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Title: “**Studies of Jews and Judaism in Post-Stalinist Soviet Union**”

Panel: Judaism, Jewish Studies and Anti-Semitism

Jewish scholarship during the early post-revolutionary and the Stalinist years has been overviewed and analyzed by several students of Soviet Jewish history: see, e.g. Alfred Abraham Greenbaum’s book *Jewish Scholarship and Scholarly Institutions in Soviet Russia, 1918-1953* (Jerusalem, 1978), and David Shneer’s article “A Study in Red: Jewish Scholarship in the 1920s Soviet Union,” *Science in Context* 20.2 (2007). The post-Stalinist period has attracted much less attention, which reflects the brutal reality of the historical situation: during these years, 1953-1991, in the entire country there was no academic unit dealing with Jewish-related academic research. One could count on the fingers on two hands the scholars who focused on such themes. Thus, lexicographical projects resulted in the publication of two dictionaries: the Hebrew-Russian one (in 1963) and the Russian-Yiddish one (in 1984). A couple of dissertations can be categorized as belonging to Jewish studies, including a *kandidat* dissertation on Yiddish historical linguistics, and a doctoral dissertation on Sholem Aleichem’s oeuvre.

The Moscow Yiddish literary monthly *Sovetish Heymland* (Soviet Homeland, 1961-1991), the only journal that had a “license” to print material on Jewish culture and history, became an ersatz outlet for some academic and quasi-academic publications. In 1981, the journal even sponsored, albeit only for a short time, the establishment of the Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Commission, which functioned through the 1980s as an independent group.

At the same time, a peculiar kind of “scholarship” flourished during this period: people who held positions at research and higher educational institutions kept producing anti-Zionist and anti-religious articles and books, often with a veneer of scholarly authority. “Scientific atheism” was a well-established academic field in the Soviet Union. In fact, students of all higher schools had to study this subject for at least one semester. However, people from other academic fields, most notably

philosophers, would also write about Jewish religion. Despite the biased character of the anti-Zionist and anti-religious publications, Jews would buy them, because – in the absence of any other literature – such texts could carry some information about Jewish past and present.

The paper will overview the academic and quasi-academic research of Jews and Judaism, paying special attention to the ideological environment that shaped this period. It will suggest that Soviet regime's attempts to turn Jewishness into an exclusively bureaucratic category, devoid of religious, cultural and historical meanings, reinforced anti-Jewish prejudice. No authoritative – academic or other – voice could be heard on this issue during the entire period. The post-Soviet experience shows that the situation becomes different when Jewishness stops being "latent."