsewhere resulting, at the end of this process, in a vast and complex system of very specialized welfare and philanthropic agencies.

3.1 The making of modern Jewish solidarity in nineteenth century Europe

Jewish international solidarity in its modern sense was born in nineteenth-century Europe and found its peak throughout the 1900s. Like many other aspects of the Jewish culture and tradition, Jewish texts explain Jewish solidarity as the manifestation of an eternal Jewish social ethos. Biblical or Talmudic concepts such as *tsedakah* (Hebrew for charity, צדקה), *Klal Israel* (Hebrew for peoplehood,כלל ישראל) and *Kol Israel arevim ze la'ze* (All of Israel are responsible for one another, כל ישראל ערבין זה לזה) lay at the very core of the religious understanding of the maintenance of social bonds across communities and the later development of transnational solidarity. As Ya'acov Blidstein pointed out, the precept of "redemption of captives" as it appears in the *Halakha* (Jewish Law, הלכה) as well as in other texts of the Jewish tradition, occupies the highest status in terms of the moral obligations the Jews have towards each other. In this respect, to redeem a captive came to mean not only the release of a human being from physical confinement, but also rescuing the brethren both from life-threatening situations as well as from transgressions and sins.[57] Yet, if these concepts help us to understand the ancient religious roots and sometimes the motivations of some of the actors involved in helping others, they fail to provide a suitable explanation of how these deep-rooted religious prescriptions evolved into a modern commitment of helping other Jews around the world—frequently embodied in professional agencies of Jewish aid.

Responses to what were perceived as transtate or transnational Jewish problems, such as famines, persecutions, trials for "ritual murders," civil rights, emigration, resettlement, refugees, orphans, and economic and social "regeneration" often emanated from Jewish centers capable of mobilizing economic and human resources on behalf of their less fortunate brethren and took different modalities and approaches

[57] Ya'akov Blidstein, "The Redemption of captives in the Halakhic Tradition: Problems and Policy", in S. Ilan Troen and Benjamin Pinkus (eds.), *Organizing Rescue. Jewish National Solidarity in the Modern Period*, Frank Cass, UK, 1992, p. 20-31.

depending on the historical period.[58] However, long before world Jewry started to be engaged in such transnational undertakings, Jewish communities in Europe had, since medieval times, taken care of their own poor and unfortunate. Derek Penslar, in his study on the development of Jewish economic thinking in Europe, draws a line that goes from the first attempts to organize local philanthropic charities towards the poor and the orphans in medieval Jewish Europe, to the birth of projects of radical social engineering such as Zionism and the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[59] The Jewish experience in philanthropy and solidarity was shaped by an economic thinking cultivated in Europe and further developed during the Emancipation[60] and the exposure of Jewish elites to the Enlightenment.[61] It was at this point that some communal thinkers also began to consider philanthropy as a means to "constitute a new, powerful, and viable source of modern Jewish identity."[62] If until the early 1800s poor care and philanthropy in general were directed inward, since then Jewish elites in Western Europe began to mobilize themselves on behalf of the Jews of Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa giving rise to innovative ways of solidarity and political actions. In terms of political responses, this also represented a major shift from the model of "behind-the-scenes diplomacy" (*shtadlanut*, שתדלנות in Hebrew), practiced by local notables when situations of threat and catastrophes erupted.

Scholars seem to agree in signaling the crisis launched by the Damascus Affair as the starting point of modern Jewish solidarity.[63] In 1840, Father Thomas, a Sardinian

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[58] I follow the notion of Jews as a "polity" as developed by Daniel J. Elazar. According to this author, the Jewish polity has some special features: "It is worldwide in scope but only territorial in a limited sense. It is not a state, although a state is an essential part of it. It is authoritative but only for those who accept citizenship within it. It does not demand the exclusive loyalty of those attached to it, because many of its members share multiple loyalties", Daniel J. Elazar, *People and Polity. The organizational dynamics of World Jewry*, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1989, p. 17.

[59] See Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe*, University of California Press, 2001.

[60] Jewish Emancipation makes reference to the process that started with the French revolution and entailed a progressive gain of civil liberties by Jews in Western and Central European nations. See Richard I. Cohen, "Emancipation in Western Europe," in Eli Barnavi (ed.), *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1992, pp. 158–159.

[61] Penslar, p. 90-123.

[62] Ibid., p. 105.

[63] See Jonathan Frankel, "The Crisis as a Factor in Modern Jewish Politics, 1840 and 1881-1882", in S. Ilan Troen and Benjamin Pinkus (eds.), *Organizing Rescue Jewish National Solidarity in the Modern Period*, Routledge, 1992, pp. 33-49; Elazar, op. cit., p. 113; Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred bonds of solidarity: the rise of Jewish internationalism in nineteenth-century France*, Stanford University Press, 2006.

Capuchin priest, disappeared with his servant in Damascus. Jews from Damascus were held responsible collectively and were accused of abducting the two men and killing them in order to use their blood for ritual purposes. Methods to extract "confession" included torture and resulted in the deaths of many local Jews. Moreover, in the early stages of the affair events were reported in the Western European press in a way which toyed with traditional European anti-Semitic prejudices.[64] As Jonathan Frankel showed, events in the Middle East and its disturbing echoes in the press caught Western European Jewry off guard: there were no existing institutions designed to respond to such crises. It took several months after the outbreak of the crisis before the British and the French Jews decided to intervene in the public arena and to find ways to put political pressure upon the highest authorities of their respective governments. In part this was due to the fact that the Jewish elites began to understand that the Damascus affair was threatening to undermine the status and the fragile alliances that Jews in the West had achieved during the Emancipation period. It was in this context that Jewish leaders in France and in Britain decided to make an unprecedented move by sending a French and English Jewish official delegation to Alexandria, led by the prestigious lawyer and Congressman Adolphe Crémieux and the philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore in order to intercede on behalf of their persecuted brethren.

Thus, the Damascus Affair represented a watershed in the making of modern Jewish solidarity. Jewish elites in Western Europe subsequently remained sensitive to the problems of the Jews elsewhere and started to campaign on a regular basis for their rights in the Northern African and Middle Eastern countries that were under European influence.

It was in France where representatives of the emerging Jewish liberal bourgeoisie succeeded in finding a formula that could put into action the moral obligation of helping their unfortunate brethren while supporting, at the same time, the ideals and values stemming from republicanism, liberalism and universalism. In 1860 the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was founded in Paris appealing to all liberal-minded "citizens of the mosaic faith" around the world to join them in their quest to instill republican values

[64] See Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affaire: "ritual murder", politics, and the Jews in 1840*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

and their struggle for the defense of the rights of Jews. “If, dispersed to all the corners of the globe and mixed with the nations,” Alliance’s founding *Appel à tous les israélites* went on, “you remain attached with your heart to the ancient religion of your fathers, however weak the link […] then Israelites of the entire world, come… give us your membership, your cooperation.”[65]

Establishing a central body designed to build a Jewish international solidarity network while simultaneously adhering to the principles of 1789 and the republican values, seemed to be quite paradoxical goals. But the paradox was only apparent. As Lisa Moses Leff has shown, by linking different Jewish religious and historical traditions with the language of modern solidarity, Jewish leaders sought to find new meanings for both their Judaic attachment as well as for securing their fragile citizenship status in their countries. For although it is true that the Alliance came to fill a void regarding the defense of the Jews in the international arena, it is no less true that theirs was also a domestic political struggle. The Alliance’s leaders were engaged in a struggle against the influence of clericalism and the ultramontane sectors[66] of the Catholic Church, a reactionary force which played against liberalism, republicanism, and religious freedom.[67] Thus, the “modern” character of this new endeavor laid in the fact that religious-based conceptions of solidarity were tarnished with a language that praised republican ideals and values.[68]

[65] Quoted in Moses Leff, op. cit., p. 161. On the origins of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, see Perrine Simon-Nahum, “Aux origines de l’Alliance”, in André Kaspi (dir.), *Histoire de l’Alliance Israélite Universelle. De 1860 à nos jours*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2010, p. 11-52.

[66] Ultramontanism is a clerical political conception within the Catholic Church that places strong emphasis on the prerogatives and powers of the Pope in Rome.

[67] One of the immediate reasons that led to the creation of the Alliance was the so-called Mortara case. In 1858, a 6-year-old Italian Jewish boy named Edgardo Mortara was taken away from his family by the Papal authorities under the pretext that one of the family’s servants had baptized him secretly and thus converting him into Catholicism. Despite the reactions and the international protests that this incident raised, the Church, under the papacy of Pope Pius IX, refused to let the boy return with his family. Years later Edgardo Mortara was ordained as a priest. The Mortara case was recently captured in a film that has not yet been commercially released [as of today, September 22, 2023], "Rapito" (Kidnapped) by Italian director Marco Bellocchio. The film was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 76th Cannes Film Festival, where it premiered on May 23, 2023.

[68] Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred bonds*…, op. cit.


BULLETIN

DE

L'ALLIANCE ISRAÉLITE

UNIVERSELLE

2e SEMESTRE 1872

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

PARIS

AU SIEGE DE LA SOCIETE

Figure 1. Image of the bulletin cover of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, published in the second semester of 1872. In Hebrew it can be read, "Kol Israel arevim ze baze". All Jews are responsible for one another. Source: The National Library of Israel.

The Alliance actually broadened the sense of the practice of Jewish transnational solidarity; its activities were a combination of diplomatic missions, relief operations and educational endeavors: advocacy on behalf of oppressed Jews, transmission of funds to victims of pogroms, regulation of emigration and resettlement, and the establishment of a network of Jewish schools in Islamic countries of the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East, whose Jewish population was deemed poor and backwards.[69]

[69] See Aron Rodrigue, *De l'instruction à l'émancipation*: *Les enseignants de l'Alliance israélite universelle et les juifs d'Orient, 1860-1939*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1989 and from the same author *French Jews, Turkish Jews: the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the politics of Jewish schooling in Turkey*, 1860-1925, Indiana University Press, 1990. On the different activities of the AIU, see André Kaspi (dir.), *Histoire de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle. De 1860 à nos jours*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2010.

Alliance founding members ambitioned to create a body that could, on the one hand, claim to represent world Jewry and, on the other, maintain the French-republican ideology as its main ideological tenet. This was, in part, actually achieved in its early years. In 1885 Alliance claimed to have 30,000 members scattered around the world, while its decision-making body, based in Paris, was dominated by French representatives.[70] However, it didn't take long until well-established Jewries from other Jewish centers in Europe started to create their own relief-oriented agencies: all along the late nineteenth century organizations such as the *Israelitische Allianz zu Wien* (1871), the *Anglo-Jewish Association* (1873), and the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* (1901) were founded following the example set by the Alliance Israélite Universelle which, notwithstanding, remained a sort of *primus inter pares*. Their organizational pattern as well as their approach to Jewish problems was drawn from similar ideological sources. According to the Derek Penslar, they all,

> represented a major departure from the tradition of responding to persecution through intercession (*shtadtlanut*), quiet, direct dealings between the minuscule Jewish plutocratic elite and territorial rulers. The new international organizations, following a pattern established as early as the Damascus Affair of 1840, presented their cause before the Western world's educated public, via publications, assemblies, and open appeals to world leaders.[71]

In terms of membership, these organizations sought support among Jews bearing a particular profile: well-to-do, integrated as full citizens in his or her respective nation and bearing "Israelite" persuasion, no matter how—as Alliance's appel stated—"weak the link" with Judaism was. Alliance served as a model for the creation of two American Jewish organizations, the defense-league American Jewish Committee (1904) and the relief agency American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (1914). They not only saw in the French organization a pioneer in the struggle for the rights of the Jews at an international level and the initiator of a system of overseas relief, but also they shared principles of "ethnic peoplehood" under which they understood their linkage to Judaism.

[70] Penslar, op. cit., p. 227.
[71] Penslar, op. cit., p. 225-226.

3.2 Social regeneration and productivization

Late nineteenth century also witnessed the emergence of ideas seeking to modernize and rationalize the practice of philanthropy and social welfare as they were traditionally conducted at the time.[72] These discourses regretted on one hand, the lack of coordination and centralization, that is, the "irrationality" that governed most of the charitable practices and on the other deplored—on moral grounds—the traditional almsgiving system and other policies considered to be palliative and demoralizing. Within the Jewish milieu, these ideas were adopted and further developed by the adherents of the Haskalah movement[73], shaping a discourse that placed social regeneration and productivization as central tenets in their aspiration to overcome the "Jewish problem" and to achieve the much desired "normalization." According to this ideology, Jews' occupational structure and economic behavior had to be transformed once and for all by adopting "productive" professions. It was implied that by going through this process of self-transformation, Jews and Judaism in general were to prove themselves "useful" to their host societies. Ideas of this sort gave birth to a number of unprecedented social experiments, many of them propitiated by transnational philanthropic organizations. They were implemented in Palestine, the Americas, Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia, and went on to leave a long-lasting imprint on Jewish history.

One of these endeavors was initiated by the Jewish magnate Baron Maurice de Hirsch who created in 1891 the Jewish Colonization Association (commonly known as ICA). In order to help Eastern European Jews in distress, ICA established a vast program of resettlement and colonization of agricultural lands located in Palestine, the United States, Canada, Brazil and, especially, Argentina. The organization's modus operandi was to acquire vacant lands and begin a process of selection, training and relocation of future colonists. The whole operation was organized following business lines—colonists received money for the trip, the land, and the tools as loans that had to be paid back—and relied on a heavy-handed and extremely bureaucratic administration based in Europe; something that often led to open conflicts between the administration

[72] Ibid. p. 174-254

[73] Haskalah (also known as "Jewish enlightenment") makes reference to an intellectual movement born in Eastern and Central Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century. The movement sought to integrate Jewish ideas and Jews into Western society. See Louis Jacobs, *The Jewish Religion: A Companion.* Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 223–226.

and the colonists.[74]Baron de Hirsch's original dream (he died in 1896, when the project was at its dawn) was to relocate 3,5 million Jews out of Russia during a period of twenty five years, something that was far from being achieved.[75]

Almost contemporary to the foundation of the ICA and Baron de Hirsch, Theodor Herzl founded political Zionism. As Derek Penslar pointed out, the Zionist movement could be understood at its very core not only as a political ideology seeking national redemption, but also, and above all, as a movement bearing a profound will to radically overcome the "Jewish problem" through agricultural settlements in Palestine. It is to this degree that Zionism represents one of the most—if not the only—successful programs for Jewish social regeneration.[76]

Although it is true that other agencies such as the Alliance, the ICA and the Anglo-Jewish Association ran vocational schools, founded new settlements, and opened educational farms in Palestine, what Zionism offered was also a convincing ideology of a Jewish state-building that functioned as a real balsam for the colonists that helped them overcome obstacles and hardships that appeared in the process.

Both Zionism and Baron de Hirsch's project shared common assumptions: the conviction that the European Jewish problem had to be solved elsewhere and thus immigration and resettlement were core pieces of their policies; the understanding that a sophisticated and scientifically-driven corps of technocrats and administrators had to deal with a complex and massive-scale operation ("One cannot," said Hirsch, "start colonizing haphazardly, and the movement should be preceded by a preliminary serious and careful investigation"[77]) and, last but not least, the idea that these endeavors had to be conducted following profitable models of investment. Ironically,

[74] An assessment of ICA's activities in Argentina can be found in Haim Avni, "La agricultura judía en la Argentina: ¿éxito o fracaso?", *Desarrollo económico*, 22, N° 88, 1983, p 535-48. On the conflicts between the ICA and the settlers see Iván Cherjovsky, "La faz ideológica del conflicto colonos/JCA: el discurso del ideal agrario en las memorias de Colonia Mauricio", in Emmanuel Kahan, et. al. (comps.), *Marginados y Consagrados. Nuevos estudios sobre la vida judía en la Argentina*, Ed. Lumière, Buenos Aires, 2011, p. 47-66.

[75] By 1911, the ICA managed to settle 19,000 Jews in Argentina.

[76] Penslar, op. cit., p. 223-254.

[77] Quoted in Penslar, Ibid, p. 241.

both men met and despite the common ground that both projects had, they never got along.[78]

Projects seeking social and economic regeneration of Jews gained a new momentum in the interwar period under the auspices of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (also known as Joint or JDC)[79] and, again, the ICA. Unlike Zionism and the colonization program run by the ICA in South America, these projects sought to improve Jews' economic condition *in situ*, whether through encouraging the Jews to turn to agriculture or by promoting efficient and competitive artisanal and small industrial activities.

In 1924, JDC and the ICA co-founded the American Jewish Reconstruction Foundation. The main goal was to establish (and at the same time improve the already existing) network of credit cooperatives destined to improve the economic performance of small artisans and petty traders of Central and Eastern Europe by providing cheap loans.[80]The *kassas*, as they were known, were organized on a local and regional basis and became especially popular in Poland (reaching out, according to Yehuda Bauer, to over a third of that country's Jewish population).[81] They existed also in Romania and Lithuania. The JDC also established free loan societies whose goal was to provide small and interest-free loans to those individuals who did not meet the eligibility criteria for the loans given by the *kassas*. Between 1921 and 1931 the number of *kassas* in the region went from 92 to 757, the membership saw an increase of more than tenfold (310,481 affiliated members) and the loans granted equated to more than $278 million.[82] "Normalization" was here a synonym of capitalism. The *kassas* were no other than a recreation of certain capitalist benefits that otherwise the Jews hardly had any access to. It was considered that these programs would instill capitalist discipline and

[78] See Carl Schorske, *Fin-de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 146-171

[79] On the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or Joint), see pages 43–44 below..

[80] See Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929-1939*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1974, p. 19-56; Nahum Karlinsky, "Jewish philanthropy and Jewish credit cooperatives in Eastern Europe and Palestine up to 1939: A transnational phenomenon?", *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture*, 27:2 (2008), p. 149-170 and Zosa Szajkowski, "'Reconstruction' versus 'Palliative Relief' in American Jewish Overseas Work (1919-1939)", *Jewish Social Studies*, 32, nos. 1-2 (1970), p. 14-42, 111-47.

[81] Bauer, Ibid., p. 37.

[82] Szajkowski, op.cit., part II, p. 113.

therefore Jews will be better equipped for leaving behind their structural backwardness.

Radically different in the outlook and set-up, but sharing the same substance, the social experiment known as Agro-Joint was also carried out by JDC between 1924 and 1937 and was an attempt to drive thousands of disenfranchised Jews (*lishentsy*) of early Soviet Russia into cooperative agriculture.[83] After confirming a quite significant flux of spontaneous colonization by Jews in the early 1920s and after running a colonization experiment held successful by JDC, Dr. Joseph Rosen, a Russian émigré living in the United States and expert in agronomy, was able to convince the leaders of the Joint in New York to allocate money and resources to create a vast colonization program in Crimea and southern Ukraine. Resorting to his contacts in the Soviet administration and in the political apparatus, and benefiting from a context of economic and social instability and hesitant authorities, Rosen managed to get the support of prominent Soviet leaders and decision-makers, who agreed to put vacant lands at the disposal of the Jewish colonization. Thus, this project run by the unlikely triangle of Soviet commissars, American philanthropists, and disenfranchised Jews fostered the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Jews who lived in the poor and overcrowded *shtetls*. This large-scale colonization program included the importation of tractors, grain and other raw materials to make the collective farms fully operative. Within a space of a few years, and despite many hardships, the Jewish colonies were able to provide reasonable living conditions for the Jews and furthermore they introduced modern agricultural methods for the first time in the Soviet Union such as mechanization, crops rotation and communal organization, among other things. In virtue of that, and because of the limited State power in the Jewish colonies, the Collectivization drive (1929-1934)[84] left Jewish colonies largely untouched. Moreover, many of the Agro-Joint's achievements in the field of collective agriculture represented, *in nuce*, in the eyes of many Soviet authorities of different strata, the desired horizon for the whole farming system in the Soviet Union.[85] However, in the long run, the industrial growth that Collectivization helped to enhance—draining the workforce to the cities—plus the

[83] See Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land. Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924–1941*, Yale University Press, 2005 and Bauer, op. cit., p. 57-104.
[84] Policy adopted by the Soviet authorities whereby peasants were forced to abandon their individual farms and join collective farms (*kolkhozy*).
[85] Dekel-Chen, op. cit., p. 131-208.

fierce purges set forth by Stalin in 1936-37, were key reasons for the final decline of Agro-Joint. The arrest and murder of high-ranking Agro-Joint staff attested the final blow and precipitated JDC's withdrawal from Russia.[86] It is considered that by the time the Joint left the USSR in 1937–1938, it had invested $17 million and mobilized 150,000 persons to 250 new colonies.

Figure 2. Images of the Agro-Joint project. On top left: Women thresh wheat in the fields. Crimea, Russia, c. 1930. NY_00878. On top right: Three young men in a wheat field at the Khaklay settlement. Crimea, Russia, c. 1927. NY_42897. Bottom left: In a cornfield of Jewish collective farm. Ukraine, c. 1928. NY_43878. Bottom right: Colonists at prayer in Ukraine, c. 1929. NY_00652. Source: https://archives.jdc.org/exhibits/beyond-relief-jdc-in-interwar-ukraine-and-crimea/ [Last Access: 6/3/23]

During the period when Agro-Joint seemed to be a viable and legitimate way of helping Jews in distress, it was perceived to be in direct rivalry with Zionism—even if it was never presented by its organizers as the ultimate solution for the Jewish problem—and

[86] See Mikhail Mitsel, "The final chapter: Agro-Joint workers – victims of the Great Terror in the USSR, 1937–40", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 39:1, 2009, p. 79-99

became the source of bitter confrontations amongst American Jewish leaders and philanthropists.[87]

3.3 Specialization of Jewish transnational agencies in the early twentieth century

If the Damascus affair in 1840 marked the transition from *shtadlanut* practices to innovative and modern ways of responding to Jewish transtate problems while reflecting a raising concern by Jewish elites about the fate of their brethren living elsewhere, the early twentieth century gave place to a multiplication of organizations designed to take action in different areas of functional specialization within the Jewish world. Whereas late-nineteenth century institutions such as *Alliance* combined diplomatic missions, relief efforts and educational programs, the newly founded agencies and groups tended to become specialized in certain domains of action such as religion, welfare and relief, education, and political advocacy. In addition, most of these organizations defined very clearly the *way* they would operate. They could be directly involved in setting up and running themselves different programs on the ground, which then became *operational* agencies; they could be *distributive* by virtue of disbursing funds for different purposes, or *consultative* if their activities centered in advocacy and representation.[88] The result was the creation of an array of Jewish organizations active on the Jewish world scene, ranging the full spectrum of ideological, programmatic and philosophical differences existing within the Jewish world.

During the twentieth century Jewish agencies also furthered their trend towards internationalization, conceiving their mission as trespassing national borders.

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[87] The Soviet-sponsored project of Birobizhan (1924-1937), whereby a remote area close to Siberia was to be opened for Jewish colonization with the approval and support of the Soviet State, could have been included in this section as it was also firmly rooted in ideas of regeneration and productivization (in this case promoted by the Soviet Union) triggering its own movement of transnational solidarity in the major Jewish urban centers. See Robert Weinberg, *Stalin's forgotten Zion*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998; Henry Srebrnik, "Diaspora, Ethnicity and Dreams of Nationhood: American Jewish Communists and the Birobidzhan Project", in G. Estraikh and M. Krutikov (eds.), *Yiddish and the Left*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 80-108; Antje Kuchenbecker, *Zionismus ohne Zion. Birobidžan: Idee und Geschichte eines jüdischen Staates in Sowjet-Fernost*, Metropol-Verlag, Berlin, 2000; Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, "The Jewish Communists in Argentina and the Soviet Settlement of Jews on Land in the USSR", Jews in Eastern Europe, 3 (49), Winter 2002, pp. 79-98.

[88] I took these distinctions from Ernest Stock, "Jewish Multicountry Associations", American Jewish Year Book 1974-75, vol. 75, pp. 571-597 and Elazar, op. cit., pp. 112-133.

It could be affirmed that it was during this period that Jewish modern solidarity became a *field*, in the sense given by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu; a very specific arena defined by the changing relationships established between organizations, professional bodies, and ideological and programmatic agendas.[89] Yet, as much as it could be considered as an autonomous field of social activity, modern Jewish solidarity and, more specifically, the relationships between organizations, were due to be influenced by a different set of historical junctures. The shifting importance of Jewish centers during the period affecting the political and financial capacity of the Jews in a given country, the changing Jewish demography and the rise of new needs, all played a significant role in redefining the importance of a given organization. Thus, events in the twentieth century made Jewish organizations, particularly in the field of welfare and relief, alternate between periods of expansion with ones of contraction, while redefining their goals and approaches.

The field of Jewish transnational solidarity was thus divided among different areas of action.

Advocating for the rights of Jews subject to persecutions, political oppression and antisemitic violence continued to be one of the most important fields of action in the international arena. An early attempt to centralize the lobbying efforts of diverse Jewish delegations into one single body was made after World War I, when the *Comité des Délégations Juives* was formed in 1919 in order to alert the Paris peace conference to the grave situation of Jews living in Eastern European countries and to obtain from the victorious countries safeguarding minority rights protection in a moment when treaties leading to the creation of new states were being discussed. Despite its French name and the fact that it was composed by Jewish delegations coming from all over the world, the Committee's upper echelons were composed of American-born prominent Jewish leaders like Louis Marshall or Julian Mack or by Eastern European Jewish Zionist activists and intellectuals, like Nahum Sokolow or Leo Motzkin. Throughout the interwar period the Committee was actively involved in the struggle against the anti-Jewish pogroms in the Ukraine and the *numerus clausus*[90] at the universities in

[89] See Pierre Bourdieu, "Quelques propriétés des champs", *Questions de sociologie*, Minuit, Paris, 1984; Pierre Mounier, *Pierre Bourdieu, une introduction*, La Découverte, Paris, 2001, p. 53-74.
[90] Numerus clausus, "closed number" in Latin, was a policy adopted by some Eastern European nations whereby they limited the number of Jewish students that could enroll in university.

Romania and Poland. In 1933, the Comité petitioned to the League of Nations for the rights of the Jews in Germany following the rise of the Nazi regime. The Comité eventually merged with the World Jewish Congress in 1936.[91]

Naturally, in terms of politics and activism, Zionism provided another area for active (and transnational) political engagement. From philanthropy to communal activities, political participation to pioneering efforts in Palestine, not to mention the field of Jewish political thinking, modern Zionism—in all its ideological varieties—has pervaded the entire universe of Jewish life since the late nineteenth century. Whereas in Western Europe and America, Zionism found sympathy among intellectuals and Jewish political elites, it was in Central and Eastern Europe where it enjoyed much of its initial support by the masses, even before the celebration of the First Zionist Congress in 1897.[92] In fact, political Zionism was preceded by a huge variety of activities and initiatives at all levels tending to obtain Jewish national redemption in Palestine. Zionist societies flourished across the Russian Empire, Galicia, Lithuania, and Poland in the 1880s, with the Hovevei Tzion ("Lovers of Zion") being one of the most widespread groups. Originally created in Russia, these were small and heterogeneous groupings formed either by radical activists, orthodox Jews and/or high-school students that collected money to support Jewish colonies in Palestine while preparing to become colonists themselves. Many settlements in Palestine were founded by members of this movement in the 1890s, such as Gedera, Rishon-le-Tsion, Zikhron Ya'akov, and Rehovot. Attempts to coordinate activities of Eastern European Lovers of Zion groups took place all throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century.[93]

When Theodor Herzl led the foundation of the movement in 1897, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) became the legitimate organization from where to struggle for the creation of the Jewish State, bringing together political leaders, activists, and representatives of Zionist groups and societies from across the world, ranging the full spectrum of ideological leanings, something that was the source of permanent tensions and the cause for the formation of an array of factions within the movement.

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[91] See Nathan Feinberg, "Comité des Delegations Juives." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 5. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, p. 72-73.
[92] Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1993.
[93] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism. From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel*, Schocken Books, New York, [1972] 2003.

Once the State of Israel was founded the WZO, together with the Jewish Agency, had to redefine its goals and responsibilities as the State of Israel took under its charge numerous tasks previously performed by the Jewish Agency (diplomatic relations, education and economic integration of newly arrived *olim* (immigrants, in Hebrew), etc.). Furthermore, in its ambition to become the primary organization representing all Jews, the WZO was continuously forced to navigate the complex equilibrium defined by the changing and ambivalent Israel-Diaspora relations.

Other transnational partisan solidarities emerged in the early twentieth century, following the rise of Jewish self-emancipatory ideologies in the last decades of the previous century. The case of the Bund, the Jewish labor party, is emblematic. Born in 1897 in the Russian Empire as *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland*, the commonly known as "Bund" represented the first modern Jewish political party whose program combined ethnic pride, socialist ideas and a non-Zionist secular Jewish nationalism.[94] The Bund became a major political player in the Russian Pale of Settlement and in interwar Poland, providing a cultural and ideological platform for the Jewish workers and petty artisans scattered throughout the territories of Eastern Europe known as *Yiddishkeit*. All throughout the early twentieth century, migrations and displacements of bundists, as well as the establishment of support groups in distant places, facilitated a transoceanic circulation of activists and writings, creating a more or less formal network of bundism across Jewish centers around the world, namely Paris, New York, Buenos Aires and Melbourne.[95] During the first decades of the twentieth century, the bundist movement (and the wider Yiddish socialist culture) created a vast transnational network of mutualistic, educational and cultural organizations, inspired by and at the same time connected with their Russian or Polish

[94] For Bund's history see, among others, Henry J. Tobias, *Jewish Bund in Russia from Its Origins to 1905*, Palo Alto, CA, 1972; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*, Cambridge University Press, 1981 and Henri Minczeles, *Histoire générale du Bund. Un mouvement révolutionnaire juif*, Paris 1995. See also Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern…*, op. cit. and Vladimir Medem's autobiography, *Vladimir Medem, the life and soul of a legendary Jewish socialist*, Ktav Pub. House, 1979.

[95] For a history of the Bund and the making of the Yiddish-secular culture in the US, see Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York*, Harvard University Press, 2005; for the origins of the Bund in France, see Claudie Weill, "Le Bund russe à Paris, 1898-1940", *Archives juives. Revue d'histoire des Juifs de France*, n° 34, 2e semestre 2001, p. 30-42; Nathan Weinstock, Le pain de misère. Histoire du mouvement ouvrier juif en Europe, Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 2002, vol. II, chap. 6; Nancy Green, *Les travailleurs immigrés juifs à la Belle Epoque. Le « Pletzel » à Paris*, Fayard, Paris, 1985; in Argentina see, Israel Laubstein, *Bund: Historia del movimiento obrero judío*, Acervo Cultural, Buenos Aires, 1997.

centers. During World War II and in the years that followed the liberation of Europe, the American bundists (gathered in the Jewish Labor Committee founded in 1934) set up their own channels of funding and infrastructure in order to provide relief to their coreligionists in Europe.[96] Historian Frank Wolff has shown how the bundist émigrés around the world were responsible for creating a transnational Bundist identity in the first half of the twentieth century.[97] Even after the decline of the Bund as a Jewish political movement, bundism continued to survive as a sort of specific transnational Jewish subculture.

[96] See Constance Pâris de Bollardière, "Mutualité, fraternité et travail social chez les bundistes de France (1944-1947)", *Archives Juives*, no. 1, vol. 45, 2012, p. 27-42 and Catherine Collomp, "The Jewish Labor Committee, American Labor, and the Rescue of European Socialists, 1934-1941", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 68, Labor in Postwar Central and Eastern Europe (Fall, 2005), p. 112-133

[97] Frank Wolff, *Neue Welten in der Neuen Welt? Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund im Migrationsprozess zwischen Osteuropa, den USA und Argentinien 1897-1947, Eine globale Mikrostudie*, PhD dissertation, Bielefeld University, 2011.

Figure 3. Image of an election poster of the General Jewish Labour Bund hung in Kiev, 1917. Heading: “Where we live, there is our country!” Inside frame: "Vote List 9, Bund". Bottom: “A democratic republic! Full national and political rights for Jews!”. Source: Wikipedia [Last access 22/09/2023].

Alongside the self-defense and political activities came the relief and welfare ones. Since the foundation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1860, a myriad of welfare organizations were created in different European countries seeking to address the multiple and pressing needs of their fellow Jews. They were responding to the needs created by Europe’s unstable conditions, where wars, forced displacements, political persecutions and economic hardships continued to determine the daily life of millions of Jews.

Interestingly, the changing geography of the Jewish map in Europe during the twentieth century introduced a particular dynamic in the organizational life of many of these European relief and philanthropic agencies. Thus, their existence was often punctuated between moments of *transnational* expansion and those of *national*

withdrawal, which also led to changes and redefinitions in their programmatic goals. The case of the Alliance is somehow paradigmatic. Born out of the internationalist appeal of the French liberal Jews and reputed as one of the most influential European Jewish agencies of late nineteenth century, combining diplomatic, educational and welfare endeavors, Alliance emerged from the Nazi Occupation of France having lost its role as one of the leading spokes agencies on behalf of European Jews, in the midst of a financial crisis and forced to redefine its place in the French communal and political life.[98] Alliance became financially dependent on American Jewry's support (expressed in annual contributions given by the Joint[99]) while it struggled to maintain their most precious "jewel", the extensive network of Jewish schools located in North Africa. In this respect, the decolonization processes of the 1960s and the massive departure of the Jewish population of the Maghreb to Israel and France, transformed once and for all the educational project of the Alliance.[100] Since then, Alliance managed to rebuild an international educational network in Israel, Canada, and Morocco, establishing a sort of loose subsystem of Jewish francophone schools. In addition, by the 1980s Alliance started to invest in educational projects taking place in France.[101] As we shall see, Alliance's direction very much reflected the major shift in importance of Jewish centers that began to take place in the early twentieth century and further consolidated after the Second World War.

Likewise, the fate of other European-born welfare organizations was determined by different sets of historical conjunctures, and it was often the case that they expanded their activities, relocated their headquarters, and/or redefined their goals by virtue of following the movements and the changing needs of the population they were serving. The case of OSE (or OZE) is especially telling. OSE was founded by Jewish physicians and philanthropists in tsarist Russia in 1912 as an association for childcare, health and hygiene for Jews. Its name is an acronym of the Russian *Obshchestvo Zdravookhraneniya Yevreyev*, which means "Society for the Protection of the Health of the Jews." Drawing on hygienist theories in vogue at the time, OSE's goal was to address the health problems of Russian Jews, which were closely associated with

[98] Anne Grynberg, "Reconstruction et nouvelles orientations", in André Kaspi (dir.), op. cit., p. 331-355.
[99] The Joint continued to provide funding for AIU's schools at least until the year 2000.
[100] Michel Abitol, "Décolonisation et indépendances : l'impact en Afrique du Nord", in André Kaspi (dir.), op. cit., p. 387-403.
[101] Sophie Enos-Attali, "Vers une nouvelle Alliance ?", in Kaspi (dir.), op. cit., p. 406-449.

poverty, from a medical and social perspective. By the end of the Great War, OSE had 34 branches in Russia and ran hospitals, nurseries, popular eateries and summer camps. In addition, and due to the emergencies brought by the war, cadres of the OSE opened branches in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania, playing an important role in helping the Jewish war refugees and providing a variety of medical and social welfare services. In the meantime, after their activities were outlawed by the Soviet regime in 1923, OSE's headquarters moved to Berlin becoming the OSE Union. From there they consolidated a truly widespread system of health and social institutions catering to the Jewish population throughout Eastern Europe. In Lithuania for example, they partnered with JDC to set up a Jewish health care system creating a vast array of institutions such as orphanages, schools for nurses and First drop of milk stations.[102] In 1933 OSE was forced to seek refuge in Paris when the Nazis drastically interrupted their operations and confiscated and looted their properties. In France, OSE was renamed as *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants*, and started to work with Eastern European Jewish refugees focusing especially on childcare.[103] After the war, OSE continued to work in different countries such Israel and Latin America and was especially instrumental in providing services for the absorption of North African immigrants coming to France, as well as Holocaust survivors. By the 1960s, OSE like the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*, became to all intents and purposes a French organization enjoying a vast recognition from international health organizations, adapting its structures to that of NGOs and offering their services to the general population, though taking care of stressing its Jewish origins.[104]

The Society for Promotion of Artisanal and Agricultural Work among Jews in Russia (known as ORT as acronym for the Russian Obshchestvo Rasprostraneniya Truda Sredi Yevreyev), established in St Petersburg in 1880, followed a similar path, but unlike OSE it grew from a parochial Russian Jewish vocational charity in 1880 to a global educational and training network by the 2000s, serving communities as dispersed as

[102] Rakefet Zalashik and Nadav Davidovitch, "Taking and giving: the case of the JDC and OZE in Lithuania 1919-26", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 39:1, 2009, p. 57-68.
[103] Virginie Michel, "L'action médico-social de l'OSE à Paris dans les années trente", *Archives Juives*, 2006/1, vol. 39, p. 110-124.
[104] "OSE. 100 years of History 1912-2012", OSE, Paris, 2012. Leon Wulman, "Oze or Ose." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 15. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. p. 556-557.

Argentina, Brazil, the former Soviet Union, South Africa, Italy, Ethiopia, India, United States, and Israel among others.

Originating under the same historical circumstances as OSE, and fostered by similar circles of St Petersburg Jewish philanthropists and social reformers that adhered to the principles of self-regeneration and productivization, ORT sought to promote general education and professional training amongst impoverished Jews living in the Pale of Settlement.[105] The organization's activities primarily provided vocational training in handicrafts and agriculture and supported Jewish artisans by providing loans, access to machinery and tools, and eventually acting as facilitators of business ventures.[106] ORT's projects and approach methods transited through various stages throughout the decades, and were often linked with the mood and ideological inclinations of its different generations of leaders.[107]

Between 1905 and 1914, ORT succeeded in opening programs and offices across Russia, and saw its membership grow from 285 in 1906 to 2098 in 1914.[108] During World War I, ORT established a Relief-Through-Work department that, in conjunction with other agencies such as ICA and OSE, assisted Jewish refugees. By following the route of displaced Jews, ORT's activities started to expand across the Russian Empire, reaching distant places such as Warsaw, Vilna and cities in the Ukraine and Bessarabia. In fact, ORT's expanding network beyond Russia relied heavily on the support of local Russian-Jewish émigrés, which is why during the first decades of existence it remained very much in spirit and content a Russian Jewish-Yiddishist and Labour-oriented organization.

In 1921, ORT leaders from across Russia and Eastern Europe created in Berlin the World ORT Union. Essentially, this move reflected the perceived need to adjust ORT's organizational structure to its latest transition towards an international agency. In this respect, Berlin appeared to be a more suitable place to operate from than Russia, given Berlin's strategic location as a hub to the Baltic States and Poland and as an

[105] Leon Shapiro, *The History of ORT. A Jewish Movement for Social Change*, World ORT, London, 2010 [1980].
[106] Gennady Estraikh, "Changing ideologies of artisanal 'productivisation': ORT in late imperial Russia", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 39:1, 2009, p. 3-18.
[107] Shapiro, op. cit., p. 53-70.
[108] Ibid., p. 68.

active receptor of Jewish refugees from all over Eastern Europe.[109] But it was also a way to maintain distance from the Russian office, which had been taken over by a Soviet-oriented leadership a few years earlier. Cooperation among the two ORTs would be maintained, especially in the field of Jewish agricultural colonization, but as two independent bodies.

During the 1920s and 1930s ORT would sponsor technical schools, vocational training and cooperatives for artisans in Poland, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania. Many of ORT's programs were funded, whether by Jewish labor and socialist circles in the United States, or by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, who agreed with ORT to provide funding on a regular basis so as to avoid competition in fundraising among American Jews.[110] By 1933, already consolidated as one of the most important Jewish transnational educational and philanthropic organizations, ORT started to be involved in providing relief to Jewish refugees and even envisioned a large-scale resettlement of Jews from Nazi Germany to Birobidzhan[111], as they saw in that remote region of Siberia favored temporarily by Stalin for Jewish colonization, a possible heaven for escaping Jews.[112]

ORT went through another great expansion after War World II by expanding its activities to Western Europe, Latin America and South Africa. In addition, rescue and rehabilitation operations were carried out in Eastern Europe until communist authorities terminated those programs. ORT also established training centers in North African countries. By then, ORT had two headquarters, one in New York and the other in Geneva. Slowly, ORT began to reconsider its links with Israel (ORT leaders were historically non-Zionists) and after 1948 began operating programs in the Jewish State aimed at facilitating the absorption of immigrants as well as building its own network of schools.

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[109] Gennady Estraikh, "From Foreign Delegation to World ORT Union", in Rachel Bracha, et. al. (eds.), *Educating for Life. New Chapters in the History of ORT*, World ORT, London, 2010, p. 78-79. For Berlin as an Eastern European "Jewish capital" in the 1920s, see Gennady Estraikh, "Vilna on the Spree: Yiddish in Weimar Berlin", *ASCHKENAS - Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden,*16/2006, H. 1, p. 103-127 and Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, Yale University Press, 1996.

[110] Shapiro, op. cit., p. 221.

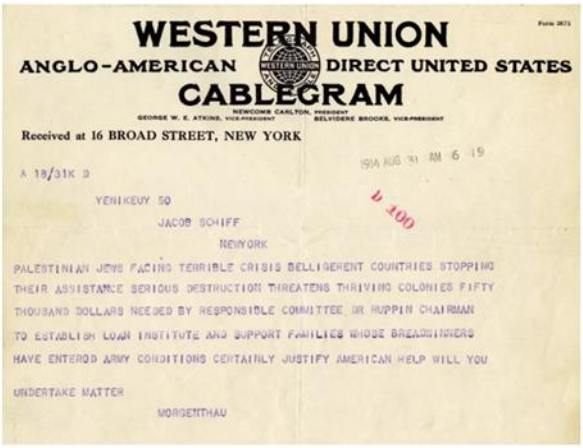
[111] On Birobidzhan, see footnote 87.

[112] Alexander Ivanov, "Facing East: the World ORT Union and the Jewish refugee problem in Europe, 1933-38", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 39:3, 2009, p. 369-388.

Following the collapse of communism, ORT returned to the former Soviet Union. In 1994 ORT established its first schools in Moscow and St Petersburg, following earlier cooperation programs started in 1989. Other ORT schools and centers across the FSU followed suit in Samara, Moldova, Odessa, etc.[113]

On the American side, the creation of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (also called Joint or JDC) in 1914 reflected the entrance of American Jewry into the world Jewish relief system. Founded by well-to-do German Jews established in New York, the Joint rapidly became the main recipient organization of funds raised by different sectors of American Jewry for overseas aid. Since then, most of the overseas relief and welfare operations have been carried out under the leadership of the Joint and, as it will later be shown, the organization was to become the face of American Jewry's growing financial muscle in overseas aid.

[113] Vyacheslav Leshchiner, "ORT's return to the Former Soviet Union: 1989-2008", in Bracha, et. al. (eds.), op. cit., p. 226-237.



WESTERN UNION

ANGLO-AMERICAN DIRECT UNITED STATES

CABLEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, VICE-PRESIDENT BELVIDERE BROOKS, VICE-PRESIDENT

Received at 16 BROAD STREET, NEW YORK

1914 AUG 31 AM 6 19

A 18/31K D

b 100

YENIKEUY 50

JACOB SCHIFF

NEWYORK

PALESTINIAN JEWS FACING TERRIBLE CRISIS BELLIGERENT COUNTRIES STOPPING THEIR ASSISTANCE SERIOUS DESTRUCTION THREATENS THRIVING COLONIES FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS NEEDED BY RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE DR RUPPIN CHAIRMAN TO ESTABLISH LOAN INSTITUTE AND SUPPORT FAMILIES WHOSE BREADWINNERS HAVE ENTERED ARMY CONDITIONS CERTAINLY JUSTIFY AMERICAN HELP WILL YOU UNDERTAKE MATTER

MORGENTHAU

Figure 4. Top left: US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau, Sr. asks New York philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff to secure aid for Jews in Palestine in a cablegram dated August 31, 1914. This cable led to the foundation of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Source: JDC Archives, NY_38786 Top right: In November 1914, the Central Relief Committee and the American Jewish Relief Committee joined forces to create the Joint Distribution Committee for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers (JDC). This 1929 oil painting is based on a photograph taken of the Executive Committee in a meeting on July 10, 1918, held at the office of Mr. Felix M. Warburg, 52 William Street, NY. Source: JDC Archives, Artifact_00397. Bottom: Logo commemorating JDC's 100 years anniversary.

Another organization active in mutual assistance and overseas aid was B'nai B'rith, one of the main protagonists of American organizational life of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Considered to be the oldest Jewish secular organization in the United States, B'nai B'rith was created in 1843 also by German-Jewish immigrants in New York. Inspired by non-Jewish fraternal orders and secret societies that were flourishing in America at that time, B'nai B'rith was a non-religious organization aimed at strengthening the ethnic bonds of a mostly secularized urban petty bourgeoisie. The Order provided to its members a particular synthesis between fraternal solidarity, mutual aid, acculturation and defense against antisemitism. Rejecting the religious understanding of Judaism, deemed too divisive by B'nai B'rith's founders, each lodge of the Order became, as Deborah Dash Moore pointed out, "a modern surrogate for

the now inadequate synagogue."[114] By 1895 B'nai B'rith began to send funds for overseas aid to the Alliance Israélite Universelle and continued to support Alliance's educational projects and charitable programs in the Middle East for the next twenty-five years.[115]

Over the years, B'nai B'rith became a large mass-based organization with a strong nationwide presence. In the years 1938 to 1946, the organization's membership rose from 60 to 190 thousand men and about half that number of women members.[116] It also went from being a fraternal order destined to succor immigrants in distress into a multifunctional service organization. B'nai B'rith provided a string of different bodies covering different areas, including services of Jewish interest such as chronic disease hospitals and vocational counseling. The Order also founded in 1913 the Anti-Defamation League, destined to struggle against antisemitism.[117]

In 1882 a lodge in Berlin was opened, becoming the first lodge outside the United States. According to Deborah Dash Moore, B'nai B'rith was perhaps the "first indigenous American-Jewish institution to cross the Atlantic in a reverse journey from that of its immigrant founding fathers."[118] By 1885 lodges were founded in Romania, Egypt, Palestine, and Austria and by the turn of the century it became a completely international organization structured with a loose federation-type governing body.[119] Even if B'nai B'rith knew how to adapt itself to the changing moods and priorities of the Jews throughout the twentieth century, it retained a wide-scope agenda typical of Jewish organizations in the nineteenth-century, whereby the strengthening of ethnic bonds, the pursuing of self-defense and the deliverance of welfare assistance to the

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[114] Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1981, p 6.
[115] Ibid., p. 29-30.
[116] Allon Gal, "Jewish Solidarity and 'Refuge Zionism': The Case of B'nai B'rith", in S. I. Troen and B. Pinkus, op. cit., p. 338.
[117] Daniel J. Elazar, *Community & Polity. The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry.* Revised and Updated Edition, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia and Jerusalem, 1995, p. 208.
[118] Deborah Dash Moore, op. cit., p. XI.
[119] "While the Order maintains central headquarters in Washington, staffed by Jewish civil servants, it has left much freedom to its various districts throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe, and in Israel. These districts resemble states in the American political structure, with their own leadership, programs, priorities, and staff. Most of the time the districts pursue their activities, unconstrained by the national or international B'nai B'rith but with fund-raising, membership-acquisition, and programmatic responsibilities toward the parent body. […] This loose-knit, democratic, federal structure has given members the chance to exercise local initiative." Ibid., p. 254.

needy were all interlinked. As it will be shown in chapter 3, B'nai B'rith Europe, although on a minor scale, would also carry out welfare programs in post-communist Europe.

In the field of immigration and resettlement, agencies, organizations and committees flourished in the era of massive movement of Jewish people. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was founded in New York in 1881 as the successor of the Russian Emigrant Relief Committee. Its main tasks were to assist Eastern European immigrants by providing meals, housing and legal counseling. The society soon acquired national dimensions and by 1917, HIAS had opened offices in Eastern Europe and the Far East. For decades, HIAS occupied a central role in coordinating with its European counterparts the immigration of thousands of persecuted Jews.[120] In fact, given the rising flow of Jewish emigration since World War I, it was not surprising that attempts to gain certain coordination among competing agencies started in the 1910s. In 1921, the HIAS and several Jewish European local relief organizations created the United Committee for Jewish Migration (Emigdirect), headquartered in Berlin. These agencies coexisted and cooperated with a multiple array of local committees and emigrant aid societies, embodying a truly transnational chain of assistance to immigrants.

In the early twentieth century the main denominational streams within Judaism also founded their own religious movements operating at a transnational scale, with the two most important ones being the Orthodox and Reform movements.

Agudat Israel was established in 1912 in Kattowitz (Upper Silesia) as the political arm of the Ashkenazi Orthodox movements from Central and Eastern Europe. As European Jewry experienced—in religious, social and political terms—anxious transformations, leading to the undermining of the traditional authority of the rabbi, as well as the cohesion of the *kehila* (community), it was deemed important by Orthodox leaders to counterforce those challenges by founding their own movement.

It was clear for Agudists leaders that Orthodox Judaism was not responding adequately to the threats posed by Zionism, Bundism, and Reform Judaism, not to mention the

[120] Morris Ardoin, "Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 8. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. p. 620.

rapid secularization processes inherent to the philosophy of the nascent modern states.[121]

Thus the main goals of Agudat Israel, formed by various and very different Orthodox traditions from German, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and elsewhere, was to reinforce the Orthodox dictum of keeping a strict *halakhic* way of life[122], to (re)establish the authority of the Torah (Old Testament) and its sanctioned interpreters, and to expand sacred texts' status and influence to not only religious aspects, but also to social and political matters as well.

Agudat Israel proved to be innovative in more than one sense; firstly, it embodied a unifying will of different Orthodox factions that otherwise remained isolated, parochially organized, and loyal to their own local and atavist customs and traditions. In this respect, the goal of the organization was to become an "all-Orthodox" group overpassing, and not without tensions, internal differences. Secondly, Agudat Israel was innovative in adopting modern methods of political action and organization. It is not without irony that Agudat Israel could be described as a modern instrument which Orthodox Jews created in order to pursue their non-modern project. It is in this aspect that they differentiated themselves from other transnational religious movements of the time, such as the conservative World Council of Synagogues and the liberal World Union for Progressive Judaism. The Agudist actions included an active participation in the political arena, whether in national politics, municipal offices or in communal decision-making bodies; it was in interwar Poland where that principle reached a peak. Agudist representatives were elected to the Polish *Sejm* (parliament), the senate and also gained the control of many *kehilot* (communities). Likewise, after the establishment of the State of Israel, Agudat Israel sent its own representatives to the Knesset, all while criticizing the secular shift of the Jewish State and the Zionist

[121] On Agudat Israel, see Alan L. Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah. The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996; Gershon C. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939*, Jerusalem, 1996 and Menachem Friedman, "Agudat Israel." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, p. 505-508; Bacon, Gershon. 2010. "Agudas Yisroel". YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Agudas_Yisroel [Last access March 7, 2023].

[122] Halakha is the term in Hebrew to refer to the "Jewish laws", which govern the way an observant Jew is supposed to conduct his or her life. In Rabbi Louis Jacobs' words, Halakha are "the rules and regulations by which the Jew 'walks' through life". See Louis Jacobs, *The Jewish Religion*…, op. cit., pp. 210–212.

ideology. After World War II, Agudat Israel consolidated the movement in New York, Jerusalem and London.

The reason why Reform Jews decided to create a world organization clearly differs from the Orthodox. The rationale that led to the creation of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) was a quest for legitimation combined with coordination efforts. Under the leadership of prominent liberal figures from Great Britain (Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu), Germany (Leo Baeck) and the United States (Stephen S. Wise), the WUPJ was established in London in 1926 in order to federate the liberal and reformed congregations from Western Europe and the United States. In its early years WUPJ's main goals were to promote and help establish liberal congregations throughout the world with the aim of gaining legitimation as a proper, modern Jewish denomination. In that respect, and because of their modern, "reformed" understanding of the Jewish religious practices and liturgy, Liberals and Orthodox confronted bitterly in the Jewish religious realm of the communities. During the pre-war years the WUJP lacked basic funds to operate as a world organization and most attempts to expand the movement to countries with no liberal congregations experienced only a mild success. The WUPJ seemed to address much more clearly the federative needs of a still weak European Liberal Judaism than the American ones, who treated the world movement with distance and unawareness, even though their contribution represented 90 percent of WUPJ's budget. Great Britain remained the center of the world Liberal movement until 1959, whereupon the headquarters moved to New York and for the first time ever an American leadership was elected. It wasn't until the postwar years and the progressive alignment of the Liberal movement with Zionism after the Six Day War that the WUPJ began to represent a major and influential world religious movement within Judaism.[123]

In part, the burgeoning of Jewish agencies on a global scale responded to a dynamic that went above and beyond the Jewish world. As Akira Iriye pointed out, during the early twentieth century many non-governmental social, religious and cultural groups promoting education, cultural exchanges, relief, and welfare services, began to engage

[123] See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 335-352.

in international activities by setting up supranational organizations.[124] One of the pioneers was the World's Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), founded in 1894 to coordinate the activities of the associations scattered around the world. The interwar period was especially fertile for such organizations. In the field of education the International Confederation of Students based in Brussels was founded right after the Great War, as well as the World Association for Adult Education (1919) and the International Federation of University Women (1919). In the area of international welfare and relief, agencies such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (1919), Save the Children International Union (1920) or the European Central Bureau for Interchurch Relief (1922) were created. That trend also included intergovernmental agencies for the coordination and regulation of different matters, such as air navigation, postal services, etc.[125]

Nevertheless, the rise of Nazism, the advent of the Holocaust, and the immediate and massive help needed for Jewish survivors in the aftermath of the war provided its own imprint to the organizational landscape of world Jewry. The rescue efforts to save Jewish lives during the years 1933-1945 accelerated the coordination between local and international Jewish agencies involved in resettlement and immigration on both sides of the Atlantic. A new resettlement agency, HICEM, was created in 1927. HICEM stands as an abbreviation for the names of three resettlement organizations: the HIAS, the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) and Emigdirect. Major contributors to HICEM were JDC and the Central British Fund, created in England in 1933 to deliver aid to German Jewish refugees. In a period when Jewish overseas immigration was facing increasing obstacles and legal barriers, the agency took into their charge all tasks relating to resettlement and emigration. Such an action involved, among other things, guidance to immigrants, obtaining visas, coordination with local agencies and committees, tracing and contacting overseas relatives of would-be immigrants, and so on. As the situation of the Jews became increasingly fragile, first in Germany and later in the rest of occupied Europe, its role increased in importance.[126]

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[124] Akira Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*, University of California Press, 2002.
[125] Ibid., p. 9-59.
[126] Valery Bazarov, "HIAS and HICEM in the system of Jewish relief organisations in Europe", 1933-41, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 39:1, 2009, p. 69-78.

The impact of Nazism was also visible in the political realm. The World Jewish Congress (WJC) was founded in 1937 as a successor of the *Comité des Délégations Juives* and quickly became one of world Jewry's political arms fighting against antisemitism and looking to find diplomatic avenues to solve the problem of the Jews caught in Nazi Germany. The WJC is actually a federative structure composed by local Jewish umbrella organizations representing different countries with a small deliberative group and a president based in New York. After the war it remained one of the main transnational Jewish political bodies alongside the Jewish Agency for Israel/World Zionist Organization. It would occupy a central role after the war when, led by the charismatic Nahum Goldmann, it launched an appeal to other Jewish organizations in order to initiate negotiations with West Germany hoping to obtain reparations on behalf of the Jewish Nazi victims. This initiative resulted in the creation in 1951 of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, a federative organization of Jewish agencies from across the world. The funds that the Claims Conference obtained, as it will be seen later, were to prove crucial in the rehabilitation of European Jewry.

Since the outbreak of the Great War, American Jewry started to acquire a place in the transnational Jewish relief world; however, it wasn't until the end of World War II that America became the most important Jewish center in the world. The funds that the remnants of European Jewry needed for resettlement, relief, and rehabilitation were provided largely by the community, who by that time had already become the largest in terms of demography and wealth. Modern Jewish solidarity in the twentieth century can hardly be understood without focusing on the impact of the shifting importance of Jewish centers around the world and fundamentally, without analyzing the rise of the American Jewish community as the authoritative Jewish center.

3.4 America as the new Jewish center

Alongside the changing organizational landscape which had taken place in the first half of the twentieth century, a major shift in the importance of Jewish centers started to emerge. The incipient capacity for unprecedented mobilization of resources that Jews in the United States showed since the Great War (with a brief parenthesis during the 1930s depression), placed American Jewry at center stage, leading to the eclipse of its European counterparts. As Daniel Soyer has shown, American Jewish aid to

Eastern European Jewry following the First World War was intense, continuous and multifaceted. After the end of the Great War, when news of the devastation and the existence of a great number of Jews in distress reached America, sectors of American Jewry who had still kept strong links with Eastern Europe's Jewish communities, such as the Orthodox and the Socialists, established their own fundraising campaigns; however, before long they decided to overcome differences and to centralize the monies in the recently created American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint or JDC). To this extent, it was expected that the aid could be delivered more efficiently through a professional body of social workers active on the ground. At the same time, the unions of immigrants coming from the same town or region (called in Yiddish *landsmanshaften*) set up their own relief committees and sent funds to Europe together with emissaries, who disbursed the aid following personal and ideological preferences.[127] This intense and sometimes chaotic circulation of people, money and narratives would have an impact on the Jewish communal life on both sides of the Atlantic. With regards to Eastern Europe Jewry, it inaugurated the American influence in reshaping Jewish communal life in the Old World.

As we have already seen, the interwar years was a period of strong involvement of JDC in the region, in charge of conducting rehabilitation and regeneration programs such as the loan *kassas* and the Agro-Joint. However, in less ambitious undertakings such as social welfare activities or even the way the money was disbursed, policies inspired by the American Jewish mindset were also felt. The emphasis on "non-partisan aid" professed by professionals and emissaries coming from the United States very much reflected American Jewry's principles of overcoming factional and ideological differences in what welfare services and overseas aid respected (especially in the key part of the process: fundraising). American emissaries and social workers also brought with them technical wisdom bred in American soil. The way social services were organized, including the formation of professional bodies were all imported from previous experiences in America. In this respect, the export of the American Jewish *weltanschauung* in overseas relief relied not only on the massive transference of funds, but also, and especially, on the Jewish communal worker. The origins of this

[127] Daniel Soyer, "Transnationalism and Mutual Influence. American and East European Jewries in the 1920s and 1930s", in Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (eds.), *Rethinking European Jewish History*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford, 2009, p. 201-220.

professional figure are related to the massive arrival of Eastern European Jews to America in the 1880s, which obliged the already established Jews to develop efficient ways to provide charitable services to their brethren. The Jewish communal worker, as opposed to a volunteer worker, is a professional who has been trained to provide welfare related aid in the Jewish community and whose performance is framed in a program that has been designed following rational and modern patterns of organization. In fact, the Jewish communal worker could be considered as one of the sub-products of the scientific turn of the philanthropic practices advocated by many American relief agencies and social thought since the late nineteenth century and whose philosophy was duly adopted by Jewish leaders. The Training School for Jewish Social Work was founded in New York in 1925 (and was later renamed the Graduate School for Jewish Social Work, closed in 1939) and offered master studies in Social Work and Social Services.[128] As historian Yehuda Bauer reported, one of the first demands placed by JDC operatives sent to Europe in the 1920s was to be able to hire social workers from the United States.[129] This petition responded not only to the need of recruiting trained professionals equipped with "modern" ideas of social welfare, but also to facing the communities' very often fierce internal struggles. By placing in key positions personnel deemed impartial, trustworthy and capable, JDC sought to secure its own policies. In Lithuania, for example, since 1919 the involvement of JDC in the Jewish communal health system led to a virtual takeover of the hierarchical positions by its own professionals or by those considered reliable enough.[130] Likewise, when after World War II American Jewry set out to reconstruct the devastated Jewish communities in Europe, they did so by introducing a body of American-trained social workers and policy-makers who brought with them American concepts and methods of social work, social service and fundraising. In view of JDC's ambition of modeling the French community to mirror the American one, historian Maud Mandel incisively asked to what degree these rehabilitation efforts could be considered as a "cultural imperialism" from one Jewry to another.[131] "Not only", Soyer concludes, "did American

[128] See Graenum Berger, "American Jewish Communal Service 1776-1976: From Traditional Self-Help to Increasing Dependence on Government Support", *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 38, No. 3/4, American Bicentennial: I (Summer-Autumn, 1976), p. 225-246.

[129] Bauer, *My Brother's*…, op. cit., p. 10.

[130] Rakefet Zalashik and Nadav Davidovitch, "Taking and giving…", op. cit.

[131] See Maud S. Mandel, "Philanthropy or Cultural Imperialism? The Impact of American Jewish Aid in Post- Holocaust France", *Jewish Social Studies*, 9.1, 2002, p. 53-94. See also Laura Hobson Faure,

Jewish relief missions bring American dollars to Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, but their emissaries also brought a very American sensibility to their needy home towns."[132]

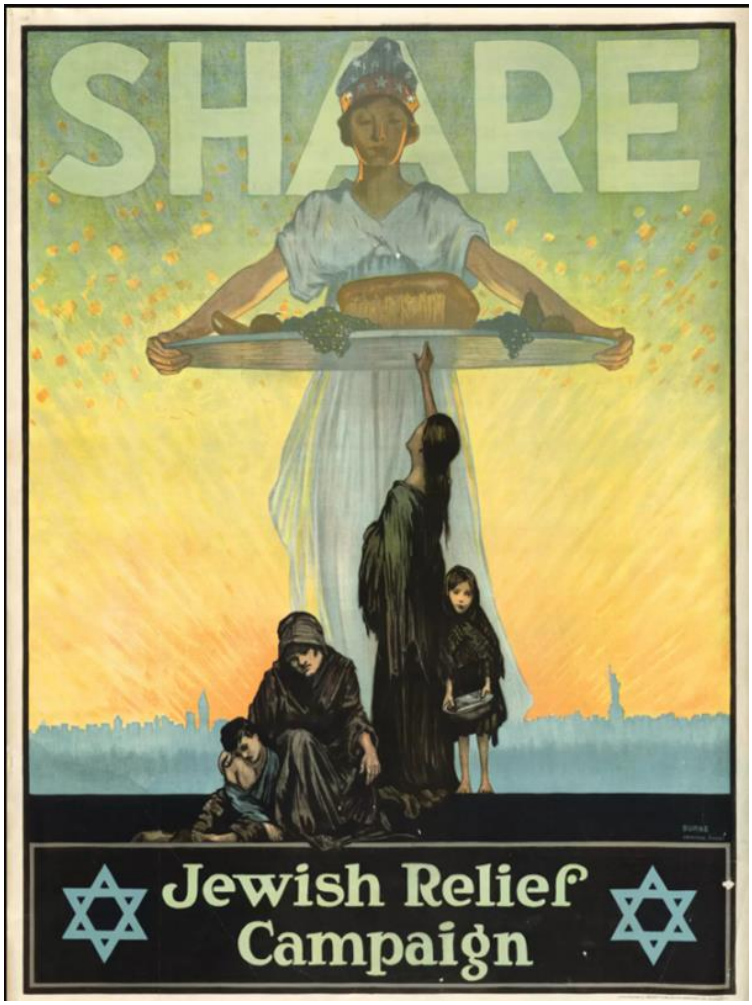

Figure 5. America as the new Jewish center. Poster of the Jewish relief campaign conducted during World War I. The image shows a monumental female figure with a tray of food, poor women and children at her feet, with the skyline of New York City in the background. Burke, Johnstone Studios; lithographed by Sackett & Wilhelms Corporation, Brooklyn, N.Y. [1917]. Source: Library of Congress, digital collection. LC-DIG-ppmsca-05663.

Un « Plan Marshall juif » : La présence juive américaine en France après la Shoah, *1944-1954*, Paris, Éditions Le Manuscrit Savoirs, 2018. For an insight from the perspective of Jewish social workers active in post-Holocaust France, see Laura Hobson Faure, "'Performing a Healing Role:' American Jewish Communal Workers and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Post-World War II France", *Parcours Judaïques X. Culture Hebraïque et Héritage Européen : Sources visibles, sources cachées,* Université Paris-X Nanterre, 2006, p. 139-156.

[132] Soyer, op. cit., p. 203.

The influence of American Jewry in the Jewish world scene further consolidated after World War II, when—largely untouched by the war and extermination—it became the largest and by far the most affluent Jewish community in the world. Furthermore, overseas involvement on behalf of fellow Jews was placed at the core of the American Jewish communal life, and philanthropy became a central piece in American Judaism's praxis.[133] Historians Oscar and Mary Handlin's opening of the 1949 *American Jewish Year Book* nicely captured this self-appointed role that American Jews would play in the decades to come: "The events of the Second World War left the United States at the center of world Judaism. The answers to the most critical questions as to the future of the Jews everywhere will be determined by the attitudes and the position of the five million Jews who are citizens of the American Republic."[134]

American Jews not only considered themselves morally responsible for the remnants of a disappeared Jewry,[135] but also developed in the following decades an extremely sensitive preoccupation for Jewish survival around the world, which was espoused with an immense capacity for fundraising through federated campaigns. Thus, since the years after 1945 massive funds were raised for a great number of Jewish overseas causes that went from the reconstruction and rehabilitation of devastated Jewish communities in Europe, the relief and resettlement of the so-called Displaced Persons (DPs)[136], to the financial assistance of the nascent State of Israel. According to an analysis done by an historian of the American Jewish community, whereas in the mid-1930s, merely 7 percent of funds raised were allocated for international needs, by the end of World War II, funds were almost evenly divided between domestic and overseas

[133] See Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986.
[134] *American Jewish Year Book (AJYB)* 50 (1948–49), p. 1, quoted in Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 274.
[135] The behavior of American Jewry during the Holocaust became a highly contentious issue within the American Jewish community and gave place to no less contentious historiographical debates. See Deborah E. Lipstadt, "America and the Holocaust", *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Review of Developments in Modern Jewish Studies, Part 1 (Oct., 1990), p. 283-296; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism*…, op. cit., p. 258-271. On the place of the memory of the Holocaust in American public discourse, see Peter Novick, The *Holocaust in American Life*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1999; Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 17, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 62-88 and Deborah E. Lipstadt, "America and the Memory of the Holocaust, 1950-1965", *Modem Judaism*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1996, p. 195-214.
[136] After World War II, many Holocaust survivors, unable to return to their homes, lived in refugee camps set up by the Allied forces in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Those camps were called "Displaced Persons' camps" and, hence, the people living there were to be known as Displaced Persons or just DPs.

spending. Throughout the 1950s overseas needs continued to receive more than 55 percent of the money raised by the federated campaigns.[137] None of this could have ever been possible had American Jews not enjoyed an unprecedented upward mobility generated by the postwar socioeconomic conditions.[138] The "golden age" of Jewish communal life, as historian Jack Wertheimer defined the period between 1945 and 1967, corresponded to a dynamic of a strong institutional growth of American Jewry.[139] Overseas relief, which was receiving the lion's share of communal allocations, was just one of the multiple spheres of action within the tremendously rich organizational life that the United States' Jewry covered, including religious congregations, educational and cultural enterprises, community relations and defense leagues agencies, and welfare services.[140]

The expansive ethos of American Jewish organizations covered a wide array of flanks. To the efforts done by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in carrying out programs of relief and rehabilitation in post-Holocaust Europe, it must be added that, between 1945 and 1955, local defense leagues such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) founded in 1904, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and B'nai B'rith redefined their agenda and expanded their activities beyond America, developing international programs and/or opening offices outside the United States, especially in Europe.[141] Furthermore, thanks to the world leading position that the United States acquired after World War II, the practice of lobbying on behalf of different Jewish issues by Jewish organizations and professionals intensified, conscious that decisions taken in Washington could have an enormous impact elsewhere.[142]

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[137] Jack Wertheimer, "Jewish Organizational Life in the United States Since 1945", in *American Jewish Year Book*, 1995, vol. 95, p. 16.

[138] "Despite the recency of their arrival in the United States, on such crucial indicators as secular education and occupation Jews rival the oldest and most successful segments of that privileged group which is sometimes invidiously referred to as 'WASPs'.", Marshall Sklare, *America's Jews*, Random House, New York, 1971, p. 51-67.

[139] Wertheimer, "Jewish Organizational…", op. cit., p. 3-98.

[140] Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity…,* op. cit.

[141] For the history of the American Jewish Committee, see Naomi Wiener Cohen, *Not Free to Desist. The American Jewish Committee, 1905-1966*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1972; Marianne R. Sanua, *Let us Prove Strong. The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006*, Brandeis University Press, 2007.

[142] Conversely, numerous Jewish leaders reported that when dealing with foreign dignitaries and authorities it was common to find them convinced of the power of the "Jewish influence" in Washington. See my interview with Ralph I. Goldman, Jerusalem, July 16, 2010, first recording, minute 5:50 onwards.

Last but not least, the three main synagogue movements (Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal), mainly funded by an American constituency, provided direct help through its worldwide associations to their denominational counterparts in Europe for the reestablishment of their congregations.[143]

3.5 Israel-Diaspora relations and the impact on the Jewish relief world

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 had an enormous impact on the Jewish transnational relief world and this operated on multiple layers. In fact, it was in the reconfiguration in the dynamics of world Jewry which took place after 1948 and in the complex Israel-Diaspora relations that followed where the key aspects of these alterations lay.

Major philanthropic efforts would be directed towards the nascent Jewish State from all over the Diaspora, especially from those centers capable of mobilizing resources such as the United States and, to a lesser degree, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Latin America and Western Europe. Cooperation of relief organizations with Zionist authorities and activists had started—and not without tensions—in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when for example the JDC assisted the illegal immigration agency called "Brichah" in helping the Displaced Persons (DPs) reach Palestine.[144] But 1948 represented a watershed; organizations such as the JDC, the American Jewish Committee and World ORT, who in the past were either indifferent or even hostile to the Zionist project, reconsidered their positions and dully supported financially or politically the still weak and fragile State.

The flow of money and resources and the large-scale support and sympathy that the Jewish State had received since 1948 wasn't, however, translated in the full acceptance of the Zionist doctrine by Jews in the Diaspora, particularly on the *shelilat ha-golat* (negation of the Diaspora, שלילת הגלות) that Israel had reclaimed from the outset. This was the case for Western European Jews, for whom the care of Israel's welfare and security became a central concern in their communal affairs, but who were

[143] See Laura Hobson Faure, "Renaître sous les auspices américains et britanniques. Le mouvement libéral juif en France après la Shoah (1944-1970)", *Archives Juives* 2007/2, vol. 40, p. 82-99.
[144] See Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah. The organized escape of the Jewish survivors of Eastern Europe 1944-1948*, Random House, New York, 1970; Tad Szulc, The Secret Alliance: The Extraordinary Story of the *Rescue* of the Jews Since World War II, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1991.

less inclined to emigrate.[145] This was especially true for American Jewry, who until 1967 saw in their support for Israel a gesture of solidarity towards their brethren in need, but for whom the Jewish State was far from being at the core of their Jewish identification.[146]

The Six-Day War drama shook much of Diaspora Jews' indifference towards Israel,[147] transforming earlier detractors into enthusiastic supporters and changing the country's image, once the victory of Israel was consummated, into one of great-power. After 1967, Jews who were now filled with pride began to express a renewed awareness of the threats that Israel faced in the explosive Middle Eastern context (worries that became acute during the 1973 Yom Kippur war). Yet, Israel-Diaspora relations were gradually entering into a much more ambivalent zone, as Jewish groups in the Diaspora started to voice publicly their criticisms towards what they regarded as Israel's own responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugees and the status of the Arab Israeli population.[148]

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[145] In the 20-year period between 1948 and 1967, only 10,316 Jews from France did aliyah; 6047 from the UK, 2216 from the Netherlands, and 1038 from Belgium. *Israel Central Bureau of Statistics-Statistical Abstract 5773*.

[146] See Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*…, op. cit., p. 335-338; Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity*…, op. cit., p. 106-110; and William Saffran, "The Diaspora and the Homeland: Reciprocities, Transformations, and Role Reversals", in Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg (eds.), *Transnationalism Diasporas and the advent of a new (dis)order*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2009, p. 75-99.

[147] The Six-Day War, the third Arab Israeli war, took place between June 5-10, 1967. In response to the mobilization of troops by Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, Israel launched a preemptive attack that destroyed almost all the air force of Egypt and Syria. The war ended with a decisive Israeli victory but was experienced by the Jewish world with great fear and anxiety, as it was perceived that Israel was going through an existential threat. See Eli Lederhendler (ed.), *The Six-Day War and World Jewry*, The Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, University Press of Maryland, 2000.

[148] One of the most important of such "new" voices is the American philanthropic body New Israel Fund, established in 1979 by progressive Jews critical of Israeli policies on those issues. See Wertheimer, op. cit., p. 52-54. See also Gabriel Sheffer, "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora's Current Situation", Israel Studies, vol. 10, num. 1, 2005, p. 1-35. Sheffer identifies three different periods in the Israel-Diaspora relations. The first, going from 1948 to late 1960s, was characterized by the attempt of Israel to establish an Israel-centered world Jewry, "negating" the Diasporic life but demanding from them resources, large-scale immigration and readiness to support the Jewish State in the diplomatic arena. The second, roughly going from 1973 to beginnings of the 1990s, supposed a gradual erosion of Israel's image, leading to a more ambivalent support and even criticisms from larger segments of Diaspora Jews, and a diminution in the amount of funds raised for Israel, which impacted on changes in the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist movement. On the other hand, Israel felt less need to apply to Diaspora Jews for political mediation upon different governments given the opening of direct channels for negotiation and economic support. A final actual period would be characterized by greater segments of Diaspora openly questioning Israel's centrality and its capacity for ensuring Diaspora's Jewish continuity. A growing chasm can be identified between pro-Israel positions held by establishment groups and Diaspora professionals of Jewish life versus

To these complex Israel-Diaspora relations, it should be added that Israel was not only the object of transnational Jewish solidarity. Since its very creation, Israel became an active player in the field of Jewish transnational assistance seeking to respond to emergencies of Diaspora Jewry as well as promoting the Jewish State as the home of the Jews. By investing its own resources and developing its own instruments, Israel conducted rescue operations around the world and provided assistance to Jewish communities in distress. In addition, the Jewish Agency, Israel's official cultural arm abroad, reached out, via its *shlihim* (emissaries), to local Jewish populations by offering Hebrew lessons, Israeli cultural festivals, educational materials, and so forth in order to promote migration (*aliyah*).

It is against this backdrop that the relationship between the two most important Jewries in the realm of transnational Jewish solidarity should be understood. Seen from the perspective of Jewish centers, postwar responses to Jewish crises overseas often came from various Jewish centers simultaneously, evidencing an unparalleled capacity for reaction by world Jewry. "Characteristic of the contemporary situation is that", Daniel Elazar pointed out, "where outside intervention is involved, it does not come simply from one center or the other but almost invariably from both [USA and Israel]."[149]

However, that world Jewry gave itself such an overarching organizational capacity for relief, rescue and rehabilitation didn't mean that it was coordinated, pursued the same goals and wasn't the source of tensions. Israel and American Jews more often than not cooperated on the ground, but areas of tension and open conflicts were present as well.

In the post-Holocaust context, Europe remained one of the most important arenas where Israelis and Americans directed their rescue and relief efforts. Tensions rapidly arose between American Jewish aid agencies and Zionist authorities around the fate of the remnants of European Jewry. While it was a shared goal to provide care for the survivors and help them to resettle, American and Zionist agendas colluded regarding the final destination of the Displaced Persons. American Jewry, represented by the Joint and the HIAS, was committed to strengthening the Jewish life in the countries

young and informal groups with more critical standings. A critical and controversial view on this last period can be found also in Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, Times Books, 2012.

[149] Daniel Elazar, *People and Polity*…, op. cit., p. 134.

where Jews decided to settle or otherwise help them to immigrate to any other Western country. On the contrary, Israel firmly advocated for survivors to settle in Palestine. When the State of Israel was officially proclaimed the conflict somehow eased. JDC went on to help many survivors settle in Israel by financing vessels and by working in close cooperation with the Brichah/Jewish Agency.

While these differences towards European Jewry never truly disappeared, the tensions between American Jewry and Israel reached a new level of intensity during the famous campaign for Soviet Jewry and the so-called "dropout" issue. In the years 1965-1989, American Jewish activists called on the Soviet Union to open its borders and allow Soviet Jewish emigration. The campaign, with the Cold War and the civil rights' movement as a backdrop, went *in crescendo* engaging young Jewish activists, proactive synagogue members from all over the country, and prominent communal Jewish leaders. Even if the plight for Soviet Jewry started in the early 1950s gaining the support of an array of Jewish and non-Jewish progressive intellectuals, public figures, and organizations worldwide[150], it was in the United States where, from the mid-1960s, it became a major communal cause, providing new means for Jewish identification and communal commitment. Under the motto "Let my people go," different Jewish organizations staged public protests, sit-ins, picketing, and set out to lobby amongst congressmen and conduct fundraising campaigns.[151]

What was initially a movement that counted not only with the blessing of Israel, but that was also discreetly but persistently fueled by the highest authorities of the Jewish State,[152] slowly turned into a bitter dispute between representatives of the two Jewries. Starting in the early 1970s, Soviet Jews who were able to leave the Soviet Union holding Israeli visas opted, while *en route*, to resettle elsewhere, particularly in the United States. If in the early 1970s only ten percent of immigrants decided not to go to

[150] Yaacok Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948-1967,* Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 121-154.
[151] Henry Feingold, *"Silent No More". Saving the Jews of Russia. The American Jewish Effort, 1967-1989*, Syracuse University Press, 2007; Gal Beckerman, *When they come for us we'll be gone: the epic struggle to save Soviet Jewry*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, New York, 2010; Jack Wertheimer, *Jewish Organizational Life*…, op. cit., p. 59-64; Benjamin Pinkus, "Israeli Activity on Behalf of Soviet Jews", in S. Troen and B. Pinkus (eds.), *Organizing*…, op. cit., p. 373-402.
[152] See Pauline Peretz, "À l'origine de la mobilisation américaine en faveur des Juifs soviétiques", *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, 14, 2004, p. 50-67. See also Feingold, Ibid., p. 87-89; Beckerman, Ibid., p. 50-55.

Israel, by 1979 that percentage rose to 66 percent.[153] These contingents were rapidly known as “dropouts” and involuntarily provoked a chasm in the Soviet Jewry movement, unveiling sharp differing goals between organizations, mainly—but not necessarily—opposing American Jews against Israel. While for American Jewish organizations such as the grassroots Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry (UCSJ) or the Students Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ), the plight for Soviet Jews was a struggle for human rights and freedom of movement, Israeli authorities and Zionist-oriented activists considered this struggle a pro-aliyah movement. Furthermore, so the argument went, since it was Israel who issued the visas under which Soviet Jews were able to leave—not to mention the concrete actions that the Jewish State took on behalf of Soviet Jews as early as 1952—Israel was a *de facto* destination. In that sense, Israelis considered the help the dropouts received from American organizations as representing a direct challenge to Zionism and its “ingathering-in-one country” ideology.

[153] Feingold, Ibid., p. 169.

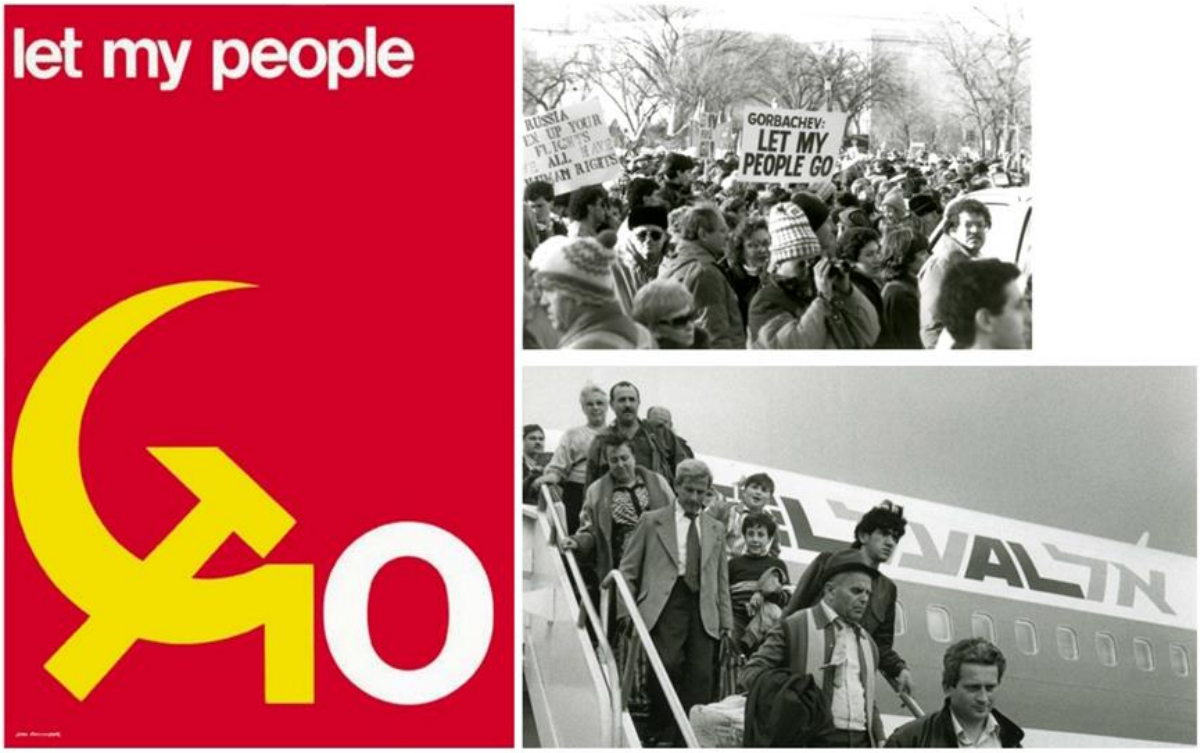

Figure 6. Left: Poster "Let my people go". Dan Reisinger, 1969. Top right: The Free Soviet Jewry March, Washington DC, December 6, 1987. 250,000 people marched on Washington to support Soviet Jewry that day. Source: https://www.adl.org/resources/news/free-soviet-jewry-march-moment-unity-american-jews/ [Last access March 7 2023]. Bottom right: Soviet Jews arriving in Israel from the former Soviet Union, 1992. Source: https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/modern-jewish-history-101/ [Last access March 7 2023]

These two examples illustrate the complexity of the Jewish transnational relief arena in the postwar period. As Daniel Elazar stated: "Willy-nilly a partnership between Israeli and American Jewry has been forged to serve Jews living outside the two centers. Each center has created its own instruments for the tasks at hand. This partnership, initially antagonistic, has become increasingly so, as the issues that once divided them have diminished."[154] Cooperation and tension may be the accurate terms to define this relationship. Israel and American Jewry would become the central forces for the rehabilitation of post-communist Jewish communal world, being responsible for a transnational flux of professionals, educators and models of Judaism. Former AJC director for Israel, David Clayman, emphasized, when reflecting on the role both Jewries had in the rebuilding of Jewish Europe, that: "Both American Jewry and Israel have served and do serve as models for regenerated European Jewish community, American born and/or American trained rabbis and educators and communal

[154] Elazar, *People and Polity*…, op. cit., p. 137.

personnel are to be found serving Jewish communities in Western Europe as well as in Central and Eastern Europe. So, too, Jewish professionals and functionaries are trained in Israel for small and dependent Jewish communities."[155]

3.6 Conclusions

It was shown throughout this chapter how modern Jewish solidarity emerged and later evolved over one hundred and fifty years. Far from being an exhaustive enumeration of all those Jewish bodies dedicated to the well-being of Jewish people, this chapter aimed to show how modern Jewish solidarity adopted various modalities and addressed a vast range of needs that went from self-defense and advocacy issues to resettlement, relief, regeneration, and rehabilitation.

Born in nineteenth-century Europe, Jewish transnational solidarity found its roots in the charitable practices destined to alleviate the condition of the sick, the poor and the orphans within each community. The Damascus affair in 1840 along with the social and political reverberations that reached Western Europe, paved the road for Jewish elites to react and organize themselves at a transnational level. Since then, Jewish solidarity has become a regular practice falling within the domain of an enriched and liberal class of urban Jewish elites. In 1860 the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* became the first organized expression of these sectors, combining the desire to maintain a Jewish peoplehood with the promotion of liberal and republican values engendered as a political tradition after the French revolutionary experience of 1789. Soon afterwards, Jews from other Central and Western European centers created their own agencies for welfare and relief, such as *Israelitische Allianz zu Wien* (1871), the *Anglo-Jewish Association* (1873), and the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* (1901).

In parallel with these organizational innovations, the paradigm of social regeneration started to gain support among philanthropists, who considered that Jews had to solve their "unproductive" position in the economic pyramid in order to better integrate and redeem, at the same time, the place of Judaism in the society. Following these premises, different projects were put into practice seeking to rehabilitate the Jews through economic reforms. Some of them, like the loan *kassas*, the vocational training initiatives, the cooperatives of artisans and the colonization venture known as Agro-

[155] Clayman, op. cit. pp. 359–360.

Joint, were destined to improve the living conditions of the Jews *in situ*. Others, like the colonization project set up and driven by the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) and Zionist groups who settled in Palestine, thought that Jews would be better off far away from their places of birth. A number of these initiatives continued in activity well into the twentieth century and left an ever-lasting imprint on the Jewish collective memory, not to mention the impact of Zionism.

During the twentieth century Jewish transnational agencies continued to flourish gaining in specialization, professionalization, and internationalization. Organizations now tended to constitute themselves around clearly defined domains of action such as self-defense, welfare, religious coordination and so on. Out of these transformations an incipient class of "Jewish professionals" rose, namely, communal leaders, philanthropists, activists, social workers, and fundraisers. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that we could talk about the formation of Modern Jewish solidarity as a *field*—a very particular arena of social action governed by its own laws, dynamics, and poles of influence, to name just a few of the key elements.

We opened this chapter by stating that responses to what were perceived as Jewish transtate problems often came from centers capable of mobilizing resources and manpower. Like many other fields pertaining to the social and cultural history of the Jewish people as a collective, modern Jewish solidarity reflected the shifting importance of Jewish centers throughout the contemporary period. The importance of a given center was mainly defined by demography (the number of Jews living there), the political, social and economic freedom the Jews enjoyed in their societies, the organizational culture of Jews, and last but not least, by the role that their countries played in the concert of nations. Regarding overseas aid, the capacity of Jews to generate an economic surplus to be invested in that domain was also important. In this respect, it was in late-nineteenth century Central and Western Europe (France, United Kingdom, Germany and Austro-Hungary), home of the politically emancipated and liberal Jew, where major centers of modern Jewish solidarity were established for the first time, rivaled only by the wealthy and enlightened Jewish bourgeoisie from St Petersburg. In the interregnum years between the Bolshevik revolution and the Nazi *machtergreifung*, Berlin became a sort of capital within Jewish Eastern Europe and therefore a hub for Jewish transnational agencies.

The twentieth century, however, with the disruption of the European centers caused by the Great War and afterwards War World II, along with the massive arrival of Jews to America, witnessed the rise of the United States as the new and undisputed Jewish center from where overseas solidarity came from. American Jews invested millions of dollars and mobilized hundreds of social workers and other professionals in order to rebuild Jewish communal life in post-Holocaust Europe. They did this mainly through their own instruments and applying their know-how, but they also financially supported pre-war European Jewish agencies such as Alliance Israélite Universelle and ORT. Later, they were instrumental in creating local institutions run by local leaders in order to reestablish communal autonomy. In 1948, the establishment of the State of Israel altered the field of overseas aid, producing a situation of bipolarity. From there on both Jewries would become the main players in the field, investing the largest amounts of money, producing their own professional bodies for delivering aid, raising funds, and defining their own agendas. The relationship among these two Jewish centers in the field of welfare and relief was one of collaboration, competition and collusion. There were other minor Jewish centers from where overseas aid came from, notably, France and the United Kingdom.

During the hundred and fifty years that passed since the Damascus Affair, world Jewry was able to develop an impressive constellation of specialized agencies scattered throughout a handful of Jewish centers around the world, ready to react upon emergencies and unexpected events affecting the Jews. When the collapse of communism took place, a well-consolidated tradition of modern Jewish solidarity was already in existence.

In this respect, 1989 and the years that followed unfolded an even more transnational and diverse Jewish landscape in post-communist Europe, something that, while not strange in the tradition of Jewish solidarity in the continent, was, at the same time, unique in modern Jewish history. The “traditional” Jewish agencies, such as the Joint and the Jewish Agency for Israel, were able to intensify their presence in the region, but began also to work alongside a myriad of “new” Western Jewish organizations and institutions, including Israeli non-governmental initiatives. The former found a new meaning and certainly developed a newfound *raison d’être* thanks to the possibilities that the period offered, and the latter sought to occupy unforeseen niches of activity. Jewish Europe became a cacophony of Jewish voices playing in the theater of relief

and reconstruction. In chapter 3 we will deploy and dissect this unique cartography. But we will first analyze the way Central and Eastern European Jewry was “rediscovered” by Western Jewish agencies, scholars, and journalists during the years that immediately preceded and followed the fall of the Berlin wall.

4. Are there still Jews in Eastern Europe? The rediscovery of Central and Eastern European Jews, 1984-1997

> *"While we mourn and remember the physical destruction of the lives and civilization of our people, we should recognize that Jewish life has not been extinguished in Eastern Europe."*
> Abraham J. Foxman, 1992

> "*Who were these Jews who had survived Hitler and Stalin and forty-five years of Communism? Who were their children? Why had they stayed? How had they coped?*"
> Jonathan Kaufman, 1997

> *"Never in the history of Europe has a moment been so propitious for its Jews as the present."*
> Diana Pinto, 1996

Central and East European Jews began to be rediscovered by Western scholars, journalists, and Jewish agencies on the eve of the Communist implosion. Between the years 1984 and 1997, an exponential increase of bibliography and documentation aiming at exploring and attesting to the existence of Jews living on the eastern half of the European continent was taking place. The trend began cautiously, circumscribed to a circle of devoted specialists and observers. But, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the trickle became a flood. Without a doubt, this rediscovery signaled a shift in the way the Jews had been portrayed in previous years. If Jewish life in countries such as the German Democratic Republic, Hungary or Czechoslovakia was deemed to have entered in the limbo of history after 1945 —if not directly extinguished, like in Poland—, towards the mid-1980s observers began to detect a renovated interest in Jewish culture and traditions by Eastern Europeans of Jewish descent. Eventually they began to speak about "awakened Jewish identities," "renaissance of Jewish culture," and "Jewish revivalism." For instance, oral histories, surveys, cultural studies, reports, journalistic accounts all scrutinized the life stories of Jewish individuals, their awakened Jewish identities, their relationship with Socialism, the impact of antisemitism as well as the past and present of Jewish communal life, just to name a few issues.

In this chapter, we will review the corpus of information produced by foreign observers, that is, Jewish activists and overseas organizations, scholars, professional journalists, and intellectuals during the period that went from the immediate years before the fall of the Berlin the Wall, around 1987, to the mid-1990s. Our aim is to identify the central elements that started to emerge and circulate in what constituted a renovated vision of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe. These narratives, spread in reports, news outlets and books, have been produced by a heterogeneous constellation of actors, in diverse settings and responding to different contexts and purposes. Some were done on a country-by-country basis, while others through pan-European approaches. We will start by analyzing how *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, one of the central scholarly organs published in London involved in the plight for the Soviet Jews, dealt with Central and Eastern European Jews since its inception in 1968 and show how the issues and concerns related to this population showed a significant alteration since 1987 onwards. Secondly, we will focus on the scholarly rediscovery of the Jewish post-war experience in Germany. Since 1985, both West German and foreign scholars began to deal systematically with the Jewish life in the two Germanies in the post-war years, trying to acknowledge first how was it possible that Jewish life had in effect continued after the Holocaust, especially in the Federal Republic, but also in East Germany, and secondly to understand the re-emergence of Jewish life in re-unified Germany.

Finally, we will scrutinize the diverse body of literature produced after 1989 in order to understand the changes in perceptions of Jews and Jewish life in Europe. The demise of Communism favored the emergence of new interpretations based on what was perceived as the end of an era. It was now possible to look back over the last forty-five years and try to explain that period from a Jewish standpoint. As a consequence, reports aiming at providing a comprehensive understanding of Jewish life in Europe during the post-war period began to see the light, scrutinizing the evolving policies of the Communist authorities *vis-à-vis* the Jews, identifying salient events and turning points and providing information about the internal dynamics of the communities. But post-1989 Jewish Eastern Europe aroused a curiosity and a fascination that well exceeded the attention of the restricted circle of specialized observers and activists of the previous decades. Thus, specialized reports gave place to more compelling narratives —produced by professional journalists— destined not only to restore the whereabouts of Jewish communal life under Communism but also to inquire about the everyday experience of those who until not long ago lived behind the Iron Curtain.

Suddenly, Jews were no longer the anonymous and passive victims of all-embracing and repressive communist regimes but "real" people with very peculiar life-histories, featuring ambiguous and unsettled relationships both with Judaism and Socialism. In addition to this, the interest in Jewish Eastern Europe led to an unprecedented memorialization process among Western Jews. Travel guides, commemorative books, photographic essays, and memorial tourism; all of these cultural devices sought to rescue from the oblivion the centuries-long Jewish history and tradition in Eastern Europe —including, certainly, a renovated vow to remember the Holocaust— considered an integral part of the identity of many Western Jews of Ashkenazi descent. However, some of these initiatives found themselves discovering that Jewish life, no matter how diminished and limited, had continued during all these years and therefore the memorial narratives became more complex. The chapter will end in the mid-1990s, when, facing what they considered a new reality of a reunified continent and a European Union in its way of consolidation, European Jewish intellectuals, not without optimism, started to talk about "new Jews" living in a "new Europe."

4.1 The place of Eastern European Jewry in the plight for Soviet Jews: *Soviet Jewish Affairs*

As much as their eyes were firmly fixed on what Elie Wiesel called the "Jews of Silence" and their main concern was located in the Kremlin, *Soviet Jewish Affairs* (SJA), the main scholarly organ involved with the movement for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate, devoted efforts all along its twenty-four years of existence to inform and follow the developments affecting Central and Eastern European Jewry. Yet, as we shall see, the prism and the regularity under which the Jews of the Soviet satellite states were observed changed over the years.

Financed by the World Jewish Congress and the Institute of Jewish Affairs[156], the *Bulletin on Soviet Jewish Affairs*, "a survey of views and events affecting the life of the Jewish minority in the USSR," was founded in 1968 by a group of Anglo-Jewish scholars and intellectuals. Halfway between a scholarly journal and an activist

[156] The Institute of Jewish Affairs was created in London in 1941 under the auspices of the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Congress. The Institute's mission was to do research on different aspects of Jewish contemporary life and function as a think tank where to suggest the terms of a post-war reparation settlement towards the Jewish people. The Institute moved to London in 1965.

publication, the spirit of SJA was well reflected in the introduction of the first issue, written by Leonard Schapiro, a professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics and expert in the Soviet Union. “Soviet Jewry,” observed Schapiro, “the largest Jewish community in the Diaspora, is also the worst off.”[157] They were not threatened by physical extermination, nor they were subject to official persecution, continued the author, but “those Jews who wish to maintain their religious practices are more restricted than any other religious community in the Soviet Union; Jews are permitted no communal organization and minimal Yiddish cultural life; and there is certainly some unofficial discrimination against Jews.” The causes of this discrimination are not to be attributed to the endemic Russian antisemitism, “but for a totalitarian state the Jews present a peculiar problem.”

> The Jew is neither a “real” Russian, in the eyes of the part or police official, nor a clear “indigene” like a Tadjik or a Mordvin- he probably has relatives in London or New York, there is the international solidarity of world Jewry (much exaggerated as this is), there is the magnet of Israel, and so forth.

According to Schapiro, recent and modest amelioration in the situation of the Jews of the USSR had been verified. That was due to the public campaign carried out in the West and, especially, by the exposure of real and accurate evidence: “The police state thrives in secretiveness and propaganda: it is particularly vulnerable to the cold light of facts.” And turning to his colleagues, he explained that:

> It is cheap and easy to dismiss all this scholarship as ‘cold war’- as the Soviet authorities and their advocates and their friends abroad invariably do. The genuine scholar is not deterred by this from his duty.

Hence, the goal of the new publication was for Schapiro

> […] to provide a forum for such genuine scholars – those who are scrupulous both about facts, and about their presentation, setting down without fear both those materials which suggest changes for the better in the plight of Soviet

[157] This and the following citations taken from Leonard Schapiro, “What this Bulletin could do”, *Bulletin of Soviet Jewish Affairs*, no. 1, January 1968, p. 5-6.

> Jewry, and those which give rise to criticism. Soviet Jews […] will have cause to be grateful for their cause. Let the facts be known![158]

Because the editors and collaborators were deeply engaged with the cause —whether they were, like Leonard Schapiro, expert *sovietologists*, or *émigrés* with access to information from behind the Iron Curtain[159]— and given that the caliber of the information published was certainly unique and that this was exposed in an academic fashion, SJA quickly became the scholarly arm of the plight for Soviet Jews. Published three times a year since 1972 —before that it appeared at irregular intervals under the name of *Bulletin on Soviet Jewish Affairs*—, a typical issue of SJA could contain reports informing about a variety of aspects pertaining the life and culture of Jews in the URSS; witness accounts and memoirs as well as letters coming from Russia; historical and historiographical contributions dealing with themes such as Jewish life and antisemitism in pre-Communist Russia and Eastern Europe as well as during the early post-World War II years; "leaked" documents introduced and annotated by experts such as articles from the Soviet press, *samizdat* (illegal) literature, manifests, and so on; reviews of books on the subject as they were being published in the West or in the East (clearly, language was not a barrier for such a polyglot group of collaborators), and a "Chronology of events," where relevant events and important personalities of the Communist world were tracked year after year. As John D. Klier showed, SJA succeeded over its twenty four years of existence in capturing the panoply of matters involving the situation of the Jews of the USSR and the issues concerning the plight for Soviet Jews.[160] In that respect, the journal dealt with many key topics: the early

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[158] Leonard Schapiro, "What this Bulletin could do", *Bulletin of Soviet Jewish Affairs*, no. 1, January 1968, p. 5-6.

[159] Among the academics there were the already mentioned Leonard Schapiro, who was the author of the famous book *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Random House, 1960); Chimen Abramsky, born in Minsk, educated in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and in Oxford, was Emeritus Professor of Jewish Studies in the University College London; Antony Polonsky, born in South Africa and appointed lecturer of International History at the London School of Economics. Among the émigrés, Lukas Hirszowicz, who served as editor of SJA for twenty years between 1972 and 1992, was perhaps the most outstanding figure. Born in Grodno, Poland in 1920, he went to Palestine in 1939 to study in the Hebrew University physics and history. There, he became a member of the Palestine Communist Party and, disillusioned with the situation in Palestine, he returned to Poland in 1948 out of political convictions. In 1968, in the midst of the antisemitic campaign and after having served in different professorial posts, he and his wife were compelled to abandon Poland and went to the UK, where he became a professor at Oxford and the London School of Economics.

[160] John D. Klier, "From Soviet Jewish affairs to East European Jewish affairs: A 24-year retrospective on the shifting priorities of Jews in east-central Europe", East European Jewish Affairs, 30:1, 2000, p. 1-16.

signs of a Jewish awakening among certain groups within the Soviet Jewry and the "new phenomenon concerning Soviet Jewry […] the open demand of Jews to emigrate, as an elementary human right, for the purpose of settling in Israel"[161]; the Soviet antisemitism and anti-Zionism; the "*refusenik*" and the "dropout" phenomena[162]; the demographics and the occupational structure of Soviet Jewry; the conditions of life and success of absorption of Soviet Jews settling in the US and in Israel, just to name a few.

What was the place of East-Central Europe in *Soviet Jewish Affairs*? There were two distinct moments when Jews from satellite countries appeared in the pages of SJA. The first incisive moment was during the period 1968-1972, as critical events were unfolding in Poland and in Czechoslovakia during the journal's first steps in 1968. In Poland, the "anti-Zionist campaigns" waged by the Polish authorities as a response to the Six-Day War in 1967 and to the students' strikes in 1968, led to a mass exodus of Polish Jews, among them scientists, journalists, artists, and communist cadres.[163] In Czechoslovakia, the Prague Spring had an evident impact and aroused the attention of the journal's staff, looking for any signs of antisemitism.[164] In fact, the intense coverage given by the journal to those events during the years 1968-1972 led the editors to rename the publication in the third issue of 1969 to *Bulletin of Soviet and East European Jewish Affairs*, a title that would be definitely changed in 1971 to *Soviet Jewish Affairs. A Journal of Jewish problems in the USSR and Eastern Europe*. Thus, the *Bulletin* period of SJA concurred with a great exposure of Polish and Czechoslovak developments. Articles focused on analyzing the nature of antisemitic outbursts from that period[165] and in exposing the sequence of events and the internal decision-making process within the Communist nomenclature; in revisiting immediate antecedents taken place in those countries such as the Kielce pogrom of 1948 and the "Slansky

[161] Ibid., p. 3

[162] On the "dropouts" see chapter 1

[163] See Dariusz Stola, "Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968", Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture, 25:1, 2006, p. 175-201.

[164] On the Prague Spring, see Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its aftermath: Czechoslovak politics, 1968-1970*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[165] Stephen J. Roth, "The Theory of Polish Communist Antisemitism", BSEEJA, no. 2, 1968; Staff Study, "Antisemitism in Czechoslovakia: Past and Present", BSEEJA, no. 2, 1968; Josef Cywiak, "Why the Jews Left Poland", BSEEJA, no. 5, 1970; Leopold Unger, "Too Many Jews or too Little Socialism?", BSEEJA, no. 6, 1970; Staff Study, "Jewish Affairs in Czechoslovakia", BSEEJA, no. 6, 1970; Anonymous (Michael Checinski), "USSR and the Politics of Polish Antisemitism 1956-68", SJA, no. 1, 1971.

Trials" of 1952-1953[166]; the intellectual origins of anti-Jewish ideas —including reviews of contemporary literature with antisemitic or anti-Zionist content[167], and in describing the ill-fated realities of the Jewish communities, especially in Poland, where a young Zygmunt Bauman, himself expelled from the University of Warsaw in 1968, characterized the phenomenon as a "Final Solution" and declared: "In all probability the year 1968 set the seal on the fate of Polish Jewry, a community of rich cultural traditions going back some one thousand years."[168] Except for one article dedicated to analyzing Rakosi's policy towards Hungarian Jews, no other country of the Soviet bloc was mentioned during that period.[169]

The years that followed gave place to an *interregnum* in the pages of SJA concerning Eastern European Jews. The number of publications decreased. During the fifteen-year period (1973-1987) almost the same number of articles about Eastern European Jews was published than during the previous five years (1968-1972). This low-key coverage continued primarily to heed any sign of antisemitism and anti-Zionism emanating from the region, especially from Poland.[170] Going in the same direction, other articles focused on analyzing the way Jews were portrayed in contemporary literature and historical studies—especially those dealing with recent history—produced in the Communist countries. It was assumed that by scrutinizing the way the Jews were depicted in those texts and by pointing to distortions and omissions in narrating the historical events —and taking into account the zealot censorship under which they were exposed before being published—, one could draw some conclusions

[166] See in the same issue: Otto Arie, "Czech Study of the Slansky Trial and Antisemitism", BSEEJA, no. 4, 1969; the review of the book written by Rudolf Slanky's wife Josefa by the same author, "Report on My Husband by Josefa Slanska", BSEEJA, no. 4, 1969, and R.Z., "Sentenced and Tried: The Stalinist Purges in Czechoslovakia", BSEEJA, no. 4, 1969.

[167] Staff Study, "The Anti-Jewish Books of Tadeusz Walichnowski", BSEEJA, no. 3, 1969.

[168] Zygmunt Bauman, "The End of the Polish Jewry: A Sociological Review", BSEEJA, no. 3, 1969, p. 3.

[169] George Garai, "Hungary's Liberal Policy and the Jewish Question, with a note on Rakosi", SJA, no. 1, 1971.

[170] See Anonymous (Michael Checinski), "Current Developments in Poland", SJA, no. 3, 1972; Anonymous (Michael Checinski), "Letter from Poland", SJA, vol. 2, no. 2, 1972; M. Checinski, "The Kielce Pogrom: Some Unanswered Questions", SJA, vol. V, no. 1, 1975; Leonard B. Schapiro, "Antisemitism in the Communist World", SJA, vol. 9, no. 1, 1979; Lukasz Hirszowicz, "Antisemitism in Today's Poland (Documents)", SJA, vol. 12, no. 1, February 1982; Michael Shafir, "From Eminescu to Goga via Corneliu Vadim Tudor: A new Round of Antisemitism in Romanian Cultural Life", SJA, vol. 14, no. 3, November 1984. See also the review of Paul Lendvai's *Antisemitism in Eastern Europe*, Lucjan Blit, "Antisemitism without a cause?", SJA, vol. 2, no. 2, 1972, p. 111-112.

on the state of the "Jewish Question" in those countries.[171] Finally, another group of articles was composed of papers dealing with aspects of Jewish life during the immediate post-Holocaust years.[172] Two articles constituted an exception to the trend of this period, advancing two topics that would come to predominate in the pages of SJA during the following years, namely, the interest in exposing information about internal community matters and the concern in exploring people's Jewish identification. The first article, published in 1980, was a study of the Czechoslovak Jewish community in 1979 based on the twelve-monthly issues of *Věstník*, the official organ of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech and Slovak Socialists Republics. The author, Aaron Zwergbaum, thoroughly analyzed the publication trying to determine what the communal news sheet actually reflected about the life of the community by pointing to what was said and what was omitted, and what could be read between lines.[173] The second article appeared in 1985 and was entitled "A note on Jewish Identity in Hungary."[174] Anna Sándor, a Hungarian journalist living in Holland, presented a succinct report on the outcomes of a series of fifty interviews with young Hungarians of Jewish origins on "the significance of being a Jew in Hungary today" that she conducted during 1979-1980. If the article was in itself a *rara avis* for SJA of those years, providing invaluable first-hand testimonies of ordinary people living on the other side of the Iron Curtain, the conclusions however were not really inspiring from a Jewish perspective. The author indicated that Judaism and the fact of having a Jewish origin constituted a "taboo," a "painful subject" that was carefully avoided —if not silenced— within the households and in interpersonal contacts.[175] Overall, according to the author, this generation felt "Hungarian" and lacked "Jewish awareness." Yet,

[171] Theodor Lavi, "Jews in Romanian Historiography of World War II", SJA, vol. 4, no. 1, 1974; Tadeusz Szafar, "A Slanted History of Polish Communism", SJA, vol. 7, no. 1, 1977; Tadeusz Szafar, "'Endecized' Marxism: Polish Communist Historians on Recent Polish Jewish History", SJA, vol. 8, no. 1, 1978; Ivan Sanders, "Sequels and Revisions: The Hungarian Jewish Experience in Recent Hungarian Literature", SJA, vol. 14, no. 1, February 1984; and Victor Eskenasy, "A note on Recent Romanian Historiography on the Jews", SJA, vol. 15, no. 3, November 1985. See also the reviews by Krzysztof Pszenicku, "Communists, Catholics and 'Zionists' in People's Poland"; Elizabeth E. Eppler, "An Incomplete Account", both of them in SJA, vol. 10, no. 2, May 1980.

[172] Lucjan Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life in Post-War Poland", SJA, vol. 3, no. 2, 1973; Yeshayahu Jelinek, "The Jews in Slovakia 1945-1949", SJA, vol. 8, no. 2, 1978; Antony Polonsky, "Jews in Eastern Europe after World War II: Documents from the British Foreign Office", SJA, vol. 10, no. 1, February 1980; George Garai, "Rákosi and the 'Anti-Zionist' campaign of 1952-53", SJA, vol. 12, no. 2, May 1982; Wolf Oschlies, "The Jews in Bulgaria since 1944", SJA, vol. 14, no. 2, May 1984.

[173] Aaron Zwergbaum, "Czechoslovak Jewry in 1979", SJA, vol. 10, no. 3, November 1980.

[174] Anna Sándor, "A note on Jewish Identity in Hungary", SJA, vol. 15, no. 2, May 1985.

[175] Ibid., p. 46-47.

they did develop "over-sensitiveness" when non-Jewish people refer to anything Jewish and this "unconscious unease" had the effect of drawing them together in "marriage and friendship."[176] The ignorance of the group concerning Jewish things concluded the author "was amazing."

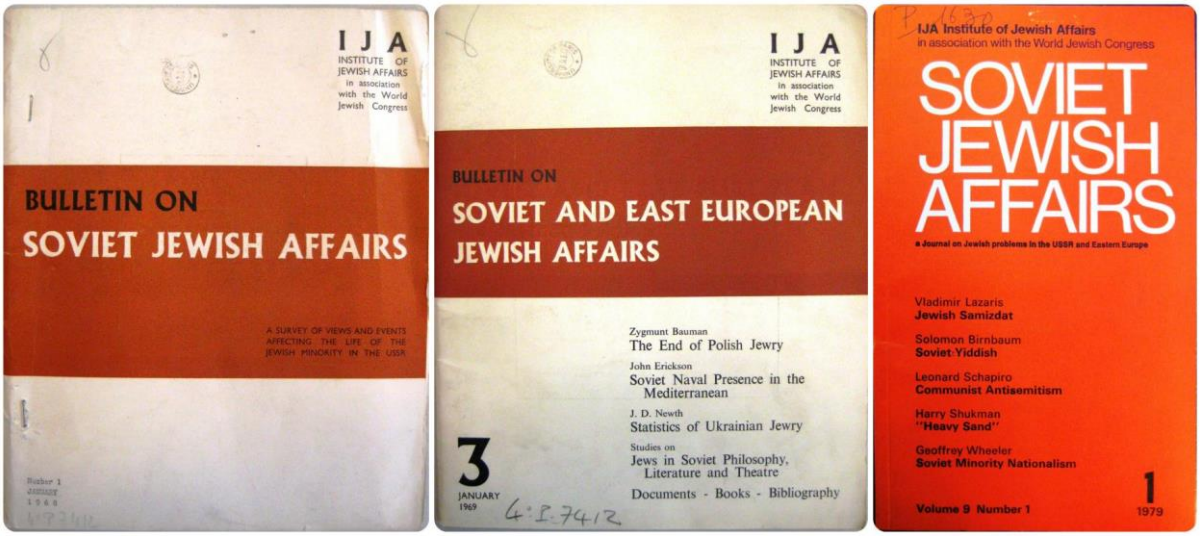

Figure 7. Portraits of three different covers of the publication, showing the evolution of the title. Photos: MD. Archives of the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (BDIC), Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense (left and center photos) and Bibliothèque de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle (right photo).

The Jews from the people's democracies were suddenly brought back to the center of attention by SJA in the late 1980s, ushering in the second large period. This time, though, it was not about monitoring antisemitic threats occurring during dramatic events. Rather, other kinds of issues captured the attention of SJA editors and collaborators, leading to increase of coverage as well as a genuine change of perspective regarding Central and Eastern European Jews. The journal began to provide information about the phenomenon of a reemergence of Jewish identity and increasing interest in Jewish related topics by local Jews or individuals of Jewish origin; the increasing openness with which non-Jewish intellectuals and dissidents began to discuss the "Jewish Question,"[177] thereby revisiting the role and responsibilities of their

[176] Ibid., p. 48-49.

[177] Beginning in the 19th century some German and other European writers, philosophers, and theologians claimed that the presence of a Jewish minority in society was a problem that needed to be solved. Known as the 'Jewish Question,' the status of European Jews became the subject of heated

countries and co-nationals during the Holocaust —an issue that was taboo under Communism; and the increasing liberalization that some Communist governments were showing towards Jews and Jewish organizations. A whole new set of events appeared to be taking place in the region.

Maybe one of the most important novelties was the new light under which Jews were portrayed in the pages of Soviet Jewish Affairs. Reports bringing unprecedented news about the internal daily life of Jewish communities and accompanied by references to a Jewish revival often led by younger generations, taking place in every capital of East-Central Europe, followed one another between 1987 and 1990.

In 1987, the editor of SJA Lukas Hirszowicz introduced two reports originally published in the Newssheet of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the German Democratic Republic (*Nachrichtenblatt des Verbandes der Jüdischen Gemeinden in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*). They consisted of minutes corresponding to general meetings held at the *Gemeinde* (Community) in 1986.[178] Hirszowicz explained that "in the early 1980s, 650 Jews were registered" in the Jewish communities of the GDR, "all of which have a synagogue or prayer room but no rabbi" and that "the link [that these Jews] retain with Judaism tend to have been weakened either by mixed marriages or by adherence to left-wing ideologies opposed to religion and Zionism." Despite the fact that the GDR refused to pay reparations to the Jewish people like the Federal Republic chose to do, the editor acknowledged that "the Jewish communities and most individual Jews in East Germany enjoy a large measure of government support." The importance of the documents reproduced by SJA was not only limited to the fact that they provided a much valuable hint into the day-to-day activities of a badly known community –if known at all. They also described a curiosity; a number of individuals who were not members of the community but who had Jewish origins and who were, for the first time, expressing interest in the Jewish organized life of East Berlin and were therefore approaching the community. The minutes narrated a meeting, which was held at the community venue, between the communal authorities and the so-called "guests":

debate in an era when they were gradually being granted civil rights and equality. See, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The 'Jewish Question.'" Holocaust Encyclopedia.

[178] "Documents. Jewish Communal Life in the German Democratic Republic. Introduced and annotated by Lukas Hirszowicz", SJA, vol. 17, no. 1, 1987, p. 61-66.

> The guests expressed gratitude to the organizers for the invitation which had brought them into closer contact with the community. They said they believed there were other Jews in Berlin who, like them, had an interest in things Jewish but had not previously crossed the threshold of the community building. It was evident that there was a widely held view that the community consisted mainly of deeply religious people. 'Judaism knows no dogma, it is not necessary to be a believer', stated Dr [Hermann] Simon [the Vice-Chairman of the Jewish community][179]

The protocols went on and provided information on the follow-up of that meeting. In "A Jewish Evening in the Culture room," it was related that members of the community and "guests" shared a social gathering that included mutual presentations, speeches, and a discussion about "What is Judaism?" They all left with the commitment to organize further events.

> In late June [1986] the culture room was packed. […] Those invited were Berliners known to have admitted their Jewish parentage outside the community. We had invited people in the mid-thirties to mid-forties age group –children of survivors- many of whom wished their own children to become familiar with Jewish traditions[180]

If the minutes reflected an atmosphere of an ongoing yet wary revival in the Jewish life of the GDR, reports coming from other countries were showing only local declinations of the same phenomenon, expressed with different intensities and *tempo*.

Two issues after the publication of the GDR documents, excerpts of a series of in-depth interviews conducted by a group of young sociologists and psychologists from the Budapest University under the topic "How did I find out I was Jewish?" were presented by SJA.[181] Again, in a context of a Jewish awakening taking place in Budapest, a team of local researchers —many of them Jews — delved into the complexities surrounding the Jewish identification and the intergenerational transmission of Judaism among survivors and their children in Communist Hungary,

[179] Ibid., p. 63.
[180] Ibid., p. 64.
[181] "Documents. Jewish and Hungarians. Introduced by George Schöpflin", SJA, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, p. 55-66.

proving that the issue was now starting to be discussed publicly among Hungarians of Jewish origin.

"The situation in Hungary is complicated even further [than in the US or Israel]", admitted the authors when speaking about the "second generation" (i.e. children of survivors), "by the fact that it is not merely the 'secondary traumatization' discussed in Western writings that is significant in characterizing this age group; it is also the evaluation of the Jewish question as a social and historical problem before and after the war."[182] The authors advanced their own socio-psychological explanation and provided details about the quandaries of Jewish identity in postwar Hungary:

> 'How did I find out you were a Jew?' In most countries, such a question would be met with astonishment. […] In most countries one does not 'find out' – Jewishness is an integral part of family traditions and the everyday and cultural environment […]. Hungary is one of the few places where this is not the case. Many of those who belong to the 'second generation' […] only came to know of [their Jewish origins] when they reached adulthood. Often the information came from older people. If it came from family members it was usually the result of a quirk in a situation of conflict or of complexes. […] Parents rarely enlightened their children about the origins of the family. If they did so it was with bad conscience. They felt […] that somehow this information would bring about a disaster for their children […]. So the second generation not only has to deal with the usual problems raised by the Jewish issue, but also with the trauma of discovering its own Jewishness. […] It is not accidental that those who remained silent or denied their origins were often convinced communists who have played an active role in the post-1945 political system. These parents displayed a typical assimilationist attitude […] 'We were communists, not Jews.'[183]

[182] That the "Jewish question" in Hungary was a sensitive issue was advanced in the introduction to the documents by Professor George Schöpflin. "Almost inevitably it was the journal *Medvetánc* which decided to breach this semi-taboo. *Medvetánc* is formally published by the Communist Youth organization at the Arts Faculty of Budapest University and, since it came into existence in 1981, it has covered a wide range of difficult and politically sensitive issues […]. This dossier appeared in no. 2-3, 1985, which did not see the light of day until the spring of 1986. No further issues of *Medvetánc* had appeared by the middle of 1987 and there were rumours of political obstacles to continued publication of the journal", Ibid., p. 55-56

[183] Ibid., p. 57-59.

Also, in Czechoslovakia signs of a timid renewal led by the younger generation were occurring amid a gloomy atmosphere. “Today, Czechoslovak Jewry is a small, dispersed and, for the most part, ageing community,” wrote Joan Friedman, an American doctoral researcher who spent six months in Prague between August 1988 and January 1989, “most of its members are living out their days in the certainty that they are the last Jews of Czechoslovakia.”[184] The majority of Prague’s 960 Jews had little or no Jewish involvement whatsoever, assured the author, their only activity was “eating in the *kosher* dining room in the community building,” not out of commitment to Jewish dietary practices but because the food “by local standards, is good and, thanks to the subsidies from the American Joint Distribution Committee, quite cheap.” The community was also caught by “factionalization and personal animosities” between “dissident” Jews and the communist-appointed functionaries who hold effective control of the community’s life. And yet, there were, according to the author,

> a small number of individuals who participate actively in the life of the community without being officially members. These are people under forty years of age whose efforts to provide themselves with a Jewish education, to live meaningful Jewish lives and to create for themselves a vital Jewish culture, are nothing less than astonishing. […] In light of the current repression, the feeling of resignation among the older members of the community […], and the continuing obstacles to any viable Jewish life, the efforts made by a small number of young Jews are little short of miraculous.[185]

Likewise, the founding of different Jewish organizations in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, along with the establishment of Jewish press organs and the promotion of Jewish culture made possible by the atmosphere of the *perestroika* were thoroughly described in a report called “Jewish Culture Re-emerges in Baltic States.”[186] A year later, in 1990, another report confirmed the revivalist trend and exposed, for the first time, a series of problems linked to this phenomenon[187]: “Despite the small size of the

[184] Joan Friedman, “The Last Jews of Czechoslovakia?”, SJA, vol. 19, no. 1, 1989, p. 49.
[185] Ibid., p. 50 and 53.
[186] S. Levenberg, “Jewish Culture Re-emerges in the Baltic States”, SJA, vol. 19, no. 3, 1989, p. 15-21.
[187] Eitan Finkelstein, “Jewish Revival in the Baltics: Problems and Perspectives”, SJA, vol. 20, no. 1, 1990, p. 3-13.

Jewish population, the revival of Jewish public and cultural life in the Baltic countries is attracting increased attention both within the USSR and beyond its borders," assured the author, and asserted that this was a consequence of "the political and social reforms initiated by Gorbachev," which in the Baltic countries "have been sustained more steadily than elsewhere in the Soviet Union."[188] The report informed that the first moves towards the establishment of Jewish cultural institutions began in 1987, favored by growing trends in favor of independence taking place in the region. However, by 1990 it was already apparent, according to the author, that the "Baltic Jewish revival" faced "*real* problems":

> 'Internal' difficulties have appeared in the last one or two years to an even greater extent. The small Jewish population of the Baltics, so recently given the opportunity to express itself, is today demonstrating an unusually broad spectrum of opinion –and an inability to work out a common platform, even on most basic issues[189]

At least in Lithuania and, to a lesser extent, Latvia, major divisions have appeared between those Jewish leaders who supported (and were engaged in the movement for) their countries' independence and those who remained staunchly pro-Soviet.
This "state of confusion" was in part explained by the fact that the most active section of the population had already immigrated to Israel in the 1970s, so "when Gorbachev's *perestroyka* policy was launched, the Baltic Jewish communities were drained of their leadership."[190] But, in addition to this, the peculiar socio-demographic structure of the Jewish population of the Baltics led to significant gaps among different elements of Baltic Jewry. To a considerable degree, a heterogeneous group —in terms of cultural, ideological and professional background— lived in the Baltics region. According to the author, different waves of Jewish immigration had taken place in the last forty years, which stood as the source of such divisions. They transformed Baltic Jewry to such an extent that direct descendants of the vibrant pre-Holocaust communities of Vilna (the "Jerusalem of Lithuania"), Volozhin, Kovno and Riga were now only "exotic" species, constituting "an insignificant proportion of the overall number of Jews in the region."[191]

[188] Ibid., p. 4.
[189] Ibid., p. 7.
[190] Ibid., p. 8.
[191] Ibid., p. 9.

> A part of the Jewish population came to the Baltics in the latter half of the 1940s on the wave of the post-war Sovietization of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. These people were, basically, administrators and economic managers of various ranks, specialists in technology, teachers, military personnel –and even KGB and Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel. […] They sent their children to Russian schools and brought them up in the spirit of 'Soviet internationalism'.
> The second wave of Jewish immigration to the Baltics, provoked by Stalinist antisemitism, began in the 1950s. […] scientific workers, physicians, engineers, and so forth, removed from or unable to find work in institutes in Moscow, Leningrad and other major centers of the country were often supported by leaders of the so-called local cadres [of the Baltic countries]. These Jews were sympathetic to the nationalist strivings of the local population but found it difficult to become part of the Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian communities on account, first of all, of the language barrier and their cultural background.
> The third wave of Jewish immigration to the Baltics began at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The goal of these immigrants was to find a destination from which they could eventually move to Israel.[192]

With a population of such diversity, and with an increasing sense of uncertainty, it was hard to predict the future.

> The scenarios of the future Eastern Europe and Soviet Union have, of course, not yet been written, but the gigantic changes which are currently taking place there provide a historic opportunity for the Jewish population, and for those living in the Baltic region specifically[193]

Revivalism aside, other issues indicative of the "gigantic changes" taking place in the region were also brought to attention by SJA. One of those changes consisted in the growing public reconsideration by different non-Jewish voices of the so-called "Jewish Question" and the role played by the local authorities and population during the Holocaust. Towards the late 1980s, a critical examination of past sins as well as of

[192] Ibid., p. 9.
[193] Ibid., p. 13.

present-day antisemitism had been progressively adopted in the public discourse of dissident sectors of various countries seeking to denounce people's democracies' way of crafting an "official" recent history. These discourses essentially stressed the silence built over the home-grown responsibilities in the extermination of the local Jewish population during the Nazi period, condemned the lack of any official recognition of the fate suffered by the Jews as reflected in the absence of memorials and monuments and, last but not least, denounced the existence of a still ingrained antisemitism.
In 1988, SJA published a transcription of a radio programme emitted in Budapest on 23 May 1987 where 9 Hungarian personalities of the culture and the sciences answered the question "Is there a Jewish Question in Hungary?"[194] While the responses collected agreed entirely with the existence of a "Jewish problem" in present-day Hungary, SJA pointed out that the radio broadcast in itself was reflecting a major change operating in Hungarian society:

> In the last ten years or so a remarkable change has taken place […] Hungarians have begun to indulge in soul-searching about their own role during the war, a process which may be described as 'coming to terms with the past'. Parallel to this discussion of past Hungarian antisemitism and its intellectual responsibility for the preparation and carrying out the extermination of Hungarian Jewry was an examination of present-day Hungarian society[195]

A process of "coming to terms with the past", although not without political motivations, was also taking place among Slovakian circles of liberal intellectuals and *émigrés*, informed SJA in 1989.[196] Yeshayahu Jelinek, a Czechoslovak scholar living in Israel, introduced and analyzed the "Proclamation of the twenty-four," a declaration signed by liberal Slovakian intellectuals, and another statement issued by the World Slovakian Congress (and association of Slovakian *émigrés* based in Toronto), both aimed at recognizing the responsibilities of the pro-Nazi government led by the Catholic priest Jozef Tizo in deporting Slovakian Jews. Motivated by the forty-fifth anniversary of the

[194] "Is there a 'Jewish Question' in Present-day Hungary? Introduced and annotated by Stephen J. Roth", SJA, vol. 18, no. 3, 1988, p. 56-71.
[195] Ibid., p. 56.
[196] Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, "Slovaks and the Holocaust: Attempts at Reconciliation", SJA, vol. 19, no. 1, 1989, p. 57-68.

deportations, the proclamation stated that "[…] We regard those events as a burdensome legacy and as inhumane and we not only condemn them but express our profound regret and beg forgiveness from all living relatives of these victims of inhumanity and all members of their nation because until now, for various reasons, nobody with authority among us has done so. […] We are also moved to make this proclamation by the fact that there is no dignified memorial in Slovakia to commemorate the greatest collective tragedy in our history."[197]

If the Slovakian declarations dealt with past responsibilities regarding the extermination of the Jewish population, an open letter distributed by the Czech human rights movement Charta 77 in April 1989 and published by SJA in 1990 (once the "Velvet Revolution" had taken place) offered an extremely critical, well-informed and vivid description of the state of abandonment and disrepair of Prague's historic synagogues and other significant historical landmarks, while it criticized the official silence and misrepresentation of the fate of the Czechoslovak Jews and the Jewish culture existing in public education and the press.[198] Entitled "The Tragedy of Jews in Post-War Czechoslovakia," the letter first condemned the fact that while it was known that an estimated of 360,000 Czechoslovak citizens were murdered between 1939 and 1945, "practically never […] do we encounter [in History textbooks] the information that 240,000 to 255,000 of the total number of victims were persons of Jewish origin." When the war ended it was clear that a significant ethnic, cultural and religious minority had been exterminated, continued the letter, and

> as a consequence, the Czechoslovak public faced two tasks -not to allow the thousand year-old presence of the Jewish community in the Czech lands and in Slovakia to fall into oblivion, and to ensure that the circumstances under which this community had been liquidated would not be forgotten

The document reminded the "favorable conditions" existing in Prague for the "fulfillment of these tasks," as it was in the Bohemian capital where the Nazis brought together a significant number of relics documenting Jewish religious and cultural life from the occupied countries. While the authors of the open letter admitted that during the 1950s

[197] Ibid., p. 59-60.

[198] "Documents. Czechoslovakia: Jewish legacy and Jewish Present. Introduced and annotated by Peter Brod", SJA, vol. 20, no. 1, 1990, p. 57-68.

a series of restorations of the Maisel, the Klaus, the Spanish and the High Synagogues had been undertaken by the government in an effort to render the installations suitable for the needs of the newly established State Jewish Museum, "the situation began to change in the late 1960s." The Pinkas Synagogue, which served as a memorial to the victims of the Nazi persecution, was closed in 1968 because of rising groundwater levels. Since then, and for twenty years, the building has remained closed to the public and endless restoration work has been carried out. The Spanish Synagogue was closed eight years ago adducing "a planned change of the electric voltage" and the Maisel Synagogue followed the same fate three years ago. "Compared with the 1960s," concluded the Charta 77 signatories, "a visitor to the State Jewish Museum will find half of its exhibition buildings closed." In addition, "hardly anything remains of what it used to be the State Jewish Museum's rich publishing activities" and its library "is generally open to the public but not all its holdings can be consulted." Last but not least, the Jewish cemeteries experienced a similar fate in postwar Czechoslovakia, "in Prague alone many Jewish cemeteries […] were arbitrarily destroyed, not to mention numerous cemeteries in the countryside. With the exception of Holesov and now also Mikulov, there is no discernible effort to save at least the most valuable synagogues and historical ghettoes […], many of which are Jewish monuments unique even in comparison with other European countries. […] Jewish monuments are subject to gradual and, as it were inconspicuous, devastation and demolition." And, after also criticizing the treatment of Jews and their fate in the school curricula pointing to numerous "mistakes" and silences present in school texts, Charta 77 closed the document by asking, "[…] does there not exist a hidden, official, and politically motivated antisemitism in our country, as indicated by the phenomena described above?"

Paradoxically, and at the same time, SJA reported about signs of openness and change of attitude of governments of the region towards foreign Jewish organizations. In 1987, SJA informed about the World Jewish Congress meeting held in Budapest in May that year.[199] "This was the first meeting of any major Jewish international organization in a Socialist country and great significance was therefore ascribed to it",

[199] SJA, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, p. 31-33.

informed Stephen J. Roth, the director of the Institute of Jewish Affairs and himself a Hungarian émigré, highlighting the fact that

> it is worth noting that this is a period when there are signals of an easing of the USSR's hostility towards Israel, and Poland, one of the countries which followed the Soviet lead and severed diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967 has already established a visa section in Israel; at the same time, Hungary has intensified commercial and cultural relations with Israel and the likelihood that some low-level diplomatic contact will be established in the near future as an interim step is being openly talked about.[200]

In a very different context and circumstances, and according to SJA, the Polish government's attitude became less hostile. The scholar Antony Polonsky, reporting on the international conference on the history and culture of Polish Jews, which took place in Jerusalem in January-February 1988, indicated that the conference "was also the scene of a political event of considerable significance."[201] A representative of the Polish government, Professor Józef Gierowski, who was also a member of the *Sejm*, read an official statement in the concluding banquet affirming that

> The Polish political leadership has accepted a decision about the attitudes in Poland, attitudes of recognition of the great contribution of the Polish Jews to our common heritage, cultural, scientific, social and economic.

And anticipated to the audience that "In the next weeks, there will be published an official declaration on the political errors committed in 1967 and 1968, with a condemnation of all forms of antisemitism."[202] Even if some days later, informed Polonsky, the spokesman for the Polish government denied categorically the existence of such a declaration condemning the antisemitic campaigns of 1967-1968, the issue was suggesting, according to the British scholar, that "the matter is clearly the subject of bitter dispute at the highest party levels in Poland."[203]

[200] Ibid., p. 31-32.
[201] SJA, vol. 18, no. 1, 1988, p. 49-54.
[202] Ibid., p. 51.
[203] Ibid., p. 52.

By exposing this array of new topics, Soviet Jewish Affairs unfolded a completely new picture of East-Central Jewry during the period between 1987 and 1990. Jews of the Soviet satellite states were not only brought back to the center but portrayed under a new light, one that pointed out the revivalist phenomenon, that is, people with Jewish origins reconnecting with their Jewish roots, looked into the dynamics of badly known communities and leadership, and informed about how the "Jewish Question" was being reconsidered by non-Jewish actors such as intellectuals and political dissidents.

The demise of the Soviet Union, and therefore the radical change in the status of the now ex-Soviet Jews —the mere object of SJA's attention—, undermined the existence of the journal. In 1992 *Soviet Jewish Affairs* was renamed to *East European Jewish Affairs, becoming* a "regular" peer-reviewed academic journal. In a "Letter to the readers," the editors conceded that "recent historical events have made inevitable a change in the title of our journal", but added that "the territorial scope of the journal under its new name remains, however, basically the same, since similar forces continue to operate in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the adjacent states of East-Central Europe."[204] Even if articles on contemporary Jewish life continued to be published in the pages of EEJA in the years that followed[205], the new journal started to dedicate more attention to nineteenth-and early-twentieth century developments because, as the editors explained, "[…] ideological and political influences of the pre-Communist period, the pre-World War I empires, the inter-war independent states of East-Central Europe, and the years of Nazism are rising to the surface."[206]

Although its main concerns were the Soviet Jews, *Soviet Jewish Affairs* proved to be the place where news and events affecting the Jews of the Eastern bloc were published on a changing regularity. Its pages served to reflect not only the events taking place in

[204] EEJA, vol. 22, no. 1, 1992, p. 3. Shortly afterwards, the editorial board would be renewed as well. Lukas Hirszowicz, a longstanding Editor-in-Chief of the journal, and Chimen Abramsky, Chairman of the editorial board, would both step down. Howard Spier, formerly the Joint Editor, would replace Hirszowicz and a new generation of Anglo-Jewish scholars would enter the board.

[205] In particular, the findings of a series of studies sponsored by the American Jewish Committee carried out in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia regarding the attitudes of the local population towards Jews in a context of transitional societies. See, Martin Butora and Zora Butorova, "'A wary approach': Attitudes towards Jews and Jewish issues in Slovakia", EEJA, vol. 23, Issue 1, 1993, p. 5-20; Helena Datner-Spiewak, "A first glance at the results of the survey 'poles, Jews and other ethnic groups'", EEJA, vol. 23, Issue 1, 1993, p. 33-48 and Andras Kovacs, "Jews and Hungarians: Group stereotypes among Hungarian university students", EEJA, vol. 23, Issue 2, 1993, p. 51-59.

[206] EEJA, vol. 22, no. 1, 1992, p. 3.

the region but also the changing mood under which Jews of the region had been scrutinized during all those years by specialized foreign observers. Most importantly, it became an invaluable source of information about the realities of this population with regard to foreign audiences, especially, in the United States, United Kingdom and Israel.[207] In the meantime, other scholars departing from a less activist ethos were already focusing on the region in order to provide further and deeper analysis.

4.2 The Jewish experience in the postwar Germanies

"By 1985 it will have been forty years since Jewish communities were rebuilt in Germany after the Holocaust. There is hardly a period of Jewish life in modern German history which we know less," stated the West German historian Monika Richarz, in a report about the situation of Jews in the two Germanies after forty years of the liberation. "Now the time has come," continued Richarz, "to acknowledge that there is indeed a small Jewish community living in Germany, a group which has its own complex and extremely diversified history."[208]

Germany (the Democratic and Federal Republics as well as the reunified *Bundesrepublik*) occupied, like no other country in the region, a special place in the rediscovery cycle of East-Central European Jews. Towards the end of the 1980s, a few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Jewish postwar experience in German soil became the object of an unprecedented scholarly attention. In a space of a few years, there appeared a surprising array of essays, articles, books, conferences, journals, and even documentary films centered in describing different facets of what until then constituted a "neglected" entity, post-Holocaust German Jewry. The making of this specialized sub-field of studies owed much to the initiative of young West

[207] Inquired about the circulation number of SJA, former editor during the 1980s Howard Spier, estimated it to be "several hundred." Email exchange, September 2013

[208] Monika Richarz, "Jews in Today's Germanies", Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute 30, 1985, p. 265. Previous comprehensive monographs on the reconstruction of Jewish life both in East and West Germany appeared during the 1960s and 1970s but remained unpublished and/or circulated within strict academic circles. See, Harry Maor, "Über den Wiederaufbau der Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland seit 1945", PhD dissertation, Universität zu Mainz, 1960; Jerry. E. Thompson, "Jews, Zionism, and Israel: The Story of Jews in the German Democratic Republic since 1945." PhD dissertation, Washington State University.

German Jewish scholars and intellectuals, who during the last years of the divided Germany, and continuing all along the *Wendezeit*, began to prompt the first interpretations and debates on Jewish life in Germany after 1945.[209] The picture was completed with the appearance of foreign scholars (mainly North American) who were also starting to approach this forty-five-year period of German Jewish history under a new light. By the early 1990s more and more books and articles began to be available in English, proving that after the reunification wider audiences were beginning to take a closer look at the German Jewish phenomenon.

Dealing with postwar German-Jewish history meant to delve with a fairly wide list of topics; the fate of the Jewish Displaced Persons stationed in Germany after the war and their role in reestablishing Jewish life in the immediate postwar years, the restoration of Jewish communities in the Federal Republic, Jewish life in the Democratic Republic, the status and identity of Jews in the two Germanies, new German Jewish literature, and the reemergence of Jewish life in a reunified Germany, just to name the most important ones.[210]

4.2.1 Acknowledging Jewish life in postwar Germany

In an essay published in 1986 Dan Diner, a Münich-born historian, who was, at the time, an emergent Jewish public voice, characterized the Jewish-German relationship after 1945 as one of a "negative symbiosis." Drawing on Gershom Scholem's critique of the often too idealized "German-Jewish symbiosis" of the pre-Nazi period, Diner claimed that after the Holocaust there emerged a renewed "symbiosis" between German and Jews but rather a negative one.

[209] It was, also, a *generational* perspective. Most of the German-speaking intellectuals that animated those first debates were all born in the 1940s: Micha Brumlik (born in Davos in 1944), Y. Michal Bodemann (Allgäu, 1944), Frank Stern (West Prussia, today Russia, 1944), Dan Diner (Munich, 1946), Cilly Kugelmann (Frankfurt am Main, 1947), Gertrud Koch (Köln, 1949). The only exception is Monika Richarz, born in 1937.

[210] See the 9-page-long bibliographical essay by Michael Brenner included in his book *After the Holocaust. Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, Princeton University Press, 1997. See also Eva-Maria Thimme, "Bibliographie zur Nachkriegsgeschichte der Juden in Deutschland", in Andreas Nachama [Hrsg.], *Aufbau nach dem Untergang: Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte nach 1945. In Memoriam Heinz Galinski*, Argon, 1992.

> Since Auschwitz—what a sad twist—one can indeed speak about a 'German-Jewish symbiosis.' Of course, it is a negative one: for both Germans as well as for Jews, the result of a mass annihilation has become the starting point for their self-understanding. It is a kind of contradictory mutuality, whether they want it or not, for Germans as well as Jews have been linked to one another anew through this event. Such a negative symbiosis, constituted by the Nazis, will stamp the relationship of each group to itself, and above, all, each group to another for generations to come[211]

Diners' vision problematized the German-Jewish relationship by denouncing "memory screens" in the German collective treatment of the Holocaust and by placing the Jews in the role of "guardians of memory." Yet, the essay also came to acknowledge —in its own way and for the first time— the existence of stable and reconstituted postwar Jewish presence on German soil. In effect, one of the most important goals sought by a first group of scholarly works was to provide an historical overview of the reconstruction of Jewish life in Germany since 1945. How did Jewish life in Germany emerge from the ashes? Who were today's German Jews?

East and West Germany, it was stressed, presented diverging realities concerning their Jewish communities. The Federal Republic, where more than 30,000 Jews lived dispersed over 65 communities[212], featured a very peculiar demographic structure. Postwar Jewish life had been possible thanks to different instances of Jewish immigration and re-immigration which included survivors who spent the war underground or who avoided deportation because they had 'Aryan' spouses; former Displaced Persons of Eastern European origin who remade their lives in Germany; German Jewish returnees from the exile (including, after 1948, those who came back from short *aliyah* experiences); refugees from the Soviet Bloc countries, and other immigrants from South America and Persia.[213] Given its diversity, it was clear that

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[211] Dan Diner, "Negative Symbiose. Deutsche und Jude nach Auschwitz", *Babylon. Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart*, No. 1, 1986, p. 9. Translation taken from Jack Zipes, "The Negative German-Jewish Symbiosis", in Dagmar C. G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weimberger (eds.), *Insiders and Outsiders. Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, Wayne State University Press, 1994, p. 144.

[212] Lynn Rapaport, "The Cultural and Material Reconstruction of Jewish Communities in the Federal Republic of Germany", Jewish Social Studies, 49 (1987), p. 137-144. Although only 33 of them reported having Rosh Hashanah services in 1989. See Y. Michal Bodemann, "'How can one stand to live there as a Jew…': Paradoxes of Jewish Existence in Germany", in Y. Michal Bodemann (ed.), *Jews, Germans, Memory. Reconstructions of Jewish Life in Germany*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1996, p. 21.

[213] Richardz, op. cit. and Rapaport, op. cit.

contemporary German Jewry bore little resemblance with prewar Jewish life; the mere notion of "German" Jewry came into question. "One may state," observed the philosopher Micha Brumlik in 1990, "that the Jewish community residing today in the Federal Republic of Germany […] represents a community of Jews *in* Germany and not a community of *German Jews*."[214]

Continuity with prewar German-Jewry was perhaps better reflected in the socio-cultural background of the Jewish population of the German Democratic Republic, which was composed mainly of direct descendants of pre-war German Jews. A small and ageing population of approximately 400 hundred souls was officially registered in the *Gemeinde*. These were survivors who consciously chose to stay in the Soviet zone after the division of Berlin and the erection of the Wall in 1961. In addition to this, there were GDR citizens of Jewish origins, returnees from the exile who settled in the GDR in order to help with "building socialism," among them significant personalities of the Weimar Republic's leftist intellectual circles who staunchly refused to consider themselves Jews and became part of the intellectual and bureaucratic elite of the GDR.[215] "Jewish life in the GDR remained a tense cohabitation of two groups –those with religious and those with political priorities. These groups maintained differing loyalties and experiences of history, and there was little love or trust among them."[216]

In parallel with the socio-demographic reconstructions of postwar German Jewry, attempts at establishing a periodization of Jewish life in both Germanies over that period were offered. Looking at the self-perception of the Jewish leadership of the Federal Republic and especially at the relationship that they established with the German authorities along the years, Y. Michal Bodemann proposed to divide the history of Jews in West Germany into four different phases.[217] First, the "Sherit Hapletah" period, when temporary governing structures set up by the Jewish Displaced

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[214] Micha Brumlik, "The Situation of the Jews in Today's Germany", in Y. Michal Bodemann (ed.), *Jews, Germans…*, op. cit., p. 4.

[215] For example, novelists Arnold Zweig, Anna Seghers and Stefan Heym; philosopher Ernst Bloch; Brecht composer Hanns Eisler; and literary historians and critics Hans Meyer and Alfred Kantorowicz, among others. See, Brumlik, Ibid., p. 10 and Richarz, op. cit., p. 267-268.

[216] Robin Ostow, "Imperialist Agents, Anti-Fascist Monuments, Eastern Refugees, Property Claims: Jews as Incorporations of East German Social Trauma, 1945-94", in Y. Michal Bodemann (ed.), *Jews, Germans…,* op. cit., p. 232.

[217] Y. Michal Bodemann, "Staat und Etnizität: Der Aufbau der Jüdischen Gemeinden im Kalten Krieg", in Micha Brumlik, et. al. (eds.), *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945*, Frankfurt, 1988. Later republished in English as "The State in the Construction of Ethnicity, and Ideological Labour: The Case of German Jewry", Critical Sociology, vol. 17, Issue 3, 1991, p. 35-46. and Y. Michal Bodemann, " 'How can one stand to live there as a Jew…': Paradoxes of Jewish Existence in Germany", in Y. Michal Bodemann (ed.), op. cit., p. 19-46.

Persons were in charge of representing their own interests, needs and ideological orientations upon the occupying powers and the German authorities. A second period was opened when the "charismatic leaders" and, along with them, most of the DPs started to abandon Germany for Israel or the US. In this interregnum years German-Jews, the so-called *Jeckes*, (both those who survived the war in Germany and those who were coming back from exile), lived side by side, and in antagonism, with Eastern Jews, leading to two radically different ways of understanding the relationship vis-à-vis the Germans (reconciliatory vs. rejection respectively). A third period started when a coalition drawn from "a mixed German and Eastern Jewish base" took over the leadership, a coalition that was Zionist-oriented, opposed to the German assimilationism, but who nonetheless "has maintained, often, but not always, in opportunistic fashion, cordial ties to the German political elite and has supported, *grosso modo*, the political aims of West German governments."[218] This period, which the author described as a "bureaucratic consolidation" going from 1950 to 1969, coincided with the gradual withdrawal of the American agencies (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the educational organization ORT, etc.), the establishment of the main Jewish representative organizations, the *Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland* and the *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle* (welfare agency), and with the initiation of the negotiations for material reparations with the West German government. "Indeed, in these early years, the organized representation of Jewry came closest to being a pure interest group of people seeking compensation for damages sustained, a group […] however, which had to continuously justify its presence in Germany vis-à-vis especially Israel and the North American Jewish organizations."[219] Bodemann also stressed the role that the young West German state had in shaping a "suitable" Jewish leadership:

> By bestowing favors on the more opportunistic and compliant leadership, providing them with funding for Gemeinde (Community) projects, giving them public recognition, granting them interviews, and inviting them as community leaders on important international trips, a largely subservient leadership was being created or sustained […][220]

[218] Ibid., p. 29-30.
[219] Ibid., p. 30-31.
[220] Ibid., p. 33.

The “bureaucratic consolidation” gave place, according to the author, to a last period of “atrophied representationism,” that is, a deflation of Jewish life under leaders (like Werner Nachmann) who held onto their positions for “an extraordinary length of time” and maintained the closest relationship with the West German conservative political elite.[221]

The content and nature of Jewish life in East Germany were completely different than in the Federal Republic. “[…] For most of the four decades of the German Democratic Republic, Jewish life barely existed, even for the Jews themselves,” affirmed Robin Ostow, a Canadian anthropologist who had conducted research among Berlin Jews since 1988.[222] Jews lived intensely *qua* Jews, continued the author, only in two decisive periods in the history of the GDR: during the anti-Jewish purges of 1952-1953 and during the immediate years that preceded the collapse of the Socialist experiment.

The first period took the shape of a drama. In 1952, echoing the anti-Zionist campaigns of Czechoslovakia and the Doctor’s Plot in the USSR, the GDR authorities launched a local version of the anti-Jewish purges. As a consequence, many Jews holding positions of power in the state and in the party were accused of being “Zionist agents” and removed from their posts, Jewish leaders were imprisoned and interrogated, and Jewish life in general fell under strict supervision of the authorities. “Over the winter, the homes of almost all Jews were raided, identity cards were seized, and victims were ordered to stay close home. […] The Berlin Jewish community split in two, and all Jewish institutions in the GDR, except the cemeteries, were closed down.”[223] After Stalin’s death, the anti-Jewish campaign receded, and the communities started to receive large sums of money to repair the synagogues. By that time, 550 Jews had fled to the West, including the leaders of all its Jewish communities. In their place new functionaries, responding to the communist authorities, were installed. After the period of the purges the Jewish communities were integrated into the German Democratic Republic’s life. “This integration was a rather peculiar one from a postwar western perspective. It was carried from above and with iron hand. Jews in the GDR were defined as a group that (1) observed certain religious rituals, and (2) was persecuted

[221] After Werner Nachmann’s death, who was the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany from 1969 to 1988, it was discovered that from 1981 to 1987 he had defrauded about 33 million DM from the German government fund intended for victims of the Nazis.

[222] Robin Ostow, “Imperialist Agents…”, op. cit., p. 227-241.

[223] Ibid., p. 231.

by the 'Fascists'. […] Minimal religious services were organized for an overaged and dwindling membership."[224]

During the 1970s, the Honecker regime pursued a dual policy regarding Jews. On one hand the eight existing communities were supported by the government while on the other, it intensified the anti-Israel propaganda in order to curry favor from the Arab states.

The "integration" of Jews in the GDR, Ostow pointed out, continued until the mid-1980s. But then, the second incisive period began. In a time when "many non-Jewish GDR citizens were beginning to 'discover' and develop 'alternate' –Christian, homosexual, Sorb, or punk- identities," [225] so the Jews began to rediscover their Jewish roots and to move closer to the religious institutions or founded independent Jewish groups.[226] At the same time, the regime, facing economic hardships and willing to re-establish commercial ties with the West, started to toy with the idea of resuming contact with international Jewish organizations, which were seen as mediators to get access to Washington. "So, as the GDR went bankrupt, its Jewish communities […] were awarded large sums of money to produce Jewish culture."[227] This period culminated when virtually the entire population of the GDR was mobilized by the Honecker government to observe the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass). East German Jewish organizations were disbanded in January 1991 and its members absorbed into the West German community; for East German Jews "the rupture with their past existence is, in many cases, almost total."[228]

Scholars also set out to look for concrete life-experiences of German Jews in an effort to describe how "was it to live as a Jew in Germany." Thus, resorting to oral histories, a series of works attempted an exploration of the itineraries of different generations of

[224] Ibid., p. 232.
[225] Ibid., p. 233.
[226] *Wir für uns*, was a group founded in 1985 by Irene Runge in East Berlin. It attracted young secular GDR individuals of Jewish origin, most of them children of survivors or returnees who were raised with communist convictions.
[227] Ibid., p. 234.
[228] Ibid., p. 238.

Jews from East and West Germany, focusing on the changing perceptions on their Jewish (and socialist) identities.[229]

Again, experiences in both Germanies differed. In the Federal Republic, testimonies dealt with the feeling of "living with a packed suitcase," referring to the sentiment of an imminent emigration, and stressed the guilt and the alienation of living in a country where the neighbors could have been the perpetrators only a few years earlier.[230] Younger individuals evoked their experiences about growing up as children of survivors (sometimes sharing the same mistrust against their neighbors that their parents had[231]), expressed their preoccupation with neo-Nazism and, even if they showed more confidence with both their Jewish and German identities, the dilemma could not be entirely solved.[232]

In the GDR, interviews portrayed the unique life experiences of a generation of German Jews that, engaged with the Left and with anti-fascist struggles, chose to settle in the GDR in order to build socialism. At the same time, they showed the complex and mostly uneasy relationship that these people had both with Judaism and Socialism. But also the testimonies served as historical documents that showed how, in the GDR of the late 1980s, the younger and middle-aged cohorts —and even also the old "communist" generation— were beginning to develop a renovated Jewish awareness by

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[229] See Peter Sichrovsky, *Strangers in their own Land: Young Jews in Germany and Austria Today*, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1986 originally published in German as *Wir wissen nicht was morgen wird, wir wissen wohl was gestern war*, Kiepenheuer & Witsch ,Köln, 1985; Robin Ostow, *Jews in Contemporary East Germany. The Children of Moses in the Land of Marx*, Macmillan Press, 1989; Vincent von Wroblewsky (hrsg.), *Zwischen Thora und Trabant: Juden in der DDR*, Aufbau-Taschenbuch-Verlag, Berlin, 1993; Jeffrey M. Peck and John Borneman, *Sojourners: The Return of German Jews and the Question of Identity*, University of Nebraska Press, 1995. See also my interview with Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer, September 12, 2023. Sandra grew up in the former German Democratic Republic. Her father's side of the family were Holocaust survivors. Today the executive coordinator of the Potsdam-based rabbinical school Zacharias Frankel College, she refers to the conflicts and contradictions of being Jewish in Germany.

[230] "I try to forget that those who belong to the German people killed my family. […] the feeling that I have to live among murderers rarely leaves me," testimony of Albert Klein in Peck and Borneman, op. cit., p. 71-72.

[231] "When I was fourteen or fifteen, I considered all older Germans a diffuse, undifferentiated mass of hypocrites, liars, and unpunished murderers. […] in the papers I occasionally would see pictures of some concentration camp guards or SS types. They looked like anyone else, like my neighbor or the bus driver," testimony of Fritz in Peter Sichrovsky, *Strangers in their own Land…*, op. cit., p. 13.

[232] "But the decision whether to be a Jew or German is one that all of us living in Germany have to make. I know of no German Jews in whom the two identities blend. Even I, who have so much sympathy for this new Germany, have no clear-cut answer to this question," testimony of Tuvi in Peter Sichrovsky, *Strangers in their own Land…*, op. cit., p. 54.

reconsidering their involvement in the community.[233] The reunification accelerated this process, and the interviews showed how East German Jews reformulated their identities in the *Wendezeit*[234] (sometimes stressing their newly reconsidered Jewishness[235]) and expressed a sense of loss for the disappearance of their "homeland" considered an "anti-fascist home."[236]

Since the mid-1980s, postwar German Jews began to enjoy an unprecedented scholarly attention. The topics and arguments that this historiography advanced were going to be picked up after 1989 to describe the rest of Central and Eastern European Jewry, such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania. But, instead of being limited to a scholarly field, the post-1989 literature was part of a wider interest that the demise of Communism aroused.

4.3 From "survival" to "revival": The post-1989 literature

Between remembrance and rediscovery, moving between the distant past and an evolving present, the post-1989 literature approached Eastern Europe and its remaining Jews from a myriad of different but intermingled angles. The demise of Communism strengthened the interest in a population that, as it has been shown, had been gradually but relentlessly rediscovered since the mid-1980s. But because 1989 was perceived to be the end of an era, it was now possible for analysts to examine with other eyes the past forty-five-year period and to advance a more comprehensive account of the Jewish experience under Communist rule. Jewish organizations were

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[233] Like Susanne Rödel, an important cadre of a publishing house in the GDR, stated: "My daughter is now a member of the Jewish Community, and I have now decided to join myself. This is now more important for me than before," in Peck and Borneman, op. cit., p. 154.

[234] "Wende" comes from the German word "wenden" (to turn) and is translated into English as "turning point" or "time of change". The term is used to describe the period of political change that took place with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany.

[235] After living as a committed communist in East Berlin since 1954, Ruth Benario, born in Berlin in 1910 and exiled to the USSR and China during the war, expressed after the reunification: "I don't feel German, I feel Jewish. I am not a German. I don't have anything in common with the whole German people. Granted, I was born here. I lived here for a long time –twenty-two years. I also came back very consciously, but not to my homeland." Peck and Borneman, op. cit., p. 57.

[236] "Vieles [in der DDR] war gut, was das geschaffen wurde und woran die Menschen, die es geschaffen hatten, auch wirklich glaubten", testimony of Sophie Marum, in Vincent von Wroblewsky, *Zwischen Thora…*, op. cit., p. 36. See also Robin Ostow, "From the Cold War through the Wende: History, Belonging, and the Self in East German Jewry," *The Oral History Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, Winter 1993, p. 59-72.

among the first in issuing reports seeking to give meaning to the whole Jewish experience under Communism, dividing it into different periods and looking for commonalities and differences among the countries. Yet, Jewish Eastern Europe aroused a curiosity and a fascination that well exceeded the interest of the restricted circle of specialized observers and activists of the previous decades. Therefore, other narratives, aimed at wider audiences and often produced by professional journalists, presented more captivating descriptions of Jewish life during those years. These narratives not only reconstituted the history of the local Jewish communities, scrutinizing the role of Jewish leadership and other key actors of those years, but also resorted to life-histories in order to shed light on the vicissitudes of "real" people of Jewish origins living behind the Iron Curtain. By doing so, they aimed at bringing the Eastern European Jewish experience closer to the American Jewish sensitivities.

In parallel with these developments, a vast remembrance phenomenon gained momentum among Western Jews. The eruption of "memorial tourism," along with the edition of "Jewish heritage" travel guides, commemorative books and photographic essays evidenced a collective desire to re-appropriate the prewar Jewish experience in Eastern Europe. Yet, some of these memorial initiatives discovered that Jewish life continued in Eastern Europe and therefore their narratives sought to integrate that longing for a lost civilization with this new revelation.

Finally, a last trend began to be noticeable by the mid-1990s, when the consolidation of the European Union and the perspective of a continental integration, led some intellectuals to speak, not without optimism, about new "Jewish identities" present in a "new Europe." All in all, this literature was called to shape much of the public discourse on East-Central European Jews in the years to come.

4.3.1 Jewish East-Central Europe anno zero

Once the Soviet system was dismantled, how can one characterize Jewish life between 1945 and 1990? What was the impact of the fall of Communism on Jews and the Jewish communities? Undoubtedly, the advent of a new era in the Central and Eastern European nations provided Jewish observers, those who had been closely monitoring the region during previous years, with a renovated perspective. Not surprisingly, Western Jewish organizations were among the first in reacting and issuing reports destined to provide information on the new developments unraveling in the region. The

London-based *Institute of Jewish Affairs*, which was also behind *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, published in 1990 a research report called "Central and East European Jewry: the Impact of Liberation and Revolution,"[237] where a group of specialized observers briefed on the Jewish situation in each country affected such changes taking place. The same year, the World Jewish Congress' sponsored annual publication *Survey of Jewish Affairs* included "A Year of Truth in Eastern Europe: Liberalization and the Jewish Communities."[238] Finally, the *American Jewish Year Book*, the annual publication of the American Jewish Committee, which for decades had been informing mostly about political and diplomatic developments concerning the Soviet system, began to report extensively on the new political atmosphere that the 1989-1990 years brought to the region. The report's author was the Sovietologist Zvi Gitelman. All of these reports examined Jewish communal life in each country constituting the former Eastern bloc, revisited events, developments and people related with the Communist past as well as informed about the new post-1989 atmosphere. "The patterns of development in the seven countries […]," noted Antony Lerman, "are remarkably similar albeit varying in intensity: a revival of Jewish cultural life; people who had denied their Jewish origins now identifying themselves as Jews; young people discovering their Jewish identity; the ousting of Jewish communal leaders who had been closely identified with the communist authorities; an increasing desire to participate in European and international Jewish activities."[239] Indeed, reports generally outlined a similar sequence of events concerning Jewish communal life during the years of Communism, pointing to three distinct moments. During the first period, in the early years following the Communist takeovers, authorities suppressed all Zionist and other cultural and educational organizations whilst unifying the remaining activities, usually religious-oriented, in a central body whose leadership was under tight control of the state apparatus. Judaism was defined by the state as a religion and governments usually provided financial help for keeping the most basic activities —the functioning of synagogues, the maintenance of cemeteries, and the provision of kosher meat—, which were carried out with considerable autonomy. In practice, only a reduced and ageing cohort of survivors remained observant. This is the period most closely

[237] Antony Lerman (ed.), "Central and East European Jewry: the Impact of Liberalization and Revolution", Research Report, Institute of Jewish Affairs, Nos. 2 & 3, 1990.
[238] Maria Balinska, "A year of Truth in Eastern Europe: Liberalization and the Jewish Communities", in William Frankel (ed.), *Survey of Jewish Affairs*, London, 1990.
[239] Ibid, p. 1.

identified with state-sponsored antisemitism and anti-Zionism. It was during the late Stalinist years when officially sanctioned anti-Zionist and antisemitic purges and "show trials" were conducted in Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary and Poland, featuring different levels of brutality and virulence.[240] In any case, antisemitism as a political instrument never quite disappeared from the culture of people's democracies, as it was notably the case in Poland during the years 1968-1969.

A second period, identified as a time of "political relaxation," witnessed the easing of some restricting policies towards the development of Jewish life by the communist authorities. This relaxation was by no means a uniform phenomenon across the countries. In some cases it was a process that had started in previous decades while, in some others, it had only started a few years prior to the end of the Soviet regime and was due in large part to a governmental strategy to curry the favor of the US with regards to trade benefits.[241] "In Hungary and Poland, the unraveling of the totalitarian state proceeded gradually and in tandem with more autonomy for the Jewish communities. In East Germany and Czechoslovakia dissent was kept on a painfully tight leash and the Jewish community gained its autonomy as suddenly as the Communist regimes in place were toppled."[242] In Hungary it was pointed out that the above mentioned "political relaxation" took place much before the fall of the regime, "it was a gradual process, beginning under Janos Kadar in the mid-60s, and growing in strength as the years went by."[243] It comprised, in the 1970s and the 1980s, increasing liberties to discuss about the Holocaust and the "Jewish Question" in general as well as the permission to progressively establish contacts with international Jewish organizations such as the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the World Jewish Congress, both based in the US. The American Joint Distribution Committee was allowed to return to fund almost in its entirety welfare needs and religious activities, as this represented an invaluable source of American dollars coming in. By the late 1980s, the Jewish Agency and the World Jewish Congress had opened offices in Budapest.[244] Likewise, for the estimated 6,000 to 8,000 Jews of Poland, "the year

[240] Balinska, Op. cit., p. 176-184.
[241] Ibid., p. 170.
[242] Ibid., p. 172.
[243] Lerman (ed.), Op. cit., p. 2.
[244] Balinska, Op. cit., p. 170.

[1989] was not so much a turning-point as a continuation of the existing processes of Jewish-Polish dialogue and of official courting of world Jewish opinion."[245] Since the early 1980s, the Polish government had been showing a conciliatory attitude towards Jews essentially by allowing the activities of a number of international Jewish organizations. In 1981, the JDC, after being expelled twice, in 1950 and in 1968, was given authorization to provide financial assistance to the community. In addition, the Lauder Foundation, an American Jewish philanthropic body established by the heir of cosmetic empire Estée Lauder, began to fund educational activities as well as initiatives to preserve Poland's rich Jewish patrimony. The Nissenbaum Foundation was also involved in preservationist initiatives.[246] According to the reports, these governmental initiatives ran in parallel with another phenomenon taking place among the emerging civic opposition in Poland led by Solidarity and Liberal Catholic intellectuals, a positive reappraisal of the Polish-Jewish past which included an increasing interest in Jewish issues.

> The founding of Solidarity in 1980, and the spirit of pluralism and openness this engendered, also fostered debate on hitherto taboo subjects, including the history of Poland's Jews. Interest in Poland's Jewish heritage continued to grow during the 1980s, expressing itself, for example, in Jewish culture weeks organized by the Catholic Intelligentsia, university seminars and conferences, films, books, non-Jewish participation in the effort to preserve Jewish monuments and radio broadcasts on Jewish holidays[247]

Governments also saw in the anniversary dates of events related to the Holocaust an excellent opportunity to stage public commemorations that could demonstrate to the West their sensitive approach with regards to Jewish issues. Thus, in Hungary the anniversary of the beginning of the deportations was commemorated for the first time in 1984 (marking the 40th anniversary); in Poland, Jaruzelski's regime organized solemn commemorations of the 40th and 45th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1983 and 1988 respectively, to which Jewish personalities from all over the

[245] Lerman (ed.), Op. cit., p. 15.

[246] Ibid., p. 16.

[247] Ibid., p. 17. "The interest in things Jewish is very much a part of the larger struggle for a democratic Poland," stated the Polish sociologist living in Canada Iwona Irwin-Zarecka in a study published in 1989 that seemed to confirm this trend. See Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory. The Jew in Contemporary Poland*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1989, p. 82.

world were invited[248]; in the GDR, the 50th anniversary of the *Kristallnacht* supposed a mobilization of resources and population. In this context, Israel remained the most delicate issue, since as a consequence of the Six Day War, all the governments of the Soviet bloc, except Romania, had cut off diplomatic relationships with the Jewish State in 1967 and adopted an aggressive anti-Zionist rhetoric, which mainly consisted in denouncing the "imperialistic character" of the Jewish State (when they did not resort to anti-Jewish purges and persecutions). Any form of contact with Israel or expression of solidarity by local Jews were informally but effectively forbidden. However, a change of attitude had been noticeable since the 1980s. Though full diplomatic ties with Israel have not been reestablished, contacts between authorities started to take place, commercial, scientific and cultural exchanges and agreements with Israeli delegations were organized and entry for Israeli tourists were simplified allowing them to visit the land of their ancestors. In addition, restrictions to travel to Israel were increasingly lifted. This was the case of Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and the GDR.

Neither Bulgarian, Yugoslavian nor Romanian Jews experienced such a "relaxation" simply because their regimes, for different reasons, allowed Jews to enjoy a higher degree of autonomy. In the case of Bulgaria, the Communist rule "has never meant [for the Jews] the same repression and officially inspired antisemitism that have been the rule in other Eastern Bloc countries." After the Second World War, Bulgarian Jews were allowed to make *aliyah* (out of 50,000, 90% went to Israel) and, for those who stayed, they were still allowed to maintain contact with their relatives in Israel. Furthermore, the members of the community claimed no antisemitism from the government and many communist figures of Jewish origin did not have to hide their religious background.[249] Neither was Tito's Yugoslavia reputed for its antisemitic policies. Jewish communal life, mostly secular, enjoyed a certain degree of freedom and could continue almost without perturbation since the end of the Second World War.[250] But Ceauşescu's Romania stood as the biggest exception in the region. "Romania was the one Soviet bloc country not to have broken off relations with Israel in 1967 and Romania's Jews enjoyed a degree of autonomy unknown in other Communist countries,"[251] stated the Institute of Jewish Affairs' report. The Romanian

[248] Ibid., p. 15.
[249] Ibid., p. 24.
[250] Ibid, p. 20-23.
[251] Ibid., p. 7.

community had been dominated by the charismatic person of Rabbi Moses Rosen, who became Chief Rabbi in 1946. Through allegiance with the Ceauşescu's regime, Rabbi Rosen served as the intermediary between Romanian supreme leader and the Jewish community. He managed to obtain, during his forty-three-year-long term, a series of concessions for the Jews and the Jewish community, including the permission to emigrate to Israel, whose number amounted to 300,000 over forty years.[252] "By the same token, Rosen was instrumental in persuading the world that the reports of human rights violations in Romania were exaggerated and that Ceauşescu should be cultivated as the one Soviet bloc country leader to have a foreign policy independent of the Kremlin."[253] As a consequence, by 1989 there were in Romania forty-one active synagogues, ten kosher canteens, Hebrew lessons, Jewish choirs, and Jewish old-age homes. Reports stated that it was the only community in the region, which "was worried" about the fall of the regime and what it could mean with regards to its privileges.[254]

Finally, a third period began to unfold after 1989-1990. Even if the majority of the Jews living in the Soviet satellite states managed to find, along the years, a more or less comfortable *modus vivendi* within the system, the end of the communist rule implied, as with the rest of the society, a genuine revolution, bringing about a significant number of transformations. Jewish communal life was completely altered. Jewish leaders, perceived to be too tainted with collaboration, fell in disgrace and were overthrown — in some cases, like in Czechoslovakia, almost immediately[255]; in some other cases, like in Hungary or Bulgaria, at a slower pace. This brought an obvious renovation of Jewish communal life. On the one hand, official communities reorganized themselves ("The once official organizations listened to their members rather than to their political masters"[256]), proposing new programs and imbuing themselves of a new breath and, on the other hand, there emerged new, mostly secular or Zionist-oriented organizations (sometimes outside the official community). Both instances began to attract

[252] Balinska, op. cit., p. 175. The AJYB report also suggested, quoting the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*, that Nicolae Ceauşescu had demanded from Israel between $ 5,000 and $ 7,000 for every Romanian Jew allowed to emigrate. Ibid., p. 351-352. Journalist Tad Szulc spoke about $ 800 and $ 1,200. See Tad Szulc, *The Secret Alliance. The Extraordinary Story of the Rescue of the Jews Since World War II*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 1991, p. 277-279.

[253] Ibid, p. 175.

[254] Lerman (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

[255] Ibid., p. 11.

[256] Balinska, op. cit., p. 169.

"unregistered" Jews who had been previously marginalized or who were simply "coming out of the closet." In Hungary, with an estimated population of 80,000 to 100,000 Jews, a group of young intellectuals set up in 1988 a Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association that only a few years later counted with sixteen operational groups that went from Israeli folk dances, literary and art circles, sports clubs, Hebrew classes, to Holocaust remembrance groups. It was remarked that their membership was composed of people "mostly of mixed Jewish and Gentile ancestry" which showed an attempt "to broaden the concept of Jewishness to an ethnic one, thereby bringing in nonreligious Hungarian Jews to the community."[257] The Jewish school system was also reviving.[258] In Czechoslovakia, the newly appointed president, Dr. Desider Galsky, began a wide program on Jewish cultural education aiming at attracting wider audiences.[259] In Poland, within the Social and Cultural Association of Jews (TSKZ), "a number of young people (whose ages range from fifteen to forty) set up, in 1989, their own 'youth groups'."[260] It was also informed that in May 1990, Pinchas Menachem Yoskovich, a 65-year-old survivor of the Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz residing in Israel, took up a post in the only synagogue in Warsaw, becoming "the first rabbi to serve in Poland since the late 1950s."[261]

According to the information reported, each country presented signs of a Jewish "revivalism," especially amongst the young generation, but the phenomenon included also disillusioned communists or simply those in process of dis-assimilation. They all turned to their awakened (or discovered) Jewish identity and, as an observer-activist put it, "absorbed the positive impact of the contemporary Jewish reality."[262]

The new era implied a period of bonanza for foreign Jewish organizations, which were now able to deploy a greater number of resources to assist the communities. The World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Agency, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the American Jewish Committee, plus a number of private foundations such as the Lauder Foundation had all opened offices in the most important capitals of the region, set up initiatives in the educational and cultural field, sent young people to Israel, and so on. Last but not least, the new governments reestablished, one by

[257] American Jewish Year Book, 1991, p. 350.
[258] Lerman (ed.), op. cit., p. 3-5.
[259] Ibid., p. 11-12.
[260] Ibid., p. 16.
[261] AJYB, 1991, p. 348.
[262] Lerman (ed.), op. cit., p. 3.

one, diplomatic relations with Israel, and this even became a top priority as the region's foreign affairs policies had begun to be overhauled. President Vaclav Havel, declared in his New Year's Speech in 1990 that he "would be happy if before the [first free] elections we succeed in establishing diplomatic relations with Israel."[263] Or, like Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyula Horn said, "The reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Israel... means that Hungary is getting rid of its past mistakes and is proof of its new way of thinking."[264]

The only worrisome sign was the possibility that the newfound freedom would bring about a resurgence of antisemitism. Most Jews looked upon the dramatic changes happening before their very eyes "with a mixture of fear and hope,"

> Fear was engendered by the possibility that anti-Semitism, traditional in some areas and espoused by some pre-World War II parties and movements, would reemerge as political and social restraints were removed and tensions heightened in societies seeking to redefine themselves and solve serious economic and social problems. Moreover, since Jews were associated in the minds of many East Europeans with the hated Communist regimes, it was feared that "revenge" would be taken on Jews for "having brought godless Communism to us[265]

These reports, written by well-informed observers and sponsored by Jewish agencies, offered first accounts and interpretations of post-war Jewish experience behind the Iron Curtain. They dealt with realities that were still largely unknown in the conjuncture of 1989-1990. This seems to be one of the reasons why they resorted to periodization and chose to underline the main trends and figures related to the recent past. Meanwhile, other narratives began to emerge, taking these first reports as a basis while at the same time recasting the story from a perspective that could be within the reach of an audience neither involved in Jewish activism nor familiar with the region's Jewish past.

[263] Ibid., p. 13
[264] AJYB, 1991, p. 349.
[265] Ibid., p. 347.

4.3.2 "Who were these Jews?" Restoring Jewish communal history during the communist years

If the reports described above were destined to inform the most implicated segments of the Jewish world, other narratives, more compelling and aiming at larger audiences, emerged in the transitional years. They were produced by professional journalists who combined their first-hand impressions on the ground, with concrete flesh-into-bones life histories and good doses of historical divulgation. They exposed the internal life of the Jewish communities under Communism, scrutinized the role of Jewish leadership and identified schisms and generational gaps among Jews from each country. Moreover, authors sought to portray the life of "real" people, Jews from all walks of life whose existence, until only recently, represented a question mark for Western Jews.
"I realized that with all the attention focused on the Soviet Jewry," stated Charles Hofmann in his 1992 book *Grey Dawn. The Jews of Eastern Europe in the Post-Communist era*, "some fascinating Jewish communities in the satellite countries, each with its own character and history, each now groping its way towards freedom, were being overlooked."[266] Hoffman, an American-Israeli journalist working for the *Jerusalem Post*, had been extensively traveling and covering Jewish-related events in East-Central Europe for over a period of a year and a half between 1989 and 1990. His book, which was sponsored by the World Jewish Congress, the Joint and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, traced, through first-hand accounts, interviews, and secondary sources, the Jewish communal histories of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, East Germany, Bulgaria and Poland during the Communist years and beyond, while venturing, at the same time, into the historical backgrounds of each of the Jewries treated in the book. *Grey Dawn* constituted a clear attempt to reach out to the American audience and educate them about such topics.

> For most western Jews, the notion of 'East European Jewry' no doubt conjures up nostalgic images of the intense but insular Jewish life of the *shtetl*, the small Jewish town whose life has been romanticized and sanitized in *Yentl* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. But while Teyve the Dairyman, the hero of *Fiddler*, was still trudging through the muddy, rutted lanes of his backward

[266] Charles Hoffman, *Grey Dawn. The Jews of Eastern Europe in the Post-Communist Era*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1992, p. ix.

> village a hundred years ago, his Jewish contemporaries in the great cities of Budapest, Prague, and Berlin were part of a sophisticated, industrialized, urban way of life[267]

Not only these emerging Jews were the heirs of the "sophisticated, industrialized and urban way of life" of their predecessors, pointed out Hoffman, but they also happened to be highly implicated, at least in the immediate post-war years, in the establishment of the new socialist order, whether as members of the party, government's bureaucrats or agents of the secret police. The portrait that the author painted was therefore relatively complex and nuanced, where each of the Jewries of Central and Eastern Europe, their communal trajectories and some of the key individuals were exposed against different layers of historical significance. For example, regarding Czechoslovakia, the author reminded that the Jews who had survived the Holocaust constituted the remnants of a rich, thousand-year-old Jewish history in Czech lands. Hoffman described the *encadrement* of the Jewish institutions after the Communist takeover of 1948 and how the legacy of the so-called Slansky trials of 1952 and the brutal suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, that cut short a timid resurgence of Jewish activities, pervaded until 1989 the ensemble of an otherwise diminished Jewish life. The figure of the secretary-general of the Jewish community of Bohemia and Moravia, Frantisek Krauss, "the last in a long and disreputable line of 'Yevseks'," [268] embodied, until the end of the regime, the restrictions, control and surveillance imposed upon Jewish organized life and especially upon its most fractious members, such as Dr. Desider Galsky, a former community president removed by the authorities due to his "reformist" behavior, or Leo Pavlat, a "Jewish activist" who was leading a group that demanded for internal changes. Hoffman's account ended in 1989, when inspired by the "Velvet revolution," a general assembly ousted Frantisek Krauss and restituted Dr. Galsky in the position of President of the Jewish community.

In Hungary, the country with the largest Jewish population, the author offered an overview of Hungarian Jewry from its path to Emancipation and magyarization under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, period which was embodied by the splendor of the famous Dohany Street synagogue and the Neolog movement, the very particular Hungarian declination of Reform Judaism, passing through the 1920s rise of the right-

[267] Ibid., p. 5.
[268] Ibid., p. 26.

wing nationalism of Miklos Horthy, the Nazi occupation of 1944, the fate of Hungarian Jewry during the Holocaust (where a population of mostly urban and assimilated 80,000 Jews survived), and the first years of Communist control and centralization of Jewish communal structures. After the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956, organized Jewry lived under what the author, paraphrasing the term "Goulash Communism," named "Goulash Judaism", a system that combined control (and self-control) with a fair degree of autonomy.

> On the surface, the Hungarian Jewish community seemed to be doing well under the Kadar regime […]. There was a developed communal structure; even if the physical facilities owned by the community were shabby and dilapidated, at least they existed. On the High Holidays the synagogues were full, even though services were sparsely attended at other times. The Jews made few demands on themselves or the authorities. The communal leaders did not find it difficult to live with the compromise package offered by Kadar[269]

However, towards the mid-1980s, criticism of the leadership started to emerge, first timidly, then more outspokenly. The transitional period that the Jewish community went through during 1989-1990, implied the reorganization of the communal umbrella organization, the removal of the ancient leaders, the founding of new cultural groups, and a revival of Jewish life. Furthermore, like no other former Communist country, Hungary witnessed the arrival, in a lapse of a couple of years, of a number of international Jewish organizations of all kinds, "eager to 'colonize' Hungarian Jewry."[270] Thus, the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Agency, the Joint, the World Zionist Organization, B'nei B'rith, the Reichman brothers' Foundation and the Lauder Foundation transformed the landscape of Budapest thus becoming "a vibrant center of international Jewish activity."[271]

Romanian Jewry constituted the most striking exception in the region, and this not without paradoxes. "While living under the most decadent, backward, and repressive regime in Eastern Europe, the Jewish community there enjoyed more privileges than any other community behind the Iron Curtain."[272] Romanian Jewish life, Hoffman

[269] Ibid., p. 65.
[270] Ibid., p. 56.
[271] Ibid., p. 89.
[272] Ibid., p. 119.

suggested, could not be understood without focusing on the figure of Rabbi Moses Rosen, who had served as Chief Rabbi since 1948 and as President of the Romanian Jewish Communities since 1964. Thanks to his strong personality and a great dose of political opportunism, Rosen established with Ceausescu's regime what the author called a "rabbinical diplomacy," whereby the Rabbi obtained for the local Jews a sort of protected status (which meant notably the maintenance of full religious activities and the permission to make *aliyah*) and, at the same time, he served "as an intermediary between world Jewish leaders and Ceausescu and acted as an advocate for Romania's economic need abroad."[273] The "red Rabbi," as he was named by critics and supporters, was described ambivalently by Hoffman, who nonetheless defined him as "the best tightrope walker of his generation."[274]

The Jews that composed the tiny Jewish community of East Berlin, with their anti-fascist and leftist background, constituted, according to Hoffman, "the only remnant of pre-war German Jewry to retain a collective foothold in German soil."[275] If they lived in the GDR in 1989 it was because "they wanted to be there"[276] as they came back from exile in the 1940s to build the "new Germany." Their children, pointed out the author, often after going through long periods of introspection, were now reconnecting with their forgotten Jewish heritage, as was the case of Irene Runge or Salomea Genin, interviewed by the author. Runge, a Sociologist by training, created the group "*Wir für Uns*," destined to attract secular, left-leaning young people of Jewish origins of East Berlin. The German unification brought also the unification of the East and West Jewish communities, referred by Hoffman as a "Jewish Anschluss," given that the Jewish community of the GDR "was swallowed up by its western counterpart."[277]

Regarding Bulgarian Jewry, the author pointed to some features that made their case rather exceptional. The Communist government established certain continuities in the spirit of the interfaith tolerance that characterized the country during the Ottoman rule and the independent period. Moreover, the Communists or, better said, Todor Zhikov claimed it was due to his intervention that almost all the Bulgarian Jews were spared deportation in May 1943, when a pro-Nazi regime that was ruling the country, who had

[273] Ibid., p. 165.
[274] Ibid., p. 137.
[275] Ibid., p. 179.
[276] Ibid., p. 176.
[277] Ibid., p. 201.

already deprived them from rights and properties, decided to resist the German demand.[278] This Jewish-Communist relationship was, according to Hoffman, "unique" in Eastern Europe. "What other Communist regime, including the Soviet Union, would have sanctioned an [Museum] exhibit, along with its accompanying propaganda, that stressed the full participation of Jews in the nation's struggles for independence and socialism?"[279] Therefore, Jewish activities were tolerated by the government, especially those secular-oriented taking place at the community center, whose leaders were Communist Jews appointed by the government. Changes in the community after the coup that removed the Communists from power in 1989 took place only gradually. Finally in Poland, Hoffman dealt with the sharp contrast that the country presented between its vibrant Jewish pre-war past and the present situation. Polish Jewry, once the cultural center of world Jewry, had been shaped naturally by its rich and dense Jewish pre-war communal past —developed both at a urban and at *shtetl* settings— and by the destruction that overcame during the Nazi time, but also, by the post-1945 developments related with the communist era. The majority of the 250,000 Jews that either survived in hiding or returned to Poland after the war fled the country in the following years, first in the late 1940s following the Kielce pogrom of 1948 and other antisemitic outbursts, secondly during the 1968-1969 anti-Zionist campaigns. The 6,000 to 10,000 remaining Jews, pointed out Hoffman, took different paths, there were those who "cut all ties with the Jewish community" and "assumed a prominent role in the new regime"; then there was "a smaller group" of elderly people who "wanted to maintain a Jewish group identity and culture, but under Communist auspices"; and, finally, those who "wanted nothing more than to bury their past and to take up new lives, for themselves and their children, as Poles."[280] Contemporary Jewish Poland, seemed to suggest Hoffman, was also composed by a fourth category, those who rediscovered their Jewish origins whether by accident, like Helena who learnt by chance that she had relatives in Israel (and all what that implied) when she was in her late thirties, or by choice, like Konstanty Gebert, a son of a non-Jewish Communist functionary and a secularized Jewish mother who discovered his Jewishness during the political turmoil that began in 1968 when he was expelled from high school. It was not a coincidence to find a number of these people associated with activities of

[278] They actually deported around 12,000 Jews from the annexed territories of Thrace and Macedonia.
[279] Ibid., P. 214.
[280] Ibid., p. 256-257.

Solidarity. Hoffman also reported that in Poland of the 1980s a "booming interest in Jewish culture" was also taking place among non-Jews; books, exhibitions, theater plays of Jewish topics had "no trouble in attracting audience" and even a network of clubs, with lectures about Judaism, had been set up by liberal Catholic intellectuals.[281] Poland of the late 1980s and early 1990s was becoming also a renovated place for Jewish memory, especially for the Polish Jewish survivors living overseas, who were starting to come back to build memorials, pay homage to their deaths and recreate the forever lost atmosphere of the *shtetels* where they grew up and from where they fled. *Grey Dawn* provided an immersion in Communist and post-Communist Jewry of Eastern Europe, pointing to the commonalities and differences of Jewish life between the Soviet satellites, offering vivid portraits of individuals related to this process, retracing Jewish national histories of the pre-war, Holocaust and post-Holocaust periods, and, *last but not least*, exploring (sometimes in critical tones) the incipient activity of the international Jewish agencies in the various countries.

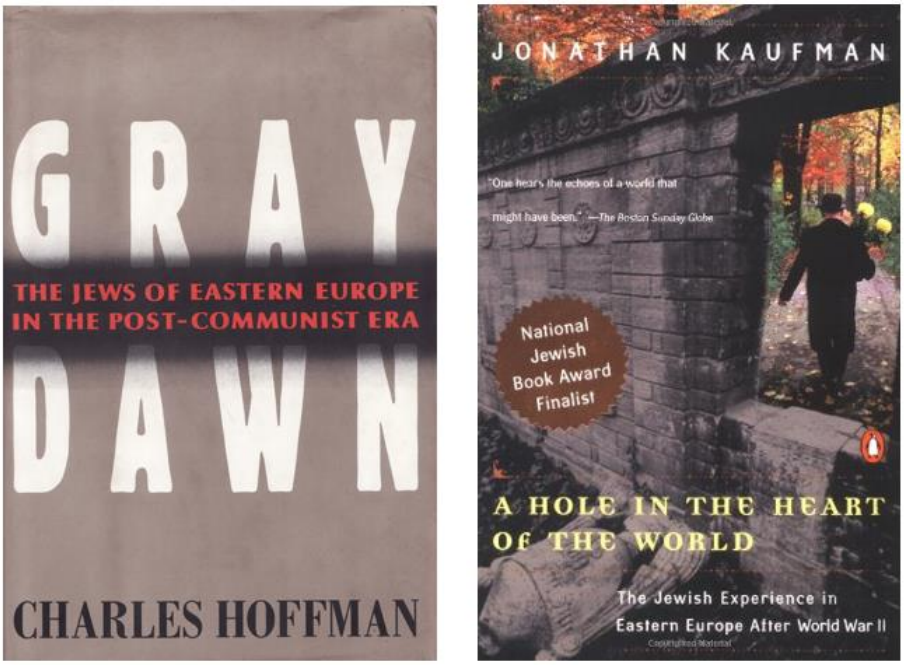

Figure 8. Photo of book covers by Hoffman and Kaufman

A second book of this sort was published in 1997 by yet another American journalist, Jonathan Kaufman, a correspondent in Berlin for the *Boston Globe* who, between 1990

[281] Ibid., p. 292-293.

and 1994, had been covering the collapse of Communism and the emergence of transitional societies in Central Eastern Europe. *A Hole in the Heart of the World* delved into the same universe he had been reporting about for the American media, but now centered in the Jewish experience, which he happened to discover while doing his journalistic work. In this sense, his book was an attempt to present his own discovery to the American readers. "I had come to Europe familiar with the Holocaust," pointed the author in the opening pages, "but, like most Americans, ignorant about what happened afterward."

> […] That there were any Jews at all in Germany and Eastern Europe after Hitler and Stalin was remarkable. Who were these Jews who had survived Hitler and Stalin and forty-five years of Communism? Who were their children? Why they stayed? How had they coped?[282]

Like Hoffman's *Grey Dawn*, *A Hole in the Heart of the World* was clearly oriented to "teach" an American audience not necessarily familiar with the recent and not so recent history of the Jews in Central Eastern Europe.

> As I traveled around Germany and Eastern Europe those days after the Berlin Wall fell, the movie in my head was *Fiddler on the Roof*. When I thought of Jews in Eastern Europe, I visualized Jews crammed into crowded villages, singing songs about tradition, busily trying to marry off their daughters by day, by night warding off the rage of local anti-Semites. […] None of those images prepared me for the richness and vibrancy, the wealth and power, that Jews had wielded in Germany and Eastern Europe before World War II. Berlin before Hitler was much like New York today. […] [The Jews] went to the opera and voted for liberal political parties. They were Jewish on the Sabbath or when it came time for Passover or Hanukkah. But the other six days in the week, they viewed themselves as simply Hungarian or Polish, German or Czech. They were like many American Jews I know. They were, in a chilling way, much like me[283]

[282] Jonathan Kaufman, *A Hole in the Heart of the World. The Jewish Experience in Eastern Europe after World War II*, Penguin Books, 1997, p. 9.
[283] Ibid. p. 4-5. See also my interview with the author on September 9, 2023.

The goal of *A Hole in the Heart of the World* was less in trying to restore the Jewish communal histories, like *Grey Dawn* did, than to depict the varied life experiences of Jewish individuals from behind the Iron Curtain and the incipient post-communist era. According to Kaufman, the fall of the Berlin Wall "meant the opportunity [for many Jews] not to bury the past but to expose it. They wanted to tell the world what had happened to them under the Communists […]. Now they felt liberated, free at last to tell their stories."[284] Following this premise, the author resorted to oral histories, secondary literature and family archives in order to reconstruct the stories of five Eastern European families. They were presented as generational sagas, yet centered in five main characters: Estrongo Nachama, a Holocaust survivor born in Greece who settled in West Berlin after the war and became a synagogue cantor; Klaus Gysi a communist of Jewish origin, who spent the war hidden in the outskirts of Berlin and later became part of the State apparatus of the GDR ("not the kind of man Jewish children in the United States learned about in Sunday school"[285]); Tamas Raj a rabbi turned dissident in Communist Hungary; Sylvia Wittmann, a grass-roots Jewish activist in Prague during the late communist years; and Barbara Asendrych, raised as a Catholic Pole only to discover, during the implosion of the People's Republic, that she had Jewish origins. Like a Central European puzzle, each of these stories went back and forth between the generations, starting in the 1910s and going all the way until the 1990s. While the author did not explain the criteria he used in order to choose these particular stories, nor gave any clue about if they could be considered representative or, on the contrary, extraordinary, the stories served nonetheless as interesting entry points to understand many aspects of the post-war Jewish experience in the Soviet satellites and West Berlin. But above all, the importance of *A Hole in the Heart of the World* lay in its "divulgation" aspect; in the way Kaufman depicted for the American audience the life-experiences of people from such distant realities.

> Like most Americans, like most Jews, I grew up familiar with the Holocaust. I had seen the grainy black-and-white newsreel pictures of emaciated bodies stacked like cordwood, as American, British, and Russian soldiers liberated the concentration camps. I had seen the movie *Shoah*, with its chilling scenes […]. These black-and-white images, like time itself, had stood still,

[284] Ibid., p. 35.
[285] Ibid., p. 9.

> emblazoned in American minds. It was only after the [Berlin] wall was demolished that grains of color began to animate the gray still lives. The more these countries opened up, and the more I traveled in them, the more the olds images began to fade away and be replaced by more complex ones. Forty-five years of hidden Jewish life began revealing itself, teeming with vitality and contradictions, told in complex layers by Jews, their friends, and their enemies. The details filled in the old gray pictures, leaving a richer, more colorful portrait.[286]

If the patterns of development concerning Jewish life were remarkably similar in each country of the former Eastern bloc (except for Romania and, to a minor degree, Bulgaria), what these books also demonstrated was that, at the same time, the Communist experience meant very different things for people of varied backgrounds who happened to have a Jewish origin in common. “Who were these Jews who had survived Hitler and Stalin and forty-five years of Communism?” asked Kaufman, in an effort to demarcate a Jewish presence that seemed to be so elusive for an American comprehension. Nonetheless, these narratives also proposed some sort of a master narrative of the Jewish experience in the region, one that began with the destruction of a vibrant civilization brought by the Holocaust, continued with suppression and survival under Communism —with its heroes and traitors— and finished with the Jewish revival in the post-Communist era. As we shall see, this narrative would also be present, only with different emphasis, in yet another trend that emerged in the post-Communist years, the memorialization of the Jewish past.

4.3.3 Memory

— *Why do you make such a rigid search?*

— *I guess I just wanted to see where my grandfather grew up… where I would be now if he hadn't come to America.*

This dialogue is taken from *Everything is Illuminated*, the 2007 film based on the novel by Jonathan Safran Foer (2004) that nicely illustrates the drive for remembrance and the popularization of memorial tourism that the demise of Communism sparked among American Jews. In the film, a young New Yorker obsessed with his family’s past, travels

[286] Ibid. 300-301.

to Ukraine in search for his grandfather's *shtetl*, looking for traces of a mysterious woman that appears in an old wartime photo. "[…] everything is illuminated in the light of the past. It is always along the side of us, on the inside, looking out," it is said in the coda of the film[287].

The memorialization of the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe supposed a nostalgic and sometimes celebratory evocation of its pre-war history, a renovated vow to remember the Holocaust, and the geographical rediscovery of the whole Eastern European area, motivated by the search and documentation of physical remnants. Remembrance of Jewish Eastern Europe was expressed in commemorative books, travel guides, memoirs, travel diaries, photographic essays and preservationist initiatives. However, the most salient phenomenon was that of memorial tourism and secular pilgrimages, which were encouraged first by the openness shown by some Communist governments —that even staged public commemorations inviting foreign Jewish personalities— and popularized later once the Iron Curtain fell. The conditions were now open for Western Jews to "return" in search of the "past," a past sometimes directly linked to their families, sometimes rather a collective one, sometimes idealized or romanticized, and for others a past to be acknowledged but ultimately disdained. The phenomenon of memorial tourism among American Jews (and also Israelis and Western Europeans) took such amplitude that in 1989 the New York YIVO Institute organized an exhibition and later published a volume on the issue of "Going Home: How American Jews invent the Old World."[288] There, anthropologist Jack Kugelmass, who conducted ethnographic research on American Jews visiting Poland, pointed out that:

> Although I do not have precise figures on the size of the current Jewish tourism to Eastern Europe (my guess is that we are speaking of a figure somewhere in the tens of thousands), the numbers are clearly on the increase, and the fact is that no visitor to the area can look through a camera viewfinder and be assured that another American or Israeli will not suddenly appear to mar the "pristine" view. Major Jewish institutions both in America

[287] For a comprehensive analysis of Jonathan Safran Foer's book, see See Rosa-Àuria Munté Ramos, *La ficción sobre el Holocausto: silencio, límites de representación y popularización en la novela Everything is Illuminated de Jonathan Safran Foer*, Tesis Doctoral, Universitat Ramon Llull. Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna, defendida el 20/4/2012.

[288] The exhibition ran between June 1989 and February 1990.

> and in Israel now sponsor guided tours for members to various parts of Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. And the tours run the gamut of Jewish institutional life, from the most secular and academic to the ultra-Orthodox.[289]

For the purpose of this dissertation, we will focus on those memorial artifacts that somehow contributed to elaborate a renovated view of contemporary Eastern European Jews. Indeed, if the emphasis during of the memorialization process was certainly put in recreating one and again the rise and fall of a civilization wiped out by the Nazis and suppressed by almost half a century of Communist rule, some of these initiatives found themselves discovering that there were still Jews in the region, even if they were considered to be ghostly remnants of a lost world. Thus, narratives and testimonies distilled a peculiar and ambivalent mix of nostalgic prewar evocations and Holocaust remembrance with a certain dose of surprise when finding out about local Jewish communities. Symptomatic of this blend is the following statement by two British Jews, who thanks to a "Jewish heritage travel" discovered that Jewish life was still going on after 1989:

> Our objective, then, was to achieve for ourselves a greater understanding of our roots in Eastern Europe and the magnificence of that Jewish culture which had flourished there for centuries. Little did we know then how moved we would be by what we were to see and how, amidst the pain of remembering the suffering and the destruction of not only the millions of precious lives but of the culture which had taken generations to develop, there would be glimmers of hope as we witnessed the valiant efforts of those remaining to keep their heritage alive and to rebuild Jewish life in a spiritual wasteland.[290]

The most typical element of memorialization was the commemorative book, big and heavy volumes that most typically included testimonies, photographs and historical texts. Given that a multitude of actors were behind the publication of each of these books, from professional journalists and photographers to memory travelers,

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[289] Jack Kugelmass, "The Rites of the Tribe. The Meaning of Poland for American Jewish Tourists," in Jack Kugelmass (ed.), Yivo Annual, Volume 21: Going Home, 1993.
[290] Michael Riff (ed.), *The Face of Survival: Jewish Life in Eastern Europe Past and Present*, NYU Press, 1993, p. 7.

Holocaust survivors and Jewish foundations, the goals and framing behind them were diverse as well.

An early example of a commemorative book can be found in *Remnants. The Last Jews of Poland*. Its authors were two non-Jewish Poles, a journalist and a photographer, husband and wife who for five years traveled across Poland looking for various communities as well as for individual people "who were often the last Jews in their cities or towns."[291] As its title suggests, *Remnants* clearly positions itself as a book that is meant to function as a witness of "the last chapter of the nearly thousand-year-long history of the Polish Jews."[292] Thus, *Remnants* portrays elderly people in their socialist-style apartments from which walls hang numerous old photographs and memories of lost relatives; crumbled prayer rooms in former Jewish towns; abandoned cemeteries; communal facilities in disrepair. Those photos pretend to be not only an exploration of the "last Jews" but also a move towards another temporal dimension. "Yet, a whole civilization cannot vanish overnight," reads the dust jacket, "as if the vessel of time has cracked, its remnants stay but slowly leak away drop by drop, person by person." However, *Remnants* is also a book about the living. Other photographs show small Shabbat and Pesach celebrations in private homes; a Jewish wedding; a group of people talking at the kosher butcher. In that sense, the book carries an unintentional revelatory effect. Polish Jews were exposed like never before since the end of the war. These two sides of the coin might have been the reason why the book's readership and interests were so high. The photographs included in *Remnants* were originally exhibited in 1985 in a Warsaw gallery; a year later an English version of the book was published in the United States, selling 11,000 copies, while some of its excerpts were published the same year in the National Geographic magazine. Other exhibitions were held in the United States, Poland and Israel and its authors toured those countries.[293]

[291] Malgorzata Niezabitowska and Tomasz Tomaszewski, *Remnants: the last Jews of Poland*, Friendly Press, 1986, p. 14.
[292] Ibid., p. 11.
[293] See Kugelmass, op. cit, p. 442-443, endnote 18. For the whereabouts of the authors and the book and a critical perspective, see Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, op. cit., p. 101-123.

Figure 9. Photos taken from the book *Remnants. The Last Jews of Poland* (Friendly Press, 1986). On top left, an abandoned Jewish cemetery. On top right, an old woman at her home eating *matzah*, unleavened flatbread that is part of Jewish cuisine and forms an integral element of the Passover festival. Bottom left, a man serving matzah during a community celebration. Bottom right, an observant Jew at his home.

Another kind of commemorative book is *The Face of Survival,* a publication that intended to serve as the printed conclusion of a series of memorial and fact-finding trips across East-Central Europe that a group of engaged British Jews—among them Holocaust survivors— did during 1989 and 1990. “Much of what we are today is a result of what happened in this world,” they explained in the prologue, “for over a thousand years, the form and content of our existence as Jews was to a greater extent shaped in the cities, towns and villages of Poland, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia.”[294] *The Face of Survival* constituted an elegy of a world that is gone, a pilgrimage to places where so many beloved people perished and where so many memories are buried, and yet it is a book that also tried to reflect the encounter with those “remaining Jews”

[294] Michael Riff (ed.), *The Face of Survival*…, op. cit., p. 4.

who, in the post-Communist context, emerge as the "glimmers of hope." Introduced by long historical overviews of each of the four countries, the book showcased the personal memoirs of four British Holocaust survivors who recall their childhood in the Czech, Hungarian, Polish or Romanian cities, towns and villages where they spent their childhoods and speak about their feelings when visiting back their hometowns after all those years. "Distance helps to refine memories," stated Stephen Roth, a Hungarian-born Zionist activist who later became the director of the Institute of Jewish Affairs in London.

> My childhood was on the whole a very happy one, sheltered by a harmonious and closely knit family, with wonderful parents and a brother and two sisters to whom I remained very attached all my life. But, looking back with the traumatic lessons of the Holocaust and the new experiences gained from living in the more advanced West, I suddenly realize that, as a Jew, my life in this small Hungarian provincial town had been one of abject degradation[295]

The coda of the book is the section called "Jewish Life in Eastern Europe today," containing brief descriptions and contemporary black-and-white photographs of local —mostly elderly— Jews and Jewish buildings. In the book's epilogue, the controversial Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen rejoiced himself about the "effort made" by this group of English Jews, who "decided to take advantage of the improved conditions for visiting Eastern Europe in order to travel to these communities and try to find out what is happening to the 'little red Jews' of the twentieth century."[296]

An interesting case of a collective commemorative book was *And I still see their Faces*, which was sponsored by the American-Polish-Israeli Shalom Foundation.[297] With texts in Polish and in English, the book was the result of the initiative of the Foundation's Director General, Gołda Tencer, a Polish-Jewish actress involved with the Warsaw's State Jewish theater, who had launched an appeal "to save the memory of the Polish Jews," whereby Poles around the world —Jews and non-Jews— were asked to send over photographs of murdered relatives and friends, of disappeared houses and buildings, and of ordinary and extraordinary events of the prewar Polish-Jewish life.

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[295] Ibid., p. 129.
[296] Ibid., p. 215.
[297] Shalom Foundation, *And I still See Their Faces. Images of Polish Jews*. *I ciągle widzę ich twarze. Fotografia Żydów polkich*, Warsaw, 1996.

More than 7,000 pictures —accompanied with descriptions made by the people who sent them— were collected. They came from all over Poland but also from the United States, Canada, Italy, Israel, Argentina and Uruguay. The more than 250-pages book constitutes an impressive album depicting a disappeared world and a no less impressive compilation of the stories that lay behind those pictures. "This album has been created," it was explained in the introduction, "by people who kept these photographs during the time of the war and then for half a century longer, waiting for someone to collect them. They adopted them, accepted them into their families."[298] For example, among many stories sent along with the photographs, one can read:

> I send you a photograph that belonged to my mother, Salomea Tarczyńska. During the occupation it was covered by another picture. As far as I can figure out, they were my mama's very good friends before the War. Unfortunately, I don't know anything more about this[299]

As it was the case of many other "memorial" causes, there emerged "memory entrepreneurs," individuals or groups who mobilize themselves in order to elaborate, transmit and even struggle for placing particular historical narratives —often traumatic and related with political violence— in the public arena.[300] In this case, it was not so much a struggle in search for public recognition by nation states and governments that mobilized these "memory entrepreneurs" but rather a quest for exhuming, appropriating and raising awareness of the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe, including the situation of post-Communist Jews. Particularly two of them, Ruth Ellen Gruber and Edward Serotta, succeeded through their work —travel guides, books,

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[298] Ibid., p. 8.

[299] Ibid., p. 9.

[300] The notion of "memory entrepreneur" stems from the concept of "moral entrepreneur" coined by sociologist Howard Becker in order to describe the role of certain militants in creating, promoting or preserving a given set of moral and social rules. See Howard Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, The Free Press, New York, 1990 [1963], p. 147. Drawing on this notion, Michael Pollak spoke about "memory entrepreneurs" in *L'expérience concentrationnaire, Essai sur le maintien de l'identité sociale*, Métailié, Paris, 1990. In the last years, many scholarly studies have scrutinized the role of "memory entrepreneurs" in multiple countries and contexts. The French academic journal *Raisons politiques* devoted a special edition to this issue: *Raisons politiques*, "Les victims écrivent leur Histoire", 2008/2, no. 30. See also the works done on Argentina's post-dictatorship period, Elizabeth Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*, Siglo Veintiuno de España Editores, 2002, p. 39-62 and Nadia Tahir, "Les associations de victimes de la dictature : politiques des droits de l'homme et devoir de mémoire en Argentine (1976-2007)", PhD dissertation, Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011. In this dissertation I decided to respect the term "memory entrepreneur," although the role of the agents I describe involves more than a struggle for public recognition of certain memories.

photographic essays, and preservationist initiatives— in interweaving history, memory and post-Communist Jewry into one single narrative. These Jewish, American-born-living-in-Europe professional journalists began in the early 1990s to promote, disseminate and advocate Central and Eastern European's Jewish legacy and to raise awareness about the resilience of a local, if weakened and in need of support, Jewish life. On one hand, their effort served, like that of Charles Hoffman and Jonathan Kaufman, to render the Jewish Central and Eastern European experience accessible to the Western Jewish audience, especially to the "memory travelers," and, on the other, it attested, like *Everything is Illuminated*, to the emotional investment and passionate reconnection that a new and old generation of Western Jews began to tie with the land of their relatives and ancestors. "I traveled thousands of miles to seek out physical remainings of a vanished civilization," declared Ruth Ellen Gruber in the prologue to her *Jewish Heritage* travel guide, "often I felt like an archeologist, digging and delving into the ruins of a past: *my* past, *our* past."[301]

An American journalist and writer who had been living in Europe since 1974 working as a correspondent for *United Press International* and for various American magazines and publications, Ruth Ellen Gruber became a true "memory entrepreneur" after the collapse of Communism. Not only through her journalistic work for Jewish and non-Jewish media —from where she reported extensively on the situation of Jews in Europe— but particularly when she authored in 1992 the first comprehensive Jewish heritage travel guide to Central and Eastern Europe[302], which was followed in 1994 by a lengthier and intellectually more ambitious travel diary, *Upon the Doorposts of Thy House*.[303] Since then, Gruber became a reference and an active advocate of post-Communist Jewish Europe. In the *Jewish Heritage Travel*, Gruber sets out to find and document those "remaining traces of Jewish culture and civilization," such as synagogues and cemeteries, and to list them country by country, in a format that aimed to facilitate ulterior visits by curious and adventurous travelers. In that sense, the guide was clearly designed to fill the needs, as we have seen, of an increasing number of

[301] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Jewish Heritage Travel. A Guide to Central & Eastern Europe*, John Wiley & sons, New York, 1992, p. 3. Italics in the original.
[302] The Jewish Heritage Travel Guide has been republished three times, the most recent in 2007 by National Geographic publishing press.
[303] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Upon the Doorposts of Thy House. Jewish Life in East-Central Europe, Yesterday and Today*, John Wiley & sons, New York, 1994.

memory travelers. Therefore, the *Jewish Heritage Travel* guide adopts the tone and language of any other "conventional" travel guide, providing to the potential (American) visitor with brief historical introductions, maps and listings of Jewish-related sites, and also practical information about hotels, restaurants and other tips. In contrast, in *Upon the Doorposts…* Gruber adopts a more thoughtful tone and embarks in a reflection about the memory and meaning of today's Jewish East-Central Europe. "Today, on the doorposts of countless houses in countless towns and villages throughout East-Central Europe," she states,

> where few if any Jews have lived since the Holocaust half a century ago, it is still possible to distinguish the places where mezuzahs had once been attached, marking these houses as Jewish homes. On some doorposts there are actual scars —empty, often very neat, gouges in the wood left when the mezuzahs were removed.[304]

Thus, resorting to the metaphor of the *mezuzah*, Gruber visits Prague's old Jewish quarter and illustrates how what was once the heart of Central European Jewry was being transformed into a tourist attraction for Jews and non-Jews alike, "a theme park of Jewish life and lore"[305]; she travels to Sub Carpathian Hungary and Slovakia, deep into towns and villages and, while following the routes that the Jewish wine merchants did during the 14th and 15th centuries, where the first Hasidic sects emerged, she searches for abandoned synagogues and Jewish cemeteries and interacts with the few Jews —Holocaust survivors— still living in the region; she tracks the remaining work of a Hungarian Jewish architect, Lipót Baumhorn, a symbol of turn-of-the-century Jewish optimism and wealth, who designed and built more than a dozen synagogues in Hungary and its adjacent areas; she visits Kazimierz, the ancient Jewish quarter of Cracow, and interviews a series of people about the architectural and urban future of this ruined section of the city; finally, she pays a three-day-visit to the post-Carmelite-nuns-conflict Auschwitz and reflects upon today's social and memorial uses of this icon of Jewish suffering.

[304] Ibid., p. 2.
[305] Ibid., p. 20.

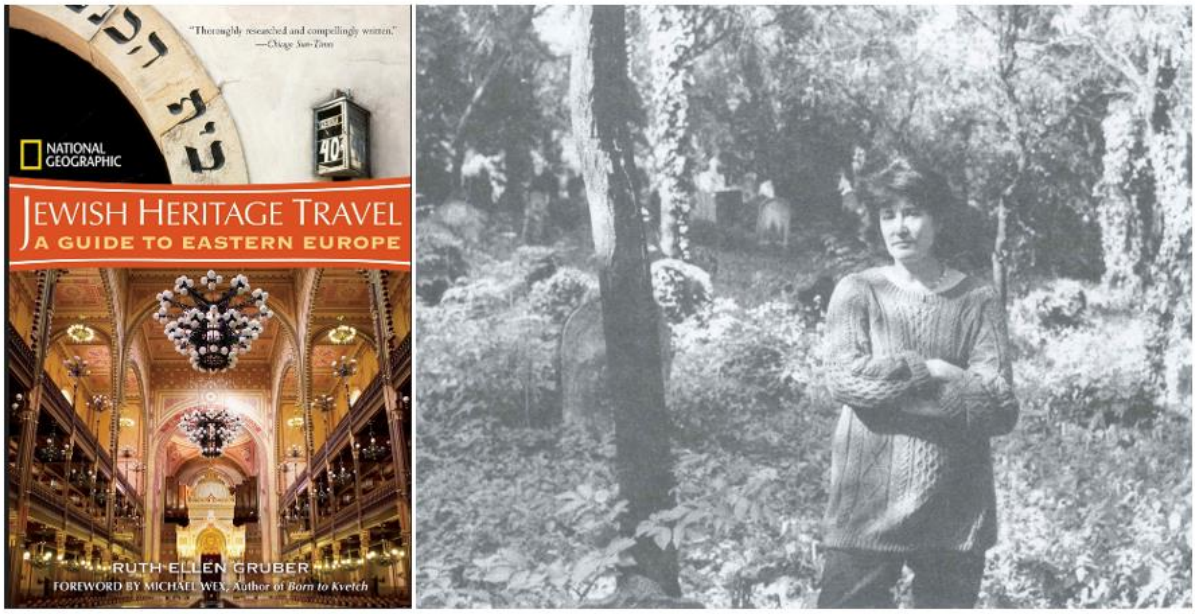

Figure 10. On the left, the cover of the Jewish Heritage Travel book. On the right, Ruth Ellen Gruber photographed in a Jewish cemetery at Kolín, Czech Republic. Source: R. E. Gruber, "Upon the Doorposts…", op. cit, p. 6.

Gruber continued her work as "memory entrepreneur" all along the 1990s and 2000s, chronicling Jewish cultural developments in Europe and involved in the revival of the Jewish communal life. In 2002, she published *Virtually Jewish*, a book where she explores the increasing non-Jewish interest in Jewish history and culture in various European cities where no more Jews are left.[306] In September 2011, Gruber received the Knight's Cross of the Order of the Merit by Poland's government, for her help in the understanding between Poles and Jews. Gruber currently coordinates an online project whose goal is to serve as an online resource for Jewish heritage in Europe.[307]

The American photo-journalist Edward Serotta represents yet another example of a "memory entrepreneur." Correspondent in Central Europe since 1985 for *Time* magazine, Serotta devoted himself to document through images contemporary Jewish life in East-Central Europe as a way to raise awareness of the existence of a still active post-Communist Jewry. In fact, in his first book, *Out of the Shadows*, Serotta made

[306] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002. For a personal recollection about those years, see my interview with Ruth Ellen Gruber, September 28, 2023.
[307] Sponsored by the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe. See www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu. For more information on Ruth Ellen Gruber, see http://ruthellengruber.com/blog/ [Last access, 26/08/2018]

clear that he wished to challenge the assumption that considered Eastern European Jews as "remnants," a premise that he himself had before the project began.

> When I arrived in the Hungarian capital, I had a mission to produce the most comprehensive photographic study ever of the last Jews of Eastern Europe. I envisioned an epitaph between two covers. By the time I left Budapest in the winter of 1990 to settle in Germany, I had 13,000 negatives. I continued shooting for almost another year even though I realized my work would never be about the "last Jews" of Eastern Europe. That is because I found there is no "Eastern Europe," and there are no "last Jews." My work is about people who are Jewish, about the lives they have been living[308]

By dismissing the "Last Jew" paradigm and by embracing the cause of the actual Jewish people living in Eastern Europe, Serotta pushed his role of "memory entrepreneur" to its limits. Instead of evoking the Jewish past, Serotta opted to speak about the future. In that sense, he was persuaded that the Jewish communities had an auspicious future.

> Everywhere I went in what had once been Socialist Europe, Jewish communities, no matter their numbers, were casting off their mantle of 'remnant' like an old garment that no longer fit. […] In Budapest, I stopped by the Jewish high school each autumn to watch it grow, from 90 in 1988, 110 the next year, to 140. In September 1990, two other Jewish day schools opened in town and their leaders were still in daze: they had 550 students between them. The entire concept of "last Jews" was beginning to sound, worse yet, misleading. All together, "Eastern European Jews" is an anachronism conjuring up a world tragically lost to us.[309]

Out of the Shadows presents contemporary portraits of the Jewries of Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and the German Democratic Republic. The reader is exposed to images of community leaders and some other prominent members, of communal celebrations and events, of official commemorations with dignitaries, and of Jewish buildings such as synagogues, cemeteries and community

[308] Edward Serotta, *Out of the Shadows: A Photographic Portrait of Jewish life in Central Europe Since the Holocaust*, Birch Lane Press, New York, 1991, p. 8.
[309] Ibid., p. 9.

centers. Serotta's photographs attest to a Jewish universe that in principle puts into question the idea of a "remnant," although it is also true that some of the photographs, which show the prevalence of the elderly in the demographics of the communities, the rundown Jewish installations, and the deserted synagogues and cemeteries, could serve as the counterclaim. More accurately, what these photographs portray is the way organized Jewish life emerged from the Communist experience, alive but weakened, and in desperate need of renewal.[310] Serotta continued all along the 1990s to publish photographic books on Central European Jews. In 1994, he published *Survival in Sarajevo*, focused on the humanitarian and inter-faith efforts done by the Sarajevo-based Jewish organization *La Benevolencija* during the Balkans war[311] and in 1996 it appeared *German, Jews, Memory: A Contemporary Portrait*, dedicated to German-Jewish post-unification situation.[312] In 2000, Serotta founded the Centropa historical institute, a Vienna-based foundation dedicated to "Jewish historical institute dedicated to preserving 20th century Jewish family stories from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans."[313]

As it was shown in this section, 1989 gave place to a vast memorialization phenomenon. Memory discourses sought to re-(create) the splendor of a lost civilization while they mourned for the extermination of the Jews of Europe. For many Western Jews the moment was propitious to develop an emotional bond with the land of their ancestors and of their collective identity. However, memorial discourses also carried with them the seed of rediscovery, projecting a renovated vision of Eastern European Jews. Different actors turned their attention to a Jewish present that, if only a shadow of what it used to be, allowed thinking optimistically about the Jews. A new wave of optimism took place in the mid-1990s, when European Jewish intellectuals welcomed the formation of a "new" Europe, a continent where Jews could now be accepted and integrated as such.

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[310] For a critical review of *Out of the Shadows*, see Aviva Weintraub, "An American in Poland: Photography and the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe", in *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1993, p. 14-21.

[311] Edward Serotta, *Survival in Sarajevo. How a Jewish Community Came to the Aid of its City*, Central European Center for Research and Documentation, Edition Christian Brandstätter, Vienna, 1994.

[312] Edward Serotta, *German, Jews, Memory: A contemporary Portrait*, Nicolai, 1996.

[313] See http://www.centropa.org/who-we-are [Last access, September 23, 2023]

4.4 "New" Jews in the "new" Europe: the optimist years

Ironically, it was a gloomy prediction over the future of the Jews in Europe, formulated in the mid-1990s by a British Jewish historian, which led to more optimistic and confident scenarios. In his book *Vanishing Diaspora*, an otherwise exceptional account of Jewish life in postwar Europe, Bernard Wasserstein argued that

> The Jews are vanishing from Europe — and not only because of Hitler. In 1939 there were nearly 10 million Jews in Europe; during the war more than half were murdered. By 1994, emigration and a surplus of deaths over births had reduced Europe's Jewish population again by more than half, to under 2 million. Demographic projections for the next two or three decades vary greatly, depending on such factors as the rate of emigration from the former Soviet Union; but the range of possibilities extends only downward — at best the Jews in Europe face slow diminution, at worst virtual extinction. Here and there pockets of ultra-orthodox Jews, clinging to the tenets of the faith, will no doubt survive — a picturesque remnant like the Amish of Pennsylvania. Perhaps too some Europeans of the twenty-first century may point with pride to strands of Jewish ancestry as some white Americans today boast of partial Amerindian descent. Since the dawn of the modern era European Jews, as individuals shaped by a common spiritual and cultural tradition and as communities moulded by a shared historical destiny, played vitally important political, economic and intellectual roles in all the major European societies; a realistic forecast now is that within a few generations they will disappear as a significant element in the life of the continent.[314]

No matter how solid Wasserstein's demographic projections were, the Jewish collective mood was, nonetheless, already going in the other direction. "Jewish identities in the new Europe" was the title of a conference held at Oxford University in 1992 whose presentations were later published in a collection of essays. Both the plural of "identities" and the "new" before "Europe" indicated the new interpretative key that Jewish intellectuals and scholars deemed necessary to introduce facing the new European reality. "Soon after the beginning of the symposium," it was explained in the

[314] Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1996, p. vii.

Foreword, "we became aware that we were moving in a new cognitive dimension: not only because many of the facts presented were new, but because it soon became apparent that the contemporary Jewish condition—in Europe, and in terms of the relationship between Jewish communities of Europe and those outside it—warranted new criteria of interpretation."[315] The times were now asking for a reassessment of Europe from a Jewish perspective. And a "Jewish" reading of the new Europe not only pointed to the (re)-unification of the continent, the move towards economic integration, and the unprecedented across-the-board consensus over the primacy of democratic, liberal and pluralistic values, but also stressed the restoration of full links between Eastern and Western Jews, the new demographic realities and the "different ways in which Jewish identities are today defined and experienced."[316] Thus, whereas a considerable number of essays included in the collection spoke about "new Jewish identities in France,"[317] "Changes in Jewish identities in modern Hungary,"[318] "New, Old and Imaginary" Jewish identities in Poland[319], "Constructing New Identities in the Former Soviet Union"[320], and "Jewish renewal in the New Europe"[321], it was fundamentally agreed that this "new Europe" presented a new set of unparalleled common challenges and opportunities to its Jews.

Perhaps no other intellectual figure embodied the Jewish "Euro-optimism" of those years than the French-Italian historian Diana Pinto, who in the mid-1990s elaborated the most articulated praise of the new social and political conditions prevailing in Europe, conditions that, according to her, favoured like never before the redevelopment of Jewish life in the continent. In the "open pan-European space which emerged as a consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall," she argued in a famous paper entitled *A new Jewish identity for post-1989 Europe*, European Jews lived "in an entirely different continent from that of their pre-war forebears, their post-war parents or even their own post-war selves. […] Never in the history of Europe has a moment

[315] Jonathan Webber (ed.), *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, London, 1994, p. vii.
[316] Ibid., p. 5.
[317] Dominique Schnapper, "*Israélites* and *Juifs*: New Jewish Identities in France", Ibid., p. 171-178.
[318] András Kovács, "Changes in Jewish Identity in Modern Hungary", Ibid., p. 150-160.
[319] Konstanty Gebert, "Jewish Identities in Poland: New, Old, and Imaginary", Ibid., p. 161-170
[320] Igor Krupnik, "Constructing New Identities in the Former Soviet Union: The Challenge for the Jews", Ibid., p. 139-149
[321] David Singer, "Jewish Renewal in the New Europe: An American Jewish Perspective", Ibid., p. 283-290.

been so propitious for its Jews as the present."[322] In contrast with the somber views of Bernard Wasserstein, Pinto boldly refused the idea of a "vanishing Diaspora." She claimed that even if the Holocaust "destroyed forever the pre-war Eastern European way of life," this didn't mean the end of any Jewish presence in Europe.

> Judaism recovered from other devastating historical experiences: the Spanish expulsion, for example, which, at the time, constituted a catastrophe for world (i.e. European) Jewry as a whole. The Marranos and their descendants came out of Spain to resume Jewish life—often as late as a century after their forced conversion. This should be sufficient evidence to disprove the claim—a mere fifty years after the Holocaust and only five years after the Holocaust and only five years after the reopening of the European continent—that the Jewish presence in Europe is disappearing. Such historical myopia is not keeping with the tenacity and wisdom of the Jewish people.[323]

The situation in Europe for the Jews, continued Pinto, was now different. For the first time in the history of the continent, "there are no longer 'captive' Jews on the continent […]. Now every Jew in Europe is a voluntary Jew. This has for a long time been technically true for Western European Jews. But new generations of Eastern European and former Soviet Jews are, for the first time, actively choosing to define themselves as Jews while remaining in their respective countries, now freely part of Europe."[324] These benevolent conditions offered the Jews the unprecedented possibility for developing a truly European Jewish identity. And Pinto urged the Jews to seize their chance and embrace the European cause.

> Jews can and should take advantage of this new paradigm and create a European identity for themselves. This can be done without reverting to anachronistic choices: to an unquestioning patriotism and total assimilation, or to an equally dangerous indifference to the surrounding culture. Europe can provide Jews with a framework in which they can identify common problems and challenges, distinctive ones that do not necessarily exist either

[322] Diana Pinto, "A new Jewish identity for post-1989 Europe", Institute for Jewish Policy Research, London, June 1996, p. 2.
[323] Ibid. p. 2.
[324] Ibid., p. 2-3.

> in the United States or in Israel. For Jews, Europe is newly emerging. It is not a finished product. And it is precisely in this unfinished sense that its Jews can be 'European.'[325]

The professional itinerary of Diana Pinto could help in explaining her ideas. In 1993 Pinto started working as an external consultant for the Council of Europe, an intergovernmental body created in 1949 that sought to promote cooperation among State members in judicial matters, democratic development and human rights. Pinto was instrumental in strengthening the links between the Council and the United States and, on the other hand, played an active role as adviser on issues related to civil society and democratic developments in the post-Communist countries, which were then wanting to join the EU. It was in this capacity, according to Pinto, where she started to reflect upon the role of Jews in the process of European unification.[326] For her, European Jews —with its deep-rooted "Europeaness" and its transnationalism— constituted the living incarnation of the multicultural European ideal. In another paper, Pinto went further with this idea. Jews and Europe, she argued, were now, for the first time in History, not only mutually compatible, but also intertwined, for the reason being that European societies were now ready to understand "the degree to which their own culture was influenced by the Jewish presence, [and] not just to stress its own separate dignity."[327] Thus, as a minority that "belonged on the European continent from the start," Jews "should take on a leading role in Europe's coming to terms with itself" by acting as "two-way plugs in redefining a wider notion of belonging for Europe's 'others.'"[328]:

> In brief, sixty years after the Second World War and the Shoah and at the dawn of the twenty-first century can one speak of or even imagine the contours of a new European Jewish identity, one which would be enriching and useful to Jews and non-Jews in Europe and around the world? The answer in my opinion is 'yes.'[329]

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[325] Ibid., p. 5.
[326] Interview with Diana Pinto, Paris, October 29, 2013.
[327] Dina Pinto, "The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish identity", CEU Jewish Studies Yearbook, 1996-1999, p. 14.
[328] Ibid., p. 15.
[329] Ibid., p. 1.

Pinto's arguments represented the culmination of the cycle of rediscovery that began in the mid-1980s and continued all along the 1990s. Here, the Eastern European Jewish presence was not only fully acknowledged but was also deemed essential for the constitution of a new pan-European Jewish identity. Moreover, Jews were called to play a central role in the building of the new, democratic and multicultural Europe. Indeed, Pinto's ideas —popular between 1996 and 2000— helped shape much of the public discourse regarding the post-1989 European Jews. According to her: "[What I said] rang bells everywhere. For the American Jews, it was the trendy thing at the moment. […] I was in the lecture circles on these topics in the Jewish world non-stop until 2000, until the Second Intifada. […] For four years I was the hottest thing in town. From California to Moscow, everyone wanted to hear Diana Pinto's message."[330]

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter showed how Central and Eastern European Jews were "rediscovered" by Western Jews in a period that spanned from the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. This cycle of rediscovery involved specialized observers and activists, scholars, journalists, writers, photographers or simply tourists. They all showed a renewed interest towards a population considered to have entered in the limbo of history after 1945, situated at the verge of extinction and living in a "spiritual wasteland."

Initial pieces of information began to come from Jewish scholars and activists who, because of their engagement with the plight for Soviet Jews, were already monitoring the region. The pages of *Soviet Jewish Affairs* presented for the first time some hints of internal community life, pointed to some positive signs regarding the behavior of the Communist authorities (as well as that of dissident personalities and groups) *vis-à-vis* the Jews and the "Jewish question" and, more importantly, detected what they soon began to define as an awakening of the Jewish identity among Eastern Europeans of Jewish origin. Still, the information collected was fragmentary and lacked a more general perspective.

Also, by the mid-1980s, Germany began to be a center of scholarly attention. Due to its peculiar history and situation and the interest aroused after the reunification, Germany and its Jews during the post-war period became a unique case of scholarly

[330] Interview with Diana Pinto, Paris, October 29, 2013.

attention. In a space of a few years, a specialized sub-field of studies began to systematically examine Jewish life in post-war Germany. This was initiated by a group of young West German Jewish intellectuals attempting to break from a generational prejudice and were later joined by foreign scholars from the United States and Canada. But it was once after the making of the "peaceful" revolutions and the collapse of Communism that the cycle of rediscovery took its ultimate impulse, capturing the imagination of a far wider audience than one of the previous years. The end of the so-called "real existing socialism" motivated the emergence of reports that for the first time tried to offer a comprehensive account of the entire Jewish experience in Eastern Europe after 1945. Thus, specialized observers but also professional journalists set out to restore the internal dynamics of Jewish communal life during those years, to identify salient periods, events and personalities, to scrutinize the role of the Jewish leadership and to emphasize the Jewish revivalism of the post-Communist era. And while reminding their audiences about the sophisticated and urban environment of the pre-war Jewish existence in the capitals of Central and Eastern Europe, they also confronted them to the fact that many Jews —whether "non-Jewish Jews" or not, to use a formula of Isaac Deutscher— professed a genuine sympathy towards the Socialist ideology and were actively involved in the establishment of the Communist regimes.

In parallel with these developments, an unprecedented drive for remembrance began to take place among Western Jews. Encouraged by the gradual openness shown by the late Communist governments, and propagated after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the "past" made itself attainable once more and therefore a whole set of memorial artifacts, including the practice of memorial tourism and secular pilgrimages, came to cater to the needs of a growing demand for remembrance. Some of these memorial initiatives found themselves "surprised" at finding remaining Jewish life in places where they only expected to see cemeteries. Thus, certain memorial narratives became more complex and combined nostalgia with revelation. In that sense, it was especially interesting the role of the "memory entrepreneurs."

Finally, by the mid-1990s, European Jewish intellectuals began speaking about "new Jewish identities" in a "new Europe." In effect, the new face of Europe, politically unified, economically integrated and governed by pluralist democracies, led the Jewish intellectuals to conclude that this new era presented new challenges for the Jews. But it was the French-Italian intellectual Diana Pinto who asserted, in full optimism, that

never in the history of Europe has a “moment been so propitious for its Jews,” who were now capable of building a distinct European Jewish identity and to play an active role in the public arena.

The cycle of rediscovery served as a backdrop for the arrival of Jewish transnational agencies in Europe. While this literature was being written and published, while tourists and survivors were going back to the encounter of their past, another phenomenon was taking place simultaneously, namely, the massive arrival of Jewish transnational organizations to the region. Ready to “invest” in these “new” Jews, and bringing with them professionals, know-how and financial resources, these agencies became key actors in the rebuilding of local communities. In the following chapter, we will depict this new organizational map that began to be part of the new Jewish Europe.

5. A transnational system of solidarity: Post-Communist Jewish Europe after 1989

> *"Everybody from Habad to the Jewish Agency to Touro College to the Conservative and Reform movements to the Israel Ministry of Education and B'nai Akiva are all involved in programs and projects to build, strengthen, and enhance Jewish continuity in Eastern Europe."*
> David Clayman, Director of the American Jewish Congress' Israel Office, 1999

5.1 A "Jewish Peace Corps?"

In 1990, Michael Berenbaum, an American scholar working at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., returned from a trip to Eastern Europe with an idea. "I believe," said Berenbaum, "it is time to establish a professional Jewish Peace Corps to serve communities in Eastern Europe."[331] Berenbaum was particularly concerned by the new generation of Jewish leaders whom he thought had "no Jewish skills or resources, which they desperately need."

> Take Bulgaria, for example, where a new generation of Jewish leaders have ousted their predecessors. By and large, the new leaders are professionals in their thirties and forties. Theater directors and journalists, lawyers and professors, they welcome their new responsibilities and are excited by the opportunity of preserving a remnant of Jewish life a generation after the Holocaust. These are skilled men and women at the top of their fields who can succeed in the new climate of Eastern Europe. They choose to express themselves as Jews even though their background is tenuous. Some are intermarried, most men are uncircumcised, almost all are Jewishly [sic] uneducated, yet these handicaps do not diminish their dedication. In Poland, Jews are coming out of the closet. In the past, Jewish identity was often

[331] Michael Berenbaum, "We Need a Peace Corps for East Europe," *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*, 7 September 1990, p. 117-118. All following quotes taken from there.

> concealed from children. Safety was found in assimilation, but the new generation wants to remember what their parents chose to forget.

The Jewish Peace Corps envisioned by Berenbaum was designed to have a two-fold mission. On one hand, it would instill Jewish values and traditions to a generation that grew up in a state of complete ignorance with regards to the most basic Jewish principles. On the other hand, the Jewish Peace Corps would provide leaders operational skills and know-how enabling them to build efficient and modern Jewish communities. Therefore, according to Berenbaum, different categories of Jewish professionals were called to staff the Jewish Peace Corps.

> Bulgaria needs a rabbi —not another-worldly figure, but a rabbi capable of addressing the needs of a highly secularized, assimilated Jewish community, of representing Jewish learning and living to the Bulgarian people, of teaching introductory courses in Judaism, and of conducting services on Sabbath and holidays […] A second set of skills is equally desirable—the programming skills of a Jewish Community Center professional, who knows how to organize Jewish theater and arts, lectures and education, programs of content that appeal to the non-religious and the anti-religious, that give substance to some abstract Jewish feelings. Similarly, a third sort of professional is needed, one who can teach Hebrew and perform circumcisions, who can serve as a modern *melamed* and a *shochet*, but is also capable of reaching adults.

Berenbaum had no doubts about where one could find such professionals: “Jewish talent is abundantly available in the West and desperately sought in the East.” It doesn’t matter, he continued,

> if such an influx of Jewish leadership comes from Israel or the United States —what is important is that such leadership is forthcoming from the West so that the remnant can have a fighting chance to regain its Jewish identity before even the memory of Jewish memories fade. Israelis have greater linguistic skills which might prove helpful in adjusting to these societies. Americans may have greater skills in functioning in these unstructured secular environments. […] Costs could be modest, especially so when compared to results.

In substance, much of what Michael Berenbaum proposed in 1990 became true in the years that followed. In effect, “Jewish talent from the West” had arrived in the East in order to help rebuild Jewish life in all possible aspects. Rabbis came from Israel and the United States in order to ensure spiritual support and religious leadership; social workers began to set up all sorts of social welfare services; Jewish professionals started to re-organize formal and informal Jewish educational programs. Furthermore, renewal of Jewish life came to signify, as Berenbaum suggested, both the transmission of Jewish values to a population that lacked of therein and the inculcation of “programming skills” on how to run the whole panoply of affairs characteristic of a modern Jewish community. But more importantly, Berenbaum’s article senses an essential aspect of the process that was about to unravel in the years to come; the fact that rebuilding Jewish life in post-Communist Eastern Europe would be the result of a collective enterprise. Millions of dollars were invested, and hundreds of volunteers and professionals were mobilized to the region in order to revive the Jewish communities. However, there never existed such a “Jewish Peace Corps,” at least as Michael Berenbaum seemed to have envisioned it. Instead, a myriad of Jewish agencies and organizations, private foundations and even individual donors stemming from different ideological and religious backgrounds, each one deploying their own professional bodies, working methods and organizational culture, arrived in the region. Altogether they did not form a “Jewish Peace Corps,” but instead a loose but complex mosaic of Jewish solidarity and community services. Indeed, the fall of Communism re-opened a vast and largely unexplored territory, a new frontier, for Western Jewish intervention. On one hand, organizations that were forced to abandon Eastern Europe during the consolidation of the Communist regimes could now make their come-back and operate without any type of constraints. Notably, that was the case of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel/World Zionist Organization. But on the other hand, the period also accelerated the arrival of newer organizations dedicated to Jewish philanthropy, such as private family foundations and other charitable bodies. The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, The L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora or even Chabad Lubavitch, they all represented different types of “new players” in the Jewish solidarity field of post-Communist Europe. Who were these new and old Jewish agencies? What were their goals? Did they interact with one another? If so, how? This chapter analyzes the transnational

dynamics of Western Jewish organizations active in Europe; a *sui generis* "Jewish peace corps" that populated the concert of Jewish Eastern Europe after 1989. This chapter's goal is not only to provide an exhaustive description of the main institutional actors that established a presence in the region, but also to explore the dynamics of this truly diverse and transnational action carried out on behalf of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe.

5.2 Jewish agencies: Old, new and renovated

As shown in the first chapter, modern Jewish solidarity had been developing for almost a hundred and fifty years prior to the fall of Communism. Favored by the increasing internationalist atmosphere prevailing at the turn of the twentieth century, which saw the burgeoning of multi-state organizations dealing with transnational problems at all levels, but also responding to very specific needs and emergencies involving Jewish people throughout the world, world Jewry created its own —and very diverse— organizational tools. Each "Jewish" crisis led to the response of one or various Jewish centers —and of various groups within those centers—, which in turn created organizations mandated to operate on their behalf. Spheres such as self-defense and political advocacy, immigration, welfare and relief, but also education, culture, and religion, were covered by a wide range of organizations aiming at addressing an array of twentieth-century Jewish needs. The result was the creation of a network of extremely sophisticated and transnational organizations. Such institutions reflected the diversity of Jewish activities and presence as well as the heterogeneity of the Jewish world in terms of its financial and political capacity, ideological differences and religious orientations. The Jewish landscape in post-Communist Europe in 1989 and the years that ensued became increasingly transnational and diverse, which although is not strange in the tradition of Jewish solidarity, is a phenomenon that can nevertheless be seen as unprecedented in modern Jewish history. New and old relief, cultural, educational and advocacy-oriented agencies; religious groups, private foundations, Jewish NGOs and initiatives carried out simply by wealthy individuals converged in the region, each seeking to occupy different niches of activity. Some had already long years of existence and a vast experience in overseas aid, while others had only been recently created. Some opened offices and deployed staff in the region, while others

limited their activities to channeling funds through organizations which already had a presence in the field. World Jewry's intervention in post-Communist Europe gave way to a complex system of solidarity and community service, where collaboration, competition and overlapping were the dominant norms. However, it all depended on the area of action involved. Therefore, it is worthwhile for one to analyze each of the main areas of action and map the organizations that were active within their respective domains. The following section will focus in three areas: advocacy and Jewish diplomacy, welfare and social assistance and Jewish education and community-building.

5.2.1 Advocacy and Jewish diplomacy

In the field of self-defense, advocacy and "Jewish diplomacy," Europe became an arena where different institutional actors stemming from the traditionally American organizational realm competed. Indeed, since the end of the Second World War the importance of American Jewry in any venture related with overseas lobbying and self-defense cannot be underestimated.[332] At the closing of the twentieth century American Jewish diplomacy had achieved such a degree of sophistication and ubiquitous presence both in the domestic and international arena that it seemed like a natural step to get involved in the newly defined Eastern European Jewish affairs. Furthermore, in Eastern European Communist countries who had cut off diplomatic relations with Israel since 1967, Jewish organizations associated with the Diaspora benefited from their more independent position towards the Jewish State. Additionally, in times of economic hardship and the need for hard currency in Eastern Europe, American Jews realized that the Soviet leaders perceived them as the facilitators they needed in order to reach out to private investors and start a rapprochement with Washington. And the American Jewish leaders duly played that game. David Clayman, longtime Director of the Israel Office of the American Jewish Congress, referred to this particular point when reflecting about the political role of the American Jewish organizations in Central Eastern Europe during those years.

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[332] See Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986; Jack Wertheimer, "Jewish Organizational Life in the United States Since 1945", in *American Jewish Year Book*, 1995, vol. 95; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History, Yale University Press*, 2004; Jonathan Dekel-Chen, "Philanthropy, Diplomacy, and Jewish Internationalism", in Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels (eds), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 8, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

> All of us who have engaged in these leadership missions [in Communist East-Central Europe] have experienced not only the pomp and ceremony accorded to these unofficial groups, but also the solicitous respect and regard accorded to us in the hope that we would convey the correct message back to Washington. Whether the message was that of most-favored-nation status, or the need for foreign aid, or private investment, or an impending arms deal, there was always in the background a non-denied impression that these American Jewish delegations could influence events and decisions in Washington.[333]

Among all Jewish organizations, it was the **World Jewish Congress (WJC)** that succeeded in placing itself at the forefront of the Jewish diplomacy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet officialdom. Created in 1936 as a "voluntary association" of "representative Jewish bodies, communities, and organizations" from around the world, the WJC represented a continuation of the *Comité des Délégations Juives*, a Jewish diplomatic body established in 1919 whose aim was to struggle for the civil rights for Jews wherever they may be. The WJC's founder and first president was Stephen S. Wise, an American Reform rabbi and a prominent Zionist leader, whose goal was to create a broad international organization that could achieve Jewish unity at least in the field of Jewish diplomacy. Upon its foundation, the organization had to deal with two sorts of tensions. The first one concerned its relationship with the Zionist movement. As Zohar Segev argued, even if WJC's leaders were themselves active in Zionist politics and even occupied high positions within the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, a situation of untenable duality emerged. *A priori*, both organizations —in their ambition to assume the role of world Jewry's main representatives— had the same objectives and struggled for the same causes, something that created a situation of duality.[334] The second source of tension was related to its decision-making process. Despite the fact that the WJC federated representative Jewish bodies from over sixty countries,

[333] David Clayman, "Cooperation and Tensions Between American Jewry and Israel Over Selected Problems Confronting European Jewry", in S. Ilan Troen (ed.), *Jewish Centers & Peripheries. Europe between America and Israel Fifty Years After World War II*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London, 1999, p. 364.

[334] Zohar Segev, "Nahum Goldmann and the First Two Decades of the World Jewish Congress", in Mark A. Raider (ed.), *Nahum Goldmann. Statesman Without a State*, State University of New York Press and Tel Aviv University, 2009, p. 107-124.

decisions were taken in New York by a small deliberative group led by the President, who was in reality in the position to overwhelmingly influence if not set the WJC's agenda outright. This was especially true under Nahum Goldmann's leadership, the organization's enduring President who assumed the role between 1948 and 1977. In that capacity, he played a major role over the course of twentieth-century Jewish diplomacy. Under his Presidency, the WJC gained much of its reputation (as well as strong criticisms), notably as the driving force behind the establishment of the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (1952) with Goldmann as the initiator and primary negotiator sitting at the table with West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer.[335]

Whereas there are no systematic studies on the activities of the WJC during the last decades of the twentieth century, some sources point to the active role that the organization played during the last years of Communism in setting up channels of dialogue with Soviet functionaries across Eastern Europe. The organization's agenda included demands for improvements in the situation of the local Jewish population and insisted upon a reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Israel, which were cut off after the Six-Day War. Diplomatic efforts to "open up" Eastern Europe to the Jewish world were led by Edgar M. Bronfman, heir of the multi-million Canadian liquor empire Seagram's, who became WJC's President in 1979.[336] The fact that he was a powerful American businessman was not ignored by his Communist interlocutors. In troubled economic times in Eastern Europe, coupled with Soviet economies in need of hard currency and seeking to build ties with the United States, the World Jewish Congress had been able, through Bronfman's high-profile as an American businessman, to approach the Communist authorities of Hungary, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland as well as to establish contacts with the local Jewish communities.[337] Bronfman's leadership style and the way he combined political lobbying with business

[335] For Goldmann's political trajectory, see Jehuda Reinharz and Evyatar Friesel, "Nahum Goldmann. Jewish and Zionist Statesman—An Overview", in Mark A. Raider (ed.), Ibid., p. 3-59.

[336] During those years, Bronfman also became, through his family's foundation, a major private philanthropist devoted to Jewish causes in the United States and Israel. The World Jewish Congress also benefited from his largesse. When Edgar Bronfman passed away on December 21, 2013, Jewish media and Jewish organizations remembered him as "one of the iconic figures in Jewish philanthropy." See Jonathan Kandell, "Edgar M. Bronfman, Who Built a Bigger, More Elegant Seagram, Dies at 84", New York Times, December 22, 2013.

[337] Charles Hoffman, *Grey Dawn*…, op. cit., p. 55-58.

intentions have been defined by a WJC's executive as "diplomacy in business suits."[338] As it was already mentioned, this turned out to be especially attractive to Communist leaders interested in obtaining trading benefits, particularly the most-favored-nation status. In turn, WJC's officers toyed with that idea as well, trying to suggest that "the road to good relations with Washington […] led, to some extent, through Jerusalem."[339]

> There was never a quid pro quo in an explicit sense. We would discuss economic affairs with the leaders of these countries—stressing that this was strictly business—and at other times we would talk Jewish issues. We never mixed the two, although a general connection was understood. After all, each side had something to give the other. They wanted to use our networks of connections to reach international business people and western governments—not necessarily our direct investment. But they think their ties to the West will develop through Jewish businessmen. It is hard to disabuse them of this notion, and in this sense they expect us to deliver.[340]

In 1989, the WJC was allowed to open an office in Budapest, the very first in a Communist country, and was received with all honors by the Hungarian government. A few years earlier, in 1987, the organization celebrated a meeting in the Hungarian capital.[341] After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the WJC's activities in Europe were focused primarily on property restitution. In 1992 the WJC, along with other Jewish agencies, created the umbrella organization called World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO), a body that dealt with the restitution of Jewish property confiscated by the Nazis and later nationalized by the Communist governments of Eastern Europe. The WJRO mandated the WJC to make initial contacts with the local Jewish communities and conduct negotiations with the governments. Benefiting from the backing of the United States Secretary of State and by President Bill Clinton, the WJRO obtained initial agreements with Hungary and Poland. The WJRO/WJC dealt with stolen art pieces, dormant accounts, and Jewish property located in Western Europe as well.

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[338] Avi Beker, "Sixty Years of World Jewish Congress Diplomacy: From Foreign Policy to the Soul of the Nation", in S. Ilan Troen (ed.), *Jewish Centers…,* op. cit., p. 381-396
[339] Avi Beker, Ibid., p. 382.
[340] Testimony of an anonymous WJC's officer, quoted in Charles Hoffman, op. cit., p. 83.
[341] *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, p. 31-33 and Hoffman, Ibid., p. 86.

The negotiations conducted with the Swiss banks received special international attention as well as ulterior compensations.[342]

In parallel, the World Jewish Congress began to leave some of the initiative to the **European Jewish Congress (EJC)**. In fact, until the late 1980s the EJC constituted a branch of the WJC, without a real implication in the continent's Jewish affairs. It was in 1986-1987, when its offices were transferred to Paris, recruiting Western European leadership, that the EJC began to be more directly involved in European issues. The organization was especially active in the Council of Europe and, later, in the European Parliament located in Strasbourg. All along the 1990s, the EJC —always funded by WJC— worked side by side with its "big brother," but while the latter put its energies in property restitution and in cultivating diplomatic relations with heads of state and senior government officials throughout Europe, the former began to be more involved in every-day political work, namely, lobbying in the European institutions in areas of human rights, antisemitism, and remembrance of the Holocaust and in running political training seminars for civil society groups and Jewish leaders of the former communist countries. It was not until the year 2000, with the arrival of the Russian oligarch Moshe Kantor as head of the organization, that the EJC became more independent from the WJC. The EJC operated during the 1990s with a budget of $500,000 a year.[343]

But neither the WJC, nor the EJC were the only Jewish advocacy organizations active in post-communist Europe. The **American Jewish Committee (AJC)**, the oldest of the "big three" community-relations organizations of the United States[344], was also active in the European political arena. If the World Jewish Congress was largely perceived as an international Jewish organization, despite being financed mostly by American Jews and based in New York, the AJC, on the contrary, was and is closely associated with American Jewry. Founded in 1906 by the same group of prominent,

[342] Avi Beker, "Sixty Years…", op. cit., p. 387-393.

[343] Interview with Serge Cwajgenbaum, General Secretary of the EJC and active in the WJC since 1974, Paris, 13/11/2013.

[344] The two other big organizations in the American Jewish scene are the Anti-Defamation League (founded by the B'nai B'rith in 1913) and the American Jewish Congress (1918). Each of them prioritized different areas of action but shared the same general goal of protecting the status and rights of the Jews in the United States. For an analysis of their role in the American Jewish context, see Daniel J. Elazar, *Community & Polity. The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry*, Revised and Updated Edition, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia and Jerusalem, 1995, p. 256-276.

well-to-do, *uptown* Jews of German descent that would be later involved in the creation of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the AJC was created as a reaction to the pogroms that were taking place in Tsarist Russia. Its goal was to prevent "the infraction of the civil, political, and religious rights of Jews" in any part of the world.[345] The Committee began to function as a pressure group to influence American diplomacy and domestic jurisprudence in areas such as civil rights, discrimination and immigration quotas. On some occasions, tactics included conducting educational and public relations campaigns. The Committee also sponsored social science research on issues pertaining to integration, civil rights, and antisemitism as well as published the *American Jewish Year Book* and *Commentary* magazine. Over time, the AJC evolved to a great extent in in terms of structure and complexity and went from being a small and elitist "committee" that practiced non-confrontational and behind-the-scenes diplomacy, to a highly influential and professionalized organization promoting, as its website today announces, a "global voice for a global era."[346] The AJC boasts 175,000 members and offices and representations across the world. Thousands of people, including high rank American politicians, attend its annual meeting taking place every April or May in Washington. Also, ideologically, the AJC has evolved no less dramatically. Its original founders, prominent figures of the early twentieth-century American Jewish landscape, mostly affiliated with liberal Judaism, cultivated an "integrationist" attitude that, while trying to secure the position of Jews in the United States, sought, at the same time, to leave no doubts about their complete allegiance to America and its democratic and liberal values. They conceived their actions from a universalistic approach, something that led them to understand their fight against antisemitism and for the inclusion of Jews, in the wider struggle against any kind of prejudice, which ended by bringing the Committee increasingly closer to other struggles for civil rights, especially that of the African American community. Regarding Zionism, the AJC traditionally held strong non-Zionist ideas. This meant that while fully supportive of the creation of a Jewish homeland, lobbying, for example, for the

[345] For the history of the AJC's first decades of existence, see Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1972.
[346] See https://www.ajc.org/globaloffices [last access, 10/3/2023]

elimination of the 1939 White Paper[347], they refused to accept the idea of the Jewish ingathering in one country, that is, the concept that Israel represented the only place where Jewish life could thrive. Jacob Blaustein, AJC president during the 1950s, collided with Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion over the issue of encouraging mass Aliyah from the United States and attempts to reach a negotiated agreement between the Committee and Ben-Gurion that would clarify the extent to which the Zionist predicament would be tolerated in the United States took place over those years.[348] It was not until the Six-Day-War that the AJC, in tune with the changing Jewish collective mood, began not only to endorse and support more openly Israel but also to turn its attention to more particularistic Jewish issues. Therefore, the AJC began to engage in struggles more directly linked with the Jewish cause, such as the plight for Soviet Jews. In the same vein, it also began to be attentive to changes within American communal life, proposing itself as a *think-tank* for policies that tended to ensure the so-called Jewish "continuity."

Even if the AJC had always been concerned for the well-being of the Jews throughout the world, its actions remained focused primarily within the United States. The impact of the Holocaust led AJC leaders to expand their activities to Europe. In France, the Committee opened in 1947 an office in Paris, from where they monitored the situation of the Jews from behind the Iron Curtain and North Africa. They also began to be increasingly interested in the local Jewish scene, hoping to become an influential actor in shaping the emerging French Jewish self-defense organizations. The AJC also published its own journal, "Evidences," from where they advanced anti-Communist ideas.[349] Germany was also a source of interest, though the approach differed. During the immediate post-war years, the Committee, along with the WJC, was part of the negotiating circle claiming the German Federal Republic for reparations —negotiations

[347] "White Papers" are official reports issued by a British Government commission, usually following government investigative commissions. The famous 1939 White Paper rejected the "Peel Commission's" partition plan for Palestine on the grounds that it was not feasible. The document stated that Palestine would be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab one, but an independent state to be established within ten years. Jewish immigration to Palestine was limited to 75,000 for the first five years, subject to the country's "economic absorptive capacity," and would later be contingent on Arab consent. Stringent restrictions were imposed on land acquisition by Jews. The Jewish Agency for Palestine issued a scathing response to the White Paper, saying the British were denying the Jewish people their rights in the "darkest hour of Jewish history." Retrieved from https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-british-white-papers [Last access 10/3/23]

[348] Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong. The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006*, Brandeis University Press, Waltham, Massachusetts, 2007, p. 58-66.

[349] Laura Hobson Faure, *Un « Plan Marshall Juif ». La présence juive américaine en France après la Shoah, 1944-1954*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2013, p. 193-204.

that ultimately led to the creation of the Claims Conference. Later on, the AJC initiated exchange programs and political contacts with different political and civil society organizations of West Germany as a way to counter a possible reemergence of antisemitism in the civil society. After the reunification, Germany continued to be considered important by the AJC, so much so that in 1997 an office was opened in Berlin, employing local staff.[350] During the same years, the AJC began a public relations campaign —that included ads in the *New York Times*— in order to press the German government to extend their reparations program to Jewish Nazi victims of Eastern Europe, a population that had been historically ignored by those allocations. Germany aside, when Communism fell the AJC began to reach out to governments and political leaders of the region, trying to establish channels of dialogue. Thus, a first level of activity was based in restoring diplomatic contacts with Eastern Europe's highest authorities, seeking to advance issues related with Holocaust commemoration, property restitution and contemporary antisemitism. Leadership missions to meet with European politicians and opinion-makers were organized by the AJC on a regular basis. On a second level, and following the German experience during the 1970s and 1980s, and also the practice, common to the Committee, of enhancing "fact-finding" visits of influent non-Jewish opinion-makers and intellectuals to Israel, the AJC began to organize exchange and educational programs between Europe and the United States, targeting emerging non-Jewish leaders, influential people of the region and even high-rank militaries.[351] This reflected the interest in Central and Eastern Europe's emerging civil society that the AJC developed in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism. In this respect, AJC commissioned opinion survey studies in various countries of the region aiming at shedding some light on the attitudes of the local population on issues such as antisemitism, tolerance, multiculturalism, and democracy. It also co-sponsored conferences, programs and seminars with German foundations such as the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation and with the Council of Europe, all dealing with issues pertaining to the situation of Jews and other minorities in the new European context.[352]

[350] Sanua, op. cit., p. 349.
[351] Ibid., p. 345
[352] David Clayman, op. cit., p. 362.

Finally, a third level of activities regarding Eastern Europe took place in Washington. When these new countries began to negotiate their entrance to NATO, the Committee acted as a "watchdog," evaluating the place these countries provided for Holocaust commemorations and how they were dealing with property restitutions as well as with the struggle against antisemitism. The AJC also campaigned within the United States in order to raise awareness about the revival of Jewish life taking place in Eastern Europe. Therefore, emerging Jewish leaders from the region, and European intellectuals such as Diana Pinto[353] were invited on a regular basis to the annual meetings in Washington and toured afterwards to other cities in the United States under the sponsorship of the AJC. As a way to showcase the Jewish revival, the AJC translated into English different publications produced by young Jews in countries such as Poland and Hungary.[354]

Another influential actor in the landscape of American Jewish advocacy, the **Anti-Defamation League (ADL)**, was present in Europe though in a more mediated fashion. In 1990 the ADL co-sponsored the creation of **CEJI-Center for European Jewish Information**, a body based in Brussels primarily devoted to conducting educational programs aiming at promoting diversity, multicultural integration and combating prejudice and discrimination across Europe. The content, structure and even the resources applied into those programs directly stemmed from ADL's educational initiatives in the United States, in particular, from a program called "A World of Difference."

The Anti-Defamation League was created as an offshoot of the B'nai B'rith in 1913 in order to combat antisemitism, counter defamation for Jews and denounce racial supremacist groups. Against the backdrop of the Leo Frank's case, a Jewish person that was mistakenly accused of murder and was later lynched by the local population of a town in Georgia, the ADL sought to become the leading voice in the struggle against antisemitism in the United States. Among other initiatives, the League had a notorious role in extracting an apology and retraction of Henry Ford, whose publication, *Dearborn Independent*, included overt antisemitic content.[355] In a way, the ADL followed a similar pattern than the AJC in terms of the evolution of its political agenda.

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[353] On Diana Pinto see chapter 2.

[354] Telephone interview with Rabbi Andrew Baker, AJC Director for European Affairs between 1992 and 2000, and since 2001 Director for International Jewish Affairs, 12/12/2013.

[355] Jerome Chanes, "Anti-Defamation League (ADL)", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, p. 194-195.

Whereas during the first decades of activities its main goal was to secure the position and status of Jews in American society, the agenda began to expand once this issue became less pressing. Thus, the ADL began to be involved, during the 1950s and 1960s, in broader coalitions for the struggle for the right of other minorities, particularly the African-American, to cultivate intergroup relations and to be an active player in the struggle for the separation of church and state.[356] In the 1970s, when radicalized black civil right groups began to show signs of antisemitism, and therefore putting into question the Black-Jewish coalition[357], the agenda of the ADL turned "inward" again, prioritizing Jewish issues. The Six-Day War had also an influence in determining the renovated focus that Israel would have in the League's agenda. Over time, ADL developed an extraordinarily rich scope of educational activities destined to promote ethnic and religious tolerance, to teach about the Holocaust and to alert against antisemitism. Describing itself as "the leading provider of anti-bias education," the ADL established in 1985 the World of Difference Institute in order to carry out educational campaigns in schools, university campuses, workplaces and other grass-roots associations of local communities.[358] It was precisely this model that would be exported to Europe at the moment of the foundation of CEJI.

As with the case of the many other American Jewish groups, the ADL began to have a more direct involvement with European Jews after the Holocaust. In the 1980s ADL opened an office in Paris destined to deal with European Jewish issues. However, constant clashes over what the European B'nai B'rith considered an American interference in local affairs led the experiment to an abrupt conclusion, with the ADL closing the Paris office at some point in the early 1990s.[359] Whether ADL's decision to have a more mediated presence in the continent was due to this unsuccessful experience remains unclear.

Based in Brussels, CEJI-Center for European Jewish Information was perhaps the first distinctly Jewish organization to be functioning within the dense —and sometimes overcrowded— fabric of agencies and organizations that orbit around the European Union's programs and subsidies. Less a diplomatic body than an educational NGO,

[356] On the Jewish role in the struggle for the separation of church and state, see Gregg Ivers, *To Build a Wall. American Jews and the Separation of Church and State*, University Press of Virginia, 1995.
[357] On Black-Jewish relations in the United States of the postwar period, see Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism. A History*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, p. 308-311.
[358] https://www.adl.org/education/world-difference-institute [last access, 10/3/2023]
[359] Clayman, op. cit., p. 360-361.

CEJI's main programs during the 1990s, conducted in classrooms and among young people, dealt with advancing an agenda of multicultural tolerance and integration, and in promoting what in the European Union's language was dubbed as "fundamental rights." The Center was also involved in interfaith dialogue. In this respect, the Anti-Defamation League clearly stood as CEJI's most important institutional backer. A series of documents issued by CEJI in 2004 described itself as "the official representative at the European Union of ADL's A World of Difference Institute,"[360] being its programs a "European adaptation" of the American educational initiative.[361] Yet, ADL never had any participation in CEJI's budget. The organization was originally supported by a few Jewish donors from Western Europe, such as Baron Alain Philippson from Belgium and Daniel Kropf from Holland. A British charity, the Parthenon Trust was also involved during the first years. Since 1994 CEJI has been able to secure much of its funding from the European Union itself.

5.2.2 Welfare and social assistance

A very different landscape existed within the welfare and relief field and was dominated by the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint or JDC)**[362]. After having played an important role in providing assistance and support to Holocaust survivors stationed in Displaced Persons' camps, as well as its involvement in the reconstruction of Jewish communities in Western Europe, JDC, during the Cold War years, provided overt and underground assistance to Eastern European Jewish communities. Expelled from virtually all Eastern European countries during the early communist years, in 1953 the Joint went on to create a front organization called *Société de Secours et d'Entre'Aide* (SSE) based in Geneva in order to be able to channel funds to communities placed behind the Iron Curtain. In spite of being officially barred from such countries, the Joint discreetly distributed assistance to Hungary, Poland,

[360] CEJI, "Presentation du centre européen Juif d'information", p.2.
[361] "Communication de la Commission Européenne relative à la future agence Européenne des droits fondamentaux. Participation à la consultation organisée par la Commission Européenne", Contribution soumise par Pascale Charhon-Directrice du CEJI, 15 décembre 2004, p. 1.
[362] On the Joint or JDC, see chapter 1

Czechoslovakia, and other Soviet countries through its third-party organization.[363] The only exception was Romania. In 1967, and thanks to Ceausescu's concessions in great part due to the active role played by the charismatic and controversial Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen[364], the Joint was allowed to start assisting the estimated 60,000 Romanian Jews more directly. As a consequence, a vast welfare program was put in place by the Joint, via regular contributions to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (FEDROM). The program included the upkeep of eleven subsidized kosher kitchens dispersed across the country, the provision of medical services and the distribution of food packages, clothing, cash allowances and winter assistance to approximately 2,000 elderly and impoverished Jews.[365] By 1976, Romania alone represented JDC's second largest country program consuming approximately one-fourth of its total annual budget.[366] During the 1980s, JDC's annual allocations to the Romanian program amounted to more than $ 4,000,000.[367]

Romania aside, the situation of "indirect" help lasted until 1980-1981. Ralph Goldman, then Executive Vice-President of the JDC, conscious that an official presence of the Joint in those countries would put the organization closer to a reentry in the USSR, initiated a series of diplomatic negotiations with Soviet leaders across the region that ultimately succeeded in letting the Joint being admitted back to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. JDC was thus allowed to start sending personnel in order to assess the needs of the Jewish population that, according to the agreement signed with the Soviet authorities, had to be exclusively circumscribed to welfare and medical

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[363] Tom Shachtman, *I Seek My Brethren: Ralph Goldman and 'the Joint': Rescue, Relief, and Reconstruction*, Newmarket Press, 2001, p. 62-63.

[364] The role that the Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen played during communism, and the controversies that this generated afterwards, was mentioned in the previous chapter. See also Rabbi Moses Rosen's autobiography, *Dangers, tests and miracles: the remarkable life story of Chief Rabbi Rosen of Romania as told to Joseph Finkelstone*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1990. On a critical evaluation about his behavior, see Leon Volovici, "National Communism and Jewish Politics: Romanian Chief Rabbi Rosen's Miracles and Dilemmas", in S. Ilan Troen (ed.), *Jewish Centers…,* op. cit., p. 85-98.

[365] See my interview with Zvi Feine, Jerusalem, July 8, 2011. Based in Jerusalem, Feine served as JDC Country Director for Romania between 1988 and 2002. See also Zvi Feine, "Partnering with the Jewish Community of Romania and Transitioning from Holocaust and Communism to Modernity", in Ram A. Cnaan, Melissa E. Dichter and Jeffrey Draine (eds.), *A Century of Social Work and Social Welfare at Penn*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, p. 274.

[366] *Compassion in Action: A Continuing Task. A Study of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Inc*., December, 1976, p. 14-15.

[367] American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Global Program and Budget 1987, Planning and Budget Department, New York, March 1, 1987, p. 1.

assistance. In other terms, engaging in educational activities with younger Jews was totally forbidden.[368]

After the fall of Communism, JDC continued to have a leading role in setting up and conducting social welfare programs. The fact that the JDC could now operate without any constraints, allowed the American organization to expand its programs to other countries (to the already existing operations in Romania, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia they were added Albania, Bulgaria, the Baltic States and, of course, the former Soviet Union) and to grow in sophistication. In order to conduct these operations, the Joint, as American Jewry's overseas arm, counted with its natural source of funding, a percentage of the annual contributions made to the United Jewish Appeal by the Jewish Federations of North America. However, since the mid-1990s the JDC had been able to attract a string of different donors that were placed outside the regular fundraising channels. They helped "leverage" the organization's increasingly insufficient budget.[369] Relying on this complex system of funding, the Joint became virtually the sole broker of social assistance in Eastern Europe (and the former Soviet Union), being able to shape —as the organization historically did— the policies in that matter. Thanks to this intricate funding mechanism, JDC's annual expenditures for Eastern Europe nearly tripled in twenty years, going from $5,019,600 in 1980 to $13,009,570 in 1999.[370] Who were these funders?

One of the Joint's historical main partners in its welfare undertakings was the **Central British Fund (CBF)**, the British —and more modest— counterpart of the American overseas organization. Established in 1933 by a group of wealthy businessmen and Jewish leaders of the British Jewish community, the CBF original goal was to aid the victims of Nazi Germany. The Central British Fund for the Relief of German Jewry (CBF), as it was originally named, would act as a fundraising body on behalf of the German Jews, being also in charge of setting up different bodies destined to provide help to the refugees arriving in London. The CBF was also very much involved in the famous *Kindertransport* operation, whereby almost ten thousand unaccompanied

[368] Although some assistance for the upkeep of religious activities was allowed. See my interview with Ralph I. Goldman, Jerusalem, July 16, 2010. Shachtman, op. cit., p. 62-90; 151-173.

[369] See Mark I. Rosen, *Mission, Meaning, and Money. How the Joint Distribution Committee Became a Fundraising Innovator*, Fisher-Bernstein Institute for Jewish Philanthropy and Leadership, Brandeis University, 2010.

[370] See American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Global Program and Budget 1985, Planning and Budget Department, New York, March 14, 1985, p. 222 and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Annual Report 1999, p. 2.

Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were sent to the United Kingdom within a nine-month period prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.[371] Having promised to the British authorities that the refugees would not become a financial burden on the public funds, the CBF was responsible for the financial upkeep of the refugee children during the war years, until the massive arrival of refugees pushed the government to reconsider its position and to contribute. After the war, the CBF engaged in different relief tasks concerning Jewish population in Europe, such as sending delegations of social workers and volunteers to assist Shoah survivors in the recently liberated concentration camps, helping in the rebuilding of Jewish communities in the European continent and working in the resettlement of various contingents of Jewish migrants from North Africa and Eastern Europe in the UK and in Europe. This way, the CBF became the overseas agency of British Jewry. In 1994 CBF changed its name to World Jewish Relief (WJR) and continued to be focused in supporting welfare projects destined to alleviate the situation of impoverished Jews (and non-Jews as well) around the world and in responding to international disasters. The relationship between the CBF/WJR and the Joint goes back to the 1970s and it always took the form of grants that the former gave to the latter earmarked for special projects. Thus, CBF contributed for more than thirty years in a wide array of social projects conducted by the Joint taking place in Morocco, Iran, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In the seventies, CBF shared the costs of programs such as assistance to Moroccan Jews prior emigration, the upkeep of a youth and old age club in Tehran, and day care programs for working mothers in Israel, just to name a few.[372] During the 1980s and the 1990s, CBF/WJR's money helped fund different welfare and relief programs carried out by JDC in the region. In 1987, for example, the CBF contributed to the JDC with $436,850 plus 25,000 Pounds Sterling. $128,000 out of the total went for programs delivered in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia.[373] In the year 2000, WJR's contribution reached $2,119,822. More than

[371] Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain*, 1938-1945, Purdue University Press, 2012.

[372] JDC-NY, Central British Fund, 1973-1974, item ID 1006583, Letter from Accounts Department to Dr. A. Kohane, February 5, 1974; JDC-NY, Central British Fund, 1973-1974, item ID 1006619, Letter from Akiva Kohane to Dr. M. Feiler, Re: Central British Fund Grant, November 22, 1975.

[373] American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Global Program and Budget 1987, Planning and Budget Department, New York, March 1, 1987, p. 138. $15,000 were used to give cash assistance in Czechoslovakia, $25,000 for cash assistance and a sleep-away camp in Hungary, $20,000 for assistance to "Needy Righteous Gentiles" and medicaments for elderly in Poland, $60,000 for food packages and kosher canteens in Romania, and $8,000 for relief and welfare to pensioners.

fifty percent of that money served to fund a joint program that the JDC and the WJR were conducting in Western Ukraine since 1997 and the rest went to Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia and Hungary.[374]

Yet, the organization that, since the mid-late 1990s, began to be the key funder of JDC's welfare programs in Eastern Europe was the **Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference)**. The importance of the funds given by the German Federal Republic to the Claims Conference for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Jewish communities in Western Europe during the post-Holocaust years has been widely acknowledged. Between 1954 and 1964, $ 110 million was distributed among forty countries.[375] Likewise, monies from the now unified Germany, plus contributions from the Hungarian and Austrian governments, from German industries and from profits obtained from heirless restituted Jewish property, administered by the Claims Conference, began to be decisive in the post-Communist context. Since 1994 Claims Conference's monies have funded social welfare programs and medical services provided to Nazi victims living in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries. Those funds were majorly funneled to the Joint, who took charge of operating these programs in the field.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, or just *Claims Conference*, represents a unique case in the field of international law regarding wartime reparations made from a government (in this case West Germany) to a group of individuals (Jewish victims of Nazi persecution).[376] The establishment in 1951 of a Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany was fostered by Nahum Goldmann, the charismatic President of the World Jewish Congress between 1948 and 1977. The Conference was actually a consortium of twenty-three Jewish organizations from around the world whose initial goals was to obtain funds for the relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of Jewish Nazi victims and to aid in rebuilding Jewish communities and institutions devastated from Nazi persecution. In addition, the Claims Conference sought to secure compensation for individual victims and to pursue measures for the restitution of pre-war Jewish property in Germany.

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[374] American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 2000 Worldwide Program, Program Planning and Budget Department, New York, March 1, 2000, p. 241.

[375] Ronald W. Zweig, *German Reparations and the Jewish World: A History of the Claims Conference*, 2nd edition, Frank Cass, London, 2001.

[376] Marilyn Henry, *Confronting the Perpetrators. A History of the Claims Conference*, Vallentine Mitchell, London, Portland, 2007; Ronald W. Zweig, *German Reparations and the Jewish World: A History of the Claims Conference*, 2nd edn, Frank Cass, London, 2001.

International law did provide a legal framework for wartime reparations between victorious and defeated states but offered no precedents for a state to concede reparations to individuals represented by non-governmental organizations. However, as early as 1943, Jewish scholars and lawmakers in America began to raise the issue of reparations and compensations that Germany would be obliged to settle in the postwar period regarding the crimes committed to the Jews. Fully aware of the judicial challenge that this posed, their suggestion was that the "Jewish nation" had to be represented by an *ad hoc* international agency. Estimations of the material damages inflicted to the Jews by the Third Reich went up to twelve billion dollars.[377] Once the West German state was legally constituted in 1949, informal contacts started to take place between Jewish organizations and German authorities. What finally triggered the creation of the Claims Conference was a speech given by the then West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer to the Bundestag in 1951. There, while recognizing the "moral" responsibility that West Germany had for the crimes committed by the Nazis to the Jews, he promised to deliver material reparations to the victims and requested Jews to form a representative organization with which West Germany would be able to negotiate the conditions for those reparations.[378] It took a year to reach a formal agreement with the German authorities. The Luxembourg Agreement (1952), as it came to be known what was actually a series of agreements or "protocols" covering individual and collective claims, stipulated that the West German government agreed to pay compensations ("*Wierdergutmachung*") both to Israel and to the Claims Conference, enacting at the same time legislation to provide compensations and property restitutions to individual victims of Nazi persecution. Under these arrangements, Israel was bound to receive DM 3 billion in goods to be paid over a twelve-year period and the Claims Conference, another DM 450 million for projects aimed at survivors living outside Israel.[379]

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[377] See Dean Silver, "The Future of International Law as Seen through the Jewish Material Claims Conference against Germany", *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3/4 (Summer - Autumn, 1980), p. 215-228.

[378] This last request was a de facto acceptance by Adenauer to the pressures exerted by different Jewish leaders on the issue that West Germany should deal not only with Israel, as they originally envisaged, but also with Nazi victims living elsewhere. On the elaboration of the Nazi past by East and West Germany, see Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1999.

[379] Henry, op. cit., p. 2. The fact that Israel and Claims Conference reached different agreements was part of previous negotiations within the Jewish world. In fact, Israel pretended the Conference to rally behind Israel's claims. Finally, it was convened that Israel and Claims Conference would present

During its sixty years of existence the Claims Conference exercised an ongoing pressure upon the West German authorities in order to expand compensation and restitution measures. It also succeeded in enlarging its funding sources, including the Austrian and the Hungarian governments, German industries who profited from slave labor such as Volkswagen and Daimler Benz, Swiss Banks, and private foundations. These ongoing negotiations resulted in the creation of a series of different funds comprising a vast and complex system of indemnifications, compensations, pensions, restitutions and financial aid distributed to a variety of Nazi victims dispersed around the world as well as to an array of Jewish agencies running rehabilitation and welfare services and Holocaust-related educational and cultural programs.

The role of Claims Conference evolved dramatically during these decades as well. Conceived on a first place as an advocacy organization acting on behalf of the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, it was forced to become in 1980 an "operating" agency after West Germany pegged a new fund (the "Hardship Fund", destined primarily to compensate Nazi victims who emigrated from the Soviet Union into the "free world" during the 1970s) to the condition that Claims Conference assume the task of administering it. That implied taking responsibilities in determining eligible cases and in disbursing those funds, though following strict German limitations.

The German reunification opened new avenues for claiming further compensations and restitutions. Firstly, the Claims Conference urged the reunified German government in order to establish an additional fund for those Holocaust survivors from Eastern European countries that had previously received no compensation. As a consequence, since 1992 Germany agreed to pay lifetime pensions of DM 500 per month to an estimated population of 25,000 Nazi victims.[380] These compensations would be later expanded to more eligible recipients in Central Eastern Europe.[381] Secondly, Claims Conference negotiated the passing of legislation ensuring the restitution of Jewish property located in the former German Democratic Republic. The

different sets of claims for a different set of purposes. The Israeli delegation made claims for the expense of integrating half-a-million immigrants in the immediate post-Holocaust years, on the grounds that the absorption of such an influx of people suffering all sorts of distress caused huge outlays for the newly constituted state.

[380] On the role that the US Government played in supporting Claim Conference's demands, see Karen Heilig, "From the Luxembourg Agreement to Today: Representing a People", Berkeley Journal of International Law, Volume 20, Issue 1, Article 6, 2002, p. 185-189.

[381] As of October 2012, the CEE Fund had allocated $514 million to 24,758 survivors. See The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, "60 Years of the Claims Conference. 1952-2012", p. 37.

Vermögensgesetz, as the law was called, established also that the Claims would be designated "successor organization" for all heirless and unclaimed individual and communal Jewish property. This gave the Claims access to and, what is more, the freedom to distribute the money generated by the sales of that unclaimed property, which was calculated by the end of 2001 in 8,089 properties.[382] Thus, this permitted the organization to make for the first time overt allocations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, countries that until then were excluded from any compensation program due to the refusal of West Germany to deal with the communist half of Europe. Between 1995 and 2000, Claims conference distributed $400 million, primarily to programs aimed at providing services —food packages, home care, medical assistance— to Nazi victims in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those programs were run almost exclusively by the JDC. "These sums made the Conference," pointed out Marylin Henry, "one of the largest Jewish charitable agencies in the world."[383]

Strongly criticized by the Nazi victims and Jewish organizations because of its bureaucratic and lousy procedures, the numbers of Claims Conference are nonetheless impressive. The negotiations carried out by the Conference led to one-time or on-going payments to more than 500,000 Jewish victims in 67 countries. In the year 2000, more than 94,000 Nazi victims were still receiving monthly pensions totaling DM 955 a year.[384]

[382] Henry, op. cit., p. 119-120.

[383] Ibid., p. 194.

[384] In 2009,11 employees of the Claims Conference were accused of approving more than 5,000 fraudulent applications for restitution claims and thus defrauding the German government of $57 million. See, among others, Maxine Dovere, "Inside the Claims Conference Fraud Trial", *eJewishphilanthropy.com*, May 7, 2013. Available online at: http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/inside-the-claims-conference-fraud-trial/ [Last access: 10/3/2023] and Sam Sokol and Eva Tapiero, "Claims Conference mismanagement key in 'facilitating' fraud, internal report alleges", *The Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2013. Available online at: http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-News/Claims-Conference-mismanagement-key-in-facilitating-fraud-internal-report-alleges-319190 [Last access: 10/3/2023]

Figure 11. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of the Federal Republic of Germany signing the Luxembourg Agreements on September 10, 1952. Source: "60 Years of the Claims Conference", The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 2012, p. 9.

Besides the CBF/WJR and the Claims Conference, JDC began to interact with new actors emerging in the Jewish overseas philanthropic arena of the 1990s. A number of private foundations, established by wealthy American Jewish individuals or families and usually run by a professional staff, began to be increasingly active players in the rebuilding of Jewish Europe. In most cases, these foundations played a role of grant-making bodies, supporting with extensive contributions the variety of programs that were being conducted by organizations in the field. However, foundations could also be more directly involved by virtue of conducting their own operations in the field, something that required opening offices in Europe, bringing professionals from abroad, and hiring local staff. That was notably the case, as we shall see later, of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. Yet, as much as their role was circumscribed as disbursing bodies, their influence in the design of programs cannot be overstated. The money that these bodies provided was earmarked for very specific projects and thus organizations in the field competed for and were obliged to allocate them accordingly. We will mention here three of the most important ones. Their stories share the same

combination of upward social mobility characteristic of Jewish immigrants to the United States, philanthropic ethos and commitment to Jewish causes both in the domestic realm as well as overseas.

The **Buncher Family Foundation** constitutes a perfect example of the combination of these elements. Jack Buncher, the son of Russian immigrants that arrived in Pittsburgh in the early 1900s, started his career at twenty-four with little more than his father's scrap yard. Decades later, as the sole owner of The Buncher Co., a real estate firm, Buncher became a multimillion-dollar developer and one of Pittsburgh's largest property owners, with 10 million square feet (929,030 square meters) of commercial and office space. Before becoming a developer, Jack Buncher expanded his father's junk business by participating in the American war efforts, touring South America looking for scrap metal and raw material to be shipped to the United States.[385] When Mr. Buncher passed away in 2001, a local newspaper estimated that he was leaving behind one of the largest real estate portfolios ever accumulated in Pittsburgh.[386]

Established in 1974, the Buncher Foundation began to be the conduit for Jack Buncher's charitable activities, supporting dozens of local charity projects in Pittsburgh. In 1989, concerned about the small and isolated Jewish communities of Latin America, Buncher approached the Pittsburgh Jewish Federation, which in turn contacted the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The result was the establishment of the Buncher Leadership Program, a leadership development program that would especially target Jewish community leaders of the region. The program, a sort of mentoring process, started with training sessions given by local professionals and finished with a trip to Israel, where the recipients received further training and coaching. In 1991 the program expanded to the former Eastern bloc and later included Jews from India. During the first three years, the foundation allocated the JDC $100,000 per year to run this project. In 1992, that amount began to be increased 20% each year. The Buncher Leadership Program became a genuine transnational enterprise that functioned within JDC: Buncher funds, channeled to JDC via the Pittsburgh Jewish Federation, and implemented by a multinational staff that included Latin Americans,

[385] Interview with Jack Buncher, National Council for Jewish Women, Pittsburgh Section, Oral History Project, University of Pittsburgh, 1994, Tape 2, Side 3. Available online at https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3Aais196440.059 [last access April 22, 2023].

[386] Dan Fitzpatrick, "Obituary: Jack Buncher / Developer who built real estate empire", *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Wednesday, December 5th, 2001. http://old.post-gazette.com/obituaries/20011205buncher1205p3.asp [last access: April 10, 2023].

Europeans, Russians and Israelis, reached out to would-be-Jewish-leaders from Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union, Latin America, and India and gave them intensive training seminars on Jewish values and social management. When explaining this program to a group of Jewish women from Pittsburg who was interviewing him for an oral history project, Jack Buncher said: “I can’t tell you how big [this program] it has gone.”

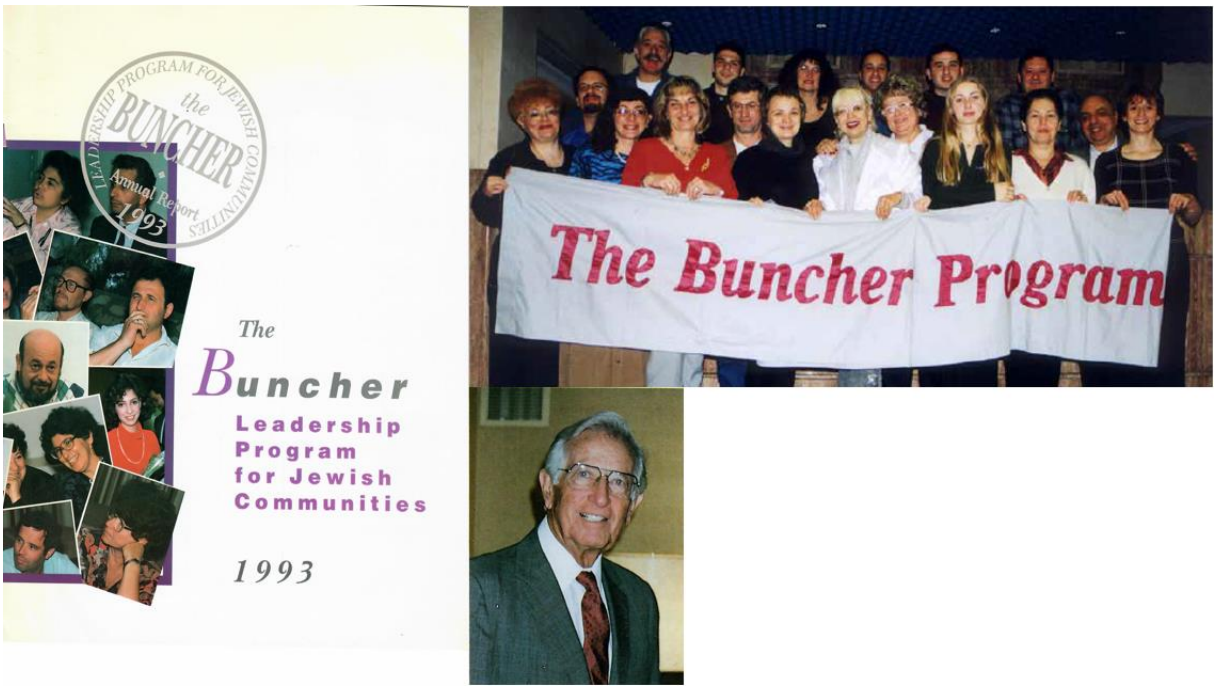

Figure 12. From left to right. Front cover photo of the Buncher Leadership Program report for 1993. Photo of Jack Buncher. Group of Buncher graduates, circa 1994.

Like the Buncher Family Foundation, by the time Communism imploded, **The Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation, Inc.**, established in 1959 in Baltimore and in Hawaii, had already thirty years of philanthropic work in the United States. Born in Galicia (at that time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) in 1908, Harry Weinberg arrived in the United States with his family at age of three. As poor immigrants they settled in Baltimore. Already as a boy Harry showed inclinations for business selling souvenirs to parade-goers celebrating the end of the Great War. “The rest,” stated one of the Foundation’s reports, “is Horatio Alger-like story of ever-increasing wealth accumulation.” Weinberg became a successful businessman in the 1950s and 1960s by heading diverse intra-urban transportation systems, owning mass transit bus lines in New York, Scranton, Dallas, and Honolulu. He later ventured into financial and real

estate investments. At the time of his death in 1990, Weinberg "was the largest single real estate investor in Hawaii."[387] The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation (Jeannette after his wife) was founded by Harry in 1959 with the goal to assist poor people. In its statutes, it was established that at least 25 percent of the total contributions each year had to be made to organizations whose beneficiaries were primarily Jewish people, and at least another 25 percent to organizations whose beneficiaries were primarily the community-at-large. The Trustees had complete discretion as to the allocation of the other fifty percent, although in 2005 they had anticipated that 60 percent of it would be allocated in the next several years to organizations whose beneficiaries are Jewish.[388]

After the death of Harry Weinberg the foundation's decisions started to be taken by a board of Trustees composed by family members, business associates and Jewish professionals, among them Bernard Siegel, the foundation's president between 1990 and 2005, who led the foundation into its overseas philanthropic initiatives. During that period, the Weinberg Foundation disbursed a total of $ 922,849,000 to projects located in Maryland, Hawaii, Northeastern Pennsylvania, New York, Israel, Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.[389] According to estimates done by the Foundation itself, the Weinberg Foundation was by 2005 one of the largest private foundations in the United States, with assets of over $ 2 billion.[390]

[387] The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., "To Build and to Serve: Fifteen Years of Life-Affirming Partnerships. 1990-2005", p. 11.
[388] Ibid., p. 15.
[389] Ibid., p. 17.
[390] Ibid., p. 11.

Figure 13. Collage of photos showing the Weinberg's Foundation support to multiple initiatives in the United States. Source: The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., "To Build…", op. cit., p. 16.

The association with the Joint seemed to have started in 1988. A story referred by a couple of independent sources refers that that year Harry Weinberg, while vacationing in Israel, visited five old-age homes run by the JDC. After noting that none of them were equipped with air conditioning, he decided to write a check on the spot for $1 million.[391] Since then, and through 2005, the Weinberg Foundation allocated to the JDC 104 grants for a global total of $114,382,365. During the same period, it also contributed to the Jewish Agency for $ 11 million. While most of Weinberg's funds went for programs that the JDC was carrying out in Israel and the former Soviet Union, welfare programs and, as we shall see later, communal rehabilitation projects in Eastern Europe were beneficiated as well. For example, in 1994, the Weinberg

[391] Ibid., p. 5 and Mark I. Rosen, *Mission, Money…,* op. cit., p. 30.

Foundation co-funded a project to provide cataract surgery for elderly Jews in Romania.[392]

"I want to improve the conditions of those less fortunate, so that they can help themselves; to support educational programs that increase the chances of individual success. I feel obligated to Switzerland and Spain, the countries where I work and live. I am also committed to the Jewish people and the State of Israel. I hope others will join me in these efforts and enjoy the satisfaction of making a difference."[393] With these words the billionaire Marc Rich (1934-2013), a controversial oil and commodities trader, opened the twentieth anniversary report of his foundation, **The Rich Foundation for Education, Culture and Welfare**. Marc Rich, born Marcell David Reich, was a Holocaust survivor who immigrated at the age of seven with his family to the United States. Thirty-three years later he became, by virtue of a sharp market understanding and his dealings with dictatorial regimes and embargoed nations, one of the most successful independent oil traders ever. By that time, Rich had already built a successful career as a commodities trader at the New York-based Philipp Brothers. In 1974, he decided to establish his own trading company, Marc Rich + CO. His company went from a $28 million profit in 1974 to a $200 million-profit in 1976. By 2010, Marc Rich's wealth was calculated by Forbes at $1 billion.[394] In 1980, Marc Rich was indicted in the United States on federal charges of tax evasion and illegally making oil deals with Iran during the Iran hostage crisis (thus, defying president Carter administration's embargo on ayatollah's Iran.) Because of that indictment, Rich remained in Switzerland and never returned to the United States. Years later, in 2001, he received a controversial pardon from President Bill Clinton.[395]

[392] Feine, op. cit., p. 276-277

[393] The Rich Foundation for Education, Culture and Welfare, "Over 20 Years of Philanthropy", 2002, p. 3.

[394] Forbes, "The World's Billionaires," 3/10/2010. https://www.forbes.com/profile/marc-rich/?sh=30684c655be4 [Last access: 10/04/2023].

[395] Marc Rich became a veritable controversial figure and because of that a simple google search with his name features literally millions of entries. See his authorized biography, Daniel Ammann, *The King of Oil: The Secret Lives of Marc Rich*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2009.

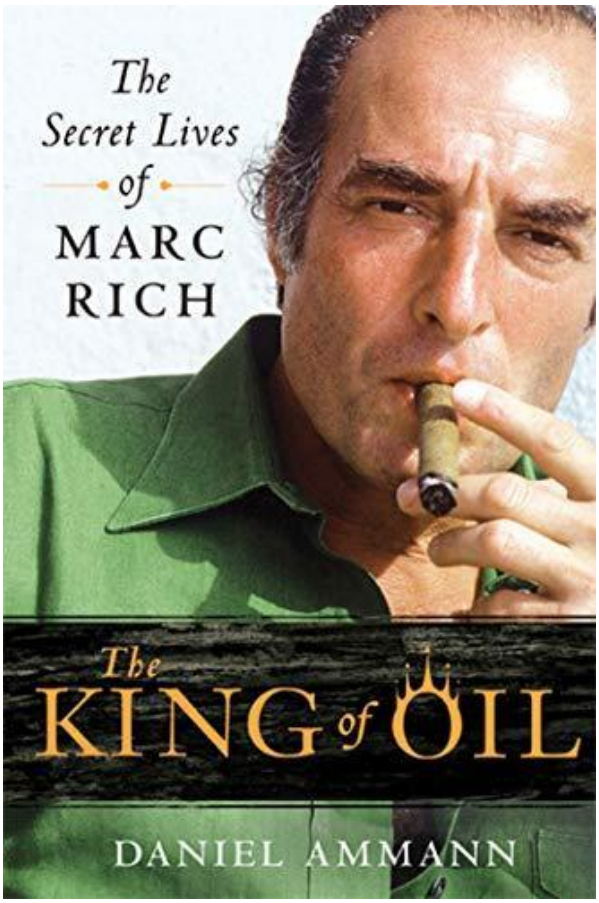

Figure 14. Cover image of the book of "The King of Oil: The Secret Lives of Marc Rich," authorized biography of Marc Rich by Swiss journalist Daniel Ammann. The book became a best-seller and was translated into nine languages.

In 1982 Marc Rich, Alec Hackel and Pincus Green, the three senior partners at Marc Rich + Co., founded in Israel the Doron Foundation, which was intended to be active only in Israel. In 1995-1996, Pincus Green retired and created his own Foundation dedicated mainly to supporting religious affairs. Alec Hackel did the same by creating the Solon Foundation. During the same period Marc Rich created two foundations, one in Madrid, dedicated to charitable work in Spain and a second one in Paris, in order to deal with Jewish Europe. Having become the sole owner of Doron, March Rich integrated all into one Marc Rich Foundation -except for the Doron Foundation in Switzerland which awards every year special awards to excellence in different areas such as culture, arts, science and society in Switzerland only. During the 1980s and 1990s both the Doron in Israel and the Marc Rich Foundation in Paris supported projects in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Since the Foundation had no offices in the field, support was done through grants allocated to Jewish agencies such

as the JDC, the Lauder Foundation and the Jewish Agency.[396] Whereas the Doron and Rich Foundation disbursed a total of $ 115 million between 1982 and 2002, $ 5,873,000 corresponded to different projects for the rebuilding of Jewish Eastern Europe and the ex-Yugoslavia.[397]

Upon its foundation in the year 2000, the **Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah (FMS)**, a French foundation established with the aid of contributions from the French government, began to earmark funds to JDC for welfare projects in Eastern Europe. The establishment of the FMS is directly linked with the public recognition, done by President Chirac in 1995, of the responsibility of the French state in the deportation of Jews that had taken place during the Nazi occupation of the country between 1940 and 1944. Soon after this recognition, negotiations started between the French Jewish community, American organizations and a French governmental commission in order to seek compensation for the "economic" crimes committed during that period, which included spoliation of Jewish properties, bank accounts and art works. It took five years for the issue to be settled. The two bodies created as a result, the *Commission d'indemnisation des victims de spoliations* (CIVS) and the *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*, were in charge of supporting projects whose goal was to preserve the memory of the Holocaust. The FMS was given the status of an entity of public utility and received a one-time allocation of 2,5 billion of French Francs ($5,19 billion) provided by public funds, the Banque de France and National Post Office Company. Presided first by Simone Veil, a Holocaust survivor that occupied important positions within the French political and cultural system, and later by David de Rothschild, the FMS began to support educational and research initiatives, the preservation of places of memory, to provide funds for medical and psychological assistance to Holocaust survivors and to sponsor Jewish cultural activities in France. The organization is also responsible for the maintenance of the *Memorial de la Shoah*, a memorial center located in central Paris.[398] Since its inception, the FMS co-financed along with the Claims Conference and other charitable bodies, a wide array of projects that were carried out by the JDC in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For instance,

[396] Email exchange with Avner Azulay, Rich Foundation's Managing Director since its creation to the present. October, 20th, 2013.
[397] The Rich Foundation, op. cit., p. 88-89.
[398] David Kessler, « Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah », in Jean Leselbaum and Antoine Spire (dirs.), *Dictionnaire du Judaïsme français depuis 1944*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2013, p. 344-347.

in 2002, the FMS contributed €538,000, along with the OSE, to a three-year project destined to the construction of an old-age home for Nazi victims in Ukraine, which also included training of the personnel.[399] During the same year, the FMS allocated €110 thousand for medical programs to Holocaust survivors provided by the Jewish community in Vilnius, Lithuania; €100 thousand for food and medical assistance to Holocaust survivors in Sofia, Bulgaria; and €37 thousand for the purchase of medicine and home visits for Holocaust survivors in Poland.[400] An additional €50,000 was allocated for the renovation of a kosher canteen in Romania.[401] In the following years, the FMS continued to support, through the Joint, specific projects related with Holocaust survivors in countries such as Romania, Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria. In total, FMS' annual expenditures rose from €5 million in 2002 to €13,5 million in 2010, with its involvement with international projects around 30%.[402]

Apart from this vast welfare system that orbited around the Joint, **B'nai B'rith**[403] was the only Jewish organization that embarked on an independent welfare program, though on a much smaller scale. Since its foundation in 1843, philanthropy had always been a central tenet in B'nai B'rith's philosophy. The care for the orphans, the elderly and the sick was seen by the Order's leaders as a vehicle both to assert the central role they wished to occupy in American Jewish life and as a way to unify a community perceived as too fragmented.[404] With the rise of Nazism in Germany, B'nai B'rith –an organization that was founded by German-Jewish immigrants– saw in Palestine a heaven for the increasing number of German-Jewish refugees and therefore began to contribute to the Jewish National Fund. In 1934, the Order founded and ran a hostel in Jerusalem. During the same years, the Order established two *moshavim*[405] in Palestine, "Modelet B'nai B'rith" (Homeland B'nai B'rith) and Moshav Zvi. The initial

[399] JDC Paris archives, folder « FMS old », Compte Rendu de la Commission Solidarité du 2 juin 2003, Paris, 18 juin 2003, p. 3-4.
[400] JDC Paris archives, folder « FMS old », Fiche Projet 02/S19; Fiche Projet 02/S20; Fiche Project 02/S31.
[401] JDC Paris archives, folder « FMS », Ordre du Jour, Mardi 11 février 2003 de 09h30 à 12h30.
[402] Fondation Mémorial de la Shoah, Annual Reports 2002-2010.
[403] On B'nai B'rith's origins see chapter 1, page 22.
[404] Dash Moore, p. 23-24.
[405] Moshavim is the plural for *moshav* (Hebrew: מוֹשָׁב). It literally means "settlement" or "village" and is a type of settlement present in Palestine/Israel, similar to kibbutzim, where a type of cooperative agricultural community of individual farms was fostered. They were pioneered by the Labour Zionists between 1904 and 1914.

consideration of Palestine as a land for refugees evolved into a more outspoken support to the Jewish State. Especially under the presidency of Henry Mosnky (1938-1946), B'nai B'rith intensified its help to the *yishuv*[406] in Palestine thus affirming Zionist orientation. After the Foundation of the State of Israel, B'nai B'rith continued carrying out different solidarity programs with the nascent country.[407] Regarding Europe, the Order attempted to reorganize the European lodges in the immediate postwar years. In 1949, representatives from France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, and England met in Paris in order to launch the B'nai B'rith European Committee, which was chaired by Leo Baeck, the German Reform rabbi. By 1955, the European lodges were grouped in the European district, called District 19.[408] The fall of Communism propitiated the opening of new lodges in countries where such activities were not allowed in the past. Thus, the Order expanded to virtually every country and large city of the former Eastern bloc. In Europe alone, there are today 5,000 members in more than 150 associations or lodges in 29 European countries.[409] In addition to the creation of independent lodges, the reunification of the continent led to a more unified structure. Thus, in 1999 B'nai B'rith Europe was established as a merger between the continental and the British lodges of the Order. Its offices were located in Brussels. It was this newly created entity, B'nai B'rith Europe, which undertook a humanitarian project for delivering food and medicines to Jews in Ukraine and in Romania. With an annual budget of € 110,000 (£ 55,000 coming only from the UK), the project was entirely funded by the European members.[410]

5.2.3 Jewish education and community building

Undoubtedly, it was in community-building and educational initiatives, those aiming at, in Berenbaum's ideas, instilling Jewish values and traditions and in transmitting the necessary know-how to build modern Jewish communities, where a multiplicity of institutional actors began to be involved. The quotation that opens this chapter nicely

[406] The Hebrew word that makes reference to the body of Jewish residents in the Land of Israel.
[407] For the origins of the B'nai B'rith, see chapter 1.
[408] Deborah Dash Moore, op. cit., p. 210-211.
[409] See https://www.bnaibritheurope.org/where-we-are/ [Last access, 04/04/2023].
[410] Telephone interview with Alex Faiman, 1/6/2012. Based in London, Faiman has been a member of B'nai B'rith since 1972 and was elected member of the Executive of B'nai B'rith Europe in 1999. In his position he was in charge of overseeing the humanitarian project in Ukraine.

captures the unprecedented "free market" of Jewish choices that emerged during those years. The quotation also suggests how strengthening Jewish identity among a population deemed "Jewishly" dispossessed became for many the main priority in the region. In part, the emphasis put on passing on Jewish education and on identity was a projection of domestic developments taking place in American Jewish life. Similar to what had happened in the realm of American advocacy efforts and community relations after the Six-Day War, Jewish life had begun to turn "inward" starting in the 1970s. As exemplified by the Historian Jonathan Sarna, ideas related to "Jewish renewal," "Jewish continuity," and "Jewish renaissance" gained credence in the 1970s, enabling new spiritual and religious practices.[411] But what signaled the alarm in the American Jewish establishment was the publication of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). There, it was found that among Jews the intermarriage rate was 52 percent, surpassing significantly lower estimations conducted in previous decades. The survey brought to light the increasing detachment of the Jewish youth *vis-à-vis* organized Jewish life and Israel. The 1990 NJPS ignited a quite intense communal debate and sparked fears over the very survival of a community considered thus far comfortable in its self-sufficiency. As a consequence, strengthening Jewish education, especially among teenagers and young adults, became the obsession of American Jewish leaders and the focus of its domestic philanthropy.[412] Eastern European Jewry was undoubtedly depositary, all over the 1990s of this renewed interest in Jewish education. And the atmosphere of total liberalization prevailing in the region gave place to an open competition, but also to certain alliances and punctual partnerships, among Jewish organizations on the ground, namely religious groups, Jewish agencies and grant-making charitable bodies.

Among the organizations that were active in Eastern Europe, the JDC remained predominant. As it was suggested above, the American organization was not only

[411] Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism…*, op. cit., p. 307-333.

[412] On the renewed interest in Jewish education in the United States, historian Jack Wertheimer asserted in 1999 that: "Perhaps never before has there been so much talk about investing large sums of communal and philanthropic dollars in the enterprise of Jewish education. And perhaps never before has a Jewish community pinned so much of its hopes for 'continuity' —for the transmission of a strong Jewish identity to the next generation—on programs of formal and informal education." Jack Wertheimer, "Jewish Education in the United States. Recent Trends and Issues", *American Jewish Year Book*, 1999, p. 3-4. There, Wertheimer estimated that American Jewry spent $1,5 billion annually in Jewish education.

active in the welfare and relief domains but also, and in increasingly so, it began to develop programs destined to reorganize communal life in the region. In fact, all along the 1980s, when the JDC was allowed to operate more directly in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, there had always been a preoccupation of communal continuity in the operations conducted by the Joint, which were labeled as welfare and assistance programs. For instance, in the Czech Republic, JDC paid for the training of a Rabbi and later for his salary, housing renovations and religious equipment for synagogues.[413] Given that the Soviet authorities allowed a certain minimal level of religious activities, this type of help was accepted by the authorities. However, after 1989 and, especially, with the arrival of a new Director General for Europe in 1992, the Argentinian Alberto Senderey, JDC began to intervene more aggressively in communal-oriented programs —informal Jewish education, community building, leadership development. Thus, all along the 1990s, JDC sought to promote among the communities the model of the Jewish Community Center (JCC). Jewish Community Centers were considered to be important pieces in the communal rehabilitation programs conducted by the JDC, especially in that region of Europe, where, it was considered, Jewish identity was experienced more as an ethnic or cultural identity than in a religious perspective. JDC's leaders deemed that it was in those spaces, where there was a more ethnic-cultural understanding of Judaism, and not in synagogues, where a mostly secularized population could better reconnect with its Jewish roots[414]. For that end, it began to import professionals from Argentina, a country with a rich tradition of secular-oriented Judaism, in order to assist with the implementation of such policies. One of the first areas where it began to experiment was the Baltic State countries. Another big area considered crucial by JDC was leadership development. Following the premise that it was the role of "leader" that would bring changes to Jewish community life, JDC created two programs that would be directly focused in instilling Jewish values and management skills to selected individuals from each of the communities of Central Eastern Europe. In 1989, under the auspices of the Buncher Family Foundation, a mentoring program for professionals and would-be Jewish leaders of Eastern Europe was created[415]. In 1992, Leatid, the European Center for

[413] American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Global Program and Budget 1985, Planning and Budget Department, New York, March 14, 1985, p. 28-35.
[414] Interview with Alberto Senderey, Paris, December 21, 2012.
[415] On the Buncher Foundation see above, page 162.

Jewish Leadership was established with its scope being pan-European. Both programs constituted fascinating transnational examples of how JDC in Europe understood the needs of a population who was in the process of rediscovering their Jewish roots. Over time, some of the charitable bodies that were part of the JDC system of welfare and social assistance, the Buncher, Weinberg and Rich foundations, began also to finance some of these activities geared to reshape Jewish communal life in Eastern Europe.

Along with the JDC, it was the **Ronald S. Lauder Foundation** that took a leading role towards reviving Jewish life in Central Eastern Europe. With a series of Jewish kindergartens, primary schools, and high schools running in almost every capital of Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the Lauder Foundation, established in 1987, quickly became the other significant player in the "Jewish continuity" field. The foundation had offices in many cities where it operated and hired local and international staff to run its activities. Unlike the JDC, whose focus was to transmit Judaism in an ethnic-cultural way, almost all of the educational programs conducted by the Lauder Foundation were grounded in Jewish Orthodoxy. The founder of the Lauder Foundation was the New York-based businessman, diplomat and art-collector Ronald Steven Lauder (born in 1944). He represents as no one else the figure of the wealthy philanthropist highly committed to Jewish issues that emerged in the philanthropic landscape during the 1980s and 1990s. The son of Estée and Joseph Lauder, the founders of the cosmetic empire Estée Lauder, Ronald Lauder has been listed by Forbes magazine among one of the richest individuals with an estimated net worth of $ 4.6 billion in 2023.[416] Lauder has also built a diplomatic career closely associated with the political circles of the Reagan administration and the Republican Party in the United States and with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. In 1986, he was appointed by the Republican President as US Ambassador to Austria and served in that capacity until 1987. It was in this position as a diplomat in Central Europe where he got in touch with the particular and emerging Jewish world of the region, especially through his firsthand contact with the so-called "transmigrants," Russian Jews *en route* to Israel and to the United States. This experience led him to establish in 1987 the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, with the explicit goal of helping to rebuild Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe. As Lauder explained in the

[416] http://www.forbes.com/profile/ronald-lauder/ [last access, 04/04/2023].

introduction of a report celebrating the eighteenth anniversary of the Foundation's activities in 2005:

> In 1987 I was serving as the US Ambassador to Austria and the world was a very different place than it is today. Communism ruled half of Europe. […] And most people had already consigned Jewish life in Eastern Europe to the dustbin of history.
> Today youngsters in Poland, Russia and other countries have to be taught what Communism was, […] and Jewish schools, kindergartens, camps and youth centers are thriving throughout Eastern Europe. […] After all, the people we've been calling "last Jews" keep having children.[417]

The Lauder Foundation rapidly established itself as an important philanthropic player in Eastern Europe. Its first initiatives were to provide Jewish education to Soviet immigrants living in Vienna and to invest heavily in renewing Jewish life in Poland. In Warsaw, the Lauder Foundation established a kindergarten, an elementary and a high school and started to run a winter and summer camp. In Wroclaw, it opened yet another school. A report on Jewish life in Poland published in 2011 stressed the importance of the Lauder Foundation's role in that country:

> The impact of the Lauder Foundation cannot be overstated. "They created Polish Jewish life" said one participant [of a survey]. "They did three great things" said another. "One: gave money. Two: let us know that we weren't alone, that we actually belonged to something larger. That the Jewish People was not just an abstract, but they actually cared. And three: broke the taboo that you can't help Jews living in Poland."[418]

The Lauder Foundation began to focus almost exclusively on formal Jewish education. In Hungary, the Lauder Foundation opened in Budapest in 1990 the Lauder Javne School, and ran, in partnership with the JDC, a Jewish summer camp at Szarvas, two hours away from Budapest, where it was estimated that 10,000 kids attended in fifteen years. "Children who never said a prayer in their lives," stated a report, "return home

[417] The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, *Our World. 1987-2005*, 2005, p. 6.
[418] Konstanty Gebert and Helena Datner, *Jewish life in Poland. Achievements, challenges and priorities since the collapse of communism*, Institute for Jewish Policy Research, September 2011, p. 30.

ready to lead the prayers on Friday night."[419] With the arrival of hundreds of Russian-speaking immigrants in Germany, the Lauder Foundation began to open a series of educational institutions in cities such as Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg, Cologne and Würzburg. Since then, the Lauder Foundation established kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, vocational schools and even *yeshivas*[420] in sixteen countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In addition to this, Lauder is also involved in preservation programs in the former concentration camp site Auschwitz. According to Josh Spinner, CEO and Executive vice-president of the Lauder Foundation since 1997, since its establishment the foundation invested $10 million a year, totaling $130 million between 1987 and 1999.[421]

[419] The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, *Our World*…, op. cit., p. 21.
[420] Religious schools
[421] Interview with Josh Spinner, Berlin, 25/10/2013. I couldn't have access to the foundation's financial statements.

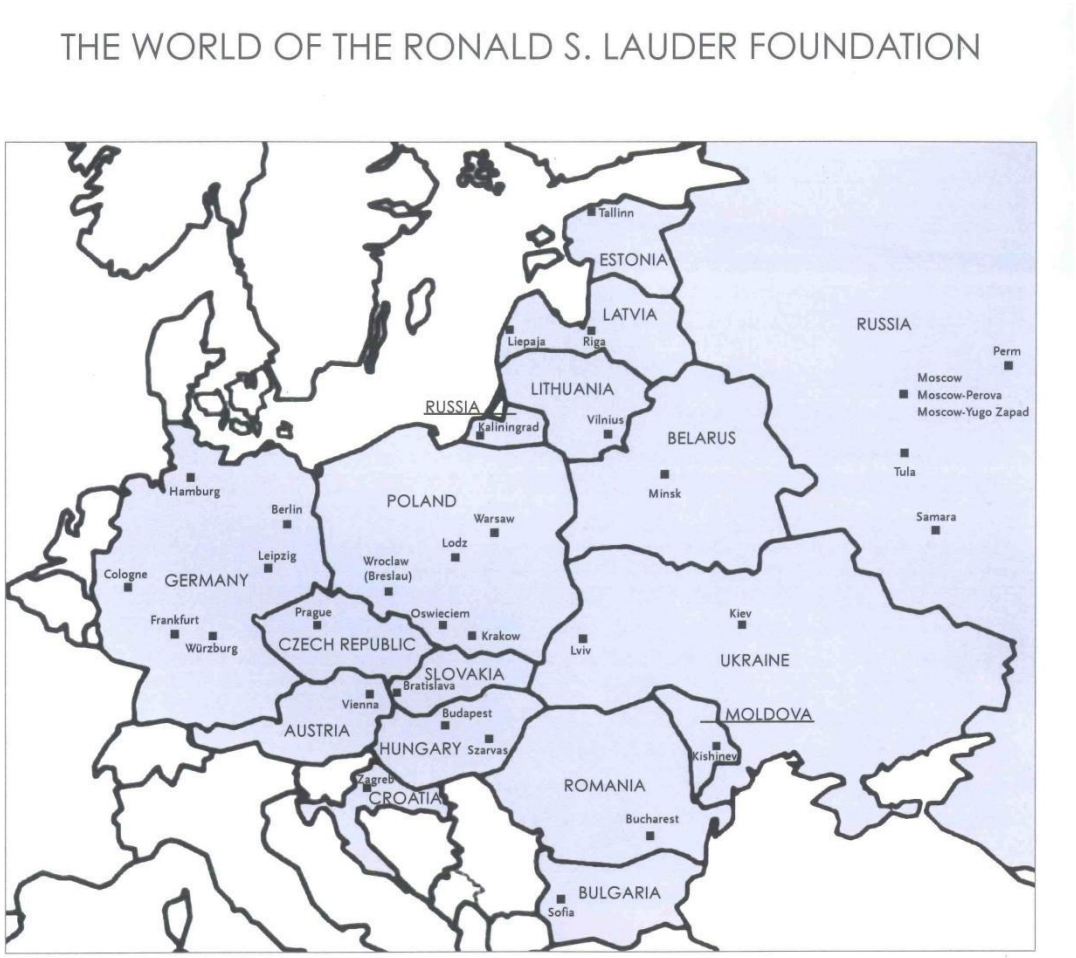

Figure 15. "The World of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation." This image illustrates the presence of the Lauder Foundation in Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Source: The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Our World…, op. cit., end page.

Naturally, the post-Communist context allowed the Jewish Agency for Israel/World Zionist Organization to operate more freely as well. Even though the Jewish Agency's efforts were almost exclusively focused in dealing with the massive flow of *olim* (immigrants) coming from the former Soviet Union, Aliyah-oriented initiatives began to spread in countries such as Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic, where emissaries (*schlichim*) responding to different ideological streams within Zionism began to organize youth clubs and other educational programs.[422] The Israeli Embassies were also active in promoting Israel, offering educational programs as well.

[422] Telephone interview with Yehiel Leket, former Acting Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency during 1995-1996 and Chairman of Youth Aliyah Department 1992-1996, 22/01/2013.

The origins of the Jewish Agency date back to 1929, when in the Sixteenth Zionist Congress held in Zürich, a "Jewish Agency for Palestine" was established under the grounds of Article Four of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, which stipulated that "an appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and cooperating with the administration of Palestine in such economic, social, and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish National Home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine."[423] The Jewish Agency, centered in Jerusalem, came to function as the executive organ of the World Zionist Organization, interceding on behalf of the Zionist movement upon the British Mandate. Over time it also ambitioned to become the privileged entity that would regulate the relationship between the settlement in Palestine (*Yishuv*), later Israel, and world Jewry, or, as a scholar put it, the "arm of the Jewish people."[424] Up until 1948, the Agency was responsible for coordinating the immigration, the land settlement, the youth programs and other related activities to promote Jewish settlement in Palestine. It was also the *de-facto* political representative of the future State of Israel. After the establishment of the State, the Jewish Agency relinquished many of its functions, especially those belonging to the diplomatic realm, though the nascent State kept relying on the Agency for immigration, absorption and settlement programs. The World Zionist Organization, for its part, was responsible for the Jewish-Zionist education programs of youth in the Diaspora via the emissaries or *schlichim*. All these functions were entirely funded by charity collected in the diaspora communities.

The Jewish Agency presents an extremely complex governance structure, which is composed by different bodies —Assembly, Board of Governors, department committees— all based on a representation formula of fifty percent from the World Zionist Organization, thirty percent from the United Israel Appeal (of the United States), and twenty percent of the Karen Hayesod (representing diaspora communities outside the United States). In other words, the decision-making bodies are equally composed of Israeli leadership (via the WZO) and Diaspora leadership (via the United Israel Appeal and Keren Hayesod). Andrea S. Arbel pointed out how the struggle for power, the dissatisfaction over the way decisions were made and chronic doubts about the

[423] Quoted in Ernest Stock and Amnon Hadary, "Jewish Agency", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 11. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 256-262.
[424] Daniel J. Elazar, *People and Polity. The organizational dynamics of World Jewry*, Wayne State University, Detroit, 1989 p. 138.

Agency's efficiency and transparency have been the source of constant tensions and infighting within the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), especially opposing Israeli with Diaspora leadership. In fact, two very different types of Jewish leaders —stemming from two very different constituencies— come together in the Agency. Whereas the Israeli component of JAFI's leadership stem from and is appointed by the whole gamut of Israeli political parties (the Chairman of the Executive is appointed by the political party in power and the Treasurer by the party in the opposition), Diaspora representation is composed by communal leaders, who are often businessmen and philanthropists for whom Jewish life is "apolitical, voluntary, and highly pluralistic."[425] Accusations that the Agency is politically-infused and that that very fact undermined the efficiency and efficacy of its actions came from diaspora leaders over the years, who called to have more direct influence in the body. And they felt especially entitled after the Six-Day War, when enormous amounts of funds began to flow from the Diaspora into the Agency. Much of the internal developments taken place within the organization since the 1970s —especially the Reconstitution of the Jewish Agency in 1971, where they reached the agreement of the fifty-fifty representation between Israelis and Diaspora leaders— were marked by the continuous demands of Diaspora leaders —Americans above all— for more direct influence in the decision-making processes, more professionalism (that is, less political appointees) and more transparency.[426]

During the 1990s, Eastern European Jewry was not a priority for the Jewish Agency/WZO. In 1989, a sudden increase in Soviet emigration to Israel began to take place; a flood that did not stop until 1995. It is considered that between those years more than half a million individuals arrived in Israel from the former Soviet countries. That operation implied for the Agency the fulfillment of unprecedented logistical challenges that included the set-up of transit stations in order to receive the immigrants, deal with bureaucratic procedures, organize hundreds of flights in order to transport people and their luggage, and, once in Israel, the put in practice of proper absorption programs. This posed the Agency a heavy financial burden. Between 1990 and 1994,

[425] Andrea S. Arbel, *Riding the Wave. The Jewish Agency's Role in the Mass Aliyah of Soviet and Ethiopian Jewry to Israel, 1987-1995*, Gefen Publishing House, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 202.
[426] Ibid., p. 200-246. See also Ernest Stock, "The reconstitution of the Jewish Agency: A Political Analysis", *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 73, 1972, p. 178-193 and Daniel J. Elazar, op. cit., p. 134-152.

$848 million were collected in fundraising campaigns in the United States for these purposes.[427]

In this context, and given the weak demographic presence that represented Eastern European Jewry in comparison with the Russian Jewry, for some operatives of the Agency, Eastern Europe was only meaningful from the point of view of the transit stations located in Budapest, Warsaw and Bucharest destined to receive the thousands of Russian immigrants *en route* to Israel.[428] Yet, some emissaries did start to arrive in the region in order to organize youth clubs, Hebrew classes and other activities advocating *Aliyah* and the State of Israel.[429] Those activities were sometimes duplicated by the local Israeli Embassies, who also offered some cultural activities, something that created internal tension between the agencies.[430]

Another increasingly important actor in this field was **Chabad Lubavitch**, the fastest-growing religious group in the region. Born in Poland in 1745, the Hasidic movement devoted to "wisdom, understanding, and knowledge" (acronym transliterated as Chabad), was centered, until the eve of World War I, in the Belorussian city of Lubavitch. When the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn, facing persecution, managed to emigrate to America in 1940 and founded a center in Brooklyn, New York the Hasidic movement planted the seeds of its contemporary transformation and further expansion.[431] The rapid expansion of contemporary Chabad and its transformation into a global Hasidic movement was thus intimately related with the adoption of New York as its operational center since the 1940s and with the orientation given by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh rebbe in the Chabad's dynasty.[432] In a Jewish word whose traditional foundations were

[427] Arbel, op. cit., p. 35-199.

[428] Telephone interview with Arnon Mantver, Director General of the Jewish Agency's Immigration and Absorption Department between 1989 and 1995, 13/11/2013. The transit stations were opened during the years when there were no direct flights between Russia and Israel.

[429] Journalist Charles Hoffman nicely captured, through an interview to a *shaliah* (emissary) active in Budapest in 1989-1990, both the Zionist ethos of his activities and some of the difficulties he found among local people who were not that interested in making *Aliyah*. Charles Hoffman, Grey Dawn…, op. cit., p. 91-93.

[430] Telephone interview with Yehiel Leket, Director of the Youth Aliyah department of the Jewish Agency 1992-1996; Acting Chairman of the Executive of JAFI 1995-1996.

[431] Jonathan Sarna, p. 298-301.

[432] Focusing on internal developments, Friedman places the beginning of the contemporary period of Chabad with the crisis that entailed the religious, political and social changes of the 1880s in the Pale of Settlement. Menachem Friedman, "Habad as Messianic Fundamentalism: From Local Particularism

deemed eroded and where assimilation was considered to be a major threat for Judaism, Chabad embraced —in contrast with other Hassidic movements tending to seclusion— a "missionary" strategy whose goal was to raise the level of Jewish consciousness to religious and non-religious Jews alike. In this sense, the concept of "mission" is central in Chabad's own understanding. Therefore, Chabad accords utmost importance to the dispatching of emissaries to all corners of the globe, in search for Jews immersed in the non-Jewish environment. These Jews are to be "redeemed," that is, made aware of their Jewishness and of the significance and obligations of Jewish identity. Thus, Chabad constitutes a "recruited society" based on "messianic activism" that seeks to broaden the scope of religious involvement of the modern (Jewish) man. The emissaries respond directly to the Lubavitcher rebbe and they correspond with him through detailed reporting and advice. "The mission assumes various forms, ranging from sporadic, one-time, incidental activities to assignment to a permanent mission, demanding the emissary's time twenty-four hours a day. […] The emissary receives a temporary allocation for his initial steps in the new location. Eventually, however, he must find his own sources of financing to develop and expand the enterprise."[433]

This was no exception regarding the activities of Chabad in post-Communist Eastern Europe. One of the first emissaries, if not the only one active by early 1990s, was Rabbi Herschel Glück, a London-based Lubavitcher, himself a son of an emissary, the Austrian-born Rabbi Avraham Yitzchok Glück, who spent his life assisting Jewish communities abroad, especially in Europe, on behalf of Chabad. After his father's death in 1992, Rabbi Herschel Glück was asked by the seventh Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, to take up his father's position and become an emissary for Europe.[434] Because of his work alongside his father, Glück had already established some contacts during Communist times, so when Communism fell, he was able to move these relations into another level. According to Glück's testimony, there seemed to be two distinct moments in the work of Chabad in post-Communist Eastern Europe. During the first stage, Chabad essentially contributed to rebuild the most basic Jewish communal infrastructure, to deliver welfare services and religious guidance,

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to Universal Jewish Mission", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 328-357.

[433] Ibid., p. 348.

[434] Interview with Rabbi Herschel Glück, London, April 29, 2012.

and to provide cross-communal Jewish informal education. These activities were always done in partnership with other Jewish organizations such as JDC, World Jewish Relief and the Lauder Foundation. During that time, Chabad's activities were essentially a one-man show led by Rabbi Glück, who seemed to move from one city to another in order to ensure Chabad's presence. An article appeared in the British Jewish newspaper *The Jewish Chronicle* reported that in 1994 alone Rabbi Glück did one hundred and fifty trips to the continent. "It matters not to him," asserted the article, "whether he encounters two Jews or 1,000 —no community is too small."[435] However, and in parallel with these first initiatives, the movement began slowly to develop its own programs and institutions. Other emissaries from the West were brought into Europe and institutions such as the Chabad Houses were founded in cities such as Budapest, Frankfurt, and Munich.

Concerning Rabbi Glück, his tasks ranged a wide scope of activities: establishing *Talmud Torahs* (religious Sunday schools), fundraising and supervising the building of *mikves* (ritual baths), officiating at weddings and circumcisions, training *shochets* (ritual slaughterers) and *machilim* (supervisors of the procedures of *kashrut*), educating Jewish leaders and lecturing in universities and communities in general. The nature and content of Glück's activities as well as his relationships with other Jewish philanthropic bodies are nicely illustrated in the following excerpt of a report, written by Glück himself, describing his activities in Czech Republic circa 1992:

> […] Altogether about three hundred people participated in the Lectures. On Shabbat the Israeli Ambassador and his Embassy staff were present. I spoke a number of times to the Students, three times to the Thirty's and Fifty's [year-old-people], and a couple of times to a cross section of the Community. On Friday night I made a Shabbaton [Shabbat gathering] for over twenty people in the Intercontinental Hotel. I brought [kosher] food from London and Vienna, and fresh fruit and vegetables locally. It was a real traditional meal with Candles, Kiddish [sic], Gefilte fish, chrane, singing, dancing, the whole Hotel seemed to be rocking. Everyone said the blessings and Grace after meals. For most people this was a totally new experience, albeit a very enjoyable one. I explained the significance of all the Rituals, and discussed the

[435] Simon Rocker, "Why roving Rabbi Gluck takes his case to Europe", *The Jewish Chronicle*, August 18, 1995, p. 8.

> relevance of the weekly Torah Portion to all of us assembled in Prague in 1992.
>
> I had a discussion with E. F., a youngish, very intelligent woman, who is very involved in communal affairs, about getting some people interested in Judaism. She was very excited about the idea of a Lending Library, and felt that this would make a major contribution to the renaissance of Judaism in Prague. The Joint and the C.B.F [Central British Fund-World Jewish Relief] are prepared to work with the Lauder Foundation on this project, which I have discussed with them[436]

No doubt, Chabad's missionary attitude contributed to its rapid expansion in post-communist Eastern Europe. The two other denominational groups with international projection, the Conservative World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues and the Reform World Union for Progressive Judaism, though with a strong presence in Western Europe, achieved during those years a more modest presence in the East perhaps because they relied in the initiative of local people in order to start developing its branches. For instance, during the 1990s, the World Council of Synagogues supported the creation of a conservative synagogue in Prague and another one in Budapest and participated in the training of rabbis. The WUPJ on its part, focused in Poland.

Unlike the Joint, the Lauder Foundation, Chabad and the Jewish Agency, which operated throughout Central Europe, the Nissenbaum Foundation and the Reichmann Foundation conducted smaller operations focused in one country. The latter in Poland, and the former in Hungary.

Zygmunt Nissenbaum, born in 1926, was a Warsaw Ghetto survivor who escaped deportation to Treblinka. After the war, he settled in southern Germany where he became a successful businessman. He did not return to Warsaw until April 1983 to attend the fortieth anniversary commemoration of the ghetto uprising, heading a delegation of the Council of Jews in Germany. There, according to some chronics, he visited the Brodno cemetery where his ancestors laid and was shocked to find it in complete abandonment:

[436] Herschel Glück's personal archives, non-catalogued material.

> The stones were scattered and the graves were open, with bones lying all over the ground. Trees had grown up all over the place, the area was not fenced in, and drunks were sitting all around. When I went back to Germany, I was sick. I felt I had to do something, and after six weeks I decided that I would come back and preserve what we could of the cemetery.[437]

Thus, that same year Nissenbaum moved back to Poland, opened an office and established, not after weaving a network of connections among the Polish political elites, the Nissenbaum Foundation, dedicated to preserving Jewish traces in Poland. From 1985 to 1990 the Foundation claimed to have done preservation work in twenty-five cemeteries, twenty-one synagogues and participated in the construction or in the restoration of four monuments, among them the one to the victims of the Kielce pogrom of 1946 and the one at the *Umschlagplatz* in Warsaw.[438] Criticisms started to come from the local community, who distrusted the over-self-publicized work led by the Foundation (prominent plaques advertising the Foundation's work were placed in each site) and Nissenbaum's high-profile role (a photographer and a cameraman followed him permanently and he showed photographs of his meetings with personalities such as President George Bush, Polish President Jaruzelski and Pope John Paul II).[439]

The **Reichmann Foundation**, began to be involved in formal Jewish education financing a single project in Budapest, the Orthodox American Endowment School, which was opened in 1990. The Reichmann Foundation was run by the Reichmann brothers, Paul, Albert and Ralph, who led the Olympia & York real estate development firm, based in Toronto.

The Reichmanns were originally from Vienna. The parents, Samuel and Rene, were Orthodox Jews who had moved from rural Hungary to Vienna, where they owned a prosperous egg export business. With the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, the family moved to Morocco, where they stayed until anti-Jewish riots erupted due to the 1956 Arab Israeli War. This time the Reichmanns emigrated to Canada. The family settled in Toronto, where Samuel and his sons started a small company producing tiles and

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[437] Quoted in Charles Hoffman, op. cit., p. 270-271.

[438] Ibid., p. 271.

[439] Ibid. p. 272 and Felix Corley, "Zigmunt Nissenbaum", *The Independent*, Sunday, September 30, 2001. Available online at https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/zygmunt-nissenbaum-5366729.html [Last access: 04/04/2023].

other building material, which they called Olympia Tile. In 1958, it became the springboard for Olympia & York, which would erect close to one hundred buildings in the Toronto area over the next fifteen years, among them the first skyscraper of Canada, located in downtown Toronto, the seventy-two-story office building First Canadian Place (1973).[440] But they were Paul, Albert and Ralph, the sons of Samuel, who led Olympia & York to a global real estate firm. Among one of its most profitable businesses was the purchase in 1977 of eight Manhattan office buildings for more than $300 million. Ten years later, and after New York's soaring business atmosphere, they were worth $3 billion.[441] In 1980, Olympia & York won the bid to build six million square feet of office and retail space near Battery Park on land reclaimed from the Hudson River. The project was called "World Financial Center." At their apex in 1990, the Reichmanns held about eight percent of New York City's commercial office space, more than twice as much as their closest rival, the Rockefellers. In all, Olympia & York owned 40 major office towers in a dozen cities on both sides of the Atlantic and controlled $20 billion in assets. The net personal worth of the Reichmanns reached $10 billion, making them at one point among the ten wealthiest families in the world.[442] However, The Reichamnns had to face bankruptcy in 1992 when their $8-billion project Canary Wharf in London's abandoned docklands was caught in the midst of a major real estate crisis, leaving many vacant spaces and forcing the company to file for bankruptcy. A few years later, the family was able to partly rebuild its fortune associated with George Soros.

The strains of commerce and religious orthodoxy were often inseparable in the family's ventures. The *New York Times* reported that Olympia & York closed its construction sites during Shabbat and during the Jewish religious holidays.[443] Moreover, The Reichmanns, and especially Paul, were also big contributors to Orthodox causes, donating up to $50 million a year to yeshivas, synagogues, and hospitals around the world. Among one of its most well-known community ventures was Kollel Toronto, a

[440] Jonathan Kandell, "Paul Reichmann, Who Helped Develop the World Financial Center, Dies at 83", *The New York Times*, October 25, 2013. Available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/26/business/paul-reichmann-who-helped-develop-the-world-financial-center-dies-at-83.html?smid=pl-share [Last access: September 29, 2023]

[441] Paul Lungen, "Famed developer was known for Tzedaka", *Canadian Jewish News*, Monday, October 28, 2013. Available online at: http://www.cjnews.com/canada/famed-developer-was-known-tzedakah [Last access: September 29, 2023]

[442] Kandell, op. cit.

[443] Ibid.

community facility devoted to modern Orthodox Jewish learning. “A senior staff member at one of the Reichmann-supported Orthodox institutions in Toronto,” reported *The Canadian Jewish News*, “compared him to a modern-day Rothschild.” Given the Foundation’s low profile it is unclear how much they invested in the Budapest school.

To these four big operative organizations and the two other foundations sponsoring particular projects, one must consider the role that a number of independent agencies began to play in allocating grants to a wide array of community-building projects across the region.

For instance, the **Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture**, established by Nahum Goldmann in 1965 with an original fund of $10 million that were part of the agreement protocols signed between the Claims and the West German government in Luxemburg in 1952.[444] The foundation’s mandate was to preserve Jewish culture and help train a new generation of scholars, intellectuals, rabbis, and cultural and communal leaders in order to replace the Jewish cultural elite annihilated in Europe during the Shoah.[445] Thus, with the goal to help disseminate Jewish culture, with a special emphasis in those cultural manifestations that would help keep alive the memory of the Shoah, the foundation awarded grants to hundreds of scholars, writers, artists, rabbis and educators around the world. From the onset, the Memorial Foundation dedicated a special attention to Jews from the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries. In the period between 1965 and 2011, the foundation allocated more than $16 million in Eastern Europe alone.[446] While, during the Communist years, the Memorial Foundation had no access to Russian Jewry and therefore transmitted funds to the Lishkat Hakesher for the elaboration of materials that would be distributed clandestinely, in Eastern Europe was able to support the officially sanctioned communities. Money was used for the edition of books of Jewish authors or with Jewish content and for the purchase of religious items. Some funds were also used to produce and circulate Samizdat (underground) literature, like in Czechoslovakia. The Memorial Foundation also financed some of the charges involved in the training of local rabbis in the Budapest rabbinical seminary, the only one active in Eastern Europe. Towards

[444] Henry, op. cit., p. 192-193.
[445] Jerome Hochbaum, “Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture”, Encyclopaedia Judaica. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 14. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 18.
[446] Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, Russia and Eastern Europe 1965-2011, p. i.

the end of Communist times, when governments across the region became more accommodating regarding Jewish issues, the foundation was able to expand the range of its support. Grants continued to be destined to cover translations and editions of Jewish books, but also to produce educational materials for children and families, and to train the emerging cohort of Jewish educators and religious leaders. That was the case of Budapest, where since 1987 the Memorial Foundation was able to support, among other things, the establishment of a Jewish studies department at the University of Budapest and initiated a teacher training program at the rabbinical seminary. In Riga, a string of activities designed to instill Jewish values to the families were organized and years later a whole network of Jewish schools from the Baltic States was organized with foundation's support.[447] Last but not least, since the early 1990s the Memorial Foundation created the International Nahum Goldmann Fellowship, an educational program that gathers Jewish communal activists from around the world.

The **L. A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora** constituted another active supporter of Jewish continuity in the region. A grant-making foundation, the Pincus Fund was established in Jerusalem in 1977 by the Zionist leaders Moshe Krone, Louis Pincus and Max Fisher. In times when the Jewish Agency's mission was being reassessed with raising criticism about its role in the field of education, the idea of creating an independent and more flexible body exclusively dedicated to support Jewish education in the Diaspora seemed to be addressing that problem. The Fund began to provide money to all sorts of educational projects dealing with Judaism all over the Diaspora. Thus, grants were allocated to the establishment and development of Jewish educational institutions such as kindergartens, Jewish day schools, yeshivas and adult education centers; to developing teachers' and educators' training programs; to starting informal educational projects; and to research on Jewish education. Even though the Fund functions as an independent grant-making body, the Fund's board is made up exclusively of representatives of four major Jewish organizations, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the World Zionist Organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Ministry of Education of Israel. Those are the organizations that made the original financial contribution for the establishment of the Fund. The Fund is in all intents and purposes a distributive body based in Israel,

[447] Ibid., p. ii-iii.

whereby it receives and evaluates grant applications from all over the world, and eventually provides up to 50% of the total financial needs to a given project for a maximum of three years. The Fund has no staff stationed in any of the communities that it supports—although personnel travels once or twice a year in order to interview communal leaders and to visit ongoing projects—nor do they become involved in the design or the execution of the projects.[448] According to the report published on the occasion of the Fund's twenty-fifth anniversary in 2002, the L. A. Pincus Fund has approved 472 projects in over forty countries for a total of almost $50 million.[449] The Fund counts with a relatively narrow annual budget when compared to other Jewish philanthropic bodies (between $ 1.8 and 2 million a year). However, given that it operates at a micro-level, that is, funding very specific programs for a limited amount of time, the Fund had been able to extend its presence to a large number of countries, including those with very small Jewish communities, such as Bolivia, Gibraltar, and Guatemala. In Europe, the Fund disbursed, through 2002, a total of $22,4 million, $18,6 million for Western Europe, $1,8 for Central and Eastern European countries and $2 million for pan-European projects.[450]

As with the case of the *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*, the Dutch **Joods Humanitair Fonds (JHF)**, established in 2002, represents yet another example of a grant-making body created as a result of negotiations carried out between Dutch Jews and the Dutch government regarding wartime reparations. At the time of creating the Fund, it was agreed to allocate part of the Dutch government's contribution toward a fund supporting projects dedicated to Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe, especially those aimed at helping to rebuild the social and cultural structures "that were destroyed with the deaths of millions of Jews during the Holocaust."[451] Thus, since 2002 the JHF began to support a wide array of projects ranging from Jewish educational activities, art clubs, Hebrew programs, purchase of religious items to the building and refurbishing of Jewish cultural centers in countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, and

[448] Interview with Lionel I. Link, Educational Coordinator, Jerusalem, 7/7/2011.
[449] The L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, *25th Anniversary Report*, June 2002, p. 13.
[450] Ibid., p. 104-105.
[451] Joods Humanitair Fonds, Brochure text, available online at http://www.jhf.nl [last access, 22/9/2023].

Croatia. The Fund also sponsored programs in the former Soviet Union, Israel and Argentina. During its first three years of activities, the JHF disbursed in Central Eastern Europe almost €1 million out of a total of €2,732,265.[452]

Interestingly, one of the last private charitable bodies being created during this period was done by one of the most traditional European Jewish families, a family who had been involved in philanthropic endeavors since at least the nineteenth century; the British Rothschilds. In fact, the British branch of the Rothschild family had already two major philanthropic endeavors running simultaneously. On one hand the Rothschild Foundation, focused solely in the United Kingdom and contributing to a whole range of charitable activities such as arts, heritage and culture, housing, health care and medical research. On the other hand, the Yad Hanadiv Foundation, founded by Baron Edmond de Rothschild in 1958, formally based in Geneva, but devoted to charitable work in Israel, supporting the construction of government buildings such as the Knesset and the Supreme Court, medical research, and educational activities. None of these charitable activities were addressed to support Jewish life in Europe. However, in 1999-2000, Jacob Rothschild established a £50 million endowment in order to start supporting projects specifically oriented towards rebuilding Jewish Europe. Therefore, a new charitable body was created, the Hanadiv Charitable Fund, later known as the **Rothschild/Hanadiv Foundation (RHF)**. Since its inception, the RHF was almost exclusively dedicated to funding academic Jewish studies, social research projects and Jewish culture and heritage initiatives. During its first years of activity, the Rothschild Foundation went from giving £1,5 million to £4,5 million a year in grants.[453]

5.3 The geography of Jewish overseas solidarity

So far, the organizational landscape in post-Communist Europe has been described, focusing on its three main areas of action: political, welfare and assistance and educational/communal. This section will conduct a more comprehensive analysis. The following chart seeks to systematize the institutional actors mentioned above, detailing, among other things, the type of organization, city where they are based, year of

[452] JHF, Annual Expenditures, 2002, 2003 and 2004 in electronic format facilitated by Muriel Leeuwin, Director of the JHF.

[453] Telephone interview with Antony Lerman, Chief Executive Director of the Rothschild Hanadiv Foundation between 1999 and 2006, 24/1/2014.

creation, geographic area served, year when they started to be active in Europe and countries in Europe served.

Name	Type of organization	Headquarters	Year of creation	Geographic area served	Active in Europe since	Countries in Europe served since 1989	Source of funds	Operative?	Disbursive?	Domain
B'nai B'rith Europe	Humanitarian branch of the Jewish fraternal order	Brussels	1843	Europe and Israel	1990	Ukraine, Romania since 1994	European donors, mostly from the UK	X		W
American Jewish Committee (AJC)	Jewish Advocacy Organization	New York and Washington DC	1906	USA, Jewish Diaspora, Israel	1947	Europe, emphasis in Germany	Donors in the US	X		P
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or Joint)	Jewish Humanitarian and Relief Agency	New York	1914	Jewish Diaspora outside the US, Israel	1914	Europe	United Jewish Appeal (UJA)* + private donors in the US	X		W+C
Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) / World Zionist Organization (WZO)	Zionist organization	Jerusalem	1929	Jewish Diaspora, Israel	1929	Europe	United Jewish Appeal (UJA)* (US Jewry) + Keren Hayesod (Diaspora Jewry) + Israeli govmnt.	X		C
World Jewish Relief (formerly Central British Fund)	Jewish Humanitarian and Relief Agency	London	1933	Jewish Diaspora outside the UK and Israel	1933	Eastern Europe	UK Jewry		X	W
World Jewish Congress	Jewish Advocacy org	New York	1936	Jewish Diaspora	1936	Europe	Edgar J. Bronfman + Jewish umbrella organizations worldwide	X		P

Name	Type of organization	Headquarters	Year of creation	Geographic area served	Active in Europe since	Countries in Europe served since 1989	Source of funds	Operative?	Disbursive?	Domain
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference)	Advocacy and disbursing Body	New York	1952	USA, Jewish Diaspora, Israel	1952	Europe, since 1994 emphasis in Central-Eastern Europe	German gvmnt + German companies + Austrian and Hungarian gvmnts.		X	W
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc.	Family Foundation	Baltimore, Hawaii	1959	USA, Israel, Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union	1990	Central Eastern Europe	Weinberg Family		X	W+C
Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture	Disbursing body	New York	1965	USA, Jewish Diaspora, Israel	1965	Europe, after 1989 emphasis in Central Eastern Europe	Claims Conference		X	C
The Buncher Family Foundation	Family Foundation	Pittsburgh	1974	USA, Jewish Diaspora, Israel	1989	Central Eastern Europe	Buncher Co. (Jack Buncher)		X	C
The L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora	Private Fund	Jerusalem	1977	Jewish Diaspora	1977	Europe	Trust established by the Jewish Agency for Israel, the World Zionist Organization, the Israeli gvmnt. and the JDC		X	C
The Doron/Marc Rich Foundation for Education, Culture and Welfare	Family/Private Foundation	Tel Aviv and Paris	1982	Israel, Europe, former Soviet Union	1982	Central-Eastern Europe	Marc Rich		X	W+C

Name	Type of organization	Headquarters	Year of creation	Geographic area served	Active in Europe since	Countries in Europe served since 1989	Source of funds	Operative?	Disbursive?	Domain
Nissenbaum Foundation	Family Foundation	Warsaw	1985	Poland	1985	Poland	Zygmunt Nissenbaum	X		Pr
European Jewish Congress	Jewish Advocacy organization	Paris	1986	Europe, former Soviet Union	1986	Europe	World Jewish Congress**	X		P
The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation	Family/Private Foundation	New York	1987	Europe, former Soviet Union	1987	Central Eastern Europe	Ronald S. Lauder	X		C
CEJI– Center for European Jewish Information	Jewish NGO	Brussels	1990	Europe	1990	Europe	European donors + European Union	X		P
Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah	State-sponsored private Foundation	Paris	2000	France, Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union and Israel	2000	France, Europe	French gvmnt.		X	W
Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv)	Private Foundation	London	2000	Europe	2000	Europe	Rothschild family		X	C
Joods Humanitair Fonds (Jewish Humanitarian Fund)	Jewish NGO	The Hague	2002	Europe, Israel	2002	Central Eastern Europe	Dutch gvmnt.		X	C
Reichmann Foundation	Family Foundation	Toronto	??	Canada, Europe	1990	Hungary	Reichmann brothers	X		C

Table 1. List of Jewish organizations

* Until 1999, after that year, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA).
** In the year 2000, Moshe Kantor became the main donor.
Domain: P=Political and Advocacy; W=Welfare and social assistance; C=Community building and Jewish education; Pr.=Preservation

The first characteristic that we can observe from this chart is that of diversification. Indeed, one of the most salient phenomena concerning post-1989 Jewish solidarity is the situation of unprecedented multiplication of charitable bodies designed to operate on the same territory and over the same population. Humanitarian and relief agencies, political/advocacy bodies, religious groups, Jewish NGOs, and private and family foundations, represented a sophisticated and highly compartmentalized system of solidarity. In total, twenty-one Jewish organizations —holding different goals, budgets, organizational structures, and funding sources— revolved around the European Jewish galaxy after 1989. Within this diversified system of Jewish philanthropy, there coexisted very different types of organizations. Those established during the first half of the twentieth century as a response to different historical conjunctures such as the welfare-oriented Joint, the Zionist Jewish Agency for Israel, and the advocacy body World Jewish Congress, began to coexist with others, which were either newly founded or had expanded its activities to Europe during previous decades. In this respect, organizations can be divided into three different groups. A first group is composed by those organizations which had already a long record of presence in Europe, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (1914), the World Jewish Congress (1937), the Jewish Agency for Israel/World Zionist Organization (1929) and the World Jewish Relief (former Central British Fund, 1933). All of them operate on behalf of one or various organized Jewries, namely the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (US), World Jewish Relief (United Kingdom), World Jewish Congress (umbrella organization of Diaspora Jewry) and the Jewish Agency for Israel/World Zionist Congress (Israel and the Zionist movement). A second group is constituted by those organizations that began to be active in Europe during the post- Holocaust years. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (1951), the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (1965) and the American Jewish Committee (created in 1906 but active in Europe since 1947) represent this group. Finally, a third group is formed by newer charitable bodies. Some of them were established around the year 1989 or even later with the explicit goal of assisting Eastern European Jews while some others, though not newly created and already doing philanthropic work on a domestic basis, jumped at the opportunity to be active overseas. The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation (1987), the Nissenbaum Foundation (1985), CEJI (1990), and the Joods Humanitair Fonds (2002) represent the former, while the L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora (1977), Doron/Marc Rich Foundations (1982, active in

Europe since 1989), the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc. (1959, active in Europe since 1990), the Buncher Family Foundation (1974, active in Europe since 1990), and the Reichmann Foundation, represent the latter. We could include in this group three other organizations as well, B'nai B'rith, whose first European lodge was founded in 1883, opened its humanitarian branch in 1990; Chabad Lubavitch that, though created in Central Europe in the eighteenth century, gained momentum since the opening of its center in Brooklyn in 1940 and the *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*, established in 2000, which began to collaborate with welfare activities run by the JDC.

Michael Berenbaum was right in assuming that "the Jewish talent" would come from the West. The cities where the organizations have established their headquarters are important indicators of a certain Jewish transnational geography. In this respect, it is New York that remains the most important "Jewish capital," at least in what philanthropy to Jewish Europe is concerned. Seven organizations have established their main offices there: American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Claims Conference, Lauder Foundation, World Jewish Congress, Chabad Lubavitch, and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Following New York comes Paris with three organizations (European Jewish Congress, the Marc Rich Foundation and the Fondation pour la Memoire de la Shoah) followed by London and Brussels, with two each. In London, the World Jewish Relief and the Rothschild/Hanadiv Foundation have their offices and in Brussels, undoubtedly because of its status as the capital of the European Union, CEJI and B'nai B'rith Europe are based. Two organizations are based in Jerusalem as well, JAFI/WZO and the L.A. Pincus Fund, while the Doron Foundation (the Israeli part of the Rich Foundation) is located in Tel Aviv.

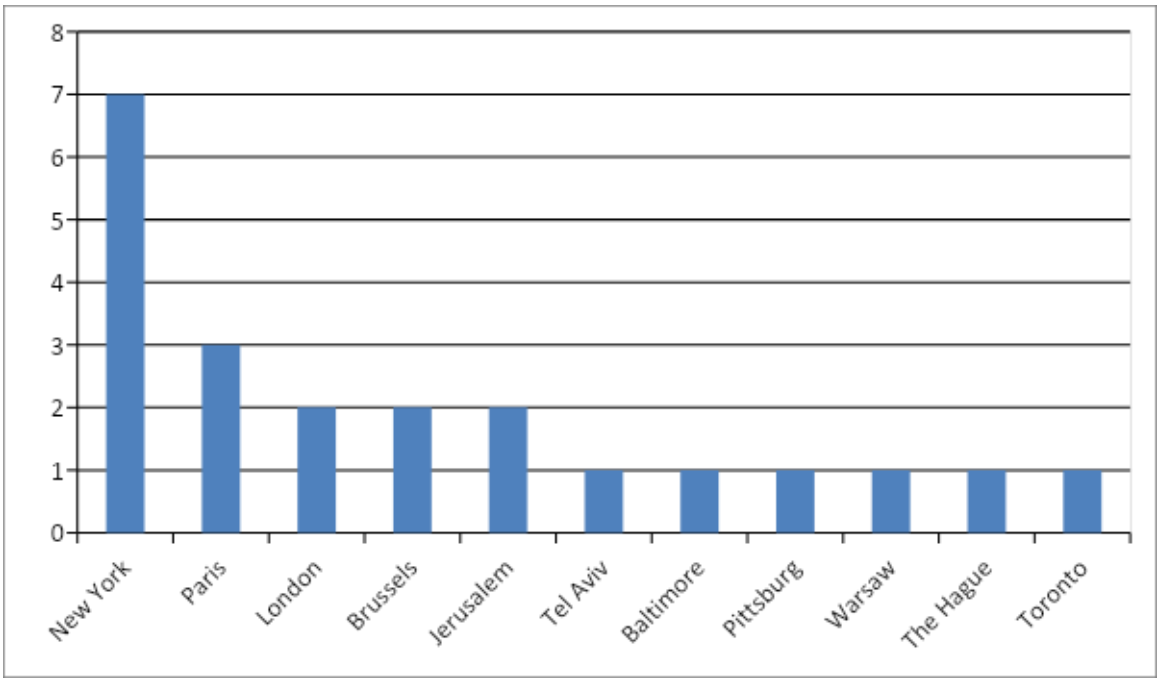

Figure 16. Distribution of Jewish organizations by city.

However, if New York remains the epicenter from where one can understand the geography of Jewish transnational solidarity (followed by Paris, London, Brussels and Jerusalem), the analysis would remain somehow superficial should not another element be contrasted, the origin and sources of funding. In other words, by virtue of tracking from where and from whom the money for each organization comes from a more complex picture presents itself.

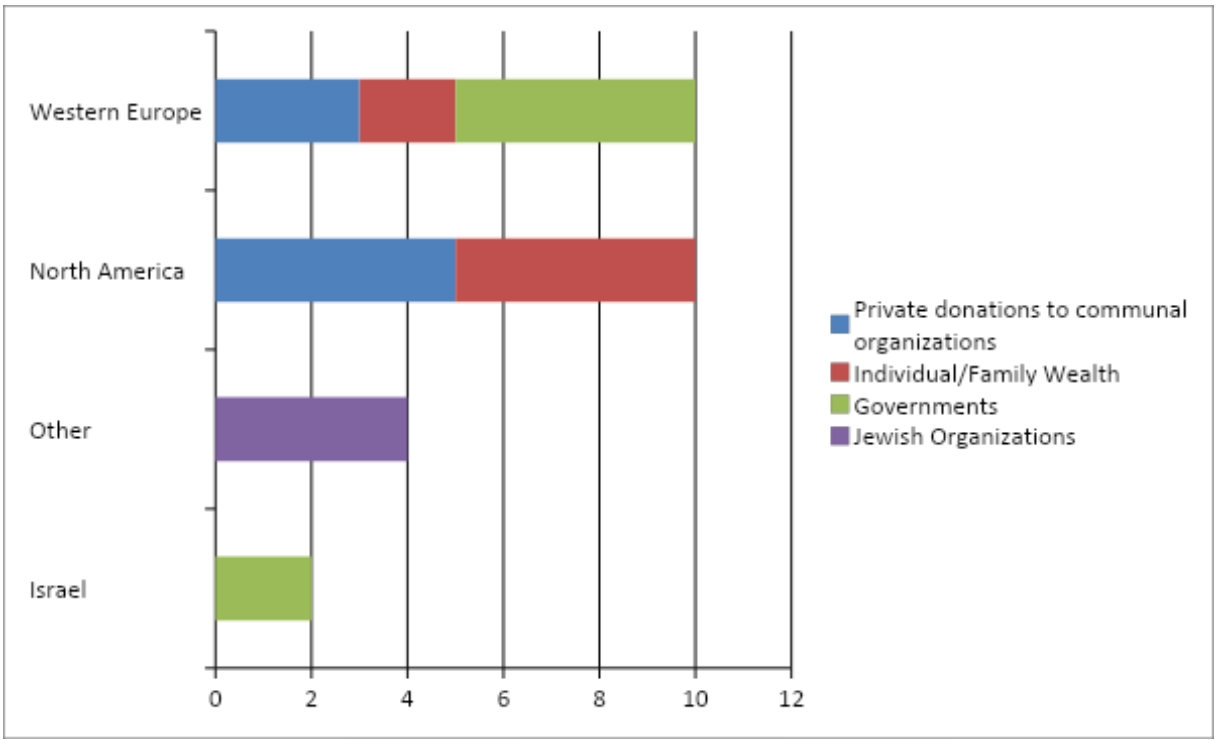

Figure 17. Origin of funds and funding sources.

The chart above combines both information about the origin and source of the funds. As we can see, North America and Western Europe are evenly divided with regards to the geographical location from where the funding stems (ten organizations are funded by monies coming from North America and ten with funds from Western Europe). Jewish organizations are responsible for the funding of four other Jewish organizations and Israel, two. Under this perspective, one could conclude that rehabilitating post-communist Jewish Europe was a task whose efforts were mainly shared by those two poles of Jewish life, United States and Western Europe.

However, when we look at the source of funds a more detailed picture emerges in each of the regions. In North America, monies for Central Eastern Europe came exclusively from local Jewry. Yet, within the local Jewry interesting differences appear. Whereas four organizations receive most of their funding from their constituencies, five are directly funded by a single individual or family. Among the latter, JDC and JAFI/WZO, receive their money through a common fundraising instrument, the United Jewish Appeal, which was in charge of conducting campaigns among the North American

Jewish Federations.[454] The three others, AJC, Chabad Lubavitch and WJC, conducted their own fundraising initiatives, getting their money from private contributors, whereas, the World Jewish Congress' President, Edgar J. Bronfman, generously relied upon his personal wealth to fund the organization during his term. In turn, the other five charitable bodies are exclusively funded by the wealth of a single family or individual (The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Buncher Family Foundation, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Reichmann brothers, Doron/Marc Rich Foundations[455]). In Western Europe the situation replicates in a minor scale that of North America, but also presents important differences. Local Jews do fund local organizations, whereby a same division can be made between money contributed by local donors to different institutions (B'nai B'rith Europe, World Jewish Relief, CEJI) and money that comes from and goes for private initiatives (Rothschild and Nissenbaum Foundation). However, it is in Europe where the role public funding gains, interestingly, a relevant place. Reparation's money given by, primarily, the German government, but also by the Austrian and Hungarian governments, fund the Claims Conference and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture; wartime reparations provided by those governments having recognized a responsibility in the mass extermination of Jews are also key to understand the establishment of the *Fondation Mémorial de la Shoah* in France and the *Joods Humanitair Fonds* in the Netherlands. Whereas in the Claims Conference case it is about a continuous flow of money coming from those governments, in the French and Dutch cases, governments contributed with a very substantial one-time allocation that the charitable bodies set up later as endowments. Finally, CEJI stands as the only Jewish organization receiving funds from the European Union. Its funding should be understood less in terms of wartime reparations than due to the system of subsidies directed to NGOs stemming from Brussels. Another important actor is Jewish organizations themselves, who fund other Jewish organizations. That is the case of the L.A. Pincus Fund, which operates with money obtained from the interests of a trust established by the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist Organization, the JDC, and the Israeli Ministry of Education; the case of the European Jewish Congress, established as an offshoot of the World Jewish Congress;

[454] Until 1999 the *United Jewish Appeal*, a unified fundraising body, was responsible for collecting money in the United States. The model entered a crisis afterwards.
[455] Marc Rich is here considered to be an American Jew though he has been established in Switzerland. See above.

the World Jewish Congress, that receive part of its funds from membership fees paid by Jewish umbrella organizations across the world; and Chabad Lubavitch, that, as we have already mentioned, was able to conduct some of its project relying on contributions done by the JDC, the Lauder Foundation and the World Jewish Relief. Finally, the Israeli government partly funds the Jewish Agency/World Zionist Organization.

This analysis helps us understand that American Jewry, all its segments comprised, stands as the main supporter of the rehabilitation of Jewish life in post-Communist Europe followed by Western European governments, especially the German one, and Western European Jewry. After all, and as it has been shown in chapter 1, after the Second World War American Jewry became the undisputed center for Jewish life, combining affluence, organizational means, and an overdeveloped sensitivity to respond and feel responsible for Jewish causes overseas. The contrast with other Jewries is only too wide to ignore, even, and specially, with Israel. But the fact that more than half of American Jewry's philanthropic bodies active in Central Eastern Europe were funded by individual wealth, opens the question concerning the "representativeness" of the Jewish organizations. Up until the post-Holocaust era, the Jewish solidarity field encompassed organizations that somehow responded to different segments of organized Jewries. The Joint, the AJC, the World Jewish Relief, B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Agency for Israel are typical representatives of well-established communities, or in the case of the World Jewish Congress as an umbrella of worldwide Jewish communities. Even "partisan" solidarities such as those connected with different Jewish denominational streams are expressions of a certain collective ethos within the Jewish world. Interestingly, the novelty is that post-communist Europe has seen the burgeoning of newer bodies of Jewish solidarity that do not necessarily respond to a given collective or segment within organized Jewry. Foundations were created by families or individuals eager to have a more direct participation in those affairs. This shift in the world of Jewish philanthropy, involving a great deal of fragmentation and individuation, is key to understanding the post-communist dynamics.

5.4 A transnational dynamic

The circulation of monies coming from various sources and the fact that not all the organizations had an actual presence in the field were the two key factors that fostered the creation of a genuine transnational network in the rebuilding of Jewish Eastern Europe. As we have already seen, many philanthropic organizations constituted themselves as grant-making bodies, providing sums whether to other organizations that had an ongoing operation in the region or to the communities directly. Not to mention other funding structures such as the Western European governments placed outside the Jewish realm. Thus, this gave place to a peculiar scheme of money circulation, determining a complex system of alliances and partnerships. The diagram below attempts to show how this scheme unfolded during the years 1989-2002.

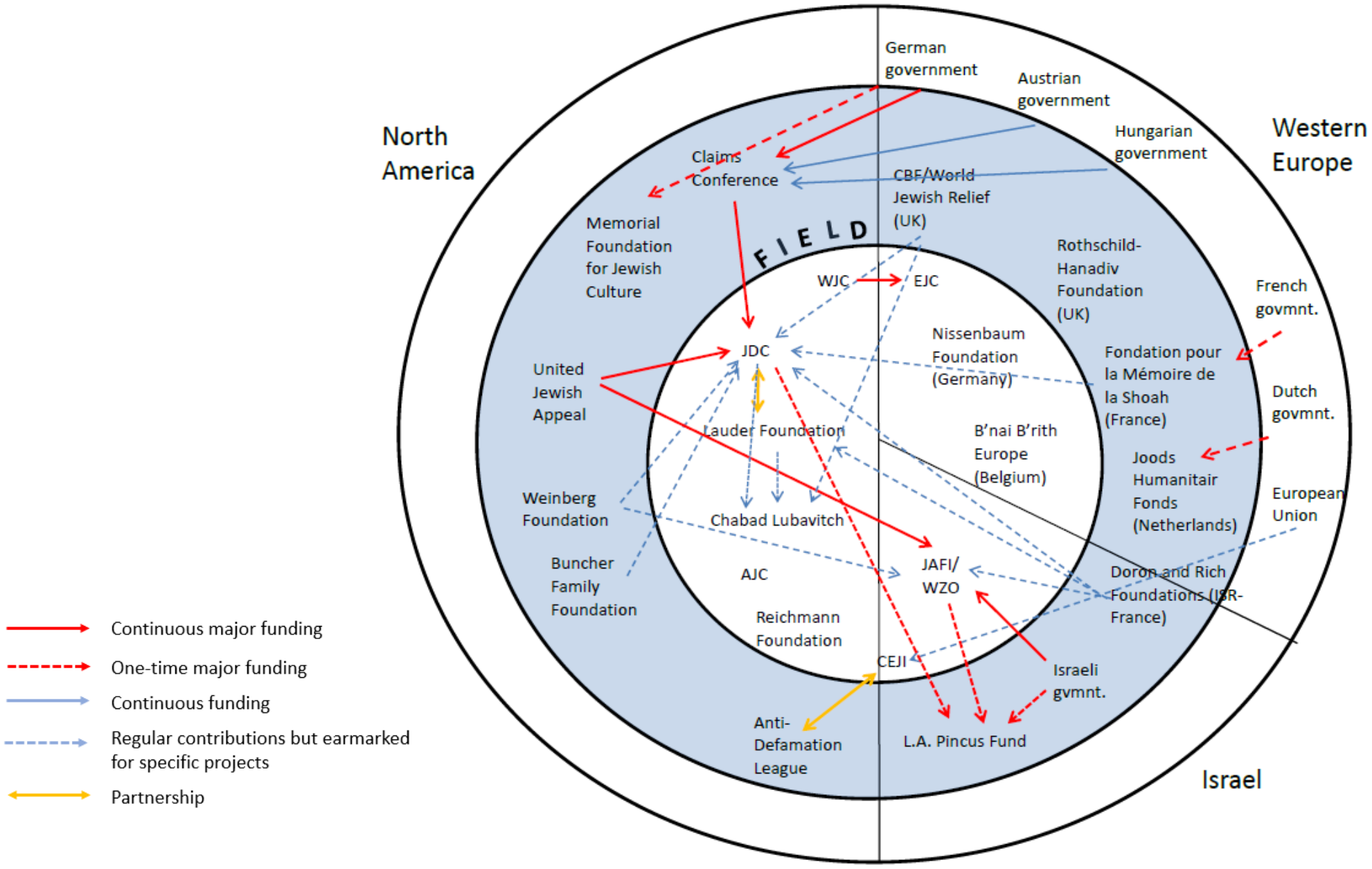

Figure 18. Transnational dynamic among organizations active in Europe 1989-2002

The diagram is made up of three concentric circles divided in turn into three different geographical regions, North America, Western Europe and Israel. In the white-inner circle, called “Field,” there were placed the “operative” organizations, those that have opened offices and deployed staff in the region, and conducted a variety of programs. In the middle, in the light-blue circle were included different Jewish organizations that played the role of disbursing bodies. Finally, in the outer white circle there were placed those non-Jewish entities that provided funds to Jewish organizations for the rebuilding of Jewish Europe. All these organizations and charitable bodies are connected with arrows. A one-way arrow in red indicates major funding; for instance, the German government is a major funder of the Claims Conference like the United Jewish Appeal is with the JDC and JAFI. A dashed red arrow indicates a one-time major funding, normally allowing organizations to establish an endowment and to disburse the interests given by those endowments. That’s the case of the L.A Pincus Fund (established as trust thanks a one-time contribution of JAFI/WZO, the Ministry of Education of Israel and JDC), the FMS (a major contribution from the French government, including public companies), and the Joods Humanitair Fonds (Dutch government). A light-blue one-way arrow indicates direction of funding, not as major as the red arrow, but a continuous one, such as the case of the Austrian and the Hungarian governments with regards to the Claims Conference. In contrast, a dashed light-blue arrow indicates earmarked contributions for specific projects. That’s the most usual case, involving foundations, charitable bodies and other agencies. Finally, an orange two-way arrow indicates partnership, that is, an equal relationship between organizations in, for example, pursuing one project.

The diagram helps to clarify the transnational nature of the rehabilitation of post-communist Jewry that unraveled between 1989 and 2002. It shows not only the extent and nature of the participation of each of the three poles (North America, Western Europe and Israel) in post-communist Eastern Europe and the “division of labor” created between those agencies that went operative and those that disbursed funds, but also, and essentially, shows their mutual relationships. As we have already suggested, money circulated in many different forms and for very different causes.

One of the most interesting cases is the Claims Conference, whose funds went back and forth, from Europe to the United States and then back to Europe through the JDC. Another remarkable phenomenon is constituted by the centralizing role of the JDC which, as we have seen, received its largest share of funding from the United Jewish Appeal, but also began to be the recipient of monies coming from various sources. The picture below represents a visual example of this dynamic.

Figure 19. Sign located at the entrance of the Jewish Community Center "Beit Shalom" in Sofia, Bulgaria. Photo: MD-2011.

The picture above, taken at the entrance hall of Sofia's Jewish Community Center, serves as a perfect illustration of the transnational dynamics that the process of rebuilding East European Judaism implied, in this case with JDC as the central actor. It shows the confluence of very different kinds of institutional actors in terms of countries of origin, histories, conception of philanthropy, fundraising mechanisms, organizational culture, and scale of their operations. These actors, notwithstanding its heterogeneous composition, came together in one single project, that of rebuilding one of the Bulgarian Jewry's main facilities, the Jewish Community Center. We know now that it was the JDC that centralized those monies coming from different sources. If we count the contribution of the local group "Shalom," this project had been supported by monies coming from four countries (Bulgaria, US, UK and France), two Jewish relief agencies created in response to different challenges of the first half of the twentieth century –the JDC (1914) and World Jewish Relief (1933)-, one state-sponsored cultural organization created in the 2000 (*Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*), one American family foundation, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and one individual donor Jackie Wolf from San Francisco. Sofia's Jewish Community

Center is only one of the multiple examples of the particular dynamics at play in the rebuilding of Eastern European Judaism. Many programs and initiatives lacked such signs like the one at the Sofia's Jewish Community Center, but they were certainly following the same logic. This example also demonstrates that, in some areas, a coordinated work was possible, at least, for very specific projects, no matter how different the ideological, programmatic and philosophical approaches were regarding the "new Jews" in the "new Europe."

5.5 Conclusions

The rebuilding of Jewish life in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism constituted, above all, a collective endeavor. It involved the participation of a multiplicity of actors: Jewish agencies, private foundations, individual donors and governments, hundreds of individuals and the investment of millions of dollars. In this chapter we focused on the main institutional actors: twenty-one organizations from the political, welfare and educational and cultural fields, which were founded in the last hundred and sixty years, starting in 1843.

Yet, far from being a coordinated effort, a "Jewish Peace Corps" as a concerned observer envisaged in 1990, the rehabilitation of post-communist Central and Eastern European Jewry took the form of a complex mosaic of organizations active in different fields of action and struggling to carve their own niche. Each domain presented its own characteristics. In the political and advocacy field, organizations overlapped, competed and ignored each other in their ambition to become the leading voice of the Jewish people. That space was disputed by the World Jewish Congress, the long-time body devoted to Jewish diplomacy, the European Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee, which brought along the American tradition of self-defense, advocacy and community relations. CEJI-Center for European Jewish Information was focused on educational campaigns and followed a model developed in previous years by the Anti-Defamation League. In contrast, in the relief and social welfare assistance domains, operations revolved around one single player, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The JDC was able to build a system of funding that involved different kinds of organizations whose funds stemmed from varied sources. Thus, its major and natural funder, the United Jewish Appeal, was joined by the Central British Fund, the Claims Conference and the Buncher, the Weinberg, and the Rich and Doron Foundations, among others.

But it was in the field of “Jewish continuity,” the one aimed at intervening in the fabric of Jewish communal life and transmitting Jewish identity to a population deemed “Jewishly” uneducated, where a genuine free market of choices emerged in a space of only a few years: the JDC, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, the Jewish Agency/World Zionist Congress, Chabad Lubavitch, along with a string of other agencies, providing larger or smaller sums, they all began to devote efforts to shape, strengthen and maintain the renovated Jewish identity of Eastern European Jewish population. Each of these agencies had a particular understanding of Jewish life and Jewish identity and therefore set up their own programs and activities. In no way did this impede the development of partnerships on particular projects.

In addition, 1989 confirmed a trend that had started during the Great War and consolidated after the Holocaust: the central role that American Jewry played in overseas aid. Half of the organizations involved were funded by different segments of American Jewry. Jews from Western Europe and, interestingly, European governments provided a not negligible amount of money.

But if that trend was confirmed, a new one emerged. New charitable bodies began to reshape the landscape of Jewish solidarity. These new charitable bodies characterized themselves for being the instrument not of a given collective of Jews but of single families or individuals. This was all the more ironic: if the practice of philanthropy, as it was shown in chapter 1, was originally conceived as a collective obligation towards impoverished and persecuted brethren, this chapter showed how it became, since the second half of the twentieth century and more so towards the 1990s, an increasingly fragmented and individualized practice. Therefore, philanthropic instruments created during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by organized Jewries began to coexist –and interact- with other players, namely, private foundations.

6. Conclusions and validation of hypothesis

This thesis has sought to examine the role that Jewish transnational organizations played in rebuilding Jewish Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has also sought to shed light on the narratives that were produced about European Jews in the wake of the political transition in Europe to understand the degree to which these two phenomena are interrelated. In other words, I tried to answer the following questions: How was aid from Jewish agencies and organizations structured in post-1989 Europe? What were its central features? To what extent does this process represent continuity and to what extent something radically different from previous interventions? With respect to the narratives, what did these new narratives consist of and who was behind them? I have considered the topic in its *historical* dimension, both in its *longue-durée* perspective –the making of Jewish transnational solidarity in modern Europe— and as part of contemporary history –1989 and its aftermath for Jews in Europe. I have also considered its *sociological* dimensions, focusing on the transnational condition of the phenomenon as well as on the analysis of narratives and the heterogeneity of platforms through which those narratives circulated.

6.1 Validation of hypothesis

At the beginning of this doctoral thesis, I proposed several research objectives with their respective hypotheses. It is now time to evaluate whether these hypotheses, based on the findings, can be fully or partially validated or if, on the contrary, cannot be validated at all. In what follows, I restate the research goals and respective hypotheses for further examination.

RESEARCH GOAL 1 (RG1): To analyze the making of Jewish transnational solidarity in the modern era in order to understand and identify continuities and ruptures with that of post-1989 Jewish Europe

• **Hypothesis 1.1 (H1.1)**: Modern Jewish solidarity, born in nineteenth-century Europe, evolved to become, during the twentieth century, a field of activity, a very specific arena defined by the changing relationships between organizations, professional bodies, and ideological and programmatic agendas as well as by the changing relevance of Jewish centers capable of mobilizing resources and people in favor of less fortunate brethren.

The practice of Jewish solidarity can be linked to ancient Biblical and Talmudic notions, such as *tsedakah* (Hebrew for charity, צדקה), *Klal Israel* (Hebrew for peoplehood, כלל

ישראל) and *Kol Israel arevim ze la'ze* (All of Israel are responsible for one another, כל ישראל ערבין זה לזה). Yet, if these concepts help us to understand the ancient religious roots and sometimes the motivations of some of the actors involved in helping others, they fail to provide a suitable explanation of how these deep-rooted religious prescriptions evolved into a modern commitment of helping other Jews around the world—frequently embodied in professional agencies of Jewish aid. In order to understand these ulterior developments, this thesis investigated the rise of Jewish solidarity in its modern sense, which was born in mid nineteenth-century Europe. Over time, philanthropic endeavors adopted various modalities and addressed a vast range of needs that went from self-defense and advocacy issues to disaster relief, vocational training, economic rehabilitation, and agrarian resettlement. More importantly, the thesis also showed how modern Jewish solidarity became a *field* in the sense given by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, a very particular arena of social action governed by its own dynamics.[456] Hence, this hypothesis can be fully validated. I would like to point out here some of the distinct features of modern Jewish solidarity:

Transnationalism. Cross-border contacts between individuals and communities was a constant feature in Jewish life during centuries. One could claim that, in fact, Jews behaved in transnational fashion decades, if not centuries, before this phenomenon captured the attention of academic disciplines and before scholars began thinking about other diasporas in similar ways.[457] However, the emergence of an organized Jewish philanthropic system constituted, in its very nature, a transnational enterprise. Modern Jewish philanthropy was created as a response to "transtate" or "supranational" problems affecting other Diaspora Jews and, therefore, when addressing those challenges Western Jewish elites organized themselves and, more importantly, acted at a transnational level. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye defined transnationalism as "contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments."[458]

Indeed, modern Jewish philanthropy became a veritable "transnational third sector" informed by a loose but mobilizing sense of peoplehood, a "'community of action'

[456] Pierre Bourdieu, "Quelques propriétés des champs", op. cit and Pierre Mounier, *Pierre Bourdieu, une introduction*, op. cit.
[457] Moshe Rosman, "Jewish History Across Borders",op. cit.; Shulamit Volkov, "Jewish History. The Nationalism of Transnationalism", op. cit.; William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies…", op. cit.
[458] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, op. cit., p. xi.

through which groups of activists mobilized to aid and/or rescue Jews in peril."[459] The transnational dynamic reflected, in turn, the shifting importance of Jewish centers throughout the contemporary period. The importance of a given center was mainly defined by demography (the number of Jews living there), the political, social and economic freedom the Jews enjoyed in their societies, the organizational culture of Jews, and last but not least, by the role that their countries played in the concert of nations. In this sense, if Western Europe was the cradle of modern Jewish philanthropy, it was in the United States where, after World War II, reached its peak.

Modernization. Pre-modern Jewish transtate philanthropy was based on the figure of the *shtadlan* or "intercessor". This was a well-connected, influential, and very often affluent Western European individual, who used his business networks, family ties, and political relationships to intercede upon the authorities on behalf of local Jewish communities.[460] The Damascus affair in 1840 and the Mortara case in 1858 marked the transition from *shtadlanut* practices to innovative and modern ways of responding to Jewish cross-border problems. In 1860 the Alliance Israélite Universelle was founded in Paris, becoming the first organized expression of transnational Jewish solidarity in modern times. Shortly thereafter, Jews from other European centers created their own relief agencies such as Israelitische Allianz zu Wien (1871), Anglo-Jewish Association (1873) and the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden (1901).[461] Since then, organizational philanthropy operated in a more systematic fashion. It can be asserted that their emergence responded to a dynamic that went above and beyond the Jewish world. As Akira Iriye pointed out, during the early twentieth century many non-governmental social, religious and cultural groups promoting education, cultural exchanges, relief, and welfare services, began to engage in international activities by setting up supranational organizations. With respect to the cross-border activities of the major religions, Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, developed the notion of "religious international," defined as a "cluster of voluntary transnational organizations and representations crystallizing around international issues, in which both 'ordinary' believers and religious specialists could serve as protagonists." The term, they

[459] Jonathan Dekel-Chen, "Philanthropy, Diplomacy, and Jewish Internationalism", op. cit. and same author "Transnational intervention and its limits: the case of interwar Poland", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* 17:3, pp. 265–286.
[460] Scott Ury, "The Shtadlan of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth: noble advocate or unbridled opportunist?", *Polin*, *15*, 2002, pp. 267–299.
[461] Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affaire: "ritual murder", politics, and the Jews in 1840*, op. cit. and Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred bonds of solidarity: the rise of Jewish internationalism in nineteenth-century France*, op. cit.

asserted, can serve as an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of international/transnational religious activity in the modern world.[462]

Specialization and professionalization. Modernization also meant increasing specialization and professionalization. On the one hand, the burgeoning of Jewish philanthropic organizations propitiated an increasing specialization, a sort of division of labor within the field. Thus, different areas of functional specialization within the Jewish world can be identified: political advocacy and fight against antisemitism, emigration and resettlement, relief and welfare, Jewish education and religious coordination. Around these areas of action, a veritable constellation of agencies and organizations orbited.

On the other hand, an incipient class of "Jewish professionals" rose, namely, communal leaders, philanthropists, activists, social workers, and fundraisers. Social service areas received the influence of the "scientific turn" that began to be adopted in the practice of philanthropy in the United States. Hence, the Jewish communal worker, as opposed to a volunteer worker, is a professional who has been trained to provide welfare related aid in the Jewish community and whose performance is framed in a program that has been designed following rational and modern patterns of organization.

• **Hypothesis 1.2 (H1.2)**: The Jewish solidarity that unfolded after the fall of communism could only have been possible thanks to the existence of a sophisticated transnational system of ethno-religious philanthropy and mutual aid forged during the previous one hundred and fifty years.

This thesis has shown that in many respects the 1989 events represented a moment of radical change regarding European Jewry. For the first time since the Holocaust, Central and Eastern European individuals of Jewish descent could reconnect or rediscover Jewish culture and traditions, explore their spiritual and religious needs, and become voluntary members of a Jewish community, in an atmosphere of political freedom and officially sanctioned religious tolerance.[463] Jews across the continent felt a renewed optimism toward the future of Europe. It is in this new context that

[462] Akira Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*, op. cit. and Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene (eds.). *Religious Internationals in the Modern World. Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 1–2.

[463] Jonathan Webber (ed.), *Jewish identities*…, op. cit.; Victor Karady, "Jewish Identity in Post-Communist…", op. cit; Gitelman, Kosmin and Kovács, *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*…, op. cit.; Geneviève Zubrzycki, *Resurrecting the Jew*…, op. cit.

transnational Jewish agencies felt compelled to operate and invest in reconstructing Jewish organized life. It was shown in the thesis that this process can be placed in a long list of modern transnational Jewish interventions in the region. In fact, modern Jewish solidarity had been developing for almost a hundred and fifty years prior to the fall of Communism. Favored by the increasing internationalist atmosphere prevailing at the turn of the twentieth century, which saw the burgeoning of multi-state organizations dealing with transnational problems at all levels, but also responding to very specific needs and emergencies involving Jewish people throughout the world, world Jewry created its own —and very diverse— organizational tools. Each "Jewish" crisis led to the response of one or various Jewish centers —and of various groups within those centers—, which in turn created organizations mandated to operate on their behalf. Spheres such as self-defense and political advocacy, immigration, welfare and relief, but also education, culture, and religion, were covered by a wide range of organizations aiming at addressing an array of twentieth-century Jewish needs. The result was the creation of a network of extremely sophisticated and transnational organizations. Such institutions reflected the diversity of Jewish activities and presence as well as the heterogeneity of the Jewish world in terms of its financial and political capacity, ideological differences and religious orientations. Scholar Abigail Green called this phenomenon a "multivocality of Jewish philanthropy"[464] Thus, when the collapse of communism took place, a well-consolidated tradition of modern Jewish solidarity was already in existence. The hypothesis can be fully validated.

However, if this hypothesis can be validated, 1989 and the years that followed invite us to adopt a more complex perspective. While this philanthropic endeavor owes much to the solidarity tradition born in European modernity and the agencies that were created accordingly, it is also true that the period saw the rise of new types of philanthropic organizations which reflected in some respects a major shift from the seemingly consolidated practices of the previous century. In other words, "old" and "new" Jewish philanthropy began to coexist after 1989. I will elaborate further on this point when discussing hypothesis 3.3 (H3.3).

RESEARCH GOAL 2 (RG2): To analyze the narratives produced by Jewish activists and overseas organizations, scholars, professional journalists, and intellectuals about Central and Eastern European Jews between 1985 and 2000.

[464] Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene (eds.). op. cit., p. 15.

• **Hypothesis 2.1 (H2.1)**: During this period, a radical transformation took place in the narratives portraying Jews living in Central and Eastern European countries.

In effect, the thesis has shown how Central and Eastern European Jews were "rediscovered" by Western Jews in a period that spanned from the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. This cycle of rediscovery involved specialized observers and activists, scholars, journalists, writers, photographers or simply tourists. They all showed a renewed interest towards a population considered to have entered in the limbo of history after 1945, situated at the verge of extinction and living in a "spiritual wasteland." And all this had a direct impact on the narratives that emerged and started to circulate during that period.

Initial pieces of information began to come from Jewish scholars and activists who, because of their engagement with the plight for Soviet Jews, were already monitoring the region. The pages of *Soviet Jewish Affairs* presented for the first time some hints of internal community life, pointed to some positive signs regarding the behavior of the Communist authorities (as well as that of dissident personalities and groups) vis-à-vis the Jews and the "Jewish question" and, more importantly, detected what they soon began to define as an awakening of the Jewish identity among Eastern Europeans of Jewish origin. Still, the information collected was fragmentary and lacked a more general perspective.

Also, by the mid-1980s, Germany began to be a center of scholarly attention. Due to its peculiar history and situation and the interest aroused after the reunification, Germany and its Jews during the post-war period became a unique case of scholarly attention. In a space of a few years, a specialized sub-field of studies began to systematically examine Jewish life in post-war Germany. This was initiated by a group of young West German Jewish intellectuals attempting to break from a generational prejudice and were later joined by foreign scholars from the United States and Canada.

But it was once after the making of the "peaceful" revolutions and the collapse of Communism that the cycle of rediscovery took its ultimate impulse, capturing the imagination of a far wider audience than one of the previous years. The end of the so-called "real existing socialism" motivated the emergence of reports that for the first time tried to offer a comprehensive account of the entire Jewish experience in Eastern Europe after 1945. Thus, specialized observers but also professional journalists set out to restore the internal dynamics of Jewish communal life during those years, to

identify salient periods, events and personalities, to scrutinize the role of the Jewish leadership and to emphasize the Jewish revivalism of the post-Communist era.

In parallel with these developments, an unprecedented drive for remembrance began to take place among Western Jews. Encouraged by the gradual openness shown by the late Communist governments, and propagated after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the "past" made itself attainable once more and therefore a whole set of memorial artifacts, including the practice of memorial tourism and secular pilgrimages, came to cater to the needs of a growing demand for remembrance. Some of these memorial initiatives found themselves "surprised" at finding remaining Jewish life in places where they only expected to see cemeteries. Thus, certain memorial narratives became more complex and combined nostalgia with revelation.

Finally, by the mid-1990s, European Jewish intellectuals began speaking about "new Jewish identities" in a "new Europe." In effect, the new face of Europe, politically unified, economically integrated and governed by pluralist democracies, led the Jewish intellectuals to conclude that this new era presented new challenges for the Jews. But it was the French-Italian intellectual Diana Pinto who asserted, in full optimism, that never in the history of Europe has a "moment been so propitious for its Jews," who were now capable of building a distinct European Jewish identity and to play an active role in the public arena.

Consequently, this hypothesis is fully validated.

• **Hypothesis 2.2 (H2.2)**: Such a change in the narrative is a central element that explains the mobilization of various actors and resources for the reconstruction of the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe.

The thesis has shown that while these narratives were being written and published, while tourists and survivors were going back to the encounter of their past, another phenomenon was taking place simultaneously, namely, the massive arrival of Jewish transnational organizations to the region. But can we affirm that these new narratives were *central* in explaining the mobilization of Jewish transnational solidarity? In order to answer this question, we may pose our attention to the narratives produced by those agencies who one may assume had a direct influence in the decision-making bodies of the Jewish aid organizations. In fact, Western Jewish organizations were among the first in reacting and issuing reports destined to provide information on the new developments unraveling in the region. The London-based *Institute of Jewish Affairs*

published in 1990 a research report called “Central and East European Jewry: the Impact of Liberation and Revolution,” where a group of specialized observers briefed on the Jewish situation in each country affected such changes taking place. The same year, the World Jewish Congress’ sponsored annual publication *Survey of Jewish Affairs* included “A Year of Truth in Eastern Europe: Liberalization and the Jewish Communities.” Finally, the *American Jewish Year Book*, the annual publication of the American Jewish Committee, which for decades had been informing mostly about political and diplomatic developments concerning the Soviet system, began to report extensively on the new political atmosphere that the 1989-1990 years brought to the region. We can assume that these publications provided information to the agencies that were arriving in the region. However, I believe that this thesis was not able to probe that these narratives were *central* elements that explains *per se* the mobilization. In order to do that, more research needs to be done, especially about decision-making processes within the philanthropic agencies. Therefore, I would say that the hypothesis is only partially validated.

RESEARCH GOAL 3 (RG3): To examine the transnational dynamics of Western Jewish organizations present in Europe after 1989.

• **Hypothesis 3.1 (H3.1)**: The reconstruction of Jewish communities and Jewish life in general in the post-communist countries of Europe in the period between 1989 and 2000 has been a collective, transnational enterprise and involved the mobilization of people, resources, knowledge and narratives from other Jewish centers of global importance, but it has been characterized by the absence of centralized coordination, by high degrees of compartmentalization and by the dialectic between competition and collaboration. This was especially developed in chapter 3.

The rebuilding of Jewish life in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism constituted, above all, a collective endeavor. It involved the participation of a multiplicity of actors: Jewish agencies, private foundations, individual donors and governments, hundreds of individuals and the investment of millions of dollars. This thesis was able to map twenty-one organizations that were active in the political, welfare and educational and cultural fields. Indeed, post-1989 Jewish solidarity showed an unprecedented multiplication of charitable bodies designed to operate on the same territory and over the same population. Humanitarian and relief agencies, political/advocacy bodies, religious groups, Jewish NGOs, and private and family foundations, represented a sophisticated and highly compartmentalized system of solidarity. All these twenty-one Jewish organizations —each of them holding different goals, budgets, organizational

structures, and funding sources— revolved around the European Jewish galaxy after 1989.

Yet, far from being a coordinated effort, a “Jewish Peace Corps” as a concerned observer envisaged in 1990, this thesis has shown how the rehabilitation of post-communist Central and Eastern European Jewry took the form of a complex mosaic of organizations active in different fields of action and struggling to carve their own niche. Each domain presented its own characteristics. In the political and advocacy field, organizations overlapped, competed, and ignored each other in their ambition to become the leading voice of the Jewish people. That space was disputed by the World Jewish Congress, the long-time body devoted to Jewish diplomacy, the European Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee, which brought along the American tradition of self-defense, advocacy and community relations. CEJI-Center for European Jewish Information was focused on educational campaigns and followed a model developed in previous years by the Anti-Defamation League. In contrast, in the relief and social welfare assistance domains, operations revolved around one single player, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The JDC was able to build a system of funding that involved different kinds of organizations whose funds stemmed from varied sources. Thus, its major and natural funder, the United Jewish Appeal, was joined by the Central British Fund, the Claims Conference and the Buncher, the Weinberg, and the Rich and Doron Foundations, among others.

But it was in the field of “Jewish continuity,” the one aimed at intervening in the fabric of Jewish communal life and transmitting Jewish identity to a population deemed “Jewishly” uneducated, where a genuine free market of choices emerged in a space of only a few years: the JDC, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, the Jewish Agency/World Zionist Congress, Chabad Lubavitch, along with a string of other agencies, providing larger or smaller sums, they all began to devote efforts to shape, strengthen and maintain the renovated Jewish identity of Eastern European Jewish population. Each of these agencies had a particular understanding of Jewish life and Jewish identity and therefore set up their own programs and activities. In no way did this impede the development of partnerships on particular projects.

The hypothesis can be fully validated.

• **Hypothesis 3.2 (H3.2)**: It is in the analysis of the circulation of money used to finance field operations that the eminently transnational character of the intervention can be observed and attested.

How *transnational* were Jewish philanthropic efforts in rebuilding Jewish Europe? The thesis has shown that, in its very nature, Jewish solidarity in its modern sense was a transnational enterprise. Organizations and other philanthropic bodies created mostly along the twentieth century were mandated to react facing cross-border challenges affecting Jews living elsewhere in the world. Aid emanated from those Jewish centers capable of mobilizing human and financial resources in favor of their religious brethren. The thesis analyzed the geographical distribution of Jewish organizations. Indeed, the cities where the organizations have established their headquarters are important indicators of a certain Jewish transnational geography. In this respect, it was shown how New York remained the most important "Jewish capital," at least in what philanthropy to Jewish Europe was concerned. Seven organizations have established their main offices there: American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Claims Conference, Lauder Foundation, World Jewish Congress, Chabad Lubavitch, and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Following New York came Paris with three organizations (European Jewish Congress, the Marc Rich Foundation and the Fondation pour la Memoire de la Shoah) followed by London and Brussels, with two each. In London, the World Jewish Relief and the Rothschild/Hanadiv Foundation have their offices and in Brussels, undoubtedly because of its status as the capital of the European Union, CEJI and B'nai B'rith Europe are based. Two organizations were based in Jerusalem as well, JAFI/WZO and the L.A. Pincus Fund, while the Doron Foundation (the Israeli part of the Rich Foundation) is located in Tel Aviv.

As it can be seen, post-1989 transnational geography gives an account of the distribution of Jewish centers, the specific weight of each of them and at the same time allows us to lay the foundations for understanding the dynamics between them.

Yet, the transnational nature of Jewish philanthropic aid also comes as evidence when scrutinizing the way in which the money flowed globally. Indeed, the circulation of monies coming from various sources and the fact that not all the organizations had an actual presence in the field were the two key factors that fostered the creation of a genuine transnational network in the rebuilding of Jewish Eastern Europe. Many philanthropic organizations constituted themselves as grant-making bodies, providing sums whether to other organizations that had an ongoing operation in the region or to the communities directly. Not to mention other funding structures such as the Western European governments placed outside the Jewish realm. Thus, this gave place to a

peculiar scheme of money circulation, determining a complex system of alliances and partnerships.

The thesis has shown in detail, through a diagram, the transnational nature of the rehabilitation of post-communist Jewry that unraveled between 1989 and 2002. I was able to probe not only the extent and nature of the participation of each of the three geographical poles (North America, Western Europe and Israel) in post-communist Eastern Europe and the “division of labor” created between those agencies that went operative and those that disbursed funds, but also, and essentially, their mutual relationships. Money circulated in many different forms and for very different causes.

For example, one of the most interesting cases was the Claims Conference, whose funds went back and forth, from Europe to the United States and then back to Europe through the JDC. Another remarkable phenomenon was constituted by the centralizing role of the JDC which, as we have seen, received its largest share of funding from the United Jewish Appeal, but also began to be the recipient of monies coming from various sources.

Therefore, this hypothesis is fully validated.

• **Hypothesis 3.3 (H3.3)**: In post-1989 Jewish philanthropy it began to coexist “old” or “traditional” forms of philanthropy, which were expressions of different segments within the Jewish collective, representing ideological, religious or national differences, with philanthropies of a new type, based on individual and/or family fortunes.

The fall of Communism re-opened a vast and largely unexplored territory, a new frontier, for Western Jewish intervention. On one hand, organizations that were forced to abandon Eastern Europe during the consolidation of the Communist regimes could now make their come-back and operate without any type of constraints. Notably, that was the case of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel/World Zionist Organization. But on the other hand, the period also accelerated the arrival of newer organizations dedicated to Jewish philanthropy, such as private family foundations and other charitable bodies. The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, The L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora or even Chabad Lubavitch, they all represented different types of “new players” in the Jewish solidarity field of post-communist Europe. A myriad of Jewish agencies and organizations, private foundations and even individual donors stemming from different

ideological and religious backgrounds, each one deploying their own professional bodies, working methods and organizational culture, arrived in the region.

In fact, these new charitable bodies began to reshape the landscape of Jewish solidarity. One of their main characteristics was that of being the instrument not of a given collective of Jews but of single families or individuals. In the thesis I identified at least seven charitable bodies that were exclusively funded by the wealth of a single family or individual (The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Buncher Family Foundation, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Reichmann brothers, Doron/Marc Rich Foundations, Rothschild Foundation and Nissenbaum Foundation). This was all the more ironic: if the practice of philanthropy, as it was shown in chapter 1, was originally conceived as a collective obligation towards impoverished and persecuted brethren, the thesis has shown how it became, since the second half of the twentieth century and more so towards the 1990s, an increasingly individualized practice. This opens the question concerning the "representativeness" of the Jewish organizations. Up until the post-Holocaust era, the Jewish solidarity field encompassed organizations that somehow responded to different segments of organized Jewries. The Joint, the AJC, the World Jewish Relief, B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Agency for Israel are typical representatives of well-established communities, or in the case of the World Jewish Congress as an umbrella of worldwide Jewish communities. Even "partisan" solidarities such as those connected with different Jewish denominational streams are expressions of a certain collective ethos within the Jewish world. Interestingly, the novelty is that post-communist Europe has seen the burgeoning of newer bodies of Jewish solidarity that do not necessarily respond to a given collective or segment within organized Jewry. Foundations were created by families or individuals eager to have a more direct participation in those affairs.

Philanthropy analyst Andrés Spokoiny called this process "disintermediation." For him, current philanthropic trends cannot be understood in a vacuum, but rather connected to larger social trends. Hyper-connectedness, individuation and post-modern identity-building are part of those trends. Therefore:

> Like everything else in society, philanthropy is being disintermediated. In the past, funders were comfortable with Federations and other communal organizations organizing their philanthropy for them. Donors contributed to a central charitable fund and trusted that central body to make philanthropic decisions for them. This approach doesn't suit the hyper-empowered individual who is not willing to outsource

> these decisions to others. Funders want to decide for themselves where the money goes. Instead of seeing "intermediaries" as vehicles for connecting with the issues they care about, donors view them as unnecessary expenses and infringements on freedom of action—barriers between the donor and the grantee, hurdles to overcome […] Today's funders seek to relate directly with the causes they care about.[465]

The Private Foundation, along with other philanthropic tools such as the DAF (Donor Advised Funds), emerged as the main philanthropic vehicles of this era. "At any rate the main appeal of these two philanthropic vehicles is that they offer donors a large degree of freedom and control over their philanthropy." (p. 136) The collective dimension was, of course, weakened and the relative weight of communal philanthropy diminished. According to American scholar Lila Corwin Berman, the number of Jewish private family foundations registered in the US went from 3,000 in the mid-1990s to 10,000 just a decade later.[466] This shift in the world of Jewish philanthropy, involving a great deal of fragmentation and individuation, is key to understanding the post-communist dynamics.

6.2 New lines of research

As a result of this doctoral thesis, new topics of study have emerged to consider in future research.

In the first place, in-depth research about the concrete modalities under which Jewish philanthropic agencies operated could be carried out. In other words, the present thesis investigated the ecosystem of Jewish philanthropy from a "macro" perspective, trying to deploy a mapping that accounts for the configuration of the entire organizational scope dedicated to philanthropy, the areas of work, the sources of funding and the circulation of money. A new line of research could shed light on the concrete modalities in which certain interventions were carried out in specific communities. For example, one of the specific interventions that were implemented most rapidly was training and leadership development programs for community leaders. These programs had a double objective: to transmit Jewish knowledge to a population that lacked it and, at

[465] Andrés Spokoiny, "The Changing Face of Jewish Philanthropy", in Rabbi Mary L. Zamore (ed.), The Sacred Exchange. Creating a Jewish Money Ethic, New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2019, pp. 135–136.
[466] Lila Corwin Berman, *The American Jewish Philanthropic Complex. The History of a Multibillion-dollar Institution*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 169.

the same time, to provide the necessary know-how for the daily functioning of communities and other Jewish institutions of a religious and/or cultural nature. This new line of research could focus on investigating these leadership programs, trying to answer the following questions: What criteria were used for the selection and recruitment of participants? How were these training seminars structured and what was their rationale? What kind of knowledge and contents were imparted and how were they processed and appropriated by local activists? How important have these programs been in the formation of a cohort of community leaders and Jewish professionals? What impact have these programs had on local Jewish life? Beyond the specific case of leadership training programs, there are other entry points from which to understand the concrete interventions of transnational organizations in local Jewish communities. Just to name a few: the way in which social services, religious life and community practices were restructured. The work with children and youth. The interactions between professionals from different organizations and local activists.

Secondly, I believe that this thesis opens an interesting invitation to explore transnational dynamics operating within other religions, aiming at establishing a comparative framework. Issues such as solidarities, networks, political movements or attempts to coordinate cross-border religious factions or segments are some of the phenomena that may be of interest to those who pursue this line of research. Following the postulates of Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, it would be a matter of investigating the wide range of manifestations involved in thinking about religions in their “internationalist” or “transnational” facet. “In every case, however,” argue Green and Viaene, “we would emphasize the key role of mobilization and a religiously inflected voluntarism at the heart of the religious international paradigm.”[467]

Third, this research focused on the narratives that have circulated about Jews during the period between the mid-1980s and 2000. We have seen how during those years perceptions of Central and Eastern European Jews radically changed: Jews were “rediscovered,” information began to emerge about what communal life has been like under communist regimes, key actors and leaders were singled out, and an incipient "renaissance" of Jewish life was identified. Overall, this is an optimistic vision for Jews and for Europe. In a way, these narratives operated as a backdrop for the intervention of transnational agencies. It would be interesting then to extend this analysis temporally to understand how these narratives have evolved since then, what are the

[467] Green and Viaene, op. cit., p. 2.

changes and continuities that can be identified, which are the voices that generate these narratives, and in which supports, technologies and media they circulate.[468]

6.3 Limitations of the study

In the development of this doctoral thesis, framed within the disciplines of social sciences and contemporary history, it has been impossible to overcome some difficulties from the point of view of the researcher and that can be identified as limitations of the present study. These are the following.

6.3.1 The author's own position as a Jewish professional

This is perhaps the main item to point out. In the introduction to this thesis, I mentioned that one of the most relevant facts that led me to write this thesis is my work experience in one of the Jewish philanthropic organizations mentioned in this thesis. Specifically, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, where I started working in February 2009. Therefore, the question of to what extent my professional activity influenced my perspective as a researcher is absolutely valid. It is true that my position within the organization has allowed me, at various times during the fieldwork, to make contact with certain protagonists that would otherwise have been very difficult for me to access. On the other hand, having been able to have first-hand experience in subjects that were directly related to the content of this thesis has given me a detailed knowledge of countless issues. However, I have tried at all times to be guided by scientific research, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view. In any case, it was a matter of historicizing and analyzing from the social sciences the practice of Jewish philanthropy in a specific time and place, post-communist Europe. Nor was it the aim of this thesis to extol or denigrate what has been done by the organization that employs me, nor to provide details considered confidential. It should also be noted that this organization has not funded this research in any way.

6.3.2 Personal involvement with the topic

My interest in the subject of this thesis comes not only from my professional experience. There is of course a strong personal connection that must also be acknowledged. On both an academic and personal/identity level, researching, writing

[468] For example, Dr. Nathan Abrams, a specialist in film studies at Banghor University, has conducted research on the transformations that Jews have undergone in world cinema since 1990. See Nathan Abrams, The New Jew in Film. Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Cinema, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012.

and ultimately learning more about this and other aspects of Jewish history during the twentieth century is something I am passionate about. My personal connection with Judaism is through learning about its history and its culture. This is worth mentioning as another factor that, while stimulating, can be potentially limiting when it comes to tackling a PhD thesis.

6.3.3 Intergenerational / intercultural limitations

Research for this thesis involved interviewing a number of active and retired professionals, as well as activists, journalists and other academics. While the shared topic of conversation provided a unique opportunity to connect and exchange experiences and impressions, one must still recognize the natural limitations of intergenerational and/or intercultural dialogue. Being situated in a particular historical setting, many of my interlocutions assumed my knowledge of certain historical events, names of people and organizations. Even certain shared cultural frameworks were taken for granted, which was not always the case. Differences in age, gender and cultural and religious background may have impacted the way I interpreted some of my interlocutors. Additionally, language, in concrete not being a native English speaker myself, may have also played a limiting role.

6.3.4 Historicizing the post-communist period

Without entering into historiographical and/or methodological considerations, I would like to point out here the limitations derived from studying a process that unfolded in the context of post-communist Europe from the perspective of the 2000s. To what extent, it is worth asking, was my interpretation tinged by later geopolitical, cultural or social developments? To what extent my interlocutors were influenced by such later developments? I am aware that this is an inherent question when approaching other historical periods.

6.3.5 Access to organizational/institutional sources

I have not been able to consult sources belonging to Jewish philanthropic organizations and institutions. I have overcome this difficulty by means of in-depth oral interviews and by relying on existing material available for public consultation, such as financial statements and activity reports usually published on an annual basis.

6.3.6 Evolving nature of the research topic

In this thesis I have concentrated on analyzing the practice of Jewish philanthropy in a specific time and space, post-1989 Europe. However, I am aware that, after the specific period described in the thesis, the practice of philanthropy has continued and, more importantly, has been evolving following patterns developed both within the Jewish world and in the broader philanthropic sector. Consequently, all conclusions, except for those that refer to historical events already consummated, should be understood in this light.

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7.1 Interviews

(Recordings or transcriptions are available at https://kelodim.wixsite.com/tesismd [Password: Rje2801!&])

Anusiewicz-Baer, Sandra. (Born in the former German Democratic Republic to Holocaust survivors, she is currently the Coordinator of the Zacharias Frankel College, a rabbinical school based in Potsdam, Germany). Online, September 12, 2023.

Axelrod, Toby Anne. (Journalist for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Hadassah Magazine, and the Times of Israel. Born in the US, she moved to Berlin in 1997). Online, August 14, 2023.

Baker, Andrew. (Rabbi. American Jewish Committee's Director for European Affairs between 1992 and 2000). Telephone Interview, December 12, 2013.

Cwajgenbaum, Serge. (Secretary-General of the European Jewish Congress during the 1990s. Passed away in 2019). Paris, November 13, 2013.

Faiman, Alex. (Member of the Executive Committee of B'nai B'rith Europe). Telephone Interview, June 1, 2012.

Feine, Zvi. (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Country Director for Poland and Romania between 1988 and 2005). Jerusalem, July 8, 2011.

Goldman, Ralph I. (Executive Director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee from 1976 to 1988. He played a key role in leading the negotiations with the different communist governments of Eastern Europe so that the JDC could once again operate in those countries. He passed away in 2014 at the age of 100). Jerusalem, July 16, 2010.

Goutman, Marina. (Director of the Buncher Leadership Program). Budapest, November 14, 2022.

Glück, Herschel. (Rabbi. Emissary of the Jewish sect Chabad Lubavitch). London, April 29, 2012.

Gruber, Ruth Ellen. (Journalist, researcher and activist. Expert on Jewish heritage and contemporary Jewish Europe). Online, September 28, 2023.

Kaufman, Jonathan. (Journalist. Author of *A Hole in the Heart of the World: Being Jewish in Eastern Europe* [Penguin Books, 1997]. Current Director of the Northeastern University School of Journalism). Online, September 9, 2023.

Pinto, Diana. (Intellectual historian who wrote extensively about Jewish life in contemporary Europe). Paris, October 29, 2013.

Leket, Yehiel. (Director of the Youth Aliyah department of the Jewish Agency 1992-1996; Acting Chairman of the Executive of Jewish Agency for Israel 1995-1996). Telephone Interview, January 22, 2013.

Lerman, Antony. (Chief Executive of the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation (renamed the Rothschild Foundation Europe in 2007) between 199 and 2006). Telephone Interview, January 24, 2014.

Levi, Linda. (Professional at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee during the 1980s and 1990s). New York, December 8, 2011.

Link, Lionel I. (Senior Program Director at The Pincus Fund for Jewish Education). Jerusalem, July 7, 2011.

Mantver, Arnon. (Director General of the Department of Immigration and Integration Department at the Jewish Agency for Israel between 1989 and 1995). Telephone Interview, November 13, 2013.

Montreuil, Michel. (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Director Regional for the Baltic States between 1993 and 1997), Paris, May 13, 2010.

Schneider, Michael. (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's CEO between 1988 and 2002. Passed away in 2022). New York, July 8, 2019.

Senderey, Alberto. (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Director for Europe between 1992 and 2014). Barcelona, October 18, 2023.

Spinner, Josh. (Executive Vice-President and CEO of The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation). Berlin, October 25, 2013.