

Jewish Experiences in Eastern Europe, 1945–1968



International conference November 11th – 13th, 2018

Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and Eastern
European Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Centre for Contemporary History, Potsdam,
and Einstein Forum, Potsdam

ZENTRUM FÜR ZEITHISTORISCHE
FORSCHUNG POTSDAM

Alte Str. 11 • 14467 Potsdam • Germany



THE HEBREW
UNIVERSITY
OF JERUSALEM

EINSTEIN
FORUM

Conference Convenors:

Jan C. Behrends, Potsdam

Juliane Fürst, Potsdam

Mischa Gabowitsch, Potsdam

Semion Goldin, Jerusalem

A joint conference of the Einstein Forum, Potsdam, the Centre for Contemporary History, Potsdam, and the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and Eastern European Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Cover illustration: Stenotypist training in Reichenbach/Rychbach/Dzierżoniów, 1946. Courtesy of the Jewish Studies Department at the University of Wrocław

The Holocaust decimated Eastern Europe's Jewish communities, but it didn't obliterate them. Several million Jews were living in the Soviet Union and its newly expanded sphere of influence after the end of the Second World War. Their postwar experiences are often seen as an epilogue to the Shoah, or else portrayed as an interlude cut short by the communist regimes' anti-Zionist campaigns and the renewed wave of emigration they caused. Fifty years later, this conference reconsiders Jewish experiences before 1968 and places them in the wider context of postwar European societies.

Abstracts

Jan T. Gross, Berlin

Jewish Experiences in Eastern Europe, 1945–68

This keynote lecture discusses how Jewish survivors of the Holocaust had to cope with various manifestations of Antisemitism in Eastern Europe after the end of the Second World War. It also looks at how debates about these experiences have been affected by present-day political developments in the anniversary year of 2018.

Zvi Gitelman, Ann Arbor

Revival, Repression, and Restriction: Jews in Communist Regimes, 1945–68

After the Holocaust, sharp turns in government policy buffeted Soviet Jews. Following a short period of postwar recovery, the government eliminated Yiddish culture and its activists. This escalated into an “anti-cosmopolitan” campaign affecting all Jews, and the “Doctors’ Plot” (1953), a possible portent of mass deportation. De-Stalinization brought relief, but no restoration of Jews’ previous positions, nor of Jewish culture. Compared with the seemingly uniform political, cultural, and economic policies and institutions imposed by the Soviet Union on the “satellite countries,” there was significant variance in governments’ policies toward Jews. I try to explain Soviet policies, and why the USSR tolerated variants of those policies in Eastern Europe. The “Six Day War” in the Middle East prompted a sharp change in policy, but again, not all socialist countries followed Soviet policy exactly. My talk will explore demographic decline, emigration, restitution, religion and culture, self-governance, and relations with Israel and foreign Jews.

Diana Dumitru, Chişinău

Jews in Soviet Moldavia and Romania after WWII: What We Know and What We Don’t Know

This talk summarizes the current state of historical knowledge about Jewish life in Soviet Moldavia and socialist Romania after the Second World War and introduces the author’s own research on Jewish life under late Stalinism in Soviet Moldavia. Archival sources from Chişinău and Moscow indicate that developments in this republic followed a trajectory somewhat different from the tendencies displayed at the time in the Soviet capital. It will discuss both the opportunities and limitations faced by Jews in the MSSR, placing these phenomena in the framework of Soviet nationalities policies and its accompanying personnel policies. The second part of the presentation will explore the main areas of interest of historians of Jewish life in postwar Romania as well as their main findings. The presentation intends to identify and encourage further explorations of neglected and understudied topics related to Jewish history in these two regions.

Dariusz Stola, Warsaw**The History of the Jews in Communist Poland and Its Representations Since the 1980s**

My presentation will provide an overview of the history of Polish Jews between 1944 and 1968, focusing on a few selected topics and their representation in the scholarship and in public debates. The key process during that period was the dramatic numerical decline of the Jewish population and the evolution of its cultural profile as a consequence of four waves of emigration. Some topics of this history, such as postwar violence, emigration, or the international dimension of Polish-Jewish relations, have attracted the attention of scholars, while some others, such as religious practices, demography, or the life of the lower social strata, have been relatively neglected. I will also explore what topics of this history have attracted wider attention and have been discussed in public debates on the Polish-Jewish past. The latest such debate took place this year, when the 50th anniversary of the “anti-Zionist” campaign of 1968 brought some surprising political statements.

Andrea Pető, Budapest**Jews in Postwar Hungary: The Politics of Emotions**

The talk discusses the experiences of one of the largest surviving Jewish communities in Europe. After giving a brief overview of the state of research on institutions, demography, and leading personalities, it explores the politics of sources and of institutional and personal stories based on ego-documents and the Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive testimonies, with a special emphasis on gendered experiences. By exploring this aspect of the testimonies, this talk aims to contribute to an understanding of constructions of “emotional communities,” and to investigate different source genres in order to trace how the language of emotions was learned and performed in the sources influencing historical narratives.

Kateřina Čapková, Prague**Jews in Communist Czechoslovakia: Official and Private Sources**

In the few works that have been written about postwar Jewish history in Czechoslovakia, scholars have focused mostly on the attitude of the state toward the Jews, and especially on the Slánský Trial in 1952. Consequently, they have emphasized the discriminatory character of the regime and the pressure on the Jews to assimilate. In my talk, based on a broad range of archival documents and on interviews, private correspondence and photos in private possession, I aim to show the much more complex lived experience of a vibrant and diverse community. Not surprisingly, this different perspective questions many of the dominant assumptions and interpretations.

Pavel Kolář, Konstanz

The Enemy Never Sleeps: Communist Concepts of the Other from Stalin to the Prague Spring, 1945–68

All political communities need concepts of enemies to consolidate their unity. Postwar European communism, culminating in its Stalinist form, developed a particularly radical narrative of enmity. Questioning the established concept of “communist ideology” as a static doctrine, this talk seeks to unravel the transformative nature of the communist depictions of enemies during the postwar era: Imperialists, Revisionists, Dogmatists, Sectarians, Zionists—all these concepts were exposed to perpetual reinterpretations, particularly after 1956. The overarching question we should pose to European history in this period is how diverse enmity narratives continued to both compete and coexist throughout the ensuing political upheavals of the time.

Participants

Samuel Barnai is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of European Studies and at the Rothberg International School, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is a post-doctoral research fellow of the GIF (German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development) and also of the ISF (Israel Science Foundation). He specializes in large-scale studies of historical, socio-demographic, and cultural developments among East European Jewry. Among his recent publications are: “Anti-Zionism in Contemporary Russia: Eurasian, Islamic, and Left-populist Trends” in Robert S. Wistrich (ed.), *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism and Delegitimizing Israel* (2016); “Jews of Soviet Lithuania. Revival after the Holocaust” in V. Sirutavičius, D. Staliūnas, J. Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė (eds.) *Lithuanian Jews: Historical Study* (2012); “Jews in Lithuania: 1945–1990” in J. Verbickienė and L. Lempertienė (eds.), *Lithuanian Jews: History, Culture, Heritage* (2009); and “Social Trends during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev Years: The Jewish Case” in Z. Gitelman, Y. Ro'i (eds.) *Revolution, Repression and Revival: Jews in the Former Soviet Union* (2007).

Jan Claas Behrends is a research fellow at the Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) in Potsdam and teaches East European history at Humboldt University in Berlin. His interests include the study of modern dictatorships, urban studies, war, and violence. He has been a visiting fellow in Paris, Dublin, Chicago and other places, and has published widely in several languages.

Stefano Bottoni holds a Ph.D. from the University of Bologna, and since 2012 has been a senior research fellow at the Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and a visiting fellow at the Imre Kertész Kolleg in Jena (2015). His main research interests are in the political and social history of Eastern Europe under the socialist regimes, with a special focus on nationalities policies in Romania. He has taken part in several international research projects, including *Schleichwege: Inoffizielle Begegnungen und Kontakte sozialistischer Staatsbürger 1956–1989* (Volkswagen-Stiftung) and *Physical Violence in State Socialism* (Centre for Contemporary History), and is currently a team member in the *Horizon 2020* project “COURAGE” on cultural opposition in communist Eastern Europe. His publications include the monographs *Long Awaited West: Eastern Europe since 1944* (2017), and *Stalin's Legacy in Romania: The Hungarian Autonomous Region, 1952–1960* (2018).

Naida-Michal Brandl holds a Ph.D. from the University of Zagreb and is currently an assistant professor of Jewish history at the University of Zagreb. Her research focuses on the identities of Jews in Croatia during the Yugoslav periods (1918–1990); the evolution of the Zionist movement(s); Jews in the economic, social, and cultural life of Croatia; property issues; tangible and intangible Jewish heritage in Croatia; as well as on Jews in Dalmatia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Her recent articles include: “Jewish Identities in Croatia after the Second World War” (2012), “The Jewish Religious Community of Zagreb, 1945–1946” (2016), “Jewish Topography of Zagreb” (2016), “Jews Between two Totalitarian Systems: Property Legislation” (2016), and “Jewish Elites in Zagreb from 1941 until 1945” (2017).

She was a recipient of the Fred & Ellen Lewis JDC Archives Fellowship for 2017 for research on the role of the Joint Distribution Committee in the reestablishment of Jewish religious communities in Croatia (Yugoslavia) in the aftermath of the Shoah.

Kateřina Čapková is a senior researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History, Prague, and teaches at Charles University and NYU in Prague. Her book *Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity and the Jews of Bohemia* (2012) was named an Outstanding Academic Title in 2012 by *Choice* magazine. With Michal Frankl, she co-authored *Unsichere Zuflucht* (2012), a book about refugees to Czechoslovakia from Nazi Germany and Austria. She is currently working on a book comparing the postwar history of the Jews of Poland and of Czechoslovakia. In 2016, she initiated the establishment of the Prague Forum for Romani Histories (www.romanihistories.usd.cas.cz).

Diana Dumitru is Associate Professor of History at Ion Creangă State University of Moldova. Her fields of expertise include the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, Soviet history, ethnic relations, and the politics of history. She has been awarded numerous fellowships, including an Imre Kertész Kolleg fellowship, a Fulbright scholarship for research at Georgetown University, a postdoctoral fellowship for study at Yad Vashem, and a Rosenzweig Family Fellowship for research at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Her *World Politics* article, "Constructing Interethnic Conflict and Cooperation: Why Some People Harmed Jews and Others Helped Them During the Holocaust in Romania," co-authored with Carter Johnson, received the 2012 Mary Parker Follett Award, for the best article or chapter published in the field of politics and history, awarded by the American Political Science Association. Her second book, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union*, was published in 2016.

Juliane Fürst is head of the Communism and Society department at the Centre for Contemporary History, Potsdam, and a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Bristol. She is currently writing a monograph on the culture and history of the Soviet hippie movement titled *Flowers Through Concrete: Explorations in the Soviet Hippieland*, forthcoming in 2019. She is also the author of *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Late Socialism* (2010) and the editor of *Dropping Out of Socialism: Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc* (2016).

Mischa Gabowitsch, historian and sociologist, has been a research fellow at the Einstein Forum since 2010. His most recent English book publications are *Protest in Putin's Russia* (2016) and *Replicating Atonement: Foreign Models in the Commemoration of Atrocities* (as editor, 2017). He has also edited or co-edited three volumes on war commemoration in Russian and German. He is currently working on a history of Soviet war memorials, with a particular focus on the 1940s and 50s.

Konstanty Gebert is an author, journalist, lecturer, and political activist based in Poland. In 1976 he graduated from the Department of Psychology at the University of Warsaw. He

was a prominent figure in the democratic opposition in the 1970s and 1980s and cofounder of the unofficial Jewish Flying University (1979), the Polish Council of Christians and Jews (1980), and a trade union of the employees in academia, technology, and education that merged with *Solidarnosc* (1980). After the government imposed martial law, he wrote and published articles for various underground publications under the pseudonym Dawid Warszawski. Gebert also served as a war correspondent in Bosnia for *Gazeta Wyborcza*. His articles have appeared in a variety of national periodicals and foreign media. He has written numerous books, including a first-hand account of the Polish Round Table negotiations of 1989 as well as books on French policy toward Poland, on the Yugoslav wars, the wars of Israel, Torah commentary, and postwar Polish Jewry. Gebert is the founder of *Midrasz*, the first Polish-language Jewish periodical in postcommunist Poland, and regularly lectures in Poland, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the U.S.

Zvi Gitelman is Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Preston Tisch Professor Emeritus of Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. His current research is on World War Two and the Holocaust in the Soviet Union and on the politicization of history. Gitelman has been a fellow at Harvard, Oxford, the University of Pennsylvania, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Yad Vashem Institute, and the Institutes for Advanced Study in Princeton and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is the author or editor of 17 books about Soviet, East European and Israeli politics, the most recent of which are *Jewish Identities in Postcommunist Russia and Ukraine: An Uncertain Ethnicity* (2012) and *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-speaking Immigrants in Israel, the U.S. and Germany* (2016). His book *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union* (2001) was translated into Japanese and Russian.

Semion Goldin received his Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His dissertation, *Russian Jewry Under Tsarist Military Rule During World War I*, appeared as a monograph in Russian (Moscow: 2018). Since 2008 he has served as director of the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has taught courses at the Hebrew University and at the University of Haifa, and has published a number of articles on various topics of Russian-Jewish history in the 20th century.

Jan Tomasz Gross is Professor of History and Norman B. Tomlinson '16 and '48 Professor of War and Society Emeritus at Princeton University. His books, which have won numerous awards and have been translated into multiple languages, include *Golden Harvest: Reflections about Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (with Irena Grudzińska-Gross, 2012), *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (2006), *Neighbors: Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (2001), and *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (edited with István Deák and Tony Judt, 2000).

Pavel Kolář is Professor of East European History at the University of Konstanz, Germany. His latest publications include *Der Poststalinismus. Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche*

(2016) and *What Was Normalisation? Essays on Late Socialism* (2016, co-authored with Michal Pullmann, in Czech). He is currently finishing a book project on the politics of capital punishment in state socialism.

Ilse Josepha Lazaroms holds a Ph.D. in history from the European University Institute in Florence. Her work, at the intersection of feminist studies, Jewish studies and Central European history, currently explores issues of home and belonging in Hungarian Jewish migration stories. Her book *The Grace of Misery: Joseph Roth and the Politics of Exile, 1918–1939* (2013) received the 2015 Victor Adler State Prize from the Austrian Ministry of Science and Education. She has been a visiting fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Imre Kertész Kolleg in Jena, the Center for Jewish History in New York, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Budapest. At the moment she is a Research Fellow in Jewish Studies at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main and a lecturer in Gender Studies at Utrecht University. Her debut novel, *Vinter*, will appear in 2019.

Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov is Associate Professor at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Her research focuses on the history of East European Jewry in the 19th and 20th century, the history of Yiddish culture (especially the Yiddish daily press), and Polish-Jewish relations. Her books include, among others, *Obywatel Jidyszlandu. Rzecz o żydowskich komunistach w Polsce* (2009; English translation forthcoming 2019) and *Mówić we własnym imieniu. Prasa jidyszowa a tworzenie żydowskiej tożsamości narodowej* (2016). She is currently completing a new edition of Emanuel Ringelblum's notes from the Warsaw ghetto (forthcoming 2018). She was the 2010 recipient of the Jan Karski and Pola Nirenska Award for research on Polish-Jewish history.

Pól Ó Dochartaigh is Registrar and Deputy President of the National University of Ireland, Galway. He holds degrees in German (Cardiff) and in Irish (Ulster) and a Ph.D. (Nottingham) on Jews in GDR literature. He spent six years in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s, including two years (1987–89) as an English teacher at the Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität in Rostock, GDR. He is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, a former President of the Association for German Studies in Great Britain and Ireland, and was a Founding Member of the International Feuchtwanger Society (Los Angeles) in 2001. His research is in literature and history in a German-Jewish-Irish triangle. His books include *The Portrayal of Jews in GDR Prose Fiction* (1997), *Germany Since 1945* (2003), *Julius Pokorny, 1887–1970: Germans, Celts and Nationalism* (2003), and *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust* (2015). He is currently editing a book that arose from a UK Research Council-funded project on Jews in Irish literature, which he led.

Andrea Pető is a professor in the Department of Gender Studies at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary and holds a Doctor of Science degree from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She has written five monographs, edited thirty-one volumes, and her works on gender, politics, the Holocaust, and war have been translated into seventeen languages. In 2018 she was awarded the 2018 All European Academies Madame de Staël

Prize for Cultural Values. She edited, with Louise Hecht and Karoline Krauska, *Women and Holocaust: New Perspectives and Challenges* (2015), and, with Judith Sapor, Maura Hametz, and Marina Calloni, *Jewish Intellectual Women in Central Europe 1860-2000* (2012). She has co-authored a volume with Ildiko Barna which maps the activity of the people's tribunals in Budapest using quantitative methods (*Political Justice in Budapest After World War II*, 2015) and edited the Macmillan Handbook *Gender and War* in 2017.

Iryna Ramanava holds a Ph.D. from the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus and is currently Professor of History at the European Humanities University (Vilnius). Her research explores the relationship between the authorities and society in the period of Stalinism and in the years after it, with a special focus on everyday life. Her books include *Mir: The History of a Small Town as Told by Its Inhabitants* (2009, in Belarusian), *Power and Society: the BSSR in the 1930s (Documents of the Secret Department / Special sector of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), BSSR* (2018, in Belarusian and Russian). She has been a visiting fellow at the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies of the University of California, Berkeley and the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme / École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, and a visiting professor at the History Center and History Department, Sciences Po, Paris.

Joshua Rubenstein is a longtime Associate of Harvard University's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and is also Associate Director for Major Gifts at Harvard Law School. He was the Northeast Regional Director of Amnesty International USA for 37 years. His first book, *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights* (1985), was the first general history of the Soviet dissident movement. *Tangled Loyalties*, his biography of the controversial Soviet-Jewish writer Ilya Ehrenburg, came out in 1996. *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (2001) received a National Jewish Book Award in the United States. He then edited *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* (2005) and *The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-Occupied Soviet Territories* (2008). His interpretive biography of Leon Trotsky is part of the *Jewish Lives Series* of Yale University Press. *The Last Days of Stalin* (2016), his tenth book, is scheduled to appear in Azeri, Estonian, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese, and Ukrainian.

Dariusz Stola is a historian and professor at the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences. Since March 2014 he has been the director of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews, a leading European narrative museum and major cultural institution in Warsaw. He has authored six and co-edited four books, and published more than a hundred scholarly articles on the political and social history of Poland in the 20th century, the Holocaust, international migration, and the communist regime. He has served on the advisory boards of several Polish and international institutions and journals.

Jewish Experiences in Eastern Europe, 1945–68

Program

Sunday, Nov 11, 2018

Venue: *Einstein Forum, Am Neuen Markt 7, 14467 Potsdam.*

No registration required.

7:00 PM *Jan Gross*

Keynote lecture: Jewish Experiences in Eastern Europe, 1945–68

Monday, Nov 12, 2018

Venue: *Einstein Forum, Am Neuen Markt 7, 14467 Potsdam.*

No registration required.

10:00 AM *Zvi Gitelman*
Revival, Repression, and Restriction: Jews in Communist Regimes, 1945–68

11:00 AM *Diana Dumitru*
Jews in Soviet Moldavia and Romania after WWII: What We Know and What We Don't Know

12:30 PM *Dariusz Stola*
The History of the Jews in Communist Poland and its Representations since the 1980s

1:30 PM Lunch break

3:00 PM *Andrea Pető*

Jews in Postwar Hungary: The Politics of Emotions

4:30 PM *Kateřina Čapková*

Jews in Communist Czechoslovakia: Official and Private Sources

5:30 PM *Pavel Kolář*

The Enemy Never Sleeps: Communist Concepts of the Other from Stalin to the Prague Spring, 1945–68

Tuesday, Nov 13, 2018

Venue: *ZZF, Am Neuen Markt 9d, 14467 Potsdam.*

Please register by e-mailing Stephanie Karmann at karmann@zzf-potsdam.de

9:30 AM Panel discussion: Jewish Communists and Loyalists. Participants: *Naida-Michal Brandl, Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, Pól Ó Dochartaigh*. Chair: Mischa Gabowitsch

11:30 AM Panel discussion: Communist Regimes and Antisemitism.

Participants: *Stefano Bottoni, Konstanty Gebert, Joshua Rubenstein*. Chair: Juliane Fürst

1:00 PM Lunch break

2:15 PM Panel discussion: Everyday Life, 1945–68.

Participants: *Samuel Barnai, Ilse Josepha Lazaroms, Iryna Ramanava*. Chair: Jan Behrends

4:30 PM Panel Discussion: Directions for Research.

Participants: *Kateřina Čapková, Zvi Gitelman, Dariusz Stola*. Chair: Semion Goldin