Elie Wiesel visited the Soviet Union in fall 1965 during the Jewish High Holidays. Due to Soviet censorship, Jews in Western countries knew very little about the life of Jews in the Soviet Union. Wiesel wrote, "I went to Russia drawn by the silence of its Jews. I brought back their cry." Wiesel described his visit to the Soviet Union in his book, The Jews of Silence. He wrote about Antisemitism and the suppression of Jewish life in the Soviet Union. Jewish scholarly, educational, and cultural organizations were closed by the Soviet authorities in the second half of the 1930s–1940s. However, in spite all the efforts of the authorities, Jewish religious life was never completely suppressed in the Soviet Union.

Official Soviet reports show that a significant percentage of Kievan Jews continued to attend synagogue or clandestine minyanim after the Second World War and celebrated Jewish religious holidays. So, the Kiev synagogue became a place of dissent and spiritual resistance against the Soviet state Antisemitism and assimilation policy. The authorities understood this well and attempted to break Jewish resistance by discrediting and attacking Judaism and Jewish religious life.

Revival of Jewish Religious Life in Kiev after the Shoah

Before World War II, Kiev had the second largest Jewish urban population in the Soviet Union after Moscow. In 1939, 224,236 Jews lived in Kiev out of 847,000 inhabitants (26.5 percent). The Jewish population of Moscow in 1939 was 250,181. By January 1, 1947, Jews constituted 18.8 percent of the Kiev population: 132,467 of 704,609 city
inhabitants. Thus the Jewish population of Kiev had decreased from 1939 to 1947 by 91,769 people. Most of these Jews were either killed by the Nazis in Babi Yar or perished on the front during the war.

Despite their great losses, Kievan Jews attempted to restore their cultural and religious life after the war. The last Jewish scholarly, cultural institutions and public organizations were closed in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s during the anti-cosmopolitan campaign. However, Jewish religious life was never completely suppressed in the country. There are several reasons for this. The Soviet Union officially had a policy of freedom of conscience. But unofficially the authorities put considerable pressure on believers of all denominations. Most churches, mosques, and synagogues were closed in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. Before the February 1917 revolution, Kiev had four synagogues and sixteen prayer houses, but they all were closed by the Soviet authorities in the late 1920s and early 1930s. However, in spite of the closure of the synagogues and the anti-religious propaganda, a significant part of the Jewish population in Kiev and the Soviet Union remained observant.

After World War II, the Soviet authorities returned the synagogue at 29 Shchekavitskaia Street in the Podol district (where most Kievan Jews lived) to the Kiev Jewish Community. It was the first synagogue built in Kiev in 1895, financed by the merchant Gessel Markovich Rosenberg. The Moorish-style building was designed by the architect Nikolai Gardenin. The synagogue was closed by the Soviet authorities in 1929 and turned into the Club of Jewish Artisans. During the occupation of Kiev, the Nazis used the synagogue as a stable.

During and immediately after World War II the Soviets decreased their pressure on religious institutions. Josef Stalin even sought support from the Russian Orthodox Church to raise patriotism among the population. Religion helped people overcome the psychological trauma of losing family members, friends, and relatives during the war. Religious Jews, who returned from the front and evacuation to Kiev, petitioned the authorities to return to them the synagogue at 29 Shchekavitskaia Street and their request was fulfilled in 1945.

In the 1950s–1970s many Kievan Jews attended the only operating Kiev synagogue. According to official reports in 1951 and in 1956–1958, about thirty thousand Jews (approximately one fifth of the Jewish population) attended the synagogue on Yom Kippur holidays: “Shchekavitskaia Street, where the Kiev synagogue is located, was so crowded on Yom Kippur in 1958 that no transportation could move on the street. On the adjoining streets the crowds of Jews moved continuously.” Four cantors participated in the religious service in the synagogue during the religious holidays.

One synagogue obviously could not satisfy the religious needs of the Kievan Jewish population. Religious Jews repeatedly appealed to the authorities to allow the opening of a second synagogue in Kiev after World War II; however, all requests were rejected. Furthermore, two Kiev rabbis were dismissed by the Soviet authorities. Kiev Rabbi
Itske Gershkovich Shekhtman (in office 1945–1952) was deprived of his accreditation at the end of 1952 for unauthorized fundraising for repair of the synagogue. He was reported to have publicly requested in the synagogue that “every Jew should support the only synagogue in the city Kiev.” The report also stated: “Furthermore, an illegal ‘Jewish mutual help cashbox’ was found in the Kiev synagogue. Itsyk Goifman was in charge of this cashbox, in which up to 12,000 rubles was detected.”

In addition to “financial crimes,” the commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) of the Ukrainian SSR accused Rabbi Shekhtman of trying to turn the synagogue into a “‘kahal’ [i.e., to give to the prayer house a specifically national character], and to save by any means the ‘only’ synagogue as the ‘only’ place of ‘Jewish organization.’” In other words, Rabbi Shekhtman was accused of trying to re-create the pre-Soviet Jewish community structures in Kiev. The commissioner of the CARC reported the lively Jewish religious activity in Kiev under the leadership of Rabbi Shekhtman. This ran counter to the official policy of the ultimate suppression of religious life in the Soviet Union. So, Rabbi Shekhtman was dismissed, and he died a few months later in April 1953.

Avrum Alterovich Panich became the new Kiev Rabbi (in office 1953–January 1958). However, Rabbi Panich was deprived of his accreditation in January 1958 by the CARC for the similar crime of “fundraising [for the synagogue] in private apartments and in offices.” Of course the rabbis had to raise money because neither they nor the synagogue had any other revenue. The Soviet authorities certainly understood this, but they used the accusation of illegal financial activities to deprive Kiev religious Jews of their rabbi. From January 1958 until 1987, Kiev Jews did not have a rabbi at all. The Kiev synagogue remained open but was under strict observation by the KGB. People who attended the synagogue were also under KGB observation, and some of them had problems at their work or even were fired from prestigious positions. In the absence of a rabbi, the synagogue was operated by the board of the Kiev religious community, members of which were preselected and approved by the CARC. Of course the members of the board, which depended on the CARC, were generally obedient to the Soviet authorities.

Elie Wiesel visited the Kiev synagogue on the second day of Sukkot in 1965. He recalled:

The Jews I found in the synagogue differed from those in other cities. Their fear is more solid, more compact, and perhaps more justified. Their own leaders terrorize them…you can feel it in your bones. Nowhere else in Russia did I see such hatred on the part of Jews toward their own leaders…

The gabbai of the synagogue was a clumsy and vulgar Jew by the name of Jonah Gandelman [Gendelman]. His eyes were permanently enraged, his voice continually shouting. He had the domineering character of a military commander and seemed
to hold a whip over the congregation. One look from him, and the object of his wrath was cowed into obedience.¹⁷

The authorities, who under Nikita Khrushchev launched a new anti-religious campaign, hoped that without a rabbi the number of religious Jews would decrease in Kiev. The authorities at least partially achieved their goal: the number of observant Jews who attended the synagogue significantly dropped. In 1978, twenty years after Rabbi Panich was removed, 600 Jews attended the synagogue on the first day of Pesach on April 22, and 950 Jews attended the synagogue on the last day of Pesach. On the other days of Pesach, the attendance at the synagogue was 100–150 per day.¹⁸

However, Jewish religious life in Kiev was not limited to the synagogue. There were also numerous minyanim. According to the report of the CARC commissioner P. Vil’khovyi, for the last quarter of 1952 about 100 illegal minyanim operated in Kiev:

The authorities took measures to stop the operation of the minyanim in known locations, however some of them probably continue their activity underground. These minyanim gathered in average from 40 to 60 people. For example, on Kreshchatik Street #58 in a private apartment, there was a special minyan for Jewish intelligentsia (medical doctors and other professionals). Not less than 100 people participated in this minyan.¹⁹

In 1952 the Jewish religious community in Kiev included five thousand people who were officially registered as members of the single synagogue. About five thousand Jews participated in minyanim. So, there were at least ten thousand observant Jews in Kiev in the last year of Stalin’s rule. In 1973 the chairman of the Kiev Jewish religious community, I. B. Zhydovetskii, reported that the synagogue produced and sold sixty-two tons of matzah before Pesach that year. Eighty-two hundred Jews from Kiev and its suburbs submitted orders for matzah. The customers purchased on the average five to six kilograms (ten to twelve pounds) of matzah.²⁰ So, considering the number of orders for matzah, the number of religious Jews had not decreased significantly in Kiev from 1952 to 1973, in spite of all the efforts of the Soviet authorities to suppress Jewish religious life in the city.

According to Zhydovetskii, “if 40 illegal minyanim were not operating in different districts of the city, the [Kiev] synagogue would always be overcrowded.”²¹ Thus, the CARC commissioner M. Gladarevskii, who reported a conversation with Zhydovetskii on May 15, 1973, concluded that “obviously the increased activity of the Jewish religious community makes it necessary to more thoroughly control” its activity.²² Control over the synagogue was reinforced, but it did not help much. Five years later, on Pesach in
1978, the Kiev synagogue produced and sold over sixty-one tons of matzah. This was almost the same amount as in 1973, which means that the number of observant Jews had remained about the same.

The CARC commissioners explained their failure to suppress ongoing Jewish religious life in Kiev by the stubbornness of observant Jews. The CARC commissioners complained that Jewish religious fanatics often broke work discipline and Soviet law by refusing to work on Jewish holidays. For example, according to the report of the CARC commissioner, on Yom Kippur in 1951 many stores were closed in Kiev: “There were 34 stores closed on Yom Kippur in Podol district alone; all salesmen of these stores were in the synagogue on this day.”

My great-grandfather, Yankel’ Berkovich Khiterer, was one of these “stubborn” observant Jews about whom the CARC commissioners complained. In Stalin’s time, when the workweek was six days and the only weekend day was Sunday, he refused to work on Saturdays. He said that God did not allow him to work on Saturday. A command from God was apparently persuasive for Stalin’s authorities because my great-grandfather was allowed to work five days per week. Perhaps it also helped that my great-grandfather worked in modest positions. Before the war he sold magazines and newspapers in a booth; after the war he worked at the post office.

The CARC commissioners also accused observant Kievan Jews of a lack of Soviet patriotism. For example, the CARC commissioner A. Oleinikov wrote in his report of April 7, 1953, about the inappropriate behavior of Kievan Jews on the day of Stalin’s funeral, on March 9, 1953:

On March 9 of this year, on Monday, a day unusual for religious service, an unusually large number of Jews visited the Jewish synagogue in Kiev. Over five thousand Jews came to the synagogue, among whom the majority were unbelievers or those who seldom come to the synagogue (only on Yom Kippur).

Exactly on this Monday, on March 9 this year, the funeral of I.V. Stalin took place. Due to this, a huge number of Soviet people gathered to listen to the radio broadcast [of Stalin’s funeral] on Kreshchatik and other large squares of Kiev.

Why did a significant part of Jews not come to Kreshchatik to be with all the people there, but instead concentrated at the synagogue?

I assume that this happened (the concentration of Jews at the synagogue on that day) because the synagogue is the center for all Jews, not only the prayer house for observant Jews. Synagogues are really the place of concentration and gathering of almost all the local Jewish population.

The above listed facts show that “behind the shoulders and backs” of the registered Jewish communities and their synagogues, hide some dark forces and possible
nationalists, who use Judaism as a curtain for some specific purposes. I hope that our state security [i.e., KGB] will pay attention to this.25

Perhaps many Kievan observant and nonobservant Jews concentrated in the synagogue on the day of Stalin’s funeral because they were afraid of a new pogrom in the city. The memories of the Jewish pogrom in Kiev on September 7, 1945, were still fresh. During this pogrom sixteen Jews were killed and over a hundred were seriously injured.26

The situation in Kiev was quite explosive. Stalin died during the “Doctor’s Plot” campaign, when a significant part of the local gentile population believed that “the Jewish doctor-wreckers” had poisoned Soviet leaders. During the campaign local Antisemites called in their leaflets for the killing or the expulsion of all Jews from the city. So Kievan Jews used the proven tactic of survival during a pogrom: to concentrate in large numbers in one place and prepare to defend themselves in case of danger.

Although the number of religious Jews who attended the synagogue significantly dropped after removal of the rabbi, the synagogue and its vicinity remained the place of Jewish gathering and the center of Jewish national life in Kiev. The chairman of the Kiev Jewish Community, Gendelman, reported to the authorities in 1966 that a thousand religious Jews attended the synagogue on Yom Kippur and that “the rest of the twenty thousand, which created the crowd near the synagogue, were not observant, but they considered that it was their duty to show Jewish national unity in this day.”27

The representative of the CARC, A. Sharandak, wrote in his secret report “About Hostile Activities Under Coverage of the Synagogue” to the chairman of the CARC, A. A. Puzin, on November 15, 1962: “The nationalist elements consider the [Kiev] synagogue as the only place of Jewish communication and the center of Jewish unity in the surrounding hostile environment.”28 Sharandak reported that ninety-six foreign tourists, including twenty Israeli citizens, visited the Kiev synagogue in 1962. He stated that Israeli Ambassador to the Soviet Union Yosef Tekoah,29 along with the attaché officer and his wife, attended the Kiev synagogue on Yom Kippur, on October 8, 1962, and stayed there from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. They came out several times and communicated with the Jews, who gathered in large numbers on the street near the synagogue. Sharandak claimed that these diplomats “provided nationalist propaganda and invited Jews to immigrate to Israel, distributed Zionist and nationalist illustrated brochures and Zionist badges.”30 Sharandak wrote that the Israeli diplomats provoked “anti-Soviet activities among some Jews, who came to the synagogue. Some people screamed from the crowd that the Soviet authorities didn’t give freedom to Jews, discriminated against them in the right to work and education, and wanted to repeat the fascist Babi Yar. The screamers from the crowd addressed their statements to the Israeli diplomats and asked them for protection.”31
Sharandak reported that the Israeli diplomat Karmel and the entire Israeli volleyball team attended the Kiev synagogue on the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, on October 20–21, 1962, and distributed there “Israeli nationalist literature in Russian, English and Hebrew.”

Sharandak wrote that the Kiev City Council was considering closing the synagogue, “which is not the place of satisfaction of religious needs of the observant Jews, but a center for connection with the agents of the foreign intelligence services, a site of the instigation of Jewish bourgeois nationalism, a stronghold of the Israeli Embassy in the USSR for spreading of undermining Zionist activity, and a black stock market for various dealers, businessmen and crooks.”

However, the Kiev synagogue was not closed, and visits of foreign tourists there continued in the 1960s–1970s. Nine musicians of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra attended the synagogue on the last day of Passover on April 24, 1965. They distributed their religious literature and talliths (prayer shawls). As noted earlier, Elie Wiesel attended the synagogue on the second day of Sukkot in 1965.

During Sukkot on September 28, 1966, three young Jews came to the synagogue during the religious service and demanded that the religious board announce to the Jews that there was a memorial meeting in Babi Yar at 5 p.m. on September 29. The meeting was devoted to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Holocaust of Kiev Jews in Babi Yar. The chairman of the Kiev Religious Community, Gendelman, spoke to the congregation in the synagogue on September 29, 1966. He said that the authorities did not allow any meeting in Babi Yar and that rumors about the such a meeting were a provocation. Gendelman called upon the congregation to not go to Babi Yar.

The next day, September 30, a group of Jews came to the synagogue and blamed Gendelman for intentionally misinformed them. There had in fact been a meeting in Babi Yar on September 29 — unsanctioned by the authorities — where writer Victor Nekrasov, dissident Ivan Dziuba, and others presented their speeches, and Kiev cinematographers shot a documentary. On September 30 V. Sukhonin (his position is not mentioned in the source) reported to the secretary of the Kiev City Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, A. P. Botvin, about the unsanctioned meeting in Babi Yar: “Gendelman told the Jews that the synagogue should not participate in such events because the observant Jews should commemorate the dead according to the religious ritual in the synagogue, but not in a meeting. In response to Gendelman, Panakh called the leaders of the Jewish religious community the enemies of Jewish people.”

Thus, despite all efforts by the authorities to keep the Kiev synagogue under control, it became a center of Jewish national life and a place of both spiritual and physical resistance to the state and popular Antisemitism and the assimilation policy of the Soviet authorities. The authorities and local Antisemites understood this well and attempted to break Jewish resistance by attacking Judaism.
In 1958 the Central Committee of the Communist Party began a new anti-religious campaign. Although it affected all religious denominations, “the most violent and vicious attacks were directed against the Jewish religion.”\textsuperscript{16} Benjamin Pinkus wrote that in the 1960s that “between 15 and 20\% of all the anti-religious articles in the Soviet press were directed at the Jewish religion, and not at the main religions in the country. . . . In this period, fifty four books were published against the Jewish religion in Russian alone.”\textsuperscript{17} However, none of these books received such “worldwide publicity and evoked [such] sharp reactions in the West” as \textit{Iudaism bez prikras} [Judaism Without Embellishment] by Trofim Kichko. Published in 1963 by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, with 12,000 copies printed in Ukrainian, it was addressed to a Ukrainian audience. The book was openly antisemitic, asserting that hypocrisy and bribery were “admissible in Judaism, as are ‘contempt and even hatred’ for non-Jews.”\textsuperscript{18} Kichko wrote that “Jewish capital opened for Hitler the road to power and Jewish bankers received from Hitler titles as ‘honorary Aryans,’ which protected them from persecution.”\textsuperscript{19} The book was illustrated by crude cartoons, which depicted Jews in the Nazi \textit{Der Stürmer} style.\textsuperscript{20}

Kichko’s book was not coincidentally reminiscent of Nazi antisemitic publications, because Kichko was a Nazi collaborator during the war. An article about his collaboration with the Nazis had appeared on February 10, 1953, in one of the main Soviet newspapers, \textit{Literaturnaia gazeta}. The article said that Kichko, who represented himself as a Soviet partisan, was really a Nazi collaborator during the war in the Ukrainian city of Vinnitsa. He was expelled from the Communist Party in 1948 due to the accusation of collaboration with the Nazis but was readmitted to the party in 1954.\textsuperscript{41} So Kichko’s collaboration was well known; nevertheless, the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences published his book. If such an openly antisemitic book had been published in Moscow or Leningrad, it would have provoked the protest of all the liberal intelligentsia. But in Kiev, due to the strong popular Antisemitism, every attack on Jews (physical or verbal) was received with pleasure by much of the population.

However, considerable protest came from abroad. On February 24, 1964, Morris Berthold Abram, the president of the American Jewish Committee, supported by a United States representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, brought Kichko’s work to worldwide attention by criticizing it during a press conference. He called the book a “disgusting example of the religious hatred and antisemitic literature” that was reminiscent of Hitler, Goebbels, and Nazi propaganda.\textsuperscript{42} The work was condemned in the United States and many European countries. Under intense international pressure, the Soviets denounced the book and withdrew it from circulation.
On April 4, 1964, the newspaper *Pravda* published the report of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union about Kichko’s book, which stated:

The author of the book and the authors of the preface wrongly interpreted some questions concerning the emergence and development of this religion. . . . A number of mistaken propositions and illustrations could insult the feelings of believers and might even be interpreted in the spirit of Antisemitism.

It is difficult to say whether Ukrainian Antisemites accidentally exceeded the allowed limits of attacks upon Jews and Judaism, or, more likely, they intentionally tried to expand the limits. A few years later, in 1968, Trofim Kichko published a new antisemitic book, *Iudaizm i Sionism* [Judaism and Zionism], by the Znannia [Knowledge] publishing house. The book was published in Ukrainian and designed for a wide audience. On January 20, 1968, the newspaper *Pravda Ukrainy* reported that “Kichko was being rewarded by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Ukraine with an honorary diploma for his services to atheist propaganda.” This shows clearly that Kichko’s publications received support from the Ukrainian Soviet authorities.

Certainly, there were many other publications against Judaism and Zionism in Kiev and Ukraine, but Kichko’s works attracted the attention of the world for their rabid Nazi-style Antisemitism.

**JEWISH CULTURAL LIFE IN KIEV**

I think that the most amazing thing about Jewish cultural life in Kiev is that it continued to survive under the conditions of strong popular and state Antisemitism. All Jewish performances were forbidden in the Soviet Union in the last years of Stalin’s regime; however, during Khrushchev’s Thaw some Jewish concerts and performances were again allowed.

In 1959, the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Yiddish writer Sholom Aleichem was celebrated in the Soviet Union. The authorities permitted in that year “a relatively large number of Yiddish concerts.” Soviet Yiddish singer Nehama Lifshitz came with her concerts to Kiev in December 1959. Historian Yaacov Ro’i wrote that Nehama Lifshitz’s concerts “were not only cultural events, but ‘happenings’ of great national significance.” Yiddish writer Itsik Kipnis, the poetess Riva Balasnaia, and the widow of David Hofshiht, Feige, came to Lifshitz’s concert in Kiev in December 1959. Nehama came with her Jewish concerts to Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, and other Ukrainian cities several times in the 1960s before her immigration to Israel in 1969.
But the strongest impression was made by her first performance in Kiev in December 1959. Ro'i wrote:

Jewish cultural events were very rare in the Ukrainian capital. The large hall was so packed that there was no standing room at all. Nehama concluded her concert with the “Lullaby to Babii Iar” by a Jewish poet from Kiev, Shayke Driz, set to music by Riva Boiarskaia (also of Kiev). Nehama usually sang this particular song last, as she found it difficult to continue singing after it. But to sing about Babii Iar in Kiev was not like singing about it elsewhere. Here no one applauded. The hall seemed to be electrified.

The entire audience rose to its feet like one man and stood in absolute silence, in the atmosphere of fear that characterized the Jews of Kiev. In Nehama’s words, this was a “curtain of tears.” As she left the hall people stood outside, still silently weeping, in order to touch her hand or sleeve as though she were some holy person.

In addition to rare Jewish performances, Kievan Jews enjoyed reading books by Jewish and Russian-Jewish writers Sholom Aleichem, Babel, Ilia Ehrenburg, Itsik Kipnis, Grigorii Polianker, and others. Their works were published in Russian in the Soviet Union in 1950s–1970s.

Yiddish poet and writer Itsik Kipnis was expelled from the Ukrainian Writers Union and arrested in 1949 for “bourgeois nationalism.” He was imprisoned in concentration camps until 1954. After his liberation he did not receive permission to live in Kiev until 1958. He settled in the Kiev suburb of Boiarka. His apartments in Boiarka and later in Kiev were the unofficial “center of Jewish culture. Many Kievan Jews came to the Kipnis apartment to look at Jewish books, receive advice about how to learn Hebrew, to listen to Kipnis’s observations about Jewish literature, which became an important part of their spiritual life.”

As a “clerical language,” Hebrew was forbidden in the Soviet Union from the 1920s. But illegal Hebrew courses [ulpanim] functioned in Kiev, the first of which were opened in 1969. The first two teachers, Evgeniia Bukhina and Anatolii Gerenrot, were “young people who had previously learned Hebrew from older Zionists in Kiev itself.” Nobody published Hebrew literature in the Soviet Union. But Hebrew books arrived from Israel to the Kiev synagogue and private individuals. According to Vera Yedidya, the owner of an illegal secondhand bookstore sold Hebrew books from private collections. “His store even became a meeting place for Jews seeking an opportunity to talk Hebrew.”

In the 1970s the Jewish samizdat [clandestine] journal Evrei v SSSR [Jews in the USSR] circulated in Kiev as well as in Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk, Khar’kov, Riga, and Baku in tens of copies. One of the journal’s publishers, Alexander Voronel, wrote:
“It was our intention to provide Soviet Jews with cultural material to compensate for their dearth of national self-consciousness that was the result of the total silence of the Soviet publications on Jewish history and culture.”\(^5\) By 1980, twenty volumes of *Evrei v SSSR* had been published. “Altogether more than five thousand pages were published in *Evrei v SSSR* by more than one hundred authors. The ‘Jews of silence’ showed that they were not altogether silent.”\(^5\)

Kievan Jewish artists Zinovii Tolkachev (1903–1977) and Mikhail Turovsky (b. 1933) devoted many of their works to Jewish themes, particularly to the Holocaust. During the war Tolkachev served in the Soviet Army, with which he came to the Nazi death camps Majdanek and Auschwitz. He later depicted the horror of the camps in his albums *Majdanek* (1944–1945) and *Flowers of Auschwitz* (1945). Many of Tolkachev’s paintings were made in the camps immediately after their liberation. At some point he ran out of paper and, while rummaging through one of the Nazi offices in Auschwitz, found paper with the letterhead “Commandant of Concentration Camp Auschwitz,” which he used for his paintings. So this letterhead became part of his works, showing the creator of this horror.\(^5\)

Tolkachev’s two albums, published in Warsaw in 1945–1946, were in the name of the Polish government sent to the leaders of the Soviet Union, United States, Great Britain, and France. During the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the newspaper *Pravda Ukrainy* accused Tolkachev of creating paintings with “Zionist-religious content,” and the artist was denounced as a “bourgeois nationalist and rootless cosmopolitan.”\(^5\)

In his later years Tolkachev worked as a book illustrator, and he also made a series of portraits of Ukrainian and Jewish writers. In the 1960s he returned to Jewish and Holocaust themes and made two series of paintings, *Auschwitz* and *Shtetl. Auschwitz* was published as an album of twenty-six paintings in Kiev in 1965, with an introduction by the Ukrainian Jewish writer Leonid Pervomaiskii. An expanded version of the album with eighty paintings was published in Moscow with an introduction by the Russian writer Aleksander Borschchagovskii.

The Kievan artist Mikhail Turovsky immigrated to the United States in 1979. Before his emigration, he was already recognized as a prominent artist with the title People’s Artist of Ukraine. He was also a member of Academy of Arts of Ukraine. However, Turovsky left Ukraine in search of artistic and personal freedom. In America, Turovsky created his series of works, *Holocaust*, in which he devoted many paintings to the Babi Yar massacre.\(^6\)

The Holocaust and Babi Yar massacre themes were dominant in the works of Kievan Jewish artists and writers in the postwar period because they were the most traumatic experiences in their lives. The Babi Yar massacre changed the atmosphere of the entire city. Not only Jews but many gentiles were traumatized by the massacre.
THE EMIGRATION MOVEMENT

The main reasons for the emigration of Jews from Kiev were the same as from the rest of the Soviet Union: state and popular Antisemitism, the suppression of Jewish national and religious institutions, and low living standards. So, Jews who searched for a better and more “meaningful Jewish life” tried to emigrate from the USSR.\textsuperscript{57}

State discrimination continued in the Soviet Union until the late 1980s. Kievian Jews were not hired for prestigious positions nor accepted into prestigious universities. They were considered by the authorities to be a fifth column that could leave the country at any time and take with them precious knowledge and state secrets.

But Jews suffered even more from popular Antisemitism in Kiev. Antisemites often insulted and sometimes beat Jews on the streets, in stores, markets, and schools, and on public transportation. Many Jewish graves were vandalized in Kiev cemeteries, and antisemitic signs and leaflets often appeared in different parts of the city. Sociological research conducted by Ludmila Tsigelman found that 74 percent of Jews who emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel reported that they had experienced Antisemitism in their childhood.\textsuperscript{58}

Many Kievian Jews wanted to emigrate from the Soviet Union. However, Jewish emigration was severely restricted by the Soviet authorities. Jewish refusniks [people refused permission to leave the Soviet Union] organized unsanctioned meetings at the synagogue and in Babi Yar, where they demanded that they be allowed to leave the country and to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. Many of these Jewish activists were arrested. But in spite of all of this persecution, the authorities never succeeded in completely suppressing the Jewish national movement in Kiev.

The Six-Day War raised the national self-esteem of Soviet Jews. Jewish youth dreamt about emigration to Israel. Tsigelman wrote that in many Jewish families, the youth initiated the emigration from the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In some cases, when their parents refused to leave the country, the young people emigrated alone. According to Tsigelman, “Of twenty-four youth who finished one of the Kiev mathematical schools in 1971, fifteen had already been living in Israel for several years by 1980. Those youths decided on repatriation independently, as in the cases of Mark Lutsker and Iakov Vinaver, who left despite their parents’ objections, after having served three-year prison terms for their refusal to serve in the Soviet army.”\textsuperscript{59}

Soviet Ukrainian authorities reported the growth of a Zionist mood among the Jewish population of Ukraine. They explained this phenomenon by the influence of Zionist propaganda from the radio station Voice of Israel. Thus, a secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, F. Ovcharenko, wrote in his
secret report to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (TsK KPSS), on April 22, 1971:

According to the information of the local communist organization, a significant part of the Jewish population of Chernovtsy, Odessa, Kiev, Vinnitsa, and some other cities of Ukraine listen to programs of the “Voice of Israel,” especially in Russian . . . .

Considering this circumstance, we ask TsK KPSS to take measures to jam the programs of the radio station “Voice of Israel” by the radio station Maiak [Beacon], or by the programs of the Ukrainian radio station Promin’ [Beam], especially in the cities of Chernovtsy, Odessa, Kiev, Vinnitsa, and others, where a significant Jewish population lives.60

However, despite the struggle of the Soviet authorities against Zionism and “enemy voices,” thousands of Kievan Jews left for Israel and the United States in the 1970s.

CONCLUSION

The Soviet authorities never succeeded in completely assimilating the Jews or suppressing the Jewish national movement. From 1945 through the 1970s, Jewish national life continued in Kiev: religious Jews (about 20 percent of the Jewish population) attended the only open synagogue or prayed in minyanim in private homes. Hundreds of Jews attended unsanctioned memorial meetings in Babi Yar on September 29 (the day when the Jewish massacre began there). They, together with Russian and Ukrainian liberal intelligentsia, ultimately forced the Soviet authorities to build a monument in Babi Yar in 1976. Kievan Jews enjoyed Jewish cultural life, sanctioned or unsanctioned: rare Jewish public performances and often unofficial gatherings in private homes, where they discussed Jewish literature and samizdat, as well as talked about the newly created State of Israel and its conflict with the Arab countries. Many discussed the possibility of emigrating from the country and studied Hebrew.

In his essay Babi Yar, composed on the third anniversary of the massacre on September 29, 1944, Itsik Kipnis wrote that nobody could exterminate all Jewish people. “A people half and three-quarters of which has been annihilated, is like a glob of mercury. Wrench half of it away, and the other half will become rounded and whole again.”61 To echo the words of Kipnis, I can say that it was impossible to deprive Jews of their national identity or completely suppress their religious and cultural life. All of the official pressure on Jews to assimilate into the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union brought about the opposite results: the rise of Jewish national consciousness
and the emigration of Jews from the country. State and popular Antisemitism just accelerated these processes and never silenced the Jews.

NOTES

2. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 14–19.
6. Ibid.
8. The Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (TsDAVOU), f. 1, op. 24, d. 1572, ll. 314–16.
10. CAHJP, RU 2004, l. 64.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
16. *Gabbai or shamash*, a person who assists in the running of synagogue services. The official position of Jonah Gendelman was the Chairman of Kiev Religious Community. (Mitsel’, *Obshchiny iudeiskogo ispovedaniiia v Ukraine*, 122).
19. CAHJP, RU 2004, l. 64.
21. Ibid., 140.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 142.
24. CAHJP, RU 2003, l. 98.
27. Mitsel’, Olsbchiny iudeiskogo ispovedaniia v Ukraine, 125.
28. Ibid., 112.
29. Yosef Tekoah (Tukaczynski) was the Israeli Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1962–1965). His last name is misspelled in the report as Gekoah.
30. Mitsel’, Olsbchiny iudeiskogo ispovedaniia v Ukraine, 111.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid, 112.
34. TsDAVOU, f. 4648, op. 2, d. 451, l. 25.
37. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 173.
47. Ibid., 179.


51. Ibid., 143.


53. Ibid., 259.


59. Ibid., 59.

60. CAHJP, RU 1616, l. [without number].