

### Guide to the Acronyms and Names

in Memoranda of Meetings with Al Chernin and Jerry Goodman,  
November 28, 1977

**AJCSJ:** American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry  
**CJFWF:** Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds  
**Conference of Presidents:** Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations  
**NCSJ:** National Conference on Soviet Jewry (Richard Maass, chairman)  
**NJRAC:** National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Committee (Isaiah Minkoff, executive director)  
**UCSJ:** Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (Lou Rosenblum, chairman)

**Al Chernin**, assistant to the executive director, NJRAC; was assigned part time to run the AJCSJ.  
**Jerry Goodman**, executive director, NCSJ.  
**Myer Fine**, director, Community Relations, Jewish Community Federation of Metropolitan New Jersey  
**Malcolm Hoenlein**, executive director, New York Community Relations Council.  
**Jerome L. Levinrad**, executive director, Cincinnati Jewish Community Relations Council.  
"our friends", euphemism employed by officials of the American Jewish establishment for Nechemia Levanon and his Israeli cohort.  
**Ed Rosenthal**, executive director, Miami Community Relations Council  
**Stanley Sollin**, executive director, Baltimore Community Relations Council

Prepared by L. Rosenblum, 9/7/09

Memo To: Michael Bierman  
Malcolm Hoenlein  
Daniel Mann  
Edward Rosenthal  
Stanley Sollins  
Meyer Fine

From: Jerome L. Levinrad,  
Executive Director

Subject: Meeting on November 28, 1977 with Al Chernin  
and Jerry Goodman

On November 28th, 1977, Stanley Sollins, Jerry Levinrad, Danny Mann, and Malcolm Hoenlein, met with Al Chernin at his office, and Jerry Goodman in the offices on the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. Malcolm Hoenlein was present for most of the time; the other three of us were present throughout. The attached memoranda were put together from notes taken at the meetings. These interviews are "off the record" and I would therefore suggest that for the time being they be kept confidential.

J. L. L.

JLL:db  
Enclosures  
1/19/78

### MEETING WITH AL CHERNIN NOVEMBER 28TH 1977

Al reviewed the history of the NJCRAC involvement in Soviet Jewry programming and the history of the formation of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, predecessor of the NCSJ, was convened in 1964 by the Conference of Presidents. There was some resistance to the Conference of Presidents taking on the issue directly. It was apparently felt by some that the Conference of Presidents could not give adequate leadership on this issue. They eventually agreed that the NJCRAC would staff the American Jewish Conference. It remained that way until 1970 at that time Al Chernin was replaced by Abe Bayer as the staff person responsible for Soviet Jewry.

The American Conference had no budget and by 1970 it was the feeling of the NJCRAC that they could not continue to handle it on that basis. It was certainly more logical and practical for the NJCRAC to be funded to maintain the program, but there was resistance from the national agencies as well as from the Zionist groups. The national community relations agencies feared that the NJCRAC was becoming too big and functional, etc. The Zionist groups, not a part of the NJCRAC, opposed the inclusion of the Soviet Jewry program. On the other side the CJFWF and "our friends" probably would have like the program to remain with the NJCRAC. The CJFWF saw no need to create a new agency every time a new problem developed. "Our friends" were also asking for a separate budget for the American Conference on Soviet Jewry. They apparently were willing to go along with funding the NJCRAC to enable it to retain the program, if Charlette Jacobson would go along with it. However, Jacobson and the national community relations agencies did not want the NJCRAC to take over control of Soviet Jewry programming. The resulting decision to fund the new National Conference on Soviet Jewry was therefore more of a political one than a rational one.

It was Chernin's feeling that if the decision was to be made today it would probably be the same. The Zionist group is still not part of the NJCRAC and the Conference of Presidents and the national CR agencies fear the NJCRAC becoming bigger, functional, etc.

NCSJ and the NJCRAC do have a special relationship. The NCSJ is responsible for strategy and broad policy planning, the NJCRAC is responsible for dealing with communities. Chernin views the relationship between the two as good.

As far as the national agencies are concerned Soviet Jewry is a low priority for them. They play little or no role in the National Conference.

Regarding policy it is Chernin's feeling there is no real opportunity to re-examine the Soviet Jewry line. "Our friends" and the NCSJ chairman play a major role in determining the line and direction.

A question was raised concerning confusion on the part of congressmen and others in Washington over the NCSJ Washington office and the Union of Council's Washington operation. There also appears to be some confusion as to who is doing what in Washington and who is responsible for communicating with the communities about what is going on there. For example: if the NCSJ rep in Washington contacts a congressman does that rep then have the responsibility to let the communities know that their congressman has been contacted and is participating in a particular program, etc?

Questions were also raised as to the responsibility for coordinating speakers and for the development of program and material. We were told that the National Conference has responsibility for the development of materials and background etc. As to coordinating speakers, that issue seems to be unresolved.

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### MEETING WITH JERRY GOODMAN NOVEMBER 28TH, 1977

Jerry Goodman also began by reviewing the history. He indicated that at the Kanadas City General Assembly of the CJFWF there was a demand for a more integrated Soviet Jewry program, the main pressure coming from the CJFWF and the American Jewish Committee. At that time there was no budget for the American Conference and its role was unclear.

In 1970, because of the activity of the Jews in the Soviet Union, the growth of JDL, the growth of the militant activists and the activity of Lou Rosenblum and the Union of Councils, there was pressure to reorganize the American Conference. The real pressure came from "our friends" who were afraid of JDL and the Union of Councils speaking for the Jewish community.

The feeling was that the NJCRAC could not handle this issue because it could not speak for the entire Jewish community, e. g. the Zionist, the Rabbinical Organizations, etc., groups which are not represented in the NJCRAC structure.

Under Zionist pressure the old AJCSJ was restructured, and final approval was given to the organization of the NCSJ, which was to be an organization without a community arm. The new group was also required to go together with the Conference of Presidents when dealing with the President of the United States.

Provision was made for local communities to be represented on the board of governors of the NCSJ. The board of governors meets four times a year, and they try to link their meetings with the NJCRAC Executive Committee or meetings of the CJFWF in New York. An Executive Committee is responsible for running the agency between the board of governors' meetings. None of the national agency professionals sit on the NCSJ Executive Committee. Although there are communities represented within the NCSJ structure, in reality it is an East Coast based group that is calling the shots.

National agencies are involved through their professional staff persons who sit on the board of governors of the NCSJ.

In reality the national agencies do little and refer all of their questions in this area to the National Conference. There has been some attempt to try to involve the national agencies, with the American Jewish Congress developing a National Lawyers Committee and the American Jewish Committee taking on the Interreligious Task Force. At this stage, in so far as the Interreligious Task Force is concerned, Sister Ann Gillen seems to be going in her own direction.

When asked why the CRC's did not get the minutes of the NCSJ Board meetings or executive committee meetings Jerry replied that the NJCRAC objects to CRC's getting minutes and other material and is opposed to direct contact by NCSJ with the CRC's. He indicated that the NJCRAC is responsible for program implementation.

There are some areas where the responsibility is not particularly clear and over which conflict arises from time to time; areas such as who briefs people going to the Soviet Union, who relates to congressmen, who replies to specialized requests from congressmen (NJCRAC or NCSJ), and who supplies speakers, and who responds to community inquiries etc.

Communities are faced with the problem of how to get answers in the fastest way. The process is not clear. The reality is that the National Conference, as time goes on, is dealing more and more with communities. People call NCSJ directly for speakers. Goodman has developed his own resources. From time to time NCSJ gets calls for communities which they answer directly.

A problem also arises around Abe Bayer. Abe is both a program expert and an expert in substantive areas. NCSJ is supposed to be the substantive expert.

Jerry Goodman indicated that the policy of the agency is really made by the executive. He has great influence on policy and, in effect, makes it.

He does not meet very often with Al Chernin. There is some joint consultation with Abe Bayer on materials. He is open for suggestions for new programs but feels inhibited by his budget.

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