

THE YIDDISH RENAISSANCE IN UKRAINE AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE UKRAINIAN POETS' EARLY COMMEMORATION OF THE VICTIMS IN BABYN YAR¹

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Abstract. The notable rise in Yiddish literary activity in Soviet Ukraine during the 1920s and early 1930s can be attributed to the Bolshevik policy of indigenization, which promoted minority languages such as Yiddish and Ukrainian. Ukrainian was spoken by the majority of the rural and small-town, non-industrial population, though it was not prevalent among urban and industrial communities. This policy encouraged a significant expansion of translations between the “fraternal” literatures of the Soviet republics, as well as among the languages within Ukraine — often mediated through Russian as an intermediary.

By the mid-1930s, however, Stalin’s national policy shifted from fostering minority literatures to suppressing what was labeled as “nationalism” among the peoples of the USSR. This article investigates the nature and scope of translations from Yiddish — then the language of Jewish modernist revolutionary writers — into Ukrainian during the 1920s and 1930s. It employs the microhistory of the Jewish writer Peretz Markish and his family to trace the trajectories of Jewish intellectuals in the Soviet Union during the interwar period, emphasizing the importance of family ties and personal friendships between Ukrainian and Yiddish writers.

The analysis also considers the rapid, though ideologically constrained, response of Ukrainian poets and translators of Yiddish literature to the Holocaust, epitomized by the victims of Babyn Yar, as refracted through the prism of Stalinist censorship.

Keywords: Babyn Yar, Holocaust, literature in Yiddish, Red Renaissance, Soviet Ukraine, Yiddish-Ukrainian translation.

Introduction: languages and language choices in the territory of contemporary Ukraine

During the years 1917–1921, Ukraine underwent significant political upheaval, with various forms of governance including the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR), the Hetmanate, the Directory, and Bolshevik control. These shifts had a considerable impact on the formulation of language policies and the articulation of preferences. The period was characterised by a marked surge in Ukrainian national consciousness, alongside vibrant cultural activities of the Jewish communities tied to distinct linguistic identity — the Yiddish language. Cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Katerynoslav (nowadays known as Dnipro), where the Russian language prevailed, functioned as multilingual hubs, while rural areas predominantly exhibited Ukrainian linguistic characteristics. The Ukrainian

language that had been suppressed under the Russian Empire gained prominence during the Ukrainian War of Independence (1917–1921) as a symbol of national identity. The Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1920) promoted the use of the Ukrainian language in education, administration and publishing. The early 1920s witnessed the implementation of the "Ukrainization" policy under Soviet governance, which commenced in 1923.² This policy advocated for the promotion of Ukrainian language and culture in educational institutions, media outlets, and governmental entities, with the objective of consolidating the authority of the local populace faithful to the Communist Party and united under the rule of the Bolsheviks' leadership. Notable writers such as Pavlo Tychyna, Mykola Zerov, Maksym Rylsky, Mykola Khvylovy, and Mykhailo Yohansen, among numerous others, employed the Ukrainian language to articulate national themes.

Notwithstanding the promotion of the Ukrainian language, it faced competition from Russian in urban centres. Following the consolidation of power by the Bolsheviks in Ukraine by 1921, the Russian presence remained prominent within Soviet institutions, media outlets, and metropolitan intellectual circles, despite the introduction of Ukrainization policies and the advancement of the national idea prevalent among Ukrainian intellectuals.³

Yiddish was a key language among Ukraine's significant Jewish population, particularly in cities such as Kyiv, Odesa, and Katerynoslav. During the late 1910s and early 1920s, Yiddish literature experienced a period of significant growth, with renowned poets such as Peretz Markish contributing to it, and Yiddish maintained its vital role as a medium for cultural expression, particularly among socialist and revolutionary Jewish groups.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Western Ukraine, which was part of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939), primarily featured Polish and Ukrainian languages in public life. While Ukrainian was the native language of the majority population, Polish was the language of administration, education, and social elites. In addition, there was a notable Jewish population that spoke Yiddish. Minority languages such as German (spoken by Mennonite and Volhynian German communities) and Romanian (in Bukovyna) were present but limited to specific regions. In Crimea and southern Ukraine, the Crimean Tatar language was officially institutionalized in the Soviet Union in 1921, with the establish-

ment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR), and the Greek language also had some influence outside its respective community.

The article explores a niche area of scholarship: the development of Jewish culture and literature in Ukraine during the 1920s and 1930s under the Stalinist regime — a period often termed the "Red Renaissance," or, in the case of the Yiddish-speaking community, the Renaissance of Soviet Jewish culture. The analysis highlights the productive creative exchange between eminent Ukrainian and Jewish writers of the era. Furthermore, it identifies early instances where Ukrainian literature — rather than Russian or Soviet traditions — sought to commemorate the victims of Babyn Yar, even when constrained by socialist literary forms.

Yiddish-Ukrainian translation and cultural exchange in the 1920s–1930s: general remarks

In addition to the large cities that constituted centres of Jewish life in Ukrainian lands within the former Russian Empire, such as Odesa, Katerynoslav, and, from the 1910s, Kyiv (the centre of synagogue culture) and Kharkiv (where Jewish political parties emerged as early as the 1880s), cultural and artistic Jewish life in Yiddish also developed in smaller cities of Ukraine under Russian colonial rule, which all later became part of Soviet Ukraine. These included Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Uman, Berdychiv, and Proskuriv (since 1954, Khmelnytskyi), among others. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 resulted in the incorporation of Western Ukrainian territories into the Ukrainian SSR, encompassing the centres of Jewish cultural life. The largest of these centres were Lviv (with its ancient ghetto) and Chernivtsi, as well as smaller cities such as Chortkiv, Buchach, Rohatyn, Bolekhiv, and Kosiv.

During the early 20th century, Ukraine boasted a dynamic Jewish community, predominantly located in major cities within the historical Pale of Settlement. In the historical context of the 20th century, Yiddish-Ukrainian translation can be regarded as an intersection of linguistic, cultural, and political dynamics. Yiddish was the primary language of Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine. Ukrainian is the official national language of Ukraine, a country with a significant Jewish population until the mid-20th century. The translation between these languages, especially in the 1920s and 1930s in Soviet Ukraine, facilitated cultural exchange, preserved Jewish narra-

tives, and shaped Ukrainian Jewish literary identity. The language choices employed in these translations, whether direct from Yiddish to Ukrainian or mediated through Russian, were influenced by a number of factors. These included Soviet policies, bi- or trilingualism (Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish), cultural priorities, and practical constraints.

The Soviet policy of *korenizatsiya* (indigenization) in the 1920s promoted minority languages, including Yiddish and Ukrainian, leading to a flourishing of Yiddish literature and translations. Institutions such as the Kultur-Lige and state publishers like State Publishers of Ukraine (Derzhavne Vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, DVU) provided support for these efforts, facilitating mutual translations of Yiddish authors such as Sholem Aleichem and Ukrainian poets like Taras Shevchenko.⁴ However, by the late 1930s, Soviet centralisation and Stalinist purges (and later the Holocaust during WWII) had disrupted this activity, thereby limiting the legacy of Yiddish-Ukrainian translation.

The 1920s and 1930s, particularly around 1928–1931 and 1939, were zeniths for Yiddish-Ukrainian translation, driven by cultural initiatives and events such as the Shevchenko 125th anniversary. Having reached their peak in 1928–1931 and again in 1939, translations from Yiddish represented both the high quality works and the political propaganda pieces. Translation activities were centred in Kharkiv and Kyiv and supported by State Publishers of Ukraine, which had branches in both cities. The latter date, 1939, corresponds to the 125th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's birthday and the state-sponsored project of celebrating it. In such cases, DVU would often request Russian drafts for ideological vetting and streamlining of production. By the late 1930s, Soviet centralisation, Russification, and Stalin's purges disrupted independent translation practices between Yiddish and Ukrainian.

That being said, the 1920s were characterized by a remarkable degree of state support for minority languages and cultures within the Soviet Union, with Yiddish receiving significant benefits from this support. This was due to the identification of Yiddish as the language of the Jewish working class, which led to its promotion over Hebrew. The latter was viewed with suspicion in the Soviet Union due to its connections with Zionism and religion (Winestock, 2022). Therefore, during the 1920s, the Soviet state allocated substantive support to Yiddish publications, while concurrently promoting translations from Yiddish into

Ukrainian, the majority language of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

So, overall, Yiddish was actively shaping the Jewish literature, which developed rapidly in Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s. Intra-republican translation of literary works from Yiddish became a phenomenon in Soviet Ukraine. However, there were also Ukrainian Russian-speaking writers of Jewish origin, for example, Yakiv Kalnytsky, whose story "Chokrak (Son of the Regiment)" was translated from Russian by Prokhor Voronin (The Young Bolshevik publishing house, 1931).

A thorough review indicates a notable presence of literary translations from Yiddish during that period, encompassing both book editions and journal publications. Many of these translations have withstood the test of time and have become part of the Ukrainian canon of Yiddish-language classics. A notable example is the children's poems of Leib (Lev) Kvitko, translated by Pavlo Tychyna and reprinted in the *Anthology of Jewish Poetry: Ukrainian Translations from Yiddish* (2011, pp. 266–75). During the 1920s and 1930s, literary translation played a multifaceted role. During the brief period of official Ukrainization (1923–1929), it served as a means of literary and social self-realization for Jewish-Ukrainian intellectuals. It also represented one of the facets of the common cultural aspirations of the new Jewish and Ukrainian intelligentsia. Additionally, it functioned as an ideological and propaganda tool of the ruling Bolshevik party. During the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s, translation still remained a way of artistic expression and a source of income for those who were stigmatized, marginalized, and later imprisoned or executed for fabricated political crimes, such as "nationalist sabotage" and "terrorist activity against party leaders."

Direct Yiddish-to-Ukrainian translations preserved Yiddish's cultural and linguistic nuances, such as idiomatic humor and religious references, fostering a distinct Ukrainian Jewish literature. Giving priority to direct translations was rather common for such literary hubs as Knyhospilka Cooperative Publishers. Journals like *Prolit* (Proletarian Literature) facilitated collaborations. For example, David Hofstein's poetry was directly translated by Maksym Rylsky, retaining its Ukrainian Jewish context. However, direct translations, which required skilled bilingual translators, were less feasible for large-scale projects under Soviet deadlines.

It was Yiddish-Ukrainian bilingualism of many Ukrainian and Jewish intellectuals that secured cultur-

al reciprocity, enabling direct translations and mutual literary exchange. For example, Yiddish writers like Hofstein and Kvitko translated Shevchenko's *Kobzar* into Yiddish,⁵ while Ukrainian poets translated Yiddish works on a massive scale.⁶ Culturally significant were the 1931 and 1939 Yiddish editions of Shevchenko in Hofstein's translation. Modernist poetry of Pavlo Tychna and Mykola Bazhan, translated into Yiddish, enriched Yiddish literature with Ukrainian modernist style and reflected shared revolutionary themes, aligning with the Red Yiddish Renaissance.

In 2018, Hofstein's translations were reprinted in independent Ukraine in the bilingual edition entitled *Kobzar: Selected Works* and illustrated with drawings by the prominent Ukrainian graphic artist Vasyl Sedliar (1899–1937), a member of the Mykhailo Boychuk school, which were used to decorate the unique 1931 edition of *Kobzar*. All of the Yiddish translations included here were made by Hofstein during the 1920s and 1930s.⁷

Whilst reciprocal translations, supported by Soviet policies of indiginization, strengthened Ukrainian Jewish literature in the 1920s, the further dominance of Russian intermediaries in the 1930s weakened local cultural ties by imposing Soviet universalism ("socialist realism") and linguistic Russification. Stalinist purges yet further limited translation options curtailing Yiddish- and Ukrainian-language publishing.

Overall, the Ukrainization campaign facilitated the unprecedented development of the Ukrainian and Jewish culture known as the Red Renaissance. However, as Olga Bertelsen observes, "Secret police records demonstrate that the state launched counter-Ukrainization in 1926 (not in 1932–1933 as many Western commentators argue)..." (Bertelsen, 2013, p. 7). Russian-mediated translations helped to homogenize and align national culture with Soviet style and themes. As discussed by Bertelsen, "after 1926, the Soviet secret police began to methodically arrest, exile, and execute those Ukrainians who were active advocates of Ukrainization. They were labeled Ukrainian 'nationalists and deviationists'" (Bertelsen, 2013, p. 6).

Several of Jewish writers embraced Ukrainian culture and spoke Ukrainian. Yet many spoke Russian using the Russian language in their everyday lives (for example, Raisa Troianker and Leib Kvitko). At that, as Bertelsen further remarks, a lot of the Russian-speaking Jewish writers were fully immersed in Ukrainian culture, and they could also be accused of "national-

ist deviations." Those who had multiple identities by virtue of being born in Ukraine also felt vulnerable (Bertelsen, 2013, p. 21). The Moscow authorities and the secret police demonstrated a lack of consideration for the ethnic or cultural background of ethnically non-Ukrainian individuals, whom they considered to be of Ukrainian identity and consequently labelled as "Ukrainian nationalists" — based solely on shared physical space (a common apartment building) or institutional space (a common work place or public organisation), the use of the Ukrainian language, or a shared interest in Ukrainian cultural traditions (Bertelsen, 2013, p. 41).

Collaborative work on the Yiddish-Ukrainian translation projects

The choice of texts for translation, and in particular the translation strategy used, was significantly influenced by the personal and family networks between the Ukrainian and Yiddish writers. Therefore, given the prevailing circumstances, the practical role of Russian as a means of facilitating communication across the Yiddish and Ukrainian ethnic groups in Soviet Ukraine was not of the paramount significance in the urban centres. However, it could be imposed on publishers by the state controlling institutions for the purposes of political censorship and Bolshevik propaganda.

Personal communication and the cultivation of interpersonal relationships and friendship were foundational elements in the development of literary relations and translation between the Jewish and Ukrainian communities. These relations can be exemplified by the extensive network of correspondents, acquaintances, and professional contacts of Volodymyr Naumovych Vaisblat (1882–1945), who adopted the literary pseudonyms Oleksander Ger and V. Belolistov (Russian translation of the surname Vaisblat) for his literary works.

Vaisblat was born in the town of Malyn to the family of the future chief rabbi of Kyiv. At the age of fourteen, he relocated to Kyiv, where he pursued his livelihood by working in a printing house and providing educational instruction. He completed his secondary education at the 8th Kyiv gymnasium, graduating as an external student. He then pursued his academic studies in Berlin, enrolling in the Faculty of Philosophy and Philology at the University of Berlin. Following the successful completion of his studies, he returned to Kyiv and engaged in professional activities in Kyiv publishing houses, delivered lectures on bib-

liology, authored numerous articles on art history, and published several original books, including the widely popular *Reader-Declamator* in Russian and *Kobzar* by Taras Shevchenko. He cultivated friendships with prominent Kyiv cultural activists and engaged in correspondence with Maksim Gorky, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, and Sholem Aleichem. His circle of friends included prominent figures of Ukrainian culture such as Serhiy Yefremov, Mykola Zerov, Hryhoriy Narbut, Pavlo Tychyna, Maksym Rylsky, Mykola Bazhan, and others. Notably, Volodymyr Vaisblat's sister, Lia Naumivna, was the wife of Ukrainian poet-translator Yevhen Drobyazko, who was the first to translate Dante's *Divine Comedy* into Ukrainian in its entirety (Cherevatenko, 1990).

During the 1920s and the subsequent Soviet period, professional cooperation in translation was a rather widely spread practice. Native speakers of Ukrainian and Yiddish languages collaborated in teams, or tandems, to achieve optimal results. A notable illustration of the tandem work is the translation of the collection of short stories entitled *Folk Tales* by Yitzhok Leibush Peretz, originally written in Yiddish, translated into Ukrainian by Mykola Zerov⁸ and Oleksandr Ger. This translation was published as early as 1920 by the Kyiv branch of DVU, and it exemplifies the collaborative efforts of two professionals in achieving a high-quality translation outcome.

In her Russian-language memoirs, entitled *Life cut into a sonnet*, Sofia, the wife of Zerov, wrote:

"Vladimir Naumovich⁹ Vaisblat (his pseudonym was Alexander Ger) became a frequent guest of ours. He was easy to talk to, and it was interesting to talk to him. Together with Zerov, he translated Peretz's stories. Nikolai Konstantinovich [Zerov] lacked proficiency in the Jewish language [Yiddish], and their collaborative process was as follows: Vladimir Naumovich translated verbatim from Jewish into Russian, and Nikolai Konstantinovich immediately translated from Russian into Ukrainian" (Quoted in Cherevatenko, 1990)¹⁰.

Vibrant personal exchanges, literary collaborations, and friendships between Jewish and Ukrainian intellectuals led to a significant body of translations from Yiddish into Ukrainian. In addition to numerous journal publications, separate editions of Yiddish

works in Ukrainian translation amounted to dozens of volumes. Above all, literary anthologies played a crucial role in disseminating these translations to a broad readership. In 1923, the first translated anthology of Jewish poetry was published in Kyiv. Compiled and translated by Vasyl Atamaniuk, the 30-page volume, entitled *New Jewish Poetry*, was a significant milestone in the promotion of Jewish literature.

The opportunities for Ukrainian translators to consult with their Yiddish- and Ukrainian-speaking bilingual friends and colleagues without Russian mediation and use the direct interlinear Ukrainian versions of the originals rather than the relay interlinear Russian translations should also be mentioned, though such cases were not as frequent as translations via Russian. The hybrid indirect practice in the professional translation activities can be illustrated by the work of a prolific female translator from Yiddish Maria Pryhara (1908–1983).

In 1924, at the age of sixteen, Maria relocated with her parents from the Kyiv region to Odesa, a major centre of Jewish culture in Ukraine, where she resided for several years. She subsequently enrolled at the Kyiv Institute of Public Education (Kyivskyi Institut Narodnoi Osvity, KINO), from which she graduated in 1931. She was then employed by the Kyiv daily *Proletarska Pravda* (Proletarian Truth) and also worked in several publishing houses. Her contributions to Ukrainian literary translation from Polish, Russian, and Yiddish are noteworthy. She was fluent in the first two languages and likely translated from the latter with reference to Russian as an intermediary.

Pryhara began publishing translations in periodicals in the late 1920s. In the early 1930s, the monthly Red Path published her translations of poems by the Jewish poet Itzik Fefer from the cycle "Found Sparks." During the 1930s, she published several books of translations. Notable Yiddish-language poets whose collections were translated by Pryhara include Hana Levina and Itzik Fefer. In particular, these were Levina's two collections of poems — *On the Sunny Side* (1935) and *The Secret* (1938), as well as a separate edition of Fefer's collection of lyrical poems (1934). Pryhara also contributed as an editor to Fefer's poetry collection entitled *Treasure (Selected Poems Translated by Ukrainian Poets)*, which was published in 1937. Noted poets M. Bazhan, M. Zisman, L. Pervomaisky, M. Rylsky, V. Sosiura, and P. Tychyna participated as translators in this collection.

Since the mid-1930s, the use of indirect transla-

tion, involving a literal translation-intermediary into Russian (*podstrochnik*, or interlinear translation), has become pervasive in interlinguistic communication among the heterogeneous populations of the Soviet Union, particularly in the genre of poetry. As Susanna Witt's study of this phenomenon elucidates, "[p]art and parcel of the official system of Soviet literature, the *podstrochnik* enabled this very literature to emerge as a multinational entity" (Witt, 2017, p. 167). But Ukrainian poet-translators from Yiddish, who themselves did not possess sufficient proficiency in the language, mostly did not require Russian interlinear translation; their Ukrainian-speaking literary colleagues and friends writing in Yiddish could complete the task on their behalf in Ukrainian. This close interpersonal communication facilitated the contribution of prominent Ukrainian poets of that era (such as Zerov, Sosiura, and others) to numerous Ukrainian translations of Yiddish-language poetry. For example, writers such as David Hofstein, Leib Kvitko, and Peretz Markish, who published extensively in Yiddish, were Yiddish-Ukrainian-Russian trilingual fluent speakers.

Further we will trace the formation of the profile of a prominent Jewish writer in the early Soviet Union — on the example of the biographical facts, family and friends ties of Peretz Markish. Alongside Hofstein and Kvitko, Markish was a member of the Kyiv group of Yiddish-language poets and was well-known in both Soviet Ukraine and Russia for his poetry on Jewish identity and revolutionary ideals.

The living history of Jewish Ukrainian families: case study of Perez Markish

Examples of translator families include, among others, Peretz Davidovich Markish (1895–1952), a poet, playwright, and prose writer, who was born in the town of Polonne in Volhynia (now the center of the Polonne district of the Khmelnytsky region) to a settled Jewish family. He studied in a *kheder*, a Jewish religious elementary school. In an interview with Peretz Davidovich's daughter, Olga Rapay-Markish, a Ukrainian Jewish sculptor and ceramic artist, member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine, one can learn about her father's passionate and inquisitive nature, which manifested itself at a very early age: "He didn't have shoes and was too young to go to school, but he cried so bitterly that his parents agreed and his brothers simply carried him to school, wrapping him in a blanket" (Khruslinska, 2008, p. 55). Peretz started to work early and after leaving his parents'

house he lived in Berdychiv, Odesa and Moldova. Until the age of 13 he was a cantor, then a bank clerk and a private tutor. He studied at the Moscow City People's University named after Alfons Shanyavsky (which operated in 1908–1920), was engaged in self-education, tried to pass the exams for the gymnasium course in Odesa, and had various part-time jobs.

In one of her interviews, Olga Rapay-Markish told a family story about the legendary beauty of her father:

"Before the First World War, a very young Peretz found himself in Paris. Russian writers and artists used to meet in a café on Rotunda Street in Montparnasse So it was decided that Markish should definitely take part in a beauty contest that was taking place in Paris. Papa was a kind of small-town boy who adhered to certain taboos: 'How can a man suddenly enter a beauty contest?' His father was also a stunningly handsome man, with exquisite features, blue eyes, and blond hair. Of his four daughters and two sons, only Peretz inherited this appearance. Eventually, the company persuaded Markish to enter the contest. Anna Akhmatova also took part in the persuasion... But poor Peretz did not have the right clothes for the occasion. We rented a tuxedo, shoes and trousers. And Papa won the first prize! He came back and distributed some of the money to the whole caboodle, and with the rest (the cash prize was very large) he went on a trip — he visited the Holy Land, traveled all over Europe. This is reflected in his early poems" (Lisnichenko, 2014, May 30).

The history behind this fun anecdote has its indirect implications for translation: the visits to the Holy Land and extensive travels of young Markish could have strengthened his conviction to write in his native Yiddish. His most notable works were all written in Yiddish, including the poem "Volyn" (*Volin*, 1918),¹¹ the collection *Thresholds* (*Shveln*, 1919)¹² — both published in Kyiv, as well as the collection *The Unrepentant* (*Nakam* or *Der Nakam*, 1919) and the poem "Brothers" ("Brider," 1929).¹³

In Olga Rapay-Markish's words, "Peretz was chosen to be a poet — he was so handsome, inspired, with a wonderful physique" (Khruslinska, 2008, p. 55). After the Bolshevik October mutiny, Peretz Markish lived for several years in various European countries: Poland, Germany, and France, and his poetic talent

and beauty were successful everywhere. From 1926, he lived in Moscow and was elected head of the Jewish section of the USSR Writers' Union. In 1939 he became the only Soviet Jewish writer to receive the Order of Lenin. Markish was a member of the leadership of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) in the USSR. In January 1949 he was arrested as a member of the presidium of this committee on charges of anti-Soviet agitation and espionage. He was executed on August 12, 1952. His grave is unknown.

In 1917, Markish began his literary career in Katerynoslav (now Dnipro), publishing Yiddish poems in local Bolshevik newspapers, such as his poem "Fighters" (Biyorshni). In the 1920s, after relocating to Moscow, he was employed in the Soviet literary milieu, but continued to write in Yiddish, the primary language of Jewish literature in the Soviet Union. To showcase multinational Soviet literature, some of Markish's works were translated into Russian in later years, notably in the 1930s (for example, the poem "Brider") and later, after his posthumous rehabilitation in 1955.

Between 1918 and 1919, Markish was active in the Ukrainian cities of Katerynoslav and Kyiv, which were significant centres of Jewish culture and Yiddish-language publishing. Kyiv was an important centre for Jewish writers, particularly for Markish, David Hofstein, and Leib Kvitko as the core members of the Kyiv group of Yiddish-language poets.

In his early work, Markish drew inspiration from Ukrainian motifs, incorporating elements such as the Dnipro River, which he saw as a symbol of national identity and heritage (an article on Radio Svoboda observes that his early poetry is "full of Ukrainian realities"¹⁴).

Ukrainian poets-translators of Markish's work, in particular Pavlo Tychyna, used Ukrainian to assert national identity while engaging with multilingual literary circles. An excerpt from Markish's poem "The Heap" ("Di Kupe"; Ukrainian: "Kupa"),¹⁵ translated by Tychyna into Ukrainian, was published in 1922 in the magazine *Stromé* (Yiddish for "Streams"), which circulated in Moscow in 1922–1924. This magazine played a pivotal role in the Soviet Union's energetic Yiddish literary scene, notably serving as a platform for Tychyna's translation, reprinted in Chernin & Bohuslavska, 2011, p. 359.

A prolific writer-translator, who translated from Yiddish, Russian, French, German, and English, Zinaida Ioffe first met Markish in Kharkiv, where she resided

in the 1920s and was employed in an editorial office. Markish traveled to Kharkiv from Moscow for a poetry recital. That evening, Zinaida fell in love with Peretz's poems and with him. Their relationship deepened as they collaborated on editing Ukrainian translations of Markish's poems. Olga Rapay-Markish humorously suggests that her birth was the result of this professional relationship. Zinaida and Peretz were not married, and they separated before the birth of their daughter Lyalya (as she was called by her family during her childhood), although they continued to maintain communication with each other. Markish, having settled in Moscow, entered into matrimony there and became the father of two sons: Simon, a philologist, literary critic, and translator, and David, a writer.

In the words of Rapay-Markish, her mother

"hailed from a Jewish family that likely migrated to Zaporizhzhia from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the eighteenth century. During this period, Catherine the Great granted authorization to establish the Jewish colony of Changar, which persisted until the Second World War" (Khrushlinska, 2008, p. 54).

Although Olga Rapay-Markish never met her paternal relatives — knowing them only through photographs — she spent several years of her early childhood living with her maternal grandparents, Chaya and Berkh Schnitman, in the Zaporizhzhia region.

They resided in the Jewish village of Chongar, situated near a Ukrainian settlement. Both grandparents were bilingual in Yiddish and Ukrainian, while Berkh also spoke Russian, a skill likely sharpened by his extensive travels for work, which included a period in Brazil. Olga fondly recalled accompanying her grandmother to a nearby Ukrainian village where they were welcomed with the traditional gift of bread.

While the two communities shared similar economic conditions — each family maintaining a house, a vegetable garden, and a plot of steppe land — they were distinguished by specific customs, such as the absence of pigs in the Jewish village. Most residents observed Jewish traditions without being strictly Orthodox. For instance, despite their poverty, Chaya observed Shabbat by lighting a makeshift hemp wick in a spoonful of oil. She maintained a flexible household; while she prepared traditional Jewish dishes, she remained unconcerned when her sons ate lard alongside

Ukrainian peasants in the smithy. Berkh, conversely, did not follow formal religious practices, yet he kept a Bible on his desk, reading it so often that he knew it by heart. Despite these differing approaches to faith, the couple lived in mutual respect, never imposing their personal beliefs on one another (after: Khruslinska, 2008).

Rapay-Markish recalled that her mother brought her to live with her grandparents in the early 1930s. During the height of the Holodomor (1932–1933), Olga remained in their care. She remembered that whenever grain was available in the house, it was reserved solely for her; she remained unaware of what the adults ate, recalling only a decoction made from potato peelings (Khruslinska, 2008).

In 1934, Zinaida Ioffe took her daughter back after marrying Borys Tkachenko (1899–1937), a prominent Ukrainian linguist and translator. The couple had met in Kyiv, where they were colleagues in a shared editorial office.

Ioffe was a remarkable individual who possessed a wide array of linguistic skills, including proficiency in several Slavic languages, as well as French, German, and English:

"Even as a child, she demonstrated remarkable talent, but her parents lacked the financial resources to provide her with a formal education. Consequently, the community raised funds to enable her to attend a classical gymnasium in the nearest town, Melitopol. There, she acquired proficiency in several languages. When the revolution broke out, she enlisted in the Red Army as a nurse. She was captivated by the idea of the 'cult of the proletariat', leading her to enter into a relationship with one of the proletarians. This relationship, which was brief, resulted in the birth of Maya, Olga's biological sister. Zinaida subsequently graduated from university and pursued a career as a specialist in Ukrainian dialects. Notably, Borys Tkachenko also specialized in Ukrainian dialectology, which may have served as another point of contact between them" (Khruslinska, 2008, p. 54).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Ioffe provided translation and editing services for several publishing houses, including the Young Bolshevik Publishing House. Among her notable contributions was the editing of the following publications in Ukrainian: the comedy

The Inspector by Nikolai Gogol (Ukrainian spelling: Mykola Hohol) (Kharkiv: Khudozhnia Literatura, 1935), the story *Viy* (Kyiv-Kharkiv, 1935), a collection of short stories under the title *The Overcoat* (Kharkiv: Literature and Art, 1935) and the story *The Nose* (Derzhlitvydav USSR, 1936), and the collection of Anton Chekhov's *Short Stories* (Kharkiv: Khudozhnia Literatura, 1935). In the same year, the Kharkiv publishing house Literatura i Mystetstvo (Literature and Art, LiM) published Victor Hugo's novel *Notre Dame de Paris*, translated from the French and edited by Zinaida Ioffe. Her own translations from Yiddish of many works by Jewish Soviet authors also appeared in Ukrainian: In 1930, Meyer Alberton's travel notes entitled *Birobidzhan: Travel Impressions* and his short story *Into the Mine*; in 1932, Abram Kagan's play *Energy* and Meyer Alberton's short story *The BIS Mine*; and in 1934, Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *Day Two* (Kharkiv: "LiM"), Mark Daniel's heroic tragedy in 3 acts *Four Days (Julis)*, the play by the same author *Zyamka the Digger* (in collaboration with Matviy Talalaevsky), Elia Shechtman's novel *On the Edge*; in 1935, Lev Kvitko's story *Two Comrades (Liam and Petryk)*; and in 1937, another novel by Elia Shechtman, *Plowed Boundaries*. An antifascist novel by the German writer of Jewish origin, Lion Feuchtwanger, *Die Geschwister Oppermann (The Oppermanns)*, written in 1933, was also published in a translation from the German by Zinaida Ioffe (Kyiv: Derzhlitvydav, 1936).

Borys Tkachenko, much like Peretz Markish, was an extremely handsome man. However, his physical appearance was of a different type of beauty: he had black hair and looked very much like a Romani person. After establishing a relationship with Tkachenko in Kyiv, Ioffe was able to provide a safe haven for her youngest daughter, Olga, and eldest daughter, Maya, who were in the care of their grandparents. Olga recalls the residence where she, her mother, and stepfather resided until 1937:

"It was located within a substantial courtyard of a six-story building. There was a one-story outbuilding on the corner of Instytutska and Olhynska streets," — which is now the exit from the Khreshchatyk metro station to Instytutska street, — "We resided in this outbuilding, with our two-room apartment situated on one side of the entrance, and our neighbors residing across from us" (Lisnichenko, 2014, May 30).

Ioffe's husband, Borys Danylovych Tkachenko was a student of prominent linguists Leonid Bulakhovsky and Oleksa Syniavsky. He was born into an outstanding family of Kharkiv scholar, writer, and public figure Danylo Avksentiyovych Tkachenko, who was known as a writer under the pen name Danylo PISOCHYNETS and a number of other pseudonyms.¹⁶

Olga developed a close bond with Borys Danylovych Tkachenko, affectionately referring to him as "Boria" and viewing him as a parental figure. However, this period of contentment was short-lived. In 1937, Borys Tkachenko was arrested and executed shortly thereafter. A few days later, the NKVD detained Zinaida Ioffe, Borys's wife, and sentenced her to 10 years in the camps. Ioffe alerted Peretz Markish to the impending disaster and entrusted Olga to his care to prevent the girl from being sent to an orphanage marked as the daughter of an "enemy of the people." As a result, eight-year-old Olga was placed under her father's care in Moscow, where she resided for a decade. According to her memoirs, "the Markish household had a Russian-speaking environment," and some of her father's friends spoke Yiddish with him. However, her father never taught his three children the language he loved so much that he chose as the language of his creative work (Khruslinska, 2008, p. 54).

Following the arrest of Borys Tkachenko, Zinaida Ioffe was herself detained while only in her early thirties. Upon her return from the camps in 1947, she confronted the possibility of re-incarceration. In 1949, a series of anti-Jewish purges began in the Soviet Union, and the NKVD arrested members of the Anti-Fascist Committee, including Peretz Markish. Markish was subjected to prolonged torture and subsequently executed in 1952. Concurrently, those who had received a "ten-year" sentence in the late 1930s were re-arrested. To evade the camp, Ioffe sought refuge with her eldest daughter, Maya, who was working in the Urals at the time. However, in the early 1950s, the NKVD detained her younger daughter, Olga.

Olga was sentenced to internal exile, first in Siberia and later in northern Kazakhstan. It was only in the wake of Khrushchev's thaw that Olga was able to return to Kyiv in 1955, accompanied by her young daughter and her husband, the courageous artist Mykola Rapay, who chose to marry the convicted Olga and, after the birth of their daughter, to stay with her. Zinaida Ioffe herself remained creative in her later years; references abound to Vasyl Stus¹⁷ consulting her about translat-

ing Rainer Maria Rilke's 10th elegy (from Stus's letter of 11/24/1974), and to the fact that together they translated Bertolt Brecht's play *The Life of Galileo*, the manuscript of which was kept by Ivan Svitlychnyi.¹⁸

The translation work of Zinaida Ioffe is a prime example of the significant involvement of a large number of Ukrainian Jews in the Ukrainian cultural revival. There are numerous examples of this phenomenon among both ordinary "cultural workers" and the representatives of the Bolshevik government in Ukraine.

A considerable number of writers, academics, members of artistic and literary families, and representatives of the Bolshevik government, among others, have made substantial contributions to the translation industry and to Ukrainian culture in general. One of the most authoritative ideological leaders of the literary process of that time was Ivan Yulianovych Kulyk (born Izrail Yudelevych Kulyk; 1897–1937), a renowned translator-theoretician and prolific researcher and translator of North American poetry of the time. He made translations for his *Anthology of American Poetry. 1855–1925*, which was published in Kharkiv in 1928. Kulyk possessed a deep understanding of American literature and had resided in the United States and Canada. His most notable translation work, *The Anthology of American Poetry*, pays particular attention to the poetry of Walt Whitman. Notably, Kulyk was the inaugural translator of Whitman's works into Ukrainian, including the renowned poem "Leaves of Grass." He also translated the works of R. Burns. He primarily translated from English, including works such as Jim Tully's social novel *Beggars of Life* (The Autobiography of a Hobo) and J. Woodhouse's novel *Psmith the Journalist* (DVU, 1928). His linguistic expertise also extended to German and Russian, with notable translations from Eduard Bagritsky. He also contributed several short excerpts from eighteenth-century American poets to the third volume of the *Textbook on the History of Western Literature* ("Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, the Age of Absolute Monarchy and Bourgeois Revolutionary Movements"), which was compiled by Oleksandr Biletsky and Mykola Plevako (publishing house Soviet School, 1931).

Kulyk's translation heritage is extensive and diverse. In particular, he translated Carl Sandberg's poetry collection *Smoke and Fire* (Literatura i Mystetstvo Publishers, 1931). In the same year, publishing house Gart printed a collection of selected poems by Michael Gold titled *120 Million* in Kulyk's translation.

In 1932, his translation of Bruno Jasiński's poem "A Word about Jakub Szela" was published. In 1936, Derzhlitvydav Publishers printed a complete collection of poems by the prominent Georgian romantic poet Nikoloz Baratashvili in Kulyk's translation. He also used to review published works by Ukrainian writers and English translations of Ukrainian literature. Notably, his review of a collection of English translations of Ukrainian folk songs and poetry by Taras Shevchenko, Stepan Rudansky, Sydir Vorobkevych, and Yuriy Fedkovych¹⁹ (Red Path Journal, 1924, no. 6) offers a particularly insightful perspective. Alongside Hryhoriy Maifet, Kulyk is recognized as a pivotal figure in the development of Ukrainian criticism in the realm of English-language Shevchenko studies.²⁰

Kulyk was targeted during the Stalinist purges under the common, fabricated charge of belonging to an "anti-Soviet nationalist organization." The NKVD accused him of espionage, claiming he was recruited by U.S. or Canadian intelligence during his diplomatic service in Montreal. His international contacts and literary translations were weaponized as "evidence" of "counter-revolutionary propaganda" — a vague label frequently used to silence intellectuals who championed national cultures.²¹ Following a swift conviction based on coerced testimony, Kulyk was forced to implicate both himself and his wife, the poet and translator Luciana Piontek. Despite a total lack of evidence, Piontek was convicted of espionage and executed. Kulyk was sentenced to death shortly thereafter and executed on October 10, 1937.

Among the theoretical writings by Ukrainian translators of Jewish origin, Oleksander Finkel's monograph *Teoriia i praktyka perekladu* (Theory and Practice of Translation), written in Ukrainian and published by the Kharkiv branch of DVU in 1929, is a seminal work and the inaugural textbook on translation studies in the Soviet Union. Finkel (1899–1968) was one of the most important Ukrainian figures in translation studies of the Red Renaissance period, alongside Mykola Zerov, Volodymyr Derzhavyn, Hryhoriy Maifet, and others. His monograph *Theory and Practice of Translation*, which had previously been overlooked, is now regarded in Ukraine as a model of specialised literature in Translation Studies. It was the first fundamental monograph in Eastern Europe on the history and theory of translation. As the author of the first book entirely devoted to the subject matter of translation, Finkel was immediately noticed and referred by influential trans-

lation scholars — and not only in Ukraine, but also in Russian Federation, in particular, by Mikhail Alekseev in his 1931 monograph *The Problem of Literary Translation* (p. 33).

Finkel's book made him one of the leading Soviet translation scholars, along with Korney Chukovsky and Andrei Fedorov. It is important to note that, in particular, alongside *The Art of Translation* (1930) by Chukovsky and Fedorov, Zerov included Finkel's monograph, as a textbook, in the list of required readings for his course on translation methods "Metodyka perekladu" at the Institute of Linguistic Education in Kyiv in 1932 (see in Kolomiyets, 2020, p. 147).

As one of the creators of Ukrainian translation school of that time (Zerov, Derzhavyn, Maifet, Kulyk, and others), Finkel was actively engaged not only in translation practice (he translated from and into English, Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish), but also in the editor's work. For example, the short story collection entitled *From my Treasures* of Soviet Yiddish modernist Der Nister (Pinchas Kahanovich), whose historical novel *The Family Mashber* was set in a Ukrainian shtetl, saw the light of day in 1930 under Finkel's editorship.

The Ukrainian poets' early commemoration of the victims in Babyn Yar

Renowned Ukrainian poets, who participated in popularization of the Yiddish Renaissance, for example, those who just recently contributed their translations to Itzik Fefer's poetry collection *Treasure (Selected Poems Translated by Ukrainian Poets)* (1937) — M. Rylsky, V. Sosiura, and P. Tychyna — were among the first to respond in verse to the tragedy of Jewish people on the Nazi-occupied territories during WWII. As early as 1942, three poems bearing the same title, "To the Jewish People," appeared in print, authored by Pavlo Tychyna, Volodymyr Sosiura, and Maksym Rylsky.

The portrayal of the Jewish people followed the official vein of the Communist Party's "general line" — celebrating them as one of the liberated peoples of the former Russian Empire and as builders of the Soviet Union. It was also framed as an appeal to Soviet Jews, with whom Ukrainians "shared, as brothers," both joy and sorrow, as well as the land of Ukraine (as expressed by M. Rylsky,²² renowned for his translations of Yiddish poets such as David Hofstein). The inclusion of Rylsky's appeal underscores the Ukrainian-Jewish literary dialogue. These early appeals were not

calls to struggle but rather assertions that the Jewish people, long "persecuted through centuries," had "in the country of the Soviets ... found their homeland" (Sosiura),²³ and rose to defend it alongside other Soviet nations as part of a unified Soviet people. Tychyna, in turn, confronted the trauma of the massacre, emphasizing the "eternal strength" of the Jewish spirit, born of unity rather than dispersion, and urging that this power be directed toward the campaign against fascism in the West—to liberate the "brothers and sisters" of Soviet Jews who "are in the claws of a cannibal, /still in agony."²⁴ Infused with a propagandistic timbre, these poems operated as official instruments of unity, rallying the peoples of the USSR in their shared struggle against Nazism during the Soviet-German war.

The German occupation of Kyiv lasted from September 1941 till November 6, 1943. On September 29–30, 1941, the Nazis perpetrated the most lethal single-day massacre in history against the Jewish people. This occurred in Babyn Yar, a ravine in Kyiv, where 33,771 Jews were killed. From September 29, 1941, to October 1943, the total number of casualties in and near Babyn Yar reached nearly 100,000, a figure resulting from a series of coordinated killings carried out by Nazi occupation authorities.

Following the liberation of Kyiv by Soviet troops and the exposure of atrocities committed at Babyn Yar, a distinct corpus of poetry emerged dedicated specifically to this site. These works diverged markedly from earlier poems: rather than adopting the didactic tone characteristic of previous Soviet verse, they sought to document the physical traces of the crime scene through poetic means and to convey the profound emotional impact of irreparable loss through metaphorical detail. As Ostap Kin notes in his introduction to the anthology *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian Poets Respond*,

"[t]he poems collected in this volume show that the attempt to understand and commemorate the tragedy of Babyn Yar began in Ukraine almost immediately after the massacre" (2023, p. 33).

The poems of the 1940s, representing an early Ukrainian poetic response to the Holocaust, were shaped by the politically charged Soviet context in which they were composed. In 1943, Mykola Bazhan wrote the baroque-style poem *Ravine*, while Volodymyr Sosiura authored *Babyn Yar*. In 1944, two younger poets, Oleksa Yushchenko (1917–2008)

and Vasyl Shvets (1918–1993), published dedication poems, both likewise entitled *Babyn Yar*.

A subsequent wave of reflections on the tragedy resurfaced in Soviet print during the mid-1960s, marked by a deeper philosophical engagement with the human dimensions of mass killings at Babyn Yar. Leonid Pervomaisky, a Jewish-Ukrainian poet previously mentioned as a contributor to Fefer's collection, published two poems: *Resurrect Me, Future, for a New* (1964) and *In Babyn Yar* (1968). In the 1960s and subsequent decades, other Ukrainian poets also continued to compose works dedicated to Babyn Yar, expanding the literary dialogue around memory and commemoration.

Kin's anthology *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian Poets Respond* is a landmark publication that merits close attention. It brings together 41 poems by 24 Ukrainian poets—both Jewish and non-Jewish—including major figures such as Mykola Bazhan, Pavlo Tychyna, and Maksym Rylsky. The collection also features Ivan Drach, whose 1966 poem, written for the Babyn Yar commemorative events, exemplifies the Soviet Thaw's literary response to the massacre; Dmytro Pavlychko, representing post-Soviet reflections; Marianna Kiyanovska, whose six poems from her 2017 collection *Babyn Yar: Holosamy (The Voices of Babyn Yar)* form the anthology's most extensive contribution, emphasizing individual tragedies; and Valeriia Bohuslavska, whose poem engages dialogically with Kiyanovska's work, underscoring intertextual connections. Spanning the years 1941 to 2018, this volume constitutes a vital resource for scholars and readers interested in Jewish-Ukrainian cultural encounters.

Published in 2023, though initiated two years earlier to mark the 80th anniversary of the 1941 Babyn Yar massacre, this anthology memorializes Ukraine's Jewish Holocaust victims and, by extension, those of Stalinist totalitarianism. It centers poetry as a primary witness to atrocity while confronting modern anti-semitism, xenophobia, and the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine.

While predominantly featuring Ukrainian-language poetry rather than Yiddish texts, the anthology establishes a vital link to the Red Yiddish Renaissance by emphasizing the legacy of Yiddish-Ukrainian literary exchange. By including poets from diverse generations and traditions, the collection addresses a profound historical gap left by Soviet authorities, who suppressed Jewish-specific commemoration by labeling victims as generic "Soviet citizens." Ultimately,

the anthology positions poetry as a critical medium for humanizing individual tragedies within the immense scale of the massacre.

The anthology has gained renewed urgency amid the Russia–Ukraine War, which has reopened deep historical wounds — notably evidenced by the 2022 Russian bombing near the Babyn Yar site. By drawing parallels between the Holocaust and modern atrocities like the mass graves in Bucha, the collection bridges past and present violence. It emphasizes the necessity of critical thinking in the face of contemporary propaganda, specifically countering Russian claims of "de-nazifying" Ukraine that distort historical truth. Furthermore, the bilingual Ukrainian-English format challenges the Soviet-era dominance of Russian-language narratives. As Martin Paulsen notes,²⁵ this shift — echoing Oksana Zabuzhko's call to reevaluate Western bookshelves — signals a definitive move toward a sovereign Ukrainian perspective.²⁶

Overall, *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian poets respond* is a powerful and emotive collection that connects to the Red Yiddish Renaissance, a period of active Yiddish literary and cultural production in Soviet Ukraine during the 1920s and early 1930s. The collection focuses on Ukrainian Jewish experiences and the legacy of Yiddish-Ukrainian literary exchange. The connections are indirect but significant: the Red Yiddish Renaissance saw a flourishing of Yiddish literature in Ukraine, as well as an active exchange, when renowned authors such as David Hofstein, Peretz Markish and Leib Kvitko translated Ukrainian works, including Shevchenko's *Kobzar*, while the Ukrainian poets Maksym Rylsky, Pavlo Tychyna, and Volodymyr Sosiura, among others, translated Yiddish works. This exchange was pivotal in establishing the foundation for Ukrainian-Jewish literary and cultural dialogue, a tradition that the anthology continues by featuring poets who engaged with Yiddish literature.²⁷ The anthology's focus on Ukrainian Jewish poets responding to the Holocaust clearly echoes the Renaissance's emphasis on Jewish identity within a Ukrainian context, albeit expressed in Ukrainian rather than Yiddish. A notable aspect of the anthology is its relevance to the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war. The challenges to the Ukrainian and Jewish identities in the contemporary era are highlighted by the fact that both have been curtailed by Stalinist repression and genocide.

Concluding remarks

As posited by Y. Petrovsky-Shtern in the introduc-

tion to his seminal book *The Making of the Ukrainian Jew*, in the aftermath of the February 1917 revolution in Russia, a segment of the city's Jewish population opted to align themselves not with the Russian Empire but rather with the nascent Ukrainian nation and its national aspirations, thereby adopting the identity of Ukrainian Jews (2009, pp. 19–20). Subsequent to the Bolsheviks' rise to power and the establishment of Soviet Ukraine, a new Yiddish-speaking intelligentsia emerged in prominent Ukrainian cities, particularly Kharkiv and Kyiv, predicated on the grounds of bilingualism and multilingualism. This period witnessed the emergence of novel Ukrainian-Jewish discourses and the flourishing of lively literary exchanges facilitated by translation, contributing to a broader cultural renaissance that unfolded during the 1920s.

Although the period of Yiddish modernism in Ukraine was limited to the 1920s and 1930s, during this time numerous translations from and into Yiddish were produced. These served as both an official and unofficial manifestation of the friendship of peoples promoted by Soviet ideology during the Red Renaissance. The concept of interpersonal friendship was further embodied in authentic relationships and marital unions.

In the mid- to late 1930s, Stalin engaged in a campaign of terror and overt conflict against "nationalist elements/wreckers/saboteurs" in Ukraine (Kalnychenko & Kolomiyets, 2022), which culminated in the eradication of the Red Renaissance—an era marked by a flourishing field of Yiddish-Ukrainian translations. The state terror exerted an irrevocable influence on the development of Yiddish-language modernist literature in Ukraine.

The start of the Soviet-German War, also known as the Great Patriotic War in Soviet and Russian propaganda, led to a shift in the balance of power between the Soviet authorities, who sought to present a unified voice for the Soviet collectivity, and the national cultures, who sought to preserve their national identities. This resulted in a period of renegotiation (Winestock, 2022). The Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, recognized the importance of garnering support from the Soviet populace in the context of the war. Furthermore, support was sought from the global Jewish diaspora. This endeavor can be exemplified by a notable appeal made by Dovid Bergelson to the "brother Jews of the entire world" during a significant wartime rally in Moscow's Gorky Park on August 24, 1941.

After WWII, in the late Stalinist period, efforts to discredit Ukrainian and Jewish cultures persisted with

renewed tenacity. A prominent contemporary Jewish-Ukrainian intellectual, Leonid Finberg, offers his characteristics of that period: "[E]veryone who spoke Ukrainian and refused to write an ode for Stalin every day was said to be a 'nationalist'" (2019, p. 260). As for the Jewish cause, Finberg explains:

"After the war anti-Semitism became horrible because it was organized by the state. First it was soft when the USSR began to cooperate with Hitler (1939–1941); during that period there was silence about all the tragedies involving the Jews that were happening in Europe. The party disoriented citizens and did nothing to protect these groups of citizens later on, when the war broke out. The USSR cared first of all about its factories, so only factories were evacuated, and those who moved with the factories. Others were left behind" (2019, p. 259).

In conclusion, the 1920s and 1930s saw a burgeoning Yiddish-speaking intelligentsia in urban cen-

ters like Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa, where a vibrant Yiddish-Ukrainian literary exchange took root. This era of modernism — mutually shaped by Ukrainian and Jewish influences — was violently dismantled by Stalin's purges in the late 1930s. While Soviet authorities briefly leveraged Jewish national identity for propaganda during World War II, as evidenced by Dovid Bergelson's 1941 global appeal, the postwar era brought intensified state-sponsored antisemitism and the systemic suppression of Ukrainian identity.

Scholars such as Leonid Finberg have highlighted the government's failure to safeguard its Jewish citizens. In addition to Finberg's observations (Finberg, 2019, p. 270), other Jewish public intellectuals — most notably Moisei Fishbein (1946–2020), the Hebrew-Ukrainian poet, translator, and thinker — have examined the Holodomor, the state-orchestrated famine in Ukraine of 1932–1933, as a potential genocidal warning disregarded by the international community (Fishbein, 2006, December 13). The silence of global democratic forces in the face of this catastrophe may have contributed to the conditions that enabled the escalation of the Holocaust.

Comments:

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² The Ukrainization campaign proclaimed by the XII Congress of the RKP(b) in April 1923 culminated during 1925–1928.

³ The Bolsheviks initially supported Ukrainization in order to gain local support, promoting Ukrainian in the early 1920s. However, Russian remained the de facto language of Soviet administration and propaganda.

⁴ Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861) — the foremost Ukrainian Romantic poet of the 19th century and a major figure of the Ukrainian national revival.

⁵ For more detail see: "The fate of Hofshsteyn, like that of the majority of Shevchenko's Yiddish translators, was immensely tragic: They were shot in 1952—Oksana Pashko," *Ukrainian Jewish Encounter*. Posted on: July 8th, 2020. The fate of Hofshsteyn, like that of the majority of Shevchenko's Yiddish translators, was immensely tragic: They were shot in 1952—Oksana Pashko - UJE - Ukrainian Jewish Encounter.

⁶ Kolomyets, L. (2015). *Ukrainian literary translation and translators in the 1920s-30s: 'History of translation' course materials* (pp. 45-48). Nova Knyha.

⁷ Shevchenko, T. (2018). *Kobzar: Selected works* (Bilingual ed.). Dukh i Litera Publishers.

⁸ Mykola Zerov (1890–1937) was a leader of the Kyiv group of Neoclassicist poets and translators; literary scholar, historian and critic, one of the key figures of the Ukrainian cultural revival decade. Zerov is particularly renowned for his translations of ancient Roman poets such as Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Catullus, among others. In addition to his own oeuvre, he is also renowned for his translations of French Parnassians, as well as works from Slavic languages, including Polish, Russian, and Belarusian.

⁹ Sofia Zerova uses patronymic names Naumovich and Konstantinovich, speaking respectfully about Vaisblat and Zerov.

¹⁰ Translated from Russian. Hereafter, all translations of prose quotations from Ukrainian and Russian are mine. — L.K.

¹¹ The name comes from the geographical name of the Volyn region, pronounced "Volin" in Yiddish.

¹² The word "shveln" means "thresholds" or "edges" in a figurative sense.

¹³ The poem's central themes are brotherhood, struggle and Jewish destiny.

¹⁴ <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/879271.html>

¹⁵ The poem "Di Kupe" was written in 1918. The publication was released in both Kyiv and Warsaw within the same year. The poem addresses the subject of the Jewish pogroms in Ukraine in 1919–1920 and is regarded as a pivotal piece of Markish's early oeuvre, reflecting his response to the tragic events of that era.

- ¹⁶ Beyond his scholarly pursuits, Danylo Tkachenko was deeply involved in the arts, contributing to the Ukrainian theatrical landscape by authoring plays and opera librettos. He was also a dedicated educator who popularized zoology for children. As an active member of the Kharkiv Historical and Philological Society, he collaborated with renowned professors Mykola Sumtsov and Dmytro Bahaliy to oversee the publication of a dedicated collection of articles and the construction of a monument to Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko in Kharkiv. His writings appeared in numerous influential publications of the era, including the Lviv-based magazines *Dzvinok*, *Svitlo*, *Zoria*, and the *Literary and Scientific Bulletin*, as well as the Poltava magazine *Ridnyi Krai*. During the early 1900s, Tkachenko served as the academic secretary of Kharkiv University. In recognition of his distinguished service and cultural contributions, he was eventually elevated to the status of nobility.
- ¹⁷ Vasyl Stus (1938–1985) – Ukrainian poet, literary critic, and translator; Soviet dissident; died in Soviet strict-regime concentration camp no. 389/36-1, Perm oblast, RSFSR.
- ¹⁸ Ivan Svitlychnyi (1929–1992) – Ukrainian poet, literary critic, and Soviet dissident.
- ¹⁹ *Songs of Ukraine with Ruthenian poems*. (1916). (F. R. Livesay, Trans.). J. M. Dent & Sons.
- ²⁰ Maifet, H., & Kulyk, I. (1928). *Anhliys'ki pereklady z Shevchenka: Statti* [English translations from Shevchenko: Articles]. Naukovo-Doslidchyy Instytut Tarasa Shevchenka.
- ²¹ Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine (TsDAMLM) in Kyiv. Funds 212, 364.
- ²² Rylsky, M. (2023). To the Jewish people (J. Hennessy & O. Kin, Trans.). In O. Kin (Ed.), *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian poets respond* (p. 187). Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University.
- ²³ Sosiura, V. (2023). To the Jewish people (J. Hennessy & O. Kin, Trans.). In O. Kin (Ed.), *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian poets respond* (pp. 201, 203). Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University.
- ²⁴ Tychyna, P. (2023). To the Jewish people (J. Hennessy & O. Kin, Trans.). In O. Kin (Ed.), *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian poets respond* (pp. 219, 221, 223, 225). Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University.
- ²⁵ Paulsen, M. (2023). [Review of the book *Babyn Yar: Ukrainian poets respond*, by O. Kin, Ed.]. *Ab Imperio*, 2023(4), 248–251. Project MUSE - <i>Babyn Yar: Ukrainian Poets Respond</i> ed. by Ostap Kin (review)
- ²⁶ Zabuzhko, O. (2022, April 22). Normalized evil: Reading Russian literature after Bucha. *Times Literary Supplement*, 6. <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/russian-literature-bucha-massacre-essay-oksana-zabuzhko/>
- ²⁷ For more detail see: “Your words live in this air”: How Jews interpreted Shevchenko - UJE - Ukrainian Jewish Encounter

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Коломієць Лада

Ренесанс їдишу в Україні та його відлуння в перших ушануваннях жертв Бабиного Яру в українській поезії

Анотація. Помітне поживлення літературної активності мовою їдиш у Радянській Україні 1920-х – початку 1930-х років було зумовлене більшовицькою політикою коренізації, яка сприяла розвитку мов національних меншин разом з українською. Хоча українська залишалася основною для більшості сільського та непромислового населення, вона ще не мала широкого поширення у великих містах та індустріальних центрах. Політика коренізації стимулювала активний перекладацький обмін між «братніми» літературами радянських республік, а також між мовами всередині України, що нерідко здійснювалося за посередництва російської мови.

У середині 1930-х років національна політика Сталіна зазнала радикальних змін: від підтримки культур меншин вона перейшла до репресій проти так званого «місцевого націоналізму». У статті досліджено характер і масштаби перекладів з їдишу — мови єврейських письменників-модерністів — українською в міжвоєнний період. На основі мікроісторії життя єврейського літератора Переца Маркіша та його родини простежуються долі єврейських інтелектуалів у СРСР, а також підкреслюється значення родинних зв'язків і особистої дружби між україномовними та їдишомовними авторами.

Окрему увагу приділено аналізу швидкої, хоча й обмеженої сталінською цензурою, реакції українських поетів і перекладачів на трагедію Голокосту, символом якої стали масові розстріли в Бабиному Яру.

Ключові слова: Бабин Яр, Голокост, література їдишем, Червоне Відродження, Радянська Україна, переклад з їдишу українською.

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