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To the "City of Bread"?

Testimonial Perceptions of Holocaust Evacuation

Abstract

Composers, poets, academics, and even the state Yiddish theatre, were all evacuated between 1941 and 1942 as part of the Soviet intelligentsia. Evacuated families and intellectuals are an emerging category of Holocaust survivors. Soviet citizens were evacuated not according to levels of danger, but rather to the material value to the state. A comparison between the transit of Soviet evacuation, including Gulag transit, and the forced movement of Jews during the Holocaust links the victim groups and reveals the inextricable overlaps between the Holocaust and the Gulag. In both cases, there was uncertain language about travel vaguely "east" to the unknown republics of the central Soviet Union and to the death camps of the *Generalgouvernement.* The Jews who survived in the evacuation to Central Asia also had the memory of Soviet deportations to Siberian detention, the Gulag, and to Russian camps from which few returned. A discussion of Jewish life in Tashkent and evacuee interactions with local Bukharian Jews reveals the difficulties of life in Tashkent, the contributions of Jews both in the military and in home production that challenge pejorative post-war notions of cowardly Jews hiding from the front, and the various factors which led to integration – or the lack thereof – in the Central Asian community. The overlap between the Holocaust and the Gulag, the discussion of life in Tashkent, and a testimonial reading of evacuation establishes the frameworks for the rise of post-war Stalinist antisemitism in the Soviet Union and the preservation of Yiddish culture in exile in Central Asia.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in the Soviet Union, hundreds of thousands of civilians immediately sought refuge in the Soviet interior. This transit inward built on centuries of Russian imperial exodus to Siberia and Central Asia, including colonisation of the space and the resettlement of criminal elements to the "periphery". Evacuation from the German advance opened a new category of "evacuation" separate from that of the displaced people ("refugees" or *bezhenets*) following the First World War.[1] As Rebecca Manley discusses at length, there is a distinction between internal Soviet refugees and a more universalised refugee experience. The internal Soviet refugees were evacuees and belonged to a distinctly chaotic category of evacuation.[2] In Soviet documentation, wartime displacement was not referred to as removal but as "flight".[3] Considering evacuation from the Holocaust relationally to the Gulag reveals that the apt comparison is not with Europe's many refugees, as Anna Akhmatova has suggested in her *Poema bez goroya* (Poem Without a Hero).[4] Rather, there are blurry categories between survivors, evacuees, refugees, and political prisoners which complicate narratives of Holocaust and Gulag survivorship and post-war antisemitism. A detailed reading of evacuation testimonies builds on Man-

1 Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 7–8.
2 Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, introduction.
3 State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF) f. a-259, op. 40 d. 3028, 82–83.
4 Anna Akhmatova, *Poema bez goroya* (Moscow: Samizdat Publication, 1976).

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ley's analysis, offering individual insights into these experienced and changing categories, as well as into life in Central Asia, and informing post-war subjectivities.

This testimonial reading also expands on the interactions of Ashkenazi Jews with their Central Asian counterparts and hints at Orientalist sentiments and the loneliness of evacuees. The Jews who survived in the evacuation to Central Asia also had the memory of Soviet deportations to Siberian detention, the Gulag, and to Russian camps from which few returned. Intellectuals were not evacuated for benign humanitarian concerns, but were able to leave in the initial, confusing bureaucratic upheaval of the initial days of Operation Barbarossa, along with the party leadership and civilians necessary for the war effort.[5] Most critically, the confusion and disorientation articulated in testimonies points to the changing categories of refugee, survivor, and evacuee, and the larger geopolitical forces which forced migration across the Soviet Union. Arbitrary Soviet bureaucracy and the disintegration of the party apparatus, combined with the enforcement of martial law and the rapid advancement of the German army, cost a large majority of Jews in the western borderlands their lives.[6] The evacuee experience in the Second World War was intertwined with the Russian imperial displacement of citizens, the resettlement and Russian colonisation of Central Asia, and the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Gulag transit. Even between western Soviet and Polish Jews, there were differing reactions to the German invasion based on age, perceptions of Communism, gender, and religiosity, which changed even across the 1940s.[7]

The evacuation history of Tashkent often largely ignores the experiences of Central Asian Jews, notably the Bukharian community, who interacted with Western Soviet and Polish evacuees. Similarly, the larger category of "evacuee" flattens the differing experiences of Soviet and Polish Jews in exile. For example, Polish Jewish evacuation has largely been integrated into Polish diasporic history and not broader Jewish or Soviet historiography.[8] Research by Albert Kaganovitch and Atina Grossmann reinforces the patriotism and military service of Bukharians and their willingness to host and welcome Ashkenazim, particularly when they saw religious commonality. Bukharian reactions directly counter the antisemitic idea that "Jews fought the war from Tashkent" and show the importance of Jewish military service from Central Asia. Furthermore, welcoming refugees and providing financial and material support for religious evacuees in Tashkent and Samarkand contributed to Jewish solidarity movements and the preservation of culture during the onslaught of the Holocaust. These local and individual preservation efforts, like welcoming a Chabad family or helping with an Ashkenazi wedding, were coupled with more official support like the relocation of the Yiddish theatre to Tashkent and the evacuation of intellectuals.

By drawing on testimonies from the Fortunoff Archive, the USC Shoah Foundation, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Bukharian Lens Project, a more complete picture of the evacuation experience emerges. This work builds on Manley's, Anna Shternshis', and Eliyana R. Adler's analyses, reinforcing the dis-

5 Anna Shternshis, "The Rear", in *Jews in the Soviet Union: A History,* vol. 3: *War, Conquest, and Catastrophe, 1939–1945,* eds. Oleg Budnitskii, David Engel, Gennady Estraikh, and Anna Shternshis (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 213–215.

6 Shternshis, "The Rear", 214.

7 Eliyana R. Adler, "'I Became a Nomad in the Land of Nomadic Tribes': Polish Jewish Refugees in Central Asia and Perceptions of the Other", in *Distrust, Animosity, Solidarity: Jews and Non-Jews during the Holocaust in the USSR*, eds. Christoph Dieckmann and Arkadi Zeltser (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem: 2021), 243–277.

8 Atina Grossmann, Mark Edele, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 13.

orientation of evacuation and the changing self-identification with categories like "refugee" and "evacuee". Testimonies also highlight underlying ethnic and regional tensions, like those related to Asiatic perceptions of Central Asia that lingered in the Russian imperial consciousness, and any residual Jewish associations to Central Asia which existed in the pre-war period.

The Mythic Steppe – Flight and Bukharians in the Jewish *Zeitgeist*

Decisions to leave Poland and the western Soviet Union were made quickly amid panicked uncertainty. This was further complicated by gender and class dynamics, as well as the memory of previous wars, and if the advancing Germans or Soviets were more perceptually dangerous.[9] Evacuees left family behind, and they were often the sole survivors of Polish and Ukrainian families. Fritzi S. said "young people had to save themselves, so we went to the trains" on 2 July 1941, narrowly missing the arrival on 5 July of the Germans who, with Ukrainian collaborators, killed all of the Jews in the city inside the kosher slaughterhouse.[10] Repeated testimonies point to the warmth of Tashkent and refuge in the "city of bread", referencing a popular 1923 book by Aleksandr Neverov, *Tashkent City of Bread*.[11] Polish Jews specifically referenced the formation of Władisław Anders' Polish army in exile, the desire to enlist, and the possibilities of further flight via Iran to Israel. Although a small minority joined this branch of the Polish army in exile, most were discouraged by humiliating patriotism tests from lower-ranked Polish officers, which kept the Jews in Tashkent and Central Asia.[12]

In addition to personal decisions to continue to Tashkent, official mechanisms pushed people further east. From 1939, the Soviets realised that they had an enormous Jewish refugee problem dating from the Tsarist Pale of Settlement, and the Soviet Friendship Treaty which created a new demarcation line along the Bug River. The decision to send Jews to the interior from 1939 was thus part of a larger, elaborate set of rules on who could leave and where they could go to, or "passportisation" ostensibly to clarify refugees' legal status.[13] Theoretically, the evacuation was meant to be organised, with "spontaneous self evacuation" heavily discouraged.[14] There was a large, overarching plan in 1942: from March to July 1942, intellectuals were specifically evacuated to Kursk then onward to Saratov and the Tatar Republic, and from July to September 1942 more intellectuals were evacuated.[15] In Ukraine, men, tractors, draught animals, and grain were evacuated first, whereas the Tatar evacuations first sent children eastward.[16] The Georgian republic wanted to send arriving evacuees onward to Central Asia, for example.[17] The initial zone of evacuation was to central Russia, but then the evacuation council expanded the possible areas to include Siberia, Central Asia, and Kazakhstan, with the export of "Sovietising elements"

9 Eliyana R. Adler, *Survival on the Margins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 15–30.
10 Fritzi S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2604), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
11 Grossmann, *Shelter from the Holocaust,* 186.
12 Ibid., 187.
13 Budnitskii, Engel, Estraikh, and Shternshis, *War, Conquest, and Catastrophe*, 8–9, 31.
14 Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 48–54.
15 Glavnoe Pereseincheskoe Upravlenie pri Soviete Ministrov RSFSR, fond A-327, RG-22.027 M. Accession 2011.18.
16 "Iz istorii Velikoi otechestvennoi voiny: nachalo voiny", *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* no. 7 (1990): 207.
17 GARF f. A-259, op. 40 d. 3037, 20.

being an added benefit.[18] Could one even flee? Having documents and being on the Soviet side of the border at the outbreak of war were also enormously decisive. Felix F., who worked in the Yiddish theatre, was caught trying to return to his family in Poland from Moscow, but he had a Soviet employment card and was sent back to the Soviet Union and ultimately evacuated.[19] Gilda Z. told her father that she wanted to flee to Russia with her youngest brother, and she was given the option by "White Russians" of taking the Soviet passport and continuing on to Brest Litovsk or going back to Poland.[20] For Evelyn E., she happened to be visiting her grandparents for Shabbat, and they were able to all evacuate as they lived on the Soviet side of the border.[21]

The histories which focus on Polish-Jewish exile pay limited attention to Jewish experiences and local interactions in Central Asia, the importance of solidarity with Central Asian Jews, and the possibility of other historical mythologies about Tashkent beyond the single book by Neverov. Eisenstein described the evacuation as a "journey into the unknown", but there are historical mythologies about both the Steppe and Central Asia which lingered in Soviet and Jewish consciousness.[22] The perception of a warm, welcoming, Jewish Central Asia has origins in the Purim story, which approximates the persecutions of Xerxes I in the fourth century CE, ultimately resulting in a diasporic community of Persian-speaking Jews in Central Asia.[23] Certainly, panicked Polish and Western Soviet Jews did not plan an exile to Tashkent based on the Central Asian Jewish flight in the fourth century. However, the mythos of this region as a place of plenty and warmth, and not being completely foreign, is not exclusively traceable to a book from the 1920s. Why did Jews choose the warmth of Tashkent over the colony allocated to them in Birobidzhan? Anders' Army was not the most geographically expeditious path to Iran nor to Israel from the western Soviet Union. Finally, when Jews arrived in Tashkent, their interactions with Bukharians were not as "intermittent" as the Polish testimonies suggest.[24] Religious Jewish interaction in Tashkent and across Uzbekistan was a significant solidarity movement which continued through the Soviet destruction of evacuated Jewish institutions and even into the post-Soviet diaspora, with strong ties between the Chabad-Lubavitch and Bukharian communities. Combined, the motivations of Jews to evacuate specifically to Tashkent, combined with the Bukharian and local preservations of Jewish culture, create a more complete picture of Jewish life in exile.

In testimonies, the description of Tashkent as a city of warmth seems to mean both the climate and the welcoming safety of the Soviet interior. David S. discussed the literal cold of his initial evacuation to a transit camp and "extreme Polish antisemitism" before taking a train to Tashkent "where it was warm". He described more than the climate, saying that Tashkent was full of "beautiful places, nice, warm, just like Iran".[25]

18 Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 43–44.
19 Felix F. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1287), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
20 Gilda Z. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 3030), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
21 Evelyn E. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1791), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
22 Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 119.
23 Michael David Coogan, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 396.
24 Grossmann, *Shelter from the Holocaust*, 201.
25 David S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 3082), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

Tashkent was "like a paradise".[26] Leopold S. initially mentioned the book *Tashkent: City of Bread* when leaving Arkhangelsk, but continued on to Ferghana past Kazakhstan, where stations had "mountains of grain" because it was a "Silk Road city [where] they grow mulberry trees there".[27] Central Asia generally registered as a land of plenty and refuge. Joseph L. continued onward from Ufa, not sure that Tashkent was "tropical, but it was hot", to search for accommodation away from mosquitoes and where there was an "overabundance of fruits: sweet melons, marmalades, and juices".[28] Bianca B. went south because of the climate and fruits, to the "magic city of Samarkand", as there "everything will be beautiful".[29]

Evacuating Jews were aware that there was a Jewish population in Tashkent. Anna S. from Minsk decided to go to Tashkent "because it was warm, and they had food and clothes", but also because "many Jewish people were in Tashkent. The Jewish population there is very different than in Minsk."[30] This survivor was not referring to the evacuated Polish population, but rather to the knowledge that there were already Jews in Central Asia. When pressed, she said "[i]t's the same religion, they call us *Ashkenazik*; they are different in many ways", and she clarified to the interviewer that they are "from Bukhara".[31] David S. knew before he evacuated that Tashkent was like Iran, and about his time in Samarkand he said that "[t]here are lots of Jews there [in Bukhara], actually they were the first ones there. They look like Arabs, and these countries are mostly Muslim, but Bukhara is in Uzbekistan, but not Muslim."[32] Matthew T. considered possible avenues out of Poland, including Chicago and the growing Zionist movement under statesman and marshal Józef Piłsudski, but then mentioned flight east to Central Asia and Siberia, "where there were already Jewish cities", as a possibility under the Soviets.[33]

Furthermore, the discussion about Tashkent was not just about its literal warmth and food resources, but situated the city in a longer historical continuum. The recurring pattern for Jewish flight seems to come from a combination of hope for success with a diminished fear of Soviet reality.[34] The perception of Central Asia in testimonies links Tashkent to longer Jewish patterns of flight and to Russian imperial depictions of orientalism, refuge, and exoticism. Fritzi S. from Romania described the climate as "like Israel", while Israel M. from Poland said that Uzbekistan was "near Persia" and full of "old, old, cities", referring to Samarkand.[35] Israel M. mentioned this proximity to Iran again later, and that travel to Israel was possible via Iran.[36] In his testimony, he specifically and repeatedly mentioned Israel, rather than Mandate Palestine. Continuing on to Iran and then Palestine was not only mentioned in the context of Anders' Army, but as a viable path to safety. As Ben S. remembered, "after

26 Alexander Ameisen, Interview 51752, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 12 September 2001, Accessed 14 February 2024.
27 Leopold S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 4450).
28 Joseph L. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 891), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
29 Bianca B. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1597), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
30 Anna S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2514), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
31 Ibid.
32 David S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 3082).
33 Matthew T. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2349).
34 Budnitskii, Engel, Estraikh, and Shternshis, *War, Conquest, and Catastrophe*, 111.
35 Israel M. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1273) and Fritzi S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2604).
36 Ibid.

Stalingrad, we decided and wanted to go to Tashkent, first because Tashkent was the city of bread and it's close to Iran and we could maybe continue to Palestine".[37] Peter G. was able to do this by bribing a train conductor to go "somewhere warm" before continuing on to Palestine in 1946 as a Polish citizen.[38] Joining the army was not the goal of this transit to Palestine, and I suggest that this continuation along a geographically inefficient route to Tashkent, Iran, and then Israel has a lingering connection to Jewish survival and historical displacement from Israel.

Finally, the Jewish evacuation to Tashkent was accompanied by a larger cultural evacuation from Soviet capitals, including Moscow, Minsk, Vilna, and Kyiv, where cultural figures were evacuated with extreme priority along with military material. Soviet citizens were evacuated not according to levels of danger, but rather to the material value to the state, alongside military equipment.[39] Composers, poets, academics, and even the Yiddish theatre, were all evacuated as part of the Soviet intelligentsia between 1941 and 1942. The refugee policy was intended to help the country prepare for defence, so theatres evacuated and in exile were an additional benefit – a Sovietising element in the republics far from Moscow and an acceleration of the *korenisatsiia*, or "nativisation", policy which prioritised recognisable national idioms in Sovietising cultural products and in education.[40] The cultural evacuations of composers like Mieczyslaw Weinberg, actors like Solomon Mikhoels, and writers like Der Nister preserved Yiddish culture in exile, as such figures wrote cultural testaments of their experiences as (sole) survivors infused with sonic and literary fragments of the lives they left in the West. Evacuation became a part of *Yiddishkeit*, another displacement of a mercurial people.[41]

Life in Tashkent

Tashkent was not the "city of bread" that refugees were expecting, and typhus combined with impossible living conditions and dysfunctional systems forced many refugees to move on further to collective farms or other cities in Uzbekistan. Some had hints before arriving, like Rachel L., who was told she was going somewhere called "the hungry Steppe" when she was herded onto a train in Belarus.[42] Discrimination against refugees was initially largely resource driven and generally xenophobic, not specifically antisemitic.[43] The hunger which affected refugees was shared by the local population and by evacuating non-Jewish Poles and Russians. Evacuees were aware that "the Uzbeks were hungry themselves – they were resentful" and that "they didn't have enough rice to eat, so they wouldn't give us rice".[44] Matthew T. said that Tashkent was a disaster with nothing to eat, people stealing in order to have enough food, and "black bread in hot water instead of even a cup of tea".[45]

37 Ben S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1344), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
38 Peter G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 760).
39 Zvi Gitelman, *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 233.
40 GARF f. 8418, op. 2, d. 99, 23.
41 Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century: New Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 194.
42 Rachel Lewin-Liberow, Interview 31941, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 28 May 1997, accessed 8 February 2024.
43 Albert Kaganovitch, *Exodus and Its Aftermath: Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Interior* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022), 151.
44 Gilda Z. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 3030).
45 Matthew T. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2349).

Because Soviet authorities had restrictions on resettlement to major cities, Tashkent was not necessarily the final stop for many evacuees. However, for those too weak to continue after the long journey, a brief stint in the hospital in Tashkent often meant that they remained in the city for some time with their travelling compatriots, or that they were assigned to nearby collective farms upon discharge. Mary L. was initially in the hospital before she was taken out by her engineer husband to a communal apartment – her privileges both in the hospital and on release were guaranteed by her husband's valuable job.[46] Renata B. was able to exchange gold for good food and remain with her mother because her mother was immediately taken to the hospital when they arrived in Tashkent.[47] Again, in this testimony, there was not only a medical necessity to remain in Tashkent but a hint of corruption or privilege from evacuees who still managed to retain a substantial amount of gold by this point in their journey. On arrival, Sala M. was quarantined with a temperature and concerns about typhus, along with her mother and sister. She subsequently thought that her mother was poisoned and killed by hospital officials, so she left with her sister to live with another Jewish couple who fed them and gave them clothes.[48] Louis K. was concerned about being arrested by the KGB after seeing his uncle arrested prior to the war, and when he was in Tashkent, he went with the other Polish children to a Russian orphanage after being released from an initial stint in the hospital, so as not to bring attention to his Jewish identity.[49]

Life was particularly difficult for evacuated women, who comprised nearly two-thirds of the evacuees.[50] Most of the women in exile were widows and almost all had small children.[51] The loss of children during transit and in the harsh winters and poor living conditions was noted by most survivors with great emotion: "we lost so many children".[52] Khava Irs from Latvia gave birth outside in minus 40-degree weather because nobody would let her into a house. In Nizhnie Kumashki, a refugee named Bukhanova gave birth in a stable, and in Pikhtulina, Fruma Belinson and her four children were tossed out on to the street in freezing temperatures.[53] When the grandfather of Evelyn E. died during the journey as a result of refusing to eat non-Kosher food, her grandmother was responsible for burying him in a *tallit*. Faced with the unimaginable burden of raising a small child alone, the grandmother repeatedly put Evelyn in an orphanage in order to give them both a better chance at survival, before they returned together to Poland in 1946.[54]

Shortages of food and basic supplies meant that almost all evacuees had to have secondary incomes or trade on the black market in order to survive, and a sizeable population of people who were evacuated were afterwards arrested for sabotage and theft. Morris W. arrived to Samarkand and was allocated work in a factory, before

46 Mary Ludner-Kaletsky, Interview 54486, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 16 June 2000, accessed 8 February 2024.
47 Renata Breit, Interview 5016, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 17 August 1995, accessed 12 February 2024.
48 Sala Mydlak, Interview 19231, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 27 August 1996, accessed 10 February 2024.
49 Louis Kadlovski, Interview 39796, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 19 March 1998, accessed 8 February 2024.
50 Shternshis, "The Rear", 249.
51 Anna S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2514).
52 Bianca B. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1597).
53 Kaganovitch, *Exodus and its Aftermath*, 152–153.
54 Holocaust Testimony of Evelyn E. (HVT 1791), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

being accused of sabotage and deported to a labour camp near Dzhambul.[55] Renee S. helped a young couple with their children as an ersatz nanny, before the husband was arrested for selling Tsarist gold coins (*Nikolashka*) and sent to forced labour. Renee then turned to black-market jobs, selling stolen sugar and bread to help support herself and the children.[56] Esther G.'s mother did the same for her, and bought food on the black market to survive. She had greater success with Uzbek people than with Russian people, and they preferred to trade with Muslims, although they lived with Russians.[57] David S. bought and watered down alcohol to sell on the black market or to trade to *kolkhozniks* for food.[58] Solomon S. said that, amid the disease, malaria, and food shortages in Tashkent, "the only way to survive was to steal where you work. All of Russia was stealing!" He acknowledged the risks of black-market distribution, that everything had to remain secret, but said that anyone who survived was doing it.[59]

Bukharian-Ashkenazi interaction was therefore limited by two primary factors. First, as Kaganovitch suggests, there were religious and cultural reasons which fostered Jewish solidarity and led to Orthodox Bukharians offering refuge to Ashkenazim. Second, concerns over resources and disease meant that Bukharian-Ashkenazi solidarity was greater outside of the initial arrivals and urban integration in Tashkent and was more common in interactions in Samarkand and other cities to which refugees continued. Bukharian Jews across Uzbekistan largely preferred to house religious Jews first because they were concerned about being denounced to the Soviet authorities by the arriving Ashkenazim for keeping Jewish practices in the home. Yet, how could religious Jews practice as evacuees in exile? Material concerns for safety and food made religious adherence a low priority for many evacuees who were "too afraid to even close their eyes at night".[60] Bukharians feared repressions like those from 1937 to 1939 and increasingly guarded community practices from Shabbat to *kashrut* to life-cycle events like *brit milah* as secret rituals that were not to be shared outside of protected knowledge spaces.[61] Communism and Judaism were antithetical, and any public displays of ritual were dangerous.[62] Bukharians were also concerned about non-religious Jews bringing non-kosher products into their homes or corrupting children with secular influences.[63] It is also possible that, because Tajiks and Uzbeks distanced themselves from refugees, so did Bukharians who were suspicious of Russian and Polish Jews.[64] Still, as Manley correctly points out, Jews were more welcomed by earlier refugees or Bukharians than by fellow, antisemitic evacuees.[65] However, religious solidarity also echoes a larger divide in the survivor community between religious and secular survivors. Those who were reli-

55 Morris Winter, Interview 28839, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 25 February 1997, accessed 13 February 2024.
56 Renee Stern, Interview 25239, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 30 January 1997, accessed 10 February 2024.
57 Esther Goldfarb, Interview 58079, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 17 June 2001, accessed 10 February 2024.
58 David Steiner, Interview 26961, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 12 February 1997, accessed 13 February 2024.
59 Solomon Scharf, Interview 2866, VHA-USC.
60 Renee Stern, Interview 25239, VHA-USC.
61 Kaganovitch, *Exodus and its Aftermath*, 182, 186.
62 Alexander Ameisen described his *chuppah* as a very quick wedding where four people helped him then immediately ran away as it was still dangerous: "a communist is not a Jew". Alexander Ameisen, Interview 51752, VHA-USC.
63 Kaganovitch, *Exodus and its Aftermath*, 182, 186.
64 Ibid., 185.
65 Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 230.

gious and maintained elements of ritual practice during evacuation or in camps largely credited their survival to an unwillingness to break Jewish law. Some of this sentiment is echoed in survivor testimonies, so that their "purpose was to survive as religious Jews, not just to survive" and that to "go with the stream, would have meant annihilation".[66]

Bukharian collective memory considers that Bukharians helped Ashkenazim during the war, and the relationship between religious Ashkenazi movements, like the Chabad-Lubavitch one, and the Bukharian community were strengthened during the war.[67] Rena Yeliazarova from Panjakent near Samarkand said that her father saw taking in Jewish refugees as a "religious obligation" and remembered inviting religious Ashkenazim to their home for holidays "like they became part of the family".[68] Markiel Gavrilovich Kulangiev's family housed four Ashkenazi families in their house in Samarkand where they "lived very amicably", and Sofia Davidovna Pavlanova and Amnon Davidovich Abramov housed Jewish evacuees, including two medical students, in Ferghana and provided them with jobs in a food warehouse.[69] Aniuta L. lived for ten years in Tashkent, and she said that the worst conditions provided were by non-Uzbeks, and favourably remembered the Kashgir and Bukharian Jews as being religious and full of kindness ("where the Bukharian Jews went, European Jews went") with a large yard and two holidays a year.[70] Growing Jewish solidarity and national self-awareness led to synagogues being opened in fifty-three districts of the Soviet Union between 1943 and 1947, with new Bukharian synagogues in Stalinabad in 1943 and Bukhara in 1945.[71]

Despite the prevailing Bukharian collective memory of helping many Jews, attitudes to Ashkenazim were varied.[72] Irwin L. said that the locals in Tashkent would not even let them too close because they were full of lice, and Berry G. also avoided disease in Tashkent and continued on to Samarkand "where they spoke Jewish".[73] The attitude toward Uzbeks was largely positive: in Tashkent "we were surrounded by wonderful people, Uzbek people, who were very conscientious, very friendly, and very hospitable".[74] Most had not even known, prior to their arrival, that there were even Jews in Central Asia. Anna S. said that initially she saw Bukharians and "thought they were Uzbeki, but they didn't want to show that they are Jewish. I think they had a synagogue but it wasn't official."[75] Adel R. said that it is mostly Muslims who lived in Tashkent: "they're like the Arabs, the same thing".[76] Bianca B. echoed the separation of Bukharians and that they were first identifiable by their Bukharian kippah. She said Bukhara was "like a ghetto, not because they were separate from Muslims, but because they were really Kosher". With this evacuee, the Bukharians shared only

66 Rachel Lewin-Liberow, Interview 31941, VHA-USC. In a later part of the interview, she says a cousin without a large family "wasted her years" not being religious, and that anything other than orthodoxy is a shame.
67 Ibid., 181. For example, eight Chabad families lived in Avram Aminov's courtyard during the war.
68 Manashe Khaimov and Daniel Allen, "Bukharian Lens Project 2014 – JCCA's Bukharian Teen Lounge", *YouTube*, 3 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=atQSrR_Yv8A, accessed 17 November 2023.
69 Ibid.
70 Aniuta Leibman, Interview 40816, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 28 April 1998, accessed 21 January 2024.
71 Kaganovitch, *Exodus and its Aftermath*, 180.
72 Ibid., 184.
73 Holocaust Testimony of Betty G. (HVT 4150), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library; Holocaust Testimony of Irwin L. (HVT 2755).
74 Donia Meiler, Interview 37009, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 14 October 1997, accessed 10 February 2024.
75 Anna S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2514).
76 Adel Rosh, Interview 26469, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 2 February 1997, accessed 21 January 2024.

some bread and two eggs, but were otherwise not helpful, and she and that her family had "no connection whatsoever to Bukharians – all the Polish Jews kept together".[77] I also suggest that the most immediate identification of Jews would have been language rather than dress or custom, given the danger of openly practicing Judaism in the Soviet Union and during the war. For Jews immersed in Yiddish culture in the western Soviet Union, Russian and Bukhori speaking Jews would not have registered as Jews without some identifiable overlap in religious practice. Aniuta L. said as much: "in Uzbekistan, it's customary to speak your own language, only for Russians was Yiddish a problem, like how Uzbeks spoke Uzbek".[78] Farsi-based Bukhori would have been unrecognisable to Yiddish speakers, with an entirely different set of cultural practices of Judaism (*minhag*).

"The Jews Should Have Been Abandoned to Hitler": Antisemitism in Exile

By August 1942, official mentions of antisemitism had reached Lavrentii Beria, and locals even expressed the desire that Hitler would exterminate the Jews to help solve housing issues resulting from the mass migration to Central Asia.[79] A large influx of largely poor, Polish-Jewish refugees helped fuel post-war antisemitism in the non-metropolitan Soviet Union while, simultaneously, evacuations of intellectuals like Mikhoels bolstered Jewish solidarity and interests until the post-war liquidation of Jewish institutions.[80] Attitudes towards Jews were worse in exile than to other refugees, and many people in the eastern regions of the Soviet Union had never seen Jews, particularly the stereotypical Hassids from the western part of the country.[81] Kaganovitch divides this antisemitism into two categories: first, the notion that Jews were disloyal or untrustworthy or lacking in patriotism; and, second, that Jews participated in institutions of power, which ergo led to failures of domestic policy in the Soviet Union.[82]

Simcha S. served in the Soviet army before being demobilised, in 1939, because he was not a Soviet citizen. He was deemed untrustworthy according to Stalinist policy and sent to Central Asia in 1941.[83] Matthew T. attempted to join the Red Army after two people from Kishinev tried to steal his cotton, but the army would not take him with a Jewish passport. He later changed his passport for a Polish passport at the first opportunity.[84] Although a number of sites along the way were army organisational centres, like Poltava, the experience of many evacuees was that the government would not take Jews "as they didn't trust them", and these evacuees instead continued on to work on collective farms. Jews returned to Poland the way they evacuated, on cattle cars with as much food as they could take, often on a multi-week journey to homes where they were no longer welcome.[85] Even when Jews were able to join the Red Army, they were faced by tremendous antisemitism, and they often had to join

77 Bianca B. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1597).
78 Aniuta Leibman, Interview 40816, VHA-USC.
79 BG Kostyrchenko, ed., *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism v SSSR: Ot nachala do kul'minatsii 1938–1953* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond Demokratiia, 2005), 33.
80 Fitzpatrick, *Shelter from the Holocaust*, 133–161.
81 Kaganovitch, *Exodus and its Aftermath*, 154.
82 Ibid.
83 Simcha S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1407), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
84 Matthew T. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2349).
85 Adel Rosh, Interview 26469, VHA-USC.

different divisions to find one in which they were safe.[86] Some Jews served in all-Jewish battalions and even assigned religious meaning to their service. Shamuel Manievich Abramov from Samarkand served alongside two brothers, both of whom were killed in an entirely Bukharian squad. Gavriel Yusupovich Kalantarov was completely surrounded while serving in a unit that was mixed, with Jews and non-Jews, and used religious Jewish language to describe his salvation from that situation. At the age of nineteen, Boris Rafaelovich Ishakov saw the draft as *pkuah nefesh*, or that to save one life is to save the world. Solomon Ishakovich Yusupov remembered being treated and helped by locals as a soldier of the Red Army, and not even recognised as a Jew. [87]

Outside of the military, Jews faced antisemitism from their Polish and western Soviet compatriots with whom they were evacuated. Felix F. said that, in Central Asia, he encountered antisemitism because there Jews were blamed for the war, and he was frequently called "Abrahamic" as a slur while living in Tashkent. He remembers being denied positions because his passport indicated Jewish rather than Polish ethnicity. [88] When Michael G. encountered a Pole en route back home to Poland, he posed as a fellow Polish soldier and asked what happened to the Jews. The soldier casually replied "oh, we killed them all", and he described the Holocaust in graphic detail before advising Michael G. to continue to the American zone.[89]

By 1949, 230,700 Jews had repatriated to Poland, despite it being a vast graveyard of stolen homes, murdered families, and former concentration camps.[90] Throughout the war, there were several possibilities for repatriation to Poland or to claim either Polish or Soviet citizenship, notably the 1943 Polish break with the Soviet government after the exposure of Katyn, and the 1946 final orders for Polish repatriation under Stalin.[91] Polish Jews who survived in exile were in many ways stuck in a liminal state, as neither victims nor survivors, unable to fully process their own difficult experiences of evacuation while grieving the complete destruction of their home communities and families.[92] Acceptance of passports was also an unknown, like for Bernard O., who "heard a little about Katyn in Tashkent" but who ultimately refused Soviet papers and was arrested and sent to the Gulag for a lack of any current documents.[93] Gilda Z. and her friend who was posing as her husband were also sent to Arkhangelsk Oblast for hard labour when they refused Soviet passports and asked to return to Poland during evacuation.[94] Felix F. also describes the clear choice to accept a Soviet passport: "if not accepting Soviet citizenship it was back to Poland or

86 Ben S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1344).

87 These four testimonies come from the Bukharian Lens Project from 2014, directed by Manashe Khaimov with the goal of linking previous generations to new generations of teenagers and emphasising the heroism of Bukharians and survival during the Second World War.

88 Felix F. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1287).

89 Michael G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1880), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

90 Grossmann, *Shelter from the Holocaust*, 201.

91 Paul Allen, *Katyn: Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010). Repatriation remains a contested term, and it is one being reclaimed in Polish consciousness, as it was also the euphemistic Soviet name given to the mass deportations of Poles eastward.

92 John Goldlust, "Neither 'Victims' nor 'Survivors': Polish Jews Reflect on Their Wartime Experiences in the Soviet Union During the Second World War", in *Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959): History and Memory of Deportation, Exile and Survival*, eds. Katharina Friedla and Markus Nesselrodt (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2022), 214–235.

93 Bernard Organek, Interview 52285, *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 13 June 1990, accessed 16 February 2024.

94 Gilda Z. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 3030), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

put on a cattle car to Siberia labelled as 'enemies of the people'".[95] Simcha S. "correctly" chose the Soviet passport when offered, and he went to the Russian interior to work alongside Gulag prisoners as a mine worker.[96] By June 1940, 70,000 to 78,000 Jews had been sent to the Gulag or the "Soviet hinterlands" for refusing Soviet passports.[97]

Despite the difficulty of evacuation, both in transit and in life on the collective farms, a number of survivors credited the Soviet government with their survival, laid the responsibility of the Holocaust squarely with the occupying Germans, and had more difficulty disentangling Soviet and local perpetration. For many the red star and triumph over the swastika was a sign of hope, and even Stalin remains a nostalgic figure for some.[98] When David S. returned to Lublin, having heard about the Holocaust, he said for the Polish, "when the Bolsheviks were there, from the first and second World War, they kept [antisemitism] under control, but when the Germans came, it all came out, blossoming again".[99]

Walking Like Human Corpses: Gulag Prisoners or Evacuees?

Another mechanism to understand the overlapping groups of evacuees, survivors, and refugees is to include the perspectives of survivors victimised both under the Gulag system and in flight from the Nazi Holocaust. This comparison also supports Eliyana Adler's argument that the decision to flee was based on numerous factors, including gender and psychological proximity to previous wars. Complicating this were the Jews who survived because they were in the Gulag, or the Jews who were arrested and sent to the Gulag while in evacuation. Adding to Adler's claims about the myriad factors leading to flight was the fear of the KGB and arrest, which was held by Jews who had already interacted with official Soviet policy. Jews remembered the threat of pogroms from the imperial period as well as the threat of the Russian-Soviet penal system which "nobody survived".[100] Facing these real dangers was often not preferable to the abstract danger of the advancing Germans who were perceptually civilised. Indeed, some of the same Jews fleeing to Tashkent by 1942 were departing not from Poland, but from the Gulags of the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, even after initial flight, evacuees continued to interact with the Gulag: rampant corruption in Tashkent and the necessity of black-market trade for food often meant that Jews were sent on to labour camps for theft before the war had concluded.[101] One "had to take their chances with the black-market – do whatever to survive!".[102] Testimonies provide insight into the motivations to leave, the conditions of evacuation, and the self-assigned perceptions of survivorship and life in exile. Through a critical

95 Felix F. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1287).
96 Simcha S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1407).
97 Budnitskii, Engel, Estraikh, and Shternshis, *War, Conquest, and Catastrophe*, 33.
98 Rita H. Holocaust Testimony (HVT. 2012) Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library. Fryda Bland received a kiss on the cheek from Stalin in Moscow at a post-war meeting of workers, and in her testimony she credited him with both victory and Jewish survival: Fryda Bland, Interview 55083, VHA-USC.
99 David S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 3082).
100 Zlata G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1492), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
101 Hilda Busch, Interview 33714, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 28 August 1997, accessed 13 February 2024.
102 Bernard Organek, Interview 52285, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 13 June 1990, accessed 16 February 2024.

reading, traces of Nazi and Soviet terror are evident in these testimonies, emphasising the complicated decisions to evacuate, the view of safety in the Soviet Union, and the lingering antisemitism which would follow evacuees in the post-war period.

There is a difficulty in classifying "Gulag survivors" and "Holocaust survivors" among evacuees. Former prisoners often remained and joined established refugee networks in Central Asia. The inverse was also common: there were Jews who were initially evacuees before they participated in black-market activities or other minor infractions which earned them time in the Gulag until or beyond the end of the war. In comparative memory politics, the sentiment shared by Julius Margolin and others is that "Hitler killed so many Jews, that there is no need to add to his count the victims of Stalin".[103] The flawed definition of the Holocaust as murder in the camps of Jewish victims has been heavily contested, challenged, and complicated since the 1990s.[104] Approaching these erroneous and simplified claims of Nazi apologists with more nuance and adding the expanded victim groups of the Holocaust, including refugees and Soviet POWs, reinforces a theoretical understanding of the Holocaust.

In Holocaust testimony which overlaps directly with the Gulag, there is a clear intersection between Soviet terror and Holocaust perpetration. Matthew T. from Tavian, Poland, who was evacuated via Ukraine, said that people had to decide if they would "flee west to escape Stalin", and that "to be sent to Siberia is how people survived" – it "could be a blessing".[105] He also said that the Ukrainians welcomed the Germans because they had such a hard time under Stalin with hunger, starvation, and churches being confiscated. Later, when he was in Tashkent, he says that the *kolkhoz* where he worked was where Stalin used to send the peasants to pick cotton as a punishment.[106] Meyer G., who was sent to a labour camp after his evacuation to Yangiyul in Uzbekistan, mentions the hierarchy among prisoners, that he was sent to the camps "along with the people who were specifically taken in 1937".[107] For those who survived both the Holocaust and Gulag, we get a sense of Sovietisation and the impact of re-education – a double eradication of a Jewish self, first in the Holocaust or during evacuation, and then through Sovietisation. Solomon S., who built a custom oven for *matzah* for Passover when he was in Tashkent, said that after his time in Siberia, he became an avowed communist, and that the Soviets never touched religion – everything was just meant to be equal under a socialist system.[108] By 1940, the gamble for many Soviet Jews was between a death sentence under National Socialism, but with the hope of outliving their executioners, or life in prison under the Soviets.[109]

Israel M. described the situation succinctly: "[e]ither the Jewish people were deported by the Russians when they occupied Poland to Siberia and they were in labour camps, or the people who ran away voluntarily came to the southern part of Russia, the exact opposite, which was very hot".[110] There were three categories of people in the Soviet Union: people who were in prison, people in prison, and people who

103 Julius Margolin, *Podróz do krainy zeków* (Wolowiec: Czarne, 2013).
104 Ernst Nolte, "Marxismus und Nationalsozialismus", *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 31 (1983): 389–417.
105 Matthew T. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2349), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
106 Ibid.
107 Meyer Galler, Interview 52318, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 13 December 1989, accessed 8 February 2024.
108 Solomon Scharf, Interview 2866, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 28 May 1998, accessed 20 January 2024.
109 David Engel, "New Lands, New Subjects," in *War, Conquest, and Catastrophe*, 33.
110 Israel M. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 1273), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

would soon be in prison.[111] Hyman K., who was born in Kishinev, was accused of theft and sent to a Russian prison with his parents, "deep into Russia where the Germans would not dare go". After he was freed, he made his way to Tashkent via Saratov, but the Gulag provided his initial movement east and out of the eventual German zone.[112] Leopold S. was clear that he was sent to the Gulag in Arkhangelsk as a "punishment from the communist party" and hinted at antisemitic motivations for deportation and for the exceptionally gruelling forced labour on the Jewish high holidays.[113] Being born in Germany or "speaking Yiddish" was an excuse to be sent to a Soviet labour camp, like Selina H.'s father and brother who were sent to Siberia for hard labour from Bialystock and never returned.[114] Peter G. was also arrested in the Soviet zone in 1939 because he did not speak Polish or Yiddish, only German and French. He eventually signed a coerced statement that he had escaped illegally, and he was sentenced to five years of hard labour.[115] Leopold S. who was doing hard labour in Arkhangelsk, recalled seeing Gulag prisoners from the region walking like "human corpses" and he was afraid to even look at them. He also echoed other Gulag punishments and labour practices in his testimony, and he was reluctant to categorise his forced labour as the same as the Gulag prisoners with which they shared work. Upon his release he was able to go anywhere in the Soviet Union, and he left in 1941 for the warmth in Central Asia.[116]

In the testimonies which specifically address both evacuation and extensive time in the Gulag, we see hints of the methodology of Stalinist terror that existed across the system in the camps. Ada R. spoke about the methodologies of the Gulag in Central Asia, and how those evacuating the Holocaust ended up in and interacting with these same networks. Her father was arrested by the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, as a "political prisoner", not as a Jew, and she and her family were arrested later as family of an "enemy of the people" and sent to a Siberian *kolkhoz* specifically for women and children, where their work involved sheep pastoralism. The methodologies of survival in camps were also similar, as Bernard O. considered his job as a prison camp tailor a light sentence, and he continued his secondary economic activities by sewing secret pockets into clothes to help others steal bread. This eventually led to his deportation, with his brother, to a more demanding labour camp: ITK 13 in Western Siberia.[117] Meyer G. was transferred from a collective farm in Yangiyul, Uzbekistan, to Aktubinsk in Kazakhstan, where he lived in immense barracks with no heating, tried to avoid typhus, and his diet during forced labour was "constantly on bread".[118] Leopold S. left Poland with his brother in 1939 via Lvov, where they picked up another brother. He was eventually stopped by the Russian authorities and sent to Arkhangelsk Oblast, where he worked on abandoned villages to make them more habitable for Russian settlement in the north.[119] Peter G. also did hard labour in Arkhangelsk and spoke of the difficult survival tasks, including gathering straw, and

111 Bernard Organek, VHA-USC.
112 Hyman K. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 4400), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
113 Leopold S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 4450), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
114 Selina H. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 2521), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
115 Peter G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 760), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.
116 Leopold S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 4450).
117 Bernard Organek, Interview 52285, VHA-USC.
118 Meyer Galler, Interview 52318, VHA-USC.
119 Leopold S. Holocaust Testimony (HVT 4450).

of the brutally cold boxcar journey to the camp.[120] From forced confessions, to Yiddish and other non-Russian languages as cause for denunciation, the mechanisms of Soviet arrest established in the 1920s are echoed in these testimonies.

A Survivor of the Gulag or of the Holocaust? Conclusions

Evacuation transit from the Holocaust is complex. Rather than simply seeking refuge, survival was deeply intertwined with Soviet carceral policies and a history of transit to the interior. Survivor self-identification with victimisation was similarly complex, with recognition among a community of similar refugees of hardships in exile, but without the same subscription to "survivorship" like those who survived camps.[121] Evacuation narratives understandably focus on the evacuees, but there was also sizeable interaction upon arrival in Central Asia with Bukharian Jews, and there was the establishment of Ashkenazi Jewish institutions in exile. Evacuation testimony combined with Central Asian Jewish testimony provides a more complete look at the changing categories of evacuee throughout the war, at life in Tashkent, and at the lingering perceptions and mindsets which contributed to evacuation.

Wartime evacuation contributed to post-war antisemitism, with pervasive ideas like "Jews survived the war in Tashkent" and an increase in public hostility, denial of housing, and further humiliation. Many evacuees chose to remain in Central Asia as a second home, encouraged by Soviet authorities.[122] Artistic actions like *Zhdanovshchina* were entangled with the post-war political climate and targeted ethnicity as well as political dissidence. The post-war Soviet Union rebuilt from the Second World War with a glorious victory, which meant that it was essential to dispel the sentiment that the "Jews and their Bolshevik henchmen" had safely lived out the war in exile, while valorous draftees "died at the front to defend kikes".[123] Evacuation seems to be tied to anti-Sovietism, a counternarrative to the state glorification of the Great Patriotic War. As such, there was a corollary suspicion of intellectuals who had been evacuated versus those who had served in the Red Army. As evidenced in post-war artistic products, returning artists and composers grappled with the complexities of survivorship and evacuation, while simultaneously navigating a hostile political climate in the last decade of Stalinism.

The story of evacuation is perhaps told in three parts, the first being transit, the next of life in exile, including intersection with the Gulag, and finally the third about the negotiation of post-war antisemitism and dealing with the knowledge of the Holocaust. Dissecting the dynamics of the transit to Tashkent provides insights into the priorities of the evacuees once they arrived – survival strategies, community and family structures, solidarity and identification (or not) with the local populations, and the long reach of Soviet bureaucracy in Central Asia. These themes from a history of transit provide the context for the post-war fear of both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and of the danger of being Jewish even in relative safety. In the artistic realm, the preservation mechanisms of hidden community knowledges remained private, concealed, and cryptic in the post-war, as 1945 marked the end of Hitlerite – but not all – antisemitism.

120 Peter G. Holocaust Testimony (HVT. 760).
121 Grossmann, *Shelter from the Holocaust*, 200.
122 Shternshis, "The Rear", 263.
123 Budnitskii, Engel, Estraikh, and Shternshis, *War, Conquest, and Catastrophe*, 114.

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