

PROJECT JUDAICA UPDATE:
June 1992

Introduction:

PROJECT JUDAICA is a joint program of instruction and research in Jewish Studies sponsored by the Russian State Humanities University (RGGU), the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO). The project offers a structured five-year curriculum in Jewish studies at RGGU, leading to a university degree in "Jewish Languages, Culture, Texts and Archives". The project also conducts a comprehensive survey of archival resources on Jewish history in Russia and the other former Soviet republics, which will culminate in 1995, with the publication of a "Guide to Archival Collections on the History of the Jews in Pre-Revolutionary Russia and the USSR".

The program of instruction began in Fall 1991. Twenty-five students were admitted as Jewish Studies majors, and enrolled in a full complement of courses in Jewish language, history, and culture taught by professors from JTS, YIVO, and American, European, and Israeli universities. Upon their graduation, these students will become the first cadre of accredited Judaica specialists in Russia, and will assume positions in universities and cultural institutions (libraries, museums, archives), as well as in Jewish education and communal leadership. A Judaica division of RGGU's library, consisting of books selected and shipped by JTS and YIVO, services the program, as well as the university community and the general reading public.

The archival survey has amassed information on the Jewish holdings of some seventy-five archives in Russia and the Ukraine. Over 600 collections have been recorded, spanning the time period between 1800 and 1956, and documenting all aspects of Jewish social, cultural and political life in Eastern Europe. The accumulated information is being transferred onto a state-of-the-art computer data base, which will be stored both in Moscow and New York.

PROJECT JUDAICA is directed by Dr. David Fishman of the Department of Jewish History, JTS, and Research Associate at YIVO. The Jewish archival survey is co-directed by Mr. Marek Web, Chief Archivist of YIVO. The project is supervised by an Executive Committee chaired by Dr. Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of JTS, and Mr. Samuel Norich, Executive Director of YIVO. It receives guidance and counsel from an Academic Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished scholars and specialists.

The program in Jewish Languages, Culture, Texts and Archives at RGGU is supervised by a Working Group of university faculty and administration, chaired by Vice-Rector for Study Natalya I. Basovskaya. The Jewish archival survey is conducted by RGGU's Center for Archival Research, and is directed by Professor Evgenii V. Starostin, Dean of the University's Historical-Archival Institute.

Spring 1992 Program of Instruction:

In the Spring 1992 semester, the Jewish Studies students coalesced into a cohesive group of friends and peers, with shared interests and goals. Their Yiddish language aptitude advanced to the intermediate level, as they broadened their familiarity with Jewish history, and composed their first independent research papers in Judaica.

The Spring 1992 course offerings were as follows:

1. Elementary Yiddish (continued)
Instructors: Isidoro Niborski, Sorbonne, Paris, and Dov-Ber Kerler, Oxford University.
13 weeks, 6 hours per week.
2. Jews and Judaism in the Middle Ages
Instructors: Menahem Ben Sasson, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and Robert Chazan, New York University.
6 weeks, 4 hours per week.
3. Colloquium: Topics and Sources in Russian Jewish History
Instructors: Marek Web, YIVO, Mark Kupovetski, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow, Rashid Kaplanov, Institute of General History, Moscow, David E. Fishman, JTS and YIVO.
13 weeks, 2 hours per week.

Research paper required.
4. English Readings and Practice in Judaica
Instructor: Tatyana A. Markielova, RGGU.
12 weeks, two hours per week.

Each course was offered twice, in morning and evening time-slots, to accommodate students' schedules.

The students' knowledge of Yiddish advanced impressively under the tutelage of Professor Kerler, himself a native Muscovite who returned to Russia for the first time in twenty-one years. The students' familiarity with Yiddish culture (folklore, literature, music, theater etc.) grew, as did their appreciation of the role which Yiddish played in Russian-Jewish life in the past.

The course in Medieval Jewish history was offered in accordance with the program's "parallel curriculum", whereby students study general history and Jewish history of a given period during the same semester at RGGU. This arrangement encourages students to apply information and concepts from the Jewish course to the general one and vice versa. Enthusiastic reports from Professors Chazan (of NYU) and Basovskaya (the instructor of Medieval history at RGGU,) noted that the "parallel curriculum" enhanced the students' performance in both courses.

During the Spring 1992 semester, the students were required to compose their first original research papers in Judaica, under the guidance of Mark Kupovetski and Rashid Kaplanov, two Moscow-based specialists in Jewish history. In the course of their research, students became acquainted with the holdings of RGGU's Judaica library, and learned of the vast literature on Jewish Studies available in English. (See the list of student research papers, Appendix I.)

An air of excitement and adventure continued to pervade the classroom. The students are aware that they are involved in a historic enterprise - the revival of Jewish studies in Russia after a half-century of suppression and neglect. They are fascinated by the new topics, ideas, and approaches to which they are being exposed, and clearly enjoy being taught by professors from America, Israel and the west. Many of them are recapturing their own Jewish cultural heritage and deepening their commitment to it.

Judaica Library

Spring 1992 was the first semester in which the 3,500 volume Judaica library was in full operation. Mr. Mark Perlmutter, a pensioner proficient in Yiddish, Hebrew and English, was hired by the RGGU library to catalogue Judaica books and supervise their circulation. Mr. Perlmutter catalogued the in-house library of the Yiddish journal Sovetish Heymland in the late 1980s.

The Judaica library room has become a study hall and social center for the Jewish Studies students. Many of them do their homework there, in consultation with the librarian and their friends. Students often go to the Judaica room in their spare time to browse among the books and meet with each other.

The Judaica library is an open stacks, non-lending facility. Books may be used on the premises or in the adjacent main reading room. Library hours are Tuesday through Friday 10:00 AM-1:00 PM and 4:30-8:30 PM. The collection is open to the university community and the general reading public.

Archival Project:

The Jewish archival survey has grown in scope and sophistication in the last four months. A total of seventy five archives have responded to the inquiries of RGGU's Center for Archival Research regarding Jewish collections and documentary holdings. Over 600 relevant collections have been recorded to date, covering the time period between 1800 and 1956, and documenting all aspects of Jewish social, cultural and political life in Eastern Europe.

The archival survey of Moscow is reaching its concluding stage. Extensive work is currently being conducted in the two richest depositories: The Central State Archive of the October Revolution (TsGAOR), which houses major collections on the Holocaust and Russian-Jewish history, and the former Communist Party Archive (now called the Center for the Documentation and Study of Contemporary History), which contains the official archives of the Jewish Workers' Bund, the "Po'ale Tziyon" Socialist-Zionist Movement and other Jewish political organizations. At the end of 1992, the Seminary, YIVO and RGGU will publish a number of interim guides to the Jewish holdings of major Moscovite repositories. These will include:

1. An Annotated Descriptive Guide of Jewish Collections in the Former Communist Party Archive.
2. A Guide to Jewish Documentary Collections in Moscow's Museums and Libraries.

Work is proceeding as planned in St. Petersburg, Belarus, and Ukraine, and the results of the archival survey in these locales will be submitted to RGGU's Center for Archival Research at the end of the year.

During the current summer vacation-break, the students of the Jewish studies program will conduct internships in several archival repositories, working with Jewish documents and collections. The internships will take place in the October Revolution Archive, the Former Communist Party Archive, The Archive For Literature and Art (TsGALI), The Archive for Ancient Acts (TsGADA), and the Russian State Library. The students' work will be supervised by Mikhail Krutikov, a PhD candidate in Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

The Jewish archival survey has drawn praise from Patricia Grimsted Kennedy, one of the world's foremost authorities on Soviet archives. In a recent paper on developments in the field, she writes that PROJECT JUDAICA "is providing one of the first examples of a foreign collaborative computerized project...The experience of this project, aside from the valuable substantive information about previously inadequately described holdings, will provide the basis for discussion of important methodological issues."

Challenges and Plans for the Future

PROJECT JUDAICA faculty participated in the conceptualization and planning of RGGU's program in Comparative Religion, which will be inaugurated in fall 1992. The curriculum gives prominent attention to the Hebrew Bible, Ancient Israel and the history of Judaism. Beginning next year, relevant Jewish studies courses will be incorporated into the Comparative Religion program. This arrangement will add significantly to the student enrollment in some of our courses, and will ensure that a broader cross-section of RGGU students are exposed to the Jewish religious tradition. (See the curriculum for 1992-93, Appendix II.)

As PROJECT JUDAICA has moved from dream to reality, its complexity has grown. In addition to the American and Israeli faculty in residence at RGGU, the project now employs, jointly with the university, a Moscow staff of seven part-time and full-time workers - two local instructors of Jewish history, a director and associate director of the archival survey, a secretary/computer programmer, and two librarians. To ensure PROJECT JUDAICA's effective operation in the future, there is a need for an on-sight American Coordinator, to assist the visiting faculty in their academic and every-day affairs, and to supervise the local staff. The appointment of a qualified Moscow Coordinator for the 1992-93 academic year is a high priority.

This new position and the rampant inflation of prices in Russia will require an expansion of the project's budget, if it is to meet its educational and research goals. The cost of survey-work in the archives has increased five or six fold in the past half-year, and will continue to rise. Other expenses, such as the provision of food (including kosher meat) for faculty, are increasing at a similar rate. If, in the past, the ground-expenses incurred in rubles were "a steal" by American standards, they are rapidly becoming significant items in the project's budget.

Plans are underway for the all-important fourth year of PROJECT JUDAICA, 1994-95, during which a group of at least ten students will be in residence at JTS and YIVO in New York. The year will provide students with an opportunity to devote their energies entirely to Judaica, in a stimulating and supportive learning environment.

As the program's first academic year draws to a close, its extraordinary success has generated serious thinking about expansion, and the admission of a new contingent of twenty-five students in the fall of 1993 or 1994. In order to do so, and offer a first-year and third- (or fourth-) year curriculum simultaneously, the size of the program's faculty would need to be doubled, since professors already teach between eight and twelve hours per week, and cannot take on a heavier teaching-load. The program's ability to expand beyond its current size is therefore contingent upon a significant increase of funding.

Conclusions:

After half a century in which which Jewish history and civilization were excluded from Soviet higher education, Jewish Studies is now an integral part of academic life at RGGU. An intensive academic program is being pursued, with outstanding faculty, dedicated students, and a demanding program of course-work and individual research. The Jewish Archival survey continues to grow in scope and sophistication, and has begun drawing students into its sphere of activity.

A young Jewish intellectual leadership is being trained and nurtured. This development will have innumerable positive repercussions for Jewish life and Jewish scholarship in Russia.

Appendix I:
Spring 1992 Research Papers

1. Astashkevich, Ira; "Jews in Medieval Moscow"
2. Chlenov, Matvei; "The Velizh Blood-Libel (1798)"
3. Dolgopolski, Ilya; "Yehuda Ha-Levi and His Time"
4. Dubrova, Katya; [topic not declared]
5. Eliasberg, Galina; "Israel Zinberg as a Historian of Jewish Literature"
6. Khanina, Anya; "The Beginnings of Hasidism"
7. Kheifets, Karina; "Jews and the Crusades"
8. Kornilov, Aleksei; "The Relations Between Jews and the Russian State Until the Beginning of the 19th Century"
9. Krichevskii, Lev; "The History of the Marranos"
10. Krikun, Sveta; "The Frankist Movement"
11. Levitova, Anya; "David Ha-Reuveni"
12. Malchikova, Anya; "Judaism in the Time of Jesus"
13. Martinova, Yaroslava; "Crimea as a Karaite Center "
14. Minkin, Alexander; "The Ideology of Sabbateanism"
15. Mirkin, Grigorii; ""The First Crusade and the Jews of Palestine"
16. Mogileva, Yulia; "The Jews of Russia and the Reforms of Alexander II (1855-1865)"
17. Pichugin, Ivan; "Frankism and the Crisis of Judaism in the Second Half of the 18th Century"
18. Schedrin, Vasily; "Jewish Messianism in the 16th Century"
19. Shkolnikova, Elena; "The Jewish Shtetl in Eastern Europe"
20. Shternshis, Anya; "Uriel Acosta"
21. Sidlin, Mikhail; "Russian Appellations for the Jews in 16th and 17th Century Writings"

22. Sivertsev, Aleksei; "The Khazar Kingdom: Prospects for Future Research"
23. Solntseva, Anya; "Hebrew Poetry in Medieval Spain"
24. Tarutin, Pavel; "The Origins of Hasidism"
25. Vekselman, Larisa; "The Jews of Russia in the Second Half of the 19th Century: Legislation and Reality"

Appendix II:

RUSSIAN STATE HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY: Specialization in Jewish Languages, Culture

Curriculum and Faculty, 1992-93

Fall 1992

1. Intermediate Yiddish (6 hours per week; 14 weeks)
September 14 to December 31: Sheva Zucker (Duke University)

2. Introduction to Judaism (6 hours per week; 8 weeks)
October 14 to December 8: Yosef Penini and Moshe Tutnauer
(Bet Midrash, Jerusalem)

3. Modern Jewish History (1492-1914) (6 hours per week, 7 weeks)
September 14 to October 9: Shmuel Feiner (Bar Ilan University)
December 9 to December 30: David Fishman (JTS & YIVO)

4. English Readings and Practice in Judaica (2 hours per week, 14 weeks)
September 14 to December 31: Tatyana Markielova (RGGU)

Spring 1993

1. Yiddish Literature (4 hours per week; 12 weeks)
February 10 to May 15: David G. Roskies (JTS)

2. East European Jewry (1800 - 1917) (4 hours per week, 14 weeks)
February 10 to March 12: Samuel Kassow (Trinity College, Hartford)
March 15 to May 30: Steven Zipperstein (Stanford)

3. Seminar in Russian Jewish History (2 hours per week; 14 weeks)
February 10 to May 26: Rashid Kaplanov (Institute of General History)

4. English Readings and Practice in Judaica (2 hours per week; 14 weeks)
February 10 to May 26: Tatyana Markielova (RGGU)

RGGU Program in Jewish Studies
Final Grades - Spring 1992

Courses:

"Yiddish Language", Isadoro Niborski and Dov Ber Kerler, 12 weeks, 6 per week ["Yiddish"].

"Jews and Judaism in the Middle Ages", Menahem Ben Sasson and Robert Seltzer, 6 weeks, 4 hours per week ["Medieval"].

Grading System:

5 = excellent
4 = good
3 = satisfactory
2 = unsatisfactory (failed)

Conversion Scale:

85-100 = 5
70-84 = 4
55-69 = 3
under 55 = 2

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yiddish</u>	<u>Medieval</u>
1. Astashkevitch, Ira	5 (93)	5 (99)
2. Chlenov, Matvei	3 (69)	low 5 (85)
3. Dolgopolski, Ilya	4 (81)	5 (89)
4. Dubrova, Ekaterina	3 (69)	5 (91)
5. Eliasberg, Galina	low 5 (85)	5 (87)
6. Khanina, Anya	3 (69)	4 (75)
7. Kheifets, Karina	low 5 (86)	low 5 (85)
8. Kornilov, Aleksei	5 (93)	5 (99.5)
9. Krichevskii, Lev	5 (88)	high 5 (98)
10. Krikun, Sveta	5 (88)	high 4 (84)
11. Malchikova, Anya	3 (69)	5 (90)
12. Martinova, Yaroslava	3 (68)	low 4 (72)
13. Minkin, Alexander	5 (88)	low 5 (85)
14. Mirkin, Grigory	3 (68)	3 (72)
15. Mogilova, Yulia	5 (90)	5 (94)
16. Pichugin, Ivan	4 (73)	4 (82)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yiddish</u>	<u>Medieval</u>
17. Schedrin, Vasily	low 5 (80)	5 (90)
18. Shkolnikova, Elena	5 (92)	5 (91)
19. Shternshis, Anya	high 3 (69)	4 (78)
20. Sidlin, Mikhail	low 4 (70)	5 (87)
21. Sivertsev, Aleksei	low 5 (85)	5 (92.5)
22. Solntseva, Anya	5 (90)	5 (91)
23. Tarutin, Pavel	low 5 (85)	3 (66)
24. Vekselman, Larisa	5 (90)	low 5 (86)

Others (not Jewish Studies majors)

1. Aliev Chengiz [flunked out of program, fall 1991]	2	high 3 (68)*
2. Dunayevskii, Mikhail [Did not attend in fall 1991; took only Yiddish in spring; did not attend Ben Sasson, grade for Chazan exam - 5 (97)]	5 (89)	-
3. Gusev, Valentin [took only Yiddish in fall and spring]	5 (92)	-
4. Lashkievich, Mikhail [took only Yiddish in spring]	5 (97)	-
5. Levitova, Anya [failed Yiddish in fall semester; did not attend Ben Sasson, grade for Chazan exam - low 5 (85)]	4 (81)	-

Enrolled in program as majors: 24 students

Enrolled in courses as electives: 5 students