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Post-Soviet Jewry on the Cusp of Its Third Decade - Part 2

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- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee continues to do essential work in the post-Soviet states, but financial distress has caused the organization to sharply curtail its welfare services to vulnerable Jewish population groups. The cutbacks are due as much to decisions by North American Jewish federations to reduce subventions to international programs before the onset of the current financial crisis as to the crisis itself.
- To a limited extent, alternative human services organizations, such as the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews and welfare operations of community rabbis, have stepped in to continue reduced or abandoned JDC programs, but they are not a substitute for these.
- Local Jews began to develop small Jewish organizations during the glasnost period (1987-1991) preceding the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Most such groups focused on Jewish history or culture. Some national groups emerged during this period as well, although few seemed to represent a genuine constituency.
- To date, few authentic Jewish lay leaders have emerged in the post-Soviet states. Many in positions of authority are perceived as holding the broader Jewish population hostage to their egos, financial interests, and need to retain the favor of local/national political figures. Few nominal Jewish leaders understand the necessity to engage in serious planning or to build consensus.
- Professional leadership is advancing more rapidly, particularly among English-speakers able to observe and learn from Western counterparts and from Western professional literature. The Joint Distribution Committee has been successful in identifying a number of individuals with management skills and training them to direct welfare centers

(heseds). Over time, a professional class of Jewish community managers, some of them well educated in Jewish tradition as well as Jewish organizational management, is emerging.

Jewish Communal Organization: Welfare Programs

External organizations, particularly the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, dominate the delivery of welfare services to the post-Soviet Jewish population. The focus of such services is assistance to Jewish elderly, who form a disproportionately large segment - perhaps 40 to 50 percent - of the Jewish population in Russia and Ukraine. Continuing a policy from the Soviet period, many men and women are forced into retirement at ages 60 and 55 respectively in order to provide employment opportunities for younger people. Thus, many individuals lose their sense of place and self-esteem, as well as socializing opportunities originating in the workplace, at relatively early ages.

The welfare needs of this demographic cohort are vast, reflecting low pensions, inadequate nutrition over decades, low-quality public health and medical services in general, antiquated medical equipment and facilities, corruption in medical care, and costly basic medicines. Widespread environmental degradation and substandard housing conditions also have taken a toll on the health of many individuals in the post-Soviet states. The needs of Jewish elderly are exacerbated by psychological and physical trauma dating from World War II and the Holocaust (and the 900-day siege of then-Leningrad for many of those in contemporary St. Petersburg), as well as the ordeal of living under Communist repression and post-Communist uncertainty.

To facilitate the distribution of welfare services to needy Jews in the post-Soviet states, JDC - or Joint, as it is known outside the United States - developed welfare centers known as heseds, a term derived from the Hebrew word for charity. Such centers range in size from entire buildings (such as a former school in Dnipropetrovsk) to office suites or village bungalows, depending on the size of the community being served. A variety of services have been dispensed from such quarters, including hot meals, food parcels, basic medical examinations and referrals to local specialist physicians, selected medications and medical equipment (wheelchairs, walkers, therapeutic mattresses, etc.), legal consultations, and various repair services for residential units, home appliances, furniture, clothing and footwear, hearing aids, and other items. Most heseds also offer a variety of socializing opportunities, including holiday celebrations and different affinity groups for people with common interests.

Heseds also manage *patronage services*, which address the needs of homebound elderly. Cleaning, shopping, cooking, and other forms of homecare are provided as needed. Another hesed service is the provision of medicines, bed linens, and food to hospitalized Jews as few post-Soviet hospitals include these items in patient care.

In all, JDC provides some measure of care to approximately 160,000 elderly Jews, many of whom are retired professionals whose low pensions have been diminished by severe inflation.

Joint also assists a smaller number of impoverished and/or handicapped Jewish children and their families.

Historically, the largest single portion of funding for JDC services to Jewish elderly in the post-Soviet states has been provided by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (Claims Conference) and other restitution organizations (principally Swiss Banks Settlement, the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims - ICHEIC, and the German government). The total sum of these funds for expenditure in Russia and Ukraine ranged between approximately $41 and $50 million annually between 2004 and 2010.[1] (ICHEIC ceased distributions in 2009. Support from the Swiss banks fund, which amounted to $13.4 million of the total in 2010, is scheduled to decrease by 50 percent in 2011 and be terminated entirely in 2012.) However beneficial such funds are in the delivery of needed welfare services, their application is extended only to individuals who actually lived in areas of Nazi occupation during World War II. Individuals of comparable age who managed to escape Nazi occupation are ineligible for aid provided through these programs, regardless of frailty, economic condition, or other needs. In some cities, such as Kharkiv in Ukraine, tension has erupted between groups of Jewish elderly who receive Holocaust-related enhanced services and those who are denied them. All who were born after World War II are deprived of these benefits.

The second source of support for services to Jewish elderly through JDC has been allocations from North American Jewish federations, which amounted to $45 million in core funds in 2004 and have declined since then to $32 million in core funds in 2010. Additionally, some federations have provided supplemental elective funds for specific programs that reached $8.6 million in 2004 and have fallen since then to $7.5 million in 2010. In general, the decline in federation allocations to JDC (and to the Jewish Agency as well) reflects a turning inward by federations and ensuing loss of commitment to the Jewish international agenda. Toward the end of this period, the declining interest in overseas needs has been exacerbated by the global economic crisis, which has affected the federations' annual fundraising campaigns from which overseas allocations are drawn.

Although certain other allocations to JDC, such as those from the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, have risen during the same period, these increases have been relatively small and do not replace the losses from federations. Further, severe inflation in the post-Soviet states (10 to 25 percent annually in Russia and Ukraine) and the declining value of the U.S. dollar continue to erode the purchasing power of Joint. Joint also has been burdened by its acquisition of ill-suited hesed premises for the dispensation of its services; some facilities are badly located in relation to public transportation, poorly constructed and thus subject to extraordinary maintenance costs, and/or inefficiently designed for program implementation. Replacement or renovation of such structures is complex and very costly under post-Soviet conditions.

In response to declining financial resources, Joint has undertaken a number of measures to reduce operating costs. First, and most painful to local Jewish elderly, it has reduced the number of Jewish seniors being served from 225,000 to 160,000, usually tightening eligibility requirements for specific services in order to exclude individuals from these programs. Second, it has eliminated many relatively costly services - such as hot meal programs - in favor of discount

cards that may be purchased at heseds and then used at selected supermarkets. (Such cards are programmed to exclude use for pork, tobacco, and alcohol products.) The transition to "smart cards" has not always been successful as recipients complain of low-quality food at designated stores, inconvenient location of some stores, and the loss of socializing opportunities that were components of group meals.

Program space available to Jewish elderly in JDC buildings has been reduced. Some hesed facilities have been closed or limited in hours of operation in order to decrease costs. In newer premises, such as the Yesod Jewish community center in St. Petersburg, Joint has reduced the space potentially available for welfare services in favor of revenue-generating programs, such as an elite full-charge day care program targeting the children of middle-class families.

Although JDC welfare services in the post-Soviet states have focused on the needs of Jewish elderly, the organization also provides some assistance to 25,000 impoverished Jewish children and their families. A limited amount of material aid is offered, along with day care programs in some cities for disadvantaged pre-school age children; the latter emphasize social growth and nutrition rather than classic early childhood education. JDC also offers limited support to disabled Jews, both children and young adults; the extent of such efforts varies from city to city, sometimes depending on available premises, but, in general, JDC assistance in this area is insubstantial.

World Jewish Relief, a British organization with a mandate similar to that of Joint, works closely with JDC, often transmitting its funds through its American partner. Its work focuses on Ukraine and provides proportionately more support to Jewish children than does JDC.

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, established in 1983 by Rabbi Yehiel Eckstein, provides several million dollars annually in nutrition assistance to elderly post-Soviet Jews through JDC and to children in post-Soviet Jewish day schools through the Jewish Agency and other Jewish education umbrella organizations. IFCJ operates a fundraising drive among Evangelical Christians in the United States and other countries.

Other organizations, many of which are overlooked in the massive publicity given to Joint, also operate welfare programs serving needy post-Soviet Jews. Perhaps most visible are the numerous Chabad Federation of Jewish Communities installations across Russia and Ukraine that operate dining rooms and other services for Jewish elderly. In Moscow, Chabad sponsors a large multifaceted hesed in comfortable, modern premises. A separate Chabad-related group, Chama, also operates a large hesed in the Russian capital. Some of these groups receive subsidies from Joint and other, mostly foreign, organizations, but they provide significant funds of their own as well and manage their programs independently from JDC. Chama also receives some financial assistance from the Russian Jewish Congress, one of few welfare programs supported by indigenous fundraising. Local businessmen in Dnipropetrovsk sponsor a significant twice-yearly distribution of substantial food parcels to elderly Jews in that city and the surrounding area through the Chabad Philanthropic Fund in Dnipropetrovsk.

Action for Post-Soviet Jewry, an independent group located near Boston, assists elderly Jews in cities and small towns in specific areas of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova through its Adopt-a-

Bubbe/Adopt-a-Zayde program. Although it has always emphasized customized services in response to individual needs, such as provision of specific foods for diabetics, Adopt-a-Bubbe is increasingly assuming responsibility, albeit unofficially, for programs abandoned by Joint. For example, the organization is now sponsoring monthly full-meal home-based gatherings in areas where such services have been terminated by JDC. Adopt-a-Bubbe receives no subsidies from larger organizations, relying instead on individual contributions from American supporters, donated pharmaceutical goods from American companies, and assistance from some rabbis on the ground in its service areas.

Jewish Healthcare International, an independent Atlanta-based organization, has mobilized groups of American Jewish and Israeli physicians and other healthcare professionals to offer medical care and train local practitioners working with Jewish elderly and other needy population groups. It also has arranged for the delivery of medicines and medical supplies to health care providers in the post-Soviet states. Although it has worked with JDC heseds in the past, JHI has found this partnership difficult and is now reducing its operations in the post-Soviet states.

Additionally, a number of rabbis sponsor residential programs for disadvantaged Jewish children; the largest of these is the Tikva home in Odesa, which accommodates over 200 youngsters in three different facilities under the patronage of Rabbi Shlomo Baksht, one of two Chief Rabbis of Odesa. (Chabad Rabbi Avrum Wolf, the other Chief Rabbi of Odesa, operates a smaller facility for at-risk Jewish children.) Few youngsters in such programs are orphans in a legal sense. Instead, almost all are referred to as "social orphans," that is, children from dysfunctional single-parent families in which the custodial parent is unable to provide adequate childcare due to impoverishment, psychological instability, substance abuse, imprisonment, or other issues. JDC provides only occasional and very minor support to these programs.

The quality of such children's facilities varies substantially from city to city and sometimes within cities as a rabbi may be able to obtain funding for construction of an attractive home for girls, for example, while local housing for boys remains overcrowded and unpleasant. High-quality adult supervision of children in these institutions is not always evident. Youngsters in such programs almost always attend schools operated by the rabbis who sponsor the homes; in some cases they are enrolled in intensive yeshiva/machon settings designed for children from Orthodox rabbinic families, rather than in the less religiously intense day schools intended for children of local, nonobservant families.

As the number of Jews in the post-Soviet states has declined, the number of children requiring such assistance appears to have decreased as well, a situation with implications apparently not understood by certain rabbis in Ukraine who have built children's residential facilities that are not always fully occupied. A sort of competition has emerged among some of these rabbis for needy youngsters, with several rabbis being accused by others of "raiding" their cities in child recruitment efforts. On the other hand, the small program operated by Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt of Moscow, which receives referrals from JDC throughout Russia, often is filled to capacity. Rabbi Goldschmidt's residential facility is small and overcrowded. Although no firm numbers are available, it is likely that between 300 and 350 Jewish youngsters up to the age of 18 are accommodated in such programs throughout Ukraine and Russia.

Only two residential programs for Jewish elderly exist in all of the post-Soviet states, both in Ukraine and both started and maintained by rabbis without JDC support. The first and largest is the Beit Baruch Assisted Living Center in Dnipropetrovsk, which opened in 2002 under the patronage of Chabad Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki. Although its official capacity is 94 and admission and care was free of charge in its initial years, soaring costs have limited current occupancy to about 60 and residents now are required to pay 40 to 60 percent of their pensions in monthly fees. The facility remains open and active with generous annual operating subsidies from the Dnipropetrovsk Chabad Philanthropic Fund and Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, the Jewish federation in Dnipropetrovsk's American sister-city. Over time, the functional nature of Beit Baruch has changed as well, from a dedicated assisted living center to a partial nursing home as many residents have aged in place and are now suffering from dementia and other debilitating ailments requiring long-term nursing care.

The second senior housing facility is in Kyiv and is managed under the sponsorship of the abovementioned Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich, a Karlin-Stolin Hasid and Chief Rabbi of Kyiv and Ukraine. In common with Rabbi Kaminezki's program in Dnipropetrovsk, the Kyiv facility operates below capacity due to financial constraints. Although the building can accommodate up to 85 seniors in full-service apartments, fewer than half that number currently are in residence. Financial support is derived mainly from an endowment fund formed with proceeds from the sale of apartments previously owned by current occupants of the home. However, the fund generates insufficient income to support additional residents, even assuming that more occupants would generate more income. Further, reflecting inadequate financial resources, maintenance of the structure is substandard.

The Adain Lo Jewish Family Center, an independent St. Petersburg group established and led by St. Petersburg native Evgenia Lvova, is one of very few indigenous Jewish organizations that provide welfare services. Its welfare operations probably are best known for its special education programs that serve both children and young adults. It also offers early childhood education programs for children and their families, psychological support services, and material and social support to families in economic distress. Adain Lo has received professional and financial support from the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland (with which the St. Petersburg Jewish population enjoys a twinning relationship) and financial support from the Russian Jewish Congress, which is endeavoring to build local capacity in Jewish community organization. Another indigenous St. Petersburg organization, Eva, provides a variety of welfare services, including homecare, to more than one thousand local elderly Jews; Eva receives substantial support from JDC, as well as grants from the Russian Jewish Congress, the St. Petersburg municipality, and the Jewish federations in Cleveland and Palm Beach County.

In general, however, local philanthropic support of Jewish welfare programs is minimal. Potential indigenous Jewish donors lack familiarity with effective social service delivery systems and are unable to envision development of an infrastructure that would address the welfare needs of local Jewish populations. Although appreciation is expressed for JDC care of Jewish elderly, JDC heseds in large cities are viewed as inefficient foreign-imposed bureaucracies that provide inadequate services at unacceptably high cost with scant input from potential local donors. Further, the needs of disabled individuals are perceived as endless - and the concept of annual

giving to support ongoing welfare programs is not well established in contemporary Russia and Ukraine.

Emergence of Indigenous Jewish Leadership and Programs

The emergence of indigenous Jewish communal activity during the period of *glasnost* (1987-1991) and the immediate post-Soviet period occurred in several distinct spheres of activity. First, those with an interest in history began to explore Jewish history in the Pale of Settlement and Jewish history related to World War II and the Holocaust on Soviet territory. Each of these subjects had been taboo as Soviet authorities had long sought to deny Jewish particularity, and both government and popular antisemitism had promoted the legend that Jews had evaded the war by profiteering in the bazaars of Tashkent. Discussion of the Holocaust had been suppressed as authorities sought to emphasize the sacrifices of the broad Soviet public and the heroism of the Red Army during the war without acknowledging the distinct catastrophe visited upon the Jewish population in areas of Nazi occupation. Access to archival material had long been restricted.

As soon as political conditions permitted during *glasnost*, local Jews in cities and towns near Nazi massacre sites began to visit such locations and organize commemorative events and displays. Financial resources were sought to preserve sites and establish appropriate monuments. World War II Jewish veterans began to gather, some independently and others through JDC heseds where many were receiving aid. Foreign rabbis arriving in post-Soviet Jewish population centers also honored Jewish veterans and led memorial ceremonies at Holocaust sites. Memoirs of Holocaust survivors and Jewish Red Army veterans were published.

Concurrently, academics began to explore Soviet-era Jewish history. They established contact with colleagues in other countries, including those at Yad Vashem and other Holocaust-related organizations. Long-closed archives began to open, and Jewish historical research centers developed in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk. Both professional and enthusiastic amateur historians organized research expeditions to sites of Jewish interest.

Apart from efforts focusing on Jewish history, the second major indigenous communal activity to emerge in the post-Soviet era was in Jewish culture - music, dance, literature, and other forms of artistic expression. Jewish cultural centers began to emerge, among the most prominent of which are the Jewish Community Center of St. Petersburg (which actually initiated some activities "underground" during the Soviet period) under the leadership of Alexander Frenkel and the Migdal Jewish Community Center of Odesa under the direction of Kira Verkhovskaya. Mr. Frenkel's program is oriented toward preservation of East European Jewish culture, with a particular focus on Jewish music. Migdal offers a broad variety of Jewish cultural programs for all age groups.

Third, independent Jewish welfare assistance groups emerged, particularly in St. Petersburg, where the aftermath of the 900-day wartime siege of the city remains a relentless presence in the

minds of many of its Jewish residents. However, the immensity of the Jewish welfare agenda is such that even St. Petersburg residents have found that a strong JDC presence is necessary in the city.

Fourth, concurrent with the development of various local Jewish groups was the appearance in 1989 of the Va'ad, an organization purporting to represent all Jews in the Soviet Union of the *glasnost* era. With an uncertain mandate, even shakier finances, and an insensitivity to legitimate rabbinic concerns (such as conducting Va'ad business on Shabbat), the Va'ad might not have survived even if the Soviet Union had endured. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, its demise was assured; its successor organizations are separate Russian and Ukrainian Va'ads, the former associated with Mikhail (Micha) Chlenov and the latter with Iosif Zissels. Dr. Chlenov's Russian Va'ad is a small Moscow-based organization, providing consulting services to several Jewish groups on grant-writing and representing Russian Jewry in several international Jewish/Zionist forums. Mr. Zissels's Ukrainian Va'ad, based in Kyiv, is larger; its mission includes advocacy for the restitution of Jewish communal property seized by Soviet authorities, care of Jewish cemeteries, analysis of contemporary Ukrainian antisemitism, representation of Ukrainian Jewry in a number of Jewish/Zionist international forums, and operation of Jewish-content programs in small Jewish population centers, focusing on summer camps for adolescents. Both Dr. Chlenov and Mr. Zissels are intellectuals, capable analysts of trends in their respective countries. Neither has developed a functional lay board or a steady funding stream.

Following development of the two Va'ads and a number of smaller single-purpose organizations, such as Holocaust remembrance groups, larger umbrella organizations began to appear, most of them initiated and funded by wealthy Jewish oligarchs who are their principal leaders. Almost all are presumptuous, claiming a national or even international mandate, although few are concerned with building a service delivery system, a membership base, or a functional board of directors. In most cases, an oligarch leader and a small group of other wealthy Jews provide all of the financial resources.

Two of the earliest oligarch-driven national Jewish organizations to appear in the post-Soviet states are the Russian Jewish Congress and its Ukrainian counterpart, the United Jewish Community of Ukraine (previously known as the All-Ukraine Jewish Congress). Established in 1996 by Vladimir Gusinsky, who subsequently was forced into exile by the Kremlin, the Russian Jewish Congress is now led by Yuri Kanner, a Moscow businessman. Mr. Kanner's immediate predecessor was Vyecheslav (Moshe) Kantor, who has since moved on to become president of the European Jewish Congress. Mr. Kantor's wealth as a fertilizer magnate was a major factor in his rapid rise in the EJC.

The Russian Jewish Congress pursues an agenda focusing on supporting and building capacity in Russian-language academic Jewish studies, welfare programs associated with the Chama group in Moscow and Adain Lo in St. Petersburg, selected programs of Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt in Moscow, and general Jewish culture, including Alexander Frenkel's Jewish community center in St. Petersburg. It also perceives itself as a national voice for Russian Jewry. Although established as a national organization, its functional reach is concentrated overwhelmingly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the cities in which the majority of Russian Jews reside. It has not yet developed the capacity to deliberate the broad communal needs of the Russian Jewish population. In

common with many other indigenous Jewish organizations, it eschews association with both JDC and the Chabad Federation of Jewish Communities.

Counterpart efforts in Ukraine were led by Vadym Rabynovych, a controversial Ukrainian businessman who is persona non grata in several Western countries. Mr. Rabynovych established the All-Ukraine Jewish Congress in 1997, which was succeeded in 1999 by the United Jewish Community of Ukraine. From time to time Mr. Rabynovych managed to forge short-term alliances with other groups, such as the Progressive movement and an independent Chabad rabbi in Kyiv, but in general UJCU has been an ineffective organization, not least because many local and foreign Jews decline association with Mr. Rabynovych. In 2008, Mr. Rabynovych resigned, designating oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky of Dnipropetrovsk and Geneva as his successor. In the pattern of Moshe Kantor of the Russian Jewish Congress, Mr. Kolomoisky used UJCU as a stepping stone to a pan-European Jewish organization; he became president of the European Council of Jewish Communities in 2010, an appointment that clearly was connected to the financial support he was deemed able to provide to ECJC. Mr. Kolomoisky's sudden elevation to the presidency led to the immediate resignation of several ECJC board members in protest. Mr. Kolomoisky subsequently left the ECJC and, with several colleagues, formed a new organization, the European Jewish Union, which appears to be a top-down structure with no explicit mandate. In the meantime, UJCU remains without a clear agenda and with little active leadership from Mr. Kolomoisky.

A self-styled umbrella body, the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress claims constituencies in a broad swath of approximately 25 countries extending from the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and the Slavic countries outside the former Soviet Union to Asian countries from India to the Philippines to Australia and New Zealand. Established by Micha Chlenov in 1992, almost the entire budget of EAJC is provided by its president, Alexander Mashkevich, a natural- resources tycoon from Kazakhstan. Dr. Chlenov is its general secretary. Mr. Mashkevich plays an active role in his organization, traveling from country to country within the broad EAJC territorial mandate. Its priorities include contacts with governments and other elite groups on behalf of Jews in constituent countries; financial assistance in certain smaller communities; property restitution in those countries in which Jewish communal property had been confiscated by local authorities; and publications. However, the credibility of EAJC remains limited in several of its would-be constituent countries due to its top-down leadership configuration, lack of consultative procedures with nominal member communities, and the reality that effective Jewish communal infrastructures preexisted the formation of EAJC in several potentially important member countries, most notably Australia.

The remaining indigenous secular Jewish umbrella organization associated with the post-Soviet states is the World Congress of Russian-Speaking Jewry, founded in 2002 with the support of Chabad and the Russian government; during its initial stages, the influence of the latter was not acknowledged. Since then, the relationship with both Chabad and the Russian government has faded, but the organization has been unable to escape the popular belief that Russian authorities exercise some influence in its operations. The impression of connections between the organization and the Kremlin is strengthened by the close ties of its president, pharmaceuticals oligarch Boris Spiegel, with the Russian government. The mission of the WCRSJ, which some perceive as ripe for manipulation by Russian authorities, is to serve as a bridge between Russian-

speaking Jews everywhere, to bring Russian-speaking Jews together on behalf of Israel, and to assist the integration of Russian-speaking Jews into the larger non-Russian Jewish communities in which they live. Most Russian-speaking Jews, however, appear to have concluded that such activities are more fruitful when initiated and managed by local Russian-speaking Jews in the population centers in which they reside.

Although the grandly-named World Congress has been successful in funding a few summer camps that have attracted Russian-speaking Jewish youngsters from several countries, it remains an organization in search of a practical mission untainted by suspicions of Russian government influence. With its uncertain agenda and one of the smaller budgets of the national/international Russian-related Jewish organizations, the WCRSJ is barely visible in the sea of Jewish organizations. Its executive is Matvei Chlenov, son of Dr. Micha Chlenov.

The great void in the emergence of indigenous Jewish organizations has been in the field of welfare, that is, the lack of independent institutions systematically addressing the full range of health and welfare needs of Jewish elderly or disabled Jews of any age. Although several such groups were initiated in Leningrad/St. Petersburg during the *glasnost* period, only Adain Lo remains independent of JDC control. The Adain Lo welfare component, however, remains but a portion of the organization's larger agenda. The failure of post-Soviet Jews to embrace a broad-based welfare agenda reflects their lack of familiarity with relevant services and their apparent intimidation by the enormity of services required, in particular, by the large number of elderly Jews living in post-Soviet conditions.

The Russian Jewish Congress provides some support to such indigenous welfare organizations as Adain Lo and to Chama in Moscow, but the latter is dependent on JDC and several other outside groups as well. From time to time, individual local benefactors have subsidized specific programs at JDC heseds, such as the purchase of vans for the transport of seniors, but serious collaboration between indigenous Jewish funders and JDC seems elusive. Joint, as noted earlier, is perceived as overly bureaucratic and controlling.

The two residential programs for Jewish elderly in the post-Soviet states - in Dnipropetrovsk and in Kyiv - were initiated by Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki and Rabbi Yaakov Bleich respectively, not by indigenous individuals. Beit Baruch in Dnipropetrovsk receives support from the Chabad fundraising organization in that city, but also is dependent on a significant subsidy from the abovementioned Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, the Jewish federation in the American sister city of Dnipropetrovsk. JDC has avoided association with both facilities and even attempted to prevent financial support from other international organizations from reaching the Kyiv program.

The Special Needs Educational Resource Center in Dnipropetrovsk is housed in that city's Chabad Beit Chana Jewish Women's Pedagogical College and is funded largely by the Jewish federation in Boston with minimal local financial support. A new (2010) school for autistic children in Kyiv has been launched by Chabad Rabbi Yonatan and Mrs. Ina Markovich, both of whom are Israelis, with some local assistance, but little interest from wealthy local Jews. In this instance, a persistent level of local discomfort in acknowledging the reality of handicapped

children also may be a factor in limiting local support. JDC was approached for assistance, but declined association with the project.

In the religious sphere, the Chabad Federation of Jewish Communities umbrella organization appears to be losing some influence as individual Chabad rabbis mature in their own communities and develop their own funding sources and operational procedures. Although it can be anticipated that foreign-born Chabad rabbis will continue to control the Chabad enterprise in the post-Soviet states for decades to come, native-born Chabad rabbis now are working in secondary positions in some Russian and Ukrainian cities. Most of these men attended local yeshivot for several years and then continued their training for *smicha* (ordination) in Israel or another country. Although it is unlikely that the somewhat artificial Chabad Federation will disappear, its current alien character may soften as local Chabad rabbis assume greater influence in local Chabad activity.

KEROOR, a Russian acronym for Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Societies in Russia, is a pluralist umbrella resource institution for religious Jewish organizations in Russia. Established in 1997 and associated with Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt of Moscow, KEROOR officially reaches out to all branches of Judaism. Its executive director is Zinoviy Kogan, an appointed (rather than ordained) Progressive rabbi. KEROOR attempts to provide support to approximately 100 small Jewish communities, few of them with rabbis, across Russia. Such support may include Russian-language prayer books and other Jewish publications, Shabbat candles and other Judaica items, and Jewish calendars.

In reality, KEROOR is a pale, almost invisible, version of FEOR (the Chabad Federation). It is severely limited in authority, influence, and services by the refusal of Chabad to participate in it and by a lack of financial resources. The formal reason for Chabad's rejection of KEROOR is the latter's acceptance of Progressive (Reform) Judaism, whose legitimacy as an authentic Jewish religious expression most Chabad rabbis deny. Many observers believe Chabad's rejection of KEROOR also is a power play, denying the validity of any religious organization outside FEOR.

Indigenous Jews have been mobilized by rabbis in a number of areas to raise funds on behalf of rabbinic-sponsored endeavors, such as synagogue-based welfare operations, Jewish schools, summer camps, or other local activities. As noted, Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki of Dnipropetrovsk in Ukraine has been the most successful in building an extensive community infrastructure, financed in large part with donations from a functional local Jewish philanthropic organization. His Philanthropic Fund of the Dnipropetrovsk Jewish Community raises approximately $4 million annually from a Board of Trustees headed by banking magnate Gennady Bogolubov; the fund is organized into working committees in such areas as Jewish education, welfare, culture, media, and regional operations outside the city. Efforts are made to expand the donor base among local Jews, and funds also are contributed by international supporters. A number of additional rabbis also have built local boards, although few have achieved equally outstanding results in the amount of funds raised, the number of repeat donors, or the involvement of local lay people in decision-making regarding allocation of funds.

In an effort to promote cultural activity among minority populations, the Russian government established an "autonomy" program in 1996 that encourages the establishment of national,

regional, and local *autonomies*, that is, autonomous associations with competence to advance education, language, and culture in a specific ethnic group. Autonomy funding has been used by various local Jewish organizations to support such Jewish programs as Jewish holiday festivals, Jewish facility security, Hebrew-language instruction, and interethnic dialogues. However, the different government entities provide resources irregularly and bureaucratic impediments to receipt of funds can be daunting. Further, nonindigenous Jewish groups, particularly Chabad, have sometimes successfully managed to gain control of autonomy funding for their own activities. JDC-controlled Jewish community centers also have received autonomy support, usually through nominally independent local Jewish community groups that are closely allied with JDC.

A national organization, the Federal Jewish National and Cultural Autonomy (known by its Russian acronym, FENKA), assists independent autonomy groups in clarifying their missions, raising supplemental funds, and building network capacity. Established under the guidance of Micha Chlenov and currently directed by Evgenia Mikhaleva, an experienced Moscow Jewish professional, FENKA sometimes organizes grant competitions among the autonomies for access to these funds. The primary financial supporter of FENKA is Alexander Mashkevich, president of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress.

Whatever their particular focus or form of organization, few Jewish groups in the post-Soviet states operate in a manner consistent with civil society. Following more than three generations of Soviet authoritarian political culture, few contemporary post-Soviet Jews know how to - or understand the need to - build consensus, respect minority views, foster accountability, or work in an environment with both professional staff and volunteers. The oligarchic heads of Russian-speaking titular Jewish umbrella groups are drafted into leadership roles in return for their financial support. In most cases, they themselves provide the overwhelming majority of operating funds for the group that they represent and thus view the operation of the organization as highly proprietary with little obligation for program or financial accountability. Their boards often are ineffectual. The very concept of program needs and obligations is elusive in a population with little sense of community or mutual responsibility. Conflict-of-interest situations are little understood. Leadership succession, when it has occurred, usually is a transfer of power from one oligarch to another without due process.

Notwithstanding the volunteer leadership roles played by some local individuals of questionable ethical standards, a much larger cohort of indigenous post-Soviet Jews has emerged as competent Jewish communal professional managers. Some have been the beneficiaries of management training courses offered by JDC, the Jewish Agency, Hillel, the Melton program at Hebrew University, the Institute for Jewish Studies in the C.I.S., the Progressive and Masorti movements, or other organizations; almost all such individuals were already working in the field of Jewish communal management when assessed as promising by these organizations and subsequently recommended (and sponsored) for enrollment in one of these programs. The sponsoring organization often imposes an employment obligation on such supported individuals. Another organizer of management training courses is Project Kesher, which often attracts women with no previous Jewish communal experience and then provides training that leads to employment in the field.

Although identifying the most competent post-Soviet Jewish community managers is challenging because it is difficult to compare different situations, some indigenous post-Soviet Jewish professionals have achieved prominence. In Moscow, Dr. Mikhail Chlenov is recognized less as a manager than as an articulate authority on contemporary Russian (and general post-Soviet) Jewish life. Dr. Victoria Mochalova of Sefer and Dr. Arkady Kovelman of Moscow State University are respected in academic Judaica, and Svetlana Yakimenko of Project Kesher is one of the more competent indigenous Jewish communal professional managers in the Russian capital. In St. Petersburg, Leonid Koltun and Evgenia Lvova are highly regarded administrators of the hesed and Adain Lo respectively.

In Ukraine, Iosif Zissels is manager of the Ukrainian Va'ad and also an able observer of Ukrainian Jewish life. Also in Kyiv, Iosif Akselrud, director of Hillel in Ukraine and several other post-Soviet states, is one of very few successful post-Soviet Jewish fundraisers. Kira Verkhovskaya has built a noteworthy Jewish community/cultural center in Odesa under trying conditions. Although the extensive Chabad operation in Dnipropetrovsk is inspired by Rabbi Kaminezki, a native of Israel, he has engaged a number of local individuals who have emerged as capable Jewish community managers. Zelig Brez is outstanding as the executive director of the overall Chabad operation in Dnipropetrovsk, which bears some resemblance to a small to medium-size Jewish federation in North America. Igor Romanov directs Dnipropetrovsk Chabad regional operations and relations with government officials. Oleg Rostovtsev manages Jewish community media relations in the region, one of few Jewish community professionals anywhere in the post-Soviet states tasked with such responsibilities, which include creating and directing a weekly Jewish-content television program with a large following and working with out-of-town visiting journalists. Mr. Rostovtsev also is an astute observer of Jewish community life in Dnipropetrovsk and in Ukraine in general. Alexandra Kizhner, who had some experience in working with senior adults in Israel before assuming her Dnipropetrovsk position, manages the Beit Baruch Assisted Living Center in the city.

However inadequate their governance procedures, the development of both large national Jewish organizations and smaller local Jewish groups represent a natural process of community emergence and a conscious effort to provide a vehicle for indigenous collective Jewish expression outside the foreign-controlled welfare and rabbinic spheres that dominated the first decade of Jewish social organization in the 1990s. Leaders of many of the secular groups openly acknowledge their desire to overcome the influence of JDC or a domineering rabbi in their midst. (The Jewish Agency, with its emphasis on aliyah and on Israel-based programs, usually is perceived as much less intrusive and overbearing than either Joint or Chabad.)

Thinking Ahead

At the dawn of the post-Soviet era two decades ago, few Jews within those former Soviet states and few foreign observers could have foreseen the evolution of post-Soviet Jewish life. The next 20 years may generate as many unanticipated circumstances. Fifteen factors to watch are considered below.

1. Affecting almost all aspects of Jewish life will be the advancement of democracy and civil society in Russia and Ukraine, that is, political pluralism, a free press, freedom of association without government meddling, equality before the law, equal access to authority, the right to petition officials for redress of grievances, and civil liberties. Fair taxation policies and an end to corruption also are critical. Equally, a civil society requires an essential moral code embraced by its citizenry. Many observers believe that both Russia and Ukraine have regressed in some of these areas during the last few years and few are optimistic that these societies will come to share the values of Western democracies in the near future. Unquestionably, corruption significantly increases the cost of program operations, especially the acquisition of appropriate operating premises, in the post-Soviet states. The impact of other adverse conditions on the Jewish population is less certain; however, Jews historically have prospered in free societies and suffered in those with political and economic constraints.

2. Antisemitism is strongly rooted in both Russia and Ukraine, and popular anti-Jewish bigotry continues to exist in both countries, notwithstanding cessation of the official state antisemitism of the Soviet period. Jews in both countries convey concern about local nationalism that currently finds its primary expression in skinhead, neo-Nazi, and other rightwing violence targeting migrant workers in major Russian cities; the principal victims of such attacks are Africans and native peoples of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan), the Caucasus mountain region (Daghestan and adjacent areas in southern Russia, as well as Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), and Roma, many of whom are manual laborers in major Russian urban areas. Although Jews are not now the primary quarry of such nationalist wrath, some readily identifiable Jewish individuals, such as men in Hasidic garb, have been harassed and synagogues and other Jewish premises have been daubed with antisemitic graffiti or otherwise damaged. Economic and political influence wielded by Jewish oligarchs also generates anti-Jewish bigotry. Fear of antisemitism remains a powerful catalyst in suppression of active Jewish identification.

3. Four demographic factors bear watching. The first is an overall decline in the Jewish population of both Russia and Ukraine, a casualty of assimilation, intermarriage, low fertility, high mortality, and emigration of younger age cohorts. Some experienced demographers have concluded that less than 500,000 Jews remain in the post-Soviet states. An intermarriage rate that some believe exceeds 80 percent creates complex situations for those Jewish groups that prefer to confine their programs to halachically Jewish individuals.

Second, the Jewish population is becoming more concentrated in a handful of large cities - Moscow and St. Petersburg in Russia, and Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Odesa in Ukraine - leaving elderly and otherwise less able Jews behind in Jewish population centers so small that delivery of Jewish communal services cannot be sustained economically by conventional Jewish organizations. In Siberia and Central Asia, the problem is further exacerbated by high transportation costs between local Jewish demographic centers and more populous points in European Russia or in Ukraine.

Third, although the Jewish population in Russia and Ukraine is overwhelmingly Ashkenazi (Central and North European) in origin, sub-populations of Persian-background Jews from the Caucasus states and Central Asia form minority Jewish demographic cohorts in Moscow and

several other cities. In general, these non-Ashkenazi populations are less well educated than their Russian/Ukrainian counterparts and socialize separately from other Jews. Although both Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt of the Moscow Choral Synagogue and Rabbi Berel Lazar of Chabad in Moscow have reached out to Persian-background Jews and developed programs for them that respect their different backgrounds, tensions sometimes erupt between Ashkenazi and Persian-background Jews in settings where they come together, such as Jewish day schools.

Fourth, notwithstanding the strong tradition of advanced education among Ashkenazi Jews and their disproportionately high representation among the most accomplished Russian-language intellectuals, scientists, and cultural figures, the professional profile of Russian Jewry appears to be changing. Strong anecdotal evidence suggests that many bright younger Jews are entering various business fields and many of those who do remain in academia are joining their non-Jewish colleagues in departing from Russia and seizing scientific opportunities abroad. The future intellectual competence and prominence of Russian-speaking Jewry may not be equal to its past.

4. The efforts of Chabad and other Orthodox groups to segregate halachic young Jews for remunerated Jewish education, that is, the STARS program and its offshoots, may lead to the separation of the halachic Jewish minority from the non-halachic Jewish majority in the post-Soviet states. Further, the expectation of one group of Jews that they be compensated for participation in the Jewish communal life bodes ill for Jewish unity and communal strength.

5. The Chabad movement has become the public face of Judaism in much of Russia and Ukraine - through sending hundreds of emissaries to Jewish population centers large and small, providing support to these emissaries, and expecting them to raise funds on their own for development of local Jewish institutions. Further, many Chabad rabbis have shown considerable skill in developing fruitful relations with local government officials, which may occur "naturally" as local authorities perceive black-clad and bearded Hasidim as Jewish equivalents of Slavic Orthodox (Pravoslav) priests. When representatives of other Jewish streams attempt to develop local communities, some Chabad rabbis have attempted to undermine their efforts. To be sure, other denominations - including Progressive/Reform, Masorti/Conservative, and Modern Orthodox - have failed to provide adequate support to their own representatives.

The initial response of some indigenous Jews to Hasidic rabbis and their programs was acceptance, in part by default and in part because the Hasidic Jewish vision was perceived as authentic Judaism in view of its orthodoxy, the traditional religious appearance of its leaders, and its attentiveness in many cities to rebuilding grand synagogues that are equivalent in their dignity and splendor to local Russian Orthodox Christian cathedrals. Further, the majority of Hasidic community rabbis have developed welfare programs that provide for the neediest Jews, thus earning the respect of the larger Jewish population.

Nonetheless, the Hasidic interpretation of Jewish belief and practice has failed to win broad acceptance among educated post-Soviet Jews. Academic Judaica has appealed to some, and others have found a level of identification in Jewish cultural programs, Limmud, or similar activities. For many, however, no existing Jewish institution or program is appealing; the majority of working-age post-Soviet Jews remain untouched by Jewish life. The seeming

ubiquity of Chabad does not mean that a significant proportion of post-Soviet Jews identify with it. The Chabad-inspired conflation of Chabad Judaism with the broader Jewish population of the post-Soviet states does not represent reality.

6. Notwithstanding the extraordinary competence of some Hasidic rabbis and other foreign professionals, others are inept. Additionally, the capacity of some more-or-less secular umbrella organizations to replace less able personnel is not always apparent.

7. Strong ties prevail between post-Soviet Jews and the state of Israel, stimulated by ongoing contacts between the approximately one million Russian-speaking Jews who have immigrated to Israel during the past four decades and those who remain in Russia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet states. While some aliyah continues, it is likely that ongoing relocation to the Jewish state will occur only in small numbers; the aging of the remaining Jewish population and assimilation probably are the most important factors, although Middle East instability and a preference for migration to more prosperous Western countries also will influence post-Soviet Jews to bypass Israel.

8. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel continue to do essential work in the post-Soviet states, but financial distress has caused each to sharply curtail allocations to a variety of Jewish welfare programs and to Jewish identity-building activities respectively. The cutbacks are due as much to decisions by North American Jewish federations to reduce subventions to international programs before the onset of the current financial crisis as to the crisis itself. The decreased value of the U.S. dollar also has played a role in the diminished economic capacity of these two critical organizations to serve Jewish populations unable to provide for their own needs.

To a limited extent, alternative human services organizations, such as the welfare operations of community rabbis and the program of Adopt-a-Bubbe, have stepped in to continue curtailed or abandoned JDC programs, but these smaller welfare providers cannot be a substitute for Joint. The Genesis Philanthropy Group is, however, increasingly prominent as a funder for Jewish identity-building activity, working together with the Jewish Agency and with other groups, such as Hillel.

9. Often overlooked in reviews of outside funding is the impact of "twinning" or sister-city projects, instances in which overseas Jewish community organizations, such as a North American Jewish federation or a North American or European synagogue, establishes a relationship with a Jewish community in the post-Soviet states. In all instances, the North American/European organization provides assistance to the post-Soviet entity in the form of material goods or consulting services. Sometimes exchanges of professionals, lay leaders, or youth occur. Many such projects have yielded substantial benefits to the donor community as well; the contributors gain a wider perspective on the Jewish world and satisfaction from helping others. Even a single synagogue in the West can have a major impact on a small Jewish population center in the post-Soviet states.

However, a critical issue in all such relationships is determining the particular organization or institution with which to establish such a relationship. Clearly, many North American/European

funding bodies would prefer to boost the program capacity of nascent indigenous post-Soviet Jewish organizations, but question the ability of such organizations to absorb additional resources or properly account for them. Local groups and their leaders, as well as prevailing banking and legal procedures, frequently lack credibility. For some donors, employing known international groups, such as the Joint Distribution Committee or the Jewish Agency, as agents may provide a suitable mechanism for supporting additional local post-Soviet Jewish community development efforts; however, whereas the Western Jewish organizations intend that the relationship with JDC or JAFI become a partnership in enhancing local capacity, the international organization sometimes perceives program accountability as unnecessary or burdensome. JDC, in particular, has found it difficult to communicate with even the largest North American Jewish federations, thus effectively terminating several intended collaborative relationships. JAFI and World Jewish Relief have been more successful in implementing supplemental programs on behalf of foreign funders, and some Western donors have bypassed international organizations completely, establishing their own mechanisms for working with local institutions.

10. To date, few authentic Jewish lay leaders have emerged in the post-Soviet states. The oligarchic leaders of titular Jewish national groups, most observers agree, exercise leadership without consulting their nominal constituencies. Leaders of local synagogue boards may be somewhat more collegial, especially if they interact with other local board members in day-to-day business transactions. However, even then, many in positions of authority are perceived as holding the broader Jewish population hostage to their egos, financial interests, and need to retain the favor of local/national political figures.

Few nominal Jewish leaders understand the requirement to engage in serious planning, build consensus, or observe common practices of accountability. Their role models, after all, are the old-time party bosses or other oligarchs. They are drafted by rabbis to build or rebuild imposing synagogues or other buildings, but are much less likely to be interested in supporting the more prosaic daily needs of local Jewish populations. Many wealthy post-Soviet Jews now live abroad and are losing contact with their communities of origin. It is unlikely that many other post-Soviet Jews would look to them for leadership in a time of crisis.

11. Professional leadership is advancing more rapidly, particularly among English-speakers able to observe and learn from Western counterparts and from Western professional literature. JDC has been successful in identifying a number of individuals with management skills and training them to direct welfare centers (heseds), and some rabbis also have engaged competent operational directors of their welfare and social programs. Project Kesher has been a source of training and inspiration for some women who build careers as Jewish professionals. Others have learned on their own, reading professional literature and finding mentors among professionals in the West. Over time, a professional class of Jewish community managers, some of them well educated in Jewish tradition, is emerging.

12. Financial uncertainties will continue to plague post-Soviet Jewish institutions for the foreseeable future, even more than economic insecurity afflicts many Jewish organizations in the wider world. Post-Soviet Jewish life operates in an inflation-prone society with underdeveloped economic institutions. A culture of philanthropy does not exist. Local tax codes do not favor

philanthropic activity. Corruption is widespread; its magnitude is an important factor in the inability of Jewish institutions to acquire appropriate premises for a host of community programs.

13. Jewish education remains a critical issue in a society starved of it for three generations. Inadequate financial support plagues all formal Jewish education from day schools through graduate studies in academic Judaica. Day schools are further compromised by low enrollments - due to general Jewish demographic decline, barriers in many schools to the enrollment of non-halachic Jewish pupils, association with Orthodox interpretations of Judaism that are unappealing to secular Jewish families, and noncompetitive general studies programs.

The emergence of university-level Jewish studies as a fully accepted academic discipline awaits a steady funding base, better-trained scholars, and accessible archives. The ranking of Russia as a third center of academic Judaica alongside Israel and the United States, as one Moscow intellectual asserted to the writer, remains a distant dream.

Building on a long tradition of children's summer camps during the Soviet era, Jewish summer camps appear to be among the most popular Jewish education instruments. Such camps require further development, as well as follow-up activities throughout the school year. The Hillel student group, Taglit, MASA, and other young adult programs enjoy credibility as educational programs for post-Soviet Jewish young adults.

14. The Genesis Philanthropy Group of Moscow supports Jewish-identity programs among Russian-speaking Jews in the post-Soviet states, North America, and Israel. Because it is willing to enter into strategic partnerships with other organizations engaging Russian-speaking Jews, it has become an important source of funds to a variety of other Jewish entities in Russia and Ukraine, including academic Judaica, Taglit, Project Kesher, and other groups. Generally it has avoided relationships with Orthodox rabbis and with others who eschew pluralistic definitions of Judaism.

From its inception, this group has operated according to Western standards of accountability, employing experienced North American and British citizens in management positions. The accomplishments of the group generate hope that other prosperous indigenous Jews also will support pluralistic Jewish organizations that address the needs of the broad Jewish population.

15. Although one occasionally hears expressions of confidence about a "Jewish renaissance" in the post-Soviet states, most informed observers are pessimistic about prospects for a Russian Jewish future. The Jewish demographic decline is expected to continue and deepen, sapping the population of youth and energy, and burdening it with a disproportionately large mass of elders for whom costly services are required. Local Jews lack cohesion, a sense of community and mutual responsibility. Nominal leaders do not lead. Foreign support is waning and, Genesis Philanthropy Group notwithstanding, Russian-speaking Jews have not yet developed a culture of giving that enables them to support indigenous Jewish community institutions. The ability of a few rabbis to attract local donors doubtless is helpful to the broader Jewish community when directed toward, for example, a community soup kitchen, but is divisive when restricted to programs open only to the minority of the Jewish population that is halachically Jewish.

Prospects for future leadership are dimmed further when participants in such programs are groomed to expect payment for participation.

In addition to conditions that are intrinsic to the local Jewish population, the post-Soviet Jewish future also is dependent on a surrounding larger society that is benign and just. Recent developments in both Russia and Ukraine provide little hope that such a society will emerge in the foreseeable future.

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Notes

[1] All figures pertaining to receipts and expenditures of the Joint Distribution Committee were provided to the writer by JDC officials in March 2010.

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