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The Cold War and Holocaust Memorialization in Soviet Publications of the 1960s

In 1961, Masha Rolnik (Maria Rol'nikaitė), a survivor of the Vilna Ghetto and the Stutthof concentration camp, submitted her manuscript to the Lithuanian Publishing House of Political and Scientific Literature. It was a diary she had written in the ghetto and subsequently reconstructed from memory. Rol'nikaitė translated the original Yiddish text into Lithuanian herself. The publishing house sent the manuscript titled *Turio papasakoti* (I Must Tell) for review to the Institute of Party History of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Lithuania. The reviewing process took almost a year.¹ The verdict ultimately given by the Lithuanian party historian was a typical product of its time: it linked the past with the present, yoking the Holocaust to the ongoing confrontation between the USSR and the West. In the reviewer's opinion, Rol'nikaitė's book was "a powerful indictment of fascism, which is currently experiencing a resurgence in the USA and West Germany, being openly supported by the ruling circles in these countries."² Such formulations clearly indicated that the likelihood of publishing materials about the Holocaust largely depended on the aims of Soviet foreign propaganda. Following the publication of its Lithuanian edition in Vilnius, Rol'nikaitė's book came out in Russian in Vilnius and Moscow, and in Yiddish in Warsaw.³

Several distinct categories of Soviet citizens were involved in the ideological clashes of the Cold War. One group sincerely believed in the reality of the com-

1 Mariia Rol'nikaite, *I vse eto pravda* (St. Petersburg: Zolotoi vek, 2002), 499, 523. On Masha Rol'nikaitė's book, see: Anja Tippner, "The Writings of a Soviet Anne Frank? Masha Rol'nikaite's Holocaust Memoir *I Have to Tell* and Its Place in Soviet Literature," in *Representation of the Holocaust in Soviet Literature and Film, Search and Research*, ed. Arkadi Zeltser 19 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2013), 59–80; Gennady Estraiikh, *Jews in the Soviet Union: A History. Volume 5: After Stalin 1953–1967* (New York: New York University Press, 2023), 242–249.

2 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), 2006.436.3.B4-F4 (Masha Rolnikaite papers). I would like to thank Vadim Altskan for sending me a copy of this letter.

3 Mariia Rol'nikaite, *Ia dolzhna rasskazat'* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1965); Mariia Rol'nikaite, *Ia dolzhna rasskazat'* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1965); Mashe Rolnik, *Ikh muz dertseyln* (Warsaw: Yiddish bukh; Moscow: Agentstvo pechati "Novosti," 1965).

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munist-capitalist contradictions. Others were mere opportunists who engaged in these activities to advance their careers, without bothering to go into the actual historical events. There was also another group of Soviet opportunists: people who partook of the official Soviet discourse, while simultaneously promoting their own vision of history. Therefore, when reading Soviet publications, it is sometimes hard to decide whether their authors really believed in the immutable Soviet values. It is only on the basis of scattered hints that we can reconstruct the authors' intentions, provided that the authors really intended to say more than they could let on.

A segment of the liberal-minded Soviet intelligentsia grasped the rules of this political game and exploited the Cold War situation to bypass the censors. In March 1965, Boris Riurikov, editor-in-chief of the *Inostrannaia literatura* journal, wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, expressing his displeasure at the censors' decision to ban Arthur Miller's play *Incident at Vichy*, which touched upon the Holocaust. Riurikov knew the system inside out: back in 1955–1958, he had held the important post of deputy head of the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. His reasoning nicely encapsulates the mechanism of pressuring the authorities into making the desired decision. In his letter, Riurikov uses Cold War-era arguments: "We thought that, nowadays, amid mounting racial tensions in the US and the rehabilitation of war criminals in West Germany, the work of a prominent playwright who attacks Nazi ideology and politics from a humanist standpoint could be published in our journal."⁴ Remarkably, his appeal worked: Miller's play was published and staged at a Moscow theater as early as 1967.

These facts clearly show that the likelihood of a book on Jewish matters being published in the USSR at the time was unpredictable. Whereas Rol'nikaité learned the rules while preparing the book for publication, the experienced Riurikov knew how to build his case to achieve the desired result. In both instances—whether by accident or through conscious manipulation—the outcome was determined by Soviet foreign policy considerations.

The very fact that reports transgressing the ideological boundaries were occasionally able to pass the censors reflects the existence of some additional opportunities, of which the authors did not always take full advantage. Thus, there were references in the Russian-language press to six million individuals killed "by the Nazis during the war solely because of their Jewishness,"⁵ or statements to the

4 S. D. Tavanets et al., eds., *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura 1965–1972: Dokumenty 1965–1972* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2009), 16–17.

5 G. Mukhraneli, "Serdtshe ne mozhет prostit'," *Zaria Vostoka*, March 15, 1964.

effect that the Treblinka camp was built “for the express purpose of exterminating the Jewish population.”⁶ Such instances—which are rather atypical of Soviet discourse—indicate that there were no hard and fast rules about the presentation of the Holocaust in the USSR. They also suggest that, throughout almost the entire Soviet period, the practice of Holocaust memorialization constituted a kind of “grey area” lacking clear boundaries. This was true of texts and films, as well as of the mass grassroots activity by Soviet Jews, who erected monuments and held memorial services.⁷ This raises some crucial questions: to what extent did the willingness of the intelligentsia (both Jewish and non-Jewish alike) to exploit this grey area contribute to the representation of the Holocaust in the public space, including within the context of the Cold War? Are we to analyze the attitude of the Soviet authorities toward the Holocaust in the 1960s as a specifically “Jewish” policy or as a reflection of broader processes unfolding in the country? This seems all the more important since that period saw an active conflict between the “liberal” and the “conservative” factions of the intelligentsia, including employees of Party and governmental ideological bodies, with each of these factions advocating a different model for the future development of the USSR.

Several important books and articles have been written about the attitude of the Soviet authorities to the subject of the Holocaust in the 1960s, and the representation of this subject in texts and on the screen.⁸ Some of these works, especially those written in the West and Israel during the Cold War period, tend to concentrate on the restrictions, official propaganda efforts, and the differences

6 A. Burlak, “Taina osobniaka na Frei Gaspar (soobshchaet correspondent APN),” *Leningradskaia pravda*, March 25, 1967.

7 Olga Gershenson, *The Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013); Arkadi Zeltser, *Unwelcome Memory: Holocaust Monuments in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2018). This article does not attempt to analyze Yiddish- and Polish-language texts. However, they reflect the same general trends as do the Russian-language media.

8 Benjamin Pinkus, *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948–1967: A Documented Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 90–125; Lukasz Hirsowicz, “The Holocaust in the Soviet Mirror,” in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupies Territories of the USSR, 1941–1945*, ed. Lucjan Dobroszycki and Jeffrey S. Gurock (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 29–59; Zvi Gitelman, “Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union,” in *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 14–42; Leona Toker, “The Holocaust in Russian Literature,” in *The Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. Alan Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 118–130; Annie Epelboin and Assia Kovriguina, *La Littérature des Ravins: Écrire sur la Shoah en URSS* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2013); Gershenson, *The Phantom Holocaust*; Nati Cantorovich, “Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial: A Preliminary Investigation 1960–1965,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 103–141; Estraiikh, *After Stalin*, 223–275.

between the Soviet image of the Holocaust and the actual historical events. Others, particularly those produced during the last decades, focus more on the efforts of the intelligentsia to overcome those official restrictions. Much has also been written about the clashes between liberal and conservative Soviet circles in the 1960s in general.⁹ The goal of this article is to analyze the influence of Soviet foreign and domestic policy on texts about the Holocaust during this period.

This volume clearly demonstrates that similar attitudes toward Holocaust representation developed in various countries of the Eastern Bloc. At the same time, each country had its own history of the Holocaust, with different possibilities for public discussion of the Jewish topic. Not surprisingly, the case of the Soviet Union, which regarded itself as the key player in the ideological battles, is particularly ambivalent. Given this general historical context, the article will examine the following issues: 1) the significance of the Holocaust to the conflict between the liberal and the conservative segments of the Soviet intelligentsia, 2) the impact of the ideological confrontation with the West on the nature and number of publications dealing with the Holocaust, and 3) the relations with other countries in the Eastern Bloc, and their influence on Holocaust-themed publications in the Soviet Union.¹⁰

The “Lightly-Laid” Russocentrism and the Atmosphere of the 1960s

World War II had a very strong impact on all segments of Soviet society: the ruling class, the intelligentsia, and the general population. Virtually every family had lost some of its members: civilians murdered in the Soviet territories occupied by the Nazis and their allies, Red Army soldiers killed in action, or POWs

⁹ See, for example, Nikolai Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia: Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR 1953–1985* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002); Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Viacheslav Ogrzyzko, *Okhraniteli i liberaly: v zatianuvshemsia poiske kompromissa*, vol. 1–2 (Moscow: Literaturnaia Rossiia, 2015).

¹⁰ One question that lies outside the scope of this article is the Soviet coverage of the participation of the local population in the Holocaust, especially when it came to prominent Nazi collaborators, who had moved to the West in the postwar period. The Cold War seems to have served as a catalyst for depicting this aspect of the Holocaust as well. Articles and books published in the 1960s brought up the same arguments that were used when discussing the issue of German Nazis living in the West.

dying in enemy captivity.¹¹ Thousands of people arrested during the war by the Soviet security services were shot or imprisoned in the Gulag.¹²

The mobilizing Russocentric idea, which crystallized in the years of the war, did not lose its relevance in the postwar period. At the same time, the authorities rehabilitated the class-based approach, which had been completely discarded during the war. The idea that class distinctions mattered more than ethnic differences, which had its heyday in the USSR of the 1920–1930s, was once again turned into an all-encompassing dogma in the Cold War years. The 1960s also saw the emergence of the “Myth of the War,” which transformed the victory of 1945 into the second most important event in Soviet history (after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917).¹³

In light of this ideological framework, the party reviewer accused Masha Rol’nikaite of adhering to the “single stream” theory—which, in her case, referred to the absence of a purely negative, “class-based” depiction of the members of the Judenrat and the Jewish police. Another notable feature of the Soviet censorship apparatus was its insistence that creators not only remove unacceptable facts and storylines, but also add new content that would impart the “correct” ideological message to their works.¹⁴ Conversely, Riurikov’s letter to the authorities conveyed his understanding of the need to combine a class-based approach with a Soviet “universal” one, by equating the Holocaust with other forms of brutality by the Nazi regime.¹⁵

The process of de-Stalinization during the “Khrushchev Thaw” had a considerable impact on the official narrative of the war. However, the loosening of the Party dogmas of the late 1940s–early 1950s was a rather slow process, and Soviet society was keenly aware of the dearth of new data on virtually any subject. As Iurii Levada correctly put it, “information remained a ‘deficit good’, just like high-quality foodstuffs and imported merchandise.”¹⁶ Thus, any information that ex-

11 Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

12 Oleg Budnitski, “The Great Terror of 1941: Toward a History of Wartime Stalinist Criminal Justice,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 20, no. 3 (2019): 447–480.

13 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 126–129; David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 183–196.

14 USHMM, 2006.436.3.B4-F4; Rol’nikaite, *I vse eto pravda*, 523–537, 541–552.

15 Tavanets et al., *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul’tura*, 16–17.

16 Iurii Levada, *Vremia peremen: Predmet i pozitsiia issledovatel’ia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2016), 362.

ceeded the established boundaries was likely to achieve significant popular resonance, especially among the intelligentsia.

This fully applied to the Holocaust, which had all but vanished from the official discourse after 1948. The first substantive references to the subject in literature and the press date to the late 1950s, when the ideas of de-Stalinization began to be applied to a broader range of issues and public interest in the subject of World War II (more accurately, the Soviet-German war of 1941–1945 or the Great Patriotic War, according to Soviet terminology) was rekindled. In large measure, this delay was caused by the negative attitude of the conservatives, who wished to avoid an “excessive” focus on the Jewish theme in literature about World War II. In this way, recent Jewish history, including the Holocaust, became an important component of a broader conflict, which occasionally spilled over into the public sphere.

During the first half of the 1960s, the most notable manifestation of this conflict was the controversy surrounding Evgeny Evtushenko’s poem “Babi Yar,” which appeared in print in one of the central Soviet newspapers, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, in September 1961 (the poem aroused intense debate in society, with official publications denouncing the poet’s position, on the one hand, and hundreds of letters of support mailed to Evtushenko, on the other); and Ilya Ehrenburg’s memoirs *People, Years, Life*, which were published over the 1960–1964 period and influenced several generations of Soviet citizens, including Jews.¹⁷ For both Ehrenburg and Evtushenko, the subjects of the Holocaust and of contemporary antisemitism (both in the Soviet Union and abroad) were inseparable. In Evtushenko’s poem, the Holocaust is treated as an important manifestation of antisemitism, but by no means as the only one. In Ehrenburg’s case, mid-level functionaries of the Party Central Committee emphasized his references to anti-Jewish persecution on both sides of the Soviet-German frontline. They expressed their views, writing that, according to Ehrenburg, “they [the Jews] were brutally murdered by the Fascists in the occupied territories [. . .], they were mistreated in the Soviet rear: the writers were de-

17 Pinkus, *The Soviet Government*, 90–125; Joshua Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 334–370; Vitalii Afiani et al., *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura 1958–1964: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005), 555–566, 621–623; Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, 187–191; Gennadii Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Khrushcheva: Vlast', intelligentsiia, evreiskii vopros* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2012), 351–397; Evgenii Evtushenko, *Ia prishel k tebe Babii Iar: Istoriia samoi znamenitoi simfonii XX veka* (Moscow: Tekst; Knizhniki, 2012), 45; Gennady Estraiikh, “Yevgeny Evtushenko’s ‘Baby Yar’: A Russian Poet’s Page in Post-Holocaust History,” in *Distrust, Animosity, and Solidarity: Jews and Non-Jews during the Holocaust in the USSR*, ed. Christoph Dieckmann and Arkadi Zeltser (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2021), 331–370; Marat Grinberg, *The Soviet Jewish Bookshelf: Jewish Culture and Identity between the Lines* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2023).

nounced in the press, while the journalists and diplomats were looked down upon by their colleagues.”¹⁸

The “equalizing” Soviet approach—a legacy of the Stalinist era—was espoused by significant segments of the Party bureaucracy and the conservative intelligentsia. According to this view, the Jews had been targeted not out of racist and antisemitic motives, but simply for being citizens of a socialist state.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Holocaust would often be described as a mere “prelude” to the planned extermination of the Slavs. This obligatory interpretation was upheld not only by pro-Stalinist conservatives but even by those who, in all other respects, ought to be classified as liberals. Thus, Lev Ginzburg—a prominent Soviet Jewish journalist and translator of classical German poetry, who was chairman of the Translators’ Section of the Moscow branch of the Union of Soviet Writers—wrote:

By striking at the Jews, they wished to test the “resilience” of the human “material” and determine the “capacity” of the gas vans and gas chambers. Following Hitler’s decision to exterminate the Russian nation, the developers of *Generalplan Ost* drew on the “experience” gained during the “solution of the Jewish Question.”²⁰

Any deviation from this view was seen as a distortion of the correct historical approach.

At the same time, there was no clear linear relationship between the various spheres of politics and ideology: the denunciation of Stalinist repressions did not result in the full rehabilitation of all victims, or even of all ethnic groups; the cessation of the Stalinist antisemitic policy of 1948–1953 was not accompanied by the lifting of all anti-Jewish restrictions in the professional sphere; the revision of Stalin’s role in the war did not lead to a thorough reevaluation of the Soviet approach to the war, including the Holocaust. Under such conditions, important (non-scholarly) books on the Holocaust were published in the USSR when the wave of exposures of Stalinist crimes had begun to recede. As one contemporary later recalled: “Many things that we could not even dream of back in 1959 or 1960

¹⁸ Tat’iana Gorjaeva, ed., *Istoriia sovetskoi politicheskoi tsenzury: Dokumenty i kommentarii* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997), 139.

¹⁹ Gitelman, “Politics and the Historiography,” 17–18.

²⁰ Lev Ginzburg, *Tsena pepla: Nemetskie zametki* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1962), 136. A similar idea—that the Slavs would have been “next in line” when the Nazis had eliminated the Jews—was expressed in Lev Bezymenskii’s article, “Esli by ne Sovetskaia Armiia,” *Novyi mir*, no. 6, 1961, 201. On Lev Ginzburg, see Maxim D. Shrayar, “Lev Ginzburg, Soviet Translator: The Story of a Jewish Germanophile who became a Soviet Investigator of Nazi Crimes,” *Tablet*, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/273095/lev-ginzburg-soviet-translator>, accessed February 28, 2024.

became possible in 1962–63.”²¹ In the mid- (and even late) 1960s, one could publish materials that would have been unpublishable at the beginning of the decade, despite the greater overall liberalism of the earlier period. Thus, the books *Babi Yar* by Anatolii Kuznetsov, *I Must Tell* by Masha Rol’nikaitė, and *Nich’ia dlitsia mgoven’e* (A Stalemate Lasts but a Moment) by Icchokas Meras were published in 1966–1967 (all three titles with significant print runs, ranging from 100,000 to 280,000 copies).

However, notwithstanding this uncertainty—which was caused by the haphazard attempts of the Soviet leadership to chart a course between the liberal and the conservative factions—the first half of the 1960s saw a clear shift in favor of conservative values, and this also held true for the subject of the Jews. A significant part of the Soviet leadership refused to regard the “anti-cosmopolitan” campaign as a manifestation of state antisemitism, trying to exclude this episode from the category of Stalinist repressions. In practice, non-Jews were also targeted by this official campaign of 1948–1949 against the members of the intelligentsia who were suspected of pro-Western sympathies and disloyalty to the Soviet values. However, both the Jews and many non-Jews were clearly aware that the campaign was motivated primarily by the anti-Jewish sentiments of the authorities and a part of the literary and artistic groups.²² Such disregard for the Jewish theme was bound to affect the depiction of the Holocaust, pushing it to the margins of public debate. In this respect, the Stalinist conservatives were supported by the advocates of Russian nationalism, whose movement was crystallizing in those years.²³ Khrushchev himself seems to have been aware of the position of the conservative literati vis-à-vis the Jews. According to Ilya Ehrenburg, the Soviet leader was socially close to this segment of the intelligentsia.²⁴ Khrushchev clearly articulated his own view of the Holocaust at a March 1963 meeting with writers and artists, where, as part of an attack on the liberal intelligentsia, he touched on Evtushenko’s “Babi Yar”: “The poem presents the matter as though only the Jewish population fell victim to Fascist crimes, whereas many Russians, Ukrainians, and Soviet people of other nationalities died there at the hands of the Hitlerite executioners.”²⁵

21 Benedikt Sarnov, *Sluchai Erenburga* (Moscow: Tekst, 2004), 145.

22 Pinkus, *The Soviet Government*; Yehoshua A. Gilboa, *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry, 1939–1953* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); Gennadii Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina: Vlast’ i antisemitizm* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2001); Gennadii Kostyrchenko, *Stalin i kosmopolitizm 1945–1953: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” 2005).

23 Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia*, 178–179.

24 Sarnov, *Sluchai Erenburga*, 159.

25 Pinkus, *The Soviet Government*, 74.

However, even this critical statement by Khrushchev did not lead to a blanket ban on the subject of the Holocaust. The situation did not change radically in the early years of Brezhnev's rule (from October 1964 until the middle of 1967), despite some "revanchist" statements by senior Party functionaries and public accusations of "besmirching" the Soviet past, which were aimed at the intelligentsia. This relatively liberal policy was reversed only after two landmark events: the Sinyavsky–Daniel trial of 1966—which was accompanied by a shrill propaganda campaign and resulted in major restrictions on the freedom of speech and action of liberal intellectuals—and the response within the USSR to the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the Jewish context, an additional factor was the severing of diplomatic ties with Israel in June 1967, which was followed by the mass exodus of Jews from the early 1970s on. The depiction of the Holocaust was further influenced by the tightening of state control over the forms of commemoration of World War II, which became apparent after 1965, in the wake of the countrywide celebration of the 20th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany.²⁶

Michael Rothberg suggested the concept of "multidirectional memory" for analyzing the mutual influence of different memories, which may be either supportive or competitive. According to him, "multidirectional memory considers a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post-World War II present."²⁷ In other words, one kind of memory may serve as "a platform to articulate a vision" of the other one, using the past in order to construct the present.²⁸ The memory of some events could drive people to analyze others.

In accordance with such a trend of evaluating the recent past through the prism of current events, the liberal intellectuals interpreted the national and international situation as part of the confrontation between fascism and anti-fascism (they regarded fascism primarily as an ideology that contradicted the principle of liberty); they wished to combat the simplicity and triviality of the former by exalting culture, which they regarded as the highest form of anti-fascist activity.²⁹ Such an approach naturally lent itself to exposing the similarities between the Nazi and the Soviet past and present, and the intellectuals frequently resorted to such analogies throughout the 1960s.

This dichotomous view of the situation regarding the Holocaust was likely encouraged by the tendency of Cold War-era propaganda to denounce the flaws of

²⁶ Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 133.

²⁷ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 4.

²⁸ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3, 5.

²⁹ Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Dnevnik—bol'shoe podspor'e (1938–1994)* (Moscow: Vremia, 2015), 152.

the rival Western system by comparing it to its Soviet counterpart. The very idea of “comparing” in addition to highlighting of the differences inevitably led to an exposure of the underlying similarities as well. A segment of the intelligentsia began to play this game in earnest and the history of World War II (i.e., the juxtaposition of the Nazi and the Stalinist modes of governance and population control) turned out to be a fruitful field for such analogies. The Soviet bureaucracy understood these transparent hints and it banned many works that might “lead the reader to draw inappropriate parallels and analogies.”³⁰ In the early 1960s, many Soviet intellectuals, even of the liberal stripe, were still psychologically unprepared for a direct comparison of the two regimes or a comparison between antisemitism in the USSR and abroad: these themes featured not only in Vasilii Grossman’s novel *Life and Fate*, which was confiscated in February 1961, but also in Ehrenburg’s memoirs. Both of these questions were painful even for Alexander Tvardovsky, editor-in-chief of the *Novyi mir* journal, who is commonly regarded as a paragon of liberalism.³¹ The negative response on the part of members of the conservative intelligentsia (including the bureaucracy) is more understandable still, since they naturally tended to regard all such analogies as liberal “pranks.”

The dichotomy between the two sides was sharpened by the fact that the parallels between the Nazi and the Soviet systems (including when it came to Jews) were easily discernible to Soviet readers, who were well versed in the “Aesopean” language of subtle hints used by literary writers and political essayists – demonstrated possibility and readiness to read between the lines.³² Conversely, any references to the presence of the subject of the Holocaust in Western discourse served to underscore the limited ability to represent it in the USSR itself. Such a view of the situation can be deduced from an article by Liudmila Chernaia published in *Novyi mir* in 1964. It discussed *The Deputy*, a drama by the West German playwright Rolf Hochhuth that explicitly dealt with the reluctance of Pope Pius XII to denounce the Nazi extermination of the Jews:

This theme—the persecution of the Jews by the Hitlerites—has become a “staple” (if such a term can be applied to so dreadful a subject) of Western literature. The West German literati, wracked by a deep sense of guilt over the millions of people—who were persecuted, slandered, and then physically exterminated by the fascists for racist reasons—are constantly harking back to this topic.³³

³⁰ Tavanets at al., *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul'tura*, 524.

³¹ Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir*, 168, 176.

³² Lev Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopean Language in Modern Russian Literature* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner in Kommission, 1984); Grinberg, *The Soviet Jewish Bookshelf*, 9.

³³ Liudmila Chernaia, “Literatura ‘dnia—nol’ (Zametki o literature FRG),” *Novyi mir*, no. 7, 1964, 203.

During this period, the dominant Soviet propaganda technique—which involved making a comparison between communism and capitalism, and ruling in favor of the former system—would often backfire, leading people to draw the opposite conclusion. Some of them already had little faith in the reliability of Soviet information, even in cases where that information was true. The people continued to make the comparison, but with a great deal of skepticism regarding the alleged Soviet moral and social superiority. As a result, within the framework of the prevailing “culture of comparison,” any description of negative events in the West would inevitably lead to the question: “And what about us?” The implied answer did not paint the Soviet Union in a favorable light.

The censors, too, had no trouble “getting” all the hints. The rules of Soviet ideological censorship were somewhat amorphous and this indeterminacy enabled some controversial works to make it into print. The decentralization of authority—which was the fundamental idea of Khrushchev’s regime—also applied to the censorship apparatus, which delegated some of its functions to other Party and state organs.³⁴ This, in turn, paved the way to additional publications on the topic. The many levels of control over the print media served only to exacerbate the unpredictability of the situation. Furthermore, decisions would often be taken in an *ad hoc* fashion—depending on the topicality of the subject matter and the prevailing mood among the bureaucracy.³⁵ The likelihood of any given work being published depended not only on the author’s willingness to engage in self-censorship (or even to use circumlocutions), but also on the administration of the publishing house, the courage of the editors, and the views of the particular censor or Central Committee official. Nevertheless, the very fact that many works of this unwelcomed type did manage to see print in the 1960s must be connected not only to the relative inconsistency of Soviet policy, but also to the exigencies of the Cold War. This situation made the regime willing to exploit some “risqué” subjects (including that of the Holocaust) for propaganda gain.

34 Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev Era Soviet Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 47–48. On the transformation of the censorship apparatus in those years, see: Tat’iana Gorიაeva, *Politicheskaya tsenzura v SSSR 1917–1991 gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2009), 31–35.

35 See, for instance, the following study of a closely related topic, the censoring of translated literature: Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance*, especially the definitions on 6–9, 45–64.

The Holocaust as a Weapon in the Cold War

The subject of the Holocaust was far from prominent in the numerous Soviet publications dealing with West Germany. Nevertheless, it would be invoked whenever it fit the general narrative of anti-Western propaganda. Many war-related Soviet texts that mentioned the Holocaust would accuse the West of failing to prosecute Nazi criminals. Obviously, such texts were meant to serve Soviet propaganda goals, and the generalizations contained in them were often inaccurate. Nevertheless, it is true that relatively few former Nazis residing in the Federal Republic of Germany were convicted of crimes committed during World War II (including the murder of Jews): from the end of the war until January 1992, a total of 974 persons were found guilty, with 472 of them being convicted of killing Jews. Numerous criminal investigations of former Nazis launched by West German authorities came to naught.³⁶ Thus, it is hardly surprising that the 1960s saw a flurry of Soviet denunciations: hundreds of anti-Western texts that touched, to varying degrees, on the subjects of Nazi antisemitism and the persecution and murder of Jews by the Nazis and their local collaborators.³⁷

Another factor that favored the publication of Holocaust-related materials in the USSR was the considerable effort made by the authorities to make these materials accessible to Western audiences. One indication of this is the simultaneous publication of foreign-language editions of some of the books. In particularly prominent cases, they would be reissued by European publishing houses, occasionally even arousing a response in Western societies. Thus, the publication of Lev Ginzburg's *Bezдна* (Abyss) (subtitled *A Narrative Based on Documents*) in West Germany led to a surge in local interest in the investigation launched by the Munich prosecutor's office against Kurt Christmann, who had served as commander of Einsatzkommando 10a in Krasnodar, Russia.³⁸

To mobilize the Soviet population within the framework of the "confrontation between two systems"—the primary ideological narrative of the Cold War—the USSR had to present itself, and the other countries of the Eastern Bloc, as the only

36 Jürgen Matthäus, "No Ordinary Criminal": Georg Heuser, Other Mass Murderers, and West German Justice," in *Atrocities on Trial: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Prosecuting War Crimes*, ed. Patricia Heberer and Jürgen Matthäus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 193.

37 On publications about the Holocaust in the USSR, see: Pinkus, *The Soviet Government and the Jews*, 421–454. Many Holocaust-related newspaper and magazine pieces dating from 1960–1967, which have been used in this article, may be found in the multivolume collection, *Evrei i evreiskii narod: Sbornik materialov iz sovetskoi pechati*, edited and published in Jerusalem.

38 Lev Ginzburg, *Bezдна: Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1966); Ginzburg, *Potustoronnie vstrechi*, 179–196.

consistent opponents of the contemporary legacy of Nazism. The primary thrust of Soviet journalism lay in repeated (and largely justified) allegations concerning the prominence of former Nazis in the political and intellectual elites of Western countries. Many publications exploited the contradiction between the principle of historical justice, which was propounded by the Soviet press and taken as a given by many Soviet people, and the strict rationalism of the West German justice system, which insisted on convicting only those individuals whose direct involvement in the killings could be demonstrated.³⁹

Numerous publications informed Soviet readers about the comfortable lives of former Nazi functionaries in the Federal Republic. Notably, it was emphasized that the pension paid to former Hitlerite officials and military officers was more than four times higher than the sum paid to anti-Nazi resistance fighters, who had been held in jails and concentration camps.⁴⁰

One event that affected the number of Holocaust-related publications was the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Dozens of articles on the subject, with a plethora of details about the extermination of European Jewry, were published in the USSR in 1960–1962,⁴¹ although the “tried and true” principle of equating the Jews with other victims of Nazism remained in force. All in all, the Eichmann trial was not a turning point for the Soviet people, the way it was for Israelis (and other Westerners), since the former tended to focus on events taking place within the USSR. Still, whenever Eichmann’s name was mentioned, it would inevitably bring the Holocaust and antisemitism to mind.

At first, the attention of Soviet correspondents was drawn to the very fact of Eichmann’s capture, which had caused a stir; the deterioration of Israeli–Argentinian relations following his kidnapping from the territory of a foreign state, and the insistence of the Israelis on having him tried in their own country, despite the suggestion that he be extradited to Germany.⁴² However, almost immediately the subject was moved from the newsreels to the traditional propaganda channels. The Soviets were particularly eager to see whether the trial would bring to light the involvement of some West German politicians in the Holocaust. The most prominent of these was Hans Globke, who had served as Under Secretary of State and Chief of Staff of the West German Chancellery since 1953 and was one of the most influential officials in Konrad Adenauer’s government. Globke had been one

³⁹ Ginzburg, *Potustoronnie vstrechi*, 185; Ginzburg, *Tsena pepla*, 146–147.

⁴⁰ Lev Ginzburg, *Dudka krysolova: Zametki pisatel'ia 1956–1959* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1960), 74.

⁴¹ A detailed analysis of these articles may be found in: Cantorovich, “Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial,” 103–141.

⁴² “V sovete bezopasnosti OON,” *Pravda*, June 24, 1960.

of the authors of the 1935 race laws and later (according to Soviet sources) he not only monitored the progress of the Holocaust in his capacity as councilor at the German Ministry of the Interior, but was also directly involved in the deportation of Austrian and Slovak Jews.⁴³ The Soviet media provided a fairly detailed biography of Globke, which was supplemented by an account of Nazi anti-Jewish persecution. Several articles published both at the time of the Eichmann trial and afterward (especially during Globke's trial, which was held *in absentia* in East Germany in July 1963, and at which he was sentenced to life imprisonment) invariably referred to Globke as the promulgator of "antisemitic race laws," a "Hitlerite ideologue of antisemitism," and an "erstwhile pogromist and executioner, an emissary and advisor of Himmler himself."⁴⁴ Interest in the subject was heightened by the fact that the Eichmann trial took place in a period when the number of Soviet publications dealing with the war in general, and the Holocaust in particular, had begun to grow exponentially. Thus, the detailed examination of the mass murder of the Jews during the trial should be seen as part of the general trend of transforming the Holocaust into an important weapon in the Eastern Bloc propaganda arsenal. Within the context of the trial, Israel was discussed in the Communist press primarily in terms of its relationship to West Germany. For example, Soviet newspapers accused David Ben-Gurion of colluding with Adenauer, who had allegedly promised to pay the Israelis continued reparations in exchange for their silence on Globke's role in the Holocaust.⁴⁵

Since the West was very skeptical of any evidence on the Holocaust and the war provided by the USSR and its allies,⁴⁶ the Soviet side became obsessed with

43 V. Vavilov, "Ubiitsa s chistoi sovest'iu," *Komsomol'skoe znamia*, April 2, 1961. On Globke, see: Erik Lommatzsch, *Hans Globke (1898–1973): Beamter im Dritten Reich und Staatssekretär Adenauers* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009).

44 V. Kuznetsov, "Globke—na skam'iu podsudimyykh," *Pravda*, July 29, 1960; B. Gurnov, "Rassadnik zarazy—Bonn," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, June 7, 1960; A. Grigor'iants, "Seroe preosviashchenstvo," *Trud*, August 9, 1960; "Globke—pod sud," *Izvestiia*, June 24, 1961; Ervin Martinson, "Bonnskiy Eikhman," *Sovetskaia Estoniia*, July 7, 1963; Iozef Shtrait (General'nyi prokuror GDR), "O sudebnom protsesse po delu Globke," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, no. 11, 1963, 101–107.

45 Cantorovich, "Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial," 111–119. About these accusations, see, for example, Lommatzsch, *Hans Globke (1898–1973)*, 231, 340. On relations between Israel and West Germany during the Eichmann trial, see Roni Stauber, *Diplomatia betzel shel hazikaron: Israel veGermania hama'aravit 1953–1965* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar; Yad Vashem, 2022), 331–435.

46 See for example, David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 164–167; David Shneer, *Grief: The Biography of a Holocaust Photograph* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 163–164; Jeremy Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938–1946* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 188–195.

producing and citing archival documents to substantiate their allegations. This desire to cite authentic documents was so strong that some references to the Holocaust looked rather forced. A good example of this trend is the media offensive against Friedrich Foertsch, who had been appointed Inspector General of the Bundeswehr in 1961. An article tellingly titled “New Materials on Foertsch’s Crimes,” which was published in *Novoe vremia*, reproduced one of the most iconic images of the Holocaust in the USSR: a map detailing the massacres of Jews carried out by Einsatzgruppe A from October 16, 1941, until January 31, 1942. The map listed the numbers of victims next to images of coffins. The map of Estonia included the figure “963” (the number of murdered Estonian Jews), with the word “Judenfrei” appearing below it. The German-language legend on the map also estimated the number of surviving Jews by early February 1942 (the inscription contained the German word “Jude,” which was well-known to Soviet readers). This image was accompanied by an utterly neutral Soviet-style caption referring to “the extermination of the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories of the Soviet Union.” In accordance with the policy of Soviet “equalization,” the article also gave statistical data on the murder of Communists, partisans, and mentally ill persons—in addition to Jews. Neither the map nor the data had any direct connection to Foertsch, who had been appointed Chief of Staff of the 18th Army (which operated in the area of Leningrad, Pskov, and Novgorod) in 1943, by which point virtually all Jews in the region had been annihilated. The only reason for bringing the subject up was the fact that Einsatzgruppe A had earlier been active in the same area.⁴⁷ The authors and editors of *Novoe vremia*, many of whose foreign correspondents were employed by the Soviet intelligence services, seem to have been well aware of the nature of the materials they were publishing. These examples serve to illustrate how the Soviet intelligentsia, which was busy disseminating Soviet propaganda, would also try to introduce new sensational materials (including Holocaust-related ones) into the public discourse, while simultaneously blurring the Party directives. Lev Ginzburg’s essay about the Eichmann trial can be seen as yet another attempt to inject little-known facts about the Holocaust into the public consciousness. The text touched on some issues that had nothing to do with the trial itself or with anti-Western propaganda, but which were of deep interest to Soviet Jewry. Taking advantage of his license

47 “Novye materialy o prestuplenii Fercha,” *Novoe vremia*, no. 40, 1961, 30–31. This map was later republished in *Prestupnye tseli—prestupnye sredstva: Dokumenty ob okkupatsionnoi politike fashistskoi Germanii na territorii SSSR* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 85. This was the only Holocaust-related document in that book, and it explicitly referred to the Jewishness of the victims—after all, the collection of documents was supposed to be a scholarly publication.

to talk about the Holocaust in connection with the Eichmann trial, Ginzburg presented a Russian version of Hirsch Glick's "Partisan Song" (in all likelihood, it was Ginzburg's own translation). The lyrics were accompanied by the following perplexing remark: "I overheard this song in democratic Berlin, in the street. It was sung by soldiers of the German People's Army."⁴⁸ Ginzburg used this story to justify the publication of the song.

As for direct information about the Holocaust, it was most likely to appear in articles dealing with less prominent figures—judges, journalists, diplomats, prosecutors, businessmen, police officers, etc.—who had either directly participated in the killing of Jews during the war, or else had held posts in the Nazi administration and propaganda apparatus.⁴⁹ Such publications would often give the person's exact address. Thus, for all their trenchant criticism of Western society, the Soviets tried to pressure those governments by manipulating Western public opinion.

Another issue tangentially related to the Cold War was the Nazi fugitives living in South America, who had been thrust into the international spotlight by the Eichmann trial. The Soviet texts dealing with them clearly articulated the second ideologue of that time period: appealing to the "progressive international community" to extradite those criminals, who still walked free. This motif can be heard in the 1967 article by V. Rozen about Franz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka.⁵⁰ The latter piece was phrased carefully, so as to enable experienced readers to deduce that it discussed the Holocaust. Thus, there were explicit references to the Wannsee Conference and to the directive about the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" that had been adopted there. Unlike Auschwitz (which was commonly referred to by the nearby Polish city of Oświęcim in Soviet publications), Treblinka was relatively unknown to Soviet readers. The only source of information about it may have been Vasilii Grossman's essay "The Hell of Treblinka," which had been published in Russian and Yiddish in 1945 and which was mentioned in the 1967 article.⁵¹ The very next sentence in Rozen's article – "Trains carrying 300,000 doomed civilians were sent to Treblinka from Warsaw alone" – left no doubt as to the true

⁴⁸ Ginzburg, *Tsena pepla*, 124. This song was published under the title "Jüdisches Partisanenlied" (Song of the Jewish partisans) in *Soldaten singen. Liederbuch der Nationalen Volksarmee* (Berlin: Verlag des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung, 1957), 86–87. I would like to thank Stephan Stach for drawing my attention to this East German publication of this song.

⁴⁹ "Teper' on v Stokgol'me," *Novoe vremia*, no. 31, 1964, 25–26; V. Ivanov, "Mul'timillioner—ubiitsa," *Kommunist*, May 19, 1963.

⁵⁰ V. Rozen, "Shtangl'—palach Treblinki," *Novoe vremia*, no. 20, 1967, 30–31.

⁵¹ Vasilii Grossman, *Treblinskii ad* (Moscow: Voennoe izdatel'stvo Narodnogo komissariata oborony, 1945); Vasili Grosman, *Treblinken genem* (Moscow: Der emes, 1945).

subject matter of the entire piece (i.e., the Holocaust). This fundamental truth shone through the Soviet obligatory “equalizing” context, which was provided by a technically true statement to the effect that, after January 20, 1942 (the date of the Wannsee Conference), Hitler had also begun “the forceful extermination of the Gypsies and the ‘subhuman’ Slavs.”⁵² Such “disclaimers,” which reflected the real historical situation, nevertheless, probably were inserted by the author mainly in order to marginalize the Jewish topic and ensure conformity with the regime’s ideological goals.

As part of the general highlighting of the Holocaust, the Soviet press ran regular reports (frequently citing the TASS agency) about the arrests and trials, in various West German cities, of Nazi criminals who had been directly involved in the deportation and killing of Jews.⁵³ In all likelihood, given the general climate of anti-Western propaganda, Soviet readers were supposed to interpret these actions as a reluctant response by the West German authorities to the pressure exerted by the Soviet regime and its satellites (the German Democratic Republic, in particular). Conversely, the Soviet media were just as eager to give updates on various odious individuals from the Nazi past who were never brought to trial (or worse, had been acquitted by the West German courts). Thus, in 1965 the *Iskusstvo kino* magazine ran a lengthy article on the German director Veit Harlan in connection with the 25th anniversary of his notorious antisemitic movie, *Jud Süß* (Süss the Jew). The article recounts how, back in 1950, the seemingly ironclad legal case against Harlan fell apart and he was acquitted, because the court had failed to establish a connection between the film and direct antisemitic actions.⁵⁴

The numerous articles—some of which were written in adherence to the exacting standards of Cold War propaganda—enabled curious Soviet readers to easily deduce that the predicament of Jews during the war had been qualitatively different from that of other citizens, and that a Jew’s chances of survival under Nazi rule had been slim indeed.

52 Rozen, “Shtangl’—palach Treblinka,” 30.

53 “Ubiitsa arestovan,” *Pravda Ukrainy*, January 31, 1961; “Arestovan eshche odin gitlerovskii palach,” *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 9, 1961; Lev Ginzburg, “Dusheguby,” *Novoe vremia*, no. 52, 1962, 26–27; B. Rodionov, “Teni Eikhmana,” *Izvestiia*, May 19, 1964. On the problem of the trials held in West Germany in the 1960s, see, e.g., the following articles: Matthäus, “‘No Ordinary Criminal,’” 187–209; Rebecca Wittmann, “Tainted Law: The West German Judiciary and the Prosecution of Nazi War Criminals,” in *Atrocities on Trial*, 211–229.

54 V. Dmitriev, V. Mikhalkovich, “Chernyi iubilei,” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 3, 1965, 110–112.

The Treatment of the Holocaust in the Eastern Bloc's Countries and its Impact on the Soviet Situation

On November 15, 1965, Mikhail Romm's documentary *Obyknovennyi fashizm* (Common Fascism, known as *Triumph over Violence* in the United States) was screened in Moscow at a festival of the Mosfilm studio.⁵⁵ Although the heads of the studio had instructed the filmmakers not to emphasize the killing of Jews by the Nazis, the subject was prominent in the documentary. Furthermore, viewers were struck by the similarity between the Stalinist and the Nazi regimes—in other words, the film partook of the intellectual “game of allusions,” mentioned above. Olga Gershenson would later use Romm's work to demonstrate “the ability of cultural producers to play some elements of the system against each other.”⁵⁶ Following the advice of liberal-minded and well-educated individuals from the “Department of Socialist Countries” of the Central Committee, Romm contacted the East German director Konrad Wolf, who managed to convince the local Party bosses to screen his documentary at the *International Leipzig Documentary and Short Film Week*. After *Obyknovennyi fashizm* had won a special award at the festival, the leadership in Moscow had no choice but to approve the film for screening in Soviet cinemas without any changes. This atypical episode is nevertheless indicative of the importance of relations within the Eastern Bloc for any discussion of the subject of the Holocaust within the USSR itself.

The denunciation of Western countries for their alleged sympathy with Nazi policies, including the Holocaust, can clearly be heard in the title of an article from 1957, “The Past That Has Not Become History,” which was dedicated to the performance of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in a New York City theater.⁵⁷ The idea was stated even more explicitly when, that same year, the Iskusstvo publishing house in Moscow published the Russian translation of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's play *The Diary of Anne Frank*. It was staged in several theaters of the USSR.⁵⁸ In August 1959, two movies about Anne Frank were screened at the 1st Moscow International Film Festival. The first of these was *The Diary of Anne Frank*, an American movie directed by the famous cinematographer George Stevens. The film was based on a script by Goodrich and Hackett. The inclusion of an

55 Aleksandr Deriabin, ed., *Letopis' rossiiskogo kino 1946–1965* (Moscow: Kanon-plus, 2010), 680.

56 Gershenson, *The Phantom Holocaust*, 68.

57 V.Z., “Proshloe, ne stavshee istoriei,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 9, 1957, 4. My gratitude to Alexander Frenkel who informed me regarding Soviet publications on Anne Frank in the 1950s.

58 Estraiikh, *After Stalin*, 236–237

American film in the festival became possible due to Soviet interest in strengthening its position in the West. For the sake of propaganda, the authorities wished to exhibit Soviet films in Western countries; for this reason, they screened, and even bought, a relatively large number of Western movies in these years.⁵⁹ Presenting a work by a well-known American director at the festival seemed worth the risk of some members of the Moscow intellectual elite watching a Holocaust-themed film.

Still, in order to neutralize this ideological retreat, the Soviet press published several critical articles.⁶⁰ In his review in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Lazar Lazarev (a liberal literary critic of Jewish origin) gave high praise to the artistry of the film and mentioned the Jewishness of the main character, albeit only once. However, he also evaluated the film from the point of view of the official Soviet narrative of the war. Lazarev condemned Stevens' brand of humanism and rejected the very idea of human life as the highest value.⁶¹ The critic stressed Soviet values, which prioritized people's courage and social optimism. At the same time, Lazarev's article made readers clearly aware that an alternative, non-Soviet approach to the Holocaust was possible.

The second film, less surprising in the context of the festival, was *Ein Tagebuch für Anne Frank* (A Diary for Anne Frank), a production of the East German DEFA film studio, directed by Günther Diecke.⁶² To gauge the official attitude toward the Jewish theme at the time, we may look at an article by the Hungarian film critic Peter Reni, which was published in *Pravda* and covered both movies.⁶³

Although Reni adhered to a seemingly cardinal rule of Soviet propaganda—Jews (or the word “ghetto”) must not be mentioned more than once per text⁶⁴—his article in *Pravda*, and the film festival, had the effect of opening the floodgates of Holocaust-themed publications. The year 1960 saw the appearance of an essay by Lev Ginzburg, which was titled almost identically to the East German

59 Afiani et al., eds., *Ideologicheskie komissii TsK KPSS 1958–1964*, 186–187, 258, 264.

60 For example, Lazar' Lazarev, “Melkoe i krupnoe,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, August 8, 1959, 3; Ia. Varshavskii, “Vstrechaiutsia liudi, vstrechaiutsia fil'my,” *Trud*, August 12, 1959, 3; Grigorii Roshal', “Itogi radostny,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, August 18, 1959, 3.

61 Lazarev, “Melkoe i krupnoe.”

62 On the film *A Diary for Anne Frank*, see David Shneer, “Yiddish Music and East German Antifascism: Lin Jaldati, Post-Holocaust Jewish Culture, and the Cold War,” in *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 60, no. 1 (2015): 218–221. In October 1960, this film was shown to the wider public in Soviet cinemas (*Sovetskii ekran*, no. 17, 1960, 19).

63 Peter Reni, “Bol'shaia tema moskovskogo kinofestivalia,” *Pravda*, August 12, 1959; Estraiikh, *After Stalin*, 238.

64 Rol'nikaite, *I vse eto pravda*, 561. Lazarev's article, “Melkoe i krupnoe,” also adhered to this rule.

film “A Diary for Anne” and contained similar attacks on West Germany. However, it was also the first Soviet publication with extensive factual information about Anne Frank’s fate.⁶⁵ Finally, a Russian edition of the diary itself (in Rita Rait-Kovaleva’s translation) came out in the same year.⁶⁶

The greater freedom to talk about the Holocaust in the other countries of the Soviet Bloc was bound to affect the situation in the USSR. An important milestone in this respect was a collection of documents titled *SS v deistvii* (The SS in Action), which came out in East Germany in 1958 and was reissued in Russian in Moscow in 1960.⁶⁷ It was published several months before Anne Frank’s diary by the same Inostrannaia literatura publishing house, which specialized in translated works by foreign authors. Both Russian books were supplied with specially written prefaces: The *SS v deistvii* was prefaced with an essay by the famous jurist Mark Raginskii, who had assisted the Chief Soviet Prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials the preface to *Anne Frank’s Diary* was written by Ilya Ehrenburg. Both texts contained anti-Western denunciations and discussed, in greater or lesser detail, the support offered to former Nazis in the Federal Republic of Germany. Whereas the Jewish theme is present in Raginskii’s text only implicitly—there are references to the “physical extermination of entire ethnicities” and to the sites of mass shootings of Soviet Jews (Babyn Yar and the Kerch anti-tank trench)—Ehrenburg explicitly mentions the figure of six million murdered Jews, which he wrote about in *Pravda* back in 1944.⁶⁸ The terseness of Raginskii’s introduction with regard to the Jews was more than compensated by the contents of the collection, which included an entire section titled “Documents and Reports about the Persecution and Murder of the Jews.” The introduction to the German edition, which was reproduced in the Russian version, stated that “the SS carried out a mass extermination of the Jewish population of Germany and the occupied countries, killing a total of six million persons.”⁶⁹ The documents themselves gave some indication as to the key stages of the policy of persecution and extermination of Jews—thus, the book included data on the Wannsee Conference and provided a statistical breakdown of the Jewish victims (within the pre-World War II borders). Much of the collection’s content was lifted wholesale from Léon Poliakov and Joseph

65 Ginzburg, *Dudka krysolova*, 65–76.

66 *Dnevnik Anny Frank* (Moscow: Inostrannaia literatura, 1960); *After Stalin*, 235–242.

67 Mark Raginskii, ed., *SS v deistvii* (Moscow: Inostrannaia literatura, 1960).

68 Mark Raginskii, “Predislovie k russkomu izdaniiu,” in *SS v deistvii*, ed. Mark Raginskii (Moscow: Inostrannaia literatura, 1960), 6, 9; Il’ia Erenburg, “Predislovie,” in *Dnevnik Anny Frank* (Moscow: Inostrannaia literatura, 1960), 5; Joshua Rubenstein, “Il’ia Ehrenburg and the Holocaust in the Soviet Press,” in *Soviet Jews in World War II: Fighting Witnessing, Remembering*, ed. Harriet Murav and Gennady Estraiikh (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 36–56.

69 Raginskii, *SS v deistvii*, 18.

Wulf's book *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, which had been published in West Berlin in 1955. Thus, titles issued in other countries of the Eastern Bloc became one of the major conduits supplying information from Western media to the Soviet readership. Still, the selection of materials for inclusion in *SS v deistvii* was clearly influenced by political considerations. The final section made this hidden agenda obvious, being devoted to the current standoff between the two Germanys, with a particular emphasis on present-day antisemitism in the Federal Republic. The importance of the book lay in its making of Holocaust-related historical documents part of Soviet discourse (in the second edition, published in 1968, the Jewish theme was even more pronounced, and the new version of Raginskii's introduction openly mentioned the killing of Jews and the Warsaw Ghetto), as well as in the legitimization it gave to the very idea of discussing the Holocaust. The impact of this collection is palpable in contemporary Soviet publications.⁷⁰

As soon as Holocaust-related publications had become acceptable, reports from other countries (both socialist and non-socialist ones) became relatively common. As early as May–June 1960, there were articles about the discovery of diaries written by East European Jewish teenagers—Dawid Rubinowicz from the Polish town of Bodzentyn⁷¹ and Dawid Sierakowiak from Łódź⁷²—who were meant to serve as Eastern Bloc “analogues” of the “Western” Anne Frank. In June 1961, the *Inostrannaia literatura* journal published an illustration by Bronisław Lemke, informing the readers that “many of his watercolors have a sublime tragic quality—e.g., his *El mole rachmim*, which depicts a praying Jew over the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto.”⁷³ Information about Holocaust-related films and books released or published in the Eastern Bloc (and, occasionally, in Western countries) appeared regularly in the Soviet press throughout the 1960s.⁷⁴

Relations within the Socialist Bloc did not guarantee the publication of books on the Holocaust. The negative attitude toward this subject can be seen in the abortive attempt to publish a Russian-language edition of Bernard Ber Mark's monograph *Der oyfshtand in varshever geto* (The Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto).⁷⁵ The book was slated for publication by *Inostrannaia literatura* publishing house in 1960. However,

⁷⁰ See, for instance: Bezymenskii, “Esli by ne Sovetskaia Armiia,” 202–203.

⁷¹ Iu. Gavrilov, “Piat' uchenicheskikh tetradei,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 31, 1960.

⁷² “Novyi dnevnik Anny Frank,” *Molodezh' mira*, no. 3, 1960, 3–4.

⁷³ M. Silich, “Kamni krichat (izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo za rubezhom),” *Inostrannaia literatura*, no. 6, 1961, 242–245.

⁷⁴ For example, Wolfgang Luderer's film *Lenebde Ware* (Live Commodities), which dealt with the Holocaust in Hungary, see: *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 4, 1966, 133. A letter of Zalman Gradowski of the *Sonderkommando* in Auschwitz was published in A. Lopatenok, kandidat meditsinskikh nauk, “Pis'mo iz lageria smerti,” *Neva*, no. 4, 1962, 220–221.

⁷⁵ Ber Mark, *Der oyfshtand in varshever geto* (Warsaw: Yidish bukh, 1955).

the project led to a clash between the liberals and the conservatives. The official censorship organ, Glavlit (the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press), was adamantly opposed to the book's publication and would not be swayed by the arguments of the project's advocates, including the Deputy Minister of Culture, who claimed that a ban would lead to a negative response in the West. In the end, the question was put before the Presidium of the Central Committee, which ruled in favor of Glavlit and its allies in the Propaganda Department, who deemed the publication of Mark's book in the USSR to be undesirable. Unsurprisingly, a second attempt to petition the authorities two years later once again met with failure. The resolution issued by the Propaganda Department in November 1962 was even harsher: Mark's monograph was characterized as a "Zionist" (nationalist) work. Ironically, the person in the Central Committee Propaganda Department who rejected Mark's book for publication was Alexander Yakovlev, the future high-level proponent of Gorbachev's perestroika.⁷⁶ Such a response was predictable. Although at the time Mark served as head of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, his book, which despite adhering to the obligatory communist approach, was written from a markedly "Jewish" point of view and this clearly made it unsuitable for the Soviet canon of the war and the Holocaust.⁷⁷ It, too, to use the words of a "liberal" censor, "had an obvious uncontrollable [Jewish] subtext," which could not be completely erased.⁷⁸ Thus, this book was destined to be disseminated through the Jewish samizdat.⁷⁹ This case only confirmed the difference between the Soviet situation and that of the other countries of the Eastern Bloc. Stephan Stach shows in his article that, in East Germany, Mark's book was translated from Polish, updated by the author in light of the current demands, and published with the approval of the Socialist Party leadership.⁸⁰ However, all of Mark's attempts to replicate the German success in the USSR met with failure.⁸¹

76 Semen Charnyi, "Sovetskii gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v tsenzure nachala 1960-kh godov," *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve*, 2 (15), 1997, 76–81.

77 Charnyi, "Sovetskii gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v tsenzure nachala 1960-kh godov," 80; Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partia*, 132–133.

78 Liudmila Chernaia, *Kosoi dozhd'* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2015), 529.

79 The Jewish samizdat contained uncensored materials dealing with Jewish history, Jewish problems in the USSR, and Israel; it was disseminated mainly among Jews. See Benyamin Pinkus, *Thiya vetkuma le'umit: Hatziyonut vehatnu'ah hatziyonit bivrit hamo'atzot* (Kiryat sde boker: Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 1993), 408–417, on Ber Mark's book, 410.

80 Stephan Stach, "'The Jewish Diaries . . . Undergo One Edition after the Other': Early Polish Holocaust Documentation, East German Antifascism, and the Emergence of Holocaust Memory in Socialism," in *Growing in the Shadow of Antifascism: Remembering the Holocaust in State-Socialist Eastern Europe*, ed. Kata Bohus, Peter Hallama, and Stephan Stach (Budapest: CEU Press, 2022), 281–282.

81 Charnyi, "Sovetskii gosudarstvennyi antisemitizm v tsenzure nachala 1960-kh godov," 79.

However, the ban on Mark's book did not mean that the very subject of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was taboo.⁸² April 1963 marked the 20th anniversary of this event. In the USSR, it was a difficult time: only recently, Khrushchev had fired a public broadside at the liberal intelligentsia, including Evtushenko and Ehrenburg, to the cheers of the conservative faction. Thus, many contemporary texts, especially those published in the central press organs, reflected the ambiguity of the situation. *Komsomol'skaia pravda* did run a translation of an article by Jerzy Rakowski, which informed readers that the Jews had been placed on the lowest rung of the Nazi racial hierarchy, lower than the Poles or the Russians, and that the Hitlerites had "subjected them to a policy of physical extermination." By and large, the article adhered to the "politically correct" line; at the same time, it provided information on the major stages in the history of the ghetto and the uprising.⁸³ However, even in this ideologically sanitized form, Polish journalism turned out to be freer than its Soviet counterpart. Unsurprisingly, Rakowski's article was prefaced with an editorial that downplayed the "bold" remarks of his Polish colleague and upheld the "equalizing" interpretation of the Nazi policy of extermination.

Many among the Soviet public were capable of sifting through the information, separating the wheat from the chaff. This was especially true of the Jews themselves, with their heightened sensitivity to the subject and their persistent tendency to compare the contemporary situation to the Holocaust and to late Stalinist antisemitism. As part of this mindset, they interpreted even the quotidian concept of "antisemite" as synonymous with "fascist." At the same time, every positive newspaper article or TV broadcast devoted to the Holocaust would be taken as a hopeful omen of their future in the USSR.⁸⁴ This attitude was influenced by a broader tendency among many Soviet citizens, who would pore over newspapers, hoping to detect some positive trend in the country's politics. In such an environment, any references to the Holocaust would be imbued with special significance as a sign of possible further changes, steering the Soviet state in a more liberal direction; for the Jews, such references seemed to herald a new Jewish policy. Therefore, the key publications on the subject, both in the 1960s and in the 1970s, would be actively discussed by the citizenry.⁸⁵ Given the limited print runs of many of these materials, copies of them would often be circulated among friends and acquaintances.

⁸² See Estraiikh, *After Stalin*, 230–235.

⁸³ "Liudi, bud'te bditel'ny!" *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, April 19, 1963.

⁸⁴ Rol'nikaite, *I vse eto pravda*, 564.

⁸⁵ Zvi Gitelman, "Politics and the Historiography," 27.

Conclusion

In the USSR, the 1960s were marked by an open confrontation between two camps—the liberals and the conservatives—which involved both the intelligentsia and the Party bureaucracy. All the issues symbolizing the rejection of the ideas that used to dominate the Stalinist era—such as mass repressions, the cult of the leader, Party censorship, pomposity, the obligatory social optimism, the reluctance to discuss the victims of the war, and antisemitism became bones of contention between these factions. The Jewish theme, including the Holocaust, served as one of the indicators of this schism, and the issue of the Nazi policy toward Jews was inextricably bound up with the discussion of the Stalinist policy—and especially postwar antisemitism, which had manifested itself in many ways, including the struggle against “rootless cosmopolitanism.” Despite the partial overhaul of the system during the “Khrushchev Thaw,” many aspects of the earlier Stalinist policy remained in force and the equalizing Soviet approach to the Holocaust was maintained.

The Cold War served as a catalyst for abandoning the policy of ignoring the Holocaust in the USSR. The requirements of anti-Western propaganda, the need to denounce Western governments for their tolerance of former Nazis, the assertion that the Soviet Union and the countries in the Eastern Bloc were the only true fighters against the legacy of Nazism—all this helped keep the subject alive in the Soviet press, literature, theater, and cinema.

Thanks to the new information about the Holocaust that was filtering in from abroad under Cold War conditions, new Holocaust-related symbols and concepts gained a foothold in the Soviet public discourse. This situation enabled the authors of articles and books to develop indirect ways of tackling the subject, bypassing the censorship restrictions. In those years, the Holocaust could be evoked without explicit reference to the Nazi policy of exterminating the Jews, but—simply by bringing up Adolf Eichmann, Hans Globke, the Wannsee Conference, or Anne Frank (not to mention more blatant terms, such as “the Final Solution” or “ghetto”). In this way, readers could correctly guess the true subject matter, even though concepts related to the Holocaust (e.g., the Treblinka and Sobibór extermination camps) had to be stripped of their “Jewish” context, in accordance with the Soviet policy of “equalization.” The use of “Aesopean” language became one of the hallmarks of the time. The liberal intelligentsia transformed this guessing game into yet another way of resisting the system. Meanwhile, the publications themselves—even the explicitly anti-Western ones—became one of the few channels for supplying information about the Holocaust to Soviet readers.

Knowledge about the Holocaust in the USSR, both in the 1960s and afterward, was very limited, even compared to other countries in the Eastern Bloc. Nevertheless, there were hundreds of publications touching on the Holocaust, either directly

or indirectly, and these allowed perceptive Soviet readers, Jews and non-Jews alike, to deduce the existence of a special Nazi policy vis-à-vis the Jews, which had left the latter virtually no chances of survival under Nazi rule. This insight contradicted the official Communist Party line, according to which Nazism had posed an equal threat to all ethnic groups. We may also assume that the impact of the Cold War on Holocaust-related publications in the USSR was very strong even in those cases when the relevant book or article had no direct bearing on the international confrontation. When weighing the pros and cons of publishing such works, the authorities would inevitably consider both the international and the domestic contexts, strengthening the general anti-fascist or anti-conservative (anti-Stalinist) narrative.

There were many things that the liberal literary and artistic elite did not know about the Western world. Only some of those literati could sporadically read or watch Western intellectual products about the Holocaust or receive information on Western attitudes on the topic; fewer still could occasionally visit the Western countries. Nevertheless, it was these individuals who became the channels for conveying some Western ideas to the Soviet people, sometimes in a highly censored, or even distorted, form. Still, the very denunciation of Western views served to show that an alternative approach existed and Soviet liberal intellectuals could easily interpret these allegorical statements. Soviet citizens were experienced in separating the “wheat” of relevant and important information from the “chaff” of propaganda verbiage. For the great mass of Soviet people, including Jews, such texts or films served as a goad to thinking about alternative conceptions of history and memory. At the same time, within the framework of the ideological clash, the Soviets made a lot of effort to promote their own materials in Western countries. Much was published in the USSR, especially on the subject of former Nazis and local collaborators, in order to influence Western public opinion. Many such texts became accessible within the USSR itself, strongly affecting Soviet readers. These processes did not always play out the way the authorities had intended.

All such publications served to legitimize the very subject of the Holocaust in the USSR and this directly affected other aspects of the memorialization of the mass killing of Jews by the Nazis and their local collaborators—namely, the grassroots memorial activities of Soviet Jews, which resulted in the creation of hundreds of monuments and the observance of numerous memorial ceremonies.

