

Final Report

**The Interethnic Dimensions of Jewish Memory Construction in the Post-Stalin USSR,
1953-1985**

Visegrad Fellowship at Open Society Archives
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Project Background:

The Jewish movement was among the most successful Soviet dissident movements in attracting international attention and achieving its political goals, primarily emigration to Israel. Accordingly, scholarship on the movement has focused on its international dimensions, isolating it from the Soviet context in which it took root. But the Jewish movement's concerns, methods, and agenda shared much with those of the many other national movements that formed in the USSR contemporaneously. An extensive body of Jewish samizdat leaves no doubt that the Soviet Jewish movement saw itself primarily as a national movement – one of the many national movements that crystallized in the thaw following Stalin's death and that articulated its grievances and goals in the vibrant sphere of nationally oriented samizdat that emerged at the onset of the Brezhnev era.

Jewish activists collaborated and clashed extensively with non-Jewish national activists, especially Russians and Ukrainians, as most Soviet Jews resided in these two Soviet republics. My research fellowship at OSA was part of a dissertation project aiming historicize these affinities and entanglements. Focusing on the burning issue of collective memory construction, I explore how Jewish efforts to reimagine the catastrophic recent past in ways that could serve a redemptive national future mirrored, clashed, inspired, and took cues from parallel Ukrainian and Russian developments. Historical scholarship has tended to isolate Jewish memory construction, due to the unparalleled genocide that Jews experienced during the years of the Nazi occupation, during which approximately 2.5 million Soviet Jews were slaughtered. Appreciating, though, the vastly different wartime experiences of the Jews, Russians, and Ukrainians, and the considerably different challenges and goals that their inchoate postwar national movements faced, should not blind us to the similar ways in which activists of all three ethnicities challenged the official war myth with a diverse constellation of counter-narratives.

Review of Consulted OSA Materials:

During my two-month Visegrad fellowship I worked with materials in two of the Radio Free Liberty/Radio Europe (RFL/RE) Archive collections: the Samizdat Archives and the Soviet Red Archives (see **Appendix** below for table of consulted files).

RFL/RE Samizdat Archives proved to be a particularly useful collection for my purposes. The biographical files held an abundance of riches. Nearly all of my protagonists—Jewish dissidents and their Russian and Ukrainian interlocutors—had a folder, and sometimes multiple, dedicated to them in this collection. These biographical files shed light on various aspects of the Jewish movement’s interethnic encounters: press coverage of dissident debates and cultural production dealing with the memory of the Nazi occupation and Stalinist terror, RFE/RL research reports covering dissident activities and their protest activities in Soviet labor camps, and radio broadcasts and interviews with dissidents and emigres testifying to the ways that Jewish dissidents thought through their own national struggle with reference to Russian and Ukrainian national themes. In addition to the biographical files, the Samizdat Archives included illuminative subject files dedicated to themes and issues at the heart of my project: Baby Yar, the most important site of Soviet Holocaust memory formation and contestation; *Jews in the USSR*, the longest-running Jewish samizdat periodical; the scientific and cultural seminars Jewish dissidents held throughout the 1970s and 1980s; and religious revival in Ukraine, inter alia.

In addition to the Samizdat Archives, I also worked extensively with RFE/RL’s Soviet Red Archives, which feature materials from Soviet press and periodicals, along with Western publications and RFE/RL coverage, that elucidate important themes, issues, developments, and biographies in Soviet society, culture, and foreign policy. Particularly valuable were this collection’s coverage of two related developments integral to the galvanization of Soviet Jewish national consciousness: Soviet antisemitism and the Six-Day War. These thematic files attest to the long historical shadow cast by the Nazi occupation and the centrality of the Soviet regime’s Great Patriotic War myth to post-Stalin society. The Soviet press and authorities’ comparison of Zionism to Nazism—which reached an apex in the aftermath of Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War—in turn motivated Jewish dissidents’ comparison of Nazism to Soviet socialism, feeding a growing Jewish discourse on Soviet cultural/spiritual genocide, which they directly linked to the Nazis’ physical annihilation of European and Soviet Jewry.

A major, if disorienting, advantage of the Samizdat and Red Archive holdings was their kaleidoscopic nature. Viewing materials from RFE/RL and other Western press outlets alongside statements from the Soviet press and authorities and ego-documents from the dissidents themselves allowed for a thorough triangulation of various perspectives.

Finally, it was incredibly beneficial to work at an archive holding the entirety of RFE/RL's published samizdat collections (*Arkhiv samizdata* and *Materialy samizdata*). While these published materials are available elsewhere, their easy access at OSA allowed for quick consultation of a wide range of samizdat documents referenced in the aforementioned collections. Consequently, I completed my fellowship with a much richer familiarity with the overall samizdat landscape.

Examples of Promising and Unexpected Finds:

During my fellowship at OSA, I discovered numerous promising and unexpected finds shedding light on the thick ties that bound Jewish national activists with their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts. On the plane of Jewish-Russian national connections, I discovered press coverage on the first officially endorsed Yiddish theater performance since Stalin's decimation of Soviet Yiddish culture following WWII. Surprisingly, Ilya Glazunov, an artist with strident Russian nationalist views, was the play's set designer, and the press coverage sheds light on his complex but not wholly antagonistic views on Jewish nationalism. Russian-Jewish national ties were also illuminated in the biographical materials of Mikhail Agurskii, the son of an Old Bolshevik, whose turn to Zionism and the Jewish faith in the early 1970s was preceded by his prior conversion to Russian Orthodoxy. More than any other Jewish dissident, he worked to build bridges between Zionists and anti-Soviet Russian nationalists. His OSA files helped me more deeply understand his life and thought, including his trepidations vis-a-vis Ukrainian nationalism.

Conversely, other Jewish dissidents found Ukrainian dissidents—with their 'small' anti-imperial nationalism—to be much more likely potential allies. I reviewed many materials testifying to the extensive collaboration between Jewish and Ukrainian activists, especially in the labor camps, where they joined together to protest the camp authorities' chauvinism and the oppressive treatment of religious believers. Indeed, the issue of religion was central to Jewish-Ukrainian solidarity, as I confirmed working with OSA's unpublished samizdat materials related to the

revival of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. These materials showcase the deep concern for the Jewish issue exhibited by leading Ukrainian Catholic dissident, Iosif Terelya, who lamented the Soviet destruction of Jewish cultural monuments, attempted to discover the fate of Raul Wallenberg, and even requested Israeli citizenship when sentenced to a second term in the labor camps.

Perhaps my most exciting find of all was an exchange of letters I discovered in the unpublished samizdat collections between two prominent Jewish World War Two veterans, Agurskii, and Iurii Zhukov, a prominent political journalist for *Pravda*. This rich correspondence vividly illustrates themes and issues central to my dissertation, especially how contestations over the memory of the Nazi occupation galvanized Jewish national sentiment and how Jewish activists articulated their own national struggle with reference to other Soviet nationalities.

Challenges:

As with all archives, the OSA collections presented certain generative challenges, two of which merit particular mention. First, because these materials were collected and curated by RFE/RL, they are filtered through a Western liberal bias, which sometimes obfuscates Jewish dissidents' ties with other national movements in the USSR. In their outreach to international human rights organizations and Western journalists, Jewish activists did not center these ties, as this would have worked against strategic narratives of both internal group solidarity and superlative suffering. Yet careful triangulation of OSA materials with the archival sources I have collected in Russian and Ukrainian archives demonstrate that transethnic ties were nonetheless central to the Jewish movement's activity, self-understanding, and memory construction efforts. Second, while my temporal focus ends with the onset of Gorbachev's reforms in 1985, I found many rich documents at OSA from 1985-1991, when newfound freedom of expression allowed for nationalist activists to address the horrors of the recent past more openly, even on the front page of official Soviet publications. I have not yet determined whether to expand my temporal focus to incorporate these rich findings. Regardless of the extent to which I directly address this period in my dissertation, grappling with the perestroika period will allow me to historicize more accurately changes and continuities in nationally oriented activists' memory construction efforts during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras.

Appendix: Table of OSA files consulted

| HU OSA 300-85 Samizdat Archives | |
|---|--|
| HU OSA 300-85-12 Subject Files | |
| Call Number | Name |
| 300-85-12:81/25 | Groups: Ukraine: Anti-Fascist Movement, 1990 |
| 300-85-12:81/26 | Groups: Ukraine: Babi Yar, 1990 |
| 300-85-12:81/34 | Groups: Ukraine: Jews, 1989-1990 |
| 300-85-12:81/38 | Groups: Ukraine: Initiative Group for Protection of Rights of Believers and Church in Ukraine, 1982-1990 |
| 300-85-12:183/8 | National Question: Jews: Belarus, 1973-1991 |
| 300-85-12:183/9 | National Question: Jews: Birobidzhan, 1977-1990 |
| 300-85-12:183/10 | National Question: Jews: Bukhara, 1973-1989 |
| 300-85-12:183/11 | National Question: Jews: Returnees, 1967-1988 |
| 300-85-12:184/3 | National Question: Jews: Hebrew, Yiddish, 1975-1989 |
| 300-85-12:184/4 | National Question: Jews: Il'inka [street / area in Moscow], 1977-1991 |
| 300-85-12:190/1 | National Question: Jews: Seminars, 1976 |
| 300-85-12:190/2 | National Question: Jews: Seminars, 1977-1989 |
| 300-85-12:191/5 | National Question: Jews: Ukraine, 1907-1991 |
| 300-85-12:191/6 | National Question: Jews: Ukraine: Vinnitsa, 1974-1980 |
| 300-85-12:191/7 | National Question: Jews: Ukraine: Kyiv, 1974 – 1991 |
| 300-85-12:191/8 | National Question: Jews: Ukraine: Kyiv, 1981-1982 |
| | National Question: Jews: Ukraine: Odessa, 1974-1988 |
| 300-85-12:252/11 | Samizdat: Journals / Periodicals: “Jews in the USSR”, 1974 – 1975 |
| 300-85-12:252/12 | Samizdat: Journals / Periodicals: “Jews in the USSR”, 1976 – 1984 |
| 300-85-12:252/12 | Samizdat: Journals / Periodicals: “Jews in the USSR” 1978 – 1991 |
| HU OSA 300-85-13 Samizdat Biographical Files | |
| Call Number | Name |
| 300-85-13:3/7 | Agurskii, Mikhail |
| 300-85-13:69/10 | Voronel', Aleksandr |
| 300-85-13:80/8 | Glazov, Iurii |
| 300-85-13:80/6, 13 | Glazunov, Il'ia |
| 300-85-13:81/4 | Glikman (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:81/5 | Gluzman, Semen |
| 300-85-13:81/9 | Glezer, Il'ia |
| 300-85-13:81/10 | Glezer, Aleksandr |
| 300-85-13:81/11 | Gleba - Glucksmann |
| 300-85-13:81/12 | Gluzman, Semen |
| 300-85-13:123/8 | Zisel's, Irena (compilation) |

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| 300-85-13:123/9 | Zisel's, Iosif (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:123/10 | Ziserman, Diana |
| 300-85-13:123/11 | Zicerman (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:123/14 | Zisel's - Zlotnikov |
| 300-85-13:132/23 | Kandel' - Kamov, Feliks |
| 300-85-13:132/24 | Kandyba, Ivan |
| 300-85-13:154/7 | Kofman (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:154/8 | Kociubinskaia, M. [Mikhailyana] |
| 300-85-13:154/15 | Kochubievskii, Feliks |
| 300-85-13:154/16 | Kochubievskie Feliks, Valentina |
| 300-85-13:154/17 | Kosharovskii (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:154/20 | Cohen, Stephen |
| 300-85-13:154/24 | Kosharovskii, Iulii |
| 300-85-13:158/15 | Eduard Kuznetsov |
| 300-85-13:159/1 | Kuznecov, Anatolii |
| 300-85-13:168/17 | Lerner, Alexander |
| 300-85-13:169/1 | Lerner, Alexander |
| 300-85-13:169/3 | Lieberman (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:185/11 | Markish (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:192/2 | Meiman, Naum, Nina |
| 300-85-13:193/7 | Mendelevich, Iosif |
| 300-85-13:194/6 | Meshko, Oksana |
| 300-85-13:201/1 | Moroz, Valentin |
| 300-85-13:207/10 | Nekrasov, Viktor |
| 300-85-13:214/1 | Ogorodnikov, Aleksandr |
| 300-85-13:214/7 | Ogurcov, Igor' |
| 300-85-13:219/12 | Osadchii, Mikhailo |
| 300-85-13:219/13 | Osipov, Vladimir |
| 300-85-13:239/21 | Prestin, Vladimir |
| 300-85-13:253/9 | Rudenko, Mikola |
| 300-85-13:253/10 | Rudenko, Raisa |
| 300-85-13:253/11 | Rulev, Kagan, Lazar' |
| 300-85-13:275/8 | Svetlichnyi, Ivan |
| 300-85-13:275/9 | Svetlichnaia, Nadezhda (Svitlichna, Nadiia) |
| 300-85-13:296/8 | Sotnikov(a) (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:316/6 | Fain, Ven'iamin |
| 300-85-13:316/7 | Fainberg, Viktor |
| 300-85-13:319/4 | Finkelstein, Ethan |
| 300-85-13:319/13 | Finkel', Fedor |
| 300-85-13:322/1 | Fuks (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:322/3 | Ful'makht (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:322/5 | Furman (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:322/6 | Furman, Lev |
| 300-85-13:325/14 | Heifetz, Mikhail |

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| 300-85-13:338/1-3 | Shch'aranskii, Anatolii |
| 300-85-13:339/1 | Shch'aranskii, Anatolii |
| 300-85-13:346/1 | Shafarevich (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:346/6 | Shafarevich - Shaia... |
| 300-85-13:346/8 | Shvarcman (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:349/3 | Shumuk (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:349/6 | Shukhevich (compilation) |
| 300-85-13:351/7 | Shimanov, Gennadii |
| HU OSA 300-85-44 Unpublished Samizdat: Subject Files | |
| Call Number | Subject |
| 300-85-44:15/13 | History: Babi Yar, 1976 |
| 300-85-44:15/19 | History: Russian Renaissance, 1986 |
| 300-85-44:20/6 | Nationalities: Jews, 1973 - 1975 |
| 300-85-44:20/7 | Nationalities: Jews, 1976 |
| 300-85-44:20/8 | Nationalities: Jews, 1978 |
| 300-85-44:20/9 | Nationality: Jews, 1987 |
| 300-85-44:20/10 | Nationalities: Jews, 1989 |
| 300-85-44:20/11 | Nationalities: Jews: Anti-Semitism, 1988 |
| 300-85-44:20/12 | Nationalities: Jews: Anti-Semitism, 1988-1989 |
| 300-85-44:20/13 | Nationalities: Jews: Anti-Semitism, 1980-1990 |
| 300-85-44:20/14 | Nationalities: Jews: Anti-Semitism: Media Coverage of Events in the Middle East, 1982 |
| 300-85-44:20/15 | Nationalities: Jews: Jewish Culture, 1976 |
| 300-85-44:20/16 | Nationalities: Jews: Jewish Movement, 1976 |
| 300-85-44:20/17 | Nationalities: Jews: Official Anti-Semitism, 1978 |
| 300-85-44:20/18 | Nationalities: Jews: Fate of Jewish Colonies in Ukraine, 1985 |
| 300-85-44:20/19 | Nationalities: Genocide |
| 300-85-44:31/9 | Samizdat, 1965-1982 |
| 300-85-44:31/13 | Samizdat: Jewish Samizdat, 1981 |
| 300-85-44:35/1 | Emigration, 1970 |
| 300-85-44:35/2 | Emigration, 1974 - 1987 |
| 300-85-44:35/8 | Emigration, 1978-1981 |
| 300-85-44:35/17 | Emigration: Jews, 1976 |
| 300-85-44:35/18-19 | Emigration: Jews [1/2] & [2/2], 1984 |
| 300-85-44:35/20 | Emigration: Jews, 1986 |
| 300-85-44:35/21 | Emigration: Kiev/Kyiv Refuseniks, 1981 |
| 300-85-44:37/10 | Emigration: Refuseniks, 1981-1987 |
| 300-85-44:37/11-12 | Emigration: Refuseniks [1/2] & [2/2], 1984 |
| 300-85-44:38/2 | Emigration: Refuseniks [2/2], 1985 |
| 300-85-44:38/3 | Emigration: Refuseniks, 1986 |
| 300-85-44:38/4 | Emigration: Refuseniks [1/4], 1987 |
| 300-85-44:38/16 | Emigration: Aircraft Hijackers, 1973 |
| HU OSA 300-85-48 New York Office Files Relating to Samizdat | |

| Call Number | Name/Subject |
|---|--|
| 300-85-48:1/7 | Agurskii, Mikhail |
| 300-85-48:21/5 | Jewish Question in the USSR, 1970-1989 |
| HU OSA 300-80 Soviet Red Archives | |
| HU OSA 300-80-1 Old Code Subject Files | |
| Call Number | Subject |
| 300-80-1:35/2 | Antisemitism: general, 1953 - 1960 |
| 300-80-1:35/6 | Antisemitism: general, 1966-1969 |
| 300-80-1:39/4 | Antisemitism: Baby Yar, 1976-1991 |
| 300-80-1:100/3 | Middle East, 1966-1967 |
| 300-80-1:288/4 | Israel: USSR (relations), 1970 |
| HU OSA 300-80-7 USSR Biographical Files | |
| Call Number | Name |
| 300-80-7:6/7-8 | Agurskii, Mikhail |
| 300-80-7:120/3 | Dziuba, Ivan |
| 300-80-7:176/9 | Kochubievskii, Boris |
| 300-80-7:200/4 | Luk'ianenko, Levko |
| 300-80-7:218/1 | Mel'chuk, Igor' |
| 300-80-7:218/2 | Men... |
| 300-80-7:218/3 | Mendelevich, Iosif |
| 300-80-7:236/9 | Nudel', Ida |
| 300-80-7:237/1 | Nudel', Ida |
| 300-80-7:303/3 | Slepak, Vladimir |
| HU OSA 300-80-9 Kraus Biographical Files | |
| Call Number | Name |
| 300-80-9:666/3 | Fedorchuk, V – Fedoseev, Viktor |
| 300-80-9:666/4 | Fedoseev, Viktor |