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## The Red and the Yellow Star: Soviet-Jewish Memory of the Second World War

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June 1941 onwards, German troops invaded the territories that had formerly been annexed by the Soviet Union. They rapidly encircled the main East European centers of Jewish population. Jews in those areas were unprepared for the campaign of mass murder that was soon to take place. After the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, Soviet newspapers had kept silent about the National Socialist policy regarding the Jews in the German occupied territories. Despite terrible rumors about atrocities in the west brought by Jewish refugees fleeing to the districts occupied by the Soviet Union between September 17 and the October 22, 1941 (before the borders between Eastern and Western Poland were shut down), many Jews chose to stay in German-occupied territory even after the German–Soviet pact was broken. What motivated so many Jews not to flee eastwards were memories of German occupation of Ukraine in 1917. The Germans were remembered as a “nation of cultured, po-

lite, order loving people”<sup>1</sup> who had put an end to frequent anti-Jewish pogroms. In another ironical twist of history, There was in those occupied territories of Eastern Europe only one significant group of Jews that miraculously just barely escaped the massacres. In fact only those who had been deported to the Russian interior by the Soviets

1 Mordechai Altshuler, « Escape and evacuation of Soviet Jews at the time of the Nazi invasion » in: *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Studies and sources on the destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied territories of the USSR, 1941- 1945*. Dobroszycki, L., & Gurock, J. S. (ed.) (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 90.

prior to 1941 escaped the massacres.<sup>2</sup> Tens of thousands survived that way.<sup>3</sup> Those who remained, however, were to know a terrible end. Of the 2,650,000 Jews estimated to have stayed in the German occupied territories after the invasion, only around 110,000 survived.<sup>4</sup> In other words, of the total Jewish population, 4% were still alive in 1944. These were generally the handful that had found non-Jewish protectors or who had joined partisan units.

The Holocaust is often understood as the epitome of our destructive modernity, the gas chambers standing for industrialized killing. This image, however, does not adequately describe the Holocaust in the newly conquered areas. In its earlier stages, the *Einsatzgruppen* and their confederates displayed boundless brutality. Mobile killing squads liquidated a large part of Soviet Jewry by gunfire near their homes— a method of killing that was anything but industrial. Other Jews were rounded up in ghettos. They too were later progressively “liquidated”. The perpetrators of the Holocaust carried out their gruesome task with macabre yet overwhelming efficiency. Within five months, they had killed about half a million Jews. They were helped in their task by the German Wehrmacht, which, according to Raul Hilberg, “went out of its way to turn over Jews to Einsatzgruppen, to request actions against Jews, to participate in killing actions, and to shoot Jews in reprisal for attacks on occupation forces.”<sup>5</sup> It was not uncommon either for the local population to contribute to the slaughter of their Jewish neighbors and fellow-

citizens (examples of this were often found in Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland)<sup>6</sup>.

When the Red Army liberated the occupied territories in 1943–1944, it found almost no Jews alive. To Vassili Grossman, who would later be an editor of the *Black Book*, this was a subject of bewilderment and anguish. Grossman himself was a Ukrainian Jew, whose mother had perished along with the 35,000 Jews of Berditshev at the hands of the Germans in 1941. Grossman was a reporter with the Red Army as it reconquered Eastern Ukraine. He gradually grasped the extent of the destruction, and eventually wrote that:

In Ukraine there are no Jews. Nowhere—not in Poltava, Kharkov, Kremenchug, Borispol, not in Iagotin. You will not see the black, tear-filled eyes of a little girl, you will not hear the sorrowful drawling voice of an old woman, you will not glimpse the swarthy face of a hungry child in a single city or a single one of hundreds of thousands of shtetls.<sup>7</sup>

The widely known piece, which was considered too political at the time, was never published.

Despite the the large number of victims, it was only only a little bit more than a decade ago that the study of the Holocaust and East European studies finally met. While acknowledging the significant proportion of victims killed in the East, the subject had remained rather peripheral in Holocaust studies, primarily because hardly anybody survived. Secondly, most Holocaust specialists lacked deep immersion in the local languages and traditions and historical context of the region they were studying. It so turned out that even in his indispensable and pathbreaking *magnum opus*, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hilberg made no single use of sources or scholarship in Eastern European languages and “exhibited superficial acquaintance with East European history”<sup>8</sup> even when over 4,000,000 among the murdered European Jews were born in what has come to be known as “the Bloodlands.”<sup>9</sup>

There is, however, more to it than that. In fact, for many survivors testifying was officially discouraged. Testimonies, if collected at all, were also not readily available

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2 When the Soviet Union annexed Poland’s eastern territories (1939), Western Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states it launched a massive resettlement program. Elites of the various “nationalities” living in the annexed territories were arrested and sentenced to forced labor in Siberia and Central Asia. In Eastern Poland for example, from 1939 to 1941, the Soviets arrested 107,140 persons, of whom 23,590 Jews. Poles of Jewish origin were mainly deported during April and June 1940. In April, those deported were mostly representatives of the former Polish law enforcement authorities, members of the propertied classes and relatives of those already purged. In June 1940, the category targeted was mostly refugees from Western Poland. They were those Jews who had fled from Western Poland when the Germans invaded this region. Afterwards, for fear of not being able to return and join their families, those Jews often refused to take Soviet citizenship and they applied to the Soviet-German population transfer commission to be transported back there. This made them suspicious in the eyes of the soviet authorities and this is why many were deported. <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/medialles-deportations>

3 Escape from German occupied territories, USHMM: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005470>

4 Yitzhak Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner: Soviet Jews in the War against Nazi Germany*. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The International Institute for Holocaust Research; Gefen, 2010), 126.

5 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jewry* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 301.

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6 Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (New York : Penguin Books, 2002).

7 In: Jewish Quarterly: Ukraine without Jews by Vassily Grossman <http://jewishquarterly.org/2011/10/ukraine-without-jews/>.

8 John Paul Himka « A Reconfigured Terrain » in *The Holocaust in the East: Local Perpetrators and Soviet responses* edited by Michael David Fox, Peter Holquist and Alexander M. Martin (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2014), 1.

9 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands, Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

to Western researchers. Archival access was consistently blocked. When Yad Vashem requested some documents on the Holocaust in Ukraine in 1965 they were brushed off. The Soviet Union, they were told, did not organize the archives “relating to the crimes of German fascism in World War II...according to the nationality of the victim.”<sup>10</sup> In this paper I investigate why this was so.

Let me outline the challenges scholars faced when writing about the Holocaust in the East. Firstly there was the problem of the singularity of available sources. <sup>11</sup> Those who survived the death camps were special; they were exceptions to the rule. Primo Levi described the paradox of the survivor in his book *The Drowned and the Saved*. Survivors were compelled to provide the world with a “universal testimony of what man can inflict on man.”<sup>12</sup> At the same time, “all the stories of people who survived concentration camps have no general application”, that “[every] survivor is an exception, a miracle, someone with a special destiny.”<sup>13</sup> “About the heart of darkness that was also the very essence of their experience, about their last betrayal, about the Calvary of 90 percent of the Prewar Polish Jewry – we will never know,”<sup>14</sup> Jan Gross argues.

When they finally gained access to relevant material after the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars had to acknowledge yet another challenge to historiography. They realized that the way the Holocaust was perpetrated in the East was different. It was the “Holocaust by bullets”. Most Eastern Jews did not perish in the gas chambers. The “West” has tended to commemorate the Holocaust based on the experience of German and West European Jews, a numerically much smaller group of victims. Now that the Iron Curtain has been lifted, the international collective memory of the Holocaust has to include those four to five million Jews who were killed east of Auschwitz and whose experience of the Holocaust was quite different.

The secrecy of Soviet historiography about the Holocaust thus affected Western historiography quite dramatically. For the first time in 2001 Jan Gross in *Neighbors* openly challenged the prevailing locus in historiography in European history that there are “two separate wartime histories – one pertaining to the Jews and the other to all the other citizens of a given European country subjected to Nazi rules.”<sup>15</sup> The Western historiography of the Holocaust

was influenced by the emergence of a new world order in the post-war years. On the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain the fate of the Eastern Jewish population was drowned into the bigger picture of Eastern European suffering under the Nazi occupation. In the West, people did remember the Holocaust but incompletely. The Shoah had mainly taken place in the newly Soviet dominated and thus inaccessible no man’s land beyond the iron curtain. The history of the Holocaust was stripped from its geography.<sup>16</sup> While the suffering of the Jews was acknowledged and increasingly remembered, it was de-contextualized. The Holocaust, precisely because it was deprived of its Jewishness in the East and of its geography in the West thus never was fully included into European history.<sup>17</sup> In general, after the war a ferocious competition over Eastern European victimhood ensued. “In this competition for memory, the Holocaust, the other German mass killing policies and the Stalinist mass murders became three different histories even though in historical fact they shared a place and times”<sup>18</sup>, Timothy Snyder writes in *Bloodlands*, where he tries to weigh against the separation of these histories.

Jews were victims and Jews were also heroes. Soviet Jewish wartime fate was not only victimhood, but also resistance. In fact, about half a million Jews fought as soldiers and officers of the Red Army. Approximately 180,000 of them died in battle, and some 70,000 to 80,000 were murdered in prisoner of war camps.<sup>19</sup> If one looks in percentage terms at the awarding of distinctions for valor in the Red Army, Jewish soldiers fought as bravely as the average Soviet military man. At least 147 Jews won the highest military decoration. Only four nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Tatars) won more Hero titles, although in 1959 Jews were only the eleventh-largest Soviet nationality.<sup>20</sup> David Abramovitch Dragunsky, for instance, was born to a Jewish family and became a Colonel General in the Soviet Army. Twice he was decorated as a Hero of the Soviet Union and he remained a true war legend. Liliana Ruth Feierstein and Liliana Furman discovered that “the [Jewish] Veterans’ words do not reflect the impotence and humiliation evident in the testimonies of some who survived the camps. Having actively influenced the outcome of the war and having held a military rank put the veterans in a different

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10 Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 224.

11 Gross, *Neighbors*, 94.

12 Primo Levi, *Conversations et entretiens* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 1998), 93.

13 Primo Levi : *The Voice of Memory, Interviews 1961-1987*. Edited by Marco Belpoliti and Robert Gordon (New York : The New Press, 1991), 67.

14 Gross, *Neighbors*, 94.

15 Gross, *Neighbors*, xviii.

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16 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands, Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 377.

17 Ibidem

18 Ibidem

19 Arad, *In the Shadow of the Red Banner*, 126.

20 Zvi Gitelman « Internationalism, patriotism and disillusion: Soviet Jewish Veterans remember World War II and the Holocaust » in: *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union Symposium Presentations*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Center for Advanced Holocaust studies, 2005.

position.”<sup>21</sup> It is also important to note that these soldiers did not fight with such fervor because they were Jewish but rather because they were defending their fatherland. As had been the case with German Jews during the First World War, or as was observed with African-American soldiers, the war was seen by most Soviet Jewish soldiers as means to disprove prejudicial feelings and to give evidence of their patriotism. Their hopes, as it turned out, were bitterly disappointed.

To summarize, at the end of the war there was on the one hand the tale of the most tragic and pure victimhood. On the other hand, there was evidence of the bravery in combat and active role of Jewish soldiers on the front. Despite of the perfect ingredients for a enthralling wartime narrative Soviet memory of the war was consistently marked by a deafening silence on anything pertaining to the Jews during the war.

This paper traces the evolution of Jewish contributions to the Soviet World War II memory and myth. In fact, the Jewish part of the “Soviet memory cake” remained insignificant throughout. This paper examines Jewish memory from the immediate post-war context to the death of Stalin in 1953, then its suppression under Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. Lastly it will describe the still arduous Holocaust memorialization of Post-Soviet Russia.

### The Stalin years (1945–1953)

The Soviet leadership and the Soviet people had been aware of the persecution of the Jews in Germany early on. One of the very first films directly representing Jewish persecution by the Nazis was a Soviet production called *Professor Mamlok*. It was shown in Soviet theaters as early as autumn 1938. That same year, Stalin commented on the Nazis’ Jewish policies, stating that fascist anti-Semitism “like any form of racial chauvinism, is the most dangerous vestige of cannibalism.”<sup>22</sup> He went on to declare “brotherly feelings for the Jewish people would define our attitudes toward anti-Semites and anti-Semitic atrocities wherever they occur.”<sup>23</sup> However, after the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, there were no further criticisms of Nazi

Germany (via official channels at least).

Operation Barbarossa, the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, changed everything. The anti-fascist stance was resurrected. The Soviet media started reporting on atrocities committed in the Western territories of the Soviet Union. In this context Vassili Grossman was allowed to travel with the Red Army as a reporter and a representative of the Jewish Antifascist Committee (JAC), an organization created in 1942 at Stalin’s special order. Headed by the famous actor and director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater Solomon Mikhoels, the JAC was in charge of promoting pro-Soviet sympathy abroad. It targeted American Jews in particular, whose support of the war effort was highly welcomed by the Soviet leadership. The emphasis on Nazi crimes against Jews in the Soviet Union was central to the campaign. In his capacity as chairman, Mikhoels embarked on tour of the United States, the UK and Canada in 1943. In the U.S., he was welcomed by such prominent Jewish personalities as Albert Einstein, future President of Israel Chaim Weizmann, Charlie Chaplin, Marc Chagall, and novelist Leon Feuchtwanger. Mikhoels’ endeavor was immensely successful. He raised as much as \$16 million in the United States and \$15 million in England.<sup>24</sup> At that same time, on the front, poems written by Jewish poets occasionally appeared alongside journalistic reports on Nazi-committed atrocities in the Soviet press. Ilya Selvinsky’s poem “I Saw It” was among the first depictions of the Holocaust in the East.<sup>25</sup> Official censorship, however, choked off Holocaust reporting from the end of 1941 on. Jewish poets were still able depict the specific fate of their people well into the year 1943, but Selvinsky was eventually removed from the front in 1943, to his great dismay. Just as in the case of Vassili Grossman, he and his writing were deemed too political.

Their removal was part of a larger Soviet trend. If the media had initially reported on the events of the Holocaust, they soon stopped doing so. As the war progressed towards a Soviet victory, mentions of Jews began to disappear altogether. The Sovinform bureau had already stopped mentioning “Jews” from late 1941 on. The victory in the battle of Stalingrad in 1943 made the erasure of Jewish memory from the records official. From May 1943 on, Stalin himself began referring to the Jewish victims of extermination by the “Hitlerites” merely as “So-

21 Liliana Ruth Feuerstein and Liliana Furman, „Memory under siege: Jewish Veterans of the Soviet Army in Present Day Germany“ In: *Recalling the past, (re)constructing the past: collective and individual memory of World War II in Russia and Germany*, Withold Bonner and Arja Rosenholm (eds) (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2008) Aleksanteri-sarja ; 2008/2, pp. 108-109

22 Quoted in Karel Berkhoff, „“Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population”: The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941-45“, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 10, Number 1, 2009: 61, accessed November 24th 2014. DOI: 10.1353/kri.0.0080.

23 Ibidem.

24 Lukasz Hirszwicz, „The Soviet Union and the Jews during World War II, British Foreign Office Documents“ in: *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, Volume 3, Issue 1 (1973). Accessed 24th November 2014, DOI:10.1080/13501677308577154.

25 Maxim Shrayer, *I Saw It, Ilya Selvinsky and the Legacy of Bearing Witness to the Shoah*, (New York: Academic Studies Press, Studies in Russian and Slavic Literatures, Cultures, and History, 2013).

viet citizens.”<sup>26</sup> This attitude was immediately adopted by the Soviet media, which now generally avoided any specific reference to the Jews. The Extraordinary State Commission’s reports, for instance, omitted the words “Jews” and “Jewish”. This policy of silence was not absolutely consistent in the months and years to come, and in 1943 and 1944 Soviet readers could still occasionally read and hear about the massacres of Soviet Jews. But many must have understood that talking about the Jews would have been unwise.

Interestingly enough, at the same time there was much public discourse about the destiny of non-Soviet Jews. In the wake of the Katyń Affair in April 1943, Yitzhak Arad argues, Soviet media attention to the Jews increased, though modestly.<sup>27</sup> In 1943 Nazi Germany launched an investigation into the mass graves of Katyń, where the Soviets had executed about 30,000 members of the Polish elite, mainly members of the officer corps. The German aim was to pit the Western allies against their Soviet partners while simultaneously drowning out alarming British and French reports about the imminent German destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. As Stalin presumed that the other Allies would not tolerate any challenges to their coalition’s moral superiority, he encouraged a propagandistic moral counter-offensive. This is why Soviet newspapers started reporting that the Germans were deporting Jews to certain death in Poland, and that in Bulgaria “the organized destruction of the Jews is calling forth indignation among the Bulgarian people.”<sup>28</sup> An editorial in *Pravda* on April 19 expressed anger against “Hitler’s Polish accomplices” and spoke of atrocities against “the defenseless peaceful population, especially Jews.”<sup>29</sup> Zvi Gitelman also mentioned fictional accounts of Red Army men sneaking into the ghetto to help resisting Polish Jews. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was described as “an important contribution of the Jewish masses to the international struggle of the progressive forces of all peoples, led by the Soviet Union, against fascism and international reaction.”<sup>30</sup>

Why, when the common efforts of the Red Army and

non-Soviet Jewish fighters were celebrated at home and abroad, did Soviet politics choose to ignore completely, to blot out the Holocaust on Soviet territory? This decision was the product of a precise political calculus. An emphasis on a special Jewish destiny would have thwarted necessary efforts to unite a torn post-war Soviet society.

a) *The myth of one people fighting on the same side:*

Aside from anything else, emphasizing or even acknowledging the Holocaust would have shed light on a rather inconvenient truth: the extensive collaboration of local non-Jewish populations in the Holocaust.<sup>31</sup> As these people were often newly and precariously integrated into the Soviet Union, the Soviet leadership was reluctant to hold them accountable for their acts. Why disturb the fragile post-war situation? After all, in 1945 very few Jews remained. The Soviet leadership was unwilling to alienate the new people of the USSR in general, and those who had profited from the disappearance of the Jews in particular. There was no one to complain about the perpetrators’ impunity. Local collaborators in the genocide of the Jews were thus generally not held accountable for their collaboration with the German occupation. Some of the wrongdoers were, of course, tried. But these were show trials,<sup>32</sup> and most of the perpetrators slipped through the net. Some, as in Poland in the immediate post-war period, were even actively sought out by the Soviet regime and ended up constituting the backbone of the new Stalinist regimes. Jan Tomasz Gross points out that contrary to the well-established cliché,<sup>33</sup> Jews did not assist in the Stalinization of Poland. Rather, it was former collaborators with the Germans who were instrumental in establishing the Communist regime in Poland after the war.<sup>34</sup>

b) *The myth of the “Fraternity of Peoples,”  
“Дружба народов”:*

Importantly, the Soviets believed that highlighting the very particular fate of the Jews would bolster Jewish national consciousness. Prior to the war, the Soviet emphasis had always been set on the assimilation and secularization of the Jewish minority. “Expunging the Holocaust from the record of the past was hardly a simple matter”, William Korey writes, “but unless it were done

26 Karel Berkhoff, „Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population“, 83.

27 Yitzhak Arad: “The Holocaust as Reflected in the Soviet Russian language Newspapers in the Years 1941–1945” in: *Why Didn’t the Press Shout? American and International Journalism during the Holocaust: A Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference Sponsored by the Elia and Diana Zborowski Professorial Chair in Interdisciplinary Holocaust Studies, Yeshiva University, October 1995*, (Hoboken, NJ: Yeshiva University Press in association with KTAV Publishing House, 2003), 203–4, 211–12.

28 Quoted in: Karel Berkhoff, „Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population“, 90.

29 Ibid. Emphasis added.

30 Zvi Gitelman, *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 25.

31 As an example: John Paul Himka: „The Lviv Pogrom of 1941: The Germans, Ukrainian Nationalists, and the Carnival Crowd“ in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53 (2011), 209–243; or Wendy Lower: „Pogroms, mob violence and genocide in western Ukraine, summer 1941: varied histories, explanations and comparisons“ in: *Journal of Genocide Research*, 09/2011, Volume 13, Issue 3, pp. 217–246.

32 Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 212.

33 The untranslatable Polish word for this is „Żydokomuna“

34 Gross, *Neighbors*, 112.

the profound anguish of the memory was certain to stir a throbbing national consciousness. Martyrdom, after all, is a powerful stimulus to a group's sense of its own identity.<sup>35</sup> Donald Donham, in another context, also observes that "after that part of one's identity suddenly becomes literally a matter of life and death, what was previously lightly worn – 'I am a Zulu', 'I am a Jew' – can become far more determinative."<sup>36</sup>

The creation of Israel in 1948 accentuated the threat of "petit bourgeois nationalism". Overnight, Soviet Jews had become potentially foreign elements. The creation of a Jewish state in a sense transformed the Jews of the Soviet Union into a nation, a people with a territory.

The policy of silencing, however, was counterproductive. It actually accentuated the Soviet Jews' sense of Jewishness. Numerous accounts of Jewish Red Army veterans show this.<sup>37</sup> Initially, the veterans emphasized how much they loved their country and its values. Oral history interviews show that relatively few of those interviewed had prior knowledge of what was happening to Jews in the occupied territories. They often learned about it when they were already at the front. They fought as Soviets above all else. When asked what were his personal reasons for participating in the war, Abram Tulman, a former air force colonel, answered: "My main reason was that I was a Soviet citizen and a patriot. I was a patriot. I had a Motherland and I loved my Motherland. I loved it because I paid a high price for it."<sup>38</sup> The soldiers Zvi Gitelman interviewed in the course of his research believed in the Soviet system, in socialism. They were not always fervent ideologues, he noted, but few of them ever questioned their right to belong to the Soviet polity before the war. They simply assumed that this was their system. After the war, when their heroism was not acknowledged and they

were labeled as "Tashkent Jews"<sup>39</sup>, many fell into deep despair. Anti-Semitism within the Red Army also increased towards the end of the war. In reaction Jews moved closer together. Anatoly Vodopyano noted: "At a table for four sat four Jews. They didn't spread out. And if one Jew was sitting, a second would definitely come up to him and then there would eventually be four at the table. Jews were trying to get closer to each other and Yiddish words began to slip into the conversation, though no one really knew Yiddish. An interest and an understanding that you were Jewish began to develop."<sup>40</sup> Another veteran then commented: "To tell the truth, before the war I did not feel that I was Jewish. I knew I was Jewish by nationality and that my parents were Jews. But my Jewish self-consciousness had only begun to develop. Especially after the war, during the Stalin regime...I understood."<sup>41</sup>

The Jewish sacrifice during the war was constantly downplayed; this produced precisely the effects that Soviet politicians had been so fearful of. The establishment of the state of Israel became immensely meaningful for many Soviet Jews. It did not help to enhance their already fragile status in the Soviet Union, but at a time when the very notion of Jewish courage was being denied in their home country, the birth of the Jewish state out of a bitter war instantly made it a symbol of Jewish heroism.<sup>42</sup> Soviet Jews were more than willing to embrace that symbol, privately at least.

*c) The Soviet Nations were united in suffering:*

Lastly, the Soviet leadership did not single out the Jewish war experience for fear of alienating the war's other victims. Twenty seven million Soviets died in the course of the war. The Holocaust was considered regrettable, but merely one small part of the larger phenomenon that, according to the Soviets, resulted in the death of so many of their fellow citizens. The Jews were not given special status. Everyone had suffered, the Jews not more than others. They could not be 'better Soviets'. Ilya Ehrenburg and Vassili Grossman arguably failed to recognize this argument when they promoted the publication of the *Black Book of Soviet Jewry*. The *Black Book*, containing material gathered from all over the country, was meant to document the Holocaust on Soviet soil and the participation of Jews as resistance fighters against the Nazis. Ehrenburg

35 William Korey, *The Soviet Cage: anti-Semitism in Russia* (New York : Viking Press, 1973), 90.

36 Donald L. Donham, "Staring at Suffering: Violence as a Subject," in *States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa*, ed. by Edna G. Bay and Donald L. Donham (Charlottesville: U. of Virginia Press, 2006), 29.

37 The Blavatnik Archive, Oral history project (<http://www.blavatnikarchive.org>) and Zvi Gitelman « Internationalism, patriotism and disillusion: Soviet Jewish Veterans remember World War II and the Holocaust » in: *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union Symposium Presentations*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Center for Advanced Holocaust studies, 2005.

38 Gitelman, Zvi, „Internationalism, patriotism and disillusion“, 117.

39 The myth of the „Tashkent Jew“ was widespread after the war. Many non-Jewish Soviets believed that Jews had „fought the war in Tashkent“, the Usbek capital. In other words, Soviet assumed that while „their“ soldiers and civilians were suffering under German aggression, Soviet Jews had fled to Central Asia and survived without coming near to the front.

40 Gitelman, Zvi, „Internationalism, patriotism and disillusion“, 114.

41 Ibid.

42 Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 224.

was sensitive to the political implications of the project. He wrote in 1944: “it is extremely important to show the solidarity of the Soviet population, the rescue of individual Jews by Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and Poles. Such stories will help heal terrible wounds and raise the ideal of friendship among nations even higher.”<sup>43</sup> Grossman noted that he was struck by the “all too frequent use of the word ‘Jew’ because it might irritate the reader.”<sup>44</sup> But Ehrenburg replied that using “people” instead of Jews went beyond the concessions he was willing to make. The fact that he had to call collaborators “Politsai” instead of “Ukrainians,” as was fitting, was already too much. Despite all their precautions, the *Black Book* was never published in the USSR. In 1947 Georgy Aleksandrov, head of the Communist Party’s Agitprop department wrote to Head of the Chamber of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and chief propagandist Andrei Zhdanov:

Reading the book especially the first section concerning Ukraine one gets a false picture of the true nature of fascism... Running through the whole book is the idea that the Germans murdered and plundered Jews only. The reader unwittingly gets the impression that the Germans fought against the USSR for the sole purpose of destroying the Jews...Hitler’s ruthless slaughters were carried out equally against Russian, Jews, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Latvians Lithuanians and other people of the Soviet Union. As a result of those considerations, the propaganda department considers the publication of the Black Book in the USSR unadvisable.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, Grossman had written as an introduction quite correctly pointing out the National Socialist view that:

The German race was declared to form the apex of this pyramid—a master race. They were followed by the Anglo-Saxon races, which were recognized as inferior and then by the Latin races, which were considered still lower. The foundation of the pyramid was formed by Slavs—a race of slaves. [Then] the Fascists placed the Jews in opposition to all people inhabiting the Earth.<sup>46</sup>

The *Black Book*, since it contained “grave political errors,” was not published. It committed the double mistake of singling out the Jews on the one hand, and of questioning the myth of a true “Fraternity of Peoples” on the other. Most copies were destroyed in 1948. A few, however, miraculously survived, and so the most comprehensive work ever written on the Soviet Jewry was saved. It was published in 1993 for the first time on the territory

of the former Soviet Union.

Towards the end of the war there was a dramatic increase in state-sponsored anti-Semitism. Even if this was not the primary reason why Jewish memory was suppressed, it still pervaded many official decisions concerning Jews. Misrepresentation of the Jewish fate during the war became common practice. Instead of considering them as heroes or victims, public opinion was led to think of Jews as traitors and cowards. In these days it was common to hear insults such as: “The Jews have spent the war in Tashkent” (the capital of Uzbekistan). Undeniably, some 200,000 Jews had been evacuated during the war. It is also understandable why the sudden appearance of many Jews in Central Asia, where there had previously been few, created the impression that “the Jews” had fled the front for safe havens. It was Mordechai Altshuler who first demonstrated in 1990s that if Jews were overrepresented among refugees, it was not because they had been given preference (or, of course, a choice). They just happened to be more urbanized than the average Soviet citizen and overrepresented in the sectors Soviet wanted to protect from the German invaders: governmental agencies, bureaucracies and factories. Additionally, Jews were, in general, more mobile than the rest of the population, and more willing to leave. Though official channels were mute about the German policy regarding Jews, some Soviet Jews soon realized via word of mouth that their fate under the German occupation might be even worse than that of the rest of the Soviets. However, few could have imagined that genocide would have been their lot had they stayed.<sup>47</sup> The stereotype of the “Tashkent Jew” was omnipresent at the time of the so-called “anti-cosmopolitan” campaign in 1952–1953. Over the years, it had come to be a *topos* in popular culture. It was in some ways consecrated in Vsevolod Kochetov’s *Zhurbiny*, published in 1952. In this novel, Veniamin Semenovitch, a greedy, petulant and treacherous Jew, has done well during the war. Not only did he never get close enough to the front to put his life in danger, but he also left his wife Katia in despair. He leads the life of a “constant wanderer,” carrying in his luggage “Agasfer”, the novel of the *Wandering Jew*, written by Eugene Sue in 1844. The message Kochetov conveyed was quite clear: the Jew had never belonged and never would. He who succeeded in avoiding combat, in slipping through legal formalities, had forfeited his right to be a Soviet. However, even if the Jew had deceived the officials, he would not “escape basic justice at the hands of the honest Soviet people.”<sup>48</sup> This justice comes down on the Jew Semenovitch when the Soviet citizen Skobelev publicly slaps him in the face (to the avowed satisfaction of the Soviet authorities’ representatives). “If Kochetov’s solution was not the outright sanctioning of pogroms, it

43 Gitelman, *Bitter Legacy*, 19.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Altshuler, „Escape and evacuation of Soviet Jews“, 101.

48 Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 235.

was not far removed,” Amir Weiner speculates,<sup>49</sup>. But Soviet Jews knew perfectly well that they had fought hard and that they had lost much in the war. Therefore they could not bear being exposed and slandered in this way and naturally resented being portrayed as shirkers and exploiters. Many left Russia when this became possible, which in turn meant that fewer and fewer people were left to keep alive the memory of the Eastern Holocaust. Those who stayed often mourned their losses in private. But there was no place for them in the public domain.<sup>50</sup>

### **Bitter thaw and icy winter: the Khrushchev (1953-1964) and the Brezhnev period**

Stalin died before he had a chance to carry out whatever somber designs he had on Soviet Jews. After a period of incendiary anti-Semitism, which culminated in the 1952 with the Doctors’ Plot, many Jews felt relieved and hopeful. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev maneuvered himself into the position of First Secretary of the Communist Party in 1953. A few years later he instigated a campaign of de-Stalinization. It was inaugurated with his speech “On the Personality Cult and its Consequences” in February 1956. In a closed session of the Twentieth Communist Party Congress of the USSR, Khrushchev thrust a stick into the anthill when he violently condemned Stalin’s dictatorial style and his cult of personality. He deemed them inconsistent with Party ideology. He castigated the execution of many of the Old Bolsheviks under Stalinist rule and the crimes committed by Stalin’s closest associate, Lavrenti Beria. In an audacious move, he advocated the return to Lenin’s socialist legalism and principles of Party rule. In the following years, Khrushchev made moves to enhance the living conditions of Gulag prisoners, insofar as the life of a forced-labor convict could be “improved.” At least prisoners were now finally allowed to communicate with their loved ones. When the limited reorganization of the Gulag was achieved, Khrushchev launched yet another symbolic purge. References to Stalin were removed from the National Anthem of the Soviet Union, and at the end of October 1961, Stalin’s body was removed from the Moscow Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square. On November 11, 1961, the “hero city” Stalingrad was renamed Volgograd. In these years, many Jews were hopeful that, at last, their memory of the war would finally become part of the Soviet World War II myth. How bitterly their hopes were deceived became obvious in the 1963 controversy around the monument of Babi Yar.

At the Babi Yar ravine SS-Einsatzgruppen and Ger-

man police shot more than 33,000 Kiev Jews in the course of two days in September 1941. In the decades that followed there was no official acknowledgment of the specifically Jewish character of the massacre. In 1959 Soviet Ukrainian authorities decided to construct a soccer stadium and a dam at the site. Soviet author Viktor Nekrasov protested against this undertaking, soon to be followed by the well-known poet Yevgeniy Yevtushenko. The latter published the now world-famous poem “Babi Yar” in the magazine *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.<sup>51</sup> Not only did it denounce the Soviet silence about the Holocaust, but it was also a powerful indictment of a prevailing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union of the early 1960s. That this poem was published at all was due to the fact that censorship in the Ukraine was somewhat less rigid or perhaps less effectively applied during the first years of the Thaw. As it happened, Yevtushenko set in motion a chain of events. The poem caught the world’s attention. The controversy grew even more uncomfortable for Soviet officials when world famous composer Dimitrii Shostakovich included the piece in his 13<sup>th</sup> Symphony. Eventually the Soviet authorities were forced to bow down to the demand of the protesters and critics for a monument. However, their concession soon proved itself to be deeply unsatisfying. When the monument was unveiled in 1966, the inscription read: “Here in 1941–1943, the German Fascist invaders executed more than 100,000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war.” There was, once again, no reference to Jews. A somewhat ludicrous plaque written in Yiddish was added in the 1980s. But it, too, failed to mention the Jews.<sup>52</sup> The controversy over the Babi Yar monument was one of many instances in which Soviet Jews realized that the so-called Thaw had failed to bring them what they had hoped for.

Quite the opposite, in fact. Jews were still treated as potential or real traitors to the Soviet people, as evidenced in the so-called Kogan affair.<sup>53</sup> In a well-publicized speech, Khrushchev dwelled on the treason by the Jew Kogan. Allegedly, Kogan had served as an interpreter for Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus, commander of the German Sixth Army at the Stalingrad front. In his speech, Nikita Khrushchev distinguished between the “good Jews” – for instance Soviet Jewish General Dragunsky – and the “bad Jews” such as Kogan. At the time the speech was given, Khrushchev must have known that the accusations were false. Benjamin Pinkus has argued that the First Secretary

49 Ibid.

50 Mordechai Altshuler, « Jewish Holocaust Commemoration Activity in the USSR Under Stalin » *in* : *Yad Vashem Studies*, XXX, 2002, 271-296.

51 Yevgeniy Yevtushenko „Babi Yar“, accessible: <http://remember.org/witness/babiyar.html>, (Accessed October 14th 2014)

52 Zvi Gitelman, „Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union“ *in*: *Bitter Legacy : Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, Zvi Gitelman (editor) (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1997), 20.

53 Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1989), 221.

knew he was thus not serving any of the state's interests but rather gratuitously venting anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>54</sup> The speech was immediately followed by the publication of a "documentary novel," *Storm clouds above the Town*, edited by P. Gavrutto. It portrayed the treason of the Judas Kogan, who in the story also denounced his comrades to the Germans. Even after a detailed investigation led in 1966 by the journalist Ariadna Hormodovna proved the claims wrong,<sup>55</sup> the book was republished and reedited several times. If in the 1963 edition Kogan had been a mere traitor, he rose to the rank of "Judas Kogan" in the edition of 1965. That the author made this change at the time of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Great Patriotic War" was no mere accident.

Leonid Brezhnev ousted Nikita Khrushchev from power in 1964. Under his rule, a new era of tight governmental control over every sphere of Soviet life began. In her book *The Living and the Dead*, Nina Tumarkin notes that "Bureaucratic dominance and incompetence, corruption as a way of life, the gradual disaffection and alienation for the populace, the emergence of a beleaguered, indeed, tormented dissident movement – all these characterized the 'era of stagnation.'"<sup>56</sup> The efforts of de-Stalinization described above came to a sudden end, but it was already too late. As far as the Communist realm was concerned, Khrushchev's anti-Stalinist stand did much to shatter the Soviet Union's prestige abroad. Many Communists around the world, who had been taught to devote themselves to Stalin unconditionally, were now distrustful of the USSR. This, too, had contributed to 1956 uprisings in Poland and Hungary.<sup>57</sup>

Internally, the situation did not look much brighter. "A new breed of Soviet citizen was taking shape,"<sup>58</sup> Tumarkin writes. The new Soviet citizen had learned to distrust state authorities, where his forefathers had respected or at least feared the regime. In the wake of the Thaw period, the culture of sacrifice for the community and for the Communist cause was no longer attractive. Individualism and pervasive skeptical nihilism replaced them. Most of the children of the Revolution were now gone. They had disappeared during the successive waves of forced collectivization and the purges of the Great Terror. They had been eaten by the regime they fought to establish. Many

of those who survived this, went missing in the Second World War. At any rate, the founding myth of the 1917 Revolution had lost its unifying power. No one identified with the dusty heroes. Nobody seriously believed in the omnipresent Communist slogans.

A new myth had to be created. As it turned out, the Second World War really entailed everything that was needed: drama, victimhood, glory, heroism, "a chic global status"<sup>59</sup> and, of course, the overwhelming victory of the Soviet people. 1965 marked the twentieth anniversary of the end of the war. It was celebrated like it had never been before. Until then the war had been a glorious yet traumatizing episode of Soviet history. From 1965 on it became the ultimate proof of the Communist system's overwhelming superiority. Communism, so went the myth, had crushed just another perverse form of the capitalist system, fascism. It was not only the triumph of a country. It marked the eternal triumph of the Communist ideological system. From that time on, the myth of the Great Patriotic War became completely ahistorical. The celebrations were all about the myth, and no longer about the memory. And the enemies and allies were no longer the same: the East Germans had become communist brothers, while the Americans and the British had become the ideological competitors.

A good illustration of the de-historicization of the Second World War can be found in reinterpretations of wartime photographs. Photographer Dimitrii Baltermants was on the Crimean Peninsula during the Red Army reconquest of Eastern Ukraine. He arrived in Kerch right after of the mass murder of the Jews by the Germans. One day he took a picture of one of the city's residents, whose name was P. I. Ivanova and who had just found her husband in a ditch. He had been tortured to death by the Germans. The picture's story was emblematic of the creative process of the Great Patriotic War myth. It was first published during the war and was said to be about the mass murder of Soviet citizens, undivided by ethnicity, at the hands of the Germans. The photograph was thus meant to bear witness to very specific war crimes against the national enemy. Underneath it, Soviet readers could appreciate the caption:

These photographs were taken after the German occupiers drove [the people] out to this place. 7,500 residents, from the very elderly to breast-feeding babies, were shot from just a single city. They were killed in cold blood in a premeditated fashion. They were killed indiscriminately—Russians and Tatars, Ukrainians and Jews. The Hitlerites have also murdered the Soviet population indiscriminately in many other cities, villages,

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54 Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union*, 221.

55 Moisei Kogan had in fact worked under the Germans as a driver, pretending to be Armenian, until he escaped in 1942, (for the article, see: Benjamin Pinkus, *The Soviet Government and the Jews: a documented story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Pp. 218, Doc. 46.

56 Nina Tumarkin, *The Living & the Dead: the Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic books, 1994), 131.

57 Even if the fact that Stalin's iron grip had loosened and Khrushchev seemed more liberal played the major part.

58 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 131.

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59 Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, 131.

and in the countryside.<sup>60</sup>

After having disappeared from the Soviet conscience for twenty years, the photo was reedited in 1965. Baltermant's career suddenly skyrocketed. The picture was renamed "Grief." It tried to convey a wholly different idea. No longer did its description focus explicitly on what the Germans did during the war. It was now a depiction of the abstract notion of "Evil" and not of a specific "evil" group anymore. It fostered the new national Soviet memory of the war and became one of its visual icons.

As Amir Weiner noted, it was also in 1965 that the regime set in motion a transition from living memory to a "determined attempt to develop a commemorative canon and sense of closure."<sup>61</sup> The 1960s were a time when progressively the last socially alien elements (the few remaining Kulaks, for instance) were released and rehabilitated:

Ethnic Germans deported en masse during the war received an official apology from the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, and, most notably, all limitations on foreign leaders and members of nationalist undergrounds, the last category to win rehabilitation (and among whom Ukrainian nationalists were the larger component), were removed.<sup>62</sup>

What did this mean for the Jews? Nothing. "No olive branch was extended to the Jewish community."<sup>63</sup> In fact, Soviet leaders found themselves satisfied with the new state of affairs. The Bolshevik epic, so they thought, ought to get rid of its association with the disliked Jewish minority. If Soviets saw the myth of the October Revolution as "Judaicized" beyond repair, then the new myth, the myth of the Great Patriotic War, decided the Soviet leadership, would not suffer the same fate.

As if the Soviet Jews' situation could not get worse, the Six-Day War began two years later. Anti-Zionism, and by extension anti-Semitism, reached a climax. Outrageous anti-Zionist propaganda circulated widely. It connected Zionism to fascism, anti-communism and racist ideologies. Some even argued that Zionism was but a Jewish variant of fascism. As one publication put it: "Many facts have convincingly demonstrated the fascist of the ideology and policies of Zionism. Fascism is disgusting in any of its guises. Its Zionist version is no better than the Hitlerite one."<sup>64</sup> In the mind of the Soviet reader, Zionism and thus Judaism were thereby linked to the greatest

evil the Soviet Union had ever experienced: the fascist invasion. "By associating Zionism with Fascism and Nazism, it is transformed from an esoteric doctrine of a far off people to a hateful ideology tied to the most repugnant people of this century, who caused the loss of 20 million Soviet lives."<sup>65</sup>

This was the point when many Jews decided to leave the Soviet Union. The generational gap played an important role. Promises of the Soviet Union had little appeal to many younger Jews, as little, for that matter, as they had to other Soviet youths. Moreover, those young Jews were the children of veterans and survivors, and the latter had transmitted to them their disillusionments. While their parents might have remained true believers and loved their country (right or wrong) against all odds, the children were alienated for good. Born after the war, they had never experienced anything else but hostility towards their ethnic group. This is why many chose to leave. Over the course of the 1970s, well over 1.2 million out of the two million Jews living in the USSR emigrated from the Soviet Union. Most of them went to Israel or to the United States after Congress unanimously passed the Jackson-Vanik amendment providing assistance to Soviet Jews who wished to leave the USSR.

Even during the Perestroika period, nothing really changed as far as Soviet-Jewish memory of the Second World War was concerned. Fewer and fewer Jews were left in the Soviet Union. Those who stayed tended to be uncritical of the regime, and desperately willing to melt into the masses and to live there as discretely as possible. It took the collapse of the USSR in 1991 to initiate the next big change in memory politics in Russia. To this day, however, Russian memory of the Holocaust has remained contradictory and still poses disturbing questions.

### Conclusion: Holocaust memory in post Soviet Russia

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and in the wake of the 1990s "memory boom," acknowledging and commemorating the Holocaust came eventually to be accepted in Russia. The truth was out and accessible. What Russians made of the Holocaust memory remains, however, difficult to evaluate. Has the Holocaust memory in Russia changed that much?

Arguably, Russia has made remarkable efforts in trying to promote historical transparency about what happened in the occupied territories between 1941 and 1944. The Holocaust now has a place in public memory. To promote historical research and education, the Russian Holocaust Center was established in 1992. Not unlike its counterparts in Israel or the United States, the

60 David Shneer, "Picturing Grief: Soviet Holocaust Photography at the Intersection of History and Memory" in: *The American Historical Review* 115 (1) (2010), 35.

61 Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 233.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Kharkov: Nash otvet klevetnikam, quoted in: Zvi Gitelman, „Soviet Anti-Semitism and its perception by Soviet Jews“ in: *Antisemitism in the contemporary world*, Michael Curtis (editor) (Boulder : Westview Press, 1986), 196.

65 Zvi Gitelman, „Soviet Anti-Semitism and its perception by Soviet Jews“ in: *Antisemitism in the contemporary world*, Michael Curtis (editor) (Boulder : Westview Press, 1986), 196.

Holocaust foundation aims at Preserving the memory of Holocaust victims by creating museums and documentary exhibitions, including the subject in the curricula of schools and institutions of higher education, organizing commemorative events, erecting monuments, and gathering evidence and memoirs.<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand, traditional Soviet ways of regarding the Holocaust are still prevalent. In 2005 the Russian president was present at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In the speech he gave that very day, however, President Putin did not mention the Jewish identity of the vast majority of Auschwitz-Birkenau victims once. He spoke at length of the tragic destiny of 600,000 Soviet soldiers who were killed while freeing Poland from the Nazis, and more generally of the 27 million Soviet war dead.<sup>67</sup> This was, in fact, an extraordinary feat of the Russian president, given that Auschwitz is nothing if not the epitome of Jewish suffering in World War Two. Putin did include Jews among the 27 million. But then, in very traditional Soviet fashion, he chose not to separate their tragic destinies from the larger Soviet suffering. This was not the only instance of the Soviet perspective on the Holocaust emerging again. Russian media, for instance, systematically subordinated the genocide of the Jews to the “culmination” of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the war, that was yet to take place in Moscow in May of the same year.<sup>68</sup>

Even Russian monuments to the Holocaust still are secondary to the Great Patriotic War narrative. At Poklonnaya Gora (“Hill of Veneration”), the memorial “Park of Victory” near Moscow dedicated to the “Great Patriotic War”, explicit references to Jewish victims are included in the complex. A synagogue was built there and it was the first Holocaust museum in Russia. The implications are contradictory. If the museum as such means that remembering the Holocaust was now accepted, building it in the park meant, at least symbolically, that this acceptance was only within the framework of the “Great Patriotic War”. Jewish destiny was made relative. A Catholic church and a Mosque were constructed there as well. Russian authorities had a sculpture erected at the same site. It was initially named “The Tragedy of the Jewish People” and intended for Israel. It was never delivered. In

Russia it was renamed and dedicated to the “Tragedy of Peoples.” On the tablet, the Russian inscription “Let the memory of them be sacred, let it remain for centuries” is repeated in the language of each of the Nazi-occupied Eastern European countries. Thus the semantic scope of the sculpture has been expanded beyond remembrance of the Shoah to encompass all Eastern European victims of the War, especially, of course, among the Russian people. And while the above-mentioned scientific-educational center claimed to be “the first organization in the post-Soviet era aimed at preserving the memory of Holocaust victims”, one finds that the “first textbook in Russia on the Holocaust” for teachers in 1995 still evinced Soviet tendencies. Collaboration by the local population with the Nazis is mentioned. Yet it does not feature as prominently as does the assistance provided to the Jews by the “Righteous Among The Nations”, or the participation of Jews in the Red Army and in the partisan war.<sup>69</sup>

The Soviet victory in the Second World War remains one of the few events of Soviet history- if not the only one- that has retained positive connotations in collective memory of the former Soviet Union. This explains why, even if overall awareness about the Holocaust has increased in Russia, non-Jewish Russians still best remember it as a rather small detail in the bigger picture of the Great Patriotic War. Seventy years after the Liberation of the camp of Auschwitz by the Red Army, the Soviet trope on the (in)significance of the Holocaust is thus alive and well.

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66 Website of the Russian Research and Educational center: <http://en.holocf.ru> (accessed 12.10. 2014)

67 Speech at the Memorial Ceremony Dedicated to the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 27th 2005 by Russian President Putin: [http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/events/details/2005/01/27\\_83055.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/events/details/2005/01/27_83055.shtml) (Accessed 15th of October 2014)

68 John Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (eds), *Bringing the dark past to light, The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2013), 138.

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69 Stefan Rohdewald, “Post-Soviet Remembrance of the Holocaust and National Memories of the Second World War in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania” in : *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2008) 44 (2): pp.173-184.