

**The Role of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee  
and the Round Trip Abroad in 1943**

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to compare the media coverage of the round trip undertaken by Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer in 1943 and analyze the literary works "One-Store America" and essays written by Mikhoels about the trip. The research applies the "Gatekeeping" and "Propagandist model" frameworks to investigate primary media sources, including *Eynikayt*, *Pravda*, *The Forward*, and *The New York Times*. Stuart Hall's approach is also utilized to understand the concept of the "other" in literary works.

The findings of this thesis project offer unique perspectives from the analyzed newspapers and shed light on Mikhoels's and Fefer's distinct experiences in the United States from a comparative standpoint. These findings contribute to the field of Soviet Jewish Studies and demonstrate the effectiveness of employing digital tools for analyzing literary works.

Overall, this thesis project provides valuable insights into international cooperation during World War II. It establishes a foundation for further research on the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee network analysis in my future doctoral dissertation.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Ambijan — American Committee for the Settlement of Birobidzhan

CPSU — Communist Party of the Soviet Union

GARF — Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation)

JAFC — Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

JDC — American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

KGB — Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)

NLP — Natural Language Processing

NYT — The New York Times

OCR — Optical Character Recognition

Sovinformbureau — Soviet Information Bureau

USHMM — United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

YIVO — Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (Yiddish Scientific Institute)



## Introduction

The Second World War, with its profound complexity, could be likened to a vast newspaper archive composed not of a single headline but rather countless articles, reports, and editorials, each contributing to the patchwork of understanding we grapple with today. Despite the passage of eighty years, this historic chronicle remains shrouded in layers of bias and propaganda. The task for historians is not merely to retrieve new articles but to scrutinize, interpret, and contrast diverse narratives, carving a path toward a more nuanced understanding of this tumultuous historical period. This thesis doesn't merely delve into the labyrinthine archive of events; it embarks on a dedicated exploration into the Jewish perspective, seeking to bring its distinct narratives into sharper focus in a time that defies any single, "common" interpretation.

This study delves into the brief yet momentous period of 1943 when Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer embarked on their journey to America. It was a critical juncture in history; the tide of World War II had shifted with the Red Army's triumph at the Battle of Stalingrad, the ominous proceedings of the Wannsee Conference had transpired, and millions of European Jews had tragically met their end. This thesis aims to delineate the distinctive lens through which the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee viewed these events, juxtaposed against the broader Soviet, American, and Jewish-American perspectives. Moreover, it seeks to probe the temporal context, drawing a comparative analysis between the literary work of Ilf and Petrov penned nearly a decade prior and Mikhoels' reflective essays recounting his journey to America. This comparison allows for a deeper exploration into the evolving socio-political landscape of the era, anchoring our understanding in both the literary and historical realms.

## Historiography Review

Numerous works provide different perspectives on the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC), with varying focuses and levels of detail. However, some work exclusively centers on the JAFC or gives it a crucial role. Notable contributions include papers by Shimon Redlich, Gennady Kostyrchenko, Gennady Estraikh, and Nina Petrova.

In 1969, Shimon Redlich published an article that briefly touched upon the round trip and its impact on Soviet-American relationships<sup>1</sup>. However, his more comprehensive studies on the JAFC were published later, starting with his 1982 study in the "East European Quarterly." This study focused on the problematic relationship between the JAFC and the Soviet authorities and the short-term functioning of the committee, which affected the institutions and individuals who cooperated with it. The JAFC obtained its role through pressure "from below," as the Jewish population of the USSR sent letters to the editorial office asking for help or describing the illegal actions of the Nazis. Redlich highlighted differing policies on portraying Jewish victims during WWII. Inside the USSR, emphasis shifted away from their origin and religion, while foreign policy aimed to highlight the universal Jewish problem for international support.<sup>2</sup> In 1992, Redlich gained access to archival materials related to the JAFC and published a new book in 1995, using the archival sources to support his claims. Although the line of argument remained the same, the archival sources provided new evidence to strengthen Redlich's argument. Overall,

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<sup>1</sup> Redlich, Shimon. "The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the Soviet Union." *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 1 (1969): 25–36.

<sup>2</sup> Shimon Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia: The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, 1941-1948* (East European Quarterly, 1982).

Redlich's work sheds light on the complex and turbulent history of the JAFC and the Soviet government's policies towards the Jewish minority during World War II and beyond.

Kostyrchenko's 1994 monograph was the first work that stands out from earlier studies due to the author's inclusion of primary source documents from the secret archives of the Central Committee of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and the KGB (Committee for State Security) of the USSR. Western researchers highly valued the informative value of the monograph, which partially filled the gap in knowledge regarding the political repression of Jewish figures in culture and science during the 1940s and early 1950s. The author's focus on the Jewish ethnic minority and exclusion of the problem from a wider political context is noteworthy.<sup>3</sup> In 1996, Kostyrchenko and Shimon Redlich published collections of documents related to the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, which is widely used among Soviet Jewry researchers.<sup>4</sup> In 2001, Kostyrchenko published another book with the main goal of determining the reasons behind the systematic persecution of Jews by Soviet authorities. He argues that a combination of factors led to this persecution, including Stalin's personal beliefs and the role played by Jews in obtaining equal rights to the "Doctors' Affairs" and the fight against "rootless cosmopolitanism."<sup>5</sup>

Gennady Estraiikh's publication provides an insightful overview of the JAFC's activities from its establishment until its eventual dissolution. While briefly mentioning Mikhoels and Fefer's round

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<sup>3</sup> Gennadi Kostyrchenko, *Out of the Red Shadows: Anti-Semitism in Stalin's Russia*, translated by A. Riazantseva (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, c1995).

<sup>4</sup> Shimon Redlich, Gennadi Kostyrchenko, and others, *Evreiskii antifashistskii komitet v SSSR 1941-1948: dokumentirovannaya istoriya* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Gennadi Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 2001).

trip without delving into specific details, the research highlights the crucial milestones in the Committee's existence.<sup>6</sup>

In 1999, Nina Petrova published her dissertation project about all five Anti-Fascist Committees. This is the only publication that analyses all committees together, putting the JAFC into the comparison. The JAFC is not a main focus, but rather one of all. The author mentioned the round trip to the US very roughly.<sup>7</sup>

Stepping back to a broader perspective, there are comprehensive overviews of the historiography of Soviet Jewry. The study of Soviet Jewry is a complex and sensitive issue that emerged later in Western historiography than the study of the Soviet Union in general. The lack of available documentation and doubts about the official data of the USSR, coupled with the political discourse of the Cold War, hindered research on Soviet Jewry. Solomon Schwartz's book on Soviet Jewry, published in 1951, significantly contributed to the study of the Jewish minority in the USSR. Through his primary sources, Schwartz highlighted the oppression and curtailment of cultural freedom experienced by the Jewish minority in the USSR. Schwartz's work laid the foundation for further research on Soviet Jewry and the historical experiences of other minorities in the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

The work of Salo Whitmeyer Baron, an American historian from Columbia University, in 1964 contributed significantly to the study of the Jewish population of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. While Baron supported Schwartz's conclusions, he provided a broader context for

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<sup>6</sup> Gennady Estraiikh, "The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee," *East European Jewish Affairs* 48, no. 2 (2018): 139-148.

<sup>7</sup> Nina Petrova, *Antifashistskie komitety v SSSR: 1941-1945 gg.* Moskva: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Jews in the Soviet Union* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1951).

Jewish studies by analyzing the period from the partition of Poland up to and including the Khrushchev era. Although he did not come to surprising conclusions, Baron's work expanded the field of study on the Jewish minority in the USSR. Together, the works of Schwartz and Baron provide valuable insights into the experiences of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union and their struggles for cultural and religious freedom.<sup>9</sup>

Benjamin Pincus's work focuses on the status of Jews in the Soviet Union between the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the Six-Day War in 1967. Most of the book comprises documents and their interpretations accessible to Western researchers in the 1980s, but it does not include any archival materials. While the JAFC is only briefly discussed, the book is still significant for those studying Soviet Jewry.<sup>10</sup>

Mordecai Altshuler's research draws from official statistics and materials obtained from Jewish émigrés. However, these sources offer only a partial glimpse into the situation of the Jewish minority in the USSR. The author acknowledges the limitations as a Western historian but manages to provide a broad overview. Analyzing data on gender, age, education, migration, employment, and party membership, Altshuler argues that Soviet Jews experienced social advancement despite oppression. The proportion of repressed Jews increased significantly by the end of the 1940s, and official religiosity among Soviet Jews was notably lower than the national

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<sup>9</sup> Salo Wittmayer Baron, *The Russian Jew Under Tsars and Soviets*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 of *Russian Civilization Series* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Pincus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

average. Moreover, Altshuler suggests that the geopolitical influence of the Jewish ethnic minority exceeded that of larger nationalities and ethnic groups in the USSR.<sup>11</sup>

Nora Levin's 1988 publication delves into Jewish survival in the Soviet Union, examining factors like political ideologies, anti-Semitism, religious restrictions, cultural assimilation, and the aftermath of World War II. She analyzes Soviet government policies and attitudes towards Jews, revealing the dynamic shifts in society and the resilience of Jewish individuals. The book also explores the impact of the Holocaust on Soviet Jews and their post-war rebuilding efforts.<sup>12</sup>

Gitelman collaborated with YIVO to create a comprehensive history of Jews and the Russian state, from the assassination of Alexander II to the publication of the book's second edition in 2001. The book highlights moments of Jewish self-awareness, such as in the 1920s with the policy of indigenization, in 1948 after the establishment of the State of Israel, and in 1967 after its victory in the Six-Day War. These moments are contrasted with darker periods of history, including the pogroms of the 1890s-1910s, Jewish participation in the Great Terror, the Holocaust, and the campaign to fight "rootless cosmopolitanism." The growth of Jewish self-awareness in 1948 was accompanied by a loss of representation in the political space of the USSR during the struggle against "rootless cosmopolitanism." While the book offers a chronological description of events, it does not interpret them critically.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Mordecai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry Since the Second World War: Population and Social Structure*, illustrated ed., *Studies in Population and Urban Demography* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival* (New York: New York University Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Zvi Y. Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*, ed. Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

Important historiographical work by David Shneer of the University of Colorado focuses on the role of Jews in photojournalism during World War II in the USSR. The author argued that photographs of Jewish journalists influenced the identity of Soviet Jewry. Specifically, this work focuses on how Jewish photographers depicted the everyday life of Jews in different regions of the Soviet Union and how this everyday life varied from region to region.<sup>14</sup> Although the archival documents suggest that the *Eynikayt* had its own photographers, the editors primarily used photographs also published in *Pravda* and other Russian-language newspapers. This does not contradict the argument of David Shneer since among the photographers of all newspapers of the Soviet Union, there were Jewish photojournalists, including those who depicted liberated settlements after the Nazi occupation, and *Eynikayt* also used these materials on its pages.

Another valuable piece of the historiography is research by Gennady Estraiikh, published in 2020. It is an important study of the connections between the Russian and American Jewish communities. Although only part of the book is about WWII and the post-war period, the book sheds light on how those war connections were formed earlier. Since the author writes in detail about the JAFC's communication with various organizations abroad, including publishing houses<sup>15</sup>, it played a significant role in my analysis of the *Eynikayt* operations, which can be found in the chapters below.

In his research, Dutch historian Karel Berkhof convincingly shows that the Soviet press did not emphasize the Jewishness of the victims, instead using the very vague term "peaceful Soviet

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<sup>14</sup> David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust*, illustrated ed., *Jewish Cultures of the World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Gennady Estraiikh, *Transatlantic Russian Jewishness: Ideological Voyages of the Yiddish Daily Forverts in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Academic Studies Press, 2020).

citizens." The author primarily works with newspapers that were published in Russian<sup>16</sup>. However, *Eynikayt* appears to have had fewer restrictions due to the fact that it was published in Yiddish than other Soviet newspapers. On its pages, one can often find both names, Jews and "peaceful Soviet citizens." I will write more about this further in the text.

In a very recent article, Brett Winestock examines the special status of Soviet Yiddish and what attempts the USSR made to control it. By control, I mean creating a special type of Yiddish, in which all Hebraisms are written phonetically, Russian vocabulary, and others are present in large quantities. Thanks to these changes, the language became very different from others. Despite all this, the cultural product produced in this Yiddish language was very popular in the USSR and beyond its borders.<sup>17</sup> This success of Jewish literature also made Mikhoels and Fefer recognizable and made their tour the way I describe it later in the text.

To a greater or lesser extent, the literature described above touches on Jewish life in the 1940s, highlighting various aspects of Jewish life at that time. However, the journey of Mikhoels and Fefer back and forth in 1943 is not described in detail in any work, although references, of course, appear. The analysis of this journey is that I want to contribute to the historiography of Soviet Jewry. Finally, Simon Dubnow Institut in Leipzig is currently preparing a book by Dr. Jakob Stürmann about this trip. However, as far as I know, there is no comparison analysis of press coverage, so current work still gives a new perspective.

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<sup>16</sup> Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Winestock, Brett, "Soviet Yiddish in the Worldwide Jewish Family," *In geveb*, accessed June 15, 2023, <https://ingeveb.org/articles/soviet-yiddish-in-the-worldwide-jewish-family>.



## Methodology

Regarding my research methodology, I primarily analyze two types of sources. First, I examine how the different newspapers depicted Mikhoels and Fefer's journey to America in 1943. Second, I compare the literary work "One-Storied America" by Ilf and Petrov with Mikhoels's smaller publications, where he documented his own experiences of the trip to America.

In my analysis of newspapers, I am trying to combine two approaches: "Gatekeeping" to explore the selection process for news and the "Propaganda Model" to examine the broader societal and power influences.

Kurt Lewin introduced the "Gatekeeping" theory, focusing on food production rather than media communications.<sup>18</sup> The first time this framework was used for media analysis was by David Manning White.<sup>19</sup> For this research, I am primarily using the work by Pamela Shoemaker and Timothy Vos, who developed this concept in detail.<sup>20</sup> This framework suggests looking into the details of news production and how the actual event that happened transforms into the lines of the text or other types of media content. Comparing four newspapers from different backgrounds might help to understand what had not been published in each newspaper. By examining what aspects of the event each newspaper chose to highlight, how they framed the event, and what information was omitted, I can gain insights into the newspapers' gatekeeping practices.

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<sup>18</sup> Lewin, Kurt. "Frontiers in group dynamics: II. Channels of group life; social planning and action research." *Human relations* 1, no. 2 (1947): 143-153.

<sup>19</sup> David Manning White, "The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," *Journalism Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1950): 383-390.

<sup>20</sup> Pamela Shoemaker and Timothy Vos, *Gatekeeping Theory* (Taylor and Francis, 2009).

The "Propaganda model" is also considered when analyzing newspapers in this research.<sup>21</sup> The theory's authors, Noam Chomsky and Edward Samuel Herman suggest that information agencies are not independent by definition. While the model was primarily developed for a capitalist context, it can be applied to the US and the USSR contexts. It's important to note that this analysis focuses solely on news production and does not consider audience feedback or other factors. Therefore, the conclusions drawn should be seen within the limitations of this approach.

The model was primarily developed within a capitalist framework, highlighting the significant influence of advertisements on newspaper content. However, this concept cannot be directly applied to the Soviet Communist context, as private businesses were absent in the Soviet Union. Instead, we can consider the government as a major influencer on the content of Soviet media in this context.

To analyze literary works, I use cultural studies theory to analyze Contextual Analysis, Representations and Discourse, and Ideological Elements. Stuart Hall's work is utilized as a conceptual model.<sup>22</sup> In this work, the concept of "other" is one of the key elements for understanding literary works portraying other nations.

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<sup>21</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding the Television Message," Stencilled Paper 7 (Birmingham University: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973).

## **Approaches to Analyzing Textual Data: Optical Character Recognition, Content Analysis, Text Analysis, and Visualization**

### **Optical Character Recognition**

For this master's thesis, I required Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to process Yiddish texts that are exclusively available as pictures. To accomplish this, I employed two different platforms: i2OCR and Transkribus.

Transkribus combines various technologies, including OCR, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and Machine Learning, to convert scanned or photographed images of historical documents into searchable and editable digital text. It is specifically tailored to address the challenges posed by historical documents, such as varying handwriting styles, faded ink, and difficult-to-read text.

On the other hand, i2OCR is a free online OCR web application that allows users to extract text from images or scanned documents, including PDF files. It supports various document types and languages, making it versatile for text recognition tasks.

The recognition of Yiddish text poses a significant challenge due to the language's variability. In the case of *Eynikayt*, it was published in the Soviet version of Yiddish, while the models used for recognition were trained on standardized YIVO Yiddish. This creates difficulties for the models in recognizing words written in their phonetic equivalents and encountering words that do not exist in standardized Yiddish. Additionally, the ending letters in standardized Yiddish are absent in the Soviet version, which poses another challenge. Another hurdle arises from the poor image quality of the *Eynikayt* newspaper, as they were captured using a personal device rather than

professional equipment. Furthermore, identifying and matching names mentioned in both newspapers proved challenging since their references were only sometimes aligned.

Overall, despite the challenges, applying OCR software to Yiddish texts provided valuable insights and advancements in accessing and analyzing historical documents.

### **Conventional Content Analysis and Text Analysis Techniques**

In this study, I integrated a straightforward text comparison with Text Analysis techniques, which I found to be an effective fusion of close and distant reading. This combination enabled me to uncover intriguing details. I employed these approaches iteratively; for instance, I started by reading both texts conventionally, identifying overarching questions that could be posed to the texts. Next, I utilized distant reading to validate my overall comprehension of the texts while incorporating secondary literature insights to refine my analysis. Finally, I revisited close reading and repeated the subsequent steps, further deepening my understanding of the texts.

Searching for specific words or phrases is often beneficial when dealing with extensive datasets or texts. Manually searching through files can be laborious and prone to errors, particularly when handling numerous files. Python offers a convenient solution to automate this process, enabling swift searches for particular words within files.

For this analysis, I employed Python's "os" module to read each chapter's content and search for words beginning with certain expressions. The combinations I used included "evre" to find references to Jews, "amerik" to locate descriptions of Americans, and "religi" to identify mentions of religion. Consequently, I obtained all instances of words containing these expressions and the frequency of their occurrence in each chapter.

This code is generally highly valuable when working with large text datasets and can be applied to subsequent text-related inquiries or pattern discovery. The current analysis merely scratches the surface of text analysis, and I plan to continue exploring it further. Utilizing this code saves time, minimizes the likelihood of errors in data analysis, and provides insights into the prevalence of specific words or phrases within the dataset.

### **Comparative Map Analysis**

To emphasize the distinct locations, I employed map visualizations. Leveraging Google Maps, I could depict Ilf and Petrov's differing routes during their 1935-1936 journey and Mikhoeles and Fefer in 1943. I found these visualizations quite enlightening, as they illuminated not only the route discrepancies but also shed light on the varying modes of transportation utilized during each respective journey.

### **Primary Sources**

This research uses three types of primary sources: digitized and undigitized newspapers, Literary works, and archival sources. Each of the four newspapers was accessed through different means, which will be further explored in the subsequent paragraphs.

Accessing the *Eynikayt* newspaper proved challenging for researchers as it was only available in analog format and had not been digitized at the time of the research. Furthermore, travel restrictions resulting from the Russian war against Ukraine and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic limited opportunities to visit libraries and conduct on-site research. However, a brief window of opportunity in the summer of 2021 allowed for the digitization of certain issues. Therefore, materials from the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and the Russian State Library were utilized for this research. While both institutions contributed a significant amount of materials, it

is crucial to emphasize that nearly the entire collection of newspaper issues could be assembled only by combining materials from both institutions. To navigate the content effectively, the Index of Yiddish Periodicals was a valuable resource, facilitating searches based on titles, issue numbers, and author names.

*Pravda* was one of the prominent Soviet newspapers, and multiple organizations have digitized it, making it accessible through various sources. For this research, the EastView portal was utilized, which grants access to a range of historical newspapers published in Eastern Europe and Asia. However, it is important to note that the platform's full-text search capabilities are limited. The optical character recognition results are of poor quality, resulting in issues with word search functionality.

Among the digitized newspapers, *The New York Times* provides excellent research opportunities. The newspaper is fully digital and offers comprehensive full-text search capabilities. The only challenge lies in the newspaper's inconsistent naming conventions, as there were up to three different variants of the Mikhoels family name. However, overall, the recognition quality and the search engine are invaluable tools for historians.

The collaboration between the Historical Jewish Press project and Tel Aviv University has enabled researchers to access various newspapers through the portal. The Historical Yiddish press portal contains a collection of multiple newspapers, including *The Forward*. These newspapers have been digitized and are now available in a fully searchable format, allowing researchers to find specific topics, names, and events easily. While the recognition quality of the portal is similar to the EastView project mentioned earlier, it's important to note that there may be occasional

errors in word recognition, leading to missing information. Nevertheless, the Historical Yiddish Press portal is a valuable resource for studying the Yiddish press worldwide.

Among archival sources, I am using materials from the JAFRC Archives. Most of the materials were digitized and are now accessible to researchers in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I received access to the materials in 2018 during the seminar, so now I am working with the materials remotely. However, now all materials are digitized. First, bureaucratic materials, such as salary and subscribers' reports, were not digitized. Thus, during the fall of 2020, I worked on-site in GARF Archives within the framework of the Sefer Center's charitable program "Academic Jewish Studies in the post-Soviet space," implemented with the support of the Genesis Philanthropy Group.

Finally, I am comparing literary works. Thus, on the one side, I am comparing a book in Russian, "One-Storied America," written by Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov.<sup>23</sup> In English this book was published in England in 1944 and was titled "Little Golden America." This story describes the travel done by two Soviet Journalists in 1935-1936. For the comparison was taken two essays, "Odnootazhna li Amerika" (Is America One-Storied) and "Iskusstvo v Amerike" (Art in America), were published together in the collection "*Stati, besedy, rechi: stati i vospominaniya o Mikhoelse*" (Articles, talks, speeches) by Solomon Mikhoels.<sup>24</sup> This was published in Yiddish in 1961<sup>25</sup>. The Yiddish Book Center digitized them, making them available to readers.

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<sup>23</sup> Ilf, I., Petrov, E., *Odnootazhnaya Amerika* (Moskva: GIHL, 1937).

<sup>24</sup> Mikhoels, Solomon. *Stati, besedy, rechi: stati i vospominaniya o Mikhoelse*, edited by Konstantin Rudnitskiĭ, (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1960).

<sup>25</sup> Solomon Mikhoels, *Artiklen, shmuesn, redes* (Buenos-Ayres: Heymland, 1961).

## Thesis Outline

This thesis is categorized into two core chapters that thoroughly analyze divergent perspectives portrayed in esteemed newspapers like *Eynikayt*, *Pravda*, *The Forward*, and *The New York Times*. Additionally, it carries out a comparative exploration of the authored piece of Ilf and Petrov, juxtaposing them against the concise yet insightful essays penned by Mikhoels about their trip with Fefer. The discourse goes beyond a broad comparative study of these newspapers, delving deeper into examining particular publications within these distinguished periodicals. Thus, this study provides an overarching comparative analysis and probes into specific elements that add depth and texture to our understanding.

In the first research chapter, I delve into the genesis and objectives of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, highlighting the tribulations faced by its leaders. Moreover, this segment of the study provides a comparative analysis of four newspapers— *Eynikayt*, *Pravda*, *The Forward*, and *The New York Times* —investigating their unique approaches to addressing Jewish issues during this period and their varying stances towards the endeavors of the JAFC. It's worth noting that the study leans heavily on the discourse surrounding *Eynikayt*, primarily due to the shortage of substantial coverage of its operation in the existing historiography.

Composed of two distinct sections, the second research chapter meticulously examines Mikhoels and Fefer's arrival in America. The first section is devoted to a chronological analysis of the press coverage, tracing the narrative thread from the earliest report of the delegates' arrival through to the final mention of their trip within the specified period. This approach preserves the temporal sequence of events as they unfolded in the media, offering an authentic timeline of the events reported.



A comparative analysis of the *Eynikayt* and *The Forward* was first introduced at the Farbindungen 2023: Yiddish Futures / Yidishe Tsukunftn conference under the title “Shloyme Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer's Tour of the United States as Documented by the Forverts and Eynikayt.” The discourse generated at this conference served as a fruitful platform for garnering insightful feedback, which I have conscientiously integrated into constructing this part of my thesis. The feedback received during these preliminary discussions substantially enriched the depth and quality of this comparative perspective.

The final section of the chapter pivots to an exhaustive examination of literary compositions. This part of the analysis allows for a detailed comparison of themes such as the journey from the USSR to America, Jewish narratives, and specific elements like the portrayal of American skyscrapers and the art scene. Furthermore, this section also employs text analysis utilizing computational tools, like word frequency analysis, providing an empirical dimension to exploring the analyzed texts. This analytical approach paves the way for a more granular understanding of the thematic prevalence and the recurrent motifs within the literary works under scrutiny.

## 1 — The Role of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Soviet and American Press

### The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was established as a subunit of the Soviet Information Bureau (Sovinformbureau) alongside other anti-fascist committees, such as the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Scientists and the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women.<sup>26</sup> While these committees were not created simultaneously, and each had its own dynamics, varying membership numbers, and specific objectives, they all adhered to general regulations set by the Sovinformbureau. These regulations included covering international events and internal affairs of the Soviet Union through press and radio, organizing counterpropaganda against Nazi and other hostile propaganda, reporting on military operations, and publishing military reports based on materials from the Main Command.<sup>27</sup> Hence, while each committee pursued its distinct aims, they operated within the overarching framework facilitated by the Sovinformbureau.

Although these committees shared a Soviet context and followed similar guidelines, the JAFC had its own distinctive features. Shimon Redlich accurately observed that during the early stages of the Soviet-German phase of WWII, various meetings brought together different ethnic and national “representatives.”<sup>28</sup> These gatherings encompassed diverse ethnicities and nationalities and considered factors such as profession and gender. As a result of these initiatives, five Anti-Fascist Committees were established as sub-units of the Sovinformbureau. The nature of whether these “representatives” volunteered or were requested by authorities remains uncertain. However,

<sup>26</sup> Nina Petrova, *Antifashistskie komitety v SSSR: 1941-1945 gg.* Moskva: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 1999, 88-89.

<sup>27</sup> Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) i SNK SSSR «O sozdanii i zadachakh Sovetskogo Informatsionnogo Byuro» (24 iyunya 1941 g.) // *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh syezdov, konferentsiy i plenumov TsK* (1898-1986). – Moskva: Izdatelstvo politicheskoy literatury. 1983-1990. – T. 7 (1938-1945gg.). 213.

<sup>28</sup> Shimon Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia : The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, 1941-1948 / Shimon Redlich* ([Boulder, Colo.]: East European Quarterly, 1982), 39.

it is evident that numerous shared interests brought people together, extending beyond the five committees eventually chosen to become part of the Sovinformbureau. It is plausible that a series of meetings were organized to evaluate the potential of these initiatives, aiming to determine which ones were most suitable for securing a permanent position within the Sovinformbureau and obtaining government funding to support their activities. If this was the case, it indicates that the Jewish world community had already responded significantly to the Jewish meetings even before the official committee was established, highlighting the importance and relevance of these rallies.

Among these five committees, it is evident that two of them were formed based on ethnic considerations. In the Soviet Union, Jews were primarily regarded as an ethnic group rather than a religious one. The decision to unite all Slavic nationalities within a single committee could be attributed to the structural organization of the Slavic diaspora, which often fostered shared associations. On the other hand, establishing a separate Jewish committee can be understood considering the diverse nature of the Jewish diaspora outside the borders of the USSR. For instance, certain Jewish groups may have held anti-Soviet or anti-Russian sentiments yet maintained personal connections or concerns regarding the well-being of Jews and Jewish life within the Soviet Union.

Beyond its original purpose, structural affiliation, and official responsibilities, the JAFC began to assume a significance that surpassed that of a mere propaganda office. As per Shimon Redlich, the JAFC played a pivotal role as a central hub for all Jewish organizations that persevered throughout the 1930s and maintained their presence in various forms by June 1941. Among these organizations were prominent institutions such as the Cabinet of Jewish Culture in Kyiv and the

publishing house "Der Emes."<sup>29</sup> During this period, numerous Yiddish language newspapers, including the Birobidzhaner Stern in Birobidzhan, faced closure. Even publications like the Birobidzhaner Stern in Birobidzhan, situated in a region less susceptible to the immediate threat of the advancing German Army, ceased publication from 1941 to 1944.<sup>30</sup> Operating its own editorial office, the JAFC actively produced various materials and undertook diverse projects. Thus, the JAFC's role as a unifying force for Jewish organizations became particularly significant during this time of upheaval and closures within the Yiddish press.

### **Forging Anti-Fascist Committees: Rallies and Media Coverage in the Formation of the JAFC within the Sovinformbureau**

Rallies preceded the formation of all anti-fascist committees within the Soviet Information Bureau, marking the commencement of their organizational efforts. According to Nina Petrova, all committees faced a shortage of skilled personnel, including linguists, during their early stages.<sup>31</sup> In the specific case of the JAFC, the deficiency in qualified staff extended beyond the necessity of English language proficiency for international engagements. Given the committee's unique focus and objectives, it also encompassed the vital need for expertise in Yiddish.

Radio broadcasting played a pivotal role, and its significance extended beyond Soviet domestic interests, warranting substantial attention throughout the United States. Gerd Horten, referring to a book published in 1946 that extensively studied radio usage in the US, emphasized the immense

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<sup>29</sup> Shimon Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia : The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, 1941-1948*. (East European Quarterly, 1982), 50.

<sup>30</sup> Dov-Ber Kerler, "The Soviet Yiddish Press: Eynikayt During The War, 1942-1945," in *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American & International Journalism during the Holocaust*, edited by Robert Moses Shapiro (Hoboken, NJ: Yeshiva Univ. Press in association with KTAV Pub. House, 2003), 222, cited from *Jewish Publications in the Soviet Union 1917-1960*, edited by Y. Y. Cohen, M. Piekarz, Y. Slutski, and Kh. Shmeruk (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel, 1961).

<sup>31</sup> Nina Petrova, *Antifashistskie komitety v SSSR: 1941-1945 gg*. Moskva: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 1999., 21.

influence of radio as a propaganda tool and news dissemination medium<sup>32</sup>. According to the survey, 91% of American households possessed at least one radio device, with an average of 2.3 hours spent on daytime radio listening and 2.6 hours during the evening. Women exhibited twice the average radio listening time and a 25% increase during evening hours.<sup>33</sup> These statistics underscored that radio had become an integral component of daily life for American citizens during the 1940s.

The first rally of representatives of Jewish representatives on August 24, 1941, stands as a profoundly well-documented event. The August 25 issue of *Pravda* was allocated for more than one sheet.<sup>34</sup> The rally was filmed<sup>35</sup> and later, the speeches of activists were published in various collections of documents.<sup>36</sup> Despite its modest attendance, consisting of only 13 speakers, this inaugural rally holds immense historical importance.<sup>37</sup>

The second Jewish Anti-Fascist rally, held on May 24, 1942, in Moscow, was covered in both *Pravda*<sup>38</sup> and *Eynikayt*<sup>39</sup>. *Pravda* devoted little space to describing this event, while *Eynikayt* allocated much more space to reflect on this event. Moreover, if the information was placed on page 3 in *Pravda*, in the *Eynikayt*, the title page of the newspaper was allocated for this event.

<sup>32</sup> Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>33</sup> Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Harry Field, *The People Look at Radio* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 96-97.

<sup>34</sup> "Brat'ya yevrei vsego mira!" (Братья евреи всего мира!), *Pravda*, no. 235, August 25, 1941, pp. 3-4.

<sup>35</sup> These materials are now available at many research institutions, including the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

<sup>36</sup> "Brat'ya Yevrei Vsego Mira!" (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1941), translated as "Brothers Jews of the Whole World!" (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1941), Redlich, Shimon and Gennady Kostyrchenko. Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR, 1941–1948: Documented History [in Russian]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1996.

<sup>37</sup> "Brat'ya yevrei vsego mira!" (Братья евреи всего мира!), *Pravda*, no. 235, August 25, 1941, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> "Vtoroy miting predstaviteley evreyskogo naroda" (The second rally of representatives of the Jewish people), *Pravda*, no. 145, May 25, 1942, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> "Tsu di yidn fun der velt!" ("To Jews from All Around the World"), *Eynikayt*, no. 1, June 7, 1942, p. 1.

Part of the text in Yiddish is a direct translation of the Russian text, and the appeal to the Jews of the whole world to unite, published in both newspapers, later became the motto of the JAFC.

The third Jewish people's rally took place on April 2, 1944, as briefly mentioned in a small note in the April 5 issue of *Pravda*.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, there was an April 3 issue of *Pravda*<sup>41</sup> in between, yet it made no mention of the rally whatsoever. However, in *Eynikayt*, the event held significant prominence in the April 6 issue, the first number published in April 1944. Notably, the rally topic occupied the main page and every other page of the newspaper, emphasizing its central importance.<sup>42</sup> This observation suggests that by 1944, interest in the JAFC (presumably referring to the rally's organizing body) and its activities had significantly declined compared to previous gatherings. Nevertheless, for the JAFC itself, this particular event remained equally important to those held in previous years.

The rallies held during that period were crucial in forming anti-fascist committees, such as the JAFC, within the Sovinformbureau. These events garnered significant media attention due to the participation of numerous notable individuals who delivered speeches.

### **Exploring *Eynikayt*: The Yiddish Newspaper of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the Soviet Union**

The major undertaking of the JAFC was undoubtedly the publication of the newspaper *Eynikayt*,<sup>43</sup> which was published in the Soviet version of the Yiddish language between June

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<sup>40</sup> Redlich, Shimon and Gennady Kostyrchenko. Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR, 1941–1948: Documented History [in Russian]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenija, 1996.

<sup>41</sup> "Miting predstaviteley evreyskogo naroda" (Rally of representatives of the Jewish people). *Pravda*, no. 82, April 5, 1944, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> "Der III miting fun di forshṭeyer funem yidishn folk" (The IIIrd Meeting of the Representatives of the Jewish People), *Eynikayt*, no. 74, April 6, 1944, pp. 1-4.

<sup>43</sup> *Eynikayt* – from Yiddish – Unity.

1942 and November 1948. There was a clear tendency of growth for the newspaper. Initially launched on June 7, 1942, *Eynikayt* was published approximately three times per month. In 1944, the frequency increased to four monthly issues, establishing a monthly publication schedule. Starting in March 1945, *Eynikayt* adopted a regular publishing routine, releasing three weekly publications<sup>44</sup> on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays (Shabes). The newspaper's final issue, numbered #701, was dated November 20, 1948, marking the *Eynikayt* publication's closure.

In 1942, each issue of *Eynikayt* had a print run exceeding 10,000 copies, as noted by Dov Ber Kerler, who estimated the potential readership to be around 50,000 individuals.<sup>45</sup> However, based on the lists available in JAFC archives, the maximum number of subscribers was only 1200.<sup>46</sup> This raises uncertainties about the real demand for this Yiddish newspaper within the USSR. While some individual issues of *Eynikayt* were sent abroad, the primary means of sharing its content was through separate articles rather than complete newspaper editions. This distribution method, as we will explore, could have significant implications for the newspaper's readership. Consequently, it is uncertain how many of the 8,800 copies remaining after distribution to subscribers were sold to readers through newsstands.

In the JAFC Archives is a document dated 1946 requesting the Press Department of VKP(b)<sup>47</sup> to increase the number of issues of the newspaper *Eynikayt*. The document addresses the problem of limited availability of newspapers in certain areas. The JAFC has been receiving numerous letters and postal transfers requesting the newspaper. Still, the local branches of the "Sojuz

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<sup>44</sup> Kerler, "The Soviet Yiddish Press," 223.

<sup>45</sup> "To all Soviet Book Chamber. Office of Legal Copy" in USHMM, RG-22.028M [GARF f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 854, l. 153].

<sup>46</sup> GARF, f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 589, l. 523-534.

<sup>47</sup> All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)

Pechat" (Union Press) have no limit and refuse to accept subscriptions. The letters and transfers reveal that some locations have no limit on the newspaper, while others have a limit of 1-2 copies. As a result, areas with Jewish populations are left without any copies. To solve this problem, the responsible editor and the head of the publishing house propose increasing the newspaper's circulation by 10,000 copies, requiring only four tons of paper per month. This increase would allow the publishing house, *Eynikayt*, to abandon the subsidy of 200,000 rubles annually.<sup>48</sup> This suggests a demand for the Yiddish newspaper, but the number of subscribers was intentionally limited to prevent people from subscribing.

Additionally, I would like to highlight that lists of subscribers are available within the JAFC Archives. While I couldn't find these lists for every month and year to compare the dynamics, I was able to review the lists for 1948.<sup>49</sup> During this examination, I observed that all the members of the Committee and their correspondents were among the subscribers. This suggests that the issue with the newspaper's distribution was not its availability, since major cities like Moscow were provided with enough issues, but rather the logistical challenge of delivering the newspaper to small towns and villages scattered across the vast territory of the USSR.

The editorial office of *Eynikayt* had a team of permanent correspondents from Kyiv, Minsk, and a representative from the Jewish Autonomous Region who were consistently present. These individuals were not occasional writers covering various topics but held positions within the editorial board and received a salary from *Eynikayt*. Their role involved fulfilling specific

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<sup>48</sup> GARF, f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 743, l. 270.

<sup>49</sup> USHMM, RG-22.028M [GARF f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 889, l. 11-22].



assignments given by the editorial board, which sometimes resulted in writing articles on topics that may not have been particularly captivating.<sup>50</sup>

There were several types of content in *Eynikayt*. Dov Ber Kerler listed these topics: news from the front, mobilization of the world Jewry to ensure the Red Army's victory over Nazis (including reports on the work of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee), prominent featuring of the Jewish participation in the Red Army and the partisan movement, reports on the mass murder of Jews in the Nazi-occupied territories, Jewish life and culture in the Soviet Union, Soviet life, international news, and Jewish news from abroad and especially from Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>51</sup> This list was taken from the JAFC report, and I agree with the author that these categories are questionable and that it is hard to state the most important and major topics among those listed. Still, it was the only source with a Jewish focus from the USSR that existed then. Each issue had a section titled "Iber der velt," where one could find small pieces of information about the world with a defined place – the fourth page. A distinctive feature of this newspaper was that one could read there not only about "Soviet citizens" but also about Jews separately. Karel C. Berkhoff noted that in all Soviet press, there was a tendency to hide the "Jewishness" of killed civilians under the term "peaceful Soviet citizens,"<sup>52</sup> but in *Eynikayt*, there was no such tendency. On its pages, one can easily find specific Jewish experiences. Therefore, the JAFC's materials are important for understanding their role and position, but, of course, these materials were censored, and one should read between the lines. This newspaper will be used as one of the media sources that will be compared with three other types of media.

<sup>50</sup> GARF, f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 623, l. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Kerler, "The Soviet Yiddish Press," 224.

<sup>52</sup> Berkhoff, Karel C. «"Total annihilation of the Jewish Population": The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941-45,» Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, № 10, no. 1 (2009): 61-105.

## Soviet and American Press

For the comparison are used essentially different newspapers Soviet and American newspapers. Among the Soviet media newspapers, *Pravda* – the most widespread newspaper in the Soviet Union, and pro-communist by nature without a deep focus on Jewish suffering. In contrast, there are two American Newspapers: *The New York Times* and *The Forward*. The last one is a Jewish newspaper in the US, published in Yiddish, that began as a socialist media and, during WWII, was actively reporting about Jewish suffering in Europe. *The New York Times* is a newspaper that observes everything around the US where Jewish-related topics are not central, even though a valuable part of the publishing office were ethnic Jews. There is no goal to discover deeply these prominent newspapers, so there would not be a detailed overview of their structure or board members.

### Soviet *Pravda*: Contrasting Perspectives on the Soviet Agenda and Jewish Issues during World War II

*Pravda* covered a wide range of topics and represented the Soviet agenda. On the other hand, *Eynikayt* dedicated significant attention to Jewish issues and specifically catered to the concerns and interests of the USSR's Jewish community. The differing scopes of the newspapers allowed *Eynikayt* to delve deeper into Jewish-centric topics, providing a platform for discussions, reports, and analyses related to Jewish affairs.

Without delving into its operational intricacies, *Pravda* shares a notable characteristic with the broader Soviet agenda: the absence of an anti-fascist stance at the outset of World War II. According to Karel Berkhoff, until June 1941, *Pravda* openly featured photographs depicting Molotov and Hitler together while emphasizing the significance of cooperation with Nazi

Germany over political and ideological distinctions. However, this attitude instantly changed on June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany invaded the USSR.<sup>53</sup>

The issue of Jewish massacres was noticeably absent from the pages of *Pravda*, which primarily focused on references to the killings of "peaceful citizens" while providing little coverage of the deliberate extermination of the Jewish population. Notably, Karel C. Berkhoff highlighted that *Pravda*, in its description of the 3rd rally of Jewish representatives, omitted a portion of Mikhoels' speech wherein he mentioned the devastating loss of four million European Jews.<sup>54</sup> This observation underscores the Soviet state's inclination to distance itself from losses in general, particularly the mass destruction of European Jewry. In essence, this study acknowledges the Soviet state's apparent reluctance to address and recognize the magnitude of the Holocaust and its impact on the Jewish community.

### ***The New York Times*, and Jewish Affairs during World War II**

The United States faced a challenging situation regarding its involvement in the war in Europe. On one side, a powerful German propaganda machine had garnered some supporters despite not being mainstream. This propaganda included short-wave radio broadcasts discussing topics such as the "Communist-Jewish conspiracy." These broadcasts were in "American English" and French, targeting the Canadian francophone audience.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 137-138.

<sup>55</sup> Bergmeier, Horst J.P., and Rainer E. Lotz. "Short-Wave Propaganda to North America." In *Hitler's Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing*, 35-83. Yale University Press, 1997, 44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1ww3vrp.9>.

On the other side, politicians like Robert P. Patterson advocated for an anti-interventionist policy, claiming that only Jews supported opening the Western front in Europe.<sup>56</sup> This added to the complexity of the situation. It becomes evident that the Soviet representatives were sent to the United States to maintain their influence amidst this turmoil. Furthermore, sending Jewish representatives seemed like a strategic move since, even according to Patterson, American Jews had already shown support for opening the Western front.

*The New York Times* had a complex history when it came to reporting on the Holocaust and covering Jewish affairs. According to Laurel Leff, the publisher of *The NYT* at the time, Arthur Hays Sulzberger had his own political beliefs and attitudes towards Zionism that significantly influenced the newspaper's coverage. Sulzberger held the belief that Jews were neither a distinct race nor solely a religious group, and therefore, he advocated for their assimilation efforts. Rabbis Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver shared similar perspectives and were aligned with Sulzberger's views.<sup>57</sup>

The page number and amount of text per article reflect the importance of the article itself, so the materials published somewhere among the advertisements were less important. Accordingly, most articles about Jewish affairs were on the middle-last pages, reflecting their smaller importance for *The NYT* than other information. During the Holocaust, the extermination of Jews

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<sup>56</sup> K. S. Olmsted, "Hitler Agrees with the Daily Express," in *The Newspaper Axis: Six Press Barons Who Enabled Hitler* (Yale University Press, 2022), 158.

<sup>57</sup> Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 192.

appeared on the front page of the newspaper only 26 times<sup>58</sup>, while all articles on Jewish affairs numbered roughly 40<sup>59</sup>.

*The New York Times* predominantly portrayed the work of the JAFC in a positive light. However, a noteworthy trend emerged where the focus seemed to shift towards individuals in the United States who were associated with the JAFC rather than the committee itself. It became apparent that these individuals significantly influenced the reports and coverage surrounding the JAFC's activities. Additionally, my research revealed instances where people who sought recognition and a platform for their agendas intersected with the JAFC's work, even though their goals may not have perfectly aligned with the committee's. I intend to further explore and expand upon this intriguing observation.

### ***The Forward: Ideological Debates in the American and Soviet Jewish Press during World War II***

According to Abraham Brumberg, the American Yiddish Press, including *The Forward*, leaned towards leftist or centrist positions. *The Forward*, in particular, had strong affiliations with the Jewish Socialist Federation and acted as a voice for Marxist social democracy. However, despite its leftist leanings, it was unequivocally critical of the Soviet regime. The author emphasizes that the American Jewish Press, including *The Forward*, did not respond urgently enough to the events unfolding in Germany during the 1930s, a period marked by the rise of totalitarianism. The author attributes this slow response to a lack of understanding about German Nazism and a significant sympathy towards the German Social Democrats. The author further acknowledges

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<sup>58</sup> Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2-3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 373-375

that Jewish Communists made some efforts in response to the Final Solution but asserts that their actions fell short of what was necessary.<sup>60</sup>

Following the establishment of the JAFC (Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee), the Yiddish newspaper *The Forward*, published in the United States, emerged as a vocal critic of the committee. A key factor contributing to this critique was the contrasting circumstances under which the *Eynikayt* newspaper operated compared to *The Forward*. The *Eynikayt* operated amidst the challenges of war, facing shortages of personnel and paper and operating under the constant threat of bombings. In contrast, *The Forward* enjoyed a more peaceful environment for its operations.



Figure 1 Caricature that depicts *The Forward*'s reader or author.

The provided image was published in February 1947 in *Eynikayt*. It is a caricature that highlights the perceived backwardness of a person associated with *The Forward*. The caricature features notes such as "Falshivka," meaning "Fake." This portrayal indicates a mutual debate or conflict between the two publications. Further context or information would be required to ascertain the sequence of events or determine who initiated this exchange.

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<sup>60</sup> Abraham Brumberg, "Towards the Final Solution: Perception of Hitler and Nazism in the U.S. Left-of-Center Yiddish Press, 1930-1939," in *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American & International Journalism during the Holocaust*, edited by Robert Moses Shapiro (Hoboken, NJ: Yeshiva Univ. Press in association with KTAV Pub. House, 2003), 19, 36.

A general observation of the topic reveals that various sources tended to interpret the goals and accomplishments of the JAFC based on their own preconceptions rather than seeking a comprehensive understanding of their activities. The JAFC operated within the framework of Soviet ideology while also asserting its distinct identity as a Jewish organization. They navigated a delicate balance between fulfilling their objectives and adhering to their ideological framework. However, *The Forward*, in particular, doubted that the JAFC's advocacy was genuinely for Jews, viewing it instead as a facade for advancing Soviet interests. On the other hand, *The New York Times* was not entirely objective in their coverage, often focusing more on the contributions of American Jewry to the JAFC. This observation suggests that individual biases and perspectives influenced interpretations of the JAFC's motives and actions.

## 2 — The Round Trip by Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer in 1943

Back in June 1943, two prominent Jewish Intellectuals from the USSR, Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer, were on board the plane that took them to the United States of America. However, the route of this significant trip went unnoticed by the Soviet and American newspapers I am comparing in this thesis.

Mikhoels and Fefer experienced various difficulties on their way to the US. The difficulties were not only about time and movement but also the effort that had been made to participate in this trip. For example, they had to be vaccinated against cholera, plague, typhoid, yellow fever, and many other diseases to enable travel.<sup>61</sup> All this effort in the middle of WWII was not in vain, and this eventful tour attracted much media attention. Therefore, plenty of primary sources can help investigate the role of the Soviet Jewish organization, or at least the attitude and general understanding of its role from different media perspectives.

### **Chronological Observations on *Eynikayt*, *The Forward*, *Pravda*, and *The New York Times* Articles about the 1943 Round Trip**

To explore different perspectives, I analyze four distinct newspapers: *Eynikayt*, *Pravda*, *The Forward*, and *The New York Times*. Within the pages of *Eynikayt*, a Soviet Yiddish newspaper, the fourth page predominantly featured international news under the section titled "Iber der velt" (About the world), where the information about the trip was published with only one exception, which would be highlighted. This section provided readers with concise summaries of important global news information for the Soviets. Among the Russian Soviet publications, *Pravda* held prominence as the most widely circulated newspaper in the Soviet Union, strongly aligned with

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<sup>61</sup> Mikhoels, 51.



a pro-communist ideology and offering limited coverage of Jewish suffering. In contrast, the American newspapers, *The Forward* and *The New York Times* presented contrasting viewpoints. *The Forward* originated as a Yiddish-language Jewish newspaper in the United States with socialist roots and actively reported on Jewish suffering during World War II. However, as was mentioned previously, they were not fast with the reaction to the event in the 1930s in Germany. On the other hand, *The New York Times* provided a broader scope of coverage, encompassing a wide range of topics within the United States, with Jewish-related subjects occupying a relatively smaller focus despite a notable presence of ethnic Jews within its publishing office. This comparison aims to shed light on these newspapers' distinctive approaches and content offerings, showcasing the diversity of perspectives and coverage concerning international and Jewish affairs.

### **The First Reactions to the JAFC Delegation and Mikhoels and Fefer's Round Trip**

The Jewish community had differing opinions about welcoming the JAFC delegates. The article by Olga Kucherenko highlights that some Jewish left-wing organizations and publications opposed the visit, viewing the delegates as agents of the Soviet regime sent to spread propaganda. As I will show, *The Forward* was one of them. These critics believed that any association with the delegates would tarnish the reputation of American Jewry.<sup>62</sup>

Among all the newspapers that were chosen for comparative research, predictably, the *Eynikayt* was the first one to mention the round trip conducted by Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer. The first article about it was published on June 25, 1943; it reported that Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik

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<sup>62</sup> Olga Kucherenko, "An Examination in Political Grammar: When the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee Came to America," Arizona State University, September 28, 2022, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.blavatnikarchive.org/story/81>.

Fefer got to the United States, specifically in Washington, on June 16. The article described intensively the warm welcome by representatives of prominent Jewish organizations in New York and other cities. For *Eynikayt*, it was important to stress the extensive coverage of the event in American Jewish newspapers and the non-Jewish press. To be more specific, the newspaper mentioned the visit by delegates of the Soviet Consulate in New York, where they were able to communicate their goals to approximately a hundred representatives of Jewish cultural, charitable, religious, and other organizations. Similarly, they visited New York City Hall, where Mayor Fiorello La Guardia welcomed them with greetings and best wishes. The *Eynikayt* spends a lot of space on its pages mentioning the prominent newspapers published photographs of the delegates' meeting with the mayor. They mentioned whom they would meet, and an upcoming meeting was planned in New York on July 8, 1943.<sup>63</sup>

The following day, June 26, 1943, an article critiquing the motto of the JAFC delegation, titled "Jewish Interests," was published in *The Forward*. The author's main argument was not against the idea of unity but rather the source's credibility in delivering the message. They believed that Soviet representatives, even of Jewish origin, could not genuinely call for unity due to the Soviet authorities' signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement. The article referenced a quote by Molotov stating that fascism is a matter of taste, further emphasizing the author's skepticism. The critique focused on the JAFC delegation's alleged concealment of their true motives. They were portrayed as coming to the US not as representatives of the Jewish people but solely as representatives of the USSR, seeking support and financial aid from American Jews. The article

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<sup>63</sup> "shloyme mikhoels un itsik fefer in amerike [Shloyme Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer In America]," *Eynikait*, June 26, 1943, 8.

questioned the necessity for the JAFC to emphasize the fight against Nazism and fascism, as the American public was already actively opposing these ideologies.<sup>64</sup>

On June 30, 1943, *The New York Times* published a small note in a neutral tone about the delegation from the USSR. Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer were honored at a reception hosted by the Russian Consul General in New York and received by Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia at City Hall. The presence of Professor Albert Einstein as the honorary chairman of the national reception committee indicates the significance of this visit. Additionally, it was mentioned that a public rally was planned to celebrate and welcome the delegation further.<sup>65</sup>

On July 3, 1943, *The Forward* published an article critiquing Itsik Fefer and his writings. Fefer had targeted Sholem Ash, a Jewish writer, in his works, accusing him of holding fascist views and intervening in Moscow's affairs. This criticism gains significance when considering Ash's participation in the round trip organized by Mikhoels and Fefer across the United States. Fefer was criticized for using the derogatory term "Pilsutchik" to refer to Ash, implying his association with Polish fascism. Through his quotes, Fefer portrays Ash as a supporter of capitalism, lacking political integrity. It was also mentioned that Fefer composed a song called "Ash, Sha" to commemorate Sholem Ash's 50th birthday, providing a musical expression of his perspective. According to criticism, the song reflected Fefer's views on Ash's alleged fascist tendencies. Its text satirically references the idea of rewarding Ash with orders and accolades, even playfully suggesting that he should be considered an "honorary fascist."

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<sup>64</sup> "Yidishe Interesn [Jewish Interests]," *The Forward*, June 26, 1943, 6.

<sup>65</sup> "Visitors From Soviet Honored by Consul," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1943, 5.

Also, the unknown author of the article paid a lot of attention to the connection between American Zionists and the Soviet Union. It was mentioned that Zionism's shift away from British support has led it to focus on the United States and Soviet Russia as potential allies. Dr. Nachum Goldman and the World Jewish Congress were criticized for seeking Soviet support, even facing challenges in cooperation with the Russian Communist Party. Additionally, the author questioned the idea of some American Zionists on the way toward advancing Zionist goals to eliminate the World Jewish Congress to strengthen ties with the American Jewish Committee and even to hold the Congress in Soviet Russia. It was highlighted that despite historical animosity, Zionist leaders engage in diplomatic efforts with Soviet Russia, although both sides remain insincere and unlikely to embrace each other's ideologies fully. The main criticism was that the Soviet side benefited more from this relationship, while the Zionists' prospects were uncertain and even rather deceptive. In other words, the authors do not see the benefits of such actions for the Zionists.

In addition to the criticism mentioned earlier, the author believes that the composition of the representatives who receive the Soviet Jewish delegates is questionable and that the delegation, consisting of Mikhoels and Fefer, challenges the unity of the Jewish proletariat in New York.<sup>66</sup>

### **Rally on July 8, 1943, Polo Grounds**

The meeting on July 8, 1943, was a huge event that gathered some 50 thousand people and took place in Polo Grounds, New York. This event was so huge that it was covered by all four

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<sup>66</sup> "Yidishe Interesn [Jewish Interests]," *The Forward*, July 3, 1943, 6.

newspapers: *Eynikayt*, *The Forward*, *Pravda*, and *The New York Times*. Solomon Mikhoels wrote about it in his short story about one-stored America.

On July 9, *The New York Times* reported that 47,000 people attended the event. Among the speakers were the President of the City Council, Newbold Morris, and the President of the American Jewish Congress, Stephen Samuel Wise. Greetings were read from the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations director Wendell Willkie and Professor Albert Einstein. They gathered \$ 100,000 for Leningrad military hospital. The rally was organized by the Committee of Jewish Writers and Artists and the Jewish Council of Russian War Relief. It started with three anthems: first “The Star-Spangled Banner,” then “Hatikvah,” and the last “The Internationale.” In his speech, Solomon Mikhoels said that Jews, like other nationalities, were fighting against Nazis, called all nations to stand together with the Soviet fight against Nazism, and expressed gratitude for aid from the US and Great Britain. Itsik Fefer, in his speech, referred to the role of the Soviet Union in saving a huge number of Soviet, Polish, German, and Romanian Jewish lives from Nazi extermination. This claim is very debatable; while some Polish, German, and Romanian Jews were able to escape to the central Soviet territories, an absolute majority of them remained on the territories that the Nazis occupied. Also, he talked about individual acts of Jewish heroism against Nazis. He stressed that since the USSR and the US have the biggest number of Jews, these two countries have responsibility for them. And finally, he warned the audience that they should not underestimate Nazis, even though Red Army already beats them. American bass-baritone Paul Robeson sang songs on Jewish, Russian, and American topics. Since he was one of the singers who performed the song “Go Down, Moses” during WWII, he probably sang it at this rally as well. Among the speakers were the Jewish writer Sholem Asch, who was born in Kutno, in the Russian Empire, the chief information officer of the United Radio,

Electrical, and Machine Workers of America, James McLeish<sup>67</sup>, the chairman of Argo-Joint James N. Rosenberg, the head of World Jewish Congress and leading Zionist born in Russian Empire Nahum Goldman, the secretary of Local 802 of the Musicians Union William Feinberg<sup>68</sup> among the speakers, who, as chairman of this part of the rally was born not far from Vilna Ben-Zion Goldberg. The delegates acknowledged the aid provided by the United States and Great Britain to the Soviet Union. They expressed the need for closer cooperation between the USSR and the United States in the post-war world.<sup>69</sup>

In the context of constructing a hospital in Leningrad, it is important to mention the involvement of the Soviet Jewish Medical workers in this campaign. The medical director, Boris Abramovich Shimeliovich of the Botkin Hospital, made the “Call to All Jewish Medical Workers.” Although the Botkin Hospital was located in Moscow, efforts were made to establish a new medical facility in Leningrad. While the final version of the call is unavailable across the newspapers researched, the information can be found in the JAFC Archives. The call's content aligns with the general calls issued by the JAFC, as Dr. Shimeliovich was a committee member.<sup>70</sup> However, there were two notable distinctions: firstly, the call emphasized the Jewish suffering under Nazi occupation, highlighting the need for doctors to be involved, and secondly, it specifically targeted Jewish doctors as colleagues. This suggests that, from the perspective of the JAFC or the Soviet authorities, Jewish doctors formed a significant and sizable group that warranted a specific call to action. This initiative aimed to gather financial contributions from various sources to support

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<sup>67</sup> James McLeish later was blamed in anti-American activities.

<sup>68</sup> William Feinberg was among those striking in 1942–1944 musicians' strike, seems it was an option to reach wider audience.

<sup>69</sup> “Soviet Delegates Urge Unity Here,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 1943, 5.

<sup>70</sup> “Soviet Jewish Physicians appeal to Jewish Physicians All Over World” in USHMM, RG-22.028M [GARF f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 755, l. 32-34].

the construction of a much-needed hospital in Leningrad. The fundraising campaign underscored the significance of addressing the medical needs of the city in response to the challenges and hardships faced during that time.

*Pravda* reported about the meeting the week after the event – on July 15, 1943. According to the content, the rally aimed to express solidarity with the Soviet Union and called for the opening of a second front in the war against Hitler. The newspaper cited speakers other than *The NYT* and, unsurprisingly, was more interested in what was said by American speakers than Mikhoels or Fefer. For example, the President of the City Council, Newbold Morris, was cited. Like most American citizens, he said he supported the idea of opening the second front and wanted to see America as united as the USSR. Similarly, Stephen Samuel Wise criticized Trotskyists who hesitated to help the Soviet Union fully. At the same time, other speakers from various Jewish organizations voiced their support for collaboration with the Soviet Union and the urgency of opening a second front. No doubt it was *The Forward* undermined. *Pravda* wrote that Nahum Goldman decided to attend the event despite numerous warnings about participating in the rally. He urged Jews not to fear criticism and expressed hope for closer ties between the Soviets and Jews from other countries. *Pravda* mentioned other speakers like B'nai B'rith<sup>71</sup> President Henry Monsky, representative of the New York branch of the Congress of Industrial Organizations Saul Mills, and the head of the Office for Reconstruction Assistance in War-Stricken Foreign Countries Limen. *Pravda's* report focused on expressions of solidarity with the Soviet Union and the urgent call for a second front against Hitler during the rally while also highlighting the support

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<sup>71</sup> B'nai B'rith International, a Jewish service organization.

from various speakers, reflecting the growing desire for collaboration and unity between the Soviet Union and international Jewish communities.<sup>72</sup>

On July 16, 1943, *Pravda* published again about the same meeting held on July 8, 1943, in New York. It was claimed as the first rally of American Jewry in the whole Jewish-American history and includes information about messages received by Mikhoels and Fefer from Chicago regarding a campaign to raise funds for ambulances for the Red Army. *Pravda* cited several speakers at the rally criticizing the activities of *The Forward*, possibly due to an article published by the newspaper about Mikhoels and Fefer, deeming it shameful.<sup>73</sup>

The articles focus on different aspects of the rally. The July 15 article emphasizes prominent individuals' attendance, speeches, and statements, including New York City Municipal Council Chairman Morris and Chairman of the World Jewish Congress Wise. It also highlights the significance of national unity in the fight against the enemy. On the other hand, the July 16 article focuses on the overall success of the rally, its dedication to the Soviet Union, and the impact of the speeches given by Mikhoels and Fefer on the audience. The July 15 article is a direct report of the rally, providing specific quotes from speeches and mentioning the participation of various organizations and individuals. The July 16 article, however, is more of a summary or overview of the rally, focusing on the general sentiments, reactions, and messages conveyed without providing as much specific detail. Overall, the articles offer slightly different perspectives and

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<sup>72</sup> "Miting v Nyu Yorke v Chest' Mikhoelsa i Fefera [Meeting in New York in Honor of Mikhoels and Fefer]," *Pravda*, July 15, 1943, 4.

<sup>73</sup> "Miting v Nyu Yorke v Chest' Mikhoelsa i Fefera [Meeting in New York in Honor of Mikhoels and Fefer]," *Pravda*, July 16, 1943, 4.



emphasize different aspects of the rally, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding when read together.

On July 17, 1943, *Eynikayt* published two articles about the rally on July 8 and a smaller event on July 4. They published it later than Pravda because it was the next issue after June 25. At that period, the *Eynikayt* board was in the process of transferring from Kuibyshev to Moscow, so they had limited capacities and published between one and three issues per month. The *Eynikayt* describes how delegates Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer attended a grand banquet in New York City to honor the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee from the USSR. The banquet attracted over 1000 guests, including prominent figures like James Rosenberg, who praised the Soviet Union's efforts in protecting Jews during World War II. It was described how the delegates gave impassioned speeches, rallying American Jews against fascism, met influential individuals while participating in various events, and received invitations to visit other countries, solidifying international connections among Jewish communities. To show the greater effort of the audience, bad weather was mentioned, and even despite that, a large rally showcased strong support for the Soviet Union. The visit aimed to raise awareness, unite Soviet and American Jews, and emphasize the fight against fascism and the Soviet Union's role in protecting Jews. The events conveyed gratitude and determination, with the address by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee garnering attention and the gathering raising \$ 500,000 for a hospital in Leningrad. The primary objective was strengthening unity between Soviet and American Jews, fostering solidarity, and receiving media coverage in major American newspapers.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> “Undzere Delegatn Shloyme Mikhoels Un Izik Fefer in Amerike [Our Delegates Shloyme Mokhoels and Itsik Fefer in America],” *Eynikayt*, July 17, 1943, 4.

Usually, in *Eynikayt*, events from abroad were on the fourth page. Still, one of the articles was placed on the second page, indicating the information's higher importance or closer connection to Soviet Affairs. In the published version of the speech by Mikhoels and Fefer for the rally

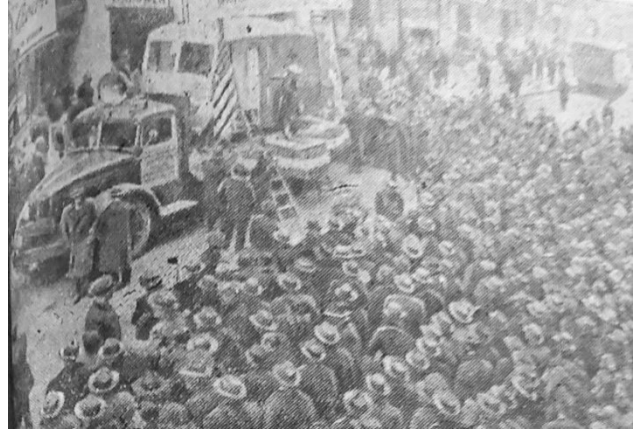


Figure 2 The Rally in New York, *Eynikayt*

in New York, the primary aim is to generate support and solidarity among Jews in America for the Soviet Union's fight against fascism. It emphasizes the importance of the alliance between the two groups and highlights the heroic struggle of the Soviet people. The speech underscores the need for quick action and readiness for decisive battles, portraying the Soviet people as determined and unwavering in their fight. Repeating phrases like "All for the Red Army" and "All for the swift and final destruction of fascism" creates a sense of unity and shared purpose. Additionally, the passage contrasts the strength and determination of the Soviet Union and its allies facing the ongoing struggle against fascism in Europe with a typical cliché about the heroic resistance demonstrated by Soviet citizens.<sup>75</sup>

### **Following Travel Across the United States, Mexico, and Canada**

After the event at the Polo Grounds, which undoubtedly marked the trip's highlight, the tour continued to other cities and countries across North America, including various locations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

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<sup>75</sup> "Tsu Amerikaner Jidn: Vendung Fun Jidishn Antifashistishn Komitet in Sovetfarband Tsum Bagegenish-miting Mit Undzere Shelikhim Haveirim Sh. Mikhoels Un i. Fefer Dem 8-Tn Jul in New-York [To Amerikan Jews: Message from the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the Soviet Union at a Meeting with Our Member Comrades Sh. Mikhoels and I. Fefer on July 8 in New York]," *Eynikayt*, July 17, 1943, 2.

On July 27, 1943, *Eynikayt* published a large observation article describing Mikhoels and Fefer's trip from New York to Boston, Pittsburg, and Detroit. Because of the article's size, several thematically divided paragraphs highlighted all the most important information. The article's tone corresponds to the Soviet style of writing such articles and overly extols the merits of the Soviet Union and its citizens.

In New York, leaders of the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Congress, Dr. Stephen Samuel Wise, Dr. Nahum Goldman, Rabbi Irwin Miller, and Perelzweig, the leader of the Jewish Congress of Great Britain, who was also then in America, organized a large conference for the JAFC delegates. In a manner of Soviet press reporting, the article extensively highlights the accolades showered upon the Red Army and its heroic exploits by speakers of the event. Also, there was mentioned about \$500,000 gathered to fund a hospital in Leningrad among circa 100 representatives of major trading companies.

There was a short description of what actually happened in Boston, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, so I would briefly list the events there. In Boston, Mikhoels and Fefer held a large meeting attended by thousands of people and were welcomed by municipal officials and notable figures from different fields. In Pittsburgh, the delegates were greeted by the mayor and given a tour of the municipal building. Prominent local community members and representatives from various countries and organizations attended a banquet. In Detroit, the delegates were greeted by a large delegation and received a warm welcome from the mayor. Jewish community organizations organized a breakfast, and press representatives conducted interviews. All of these meetings were accompanied by the speeches of the Mikhoels and Fefer, who shared messages similar to those mentioned above.

The article also outlines plans for creating the 'Black Book,' intended to be the first published documentation of the extermination on Soviet territory, spanning approximately 1,000 pages. Initially, the book was proposed to be published in Yiddish and English, with translations into other languages to follow. The editorial board was selected from among the JAFC members, and the American Jewish Congress was expected to participate in its preparation, either through financial support or by publishing the book. However, the specifics were not clarified in the article. Notably, the article contains the first appeal for readers I have seen to send the evidence of atrocities against Jews to the JAFC publishing house for inclusion in the book.

The contribution of the Jewish Autonomous Region was highlighted in the speeches during the events mentioned for the particular interest of the "Ambidjan"<sup>76</sup> that was involved in the organization of new substantial aid to the Red Army and its commitment to support orphanages in Stalingrad with aid like shoes, clothing, educational materials, and other essential items. The article emphasized that their aid, intended for 500 children, would benefit all children regardless of nationality, not just Jewish children.

Considering the significance of collaboration among artists for JAFC, the article provides a detailed account of establishing the new Jewish Anti-Fascist Theater in New York under the artistic direction of renowned director Jacob Rothbaum, who maintained close ties with the committee. It is noted that their inaugural production will be Dovid Bergelson's new play "How Long Will I Live," with plans also to stage "Game Bird" by Shmuel Halkin and Peretz Markish's play "Kyiv." The theater's request for actors to perform works by Soviet Jewish writers on anti-fascist themes was also highlighted.

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<sup>76</sup> American Committee for the Settlement of Birobidzhan.

Similarly, the article-report addresses how literary materials prepared by the JAFC are utilized in both American and international press, highlighting their publication beyond Jewish publishing houses. Special emphasis was made on the first two issues of the newly created New York newspaper *Eynikayt*, which shares its title with JAFC's own newspaper. As with other sections of the article, there is a strong emphasis on unity with like-minded individuals worldwide, including those in America, South America, and Argentina, among various publishing houses.

In conclusion, the article points out that all attempts by the writers from *The Forward* were unsuccessful. While the reasons for this assertion are not clearly explained, conveying this message to Eynikayt's readers was deemed important.<sup>77</sup> It is not clear whether they returned to New York after Boston. It seems that in August, in Eynikayt, there was nothing about Mikhoels and Fefer in America.

On July 30, 1943, *The New York Times* included a note in the "Books - Authors" section, announcing an upcoming discussion titled "Writers and the War." The event, organized by the New York Council of America-Soviet Friendship, was scheduled to take place on Wednesday, August 4, 1943, at the Hotel Pennsylvania. The discussion aimed to explore the role of writers in the war efforts of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Esteemed Jewish playwright and prose writer Lillian Hellman was set to chair the event.<sup>78</sup>

*Pravda* wrote that on August 2, 1943, there was an organized meeting for Mikhoels and Fefer with over 2,500 Cleveland citizens. Before the meeting, the mayor of the city, Frank J. Lausche,

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<sup>77</sup>"In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komitet: Grandieze Ufnem-Mitingen in Amerike Far Undzere Delegatn Mikhoels in Fefer (In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee: Grand Meeting in America for Our Delegates Mikhoels and Fefer)," *Eynikayt*, July 27, 1943, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> "Books - Authors," *The New York Times*, July 30, 1943, 13.

organized a separate reception of Soviet delegates at the municipal building and gave a speech, as *Pravda* stated, emphasizing the friendly relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Similarly, Edward J. Blythin, former mayor of Cleveland and current chairman of the local committee, made a report about the provided aid to the USSR, as well as about the assistance provided by the people of Cleveland to the Soviet Union. The attendees of the meeting donated \$ 10,000 for the construction of a hospital in Leningrad.<sup>79</sup>

On August 31, 1943, *Pravda* reported about the rally in honor of the JAFC representatives, Mikhoels and Fefer, that took place in Los Angeles on August 26, and the newspaper described it as tremendously successful. Over 7 000 people attended, including representatives from religious organizations, the film industry, business, and labor organizations, who signed the resolution about the will to do all possible to fight Nazism. The overall outcome of the meeting was more than 20,000 raised for the military hospital in Leningrad.<sup>80</sup> In summary, the rally in Los Angeles garnered significant support, including a signed resolution and impressive fundraising for humanitarian needs.

On September 8, 1943, *The New York Times* announced a meeting with Albert Einstein as honored chairman and major Raymond Massey as chairman on September 17, 1943, in the Royale Theatre to honor Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer. The National Reception Committee organized the discussion about the Soviet theatre.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> “Prebyvanie Mikhoelsa i Fefera v SSHA [Mikhoels and Fefer in the USA],” *Pravda*, August 4, 1943, 4.

<sup>80</sup> “Miting v Chast Mikhoels i Fefera v Los-Angelese [Meeting in Honor of Mikhoels and Fefer in Los Angeles],” *Pravda*, August 31, 1943, 4.

<sup>81</sup> “To Honor Soviet Actor-Director,” *The New York Times*, September 8, 1943, 26.

On September 9, 1943, there is a whole page dedicated to Mikhoels and Fefer's trip to the States with lots of photos—also, a picture where they placed flowers on the tombstone of Sholem-Aleichem in New York.<sup>82</sup> Later this picture became classical and was published numerous times in



Figure 4 Itzik Fefer, Albert Einstein, and Solomon Mikhoels

different publications. Sholem-Aleichem was considered a cultural hero for Yiddish speakers in the USSR, like for Russians Pushkin and for Ukrainians – Shevchenko. Despite Sholem-Aleichem's emigration, he was depicted as a huge figure for Soviet people and especially for



Figure 3 Itzik Fefer and Solomon Mikhoels  
Next to the Sholem Aleikhem Grave in the US

Soviet Jewry.

Even considering the not groundless argument pushed by *The Forward* that the delegation arrived as the Soviet representatives advocating for the Soviet Union, first of all, from the Eynikayt perspective, one can see some other messages. In Figure 3, one can see a picture published in Eynikayt that depicts both delegates next to the tombstone on the Sholem-Aleichem<sup>83</sup> grave. Since Sholem Aleikhem was a prominent Yiddish author born in

<sup>82</sup> "In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komitet: Undzere Sheluhim Mikhoels Un Fefer Farfestikn Di Kamfs- Eynikayt Fun Ale Shikhtn Yidn in Amerike [In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee: Our Representatives Mikhoels and Fefer Consolidate Fighting Unity of All Segments of Jews in America]," *Eynikayt*, September 9, 1943, 4.

<sup>83</sup> Sholem Aleichem – one of the founding fathers of modern Yiddish literature, YIVO Encyclopedia.

the Russian Empire and used to live for a long time in Kyiv, it seems like visiting his grave was out of the main purpose of the trip or this was a way they tried to show the common Jewish heroes for American Jewry and Soviet Jewry. The only thing that can be claimed clearly is that this event was very important for the JAFC because this picture was used many times later, similar to the picture with Einstein to illustrate other articles. Moreover, this picture is frequently used in various illustrations in the secondary literature about the JAFC and Soviet Jewry in the 1940s.

On September 12, 1943, Mikhoels and Fefer, accompanied by Jewish writer Sholem Asch, embarked on a series of rallies in Canada, as reported by *Pravda* on September 13. According to *Pravda*, their journey took them to Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto, where they were warmly received. In Montreal, a gathering was organized by the Canadian Jewish Congress, which attracted an impressive number of people — around 15,000 people. Among the present people were such prominent people as the prime minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who acknowledged its significance for Canada. Similarly, a little bit less but still an impressive amount of people — approximately 12,000 individuals gathered at the meeting organized for Mikhoels and Fefer in Toronto.<sup>84</sup>

On September 16, 1943, an article detailed Solomon Mikhoels and Itzik Fefer's concluding tour in America and Canada, ending with a significant rally in San Francisco attended by 10,000 people, where the city's mayor was present, and according to *Pravda* was emphasized the important role of the Soviet Union. As earlier mentioned, *Pravda* highlighted the importance of the main reason for delegates to come — to proclaim calls for a second (western) front against fascism and to gather financial, material, and even mental support for the Red Army. The event

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<sup>84</sup> “Prebyvanie Mikhoels i Fefera v Kanade [Mikhoels and Fefer in Canada],” *Pravda*, September 13, 1943, 4.



featured the renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin, who actively participated in anti-fascist efforts by performing at such events and playing for former prisoners in concentration camps following their liberation.<sup>85</sup> Like most *Pravda* articles, this one also emphasizes the positive depiction of the JAFC activities in local media. For instance, for *Pravda*, it was important to mention that previously critical of the USSR newspaper *Hearst*, positively evaluated the delegation's activities. Additionally, there was reported about the engagement of Mikhoels and Fefer with manufacturing and labor groups, which seems to emphasize the participation of the working class in such an event.

In Canada, their tour had stops in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto, with a notable gathering of 15,000 in Montreal, where Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King sent his regards. It was mentioned that on this trip, Soviet delegates were accompanied by the writer Sholem Ash. Finally, *Pravda* reported that upon returning to New York, a special banquet with key figures like Sidney Hillman and Ambassador General Evgeny Kiselev celebrated the tour's success and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee's efforts, which included broadcasts targeting Jewish communities in the U.S. and England. Plans were mentioned for an upcoming visit to Great Britain.<sup>86</sup>

On September 17, 1943, *The Forward* published an article that again was critical of the Jewish delegation from the USSR. They similarly claimed Mikhoels and Fefer as being “Jews” but not “really Jewish.” Itsik Fefer and Solomon Mikhoels, delegates from Moscow, arrived in Montreal, claiming to represent a Jewish delegation from the Soviet Union. However, doubts arise about

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<sup>85</sup> Based of Britanica article about the Yehudi Menuhin.

<sup>86</sup> “In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komitet: Mikhoels Un Fefer Farendikn Zeier Turne Iber Amerike Un Kanade [In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee: Mikhoels and Fefer Finishing Their Trip Aorund America and Canada],” *Eynikayt*, September 16, 1943, 4.

their legitimacy since Jewish organizations are prohibited in the Soviet Union, and the government has denied entry to organizations like the Joint Distribution Committee. Previous "Jewish" delegations witnessed in the Soviet Union were involved in arrests and mistreatment. The author questions the motives of the Soviet delegates, seeing them as communist propagandists rather than genuine representatives of the Jewish community. They criticize the delegates' attempt to change the anti-fascist sentiment in America and Canada, where the fight against fascism is already well understood. The author believes that local communists' support for the Soviet Union's efforts is unnecessary since America, Canada, and England already provide significant aid to the Red Army. They highlight the suppression of dissent in the Soviet Union, where only loyal Stalinists are allowed to live, while non-communists are persecuted. The author expresses skepticism about Soviet Russia's intentions and emphasizes the importance of relying on democratic countries like America, Canada, and England. They expressed support for President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, seeing them as the only hope for their cause.

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On September 18, 1943, *The New York Times* reported that on September 17, there was an organized meeting in the Royale Theatre. The newspaper cited a playwright, Maxwell Anderson, about the importance of fostering cultural relationships between Russia and the United States to promote closer unity. The note claimed interesting details, such as that Mikhoels spoke in Russian, but Fefer spoke in Yiddish. Major Raymond Massey announced that the Soviet delegation would depart home. In a separate event on September 16, Town Hall hosted an "American children's" festival to pay tribute to the children of Stalingrad, which was arranged by the Ambijan Committee for Emergency Aid to the Soviet Union. The festival commemorated the

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<sup>87</sup> "Fun Folk Tsum Folk [from Nation to Nation]," *The Forward*, September 17, 1943, 5.

first shipment of supplies to Silver Ponds, a children's home and sanitarium in Stalingrad housing orphaned boys and girls affected by the Battle of Stalingrad. As a master of ceremonies was child actor star Skippy Homeier, Soviet Consul General in New York Ambassador General Evgeny Kiselev was a speaker at the event.<sup>88</sup>

On September 20, 1943, *The New York Times* reported about dinner at the Hotel Commodore in honor of Mikhoels and Fefer, who were concluding their three-month tour of the United States and going to return to the Soviet Union in the nearest time. The event was attended by 1,500 people, and the resolution was signed by the Jewish Committee for Russian War Relief James N. Rosenberg and president of Women's Zionist Organisation Hadassah Mrs. David De Sola Pool. This resolution claimed anti-Semitism as a crime against the state and expressed the will to deepen relationships between the US and the USSR. President of the World Jewish Congress, Dr. Nahum Goldmann, president of the Zionist Organization of America, Rabbi Israel Goldstein, and president of the International Fur and Leather Workers Union paid tribute to the accomplishments of the Red Army and unity among nations. Greetings from notable individuals such as Mayor La Guardia, Josef E. Davies, former Ambassador to Russia, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, Paul Baerwald, honorary chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Dr. Albert Einstein, and others were also read at the event.<sup>89</sup>

On September 22, 1943, *Pravda* provided details about two significant gatherings held in the United States. Another meeting took place in New York, bringing together various prominent figures. Similarly, in San Francisco, esteemed leaders from the American Federation of Labor, Congress of Industrial Workers, and Independent Railway Workers Organizations organized and

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<sup>88</sup> "Soviet Actor Hailed at Reception Here," *The New York Times*, September 18, 1943, 20.

<sup>89</sup> "Closer Ties Urged with Soviet Union," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1943, 4.

attended a notable assembly. *Pravda* cited one of the distinguished speakers, Wilson, the head of the local Congress of Industrial Workers, who called for the support for the Soviet Union in its valiant fight against the Nazis.<sup>90</sup>

On September 23, 1943, *Eynikayt* reported about the last week in the United States. The newspaper evaluated the tour organized by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee as successful and again listed all major cities visited in America, Mexico, and Canada, culminating in a grand rally in Milwaukee, a prominent German center in America. The meeting marked the beginning of an intense campaign to support the Red Army. The author of the article noted that in New York, a committee was established to aid the Red Army after a large rally and a conference of Ukrainian entrepreneurs were organized in the city. Additionally, it was highlighted that Soviet literature, theater, and anti-fascism efforts by the USSR were topics of common ground between American-based writers and the delegates. Again, it was emphasized that America needed the materials from the Soviet Union, which refers to the idea of the “Black Book,” and there was one more time mentioned the telegrams from Albert Einstein and Sholem Asch; it remains unclear whether these telegrams were new or those received earlier.<sup>91</sup>

On September 30, 1943, *Eynikayt* summarized the round-trip outcomes and achievements during all three months. The Jewish Antifascist Committee, particularly Itsik Fefer and Solomon Mihoels, participated in a gathering in New York. This article mentioned some events on Ukraine's liberation behalf that were not mentioned before. Similarly, it was the first time mentioned that a commission of American publishers and writers was formed to collect books

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<sup>90</sup> “Prebyvanie Mikhoelsa i Fefera v SSHA [Mikhoels and Fefer in the USA],” *Pravda*, September 22, 1943, 4.

<sup>91</sup> “In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komitet: Gezeugens-Vokh Far Mikhoels Un Fefer In Amerike [In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee: The Last Week for Mikhoels and Fefer in America],” *Eynikayt*, September 23, 1943, 4.

for rebuilding libraries destroyed by the Nazis, as well as prominent writers such as Thomas Mann and Langston Hughes were mentioned as participants of some common meeting with the topic about the work of Soviet writers during the war. Traditionally for *Eynikayt*, the newspaper repeated clichés about unity between nations, especially representatives of the art sphere of the nations against the danger of war, the heroic Red Army, and Stalin, as well as the wide coverage of the round trip by the American press. Finally, the farewell banquet was mentioned, listing notable individuals such as former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Edward Davies, Albert Einstein, and Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, and was one more time written about the plans of joint collaboration and the publication of the "Black Book" documenting Nazi atrocities. The article summarized the outcome of the tour as a significant step towards uniting American leaders in the fight against fascism.<sup>92</sup>

On October 7, 1943, *Eynikayt* published the text of the resolution signed in the US. The Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scholars in America expressed deep gratitude to the Jewish Antifascist Committee in the Soviet Union for sending delegates, including Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer, to their farewell banquet. The resolution claimed that the delegates' visit enriched their knowledge of the Soviet Union's achievements and the heroism of the Red Army. It inspired a renewed sense of friendship and support for the Red Army and Stalin among American Jews. The banquet solidified unity and called for increased mobilization in the fight against fascism and the addressing of the Jewish question after the war. The Committee pledged to actively support the "Jewish Council for Aid to Russia in the War" and advocated for friendship between America, England, and the Soviet Union to ensure lasting peace. The resolution

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<sup>92</sup> "In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komitet: Viazoi Amerike Zegnt Zikh Mit Undzere Delegatn Mikhoels Un Fefer [In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee: What America Did for Our Delegates Milhoels and Fefer]," *Eynikayt*, September 30, 1943, 4.

conveyed a message of solidarity and appreciation for the bravery of the Red Army and the unity of Jews worldwide.<sup>93</sup>

Not a single newspaper reported on the negotiations between delegates and the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York despite holding meetings in total. The primary focus of these talks was to discuss the prospective aid that the JDC planned to extend to the Jewish community in the USSR, particularly those who had been evacuated to the Asian regions. First, Mikhoels conveyed his discontent with the Joint Distribution Committee's approach of specifically assisting the Red Army. Additionally, he asserted that aid should be disseminated equitably among all inhabitants of these areas rather than being exclusively directed towards the Jewish community. The JDC concurred with this approach, demonstrating its commitment to universal assistance. The documents also reveal an intriguing proposal from the JDC - they considered appointing Mikhoels as their official representative within the USSR. Yet, it remains unclear whether this suggestion was ever actualized, as the records provide no confirmation of their appointments.<sup>94</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the first newspaper that reported about the roundtrip was *Eynikayt* – the newspaper of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The first mention in *Pravda* was only after the meeting on July 8, 1943, and covered events in very few details. Interestingly, the arrival of Jewish delegates from the USSR attracted the attention of the American Jewish newspaper – *the Forward*. It was a big article – a little bit less than the whole page- elaborating on why Mikhoels and Fefer came, who they are, and their purpose. Generally, *The Forward* negatively treated the

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<sup>93</sup> “In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komite [In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee],” *Eynikayt*, October 7, 1943, 4.

<sup>94</sup> Mitsel, M. "American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Programs in the USSR, 1941-1948: A Complicated Partnership." In *The JDC at 100: A Century of Humanitarianism*, edited by A. Patt, A. Grossmann, LG. Levi, and MS. Mandel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2019), 106-107.

delegates. On the one hand, it seems not that good for the JAFC delegates, but if one would look from the perspective that *The Forward* from the beginning wished to see Soviet Jewish representatives first of all as Jews and then as secular communists, it is not that much negative attitude as one can see from the first impression.

When comparing the styles of Soviet and American newspapers during that time, notable differences in their approach became apparent. *The New York Times* and *The Forward* tended to publish articles with an analytical tone, providing various commentaries. On the other hand, *Pravda* and *Eynikayt* leaned towards a more straightforward reporting style. *The Forward*, in particular, stood out for its emotional and passionate publications. This can be attributed to its independence from government control, which allowed it to express opinions more freely than was possible for *Eynikayt*. As Gennady Estraiikh pointed out, JAFC's reports primarily focused on highlighting achievements<sup>95</sup>, and the articles in *Eynikayt* followed a similar pattern. If there were a meeting, it would be portrayed as highly successful, and if *The Forward* criticized delegates, notable figures among JAFC fellows would respond on behalf of the delegates. Thus, Soviet newspapers like *Pravda* and *Eynikayt* favored a report-style approach, while American newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Forward* leaned towards analysis and opinion pieces. *The Forward*, being independent, exhibited a more emotional tone in its publications, while *Eynikayt* focused on highlighting achievements and maintaining a consistent style.

While working with articles from different sources, it was discovered that there was some kind of dialogue between Soviet newspapers and *The Forward* – they criticized each other. *The Forward* main critical point was concentrated around the Jewishness of the delegates, and it was

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<sup>95</sup> Gennady Estraiikh, "The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee," *East European Jewish Affairs* 48, no. 2 (2018), 143.

the reason for “being unfair” while doing the tour as Jews but not being “real Jews.” They also criticized those people and organizations that cooperated with the delegation. Contrary Soviet newspapers criticized *The Forward* for being a Trotskyist traitor and not being worried enough about the life of Jews in the occupied territories by Nazis. Moreover, both *Pravda* and *Eynikayt*’s articles predominantly did not express their own negative attitude toward *The Forward*. Instead, they put this criticism into “the mouth” of the people present at different events to show that the locals, especially, do not support the rhetoric of *The Forward*.

Another important discovery is connected to Zionism. With newspapers, it is hard to know what the delegates themselves felt about Zionism, but one can definitely see that delegates had strong contacts with Zionist organizations during the trip. Moreover, at the JAFC Archives, there were discovered the draft of the greeting letter to Chaim Weitzman<sup>96</sup> – one of the most prominent Zionists then. Therefore, it seems like Mikhoels and Fefer met different people despite the political views they represented.

Talking about the grand event on July 8, it is important to write about the motifs of those who joined the event and were named by various newspapers. It seems like some speakers came to the event not really to support Soviet Jews in their struggle but because they had their own goals. Even if one believes that that group honestly wanted to help Soviet Jewry, it is important to remember that that group also had another motif. For example, between 1942 and 1944, William Feinberg was an active protester against music producers in New York, and Paul Robeson was one of the activists for equal rights for all Americans. Therefore, one can understand that some

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<sup>96</sup> USHMM, RG-22.028M [GARF f. R-8114, op. 1, d. 23, l. 89].



of the speakers might have used the space with a huge audience to talk not only about struggling Jews but also about the problems that were more important to them personally.

Generally, the trip was three months long and attracted a lot of attention from different audiences. The most information is about the events held in New York, less in Canada, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The information about visiting Mexico exists only in memoirs. For some reason, this part of the trip was not as important as others. The press hasn't covered some of the meetings and rallies, but one can find the information about them in Solomon Mikhoels's memoirs.

It is also an appropriate claim by Gennady Estraiikh that the JAFC members, throughout the existence of the committee, shifted from prominent Jewish individuals mobilized for propagandist needs to solidify Jews and political Jewish institutions.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Gennady Estraiikh, "The Life, Death, and Afterlife of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee," *East European Jewish Affairs* 48, no. 2 (2018), 142.

## Skylines, Stories, and Jewish Insights: A Comparative Journey Through Soviet

### Perspectives on America

In this part, I explore a comparative analysis of Ilf and Petrov's "Odnootazhnaya Amerika" (One-Storied America)<sup>98</sup> and Solomon Mikhoels' essays "Odnootazhna li Amerika" (Is America One-Storied) and "Iskusstvo v Amerike" (Art in America) that was published together in the collection "*Stati, besedy, rechi: stati i vospominaniya o Mikhoelse*" (Articles, talks, speeches)<sup>99</sup>. Initially, I anticipated discovering numerous references to Jewish themes and authorial conclusions related to Jews. However, after a thorough examination of the sources, I found that the Jewish subject matter is only briefly touched upon and scarcely represents the lives of Jews. Consequently, this part investigates Jewish themes and delves into text analysis methods and general comparisons of three intriguing episodes: the journey from Moscow to New York, the contrasting descriptions of skyscrapers, and the Soviet perspective on American art. This section comprises three parts, each employing categories discussed throughout the course: social realism, individualism, and collectivism.

### Journey: Soviet Union-United States

In June 1943, two prominent Jewish Intellectuals from the USSR, Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer, were on board the plane that took them to the United States of America. It was not easy to get from Moscow to New York; according to Mikhoels, it took 40 days. Regarding transportation, the route between the countries was primarily done by planes.

<sup>98</sup> Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, *One-Storied America* (Odnootazhnaya Amerika; Moscow: Yurait, 2022).

<sup>99</sup> Mikhoels, Solomon. *Stati, besedy, rechi: stati i vospominaniya o Mikhoelse*, edited by Konstantin Rudnitskiĭ, 3rd edition (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1981).

Similarly, around ten years before Mikhoels and Fefer arrived in the US, there was another trip done by Ilf and Petrov – authors of the “One-Store America.” This book opened the United States to Soviet leaders and became one of the most popular. Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer seem to have imagined the US as described in the book. It is clear because Solomon Mikhoels, right after their return home, wrote an essay: “Is America One-Store?”<sup>100</sup>, where he challenged Ilf and Petrov’s observations and proposed his own view about the States.

Comparing Figures 5 and 6 reveals notable differences in the routes taken to reach the United States from the USSR in 1935 and 1943. According to the first chapter of “*Odnostorinnaya Amerika*,” the journey in 1935 involved traveling through Europe, specifically via France, while the precise route from the USSR to Paris remains unknown. It is only possible to state that they traveled through Prague and Vienna since Ilf mentioned these locations in the letter to his wife.<sup>101</sup> According to the train connections, there was a direct train from Vienna to Paris, so I think that they traveled first to Prague and then to Vienna. They proceeded to the city of Le Havre in northern France from Paris by train. Subsequently, they embarked on the multi-story sea liner “Normandy” to cross the Atlantic.

Ilf and Petrov's pre-war journey was a more pleasant and efficient experience. They sailed aboard the luxurious ship “Normandie,” which boasted top-notch amenities akin to a grand hotel. The voyage was relatively short, lasting only five days, and offered a scenic route through the Gulf Stream. Passengers could marvel at the stunning ocean views and witness the striking New York skyline emerging from the water as they approached their destination. This dramatic transition

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<sup>100</sup> Mikhoels, *Stat'yi, Besedy, Rechi [Articles, Conversations, Talks]*, 229-237.

<sup>101</sup> Ilf and Petrov, *Sobranie Sochineniy V 5 Tomakh*. Tom 4, ed. A.G. Dement'ev, V.P. Kataev, and K.M. Simonov, with footnotes by B.E. Galanov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoy Literatury (Goslitizdat), 1961), 532

from the vast emptiness of the ocean to the bustling metropolis created a memorable experience for travelers. Upon arrival, Ilf and Petrov disembarked without significant delays or obstacles, reflecting the inter-war era's relatively peaceful and efficient travel conditions.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast, Mikhoels and Fefer, on their voyage, spent approximately three weeks in Tehran, over a week in Cairo, several days in Khartoum, and some time in Accra before finally arriving in New York. Their primary mode of transportation throughout this journey was American planes, which necessitated multiple stops and delays,<sup>103</sup> although the available primary sources do not provide significant details regarding this aspect. The travelers also experienced diverse weather conditions, from the heat of the desert in Khartoum to the humid atmosphere of the Gold Coast in Accra. These factors combined to create a tense and uncomfortable journey for Mikhoels and Fefer, significantly affecting their mood and overall travel experience.

The routes from the USSR to the United States underwent significant changes between the two time periods due to the impact of World War II. In the earlier account, the journey involved a train and sea voyage through Europe, while in 1943, a more direct route through Europe became unfeasible due to the war. Instead, a more extensive and diverse journey was undertaken, with air travel emerging as the primary mode of transportation. This shift highlights the challenges and constraints imposed by the wartime circumstances, necessitating alternative routes to get to the United States from the USSR. Despite the difficulties imposed by the conflict, there was a strong determination to overcome these obstacles, both in terms of transportation and other challenges, such as obtaining vaccinations, in order to reach the United States.

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<sup>102</sup> Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, *One-Store America* (Odnostazhnaya Amerika; Moscow: Yurait, 2022), 11-16.

<sup>103</sup> Solomon Mikhoels, *Stat'yi, Besedy, Rechi [Articles, Conversations, Talks]*, ed. Stolnaia V.N. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1965), 229.

The return journey was also different. If Ilf and Petrov returned from their trip to America the same way they came, that is, by water on a liner. All that is known from the newspaper articles analyzed about the return journey of Mikhoels and Fefer is that they headed to England. That is, it is not known exactly what the path back to 1943 was. A little more is known about Ilf and Petrov's return home: they reached Cherbourg-en-Cotentin in France on the ocean liner RMS Majestic, which is significantly smaller than the Normandie,<sup>104</sup> on which they arrived. Further it is indicated only that they reached Paris, and then to the USSR, without details.

### **Journey Across the United States**

In this part, I delve into the geographical movements during Ilf and Petrov's and Mikhoels and Fefer's travels in America. It is evident that Ilf and Petrov's expedition across America spanned slightly over three months, commencing on October 7, 1935<sup>105</sup>, and concluding on January 22, 1936<sup>106</sup>. Ilf and Petrov's journey through America introduced them to a wide range of climates and landscapes, given that the travel time fell on one of the coldest periods of the year.

On June 25, 1943, *Eynikayt* published an article officially confirming the arrival of Mikhoels and Fefer in America on their scheduled date of June 16, 1943<sup>107</sup>. On October 7, *Eynikayt* published that Mikhoels and Fefer were preparing to depart from America to continue their journey, specifically to England<sup>108</sup>. From the timeline, it can be inferred that the delegates spent approximately four months in the United States, primarily during the warm summer. These

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<sup>104</sup> Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, *One-Storyed America* (Odnostorzhnaya Amerika; Moscow: Yurait, 2022), 357.

<sup>105</sup> Ilf and Petrov, *Sobranie Sochineniy V 5 Tomakh*. Tom 4, ed. A.G. Dement'ev, V.P. Kataev, and K.M. Simonov, with footnotes by B.E. Galanov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoy Literatury (Goslitizdat), 1961), 533

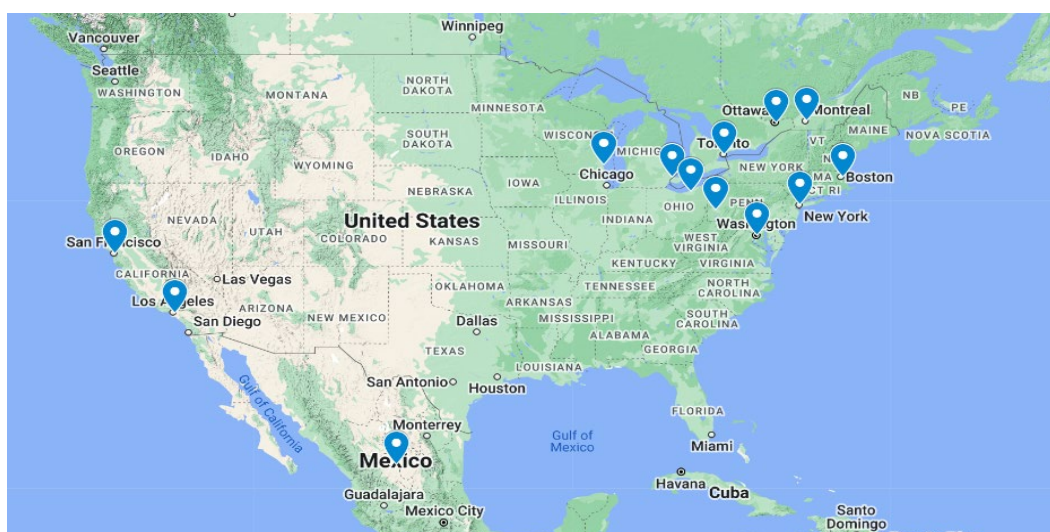
<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 566.

<sup>107</sup> "shloye mikhoels un itsik fefer in amerike [Shloye Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer In America]," *Eynikait*, June 26, 1943, 8.

<sup>108</sup> "In Yidishn Antifashistishn Komite [In Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee]," *Eynikayt*, October 7, 1943, 4.

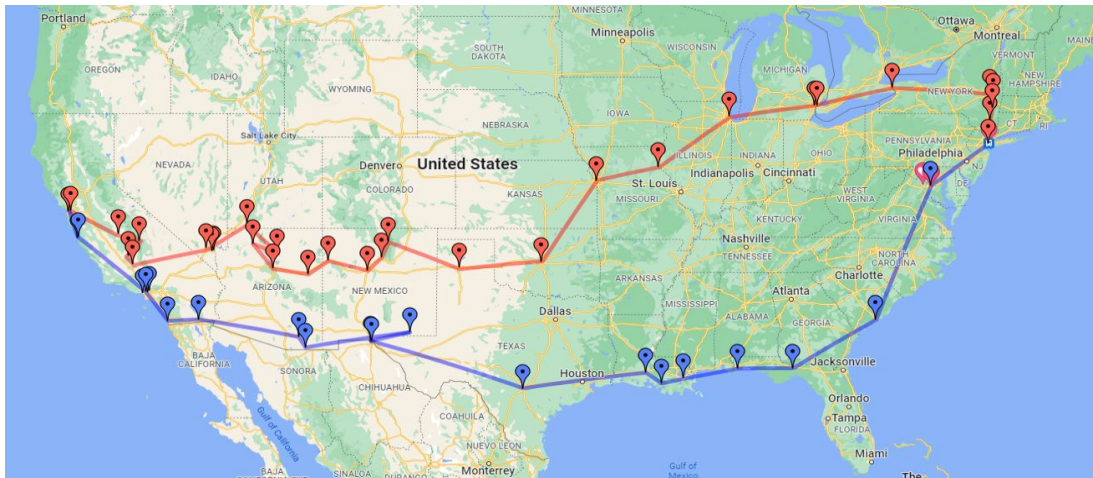
weather conditions might have influenced their perception and experience of the country, as they were exposed to its culture, climate, and various aspects during this time.

There are notable disparities in travel across the United States, as evidenced by the distinct data sources used for mapping Figures 7 and 8. Figure 7 draws upon meticulously collected information from the book "Odnoetazhnaya Amerika," allowing for a clear depiction of the sequence of visited locations. The red line corresponds to the first half of the journey, while the blue line represents the second half.



*Figure 5 Places Visited by Solomon Mikhoels and Itsik Fefer in the United States*

Upon comparing both maps, it becomes evident that these trips shared some common locations while also having some differences. However, it is clear that Mikhoels and Fefer did not visit cities in the central states of the United States. This can be attributed to several reasons.



*Figure 6 Round Trip According to the Ilf and Petrov's Book*

First of all, the purposes of the visits were very different. On the one hand, the main goal of Ilf and Petrov was to explore America and write a satirical novel; on the other hand, Mikhoels and Fefer pursued the political goals set by the Soviet government. In addition, the modes of transportation were different. Ilf and Petrov describe in detail how they bought and traveled by car. On the contrary, in the sources and historiography with which I worked, there are short references about Mikhoels and Fefer's short walks in New York; there is no indication of how they traveled longer distances across America. Considering the geography of the meetings Mikhoels and Fefer visited, it can be assumed that only planes are suitable for such travels. Otherwise, visiting so many different places in such a short time seems impossible.

Therefore, the journeys of Mikhoels and Fefer and Ilf and Petrov demonstrate the stark differences in travel experiences during wartime and peacetime. While delays, challenges, and discomfort marked Mikhoels and Fefer's trip due to the ongoing war, Ilf and Petrov's journey was smoother, more luxurious, and visually impressive, reflecting the more favorable conditions of the pre-war period.

## Skyscrapers: Amazing and Ugly

It was intriguing to juxtapose the specific details in both texts, particularly the varying perceptions of skyscrapers. In light of the Soviet socialist ideology, these contrasting observations can be analyzed through the authors' relationships to capitalist society and the specific historical context. Soviet socialist ideology promoted the idea of a classless society with the ultimate goal of achieving communism. This worldview often criticized capitalist societies, like the United States, for their perceived focus on individualism, inequality, and the exploitation of the working class.



В солнечном дыму смутно блестели стальные грани стадухэтажного «Эмпайр-стейт-билдинг». Душа холодила при виде благородного, чистого здания, сверкающего, как брус искусственного льда.

*Image 7 The steel edges of the 100-story Empire State Building gleamed dimly in the sunny smoke.*

*The soul went cold at the sight of a noble, clean building, sparkling like a beam of artificial ice. Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, One-Story America (Odnostorinnaya Amerika; Moscow: Yurait, 2022). 361.*

Mikhoels' pessimistic view of New York skyscrapers can be understood as a reflection of this critical perspective toward capitalism. By likening the skyscrapers to tombstones, Mikhoels implies that these structures are symbols of death and decay rather than progress and prosperity.

<sup>109</sup> The detached tone and impartial diction further emphasize the author's disconnection from the subject and the capitalist values it represents.

On the other hand, Ilf and Petrov's positive portrayal of skyscrapers suggests a more nuanced understanding of capitalist society. While the authors acknowledge the skyscrapers as symbols

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<sup>109</sup> Mikhoels, 232.



of achievement and the ingenuity of the builders, their admiration could also be seen as an appreciation for the material progress and technological advancements that were taking place in the capitalist world.<sup>110</sup> Their passage's expressive language and vivid imagery can be interpreted as a way to humanize and appreciate these monumental structures' creative and labor-intensive aspects.

Ultimately, the contrasting perspectives on New York skyscrapers in these two passages highlight the complexities of the relationship between Soviet socialist ideology and capitalist society. While Mikhoels' critique can be read as a more orthodox rejection of capitalist symbols, Ilf and Petrov's admiration might reflect a more pragmatic, nuanced view that acknowledges the accomplishments of the capitalist world without necessarily endorsing its underlying values.

### **Soviet Perspective on American Art and Culture**

In both works, art plays a significant role. To compare perspectives on art, I examined another essay by Solomon Mikhoels titled “Iskusstvo v Amerike” (Art in America)<sup>111</sup> from the same collection. Written in 1944, this piece recounts Mikhoels' experiences with American art during his 1943 visit with Itsik Fefer. In contrast, Ilf and Petrov's book does not consistently focus on art throughout its entirety; instead, the subject is primarily discussed in two vividly titled chapters: Chapter 36, “Bog khal'tury” (The God of Mediocrity),<sup>112</sup> and Chapter 37, “Gollivudskie krepostnye” (Hollywood Serfs).<sup>113</sup> The authors' perception of American art can be gleaned from these chapters' titles.

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<sup>110</sup> Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, *One-Store America* (Odnostazhnaya Amerika; Moscow: Yurait, 2022), 15.

<sup>111</sup> Mikhoels, Solomon. *Stati, besedy, rechi: stati i vospominaniya o Mikhoelse*, edited by Konstantin Rudnitskii, 3rd edition (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1981), 237-253.

<sup>112</sup> Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov., 274-281.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 282-285.

Considering the Soviet socialist ideology, their observations demonstrate a critique of American art and culture through the lens of the values upheld by the USSR. Soviet ideology stressed the importance of art as a means to educate, inspire, and unite the people, focusing on promoting socialist values and working-class themes. In contrast, the authors perceive American art as driven primarily by commercialism, materialism, and superficiality, undermining its potential to convey deeper meaning and foster true artistic expression.

Ilf and Petrov's critique of Hollywood in "The God of Mediocrity" and "Hollywood Serfs" reflects the Soviet disdain for the American film industry, often seen as a symbol of capitalist excess and shallow entertainment. Their portrayal of the lack of passion and inspiration among actors and technicians suggests that pursuing profit has stripped the industry of its artistic integrity. This critique aligns with the Soviet ideal of art as a tool for promoting social change and elevating the human spirit rather than simply generating revenue.

Mikhoels' essay "Art in America" highlights the scarcity of theater institutions outside of New York City's Broadway, which he attributes to the American prioritization of commercial success over artistic and cultural enrichment. His observations imply that the United States' focus on material wealth has led to a neglect of the arts and their potential to foster a deeper sense of community and shared values.

To summarize the above, both works criticized American art for being superficial and too commercialized. Both Mikhoels, Ilf, and Petrov provide a Soviet alternative to art that serves socialism, and some imagined common good. It is not clear how sincere all the authors are in their comparisons, but what is clear is that these works fully corresponded to Soviet ideology and could pass censorship.

## Jewishness on the Pages

The description of the rabbi in this passage from Ilf and Petrov's "One-Store America" reflects the socialist perspective of the Soviet writers. The fact that the shipping company provides Catholic and Protestant priests to cater to the spiritual needs of some passengers while ignoring the needs of Muslims, fire-worshippers, and Soviet engineers demonstrates a class divide based on religious affiliation.

The depiction of the rabbi highlights the lower status and lack of consideration given to Jewish passengers. The fact that the rabbi has to perform his duties in a children's room, using a tallit and a special drape to cover up images of rabbits and kittens, further emphasizes the disregard for the spiritual needs of Jewish passengers.

A strange man in a black naval uniform with a silver anchor and a shield of David on his sleeve, in a beret and with a sad beard, was shouting something in Hebrew. Later, it turned out that this was a ship's rabbi [...] As for the rabbi with the sad beard, he was not assigned a separate room, and he performed his services in the children's room. For this purpose, the company gives him a tale and a special drapery, with which he closes the vain images of bunnies and cats for a while.<sup>114</sup>

The writers may have used this depiction to criticize the capitalist system, which values profit over the well-being of passengers of all faiths. Overall, the authors seem to highlight the socialist belief in the importance of equality and the rejection of discrimination based on religion or social status.

The authors touch upon the topic of Jews and their presence in various locations across the United States. The references to Jewish people, their origin, occupations, and appearance are somewhat sporadic and do not follow a consistent pattern. In some instances, the authors refer to Jewish individuals in the context of their cultural background. At the same time, in other cases,

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 12.

references to Jews are made concerning their occupation or the type of food they may be associated with.

Throughout the chapters, the authors appear to use these descriptions to provide context or enrich the cultural tapestry of the various settings. The mentions of Jews alongside other ethnic groups (e.g., Italians, Chinese, Mexicans, Slavs, and Blacks<sup>115</sup>) might indicate that the author is attempting to showcase the diversity of the United States. The authors use the presence and experiences of Jewish individuals as one of the many threads in the narrative to depict a diverse and multifaceted picture of American society.

Apart from the rabbi, whom Ilf and Petrov wrote about in the first chapter, describing their journey to America, three minor characters of Jewish origin are indicated:

- A Jew born in Jerusalem – was mentioned as one of the barbers in a barbershop on Michigan Avenue in Dearborn.
- The owner of a restaurant in Kansas - described as a Bessarabian Jew from the city of Bender. He is also mentioned as being a Freemason and having a Masonic card.
- Don Fernando - a Swiss Jew who owns an antique restaurant in Taos. He is described as a man with a sad face of a Vilnius Jew. He is also mentioned as willing to call himself a grandee if it would be commercially beneficial.

It appears that the authors may have conversed with the individuals mentioned and asked about their place of origin, as indicated in the text. Two of the individuals mentioned are identified as

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<sup>115</sup> This is direct citation, not my own naming style.

owners, suggesting that the Jewish individuals encountered were largely representatives of the middle class.

Ilf and Petrov did not frequently mention Jews in their book. There are only several Jewish characters mentioned, like two owners of a small business who identified themselves as Jews Ilf and Petrov occasionally met. Nevertheless, the book says very little about Jews, and therefore, it is impossible to conclude about the image of the Jew they really returned home with.

In Mikhoels' text, many individuals mentioned are prominent figures in their respective fields. For example, Albert Einstein is one of the most well-known and influential scientists in history. Sholom Ash is considered one of the greatest writers in Yiddish literature, while Lion Feuchtwanger was a celebrated German-Jewish novelist. Stephen Wise was a prominent Jewish leader and social activist, and Julian Tuwim was a famous poet and writer in Poland. Overall, these individuals were highly accomplished and influential in their fields, and their presence at the meeting in New York underscores the importance of the gathering and the significance of the issues being discussed.

Mikhoels indirectly mentions the Jewish girl in his essay and does not focus much on her; she is just one of those very interested in learning about life in the USSR. What's really interesting about this girl is that she is neither prominent nor famous if compared to other people Jews Mikhoels met and wrote about. In other words, one Jewish woman is not known to the whole world, and Mikhoels wrote about her. I don't think she was an important character for Mikhoels, but rather, she was an occasional character in his notes.

The depictions of Jews in Ilf and Petrov's *One-Storey America* and Mikhoels' text are quite different. In the works of Ilf and Petrov, references to Jews are relatively common, mostly as

minor characters whose Jewish origins are not important to the plot. Thus, they are not trying to highlight Jews but rather to show the life of Jews in America along with other nationalities. The rabbi on the Normandy liner was especially interesting, but this was only from the point of view of showing the commercialization of religion in the West.

Almost all of the Jews mentioned by Mikhoels are outstanding figures in their fields. This fully reflects his experience in America because Mikhoels and Fefer came to meet famous people and not to immerse themselves in the diverse American environment. Ilf and Petrov depict Jews as part of the mosaic, while Mikhoels primarily shows Jews who have succeeded in various art fields.

### **Distant Reading of both Texts**

This approach assisted me in focusing and scrutinizing the extensive text of *One-Storeyed America*. As anticipated, descriptions of all things American and the Americans themselves are most prevalent, given that the book aimed to present the "real" America to Soviet readers. Karen L. Ryan<sup>116</sup> has written an in-depth analysis of how the portrayal of the real America unfolded, and I employ her article to enhance my understanding of the texts further.

I want to highlight that, for comparison purposes, I also employed word frequency analysis using Python. It involves counting the occurrences of each word in a given text or dataset to identify patterns, trends, or relationships between words. By analyzing these patterns, researchers can gain insights into the text's subject matter, tone, and style. This technique has demonstrated its effectiveness in various textual studies and is frequently adopted by researchers for distant

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<sup>116</sup> Karen L. Ryan, "Imagining America: Ilf and Petrov's *Odnootazhnaia Amerika* and Ideological Alterity," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 44, no. 3-4 (2002): 263-277.

reading.<sup>117</sup> The method's results proved its value, as it allowed me to identify crucial patterns in word usage within the texts, facilitating the illustration of a significant distinction between the texts written in 1937 and 1944.

*Figure 8 The Grouping of the Most Frequent Words in All Text*

<b>Mikhoels' text</b>	<b>Ilf and Petrov's text</b>
People (" <b>chelovek</b> ", " <b>amerikanets</b> ", "narod", "sovetskiy")	People and titles: (" <b>chelovek</b> ", "mister", "ser", " <b>amerikanets</b> ")
Actions and abilities: (" <b>videt`</b> ", "igrat")	Actions and abilities: ("môč'", "skazat'", "govorit'", "znat'", "delat'", "idti'", "uvidet'", " <b>videt`</b> ", "hotet'", "stoyat'", "stat'")
Places and things: (" <b>amerika</b> ", " <b>amerikanskiy</b> ", "nyuyork", " <b>gorod</b> ", "moskva")	Places and things: (" <b>amerikanskiy</b> ", " <b>amerika</b> ", " <b>gorod</b> ", "doroga", "avtomobil'", "ulitsa")
Adjectives: (" <b>bol'shoy</b> ", " <b>malen'kiy</b> ", " <b>novyy</b> ", " <b>kazhdyy</b> ", "nekotoryy", "dolzhnyy")	Adjectives: (" <b>bol'shoy</b> ", "bol'shiy", " <b>malen'kiy</b> ", "neskol'ko", " <b>kazhdyy</b> ", "novyy", "molodoy", "khoroshiy", "ochen'")
Unspecified: (" <b>zhizn`</b> ", " <b>vremya</b> ", "dollar", "vopros", "tema", "konets", "yazyk")	Unspecified: (" <b>zhizn`</b> ", " <b>vremya</b> ", "ruka", "delo", "god")
Art and culture ("iskusstvo", "teatr", "film", "aktyor", "khudozhnik")	
War ("voyna", "armiya")	

Before delving into the analysis, it is important to acknowledge that the texts under comparison vary in length, inherently influencing the absolute quantitative measures of word frequency. Consequently, these numerical outcomes and their juxtapositions should be approached with prudence and not regarded as precise. Nevertheless, certain assumptions will be made during the analysis. Additionally, it should be noted that the most commonly used words, excluding auxiliary ones, have been tentatively categorized, and these classifications are certainly open to revision.

<sup>117</sup> For example, Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," *Science* 331, no. 6014 (2011): 176-182, doi:10.1126/science.1199644.

The table presents the most prevalent words in both texts, with the shared words marked as bold. The abundance of these common terms is not unexpected, given that both texts revolve around travel accounts from Moscow to the United States. The multitude of action verbs in Ilf and Petrov's text can be attributed to the narrative's nature, as it is a book detailing many actions. In the "Places and Things" category, Mikhoels' mentioning of specific cities is not surprising either, as these cities hold particular significance for the author, akin to two poles. The lack of specific city names in Ilf and Petrov's text indicates that their work features an assortment of cities without any dominant names. Notably, the words "life" and "time" appear in both lists, suggesting that themes of life and time hold considerable importance in both texts.

What I find more intriguing are the differences between the texts. The first noticeable contrast is Mikhoels' use of the collective term "people," as opposed to Ilf and Petrov's employment of individualistic titles like "Mr." and "Sir." This distinction implies that Mikhoels emphasizes a sense of unity, while Ilf and Petrov focus on individual characteristics. Additionally, for Mikhoels, it was possible to identify two distinct categories in the text that reflect both the wartime period during which it was written and his personal fascination with art.

Both texts share travel, life, and time themes as they center on journeys from Moscow to the United States. Ilf and Petrov's narrative is dynamic and action-oriented, whereas Mikhoels' text focuses on personally significant cities. The authors' perspectives diverge, with Mikhoels emphasizing unity and commonality through collective terms and Ilf and Petrov honing in on individual traits. Mikhoels' account also highlights the wartime context and his personal interest in art through two unique categories.



Ilf, Petrov, and Mikhoels critique American society's materialistic and commercial aspects, contrasting them with the USSR's non-material values. They provide different perspectives on travel experiences and Jewish identity. Their criticisms of American art and culture align with Soviet socialist ideology, which values art for its social benefits. Comparing their accounts enhances understanding of Soviet travelers' perceptions of their own culture relative to America. The texts share themes of travel and divergent viewpoints, with Mikhoels emphasizing unity and Ilf and Petrov focusing on individual traits.

## Conclusions

The contrast between *Eynikayt*, *Pravda*, *The New York Times*, and *The Forward* elucidates each newspaper's varied roles during World War II. These roles were shaped by their distinct political and social ideologies, which influenced their narratives of the events transpiring during this critical period.

*Eynikayt*, a Soviet Yiddish newspaper, addressed Jewish issues amidst the larger Soviet agenda. As such, it significantly advocated for the Jewish community within the USSR, especially during the war. Meanwhile, *Pravda*, the Soviet Union's official newspaper, reflected the shifting Soviet positions during World War II, initially depicting cooperation with Nazi Germany and then adopting an anti-fascist stance after the German invasion. Interestingly, *Pravda* refrained from explicitly discussing the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust, indicative of the Soviet state's reluctance to fully acknowledge its scale and impact on the Jewish community.

Contrastingly, *The New York Times*, influenced by the publisher's belief in Jewish assimilation, presented a more nuanced view of Jewish affairs. The newspaper covered the work of the JAFC largely positively. Still, it shifted its focus over time towards individuals associated with the committee, indicating the sway of individual agendas on its reporting. *The Forward*, an independent American Yiddish press espousing Marxist social democracy, critiqued the Soviet regime and the JAFC, interpreting its advocacy as a guise for promoting Soviet interests.

These newspapers served as distinct lenses through which the events of the era were viewed. Their coverage, influenced by their underlying ideologies, political affiliations, and societal contexts, resulted in varied interpretations of the JAFC's role and the broader historical events of the time.

Throughout the three-month trip, the events attracted diverse audiences. Events in New York received more coverage than those in Canada, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Mexico, the latter of which was only detailed in memoirs. *Eynikayt* was the first to report on the trip, followed by *Pravda* and *The Forward*. Notably, the American newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Forward*, adopted an analytical and opinionated style, contrasting the straightforward reporting by *Pravda* and *Eynikayt*. *The Forward*, independent from government control, displayed a more passionate tone, while *Eynikayt* highlighted the JAFC's achievements.

The Soviet newspapers and *The Forward* exchanged critiques, each criticizing the others' coverage and stance on the delegates and their mission. *The Forward* questioned the delegates' Jewishness, while the Soviet newspapers branded *The Forward* a "Trotskyist traitor."

Interestingly, the July 8 gathering revealed that some speakers used the platform to advocate personal causes, potentially exploiting the large audience to highlight their issues rather than solely focusing on the challenges faced by Soviet Jews.

There was a lack of coverage of the negotiations between the JDC and the delegates. The emphasis of JDC was on providing aid to the Jewish community in the USSR. However, the JDC showed a readiness to extend its support to all inhabitants of the regions discussed. One notable proposal was the appointment of Mikhoels as the JDC's official representative within the USSR, though its realization remains ambiguous.

During their journey, the delegates consistently maintained strong connections with individuals with diverse political views, including close interactions with Zionists during and after their trip. As time passed, the JAFC transformed from a mere propaganda tool featuring distinguished Jewish individuals to a robust Jewish institution with potential political implications.

According to the analysis of the texts "One-Storied America" by Ilf and Petrov and Solomon Mikhoels' essays, there are several conclusions. The historical context, including the wartime period during Mikhoels' visit to the U.S. and the pre-war period of Ilf and Petrov's journey, significantly influenced the content and themes of their texts. The prominence of war-related terms in Mikhoels' text and the critique of American capitalism in Ilf and Petrov's work echo the geopolitical tensions and ideological disparities of their respective periods.

First, both texts offer contrasting perspectives on American culture and society, shaped by the authors' unique experiences, backgrounds, and the time they visited the United States. Ilf and Petrov, through their work, present a critique of American culture from a Soviet socialist perspective, highlighting the perceived commercialization and materialism of American art and society. Mikhoels, on the other hand, provides a more nuanced portrayal, focusing on the scarcity of cultural institutions outside major cities and the impacts of commercialism on the arts.

Secondly, the portrayal of Jewish individuals and experiences differs significantly between the two texts. Ilf and Petrov's work includes brief mentions of Jewish individuals as part of a broader narrative showcasing the diversity of American society. In contrast, Mikhoels' text prominently features influential Jewish figures, underscoring their contributions to various fields.

Finally, distant reading techniques, such as word frequency analysis, revealed shared themes of travel, life, and time in both texts. However, the authors' linguistic choices reflected their distinct viewpoints. Mikhoels' use of collective terms emphasizes unity and commonality, while Ilf and Petrov's utilization of individualistic titles indicates a focus on individual characteristics.

Overall, the analysis offers valuable insights into the authors' perceptions of American society, culture, and the Jewish experience, as shaped by their individual perspectives and the prevailing

socio-political contexts. It highlights the richness and diversity of experiences and narratives that emerge from the journeys.

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