

NAVIGATING THE PLANNED ECONOMY:
ACCOMMODATION AND SURVIVAL
IN MOSCOW'S POST-WAR 'SOVIET JEWISH PALE'

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ABSTRACT

Anna Kushkova: Navigating the planned economy: Accommodation and survival
in Moscow's post-war 'Soviet Jewish Pale'
(Under the direction of Michele Rivkin-Fish and Jonathan Boyarin)

This dissertation presents an anthropological case study of Jewish engagement in the Soviet “planned economy,” or the “economy of shortage,” in a specific geographic setting of Moscow Jewish suburbs in the first decades after World War II. Due to a range of socio-political, economic and demographic developments Moscow's suburban settlements with their dense pattern of Jewish residence, unparalleled in Soviet history, turned into what may be called a “Soviet Jewish pale” – a distinctive socio-cultural Jewish environment sustaining a specific configuration of Soviet Jewishness, not fully coinciding with that of the former shtetl, yet different from that characteristic of large urban settings.

The study focuses on one particular sphere constitutive of the suburban Jewish collective identity, that is, the economic practices where Jewishness played a vital role in creating channels for obtaining production resources, organizing production and devising distribution strategies. It demonstrates that the prohibition of private entrepreneurship on the part of the socialist state, largely ideological rather than economic in nature, called forth a likewise not purely economic response from below – ethnic mobilization in certain spheres of the formal socialist economy. In particular, the dissertation addresses three Jewish economic “niches” – small-scale artel production, trade and the Soviet version of junk-yards, and explores the question of their “embeddedness” in Jewish economic and social traditions.

As a part of a wider debate on the nature of socialist production, the dissertation provides a locally-informed understanding of the role that ethnic actors played in production and distribution at the

intersection of the “first” and the “second” Soviet economies. As cultural anthropology, it examines the complex relationships between social tradition, belief and accommodation in the urban-rural nexus of the country’s capital. By focusing on an ethnic group subjected to open and covert discrimination that curbed its members’ professional choices, this work involves an historically grounded sociocultural analysis of inequality and socio-political adaptation. As economic anthropology, it makes the first systematic attempt at narrating Soviet Jewish economic history after World War II.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DAMPS	Department Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property, Soviet “financial police”
GARF	State Archive of the Russian Federation
JEES	Jewish Ethnic Economy under Socialism (name of the project, used in quotations of field materials)
Inv.	Inventory
NEP	New Economic Policy
ORT	Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia
OZET	Society for Settling Toiling Jews on the Land (“Lenozet” mentioned in the text refers to the Leningrad division of the Society)
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
TsAGM	Central Archive of the City of Moscow

FOREWORD

“It’s time to look for greener pastures”
(Sholem Aleichem 1987: 125)¹

The phrase in the epigraph, a recurrent motif of a number of Sholem Aleichem novels (*Motl, Peysi the Cantor’s Son, The Bewitched Tailor*), as well as his autobiography *From the Fair*, although they are written before the time period I am focusing on in this work, expresses both the essential perception of time and place, as well as the actual life experience of the people I am writing about. This phrase implies the sense of being on the move, whether in a collective sense, or as one’s individual life-time experience, whether the move is voluntary, or not, and whether the “pastures” elsewhere are indeed “greener” than those at home.

For Russian Jews, the twentieth century marked a strong tendency of moving away from the Pale of Settlement where the Jewish population was locked for many preceding decades; it was a migration from small townships, which more often than not are called shtetls – the word largely imprecise as long as it is used in the sense of “small township inhabited by a majority of Jewish population,” yet symbolically charged with our today’s visions and fantasies of the “authentic” “traditional” Jewish life.

Pronounced “dead” a number of times during the same twentieth century, the shtetl became the point of departure for “three messianic pilgrimages”: “the Jewish migration to the United States, the most consistent version of liberalism; the Jewish migration to Palestine, the Promised Land of secularized Jewishness; and the Jewish migration to the cities of the Soviet Union, a world free of both

¹Literally, the original Hebrew proverb translates the following: “Who changes his place, changes his luck” (Talmud, Rosh Hashana) (Alcalay 1997: 62). In other translations of Sholem Aleichem it’s rendered as “Change Your Place, Change Your Luck” (e.g. Sholem Aleichem 1985: 47-50).

capitalism and tribalism (or so it seemed)” (Slezkine 2004: 2). In this work I am going to add some complexity to this picture by focusing on the Jews who left the Pale yet instead of a large Soviet city, particularly, Moscow, ended up in suburban settlements around it. In some ways, this was the fourth trajectory of exodus from the Pale, or at least a considerable modification of the third one.

The notion of “place” is particularly important for this research. I am arguing that due to their distinct geography (positioned in proximity to the largest urban center of the country, and yet outside of it), Moscow suburbs engendered a number of unique practices of Jewish life such as specific relations with the local gentiles, specific contours of religious observance and communal practices, as well as specific occupational patterns, including involvement in the “second” economy.

My work seeks to contribute new insights to our understanding of the larger picture of Soviet Jewish experience, while simultaneously introducing Moscow Jewish suburbs as a particular part of this experience. By doing this, I also want to show how Jewish life in suburban settlements near Moscow fits into the larger picture of Soviet Jewish life in the 20th century.

The “urban *vs* rural/ non-urban” dichotomy always loomed large in the Russian Jewish imagination; evictions from villages and cities to which the tsarist government subjected Jews almost on a regular basis and which were a part of the Jewish collective memory made them highly geographically conscious. The Russian Jewish Pale was a dynamic formation: not only did its borders change over time, important shifts were also taking place inside it, with each new governmental prohibition for Jews to live in the villages, or, on the contrary, in the cities. While the evictions from the villages of the nineteenth century were too remote in time to be remembered as structured events, those following the introduction of the “Temporary Rules” in 1882 (prohibition for Jews to live in the villages, as well as to own and lease real estate and land outside of townships and towns), as well as the expulsion of Jews from Moscow in 1882 may be seen as part of the “modern” Jewish narrative.

Eviction from villages, when some Jewish shtetls were relegated to the status of villages specifically to “free” them from Jews, is a pronounced motif in Sholem Aleichem’s works, for instance, in the novel *Tevye the Dairyman* or in the story *One Hundred and One*, where it constitutes the major

conflict. Importantly enough, when Tevye faces imminent eviction, he tells the policeman that he is moving to town because he “want[s] to be among Jews” (Sholem Aleichem 1987: 126): Jews always thought of themselves as an urban population, which first and foremost signified a certain mode of economic existence.² As a matter of fact, shtetls were literally townships structured around the commercial center, or the commercial center itself, surrounded by a non-Jewish peasant area, with which it lived in a symbiotic relation of economic exchange. In other words, Jews were as economically indispensable for peasants, as peasants for Jews.³ By contrast, the valuation of village life, which for the majority of Jews constituted an economic necessity, was usually rather low, and included, among other things, the image of rural “backwardness” and the lack of a fully-fledged Jewish community where one could feel “among their own.”⁴

As a result of the introduction of the “Temporary Rules” and eviction from the countryside, by the end of the nineteenth century up to 87% of the Jewish population found themselves “crowded in the towns” (Nemanov 190[5]: 6-7). In the present-day interviews, various residential prohibitions and multiple evictions that the Jewish population was subjected to in the Russian Empire⁵ are especially remembered though the expulsion of Jews from Moscow in 1882 and the forced deportation of the large masses of Jewish population from the front-zone during World War I. Often these events are quoted as explanations for specific geographical trajectories of the informants’ families in the last 3-4 generations.

²From the legal perspective, the status of the shtetl (Russ. *mestechko*) was distinguished from villages through its fiscal responsibilities (payment of real estate taxes), presence of municipal public administration and the “production of trade and crafts” (the latter could include propination privileges) (Nolcken 1901: 365-370).

³Cf. about Mogilev-Podol’sky at the end of the nineteenth century: “The city is populated mostly by Jews who, while enlivening its inner life and invigorating its trade and production, occupy all the best streets [in it] <...> remote streets or, to put it better, areas of Mogilev look rather like villages and are inhabited by Ukrainians” (Afanasiev-Chuzhbinskyi 1893b: 254-255).

⁴Cf. from the memoirs of Yekhezkel Kotik (middle of the 19th c.): “In those days it was degrading for a respectable Jew to live in a village, that is, to be dubbed a yishuvnik” (Assaf 2002: 260).

⁵Some literature on this question includes: Dubnow 2001a: 345-355 (expulsion from the villages of 1804), Dubnow 2001b: 309-312, Sliozberg 1907: 19-28 (on the effects of the “Temporary rules” of 1882), Dubnow 2001c: 15-22. About the Moscow eviction of 1892 in particular see: Praisman 2008: 1202-1203, Vermel’ 1924, Sliozberg 1933: 42-53, Dubnow 2001b: 399-414, Eisenberg 2003, Rosenthal 1999, Kliachko 2003). For a comprehensive overview of laws on Jewish residence in the Russian Empire until 1914 see: Gimpel’son & Bramson 1914: 1-312.

The Soviet regime in turn supplied additional paradigms of Jewish migration and settlement: first and foremost, the mass “exodus” from the shtetl in 1920-30s; various evacuation-and-return patterns during World War II; banishments of individuals and groups in the course of Soviet political repressions; the threat, however imaginary, of eviction “to Siberia and the Far East” during the last years of Stalin’s rule; varying degrees of state anti-Semitism in different periods of the Soviet regime that shaped one’s educational and career choices in terms of space; and finally, general residential restrictions in the Soviet Union, which will be discussed later on. Even though some of these developments were ethnically neutral, at least in the official discourse, they could not but add to the individual and collective Jewish sensitivity as to where one chooses to live (when there was a choice to be made), how the specific residential location is discursively justified, and how the place creates the narrative of “us” as distinct from “them,” even though “they” might be one’s closest neighbors.

Jewish immigration from the townships of the Pale of Settlement to suburban settlements around Moscow presented a distinct type of transition as compared to the one that brought Jews to Moscow itself.

On the one hand, with a clear distinction between “urban” and “rural/ non-urban” in the Russian perception of cultural space at large, dwelling outside of a large city, in a place officially called “settlement” is more often than not seen as a social failure, since it almost always signifies a limited range of political, economic and cultural resources. On the other hand, for people who made a transition to settlements, the migration was perhaps smoother in that they did not have to face the harsh and unknown challenges of a large metropolitan city head-on. They found themselves in a much more “recognizable” environment of suburban life which, as I will try to show in this work, was an important predisposition for the reproduction of distinct patterns of social and economic life.

Lee Shai Weissbach, focusing on the American Jewish immigrant communities of the turn of the 20th century, stressed that some “basic features of Jewish life in the immigrant era were manifested in America’s less visible Jewish centers” as compared to large cities. He also argued that smaller Jewish places “were not simply miniature versions of the larger metropolitan areas,” and as such “can provide

valuable laboratories in which to study the role of place in conditioning the American Jewish experience” (Weissbach 2001: 107).

In the Russian case, it would be more difficult to make a systematic comparison between the Jewish culture of larger and smaller towns: specific socio-cultural and ideological conditions of the first decades of the Soviet rule created a particularly favorable situation for Jewish assimilation in large urban centers. In fact, Jewish communities in smaller places, whether in the former “Pale,” or outside of it could indeed be seen as “laboratories” where “traditional” Jewish culture the way as we reconstruct it through nineteenth century sources, persisted – in comparison to its virtual loss in large cities.

Structurally, my work consists of two parts.

Part I starts with an Introduction that discusses three major academic discourses relevant to my research: a) Ethnographic studies of Russian Jews, b) Russian Jewish economic history, and c) the Soviet “planned” economy, including its “second,” or clandestine part. It also examines the major sources of the work and the specificity of the communicative situation in the field determined by the research topic.

The body of Part I is divided into four chapters: 1) Varieties of Soviet Jewishness, 2) “The Figured World” of the Soviet Jewish Economy, 3) “The Soviet Jewish Pale”: Malakhovka and Saltykovka, and 4) Malakhovka and Saltykovka: The Soviet Jewish “Railroad Narrative.”

Chapter 1, VARIETIES OF SOVIET JEWISHNESS, is an effort to apply a finer lens to the notion of “Soviet Jews.” More often than not these are seen as a homogenous population, sharing uniform perceptions of self and of its non-Jewish environment, opting for similar life strategies in an often hostile society, and nurturing similar intentions about its future. In contesting such indiscriminate perception, which to a large extent resulted from the socio-political conditions of Cold War scholarship, I argue that ethnographic and anthropological interventions are capable of producing a more nuanced vision of the Soviet Jewish population and elicit its internal diversity, including the economic constituent thereof. I then focus on one particular “version” of Soviet Jewishness that emerged in a specific urban-rural nexus of suburban settlements around Moscow, with particular emphasis on the

impact of ideas about “provincialism” for the local collective identity and the applicability of the notion of “authenticity” to the suburban Jewish population as opposed to the more assimilated urban “intelligentsia” Jews.

Chapter 2, “THE FIGURED WORLD” OF THE SOVIET JEWISH ECONOMY, attempts to put together various collective representations of *Homo economicus judaicus* or, in other words, popular ideas and stereotypes, both Jewish and non-Jewish, related to the economic agency of Jews, their “characteristic” exchange-related choices, “predisposition” to various economic occupations, “Jewish work ethic,” etc. The chapter particularly stresses the impact produced upon such representations by the Soviet rule with its drastically different economic regime and persistent shortages that started emerging from its very beginning.

Chapter 3, “THE SOVIET JEWISH PALE”: MALAKHOVKA AND SALTYKOVKA, discusses how the pattern of suburban Jewish settlements around Moscow was formed over the period between the beginning of World War I and the end of World War II, which socio-political factors caused or facilitated internal Jewish migration to the central part of Russia, and how the present-day Jewish suburban dwellers justify their families’ choice to stay outside the large city. Following this, the chapter presents the first attempt at reconstructing the “circle of Jewish settlements” around Moscow based both on interviews and a small range of printed sources, discusses the possibility of defining these Jewish settlements as the “Soviet Jewish Pale,” and introduces Malakhovka and Saltykovka, the two most representative settlements of this circle.

Chapter 4, “SOVIET JEWISH RAILROAD NARRATIVE,” looks at the suburban railroad as a formative element for Jewish suburban identity in terms of the interethnic encounters that it provided, production and maintenance of ethnic differences it facilitated, and various types of economic exchange it afforded. The chapter also makes an attempt at inscribing the Moscow suburban railroad experience into a larger tradition of Russian Jewish “railroad stories” of the early modern period.

Part II consists of four chapters: 1) *“In the Shadow of the Tall Forests of Socialism”*: Post-war Artels, 2) Soviet Jewish Trade and Soviet Jewish Traders, 3) Suburban Moscow “Junk-Yard Jews,” and 4) Soviet state economic anti-Semitism.

Chapter 5, *“IN THE SHADOW OF THE TALL FORESTS OF SOCIALISM”*: POST-WAR ARTELS, opens with the historical background of the first years of the Bolshevik power, when the new regime launched the policy of “productivization” of the Jewish population, aiming at weaning Jews from “non-socialist” occupations such as private artisanal production and trade. This, the chapter argues, formed a specific connection between economy and ethnicity (Jewishness), which continued into the post-war period. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, artels were, on the one hand, put into a “pre-modern” economic slot within the general perspective of the socialist production, and on the other, received a temporary license to produce a broad range of everyday consumer goods absent in the war-devastated economy. Popular perception of artels as “not fully socialist” production units, although factually wrong, is indicative of the vast “second” economy that was taking place under their cover. Analysis of the structure of artel production warrants their designation as a quasi-autonomous refuge for private economic enterprise, positioned between the official and the clandestine spheres of production. In the second part, the chapter discusses Moscow suburban artels as a Jewish economic niche, with particular emphasis on social and cultural embeddedness of small-scale production in the Jewish economic tradition, as well as the ways this tradition was creatively adapted to the new ideological conditions of the Soviet regime.

Chapter 6, *SOVIET JEWISH TRADE AND SOVIET JEWISH TRADERS*, introduces post-war trade in Moscow suburbs as a complex structure consisting of various levels, from flea market to large stores within the Soviet trade network. Collectively this structure is called “bazaar” to stress not only and not so much its general “pre-modern” character, but most importantly, its internal connectedness both in terms of the flow of goods and the main economic agents who sustained it. In discussing various reasons for overrepresentation of Jews in post-war suburban trade, the chapter particularly emphasizes the economic and moral dilemma of “prestige vs. money,” characteristic of the socialist economy in

general, but especially acute for various trade-related occupations. The “second,” or clandestine economy is examined as a constitutive element of the socialist trade network as such, where “on-the-side” transactions were necessary for trade enterprises, however small, to meet the state operation targets. While the chapter shows that on the one hand participation in such illicit activities indeed involved “selection” of actors along ethnic lines based on inter-ethnic “trust,” on the other, non-Jewish actors were never completely excluded from them. In other words, trade may not be seen as an example of Jewish “economic tribalism” even in the territories with dense Jewish population such as suburban settlements. The chapter ends with a discussion of how post-war “semi-patriarchal” suburban existence produced various traditional forms of ethnic life (religious, linguistic, communal), of which economic pursuits were a part.

Chapter 7, SUBURBAN MOSCOW “JUNK-YARD JEWS,” focuses on a largely unexplored economic niche of junk (or “secondary resources”) collection – the activity regarded as highly important throughout the Soviet regime since the socialist economy was continuously haunted by the shortage of production resources. One of the traditional shtetl occupations, junk-collection became part of the cooperative sphere of the Soviet economy, where it existed as a ramified structure of procuring stations, procuring “tents” and individual collectors. On the basis of archival materials and oral interviews, the chapter shows how the specific conditions of the Soviet planned economy, which set targets for junk-collection, shaped the basic strategies used both to attain the required targets and to generate profit on the side. Soviet junk-collection in the vicinities of large cities such as Moscow is presented as a low-prestige occupation of the new-comers, which required not so much any formal education, but rather networking skills and calculation – which explains heavy Jewish presence in this economic niche. The chapter traces several individual life trajectories of Soviet Jews who were involved in this business and draws some parallels between Soviet Jewish junk-collectors and American “junk-yard Jews.”

Chapter 8, SOVIET STATE ECONOMIC ANTI-SEMITISM, addresses the question of whether it existed as a distinct state policy in the post-war Soviet Union, what it precisely implied, and what were its particular aims. After introducing the key points of the discussion on economic trials of early

1960s, the chapter makes an attempt to compare them to the economic campaign of the middle and second half of the 1950s to argue that the show trials of the Khrushchev period were a logical continuation of the previous legal developments. At the end, a tentative conclusion is made that it would be more accurate to view post-war economic campaigns as targeted not so much directly against Jews, but rather against economic actors who found themselves in such “Jewish positions” within the Soviet economic structure.

The CONCLUSION presents the major inferences about the logic underlying the formation of the ethnic economic niches within the Soviet economic organization, as well as the development of clandestine economic practices within these niches. It discusses questions such as why private entrepreneurial agency became possible in the non-prestigious, nearly pre-modern economic sectors and what this tells about the very makeup of the socialist planned economy. The conclusion also addresses the issue of distinct subjectivity shared by clandestine producers, questions the applicability of the “resistance” paradigm to their economic pursuits, and discusses whether it is justified to view the Soviet clandestine economy as a hotbed for market economic relations of the post-Soviet era. In the end, it also argues that Jewish economy such as described in the work may be interpreted as a performative production of ethnic identity.

The conclusion is followed by a BIBLIOGRAPHY, list of ARCHIVAL SOURCES and the LIST OF INTERVIEWS.

PART I
INTRODUCTION

This work engages with a number of discourses and research traditions relevant for the theme of Jewish economic practices in the post-war Soviet Union. The most important of those discourses are: 1) Ethnographic studies of Russian Jews, 2) Russian Jewish economic history, and 3) the Soviet “planned” economy, including its “second,” or clandestine component. Below I will delineate these discourses, paying specific attention to the aspects to be discussed in my own work.

Discourse 1: Ethnographic studies of Russian Ashkenazic Jews

Russian pre-revolutionary literature on various aspects of the so-called “Jewish question” is immense; its ethnographical component, i.e. what would be now seen as a constitutive element of socio-cultural anthropology, is not always easily separated; often it is scattered among materials on population statistics, jurisprudence (various laws and regulations concerning Russian Jews, changes of Jewish legal status related to various shifts of national borders, court cases, etc.), Jewish religious life, Jewish self-administration, relations between Jews and the local non-Jewish population from common people to authorities, including interethnic violence (pogroms), sanitary state of the shtetls, etc.

The two major comprehensive and best known early ethnographies of Russian Jews are P. Chubinsky’s *Works of the Ethnographic and Statistical Expedition to the South-Western Territories* (Chubinsky 1872) and I. Orshansky’s *Jews in Russia: Essays on the Economic and Social Life of Russian Jews* (Orshansky 1877: 1-174). These two studies were preceded by M. Berlin’s *Ethnographic Essay of the Jewish Population in Russia*, a work fairly modest in size (Berlin 1861) (re-published a year after, see: Berlin 1862), and two more extensive studies by A. Alekseev (himself a baptized Jew who turned to Christianity during his cantonist years) titled *Liturgy, holidays and religious rites of contemporary Jews* (Alekseev 1861) and *Societal Life of Jews, Their Mores, Customs and Superstitions*

(Aleksiev 1868). In 1897, they were followed by the *Sketches on the Family and Public Life of Jews, Their Beliefs, Liturgy, Festivals, Rites, Talmud and Kahal* (Aleksiev 1897). *The Book of Kahal* by Ya. Brafman, even though notorious as far as the interpretations are concerned, was never questioned as a comprehensive ethnographic study (Brafmann 1869). Among other notable works dedicated to Russian Jewish population one should also mention O. M. Lerner's *Jews in Novorossia Region* (Lerner 1901) and M. G. Morgulis' *Issues of Jewish Life* (Morgulis 1903).⁶

In the vast body of Russian ethnographic and folkloric texts, especially those describing territories with mixed Jewish – non-Jewish population, one often comes across multiple references to Jews.⁷ Prince V. N. Tenishev, who – not unlike S. An-sky – undertook a large-scale ethnographic study at the end of the nineteenth century (in his case – of the Russian peasants) included a number of questions on Jews in his extensive “Program of Ethnographic Data on the Peasants of Central Russia” – e.g. on the inter-religious attitudes and economic relations across ethnic borders (Firsov & Kiseleva 1993: 381, 469; 388).

As Benjamin Nathans has argued, the concept of the “Russian Jew” first emerged in Russian around 1860s, when “a considerable number of Jews started speaking and reading Russian, migrating into internal provinces of the Empire” (Nathans 2003: 24). While the relatively late appearance of Jews on the Russian public stage may be explained by the slower pace of pan-European processes such as modernization, assimilation, granting full citizenship rights to the Jewish population, etc., the very emergence of the Russian Jew is seen in direct relation to departure from the traditional Jewish space of the shtetl, overcoming restrictions of free movement and other multiple anti-Jewish regulations of the political regime. In some ways, the Jewish subject originally “appeared” as such not only outside of the

⁶A review of Russian Jewish historiography over the period between 1860 and 1960 see in: Trunk 1960.

⁷Here are some to name but a few: Kulish 1856: 56, 151, 166, 223, 284, 285; Shpilevsky 1858; Sementovsky 1872: 58-67; Notus 1882: 220-222; Zhukovsky 1882-1884, Yanchuk 1889: 23-29, Bondarenko 1890: 74; Yakushkin 1891: 15-17; Kulikovsky 1891: 197; Maliavkin 1891: 39, 118, 121, 122; Voinov 1891; Afanasiev-Chuzhbinskiy 1893a: 299-300, 310-316; Manzhura 1894: 186, 189; Yastrebov 1894: 5, 40; Duchinsky 1896: 518-519; Demidovich 1896: 11-120; Yavorsky 1897: 107; Nikiforovsky 1897: 17, 83, 107, 108, 120, 156, 198, 212, 244, 263, 298, 306; Bulashov 1909: 452, etc.

shtetl, but precisely because the shtetl was left “behind.” The turn to the study of Jewish everyday life at the time was triggered by “disappointment with the failures of social integration in late imperial Russia” and attempts to save Jewish culture from extinction (Rabinovitch 2005: 227-228).

Notable attempts in the area of Jewish ethnography were undertaken in the last quarter of the 19th c. particularly after the mass anti-Jewish violence of 1881. In the aftermath of the pogroms, the Russian government summoned the Supreme Commission for the Revision of Current Laws in the Empire Concerning Jews (also known as Count Pahlen Commission) and charged it with the task of collecting materials on the Jewish life in the Empire. While the commission never really fulfilled its task (see, e.g.: Mindlin 2004: 113-114), it gave a certain impulse to the ethnographical study of Russian Jews.

N. Leskov’s book *A Jew in Russia. Some Observations on the Jewish Question* (Leskov 1919) was written to serve as a guideline for Pahlen’s commission (although it is not known whether the commission made any use of it, Mindlin 2004: 107, 113). Published for a wide reading audience more than three decades after it was actually written, this book, as well as Leskov’s earlier essays on Jews in Ukraine, is an ethnographic study inspired by the first-hand knowledge of the Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement. Whereas Leskov’s portrayal of Judaism was not necessarily “favourable,” the book “at least present Jews as non-threatening. *Evrei v Rossii*⁸ presented similarities between Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish folklore, and even advocated the preservation of Jewish folk culture” (Rabinovitch 2005: 252).

A large number of ethnographic articles published in various ethnographic collections, as well as small-size case studies and travelogues emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries; to name but a few, this group of texts include: Romanov 1891, Rokhlin 1908, Levanda 1911, etc.

The creation of the Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society (JHES) in St. Petersburg in 1908 laid foundations for systematic studies of Jews in the Russian Empire, which included ethnographic investigations of various Jewish communities scattered around the vast territory of the country (see, e.g.

⁸The Russian title of N. Leskov’s book [the footnote is mine, – A. K.].

Veidlinger 2003). The task of the Society was to produce a unified historical discourse on “diverse Jewish communities, having come under Russian suzerainty during different eras and as part of widely diverging societies” (e.g. Ashkenazic as well as Bukharan, Mountain Jews of the Caucasus, Karaites and even Subbotniks) (Veidlinger 2003: 166-170). Although the then existing territories of the Russian Empire did not coincide with the historical Ashkenaz, JHES acknowledged the new Imperial framework, which resulted in simultaneous exclusion of a number of Jewish communities from the project (e.g. Jews of Galicia) – in other words, as J. Veidlinger argues, the Society created a “usable past” for Jewish “nation building” within the existing political borders of the state (Veidlinger 2003: 165).⁹

Ethnography and folklore was to play a significant part in this project both due to the influence of European ideas on “folk poetry is a collective expression of the Volk” (Rabinovitch 2005: 234, also: 254) and because of the *narodnik* (Russian populist) background of Semion An-sky (Shloyme Zaynvl Rappoport) who played a major role in the project. Among other things, his earlier career as a scholar of non-Jewish populations shows the complex nature of the new Jewish cultural and political project, especially its entanglement with the ethnographic pursuits of the neighboring peoples and ethnic groups (see: Rabinovitch 2005: 227).¹⁰ The figure of An-sky is largely symbolic of the Jewish ethnographic project he undertook: as a person with the traditional Jewish identity he at the same time was an “assimilated Jewish intellectual” with a broad European cultural background. “Against this backdrop, An-sky’s dream of creating a distinctly Jewish ethnography may be seen as an attempt to address the paradox of modern Jewish identity, not by erasing or choosing between the antinomies of savage and civilized, primitive and modern, or religious and rational, but by enabling Jews from all walks of life – beginning with An-sky himself – to bridge these antinomies via ethnography” (Deutsch 2011: 29).

⁹More on the concept of the Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society, its plans concerning collectioning of the materials on Jewish history and ethnography, as well as their publication, see in: Dubnow 1995, Vinaver 1995, Frumin 1994.

¹⁰The emergence, only slightly prior to An-sky’s ethnographic undertaking, of Prince V. N. Tenishev’s ethnographic program for the study of Russian peasant population is very characteristic in this sense.

The Journal *Evreiskaya Starina* (“Jewish Antiquities”), edited by S. Dubnow (starting with 1924 – by L. Ya. Shternberg), was launched as the official organ of the JHES; in the words of S. Dubnow, the intention of the journal was “to embrace all epochs – from the development of Jewish settlements in ancient Rus and Poland to the present times; our range of interests encompass the Dark Ages of medieval times, as well as the bright prospects of modern times and the recent past, through which our generation is living” (Veidlinger 2003: 168). Starting with its first issue that came out in 1909 and till its very end in 1930, the Journal published a variety of ethnographic articles dedicated to Russian Jewish life (e.g. Beilin 1909a, Beilin 1909b, Beilin 1909c, Kagan 1910, Kliachko 1911, Itskovich 1912, Ierusalimsky 1912, Koz’min 1913, Toporovsky 1913, Maggid 1917-1918, etc.).

The key figure in the Jewish ethnography of the beginning of the twentieth century was the already mentioned Semion An-sky. In his foundational article “Jewish folk art” (*Evreiskoe narodnoe tvorchestvo*), originally published in 1908, he blames the Jewish intelligentsia for “indifference” towards Jewish culture, its description, preservation and perpetuation, in particular, for the lack of cultural institutions, periodicals, memoir literature and the like dedicated to Jewish life. He stresses the virtual absence of works on Jewish ethnography and folklore. “Disappearance” of various forms folk art (tales, legends, songs, beliefs, etc.) is happening in front of our eyes, claims An-sky – therefore, the task of collecting and studying of them is urgent. “Let’s create Jewish ethnography!” calls An-sky (An-sky 1908: 276-278).

While An-sky published on various topics related to Jewish folk culture (e.g. An-sky 1909a, An-sky 1909b, An-sky 1910, An-sky 1911, etc.), his undoubtedly major contribution was his ethnographic expeditions to Volhynia and Podolia undertaken in 1912-1914, preceded by the composition of the extensive program of field study. The program consisted of two parts; the first one, called “Der Mentsh” (Man, Human being – Yiddish), comprises over 2000 detailed questions on the life-cycle, Jewish religious and everyday life – an innovative area of historical-anthropological studies at that time (see: An-sky 1914). The second part – which, unfortunately, was not preserved till today – was dedicated to the calendar cycle. While on the one hand the program reads like a comprehensive description of the

“traditional” Jewish shtetl culture, its very intent as a “cultural self-description” (Rabinovitch 2005: 227) reveals a larger vision behind it: production of “knowledge that would make possible new forms of Jewish identity, which would regenerate the Jews as a people” (Bush 2013: 4).

In An-sky’s estimation, even what was collected by the beginning of World War I should have been enough for “40 volumes” of publications; to begin with, expedition members composed a list of materials that should lay the foundation of the Jewish ethnographic scholarship in Russia (folklore, historical materials, blood libel legends, folk musical pieces, synagogue decoration, tombstones, etc.), as well as the creation of a Jewish Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg (Sergeeva 2003: 120-121). Only as late as 1958 did Avrom Rechtman, a member of An-sky’s expeditions, publish a book *Jewish Ethnography and Folklore* (in Yiddish) based on the field findings of 1912-1914 (Rechtman 1958)¹¹

Other Jewish periodicals established at the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth century, for instance, *Voskhod* (“Sunrise”) and *Perezhitoe* (roughly, “Experiences of the Past”) also publish multiple ethnographic materials and pieces of research, e.g.: Liakhovestky 1883, Mstislavsky 1886, Farber 1890, Tager 1894, Ryvkin 1895, Levanda 1911, Molostovova 1911, Beilin 1913, etc.).

Another corpus of ethnographic texts on the shtetl in Jewish life consists of memoir literature and travelogues, both Jewish and non-Jewish, e.g.: Glagolev 1837: 106-108, 110, 112, 122-142, Shpilevsky 1858, Ben-Ami 1883a, Ben-Ami 1883b, Assaf 2002, Voinov 1891, A. G. 1903, Paperna 1910-1911, Garkavi 1913, Wengeroff 1913-1919, Beilin 1914, Ben-Ami 1914, Koz’min 1914, etc.

All these efforts promised to evolve into a new research field on Russian Jewish ethnography, but unfortunately these far-reaching plans were not to be implemented. World War I, followed by the Russian revolution and its accompanying socio-cultural and ideological changes, and later the Holocaust brought these plans to a halt.

¹¹For the most recent publications of An-sky’s expeditions see: Roskies 1992, Lukin 1994, Petrovsky 1996, Kantsedikas 2001, Sergeeva 2003, Ivanov 2005, Dymshits 2005, L’vov 2005, Sokolova 2007, Safran & Zipperstein 2006, Avrutin et al. 2009.

Soviet Jewish ethnography, as conceived by its major ideologist L. Ya. Shternberg, had to start off in a new ideological framework: while prior to the revolution ethnography traditionally concentrated on “exotic and primitive” peoples, “cultured and urban” Jews could be incorporated into it only if the very premises of the ethnographic study could be changed (Shternberg 1928: 12). In other words, the Jewish case would in fact change the nature of the discipline, which should go beyond “the study of songs, fairy tales, proverbs and the like” to embrace “economic life, social relations and public institutions, education, class division, etc.” (Ibid., 13). Traditional ethnology clearly acquires here overtones characteristic of later socio-cultural anthropology. Jews were particularly interesting as a study case since the early years of the Soviet rule brought a double catastrophe to the traditional Jewish life, both economic catastrophe and that of everyday life (changing the status of religion, inter-generational conflicts, threat to the patriarchal family order, etc.) (Ibid., 15).

The economic aspect of this agenda, in full compliance with the new ideological priorities, gets clearly foregrounded in further ethnographic studies of the Jewish population in the USSR. Against a fairly limited number of non-economic subjects (particularly, the works by I. Pul’ner on Jewish wedding and childbirth rights, as well as museum representations of the Jewish culture – see, e.g. Pul’ner 1929, Pul’ner 1931, Pul’ner s/a), major attention shifted to the economic problems of Jewish shtetl life. Even though in the foreword to his program “Study your shtetl!” (1928) H. Aleksandrov does provide a considerable space for multiple questions on Jewish popular customs, language, local history (which “can offer very important materials for the Marxist approach to Jewish history”), religion, education, sanitary conditions, popular medicine, etc., the key concern is shtetl “as an economic unit, as a certain socio-economic type.” As such, it should be studied “in close relation with [its] territorial and social surrounding, first and foremost, peasant surrounding” to facilitate the task of “changing the socio-economic structure of [its] Jewish population in the direction of either agriculture or industrialization” (Aleksandrov 1928).

Outside of the economic framework of the nineteen-twenties and thirties, which will be discussed later in this chapter, Jews become virtually absent from the field of ethnographic studies in Russia.

Within the new Soviet modernization project, traditional shtetl Jewishness was seen as a backward parochial phenomenon, not only undesirable, but also dangerous to the “social engineering” projects of the new regime. As a result, pre-World War II Bolshevik socio-economic projects in relation to the shtetl and the traditional texture of Jewish life in it produced a symbolic “disappearance” of the shtetl in both scholarly and popular imagination: “the Soviets destroyed the shtetl as a historical, sociological, cultural phenomenon before the Germans annihilated it” (Bauer 2009: 160).

Especially this notion of “disappearance” is true for the post-war period when, as the popular adage goes, there were “no more Jews left, only the Russian urban population.” Even though this might be a rather radical look upon the fates of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union, one cannot deny the effects of mass migration from the shtetl, rapid assimilation processes in larger Russian towns and cities, and the Holocaust that hit primarily the areas of the former Jewish Pale and those who had stayed there. To a large extent the project of making Jews into Soviet citizens indeed happened, yet due to the lack of thorough historical and ethnographic research at the time when this process was taking place we still have little understanding of many cultural compromises, economic trade-offs and moral costs that this transformation brought in its wake.

As far as the Western Jewish studies are concerned, until recently they primarily focused on the textual tradition (studies of religious texts, Jewish languages and history), i.e. privileging the textual identity of Jews as “the people of the Book.” The origins of this phenomenon may be traced back to the early 19th c. development of German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* that clearly foregrounded “high” forms of Jewish culture that could secure the equal status of Jews among other European peoples, or to the Maskilic movement that frowned upon popular culture and its “superstitions,” or else to the Zionist agenda of radical redefinition of the Jewish collective identity, wherein particular forms of diasporic existence were to be overcome and as such could not constitute any “valuable asset” of the Jewish historical experience.

Other important reasons included the anthropological imperative of studying “the Other” (while a large number of anthropologists were themselves Jewish), the focus on “exotic” and/ or preliterate

cultures, the dominance of area studies, and the Christian religious roots of the anthropological pursuit as such (Boyarin 1991a). In pre-World War II American academia, the absence of the anthropology of Jews was largely rooted in Franz Boas' efforts to "protect Jews from racism," which, in the words of B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, was at the time tantamount to "protect[ing] Jews from anthropology" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2005: 455).

In recent decades the situation has changed considerably; the list of most important contributions includes, but is by no means exhausted by the following works: Myerhoff 1978, Mayer 1979, Goldberg 1987, Boyarin 1991b, Kugelmass 1996, Brodtkin 1998, Freidenberg 2009.

While it is not my aim here to present a broad picture of the Anthropology of Jews and its rapid development in Western academia (a comprehensive bibliography on the subject may be found in: Brink-Danan 2008), it should be stressed that the growing canon of the discipline particularly foregrounded the issue of the very definition of "Jewishness," and of how it is differently produced, practiced and negotiated in different socio-cultural contexts. This issue is likewise a primary stake in my own research dedicated to Russian Jews.

Western scholarship related to Soviet Jews traditionally privileged questions of Soviet state anti-Semitism, immigration, assimilation vs. acculturation, Soviet Jewish cultural practices (or the lack thereof), demography, mixed marriages, etc. Works such as Altshuler 1987, Pinkus & Frankel 1984 presented a collective portrait of Soviet Jews largely "from above," i.e. from the perspective of historical trends and socio-political developments as seen primarily through the Western perspective. Apart from this, most of these studies were based predominantly on quantitative methods, and in that sense are inherently capable of producing only certain types of representations.

In many cases this approach led to the emergence of the "victimized" image of the Soviet Jews (discriminated against, cut off from the Jewish community abroad, deprived of the major ethnic identity resources, subjected to the "non-exit" policy, etc.). Conceptually, the approach epitomizing the destruction of Jewish ethnic culture emerged in "anti-Bolshevik immigrant circles," i.e. large-city intelligentsia that lacked any feeling of continuity with its provincial past (Zeltser 2006: 7-8) – to fully

come of age in the context of the Cold War, when Soviet Jews became an important political stake in the confrontation between East and West, especially as far as the Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union is concerned. As a result, as T. Friedgut wrote in 1980, “exodus movement have claimed a near monopoly on the attention of scholars and laymen alike in recent discussions of the Soviet Jewish community” (Friedgut 1980: 3) (also: Ro’i 1991 and the bibliography of the book, Korey 1971, Brym 1993, etc.).

Against this background, it is small wonder that when political hurdles of Jewish mass immigration disappeared at the end of the 1980s, that the interest in Soviet Jews, or, rather, the “Soviet Jewish question” experienced a precipitous decline.

The version of Salo Baron’s “lachrymose conception” in respect to Soviet Jewish history seems to have been conventionally extended in the post-Soviet period – to be epitomized in the notion of the Soviet Jewish culture as a “thin” culture (Gitelman 1998: 118) – as opposed to some ideal construct of “thick,” or “full” culture understood within a religious framework. Consequently, the current revival of Jewish life in the territories of the former Soviet Union is often conceived as a radically new project undertaken largely by the Western Jewish agencies in the absence of any continuity with the Soviet past.

However, post-Cold War realities opened up new possibilities for anthropological research on the lived experience of the population once known as “Soviet Jews.” It has become clear that Soviet ideological, socio-cultural and economic realities produced historically unique possibilities for Jewish individual and collective identity practices – whether as a result of the (drastic) limitation of more “traditional” identification resources (such as religion, Jewish language(s), Jewish education), or due to the emergence of new Soviet ones.

In the recent decades the first anthropological studies of the Soviet Jewish experience emerged, focusing both on the Jewish population who stayed in Russia (Goluboff 2003, Shternshis 2006, Richardson 2008, Dymshits et al. 2008, Hirsch and Spitzer 2010, L’vov 2011, Nosenko-Shtein 2013), or on the immigrant communities (e.g. Markowitz 1993, Elenevskaya & Fialkova 2005). Even this modest set of works already exhibits the non-homogeneity of the Soviet Jewish “field” by focusing either on

local communities (T. Richardson's study of Odessa Jews, M. Hirsch and L. Spitzer's work on Czernowitz), or relations among various groups of the former Soviet Jews (Goluboff's study on the conflicts in Moscow choral synagogue involving Ashkenazic and Georgian Jews), or else groups whose Jewishness has been historically questioned (e.g. A. Lvov's research on Subbotniks, or "Russian Judaizers" (L'vov 2011). New topics such as post-Soviet Jewish community life, Jewish business, Jewish charity, as well as geographically and spatially specific Soviet Jewish histories likewise broadened the very phenomenology of what may be called "Soviet Jewish experience" (e.g. Gitelman 2001, Kornblatt 2004, Ryvkna 2005, Zeltser 2006, Nosenko-Shtein 2013, Bemporad 2013).

However, as far as the Russia-based research in Soviet – post-Soviet Jews is concerned, there are some problems related to the problematic status of the very discipline of anthropology in the Russian academia. Several years ago Moscow historian Elena Nosenko, in the wake of Katherine Verdery's considerations about "bringing anthropologists back to Slavic studies" (Verdery 2006), opened a polemic titled "Will anthropology find its place in Russian Judaica?" (Nosenko 2006). In essence, Nosenko's argumentation boils down to the following: due to the influence of European (primarily German) tradition, socio-cultural anthropology has not yet formed as an independent discipline in Eastern Europe – its place was occupied by "ethnology," usually lacking substantial theoretical content and tending to the descriptive mode of presentation. On the one hand, after the fall of socialism there were a number of institutional attempts at creating a Western-type socio-cultural anthropology, the more so, because in Eastern Europe it did not compromise itself through the engagement with the colonial project or with the Soviet ideological apparatus. As such, socio-cultural anthropology became an epitome of "democracy" and the "search for objective truth." Yet on the other hand, if socio-cultural anthropology returns back to Slavic studies, however slowly, this process is virtually invisible in Jewish studies. Jewish Studies in Russia are focused mainly on Jewish history, languages (especially Hebrew and Yiddish), literature and Jewish thought. Yet anthropology is usually not a part of curricula in Jewish centers and departments, and with the Russian "traditional" and very unproductive division between teaching and research, scholars are rarely engaged in the teaching process. As a result, a large number of

anthropological concerns remain unaddressed, among which are: Jewish collective memory and Jewish identity, Jewish life in small urban centers, issues of gender, youth and aging, formation of Jewish secular culture in Russia, issues of the so-called “religious renaissance,” etc. (Ibid., 2006).

Anthropological perspective signals the possibility of different framings of Jewishness, different sources of its representation, and certainly different methods of the very knowledge production. Studying non-metropolitan Jewish life, including that in the former “Pale of Settlement,” should be seen as an attempt at writing a more comprehensive historiography of Jews in the Soviet Union.

Recent developments aiming at revival of Jewish anthropology as a reconfigured post-Soviet and post-Holocaust discipline stem only from a few major scholarly centers in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev and Vilnius, and one may not be overly optimistic about the future of these undertakings with regards to the general state of humanities in Russia as well as current political processes.

Discourse 2: Jewish ethnic economy

Works on the pre-revolutionary Jewish economy focused primarily on large-scale phenomena related to the Jewish economic engagements in Russia; its role for the country’s general economic development; the structure of Jewish economic activities, including its geographical aspect; the general well-being of the Jewish population, etc. While to some extent one also finds passages on the “Jewish exploitation” of the surrounding non-Jewish population and stereotypes, including clearly negative ones, of Jewish economic behavior, works like those mentioned below could have been instrumental in fighting economic anti-Semitism, particularly, the heavily politicized idea on the “harmful economic role” Jews played in the region of their permanent settlement.

Thus among the pre-revolutionary studies one finds works that address the whole spectrum of Jewish occupations in Russia and the problems of the Jewish economy (e.g. Pasmanik 1905, Nemanov 190[5], Sliozberg 1907, Blank 1908, Essays... 1913), while on the other, many studies focus on particular Jewish economic engagements such as trade (e.g. Gradovsky 1886, Zhitetsky 1901), including bread trade (Raevsky 1868, Yanson 1869, Bikerman 1912), fish trade (Bikerman 1913), forest trade (Korobov 1916), drinking trade (Alenitsyn 1886, Mysh 1881, Isaevich 1892: 45-50), usury (Isaevich

1892: 23-45, 68-90), smuggling and across-the-border trade (Isaevich 1892: 56-63), etc. Another major area of interest is Jewish artisanal production and participation of Jews in the factory industry (Veller 1887, Ginzburg 1888, *Sbornik materialov...* 1904, Zak 1912, Kasteliansky 1915, Margolin 1915), as well as Jewish professional education (Bramson 1904, *Sbornik materialov...* 1904, Margolin 1908).

A substantial body of research works focused on the nineteenth century Jewish agricultural colonization (Nikitin 1887, Binstock 1891, Bramson 1894, Ben-vid 1899, *Sbornik materialov...* 1904, Dumashevsky 1859, Zemtsov 1908, Brutskus 1909, Brutskus 1913), as well as Jewish land ownership and lease (Alenitsyn 1884, *Evreiskoe zemlevladienie...* 1901). One should also mention works on credit operations and cooperation among Jews (e.g. Margolin 1908, Blum & Zak 1913, Gordon 1916) and banking houses in Russia, including the Jewish ones (e.g. Ananjich 1991).¹²

Apart from these, various particular aspects of the Jewish economy in Russia may be found in general ethnographic and historical works already mentioned above, e.g. Chubinsky 1872: 81-99, 150-163, 182-211, Orshansky 1877: 1-156, Berlin 1861: 35-41; Alekseev 1868: 42-60, Afanasiev-Chuzhbinskyi 1893a: 257-266, 285-288; Afanasiev-Chuzhbinskyi 1893b: 10-11, 14-15, 22-24, 66-69, 82-102, 129-132, 170-173, 185-187, 192-199, 208-217, 219-223, 235-243, 252-253, 284-296, 312-315, 332-338; Alekseev 1897: 167-182, Solonevich 1901, Lerner 1901: 81-92, 183-191, 203-207.¹³ Only a few works of this period take a closer look at particular shtetls and townships (e.g. Subbotin 1888-1890, Yanson 1869, Raevsky 1868).

One general conclusion on the developments of the Jewish pre-revolutionary economy was formulated by the well-known Russian-American Jewish economic historian Arcadius Kahan: in the

¹²For a concise overview of these topics, including Jewish occupations in the Pale of Settlement Jewish land ownership, Jewish drinking establishments, Jewish economic activities in the Pale, Jewish artisans, etc. see: Rubinow 1975 (originally published in 1907) and Gessen 2015.

¹³An-sky's ethnographic program contained very few questions about the shtetl economy; basically, they boil down to the group of questions №№ 162-173: Did you ever have strikes and which workers went on strike? How many artisans and of which specializations do you have? Which factories do you have, and whether Jewish workers are employed on those? What is the main type of trade in your town? Which new ways of earning emerged in your town recently, and which have disappeared? Is the Jewish community of your town getting richer or poorer? Is the immigration to America strong? How many people left, and where to? (An-sky s/d).

nineteenth – early twentieth century Russian governmental “discriminatory policies prevented a part of the Jewish population from benefiting from the fruits of industrialization” (Kahan 1986: 44). Creation of the large-scale national industry had only tangential and overall minor effects for the rapidly impoverishing Russian Jewish population – a process accelerated by the beginning of World War I.

A number of pre-revolutionary studies of the Jewish economy also stress the fact that by adopting various laws concerning Jews the Russian government not only worsened the situation of the Jewish population, but undermined local economic networks, as was the case with the “May Laws” of 1882, which was not welcomed even by the non-Jewish landowners and local administration (e.g. Blank 1908: 44).¹⁴

Paradoxically enough, the Soviet Jewish economic narrative of 1920-30s largely follows the “covenantal narrative” of modern East European Jewish history of “shtetl-pogrom-and-flight-to-freedom” (Roskies 1999: 12). Writing about the economic predicament of the Jewish shtetl population following the revolution, the early Soviet authors consistently stress the abyss of poverty and social injustice that the tsarist government plunged the Jewish population into. Life in the pre-revolutionary shtetl emerges in these works in stereotypical abject poverty, cramped conditions of habitation, ethnic prejudices and violence, etc. What is particularly stressed is the “abnormal and perverse class structure of the Jewish population” (Kiper 1930: 65) – which primarily meant the absence of the true proletariat in the shtetl that the Bolsheviks sought to find, and which was interpreted as the “atavisms (Russ. *otryzhki*) of old limitations and the lack of rights” (Ibid., 27). The Soviet press of the 1920s consistently constructed the shtetl as a space “lying beyond the boundaries of an apparently functioning, urban, Soviet economy” (Sloin 2010: 118), and, generally, lagging behind the “pace” of the new epoch.

¹⁴Even in the case of the Moscow evictions of 1892, one comes across documents describing the detriment caused to non-Jewish economies by the forced eviction of Jewish artisans or merchants, which proves that Jews were not only occupying certain economic niches where they lived, whether in a village or in a large city, but that their economic activity was embedded into the local economy, connected with economic pursuits of other estate and professional groups – and, in this case, of the financial politics of the Russian state at large (e.g. Gol’dovsky 2003: 286-287, Eisenberg 2003: 336, 349-350, Vermel’ 1924: 26-28, *Zajavlenie moskovskikh kuptsov...* 2003).

The shtetl economy also gets foregrounded because the politics of the Soviet regime virtually undermined the basis of Jewish economic life in the shtetl by prohibiting or severely limiting the two major types of traditional Jewish economy activity – private production and trade (alongside with many middlemen activities that accompanied it) (see, e.g.: Fitzpatrick 1986: 192). Interestingly enough, those who wrote about the interwar economic situation of the shtetl openly admitted the destructive effects wrought by the Soviet rule upon the Jewish economy, yet found “sound” ideological justifications for the new economic order. With only “two valued categories of workers and peasants,” the shtetl “represented a throwback to the feudal world,” and thus “the verdict on the shtetl was unanimous: the sooner this small, homogenous, insular, and linguistically distinct provincial backwater deconstructed, the better for all concerned” (Estraikh 2004: 198-199).

The discourse on Jewish shtetl economy of 1920-30s is important for my work on several counts.

First, it provides an important historical background for those family stories where the economic activity of the past generations is either missing or for various reasons reduced: while only a few of my informants did not trace their known family history to the shtetl (coming instead from the upper middle classes, artistic or professional milieu), the majority could name the actual point on the map of the former Pale their grandparents or parents came from. In other words, the shtetl was the starting point of their Soviet socio-economic trajectories, and its economic conditions in 1920-1930s was something they fully experienced and fled from. The overview below will help to understand what these people were leaving behind and how this explains their decision to move.

Second, this discourse, even though in most cases it was heavily engaged ideologically, still allows a glimpse not only of the sheer scale of the economic predicament that the Jewish shtetl population had to face, but also, importantly enough, of the ways people adapted to the new economic and political realities – an issue that will be of primary importance in the discussion of the post-war second economy.

Third, some of the narrative strands of this discourse (e.g. whether Jews are at all “capable of physical work,” what constitutes “labor” and “non-labor” earnings, whether trade should be seen as a

“productive” sphere, etc.) will likewise resurface later on; one can probably say that the interwar shtetl economy was an early site where a number of Soviet economic problems first emerged as such.

Finally, I will pay particular attention to the state policies and ideological attitudes to Jewish artisans and traders (or “middleman economy” in general), which were likewise perpetuated in the later Soviet period in relation to the cooperative sector of the Soviet economy and trade network.

By and large, the discourse on the inter-war shtetl may be called “political ethnography” with the emphasis on economic phenomena.¹⁵ Further on, I will make a close review of the existing sources, some of which are very little, if at all, known; adding these sources to the discussion of the Jewish Soviet economic history may be looked at as an independent task of its own.

A short brochure by A. Bragin and M. Kol'tsov, *The fate of Jewish masses in the Soviet Union* (1924), is based on a research conducted by the students of the Jewish section of Gomel Province Party School which focused on the economic and cultural situation of the Jewish shtetl. In a heavily politically engaged Soviet rhetoric the authors argue that shtetl is nothing but an “ugly unit of the capitalist order” doomed to be an “eternal intermediary position between the city and the village, a useless and harmful middleman” (Bragin & Kol'tsov 1924: 5-6), as well as an obstacle to “the unification of workers and peasants” (20). Jewish traders, except for a small number of “speculators” who benefited from the New Economic Policy (NEP),¹⁶ have to eke out a scanty existence not being able to compete with cooperation and the state trade (8). The number of Jewish artisans is declining due to crippling taxation; some artisans try to survive as traders, or else to cooperate, i.e. to form producer artels, but the lack of instruments and, again, “paralyzing taxes” preclude this possibility (7-8). Peasants, the main consumers both for artisans and for traders, blame the steady growth of prices for manufactured goods upon Jews who deliver these goods to the village (10).

¹⁵For obvious reasons, none of the sources mentioned below discussed Holodomor, or the “Terror-Famine” in Ukraine of 1932-33, which only worsened the already unstable situation of Jews in the area.

¹⁶A complex of measures undertaken by the Soviet government in 1921-1929 that included a partial return to market economy, including private trade (a concise description of NEP see in: Zemtsov 1991: 196-198 or at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Economic_Policy (last accessed April 3, 2017).

While in the authors' view the death of the shtetl is a "historic necessity" (11-12), there are two ways out of the existing "catastrophe": industry and agriculture; yet the former is almost completely excluded for Jews for two reasons: a) a considerable number of the non-Jewish workers who already had experience in industrial production (and who thus have a priority before Jews) are unemployed (production was destroyed by the war and has not fully recuperated), and b) it is easier for peasants to leave their families in the villages to survive on home produce and become enterprise workers in larger places as compared to Jews who in this case would have to provide for their whole families and perhaps take them along elsewhere (12).

Thus the "settling-on-land" option seems to be the only possibility for Jews in the new socio-economic situation. While "for the Marxist" the question of whether Jews can at all do agriculture is "down right stupid" (13), the question of where and how is agriculture possible remains open (11). Certainly, stress the authors, this land is not to be found "within those provinces where peasants themselves need land" (14): the state should provide land for Jews out of the "colonization fund" either in the Volga region or Ural territories; this, however, would require very substantial financing that the Soviet government now lacks (15-16). Crimea, where some pre-revolutionary Jewish agricultural colonies already exist, is presented as the "the only feasible place" for Jewish resettlement, and while Jews *en masse* do not have the agricultural expertise, their "higher than average intellectual level," as well as a high degree of internal cohesiveness and a long history of collective struggle against poverty, will eventually turn them into land cultivators on par with non-Jews (19).

The collection of essays *Jewish Shtetl in the Revolution* (Bogoraz-Tan: 1926) is perhaps one of the key sources for the understanding of the Jewish economy in 1920s, because of its scope (220 pages, 6 full-length essays), its immersion into minute details of the subject, and the ethnographic methods that the authors used to collect their data (participant observation and interviews). The research was conducted by the students of the Leningrad Geographical Institute and the Leningrad Institute of Jewish Knowledge, which explains the "unfailingly loyal (Russ. *vernopoddanicheskie*) tones" (Brutskus 1999: 299) of the collection.

In the introduction, as if trying to find an excuse for the generally lamentable economic situation of the shtetl, Bogoraz-Tan stresses that by mid-1920s the shtetl had not yet “recuperated” from the first period of the revolution (in particular, the war communism¹⁷) and not yet “adapted” to the “new conditions of life” under the new regime (Borogaz-Tan 1926: 3). While the new regime offered mass transition of the Jewish population to agricultural labor, it remains somewhat unclear whether the authors indeed view this as feasible, and whether the “lack of adaptation” is but a politically required discursive twist.

The collection focuses primarily on the changes that took place in the two major Jewish occupations in the shtetl, i.e. trade and artisanal production. Private trade of all calibers which first gets criminalized by the new power, then slightly released during the New Economic policy of 1920, and yet simultaneously ousted by the system of Soviet cooperation, is in the state of “agony”; among other things, the reason for this is the precipitously reduced consumer demand on the part of peasants, economically devastated by the war (Tan 1926: 18-21; Libes 1926: 32). The bazaar, i.e. the central market place, which used to hold “hegemony” in the shtetl, is closed as no longer necessary (Libes 1926: 54-55). Intermediary commercial engagements such as whole-sale brokers are now seen as downright “parasitical” in the new political discourse (Libes 1926: 52) and disappear altogether, thus bringing an end to the trans-territorial trade, when even small Ukrainian shtetls far away from railroad stations were supplied with goods from Kiev, Berdichev, Warsaw, etc. (Libes 1926: 55-56, also: Pul’ner 1926: 178).

Artisans are doing slightly better than the rest of the shtetl population since they are seen as a part of the new hegemon, the working class – so, at first they go through a “honey moon” of social improvement (Libes 1926: 64). And yet the artisans’ situation is precarious because of the growing taxes and, again, penetration of the state cooperative enterprises to the villages, so that peasants do not have to travel to shtetls to buy manufactured goods (Libes 1926: 61, Pul’ner 1926: 165). Some small-

¹⁷War Communism was “a formula for the Soviet policy of terror resorted to during the years 1917-1920” (in more detail see: Zemtsov 1991: 350-31 or: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_communism (last accessed April 3, 2017)).

scale producers turn into “itinerant artisans,” traveling 6 days a week across the surrounding rural area, making or fixing things, and getting their payment in money or in kind, accepting, among other things, “pork lard and sausage” to bring home by Sabbath (Tan 1926: 20). In general, both traders and artisans who are oriented to the peasant market are doing better than those who are catering for the shtetl (Libes 1926: 67). One big advantage that the new power offers the artisans is the possibility to cooperate and to get state credits for their production (Tan 1926: 20, Libes 1926: 67). This makes their life somewhat more bearable, although the young are still not eager to join the artisanal ranks (Tan 1926: 20-21, Pul’ner 1926: 167).

While by and large Jews are engaged in the same economic activities as in the past, so that “the revolution is as if did not happen for them” (Libes 1926: 52), there are significant internal shifts in the structure of Jewish economic agency and valuations attached to various economic activities. Thus, former traders, once a prestigious economic group in the shtetl, become “primitive” “small-scale artisans” to physically survive (Sirotiner 1926: 101, also: Shteyn 1926: 151) – a transition hardly possible under the “old regime.”

L. Zinger’s *Jews in Craft and Artisanal Production of the USSR* (1928) is based on a 1927 questionnaire sent by ORT (Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia) Statistical and Economic Commission to 400 townships of Ukraine and 140 townships in Belorussia to study the artisanal economy in the former Pale (Zinger 1928: 19). The artisans’ situation, says the author, may be “painted in rather dark colors”: lack of production materials that have to be purchased on a private market at high prices, nearly prohibitive condition of loans, dependency on the local peasant market and thus seasonal nature of work, excess of supply over demand for artisanal production, low quality of equipment and lack of professional skills, and so on (21-25). The situation of shtetl artisans is even worse compared to that of shtetl artisans: the former, if there is no work to be done, undertake trips to the nearby villages with some cheap goods such as matches, soap or baking soda, where they exchange them for food stuffs (25-26). Even though “cooperated” artisans, i.e. those working as members of artels, were treated slightly more preferentially as compared to the independent ones, the

difference must have been hardly significant, and membership in artels was extremely low (e.g. only 5% of Belorussian artisans were artel members (32)).¹⁸

His extensive research *Derazhnia. A contemporary Jewish shtetl* (1929) I. Veitzblit starts with a thesis that out of 800,000 Jews living in Belorussia and what was then Western Ukraine more than half are “totally redundant” since they cannot find any occupation, “neither as artisans, nor as traders, or workers, or state employees” (3).

Private trade that used to be “the basis of the material well-being of the old shtetl,” especially since Derazhnia has a railroad station of its own, is dying out; small-scale traders and middlemen who used to compose 50% of the local Jewish population are “ousted” from their business by cooperation and State trade network; the railroad station, once a hub of ebullient economic activity, stays empty (10-13). Those private traders who are still functioning are barely making ends meet – some remaining private shops sell a miscellany of cheap items (including, in one case, Orthodox icons), and the total cost of their goods is abysmally low (35, 92). Taxes that they have to pay for the trade are nearly prohibitive (35-36). While Jewish traders used to be the major middlemen between the shtetl and the peasant population (17), the new regime organized cooperatives in the villages themselves, so peasant were largely “lost” as consumers in the Jewish economy (38); young people hate to even think about going to the trade business (72). Even junk-collection, whereby the poorest Jews used to buy old rags in peasant households, is not there anymore: state cooperative organizations took this niche away (39). Many former traders turn into “virtual paupers” (96).

A noteworthy transformation happened to artisans: before the war they were considered “the most backward and non-cultured” people, and traders would “separate themselves from artisans by a Chinese wall,” first and foremost, in terms of marital arrangements and prayer practices (artisans had separate synagogues of their own). After the revolution artisans, as the group closest to the “working class,”

¹⁸More on the activities of ORT that started with the aim “to adopt the Jewish population to the economic, social and political conditions of the Russian Empire” and then transformed to embrace a wide agenda of promoting “Jewish nation-building projects that incorporated elements of economic autonomy” see: Estraikh 2009.

turned into a new “hegemon” of sorts: they now occupy the key positions in the new Soviet political and cultural organizations. Yet even though on average artisans earn more, eat better, and even have expenses for clothes and footwear, most of them suffer from the lack of credits and materials necessary for production, as well as by the income of state manufactured goods (6). According to Veitzblit’s estimation, “almost all” Jewish families in Derazhnia get some financial aid from American relatives (95), although not everybody was ready to admit this for fear of additional complications.

M. Kiper in his *The Jewish Shtetl of Ukraine* (1930) observes that “the majority of the shtetl population consisted of such social layers that inevitably and immediately had to suffer from destruction of the former social relations” (Kiper 1930: 12), and that the revolution “destroyed all the elements and factors that served the basis for economic activity of the shtetl masses” (15).

The major social group implied in these statements are private entrepreneurs, traders and middlemen: even though NEP brought about the “illusion of restoration of old pre-war economic relations when one can live through trade and middleman activities” (15), in reality they became “redundant,” and the remnants thereof were continuously forced out of the market by “centralized state and cooperative credit organs” (16, 50, 52). As a result, there exists a clear “excess” of traders and middlemen in the shtetl who constantly compete with other for survival (4-6). Small private traders observed by the author were trading in all kinds of petty merchandise such as “herring, sunflower seeds, candies, etc.,” and the general cost of their goods was often lower than the taxes they have to pay (53); some traders would buy the cheapest official permission for trading and then return it, unable to sustain their business (54). With the governmental prohibition of private trade in bread, leather and fabrics, the most “wanted” goods, the author concludes that soon “a lock will be hung on the last private shop” (55).

The attitude to various social groups in the shtetl was changing; right after the Civil War, during the period of war communism, craftsmen and artisans were labelled “non-labor population” along with the private entrepreneurs and traders,¹⁹ so that the shtetl as a whole was more often than not seen as a

¹⁹Cf.: Initially, “artisans came into the category of ‘others,’ along with more obviously undesirable types like capitalists, kulaks, priests, officers of the White Armies, and ‘former people’” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 188).

“speculators’ nest” and treated accordingly by various financial organs (which the author compares to “bandits” who devastated the shtetl in early 1920s) (66-68). Later the authorities shifted craftsmen and artisans into the category of the “Jewish working class” (for the lack of “true” (industrial) proletariat in the shtetl), yet they were still seen as distinct from “factory workers” (26).

The poorer the shtetl, notes the author, the more “excess” artisans such as tailors and shoemakers it has: while prior to the revolution they were catering for the needs of local landlords, state officials, etc., now this demand reduced drastically, leaving them unemployed (41-42). Artisans’ desire to join in artels is explained primarily by the hope to be entitled to scarce production materials distributed through cooperative networks – yet artels dissolve shortly upon being established, precisely because cooperative organizations fail to satisfy their needs (e.g. they can provide materials for 10-15 tailors, whereas there might be 90, 150, and even 400 tailors in a shtetl) (43-45). The problem of low qualification is the most acute one among the shtetl artisans (46, 49); some artisans use their legal position to mask clandestine activities such as private trade, smuggling and usury (43).

There is also a fairly large social group of “déclassé elements” among the shtetl Jews – there are the permanently unemployed, “free-lance” professions of all kinds, former rabbis, synagogal servants, ritual slaughterers, match-makers, widows, orphans, people “gathering various rags, bones and waste in the neighboring villages,” and the like (55-56).²⁰ While their desire for work, says the author, is high, there is virtually no possibility to satisfy it with the shtetl (57), especially because a large percentage of them are also “deprivees”²¹ – a category so substantial in the shtetl that as late as 1927-28 more than a third of population (30%) fell into it (73). Productivization, argues M. Kiper, or switching all these people to the “socialist rails,” is the only solution in the existing situation (74), yet since the government does not have the necessary means to relocate the shtetl population to other regions, including

²⁰Which illustrates S. Fitzpatrick’s observation that “the workers/peasants/intelligentsia break-down of society... is highly prone to schematic over-simplification” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 190).

²¹Deprivee (Russ. *lishenets*) a person deprived of voting right as well as of a number of social and economic privileges in the period between 1918 and 1936. For a short description of this notion see: Zemtsov 1991: 97-98 or: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lishenets> (last accessed April 3, 2017). In more detail see: Fitzpatrick 1986: 202.

prospective agricultural territories, and the large industry is unable to accept a large number of potential workers from the shtetl (85), one needs to “productivize” the population in the shtetl itself (87), focusing primarily on artisanal production based on local resources (89-92).

Written in the same year of 1930, A. Sudarsky’s book *The Economic State of the Jewish Shtetl* is an apology of the Soviet regime vis-à-vis the “shtetl problem”: while “Jewish counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, NEP-men and their acolytes” are blaming the Soviet government for the economic impoverishment of the shtetl, the reality, says the author, is the opposite: when World War I was over, the new power “received the economically ruined Jewish masses as a heritage of feudal-capitalist autocracy,” and set as a goal the “recovery of the economic situation of the Jewish poor” (Sudarsky 1930: 15-16). Yet while the pre-revolutionary shtetl was satisfying local consumer demand, mostly peasant in nature, it was the Soviets who declared the 49% of the Jewish traders and entrepreneurs a “non-laboring element” (4) that “did not fit into the economic politics of the Soviet Union” (16), and as such had to be dealt away with. Particularly, this concerned private traders – a group “doomed for death in the Soviet Union” (21). Their functions now are covered by state cooperative organizations (16), they are heavily taxed and prohibited to trade in grain and other agricultural products (17) – so that “soon the last private trader would be put in a museum as a historical exhibit” (21).

Artisans who are not coopted in the Soviet artels, as well as non-qualified artisans (which in some places compose up to 75% of the total), experience major difficulties in getting production materials (18), and even if there were enough materials to produce from, the very number of artisans is way too high for the local markets (22). Besides, artisans cannot possibly compete with the new Soviet factories. It might be easier to turn artisans into “constructors of the socialist society” (28) as compared to traders, and yet the creation of the “productive shtetl” (28) where “artisanal production is based on local materials” (26) requires new employment for “about 1 million Jews” (23). “Agricultural solution is also possible,” says the author – but never discusses how feasible it is (27). By and large, as late as 1930, the “shtetl problem” remains a “burning issue” for the Soviet government (20).

Although the title of the next book, *The Work of the Young Communist Unit in a Shtetl* (Monin 1925), may suggest that it deals primarily with ideological and political matters, most of it in fact focuses on the shtetl economy and the transformation of its “laborers” into the fulcrum of the Soviet regime (7). The three major areas where young communists should prioritize their economic activity are: struggle with unemployment, involvement of the shtetl youth in productive labor, and strengthening of the labor regulation of the working youth (9). The book is written in the short span of time (approximately a year and a half) that Russian Jewish economist D. Bratskus calls the “Neo-NEP,” marked by a more favorable attitude to small-scale private economy (Bratskus 1999: 302) – in particular, those artisans who had no more than two apprentices were not additionally taxed for the use of “hired labor” and preserved their social status. A major part of Monin’s work explains how Young Communist Units should involve the shtetl youth (except children of “class-alien element” such as traders (16)) into such apprenticeships, including labor agreements, minimal wage, medical insurance, maximal length of the working day, etc. (11-18).

Apart from this, Young Communist Units should conduct agitation for the transition to agricultural labor (25) and help prepare personnel for state trade and cooperation in the shtetl (28). And yet artisanal production “as the simplest production form deeply embedded into the depths of urban and rural life” is seen as central not only for satisfying the needs for mass consumption goods, but also as a fertile ground where qualified industrial cadres should grow up (47).

A. Z. Lezhnev in his *The Wooden Key: Sketches from Belorussia’s Life* (1932) stresses that while a significant part of the non-Jewish population left cities for villages during the Civil War in the hope of physically surviving “close to the land,” Jews, on the contrary, moved “to the city, to their mother ground,” since their “connection with the village, with the earth was not strong enough” (Lezhnev 1932: 90-91). The author calls Jews an “urban population *par excellence*,” and stresses that in their own turn, cities and town in the former Pale of Settlement bore a pronouncedly Jewish character (93). Jewish population must have presented a particular problem for the Bolshevik power: Jews did not have “proletariat” in the new Soviet sense of the word, i.e. first and foremost, industrial proletariat; the only

shtetl group that was likewise deprived of the means of production were artisans, which gave them some measure of ideological legitimacy in the eyes of the new regime. Data collected in 1898 by the Jewish Colonization Society allows the author to make a conclusion on the “artisanal character of the Jewish proletariat” (98). In other words, artisans and craftsmen were the closest group that could fit into this crucial category, yet differed from the “real” proletariat in that they “did not possess such a capacity for systematic organization and persistent struggle as the proletarians of large plants in Leningrad or the Moscow region” (104).

The Jewish proletariat of the Pale presented a “hesitant,” or “indecisive” mass of small-scale producers (103); they were engaged in “primitive crafts,” worked for the “limited local market” (92-93), and the cheapness of their goods was an inevitable result both of their low professional skills and of high competition among the Pale artisans (96). Over 75% of all artisans in the Minsk province were Jews, 50% of those being shoemakers or tailors; most of them worked alone, without apprentices, relying mostly on the family members’ help (95-97).

As for the Jewish trade, the “bazaar” used to be the “nucleus around which the shtetl formed,” where “for each buyer there was nearly one seller” (105). While with Jews “trade bourgeoisie dominated over the industrial one,” the forestry business in Belorussia presented an exception – it was “completely in the Jewish hands,” with Jews being both producers and traders of forestry products (while the bulk of the working force was recruited from local peasants) (107-108). And since forest business was that “wooden key” that “opened up the future” of Belorussia, it follows that Jewish wood producers and traders played the principle role in the economic development of the region.

The book by A. Kichaev, *The Contemporary State of Jewish Shtetls and Perspectives of Their Economic Recovery* (1929), reiterates many of the above-mentioned points (e.g. excessive labor power in the shtetls – 57% on average, 80% among women (Kichaev 1929: 14), mass pauperization of the Jewish population under the Soviet rule (3), development of the cooperative system that “squeezes out” Jewish artisans and traders (5), severe unemployment among the Jewish artisans (5), high percentage of “depriveds” among the former traders, middlemen and entrepreneurs that do not have any perspectives

for the future (3), etc.). Apart from this, the book provides truly impressive figures that wonderfully illustrate S. Baron's idea of the "economic re-stratification" of the Jewish shtetl population, whereby "the Jewish communities now faced the task of transferring the majority of their members from "unproductive" to "useful" occupations" (Baron 1975: 209). Thus, over the period between 1897 and 1926, the number of Jewish agriculturalists grew by 775%, and the number of state employees – by 650% (13).²² At the same time, there are still from 19 to 25.5% of people "living by non-labor income," i.e. private traders and people living on the interest from capital (11), which is quite stunning taken into consideration the time period (end of 1920s, the end of NEP – even though their number decreased by 25% since 1897).

Artisans and craftsmen present the only "productive" group of population, even though their qualifications are often low, their equipment is obsolete, and the supply of production materials is insufficient (15). The other three groups of the Jewish population are "déclassé" (their percentage steadily grew), the above mentioned traders (some of whom "go to the underground"), and the youth, whose situation is truly hopeless, especially because a considerable number of them are children of the "deprivees," whose educational possibilities were considerably curtailed (15). Against the lack of the free arable land, the Soviet regime intends to do away with unemployment among Jews primarily through "development and reconstruction of artisanal production" (15); by 1932-33 it is planned to coopt all independent artisans, increasing the percentage of certain groups of artisans by as many as 1,041% (for those working on the local mineral resources) (29).

Another important addition that the author makes to the economic discourse of the shtetl in the 1920-30s is the observation that while the number of private trade enterprises is decreasing (34), a lot of private capital slips away into illegal operations such as organization of false production cooperatives (artels), financing the across-the-border smuggling, illegal trade in vodka and moonshine, illegal

²² Even if these figures are accurate, one should bear in mind that the baseline for calculations was very low.

purchase of grain, etc. (35) – while regretting that the full confiscation of this money through state taxation is impossible (36).

A noticeable detail provided in the book concerns the social composition of Jewish collective farms; in the 12 of such farms in Kamenetsk district, out of 843 people living there, as many as 20% are artisans, 18% are traders, 20% are déclassé (41) – in other words, one should not think of Jewish agricultural colonies as consisting exclusively of those who work on land: the old shtetl structure is reproduced even there.

The émigré collection *The Jewish World* (originally published in Paris in 1939 and re-printed in 2002) particularly stresses the fact that the new state economy “knocked Jews out of the well-trodden economic road,” thereby preparing the inevitable “economic extinction for broad layers of population” that could not adapt to the new state-dominated economy (Berlin 2002: 110); that upon coming to the Jewish shtetls in the Pale, the Soviet economy radically changed their professional profile, particularly destroying the class of Jewish traders and commercial middlemen, while simultaneously creating a large group of the unemployed (Pozner 1939: 259-260); and that by destroying traditional Jewish shtetl economy, Bolshevism “destroyed the very social foundations of Jewish existence in Russia.” Deprived of the “redemptive agricultural background,” Jews were “turned into socio-economic ashes” (Ivanovich 2002: 60-61).

A 200 page long work by Ya. Kantor *Nation Building Among the Jews in the USSR* (1934) may be called a eulogy to the achievements of the Soviet regime in doing away with the old shtetl “as a hotbed of parasitism and poverty,” a “malevolent growth” on the body of the young Socialist state (157), and of transforming Jews from the people “of shopkeepers and trade middlemen into the people of labor” (161-162). While hypocritically declaring that the very existence of such “parasites” is an example of “historical injustice inherited from the tsarist era” (37), in a different place the author states that it was “the economic politics of the Soviet regime” that brought about “the complete liquidation of those intermediary functions that were performed by the majority of the Jewish shtetl population” (157). In the next move, the new power labeled the former private tradesmen, the major middlemen between

the urban and the rural markets, “parasites” and “non-productive” population, and as such deprived them of voting and other social rights. Since in 1926 the percentage of such people was stunningly high (e.g. 30% in Ukraine (36)), the government took steps towards reducing this number since it “impeded the “productivization” of the Jewish poor” (37). About half of “deprivees” were reestablished as full-fledged citizens, yet, as the author observes, those who were not, “indeed consisted of alien element” from the point of Bolshevik class system (38) – in other words, they remained “second-class citizens” until the very status of “deprivees” was abolished in 1936.

The attitude to artisans is generally more tolerant as compared to traders; it is the largest group of Jewish laboring population, composing 36.6% in Ukraine, and up to 60% in Belorussia (150). Although a number of former artisans took up jobs at state industrial enterprises, more often than not outside of the former “Pale,” the total number of artisans grew very substantially between 1926 and 1931, since up to 45% of former traders and other “non-laboring elements” chose to become artisans both to earn some kind of living, and to escape categorization as “deprivees” (152, 156). The state systematically eliminated “capitalist elements in the artisanal milieu,” making it economically near-impossible for artisans to keep apprentices, then uniting independent artisans into artels (producer cooperatives), and establishing the state control over both materials used for artisanal production and the channels of its marketing (153).

Agriculture is seen in the book as “the most accessible sphere of labor for the Jewish poor” (41), even though the “world bourgeoisie” keeps calling it a “reckless scheme of the Soviet regime” (41-42); in the author’s view, the experience of Jewish agricultural colonies, both pre-revolutionary and Soviet, serves as proof of this idea, especially when collectivization and liquidation of the social stratification (elimination of the class of the most prosperous colonists) took place (51-52).

The conclusion of the book is quite optimistic: against the opinion that “the shtetl should eventually disappear as not having any perspectives in the system of the Soviet economy” and that “Jewish should be taken away from the ‘Egypt’ of the shtetl,” Ya. Kantor foresees future shtetls as agro-industrial centers, where production is based on local agricultural materials (157-158).

The above mentioned authors largely fell along the lines of the official discourse of the time; similar attitudes, i.e. representation of the Jewish economic realities in the shtetl as “catastrophic,” on the one hand, and the general optimism, even though hardly well-grounded, of the Jewish economic perspectives under socialism, may be found both in mainstream Jewish periodicals and public addresses of the Soviet leaders. For instance, the journal “Tribune of the Soviet Jewish Community” (Russ. *Tribuna evreiskoi sovetskoi obshchestvennosti*), the official organ of OZET (Society for Settling Toiling Jews on the Land), published articles on the situation in a number of shtetls from the point of view of how it is being productively transformed in the new Soviet realities. For instance, in 1927 the Tribune brought a number of articles such as “Whither Parichi?” by S. Nepomniashchy that gives a portrait of a Belorussian shtetl examined, alongside with other similar places, by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The author gives a detailed description of the dying economy in Parichi (economic collapse triggered by World War I, sharp decrease of trade due to the spread of Soviet cooperation, near-negligible amounts of food stuffs and manufactured goods still sold in the private shops, family budgets that place people on the brink of survival, etc.). The situation with artisans, whom the author calls “the central figure of the shtetl” as the only true producers, is likewise below satisfactory with their low qualification, seasonal nature of work, and the lack of desire to hire apprentices for fear of creating their own future competitors and of being accused of employing hired labor. “Transition to labor, crafts, or agriculture” is seen as the only way out for Parichi, which, contends the author, would have been impossible without the state agricultural programs and plans to involve Jews in Soviet industry (Nepomniashchy 1927: 8-13).

In his speech delivered to the delegates of the First All-Union Congress of Jewish Agriculturalist (Moscow, 1926) and later published as a brochure *Jewish Agriculturalists in the Union of Peoples of the USSR*, Mikhail Kalinin, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets started with the statement that the revolution initially “dealt a heavy blow upon the Jewish people” by “destroying the foundations not simply of their well-being, but of the very possibility of their existence” by the forceful disruption of the sphere of small-scale private production (Kalinin 1927: 7).

While this is not exactly accurate, and since Kalinin does not mention trade at all, one would think that he most probably had in mind the whole juncture of production-and-trade that formed the economic texture of the shtetl before the revolution. In order to support his main thesis, i.e. the necessity of turning Jews into an agricultural population, Kalinin makes a discursive twist by asserting that while the Soviet government aspires to “preserve ethnicities” of all liberated peoples living in the country, including Jews, agriculture, apart from the economic salvation, is precisely the means of preserving Jews from assimilation. It is at this point that Kalinin tells his famous joke: “If I were an old rabbi wholeheartedly concerned for the Jewish nation, I would anathematize all Jews who go to Moscow to take Soviet jobs, because they are lost for their nation” – the joke that provokes laughter and applause in the audience (9) (also: Schwarz 1948: 5-6). He also hints broadly that resettling to agricultural colonies will save Jews from anti-Semitism which, he says, is perhaps stronger now than before the revolution precisely because Jews got to occupy leading positions in the Soviet state apparatus, the army, etc. (Kalinin 1927: 9). In the end of his speech, Kalinin quite plainly states that the Soviet government currently does not have enough means for the Jewish agricultural project, but notes that “capitalist Jews” who “have money to burn” are also interested in the “preservation of the Jewish nationality,” and so “scornfully dole out a pittance” to the Soviet Jewish project. Kalinin thinks this money can be accepted: among other things this is a charitable act on the part of the Soviet regime, since “capitalist Jews” hope that their efforts will earn them a cozy spot in the other world (21). The whole speech by the head of the state strikes one with its hypocrisy and cunning rhetoric, especially the conclusion where he states that it would be “an absolutely intolerable possibility from the point of view of the Soviet regime if the Jews would leave the Soviet Union in search of happiness elsewhere” (this produces “a storm of applause” in the audience) (16).

A number of works also focus on the Jewish production-and-credit cooperation, which, especially in the middle of 1920s (the period of “neo-NEP” with its slightly more tolerable attitude to private economy, e.g. Brutskus 1999: 302) extensively used the experience of similar pre-revolutionary partnerships as well as developing a new one such as giving credits to artisans and craftsmen, loaning

money for middlemen operations, offering flexible schemes for loan return and writing off of bad loans, etc. Such works describe the geography of production-and-credit cooperatives in the USSR, the types of individuals and organizations (e.g. artels) that became their members, as well as specifically Soviet obstacles that such cooperatives had to overcome (disappearance of loans from private banks and private persons, difficulties of working outside of the state system of planned provision of production materials, etc.) (see: Klinchin 1929, *Promyslovo-kreditnaya kooperatsija...* 1928).

The overview of literature presented above shows that private artisans and traders in the shtetl of 1920-30s were supposed to be either eliminated by the progressive movement of the Soviet state or to “wither away” by themselves under the pressure of the new Soviet economic realities: “The economic policies of the Soviet Union made the position of independent craftsmen increasingly untenable” (Teller 2008a: 448).²³ However, as my further story will show, this did not happen – or, rather, that economic engagements of these types (small-scale production and trade-related middlemen activities) adapted to the Soviet planned economy and successfully existed in it in modified forms alongside with, or within, the major socialist sectors of production and distribution. This major paradox of the Soviet modernization project, shows not only the theoretical limitations of this project, i.e. the gap between how it was conceived and how it was realized, but also the impossibility of arbitrary suppression of market-oriented economic practices that provide for the viability of rigid top-down economic planning.

²³Destruction of Jewish ethnic economy in the Pale had another serious consequence within the Soviet policy of “nation-building.” In accordance with Marxist evolutionary vision, Bolsheviks classified nations according to the stages they were at “on the road to socialism” while simultaneously stressing the “progressive” nature of “national self-determination” on the part of the oppressed peoples (Hirsch 2005: 51-53). For the Bolsheviks, the concept of “evolution” largely boiled down to “stages of socioeconomic organization” (from “primitive” to “communist”), so the economic principal was the basic consideration for the new administrative division of the state (territories assigned to peoples and ethnic groups based on their “economic orientation” and the “distribution of... economic resources (productive forces)” (Ibid., 53). “Shared culture,” broadly understood, was also invoked, but clearly did not play such an important role. Jews presented a serious “question” to the Soviet regime in terms of their definition as a “nation”: while V. I. Lenin maintained that Jewish “ethnic culture” was “the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeois, the slogan of our enemies” (Orbach 1982: 45), various Jewish communities of the country (Ashkenazic Jews in the former “Pale of Settlement,” Georgian Jews, Crimean Jews, Jews of the Central Asia) did not share the same economic patterns, either. And even though Ashkenazic Jews in the former Pale could perhaps qualify for a population with a common economic mode of being, the latter was effectively destroyed by the Bolshevik power itself thus depriving Jews of the major ground to claim nationhood.

In my further discussion I will concentrate primarily on small-scale production and trade-related economic activities leaving the agricultural project of 1920-30s on the side. The governmental endeavor to “place Jews on the land” started in the beginning of nineteenth century and went through a number of successive stages to be picked up by the Bolsheviks, certainly, with new ideological underpinnings.

While this project eventually failed both “under the tsars and the Soviets,” initially, as I showed earlier, some Soviet political activists, whether Jewish or not, viewed it as a virtual panacea to cure the failing shtetl economy (e. g. Borogaz-Tan 1926, Kantor 1934, Sudarsky 1930, Monin 1925, Kalinin 1927, etc.).

Others, however, were skeptical of the very idea of turning Jews into an agricultural population, as well as of the practical feasibility of this project. Thus, in 1922, two years prior to the beginning of the Soviet Jewish agricultural colonization, A. G. Bragin, a political writer and a public activist, wrote a short memorandum titled *On the worsening of the economic situation of the Jewish population in the USSR*. Among other things, he argued that placing several dozens of thousands of Jews on the land, as was the plan of the Soviet authorities, would most probably develop into a “small-scale economic measure of local significance,” since it would not prevent the economic collapse of 3 to 3,5 million people deprived of any means of subsistence under the new regime (Bragin 1995: 214-215). If anything, Bragin was definitely correct as far as the scale of new project was concerned, but apart from the scale, it was perhaps not viable under the specific political and economic conditions of the Soviet Union (for a comprehensive discussion of this project see: Dekel-Chen 2005, Weinberg 1998 (on Birobidzhan)). As Brutskus wrote in 1928, “Jewish acquisitions in agrarian revolution were, after all, modest” (Brutskus 1999: 310) (see also: Estraikh 2004: 204).

Another reason why I chose not to focus on the agricultural topic in this work is that only a few of my informants had an “agricultural strand” in their family’s past: prior to the revolution this usually meant the management or lease of the nobles’ estates (JEES_005_MB_SS,²⁴ JEES_063_KR,

²⁴Citations of field materials within the main text include: abbreviation of the project title “JEES” (Jewish Ethnic Economy under Socialism), the number of the interview and the informant(s) initials. Fuller citations, adding gender (F/M), the year(s) of informants’ birth, as well as the date and the place of the recording are provided at the end of the work.

JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_120_GZ), and in some rare cases, to the actual possession and work on land after a series of Jewish agricultural colonization programs of the nineteenth century (e.g. JEES_078_VM, JEES_089_AS_NB). Several others were associated with the Soviet agricultural project of 1920-30s, or else in the time of Khrushchevian “virgin soil” campaign in 1950-1960s (JEES_007_RL, JEES_020_LL, JEES_098_IF, JEES_106_EU). Some families, even though they temporarily lived in the Soviet Jewish collective farms, did not work on the land, but continued as tailors (JEES_034_EK_AB), physicians and managerial officers (JEES_106_EU) or land-surveyors (JEES_098_IF).

One person remembered how after the Tashkent earthquake of 1966 people “flooded” to Moscow, but unable to get the official permission to settle in the city (the so-called *propiska*), had to resort to various schemes. My informant, who had certain connections in the “passport office” of a collective farm, helped (not entirely without compensation) several families of Jewish refugees get a collective farm affiliation in the near suburbs, which meant that they could permanently stay there. He doubted, though, that they actually tilled the land in this collective farm – rather, he suggested, they worked in small producer cooperatives (*artels*) or elsewhere (JEES_097_AS).

For the majority of my informants the word combination “Jewish land-tiller” sounded like a funny joke as far as their Soviet experience is concerned (e.g. JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_030_GN_MN). The fact that this humorous association was completely missing when Israeli agriculture was brought up – and a number of my informants’ relatives were and are engaged in it – is significant in itself: it seems that the very absence of land experience is an important aspect of Russian and Soviet Jewish identity. Prohibition to own the land and work on it in imperial Russia was a “common place” in many interviews, which, on the one hand, served not only to explain Jewish pre-revolutionary professional specificity (largely, trade and small-scale production), but to epitomize many other restrictions imposed upon the Jewish population at the time (e.g. JEES_015_RK_SK, JEES_058_DG, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_104_VV). In some cases, the

forced disassociation with land was presented as typical of Jewish exile overall, which turned “people-agriculturalists” into traders and usurers (JEES_001_ER, JEES_015_RK_SK).

Discourse 3: Soviet economy

Soviet economy is a complex and largely paradoxical case for contemporary economic anthropology. A number of works on economic anthropology (e.g. Dalton 1969, Hedlund 2011) single out the “Soviet planned/ command economy” as a separate classification unit: on the one hand, Soviet economy does not neatly fit into the scheme of economic development from “primitive” to “capitalist” forms (being a highly modern economy, it heavily relies upon “pre-modern,” and often manual type of production), and on the other – it requires additional variables to explain the “maximizing economic behavior of rational individuals.” The “problem” with the Soviet economy was that in addition to “universal” limitations of economic behavior (scarcity of resources, the choice of certain economic alternatives over others, constraints produced by competition, etc.), socialism introduced a new one, ideologically legitimized and completely “non-market” by nature: prohibition of private entrepreneurial activity. The latter was equaled to the “capitalist spirit of gain-seeking,” “exploitation of one man by another,” which were proclaimed alien to the very foundations of the socialist system: “Having established their monopoly on power, the Bolsheviks proceeded to suppress such limited private property relations as had been introduced during the decades of reform. Nominally, this was carried out in the guise of sweeping nationalization with the aim of introducing ‘people’s property.’ That, however, was a notion without real meaning. In the Soviet perception, what is owned by everyone is de facto owned by no one. The real implication was to suppress the legal and economic institution of property as such” (Hedlund 2011: 132).²⁵

The “ruling force” of the Soviet economy was “political power” (e.g. Besançon 1998: 303), and many economic opportunities and advantages were foregone in view of the potential threat to the

²⁵The Soviet system did, however, allow small-scale private economic engagements, e.g. of “craftsmanship based on personal labor and not including exploitation of other people’s labor” (*Konstitutsija...* 1937: 10; *Konstitutsija...* 1988: 12), yet these engagements were marginal and always to some degree suspicious in the eyes of the authorities.

established ideological dictate in the economic sphere (e.g. Katsenelinboigen 1988: 217, Hedlund 2011: 94, Depretto 2007: 380-381, Arnot 1986 etc.). Ideology in the USSR has never been divorced from virtually any sphere of social life, economy certainly included. From the first years of the regime's existence, "economic practices no longer remained a simple question of moral debasement or improvement. Rather, in the midst of a decidedly politicized economic revolution, economic practices took on decidedly political significance" (Sloin 2010: 106). The ideological dictate in all spheres of Soviet life, including, if not primarily, economy, was such that "political economy" was a most significant element of ideological apparatus, and those teaching this discipline were seen as "performing essentially priestly functions" (Katsenelinboigen 1988: 137-138).

The same was true about economics as a branch of scholarship (which was represented by a significant number of scientists with a Jewish background): "It is well known that the science of economics in the USSR performs an ideological as well as a practical function. It is natural that under the circumstances that came to prevail in the country, the leading role was given to the so-called 'political economists', i.e. those economists whose primary duty was to furnish ideological justification for the emerging rigidly centralized economic system" (Katsenelinboigen 1981: 32-33).

"Second" economy

Rigidly structured and poorly planned, the Soviet economy was the system where producers lacked economic initiative and control over their production, and consumers, often deprived of any consumer choice, were caught in the multi-level hierarchical system of central distribution based on privilege. One of the major theoreticians of the socialist "economy of shortage," Hungarian economist János Kornai, wrote that while "instances of shortage occur in all economies," the essence of "shortage economy" consists in the fact that "the shortages appear in all or almost all spheres of the economy: in firms and households; in the allocation of products, services, and labor; and in current utilization and investment. The shortage is chronic, not temporary. Supply falls short of demand, and the difference is often very large – in other words, shortage is intense" (Kornai 2006: 240-241). In this situation, average consumers are faced with "lengthy searches [of goods] and time-consuming queuing," as well as with

the “rationing system or administrative allocation,” whereas producers – although they “have no trouble selling their output” – simultaneously lose all “incentives to technical development,” or to any intensification of their work (Ibid., 241). There is a direct dependency between the degree of economic centralization and the level of deficit (Kornai speaks about a “close a relation... between shortage and centralization,” and about how “shortage increased the tendency to centralize and centralization induced shortage” (Kornai 2006: 90)).

Paradoxically enough, the main principle that gave the name to the socialist economy, that of centralized planning may be seen as its major “fragility,” since this process is “neither adequately planned nor controlled” (Verdery 1996: 20) by those who design it – even, one might add, if they had all the best intentions to do so. The general agreement that the “lack of balance” is an “in-built” characteristic of the plan (Katsenelinboigen 1977: 73) is usually explained through the fact that it is technically impossible to pre-calculate all necessary “prestations” (including their quantity, quality, timeliness, etc.) involved in any technological process of production, whereby any enterprise becomes deeply embedded into a network of dependency connections with other firms.

This kind of system naturally brought forth a number of “adaptive mechanisms” in the form of the “second” (or, in Russian, “shadow”) economy, i.e. economic practices that were seen as partly or completely illegal from the point of view of the Soviet ideology (see: Besançon 1998, Berliner 1954, Gábor 1979, Grossman 1977, O’Hearn, Grossman & Treml 1983-1995 – a series of 38 case studies on the Soviet second economy, etc.). Definitions of the “second economy” alternatively foreground either its positioning “outside the planning structure” (O’Hearn 1980: 218) or the fact that it is pursued “for private gain” and/or “in knowing contravention of existing law” (Grossman 1977: 25).²⁶

As to the relations between the “first” and the “second” economy, in my work I will try to bring additional evidence of mutual interdependency between the two – something that K. Verdery compared to the relations between a “host” and a “parasite” (Verdery 1996: 27) – or a “symbiotic relationship” in

²⁶The major contribution to the study of the Soviet “second economy” is the Berkeley-Duke Occasional Papers on the Second Economy in the USSR (26 vols.), published in 1985-1993.

what seems to be a more precise formulation (Simis 1982: 146). Interpretation of the second economy as the sphere of production merely diverting resources from the first sphere of the socialist economy is too simplistic; what should be problematized is the virtual merge between them – on the level of production resources, distributions of produced goods, and the economic agents that often simultaneously acted in both.

Importantly enough, the second economy featured different degrees of “illegality” in the Soviet legal code. Aron Katsenelinboigen (originally Soviet, and then an American economist), in his article “Coloured Markets in the Soviet Union,” working off of the “black market” metaphor, offers an extensive color-based classification of various socialist “markets” that “implement and supplement the centralized mechanism of planned administration” (Katsenelinboigen 1977: 64).²⁷ The article introduces simultaneously two classifications of the Soviet markets, one based on the principle of their “legality,” the other – “from the standpoint of how they are caused by the centralized planning system.”

Addressing the first principle, the author suggests that “if the government and the people openly support a particular kind of market, it is a legal kind. I will indicate it by bright, light colours: red, pink, white. If the people want a market and the government does not like it but at the same time ‘closes its eyes’ (the government makes a compromise), that is a semi-legal kind, which I will colour grey. If the people (or some of them) like a kind of market which the government tries to abolish, that means an illegal kind for which I will use dark colours – brown, black.” On the basis of the second principle the author differentiates among “immanent markets” (red, pink and black), “socialist markets proper” (grey and black), and “rudimentary markets” (white, grey and brown) (Ibid., 62). Among other things, this article provides a very useful discussion template not only because it departs from a rather simplistic division

²⁷Published in English in 1977, the article was quickly translated into Russian and appeared in the Soviet *samizdat* Journal “In Defense of Economic Freedoms” (Issue 6, 1979); Some aspects of A. Katsenelinboigen’s classification were criticized by the publisher of the Russian translation, K. Burgeoisdemov (a pseudonym of Valery Chalidze, a Soviet dissident and a human rights activist, author of the book “Criminal Russia: Essays on Crime in the Soviet Union” (New-York, 1977), which includes a detailed treatment of various types of economic activity under socialism.

of the Soviet economy into “first” vs “second”/“shadow,” but also due to its detailed description of the internal structure of the economic activity under socialism.

My own work is embedded in the realities of life ridden by persistent shortages and heavily relying on the existence of the second economy. Reading this work requires a high degree of imagination on the part of readers who never had a first-hand experience of this life. There are many “imponderables,” to use B. Malinowski’s word, that people of the same culture share various communicative situations, including that of the interview; many things are taken for granted, exist “in a natural order of life,” and “don’t require explanations” (JEES_011_AN, JEES_021_NS, JEES_041_MR, JEES_058_DG, JEES_060_TZ, JEES_073_IV, JEES_081_VV, JEES_086_AR, JEES_121_FZ, etc.). While it is the aim of any anthropological work to uncover a number of such cultural givens, the readers have to put in certain efforts to picture a socio-economic reality where, for example, physicians were “complete paupers” living on a meager salary (JEES_129_AS) – same as accountants who were earning “mere pennies” (JEES_083_DT_MK); where one has to wait for special governmental “vouchers” (Russ. *order*), i.e. an official permission to buy a pair of shoes, and if the available shoes did not match you, you were getting them anyway for you are not entitled to anything else (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB); where socks, stockings and buttons (among many other things) constitute “goods in short supply,” and are offered for sale only for major holidays such as “the day of elections to the Supreme Council of the USSR” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1412. P. 77); where working at a warehouse that stored lids for preserve jars would be considered a great professional success (JEES_110_AK), since preserving jellies and pickles in summer was an important survival strategy for the majority of the country’s population, and the lids, again, were not easily available; where in order to boost social activity in junk-collection, authorities resorted to “stimulation with soap,” a rationed and much-desired-for commodity, specifically allocated for this purpose (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27. P. 21)²⁸; where “the head of the meat shop was a king” (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB),

²⁸References to archival materials in the main text include: abbreviation of the archive’s name, number of the Fund (“F”), inventory (“Inv.”), File, page number(s). More detailed descriptions are placed at the end of the work.

and the fact that a warehouse manager's grandmother was eating scrambled eggs every morning cost him a career since this unimaginable luxury clearly suggested some financial manipulations going on in the organization (JEES_062_AG_IT); where a family of five might live in one 14 square meter room for years (JEES_097_AS). Certainly, time was changing, together with "unquestionable" facts and interpretations, yet where I start my economic narrative, i.e. in the immediate post-World War II period, pretty much all of those mentioned above were there.

Jews and the second economy

It is not my aim in this work to construct an all-encompassing narrative of "Jews in the Soviet economy" akin to a number of large-scale historical works such as, for example, Baron & Kahan 1976, Kahan 1986, Penslar 2001, Attali 2010, etc. – or resolve a century-long dispute between M. Weber and W. Sombart on the origin and development of modern capitalism.

While this dispute is largely non-relevant for my work, a couple of words should nevertheless be said about it. By and large, it boils down to the questions whether it was the "Protestantism (especially Calvinism and English Puritanism)" or the "Jewish genius" that "revolutionized economic life" through engendering the new "capitalist spirit" as well as facilitating its practical implementation (see, e.g. Arkin 2002: 145). While especially Sombart's interpretations are often seen as an example of "sweeping – and invalid – generalization" (Ibid., 148),²⁹ one may surmise that the two irreconcilable perspectives that arose in the wake of M. Weber and W. Sombart respectively, resulted in the situation when, in the words of Cecil Roth, "the study of the economic history of the Jews was in the past largely a matter of hit-and-miss: according to the climate of prevailing pro- or anti-Semitism, it was argued whether offensively or defensively that the Jewish role in economic development had been all-embracing, or that after all it was insignificant" (Roth 1961: 131). I intend to withhold judgments of this kind – even though some of my informants may be prone to them (usually on the "Sombartian side"). I will also try to refrain from borrowing certain terms that originated within the initial Weber vs Sombart discussion;

²⁹About this also see: Attali 2010: 345-350 ("The Third Illusion: from Weber to Sombart").

particularly indicative in terms of the impossibility of any direct borrowing is the expression “adventurous,” or “pariah capitalism,” that Weber defines as “exploitation of political opportunities and irrational speculation” opposed to “the rational organization of capital and labor,” and directly identifies with Jews (Weber 2005: 37; 111, 245). As a term signifying an “alternative” or even “dissident” type of economic behavior, this expression might look particularly tempting within the discussion of the Jewish engagement in the second economy – however, the appeal of this term looks largely misleading on a number of counts.

No matter whether one would agree with Weber on the very definition of various types of capitalism, as well as their attribution to different historical agents, the very terms “adventurous” and “rational” were coined with regard to the larger religious context (whether Christian, or Jewish, and even in direct refutation thereof). Hence the “ethos” or “spirit” of capitalism in this or that form (e.g. as individualistic *vs* collectivistic, as supporting the idea of profit generation or as denying it, etc.) is inextricably connected with its respective religious background of those who “embody” it.

The religious “conditioning” of economic activity, famously debated by Werner and Sombart, would hardly play any significant role in case of the Jewish population in post-World War II and especially in the late-Soviet time – except for certain popular stereotypes, both internal (Jewish) and external about Jewish economic behavior and a vestige of traditional prohibition not to work on a Sabbath, relevant, however, for a fairly small number of people.

However, I am arguing that ethnic economic consolidation indeed took place in the Soviet planned economy, and presented a non-market response to a largely non-market (ideologically induced) prohibition of private entrepreneurship. Ideally, in a market economy, economic niches are formed in accordance with the market law of demand and supply, and it is one’s knowledge and skills in a given area that serve a decisive factor for one’s employment. In a non-market economy, particularly in the Soviet economy, if the latter emerged at all, more often than not it emerged along ethnic lines: if one chose to get engaged in the prohibited private entrepreneurship, one associated with “one’s own” not because they are better in production or distribution of clandestine goods, but because the bonds of trust,

which may also be strengthened through kinship, function as additional protection mechanisms. A common language shared by the members of the ethnic group, different from the language of the majority may also be of importance. To put it differently, in this this work I will try to show that Jewish involvement in the Soviet second economy may be seen as an example of how the socialist “economy of shortage” “created a potentially central role for ethnic sentiment” (Verdery 2005: 170).³⁰

In this work I will be arguing that Jewish involvement in the Soviet second economy must not be seen solely as consequence of limitations imposed upon Jews “by a non-Jewish society,” developing against various “laws and regulations” created specifically for Jews (e.g. Teller 2010). The second economy was pervasive in the Soviet Union, from its “mildest” to its “strongest” forms, and throughout the whole existence of the regime; obviously, not only Jews participated in it. I certainly do not associate with the official Soviet propaganda that at times – such as during the economic trials of 1960s – that quite successfully persuaded the “masses” that Jews were the primary culprits for the country’s economic difficulties. On the other hand, I do not fully share the wide spread Western stance that these economic trials bore an exclusively Jewish character (e.g. Evelson 1986 *passim*; Baron 1975: 284-285; Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 45-46, 72-74, 92, 100, 193-194, 197-198; Vaksberg 1994: 283-287, etc.). Although, as I will show later, post-war state anti-Semitism did play a considerable role for many aspects of Soviet Jewish life, including people’s professional and career choices, it would be too simplistic and factually inaccurate to interpret large-scale state economic campaigns as targeted specifically against Jews.

Rather, I will be looking at the Jewish involvement in the Soviet second economy through the prism of continuation of Jewish traditional economic practices, or, more precisely, their adaptive and creative transformations to the new socio-political and economic circumstances.

Usually, research on the socio-political and economic nature of socialism focuses on Soviet industry and agriculture, the two main spheres of the socialist production. In my research I will look at

³⁰Another possibility is consolidation among religious lines – here we have example of Old Believer economy in pre-revolutionary Russia (e.g. West 2001, Ananjich 1991, Ananjich 2000, Borovikov 2008).

the third, much less “noticed” sector of socialist cooperatives, as well as the Soviet trade, which for a long time were seen as “non-productive” economic spheres. I am arguing that these two domains were a fertile ground for prohibited private economic agency in various forms, and as such produced multiple adaptive practices that helped extenuate the consequences of the over-regulation in the socialist economy at large.

My own research is based on the intersection of these three discourses, i.e. ethnographic studies of Russian Jews, Russian Jewish economic history, and the Soviet “planned” economy, including its “second,” or clandestine component. In 1996, Walter Zenner observed that “while ethnic specialization in the Soviet countereconomy has not been studied, the Soviet Georgians and the Jews have played prominent roles” in it (Zenner 1996: 183). To start filling this gap is one of the aims of my work. I am focusing on three economic niches that bore a distinct Jewish character in such demographically specific places of Jewish habitation as Moscow suburban settlement, primarily Malakhovka and Saltykovka.

These niches include: 1. Craft cooperatives, or *artels*, 2. Soviet trade, and 3. Soviet “junk-yards,” or, in Russian, “offices for procurement of secondary materials” (Russ. *zagohtontory*). My work not only argues that these are the areas where Soviet Jewish economic activity can be located, but also that these were the areas where Jews exercised practices of private entrepreneurship.

All of these niches lie within official Soviet economic spheres; none of them is clandestine as such, yet all of them, as I will show later on, featured an extensive degree of clandestine economic practices.³¹ The latter necessarily required collective efforts, or network cooperation, and thus a high degree of trust.

Another important idea to bear in mind is that anything that in other socio-economic contexts would be called “traditional Jewish economic pursuits” should not be taken for granted in the Soviet context – even if the occupational patterns indeed resembled those of the pre-revolutionary period. On

³¹Even though “the difference between legal and illegal economic activity is always partly a linguistic matter, a juridical line that often blurs in practice, and such activity in the Soviet Union is complex and difficult to pin down by its very nature” (Jones 2008: 185).

the one hand, the revolution allowed many children of former artisans, peddlers and traders to become educated specialists in various spheres of life, on the other – and most importantly for this research – it reproduced sometimes very similar socio-economic conditions where more traditional economic occupations, albeit in a modified form, proved to be necessary and in some cases even lucrative.

Importantly enough, clandestine activity in either of these niches, even though I will be arguing that it was Jewish clandestine activity, did not exclude non-Jewish actors, and some, like artels, in fact heavily relied on non-Jewish workers, especially when they were large-size.

In examining various economic niches occupied by Jewish actors, my research will discuss why certain economic practices, both legal and illegal from the Soviet perspective, assumed an ethnic (Jewish) character; what role Jewishness played in creating channels for obtaining production resources, organizing production, devising marketing and distribution strategies; to what degree Jewish economic practices in late socialism can be seen as continuous with pre-revolutionary ethnic Jewish economy, or as creative adaptations to new Soviet realities, or else as a particular combination of these.

Moreover, should Jews engaged in clandestine economic operations be seen primarily as Soviet citizens acting against the laws of their state, whose Jewishness is less, if at all, important for the nature of their enterprise – or should their Jewishness be seen as constitutive of their economic pursuits? Taken to a different, and much more politicized level, as was in the case of criminal prosecution for “illegal economic activity” (e.g. the notorious economic trials of the Khrushchev era): when those under investigation were Jewish, were they accused as Jews or just as Soviet people engaged in what the state prohibited?

Even though Soviet Jewish experience may indeed be seen as a case of “thin” diasporic culture, is it possible to use the prism of economic practices to think of this “thin” culture in positive rather than negative terms? In other words my research presents an attempt to offer an alternative framing of Soviet Jewish identity, to look at it through the prism of economic practices. By exercising this perspective I hope to conceptualize a particular “post-traditional” expression of Jewishness in specific socio-economic and political circumstances. I suggest that the socialist economy presented a rich ground for

the mobilization of ethnicity along economic lines and thus can be seen as another identification resource that gave rise to a specific configuration of “Soviet Jewishness.”

Thus, my research will theorize Soviet Jewish economy as mobilization and reconfiguration of “ethnicity” in an industrialized society; describe the “performative” nature of Jewish collective identity through involvement in specific economic practices; and place the Soviet Jewish economy in the context of state anti-Semitism, new Soviet Jewish communal values, and the discourse of Jewish “loyalty” to the state and the “host society.”

Another important task of this research is to provide a missing link in the history of private entrepreneurship in Russia in the 20th c., which “must count among the biggest gaps in Soviet history today” (Hessler 1998: 516-517) (also: Jones 2008: 182). Russian researcher S. Sheikhetov, for instance, argues that the “history of the illegal shadow economy... did not start prior to the 1960s,” while the period between the end NEP and 1960s “was steadily associated with the totalitarian dominance of the state in economics” (also: Sheikhetov 2006: 190). My research, beginning with the immediate post-war years, shows on the contrary that private economic agency never disappeared in the USSR, even though it more often than not assumed clandestine character.

Although it is a part of a wider debate on Soviet Jewish collective identity, my research departs from major comprehensive narratives on Soviet Jews (e.g. Gitelman 2001, Baron 1976, Pinkus 1988, Slezkine 2004) that focus predominantly on urban Jewish populations. While “provincial” Jews come into the “big picture” much more seldom (which in itself betrays conscious or unconscious assumptions, on the part of the scholars that the “shtetl is dead”), my shift of attention to suburban Jews further “challenges the widespread view that Soviet Jewry was a homogeneous and easily identifiable group with commonly held aims and aspirations” to show that “local distinctiveness – economic, political, and social – of a specific place expands and diversifies our understanding of the Soviet Jewish experience” (Bemporad 2013: 5). Geography, as I will argue in this work, was constitutive not only for the emergence of a particular suburban Jewish type, but also of specific economic practices including the “second economy.”

Sources

This study is based on the three major types of sources: 1) published materials and research works mainly in Russian and English, 2) interviews recorded in 2013-2014 during my field research in Russia and partly in Russian Jewish immigrant communities in the United States,³² as well as a small number of interviews recorded in various former shtetls in Ukraine and Moldova in 2004-2011, and 3) archival materials from the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Central Archive of the City of Moscow. I also use a limited amount of Russian-language literary fiction.³³

Since I see oral history as the major component of this anthropological study, below I will provide some observations on the nature of my interviews and the most significant features of the communicative format within which they were recorded.

Altogether I recorded 133 in-depth interviews of various length, from relatively short ones to extensive many-hour conversations, including follow-up interviews with the key informants. Most of the interviews took place in the private atmosphere of the informants' homes. While I had a long questionnaire on various aspects of my research topic, I always let my informants speak about things closest to their personal experience rather than imposing subjects alien to it. I also tried, whenever possible, to suggest multiple interpretational possibilities to my informants' words rather than suggesting any particular one.³⁴

My original research focus sharpened in the process of interviewing: I started with fairly broad questioning on the Soviet Jewish economic engagements in Russian Jewish immigrant communities in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, then moved to St. Petersburg and Moscow which I initially

³²My field research, undertaken during my PhD studies at UNC (Chapel Hill) was supported by a Rhonda A. and Robert Hillel Silver Graduate Fellowship and the Summer research grant of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies.

³³While the status of literature as a source for ethnographic writing may be somewhat problematic, especially in the Russian academia, fieldwork as a "translation" of the native experience into forms comprehensible in a different culture inherently possesses a literary mode, for instance, that of "play, poem, or parable," thus making ethnography "both scientific and literary" endeavor (Peacock 2004: 104, 111). This, in my view, may be seen as a major justification for the reverse move, i.e. the use of literary fiction in support of ethnographic narratives.

³⁴About the specifically Jewish implication of such "dialogic play of interpretations" see: Boyarin 1991: 25.

planned to compare with the townships in the former Pale of Settlement, to finally focus on Moscow's "Jewish suburbs" of Malakhovka and Saltykovka, as well as a number of adjoining smaller settlements, which proved to be a highly provocative case-study of Soviet Jewish post-war economic practices. In the end, this narrowing of focus proved important since it allowed me to situate local specificities of Moscow suburbs within the broader context of the Soviet Jewish culture.

On the one hand, I could not perform any immediate observation of these practices as such, yet on the other, most of my present-day informants either participated in such practices, or had first-hand remembrances of them, often as a part of their recent family history. Therefore, it was the attitudes which people expressed to the subject matter of their stories, as well as their insider interpretations of them that became the object of my ethnographic observation. In this sense – even though I focus on the past – I still see this work as a study of a living Jewish community, "an embodied, contested, and ever-changing cultural group" (Brink-Danan 2008: 683) rather than an example of a bygone phenomenon situated in a historical context that itself looks quite irrelevant against the new socio-cultural conditions of the present day. The more so, because economic practices, as I will argue in this work, were tightly bound with the specific collective identity, which does not "end" with the end of the regime.

However, in terms of chronology one has to bear in mind that within the personal life span of my informants there were several major socio-political displacements that created "multiple pasts" (period of the New Economic Policy of 1920, pre-World War II time, the war and the Holocaust, immediate post-war realities, life during the "dark years of Soviet Jewry" (end of 1940s – beginning of 1950s), the experience of "fully developed" socialism, periods before and after mass immigration, etc.). Across these multiple discontinuities Jewish economic practices were not only each time re-shaped, and often radically so, but also inscribed into different patterns of inter-ethnic relations, different types of "production ethos," and different associated political allegiances. In that sense, people's sensibilities and interpretations in the second decade of the twenty-first century certainly differ from those that they might have experienced or offered 30-40 years ago: "The past... no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past', since our relation to it... is always-already 'after the break.' It is always constructed

through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (Hall 1990: 226). Presentation of Soviet Jewish economic practices by the present-day informants necessarily emerged by way of “suturing” episodes and anecdotes of their past experience into the realities of their present-day post-Soviet life – even if, similar to all “narrativizations of the self,” this inevitably involves an element of the “fantasmatic” (Hall 1996: 4). On the other hand, to use Primo Levi’s metaphor, one may say that now, several decades after the events described, “decanting, a desirable and normal process” has already taken place, “thanks to which historical events acquire their chiaroscuro and perspective only some decades after their conclusion” (Levi 1988: 19).

Even though narration may be “a cultural focus in East European Jewish society” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1974: 283), the genre of oral interview is not, particularly with the Jews of the former Soviet Union. The already mentioned virtual absence of the ethnographic studies focusing on Jews in the Soviet period foregrounds the importance of present-day interviews where people, often for the first time in their life, have a chance to speak about their Jewishness. Hence the stress on orality in my own work which seeks, among other things, to give my informants the voice of their own, thus reconstituting them as anthropological subjects.³⁵

There are, however, a number of problems about these people speaking about their past, related both to its Jewish component, its Soviet makeup, and the specific nature of economic engagements discussed – or else, to the combination of all three. In other words, present-day interviews reflect a degree of secrecy once imposed upon the Soviet past in general, the Jewish past in particular, and Jewish economic practices even more specifically, especially if these practices included a clandestine component.

As a result, people themselves spoke of what may be called a breach of memory translation on the family level, when their parents and grandparent consciously withheld information on things Jewish for fear of harming their children. This pertained to virtually all aspects of Jewish experience, whether

³⁵This was one of the reasons why I was trying to translate/ render my informants’ speech as close as possible to the original.

stories about ancestors, or knowledge of religion, or even Jewish names of family foods: “*They [parents, – A. K.] were born in fear, in Stalin’s time. None of them ever taught us either the language, or religion*” (JEES_096_EB); “*When I asked my grandfathers about this and that [in our family history], they’d say: “Sha, shvayg!”*”³⁶ (JEES_051_PZ); “*In the Soviet time I didn’t know many Jewish food names – everything was hidden, everybody was blindfolded*” (JEES_127_EF) (also: JEES_010_AN, JEES_061_LS_VN, JEES_064_GK, JEES_073_IV, JEES_078_VM, JEES_104_VV, JEES_109_SG_GG, JEES_119_MS_SS, JEES_102_YK, JEES_130_DT, etc.). Occasionally, people transferred this attitude of their parents and grandparents to me when I, in my turn, was asking similar questions: “*We lived through this for you not to know it*” (JEES_010_AN).

The topic of Soviet Jewish economic practices was further repressed as a part of collective memory: even though the political and economic situation has radically changed, and entrepreneurship became the “right” thing to do, involvement in what used to be legally questionable at the time presents a certain moral problem until nowadays. Besides, many of my informants were children and grandchildren of those who immediately participated in them, and were more often than not excluded from “adult conversations,” especially if some “shadowy” business was involved: “*This was a taboo, it was prohibited to mention this at home, all of my father’s work was a taboo*” (JEES_023_AL_ET); “*Uncle was dealing with some materials, he was a procuring agent... Aunt Sonya kept some gold from NEP... all this was concealed from me*” (JEES_052_SU_GK_LL); “*Well, no... this is a closed topic. In the past, you know what this could entail...*” (JEES_119_MS_SS); “*We were not told anything about this, because lots of people went to prison for this – you know what kind of time it was*” (JEES_102_YK). This prohibition was so strong that several times people would refuse to speak about Soviet Jewish economic engagements even a quarter of a century after the fall of the Soviet Union. Danger associated with “making money” in the USSR, which usually involved transactions illicit from

³⁶*Cut it! Quiet!* (Yiddish).

the point of view of the Soviet legal code, resulted in Jewish entrepreneurs prohibiting their children to follow their steps, thus breaking the continuity of practice as well as the memory of it.

Apart from fear, people could be unwilling to speak about such economic practices as small-scale production, trade, or junk-yard occupations because of the strong shame associated with these practices in the Soviet Union: *“When I was applying to the university, I was asked: ‘What’s your father by profession?’ And I... I didn’t want to say that he is, well, a salesperson, so, I said, he was a bookkeeper... I felt like... I didn’t want to say that he is a Jew engaged in trade...”* (JEES_111_RD).

Economic stereotypes of “speculators, swindlers and other Jews” (Sloin 2010) were, again, strong enough for some informants to question the very rationale of my research [about Jewish clandestine dealers:] *“One should not write about this, this is not interesting. They were not observant. Who were they? Did they get any education? Did they graduate from a yeshiva? Did they have any attitude to religion? They didn’t know any Talmud, anything Jewish. They were just attracted by money”* (JEES_128_SP); *“I don’t advise you to write about this mass production in your dissertation. This is not worthy of it”* (JEES_005_MB_SS); *“I just want to advise you not to stress this [small-scale cooperative production, – A. K.]. This is not the best part of Jewish life”* (JEES_060_TZ). This attitude party translates into the “retrospective devaluation of Jewish difference in exile” as “a key component of the dominant historiography of Jews since World War II” (Boyarin & Boyarin 1997: viii) with, however, an important difference that it is voiced not by external observers or immigrants, but by those insiders who were and are constructing their Jewish identity along different lines. The idea of alternatives within the Soviet Jewish identity is crucial for my research, and will be treated in more detail in the chapter “Varieties of Soviet Jewishness.”

Finally, some people doubted whether the academic value of my project would not be outweighed by the possible anti-Semitic interpretations of it on the part of certain (groups of) readers: *“You will now put this on paper, and each of your words will be seen as... ‘in the Soviet time Jews were stealing... they were producing illicit goods, and our glorious militia were disclosing them’... you are giving them the name – ‘Jews’. And everybody will be saying: ‘These Jewish bastards – that’s why we’re living so*

miserably now: because they stole everything they could during the Soviet time” (JEES_073_IV).³⁷

This concern is certainly not to be dismissed. I hope that situating phenomena discussed within broader theoretical frameworks such as identity theory, ethnic economy, socialist production, and within certain comparative frameworks (“resistance,” “survival,” and the like) will help both to redeem the biases of individual interpretations as well as to remove the anti-Semitic template from the reader reaction.

³⁷Cf. similar sensibilities in relation to post-war Jewish memoir writing: “My descriptions of sex or the underworld brought protests from rabbis and community leaders, who claimed that I poured oil on the fire of anti-Semitism, embarrassed and dishonored the victims of Hitler. Why should the Gentile world know of Jewish thieves, crooks, pimps, prostitutes, when they had all been martyred? Why not write instead of righteous Jews, rabbis, Hasidim, scholars, pious women, virtuous maidens? True, I had also written about so-called positive types, but the times demanded – so the letter writers argued – that a Jewish writer stress only the good and the saintly” (Singer 1994: 224).

CHAPTER ONE

VARIETIES OF SOVIET JEWISHNESS

“...some are at the bottom stratum of the Jewish culture, and some are at the top stratum of the European culture – how are you going to compare them? The latter are not Jews at all, they are Russian intelligentsia” (JEES_092_NB)

The very term “Soviet” with its geographical (as well as ideological, societal, economic and other implications) works as a spatial construct with its “esthetic-political link between space and wholeness” – one of the major courses of discontent with the “area studies” approach that works off the metaphor “culture as place” (see: Boyarin 1991a: 17 and on). One may argue that while over the decades that the Soviet “area” was virtually closed for scholarly observation from the outside,³⁸ the notion of “Soviet Jews” was among many that fell victim to indiscriminate generalization, whereby the Jewish population of the Soviet Union emerged as a homogenous entity, sharing uniform perceptions of self and of its non-Jewish environment, opting for similar life strategies in an often hostile society, and nurturing similar intentions about its future.

To the extent that this view tacitly presupposes the all-powerful socialist state dictating the “rules of the game” for all and creating ethnic “slots” for its various subjects, it presents yet another repercussion of the “totalitarian” (and “totalizing”) model intrinsic to Western “Cold War scholarship”: it essentializes without discrimination and prompts certain pre-given interpretations.

One reason for this was that Western research on socialism critically missed out on the actual lived experience of the “Soviet subjects” it studied. In this work I argue that ethnographic and anthropological interventions are capable of redeeming the situation. Here, my task consists in

³⁸Some exceptions, when the Jewish life in the Soviet Union was studied on the basis of secondary (immigrant) oral accounts, are: Inkeles 1959, Zborowski & Herzog 1952.

disambiguating the notion of “Soviet Jews” by stressing the internal diversity of the Jewish population in the former Soviet Union and then focusing on one particular “version” of Soviet Jewishness that has until now remained in the shadow of the emerging canon of the anthropology of diasporic Jewishness, particularly in the former socialist world.

My field research allows to distinguish several lines of differentiation among the Soviet Jews.

The first one was based on geographical differences (Litvaks, Ukrainian Jews, Polish Jews, etc.) that used to play a considerable role in the pre-revolutionary period and as such reflected the existence of a “full(er)” version of Yiddishkeit that was destroyed in the course of the twentieth century. Present-day narratives that refer to the post-war time show that such collective stereotypes occupied a much more limited space in Soviet Jewish imagination and that specific moral qualities ascribed to “other” Jews hardly had any practical implications in everyday life. Besides such stereotypes often presented mirror images of each other: “*People said: ‘We are Litvaks, and they are Ukrainian Jews, they are cads and impudent fellows’. And they, I think, treated Litvaks with contempt*” (JEES_111_RD); [Our family] “*didn’t like Ukrainian Jews, they were considered to be rogues. They are cunning, they will twist you round their little finger. And in his house [of Ukrainian Jews] they considered Litvaks to be that*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV); “*one should never compare Jews in Moldavia with the Jews of Ukraine, Belorussia, Poland... these are people with their own intrinsic character <...> Everybody was adapting to life... adaptability is what’s in common*” (JEES_015_RK_SK). More often than not, such stereotypes were nothing but friendly joshing (e.g. JEES_050_LL). Certainly, distinctions among various Jews in the past were not purely geographical, but rather cultural, with religion playing a major role in the differentiation (e.g. traditional Litvaks were/are invariably seen as “well-read people of Torah”) (JEES_022_LG)).

It seems that in the Soviet period when traditional structuration of the Jewish world was largely undermined, the geography factor became important *as such*, which reflected the general socio-political trend of centralization of various (cultural) resources in large cities on the one hand, and yet on the other, different power relations (less governmental control and more political autonomy) in places

removed from the centers of Soviet regime (Moscow, Leningrad). Different regimes of identity existed in ethnic republics of the USSR (Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania³⁹), which offered different sets of Jewish identification resources.

The place of habitation alone could be perceived as crucial for thinking about individual or collective Jewish identity; if under “urban” one understands large-city experience, then urban – non-urban divide alone clearly produced two different varieties of Soviet Jewishness. Following some demographers, these two groups may be distinguished not only in terms of their educational level, but also of the degree, or tendency towards assimilation: the first one “exhibit[ing] the characteristics of an immigrant population which might easily dissolve away into the surrounding population,” whereas the second one, “remaining at home” is “much more conservative” (Nove & Newth 1972: 145). Indeed, the Soviet model of acculturation of the Jewish population presupposed their “inclusion into the all-Soviet urban cultural model, which was largely de-ethnicized” (Yukhneva 2003: 486).⁴⁰

“Provincialism” and its discontents

This introduces a very important concept that played the role of the litmus test of sorts among the Soviet Jews. While the most adequate English translation of this concept is “provincialism,” the Russian and the Yiddish words (Russ. *mestechkovost'*, Yiddish. *kleynshtetldikeyt*) unambiguously invoke the image of the shtetl (Russ. *mestechko*) with a range of corresponding stereotypes. With my present-day informants these stereotypes more often not were acquired in an indirect way, i.e. either through literature or from older family members. And in the majority of cases the notion of Jewish

³⁹The Baltic republics in particular were always seen as more “advanced” and “less Soviet,” thus allowing for certain ethnic (Jewish) traditions to be preserved longer and to be more “visible.” Thus, two people recalled hearing Yiddish openly spoken in public as late as 1960-70-s, in one case in Lithuania, in another – in Latvia. Both informants specifically stressed their surprise at this fact, since nothing like this could have happened in St. Petersburg or Moscow (JEES_007_RL, JEES_020_LL).

⁴⁰Cf. with the words of M. I. Kalinin quoted above.

“provincialism” mapped negative characteristics to the Jewish collective identity outside of large urban centers, whether in the past, or – by extension – in the present.⁴¹

Historically, it was the Jewish Bolsheviks who were struggling to overcome the “heritage of the shtetl,” “eagerly joining the revolutionary movement after having led lives of poverty and repression in the shtetls. These Jews willingly shed their Jewish identity to participate in the international goals of the Revolution” (Hoffman 1980: 24). Present-day individual and collective resentment to the shtetl past on the part of large city dwellers is certainly rooted in these earlier sensibilities, especially because it was the most “internationally-minded”/ revolutionized part of the Jewish population that moved away from the Pale to settle in large urban centers and thus had greater chances to survive the Holocaust. The majority of my present-day informants, who were already born outside of the Pale, are the descendants of these people.

The notion of “provincialism” is thus heavily loaded with acquired stereotypes, and in as much as my informants’ family life trajectories hinge upon their departure from the shtetl at some point in the 20th c., their devaluation of “provincialism” and distancing away from it may be seen as an attempt to create a “usable past” of their own. In other words, for them “casting off” provincialism was an important element of the passage – and, most probably, of physical survival as well: “*Jews would very quickly accommodate [in Moscow]. They quickly ceased to be provincial, whereas anybody who counted himself a dweller of the capital, understood that he is also provincial in the previous generation*” (JEES_050_LL).

⁴¹Speaking ethnographically, one should bear in mind that “shtetl” signified either a township inhabited predominantly (but not exclusively) by Jews engaged in traditional ethnic cultural practices – or else, in a narrow sense, “a commercial center of a small town inhabited mostly by Jews,” which would even further stress ethnic and cultural “inclusiveness” of the term. One should also take into consideration the context in which the word is used: depending on the nature of the discourse – for instance, “shtetl” in the first sense mentioned above can be easily called simply “a town” – to distinguish it from a “village” or a “settlement” occupied mostly by the non-Jewish population. In present-day narratives people often use the word “shtetl” (or, “the real shtetl”) to emphasize the very “Jewishness” of the place that their ancestors came from. The Russian word ‘*mestechko*,’ as well as the adjective ‘*mestechkovi*,’ although it is nearly identical to the Polish word ‘*miasto*’ (town, city), always had a diminishing/ derogatory meaning – much like the Yiddish designation “*kleynshtetldik*”: it is and was not only and not so much about geography, but rather, about the “level of cultural advancement” that was allegedly residing somewhere outside of the “shtetl.”

Importantly enough, some people argued that there is no full escape from provincialism, and like other “genetic” features it may resurface in the generation of children and grandchildren: “*It was very funny, with this shtetl topic... I’m jumping here to the genes... My [distant] relatives... His wife is a dentist, and a good one, too, and my mother’s cousin is an engineer, and their son is a musician, a musical talent, [which he] inherited through the maternal line... Music school of Rimsky-Korsakov, Conservatoire... He was a normal boy, and spoke normally... and all of a sudden, during the period of puberty he produced, together with all the secondary sexual characteristics, a terrible provincial accent. Where did it come from??? What was it??? Neither mother, nor father... his mother’s family [had been living] in St. Petersburg since the nineteenth century because the great-grandfather got baptized and received ‘personal nobility,’ and was a well-known lawyer in St. Petersburg, and so on. So there was no ‘shtetl’ looming in this line. And all of a sudden this boy with a violin from a family of intelligentsia starts speaking with this accent. Everybody was horrified. With time it went away, though*” (SPb-010_AM).⁴² Another person argued that such accidental disclosures “*are purely Freudian things*” (JEES_050_LL), in other words, repressed culturally (by a larger non-Jewish culture), but inescapable. One person claimed a complete lack of any “recognition” of “provincial Jews” when she reads something about them or watches a film, and yet added that she was “*somewhat ashamed about this*” (i.e. the lack of “recognition”) – as if a feeling of some affinity should be some inalienable part of the Jewish identity in the descendants (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS).

While a genetic reading of Jewishness, which among other things creates similar considerations of “sharing” into Jewish “provincialism” may be seen as being “*one small step away from becoming a fascist*” (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS), the term “provincialism” itself has undergone an important semantic transformation whereby it lost, partially or completely, its geographical semantics, while foregrounding moral judgment. Jewish “provincialism” is associated with “*backwardness, tunnel vision*” (lit. “wearing

⁴²Generally, popular medicalization of provincial Jewishness is not an uncommon idea: “*these are people of kinship marriages, with some possible endocrine pathology <...> [people] of which I expect certain pathologies in certain areas*” (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS); “*outwardly they are not like the Jews from the capital... Smaller in height...*” (JEES_003_MM), etc.

blinders” like a horse) (JEES_131_AR), with being “*non-cultured, lacking manners, not interested in literature*” (JEES_111_RD) and “*more primitive*” (JEES_039_IZ), as well as “*not very tidy, somewhat dirty*” (JEES_093_MZ), with “*lacking intelligentsia spirit, base interests*” (JEES_082_LV), with “*narrowness of views*” (JEES_124_MK), “*fusty-musty*” life” (JEES_041_MR_LD_LR) (also: JEES_107_NL, JEES_035_IB, JEES_046_EP, etc.).

Outwardly provincialism is often identified through language/ way of speaking: provincial Jews are betrayed by their “*accent, the love of talking a lot,*” while women “*scream more*” (JEES_003_MM), they speak “*loudly and with an accent*” (JEES_043_GL), or else “*waving their hands*” (JEES_133_DS), “*It’s the manner of speaking first of all. Not a pleasant one, to put it mildly. And not a very clever one*” (JEES_046_EP), they “*spoke Russian poorly*” (JEES_111_RD), “*they were speaking such Russian, which exists only with Babel*” [Isaak Babel, – A. K.] (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS) (also JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_117_YT_IT, JEES_133_DS, etc.).⁴³

Important for my research is the economic dimension of “provincialism”: provincial Jews are described as people “*prone to little back tricks... to putting a little bit into their pockets... capable of deceiving*” (JEES_119_MS_SS), as “*not knowing much beyond filling his pockets*” (JEES_082_LV), as “*greedy and sly*” (JEES_093_MZ), “*entrepreneurial and always knowing everything in the world*” (JEES_003_MM), as those who “*chaffer*” about things, who are about “*buying, selling... deceiving somebody*” (JEES_026_IH), whose “*conversations are only about money*” (JEES_082_LV), of being engaged in a “*vulgar form of activity... trade, vulgar form of trade*” (JEES_044_LG_IA), of not having university education and earning their living through “*small-scale production... being all kinds of smiths, carpenters, I don’t know, what... traders*” (JEES_094_MG_RG), [about provincial Jews]: “*Sholem Aleichem writes about those... They rode horses... what were they called? Balagoi?* [distorted form of ‘balagula’, a Jewish horse cabman, – A. K.] *I’ve never seen people like this in Moscow. These*

⁴³In his novel *Wisdom Tooth* a Russian and then American Jewish writer Efraim Sevela describes a Jew from Kishinev (capital of Soviet Moldavia) who “speaks Russian with an accent that can make a person born in Leningrad or Moscow throw up in public” (Sevela 2002: 671).

people stayed there. Here, I'm reading Sholem Aleichem – shoemakers, shopkeepers, balagulas...

(JEES_117_YT_IT).⁴⁴

One particularly noteworthy example in this rubric related Jewish traditional shtetl occupations still pursued during 1920-30s and the Soviet modernization process that envisaged elimination of small-scale private production and trade: *“My father’s kinsmen – they were more oriented towards studying. They came [to Moscow] to become university students... But my mother’s relatives from Khar’kov – they were more on the artisanal side, shoemakers. And father thought that they... they don’t live by socialist ideas, they work somewhere in the market, they had their private business, and he considered this somehow... unworthy... The intelligent people... and those, the provincial ones... those, you know, traders.⁴⁵ The provincials, they are not educated, the socialist values are not important for them <...> they are not ‘contemporary.’ Being contemporary means socialist culture, brotherhood of peoples... this was somehow archaic”* (JEES_099_IK).⁴⁶ While for the interwar period – which, as I will show

⁴⁴This dimension seems to have been particularly strong in territories where different groups of Jews had more or less regular encounters. For instance, as some informants argued, the traditional Jewish engagement in sheep-skin business in Moldova had produced such a profound impact upon the collective identity of the local Jewish population that a specific type of a “Bessarabian Jew” was formed, distinct from a more “recognizable” (although perhaps not less stereotypical) type of the “learned Jew”: *“...there are Jews... the most educated ones, here they are called the Litvaks, from the ‘third Jerusalem,’ from Vilno – when they came here [they saw] the local Jews, the schmucks, so to speak, disregarding the laws of the Torah, but capable of earning money and knowing how to get through... Bessarabian Jews had a reputation of rogues and crooks, of being unreliable, including that in the sphere of business. Masters of scams and shenanigans”* (Bäl_011_041). [In calling Vilno the “third Jerusalem” the informant obviously confuses here two expressions, “Moscow – the Third Rome” and “Vilno – Jerusalem of Lithuania,” – A. K.].

Narrated by a local (Bessarabian) Jew, this example is important in the sense that discourse on identity, whether collective or individual, is a complex process where the choice of particular elements is not determined by their so to speak “positive” valuation that is commonly agreed upon. Rather, it is the stance the speaker takes in relation to the content presented, the way he/she negotiates it in the process of narration, as well as the larger purpose for which the “identity narrative” is produced in each particular case. One may argue, for instance, that what is of primary importance for the informant when he presents Bessarabian Jews as “rogues and crooks” as compared to the “learned” Jews from elsewhere, is the “identity of difference” through which he is communicating a distinct local Jewish specificity in the context when such differences were possible as such, i.e. when the East European Jewish world presented a broad and variegated continuum of local variants (also: JEES_064_GK, Ox-AHRC-SPb-10_Pf13_AK_BB).

⁴⁵She uses the word *torgashi*, a derogatory term for people who are engaged in trade and broader, in various dealing for personal benefit.

⁴⁶Cf.: “Large segments of the society that were neither clearly proletarian nor clearly bourgeois were supposed to be drifting between the two poles, capable of responding to the attraction of either. Such groups included urban white-

later, was the time when the majority of my informants' ancestors came to Moscow and its suburbs – “provincialism” ran against not only the new Soviet production ethos but also against the grain of the Soviet project as such, nowadays the relationship may be quite the opposite – the post-Soviet devaluation of things Soviet (as one of the possible modes of relating to the recent past, albeit not the sole one) may equate “Soviet” and “provincial” on the common basis of dependency from the state, victimized image of self in face of the officials and hair-splitting attitude to the “gifts” granted by the authorities so typical for the Soviet top-down distribution system. In the following example the person describes present-day free food aid distributed via synagogues: *“When we were getting aid, these presents... and you stand in a line – it was shameful, very much so. [Some would complain] ‘that they deceive us, they don’t put in the full amount of stuff... They are obliged to do this and that for us, they are obliged to give us...’ Paupers came for aid! Whether they are provincial, or Soviet...”* (JEES_111_RD). In other words, people now may ascribe “provincialism” to certain practices that remind them of the Soviet era, particularly, the expectation of getting free food from the authorities, thus producing a new post-socialist equation: “provincial = Soviet.” In my view, indignation and a certain amount of disgust, with which these words were pronounced, as well as the irony that accompanied the narrative in the example about Khar’kov relatives, testify not only to the intervention of ever-changing political sensibilities in how people perceive social facts, but also – in the same move – the limitation of the “political” in shaping certain continuities of practice and power relations. The issue of continuity (or the lack thereof) will be extremely important for my research when it comes to concrete Jewish practices in the post-war Soviet economic domain.

collar workers (usually called “employees” [*sluzhashchie*] in the 1920s and 1930s), middle peasants, and artisans. While one might logically argue that the Bolsheviks should have done their utmost to draw them to the proletarian cause, the opposite was true in practice. The Bolsheviks were much too anxious about the class purity of the proletariat and the validity of their own proletarian credentials to do any such thing. “A distrustful, ironic, and sometimes hostile attitude” toward white-collar workers prevailed in party circles and Soviet public discourse for many years after the revolution. A similar distrust, mingled with patronizing contempt, was often directed toward peasants and artisans, who were perceived as non-modern (*otstalye*) as well as petit bourgeois” (Fitzpatrick 1993: 751).

Getting back to Soviet Jewish “provincialism,” although a number of informants particularly stressed the fact that their parents taught them to respect any Jew no matter where he or she comes from or what he or she is doing for a living (“*there are no provincial Jews*,” JEES_015_RK_SK), many others were more or less conscious about the existence of “*snobbishness*” (e.g. JEES_003_MM, JEES_107_NL) on the part of Jews from large cities towards the “provincial” ones : “*Jews of the intelligentsia milieu, with higher education, with gymnasial education – this was a caste of a sort. They were interested in their internal life, which was much more than ‘to buy – to sell.’ Q.: But with all that, the traditional culture, the religious life... A: This was of no interest for them! Completely of no interest. They were completely non-religious Jews*” (JEES_082_LV).⁴⁷

It seems that especially the first generation of educated urban Soviet Jews could have been particularly prone to this attitude against the background of the new opportunities that opened up for Jews in the early Soviet period. Social divisions in Jewish society prior to the revolution were seen as a part of the traditional – and hardly escapable – structuration. With the new possibilities of getting a higher education and making a Soviet career, those who for whatever reason, willingly or unwillingly, failed to use these possibilities were looked down at in a different way as compared to the “traditional” Jewish community: “they could make it, but didn’t.” With a few exceptions my informants come from families that experienced upward mobility during the Soviet era.⁴⁸ Their success in the socialist system must have been to some extent influenced by the experience of their ancestors in the Pale for whom no such things were possible.

⁴⁷This snobbishness and condescension on the part of those who succeeded in large places is perhaps a universal phenomenon; as far as Jews are concerned, these attitudes were in place already in the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly with those who made their way into the Imperial capital, St. Petersburg: “A complete metamorphosis could be observed in those who left the Pale of Settlement. The tax-farmer was transformed into a banker, the contractor into a high-flying entrepreneur, and their employees into Petersburg dandies. A lot of crows got dressed up in peacock feathers. Big-shots from Balta and Konotop quickly came to consider themselves “aristocrats” and would laugh at the “provincials”” (Nathans 1999: 117).

⁴⁸Which, as I will show later in the work, did not exclude the engagement of older family members in traditional “pre-modern” Jewish occupations (cf.: “*Because he was privately selling meat, his children could receive their education*” (JEES_009_TP)).

Division into “intelligentsia” and “non-intelligentsia” is a phenomenon of the 20th c. Russia common to many peoples; yet the formation of this division had specific features among the Jews against the specific internal division of the more “traditional” Jewish society of the past.

The example above mentions “gymnasia education,” thus evoking the old Jewish elite with its “social instinct for education” and horizon of expectations very different from the rest of the shtetl population. This elite indeed looked down at common folks such as craftsmen and traders and made all possible efforts not to mingle with them. Here are some examples from the 19th c. fiction and memoir literature: “Working with one’s hands has fallen into terrible disrepute among Jews. Just as a ne’er-do-well, a parasite, is regarded as a swindler, so is the craftsman regarded as a blot on the family honor” (Mendele Mokher Sforim 1991: 161); “I was not fit for any job since I was of noble origin, so no trade occupations befit me” (Kotik 2012: 70); “Kopyl patricians, i.e. balebatim, standing out through their learnedness, wealth, or nobility, despised their poor fellow-townsmen (craftsmen, coach-drivers, unskilled workers, etc.), who were much less knowledgeable in Halakhah and not capable of devoting time for prayer and deeds pleasant to God... I often used to hear from my deceased mother: ‘Thank God, we never had a single convert to Christianity or craftsmen in our line’” (Paperna 1910: 19); “‘Why in the world,’ says my Golde, ‘is she bringing us a tailor? We’ve always had teachers in our family, cantors, beadles, even undertakers. I won’t say that some of them weren’t poor, but we never, God forbid, had a shoemaker or a tailor’” (Sholem Aleichem 1987: 51).⁴⁹

⁴⁹The following joke told by one of my informants seems to present a perfect representation of this complete and hierarchically organized structure: “*Moishe dies and goes to hell. By mistake, however, he gets into the Christian hell. He walks inside, and sees a group of people, hungry and meager, sitting around a fully laid table. ‘Why don’t you eat?’ asks Moishe. – ‘Don’t you see...?’ – they show that their spoons have very long handles, and the handles are tied to their elbows, so they can’t reach their mouths with the spoons. Moishe says: ‘So, what? You, Ivan, feed Stepan, and you, Stepan, feed Vasily...’ They did as Moishe suggested, satisfied their hunger, and cheered up. Here comes the devil, realizes the mistake and throws Moishe away to the Jewish hell. Moishe walks in and sees exactly the same picture. So, he goes: ‘Haverim, you should do so-and-so...!’ At which point one guy gets up and says indignantly: ‘What?!? Me, a factory owner, to feed this balegula???’*” (Bäl_011_024). The informant claimed that he himself heard the joke about 60 years ago from a person who at the time was in his eighties; among other things, this joke is obviously a wonderful commentary on the notion of *yikhes*, understood here primarily through occupational affiliation and the level of income. More on the notion of *yikhes* see: Kushkova 2010.

With complex historical paths of Jewish integration into Russian and then Soviet society, it would be wrong to assume that the old Jewish elite directly transformed into the Soviet one. They often felt the first victim of the Soviet struggle with the “exploiters” and “parasites.” Moreover, because the “emancipation contract” offered to Jews by the revolution consisted precisely in abolishing the old rather rigid social determinacy. However, it looks like acute status awareness did perpetuate into the Soviet period, into different socio-economic realities.

Most of my informants stress that during the Soviet time there was very little overlap between the new Soviet Jewish intelligentsia and the “provincials,” who so to speak never became “modern.” For the lack of regular contacts between the fully urbanized Jews in large Russian cities with Jews still living in small townships in the former Pale (e.g. JEES_043_GL, JEES_072_LB, JEES_133_DS, etc.), “provincialism” was more often than not understood as a different way of life, which necessarily included the occupational element: *“There are people whom you won’t even talk to. It’s not interesting, it’s completely so to speak uncultured, provincial...”* (JEES_082_LV); *“We never crossed our paths with traders and artel’ members, our circle was different <...> When you collect enough money, you go and buy theater tickets. This was my milieu. Everything else was parallel to it. We never crossed”* (JEES_107_NL). The division seems to have been profound enough for some people to present intelligentsia vs “provincial” Jews as “us” and “them”: *“These speculators are a shame for us”* (JEES_060_TZ); *“They render us a bad service”* (by looking at them non-Jews judge about all Jews) (JEES_120_GZ).

One person recalls how after the war, when the marriage market drastically dwindled, her mother, coming from an educated family, had to marry her father, a “provincial” Jew, a meat store manager. Only the death of all other suitors made her mother accept his proposal, and the internal inequality in the family was felt to the very end: *“My mother, who tried herself to escape her shtetl... She studied in a good school [in Leningrad], with good Jewish boys around... I can certainly see that father didn’t match her in any way... But they [good Jewish boys] all died [during the war]. And this provincial one...”* (JEES_036_AL). Involvement in trade served as an immediate sign of lower status in the eyes of

the Jewish intelligentsia: “*Mother was ashamed of this. Mother, with her University education... for her it was a mésalliance. A complete mésalliance*” (JEES_036_AL). Among other things this attitude was prompted by the Soviet attitude to trade as a “non-productive” sector of the socialist economy, since its “economic autonomy” would bring it “dangerously close to the capitalist model that Soviet trade was supposed to overcome. Therefore all hints of pecuniary interests were carefully curtailed” (Oushakine 2014: 218).

Prestige vs. Money

The Soviet system with its focus on the “first” economy (particularly, heavy industry and military production) and partial neglect of other spheres such as production of mass consumption goods, created a particular situation in which social prestige, understood along the official (ideological) lines and the level of one’s income did not necessarily correlate. Professions declared “prestigious” in the official Soviet rhetoric often brought only a minimal level of material existence, whereas “non-prestigious” occupations could, on the contrary, provide for a much more comfortable existence, and as a consequence, bestowed a certain type of prestige. Thus, three professions that were usually heralded as “the most honorable” ones, physician, engineer and teacher, were simultaneously the very low-paid ones; the same was largely true for the majority working in the sphere of “culture.”⁵⁰ Workers, the celebrated socialist “hegemon,” could have been paid much better, and yet people generally did not regard manual occupations at various factories and plants as a highly desirable choice (which was especially true for urban Jews).

Divergence of official prestige and money became a notable feature of the society where “official ideology allowed for the differentiation of salaries and revenues depending on the extent to which a

⁵⁰In one very telling Soviet joke, a man asks his friend, who works at the market, to get a place for his son, a loafer who does not want to go to the institute. The friend says: “*Ok, I can fix a place for him in the meat department: he’ll be selling meat, and will get around 500 rubles a month.*” – “*Oh, no, this is too much for him, – says the father, – he’ll spend all this money for booze. Do you have anything else?*” – “*How about selling beer? He’ll be getting around 400 rubles.*” – “*Oh, no, he won’t stop drinking. Is there anything for less than that, say, for 100 rubles a month?*” – *his friends shakes his head: “For t h i s he has to have higher education”* (Tul_06_23_VS) (var.: JEES_071_OZ_MK).

certain specialization or position (or a social group) was seen as important for the solution of the tasks facing the socialist society in the process of the construction of communism” (Valdera 2015: 55).⁵¹

The internal Jewish notion of “prestige” has its own specificities against the official meritocratic system. Traditionally, Jewish prestige was based on erudition, primarily religious, with its secular analogue gradually gaining importance with the development of Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment. Trade was seen as “low,” and superior only to manual occupations, while those who actually produced something with their hands were seen as people of lower social standing.⁵²

In the Soviet time, with the virtual disappearance of the religious component, the value of secular learning became dominant, while involvement in production could call forth associations with the artisanal occupations of the past.⁵³ While the official Soviet “work-ethic” (“He who does not work, neither shall he eat,” etc.) did not change the situation drastically, the Soviet economic realities with their persistent shortage of consumer goods seems to have contributed much more to the emergence of a different, non-official scale of prestige. Within it, some formerly non-prestigious/ low professions that were now in high demand, would suddenly raise the status of those who were engaged in them⁵⁴ – and vice versa, the value of professions that used to be held in high esteem (for instance, medicine or engineering) went through a certain “depreciation.”

This “shortage-based” scale of prestige was a direct consequence of divergence between the prestige based on intellectual/ cultural advancement and the poor material remuneration that it was entitled to in the Soviet society: “*There were no rich people among the architects like my husband... We*

⁵¹Certainly, there were some groups that could have both, such as party and state officials, enterprise managers, academic and research personnel, military officers, artistic bureaucracy, etc. (see: Matthews 1978).

⁵²A correlation that was reversed temporarily in 1920-1930s when shtetl artisans were recognized as the closest version of Jewish “proletariat.”

⁵³Even in the townships of the former Pale people referred to those engaged in manual labor as *grobe idn* [uncouth/ill-mannered Jews – Yiddish] (Tul_06_03), and a decent occupation at an enterprise would only mean a managerial position (speaking about her relative, an engineer, one person observed, with a lot of pride: “*He was a specialist; he didn’t work!*” (Tul_05_087)).

⁵⁴Cf.: “*Butchers were not held in high regard in the past, but with the Soviet shortages people started to respect them*” (Tul_06_14).

had enough to live on, but it was nothing special. He used to say: ‘lots of glory, but little money’

(JEES_113_IB).⁵⁵ On the contrary, seeking higher material well-being was “*not prestigious, but lucrative*” (JEES_086_AR), “*lots of money, but little honor*” (JEES_113_IB).

The clash of different scales of prestige was acutely felt by the majority of my informants: Q.: *Was it prestigious to be a person who makes money?* A.: *In my family – no. In my mother’s mentality.* Q.: *In other words, it would be better to a teacher or a physician...* A: *Poor, but with pride. Certainly. In my dad’s understanding – yes [it was ok to make money]. In my mother’s – no. They had completely different mentalities* (JEES_036_AL); “*Only the low-browed people said that “to earn money is the most important thing” – to compensate their own complex of inferiority. Pirkei Avot says: ‘Lo lehaomim lehem,’ ‘bread is not for the scholars’*” (JEES_060_TZ).⁵⁶

Different types of prestige in turn meant different understandings of “upward mobility,” since the ultimate aims could be not only different, but nearly mutually exclusive. Prestige in its various types was an important criterion for differentiation among varieties of Soviet Jewishness: “*in our country, as you understand, scholarship was not valued high, right? For instance, you are a doctor. What was it – 115 rubles of salary. Or you’re a professor – that’s 300 rubles. Well, this is not serious money. I never made less than 1,500 in the Soviet time*” (JEES_078_VM); “*People who worked in the state sphere earned little. An engineer, for instance – 100-120 rubles. Whereas a production cooperative member would earn 2,000 – 2,500*” (JEES_109_SG_GG); one’s relative was described as “*a poor professor, the chair in the Financial Academy*” (JEES_020_LL). One person told a story about a family member, a successful engineer, “*awarded with the order of the Red Banner of Labor,*” travelling for scientific events abroad, whom the rest of the family had to support materially because he himself was unable to

⁵⁵One of the “favorite” Soviet “curses” is a phrase from the 1968 comedy “Diamond Arm”: “*May you live on your paycheck only!*” (a version of it: “*May you live as an engineer!*” (JEES_127_EF)).

⁵⁶Some claimed that the notion of prestige varied geographically: “*In Georgia a physician or an engineer were considered lower than the owner of a clandestine workshop, who rode around in a good car and was constructing his own mansion. In Moscow – not so, there were different criteria, here a speculator remained a speculator, a trader – a trader*” <...> *When you were asking Bukharan Jews, they would answer: ‘We lived very well, one was working in a public bath, the other in the drugstore, the third – in the laundry’*” (JEES_052_SU_GK_LL).

do so with the money he was earning: “*Uncle Ziama would take them all with the kid to his summer house, and provided all the food and everything. Another uncle, a builder by profession, had to repair Liovochka’s⁵⁷ apartment every three years. His wife would come to my mother with empty dishes, and mother would fill it with gefilte fish, lekek, etc.*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV) (also: JEES_030_GN_MN, JEES_065_VT_GK, JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_099_IK, JEES_100_MZ, JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

In as much as this divergence produced a divide in the Soviet Jewish community, and as “provincialism” was often associated with involvement in money-making (small-scale artisanal production, trade), the divergence of prestige and money within the Soviet politico-economic system will emerge a number of times in my further discussion.

To complete the discussion of the notion of “provincialism” it should be observed that at times it did produce positive evaluations among my present-day informants – perhaps as a post-Soviet attitude with its mixed feeling of nostalgia for the (Jewish) past, including the pre-immigration Soviet past, as well as the new Jewish knowledge acquired through various Jewish educational programs, exposure to various Jewish cultural texts, etc. The aura of “authenticity,” lost in multiple individual and collective displacements of the last decades, make some people nowadays regard the shtetl as a Jewish space *par excellence*, a prototypical Jewish homeplace, embodying “piety and tradition, warmth of neighborhood and pleasantries of a small community” (Pinchuk 2001: 170). More often than not it is “*an emotional image, not a logical one*” (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS), and presents an opposite end of “the Jewish intelligentsia’s attitude toward the Jewish “folk””: a “romantic embrace” rather than “patronizing disdain” (Shore 2007: 510).

Against this romantic view of Jewish sociality, spirituality and memory, even negative images such as “abject poverty” or “cramped conditions of living” may be perceived as largely irrelevant, or else assume positive valuations: “*The shtetl is closer to the earth, to the traditions... preservation of the*

⁵⁷Diminutive of Leo (Lev). In this context the use of diminutive possibly suggest of Liovochka’s child-like dependency upon extended family members due to his inability to support his own family.

roots... *If Jews kept the tradition at all, it's because the provincial Jews kept it <...> Provincialism is more of a positive notion, a very touching one. Naïve, too*" (JEES_109_SG_GG); "*Provincialism has its charm, its fascination... its warmth*" (JEES_035_IB); "*Provincialism, it's about a small shtetl, with Jews, Russians, Ukrainians all living together, all speaking Yiddish, all celebrating common holidays, living as if they were one family*" (JEES_094_MG_RG), "*Provincials, even if he is a hereditary shoemaker, he read the Torah, he was closer to God so to speak*" (JEES_118_MR_OR) (also: JEES_003_MM, JEES_013_IS_AH, JEES_043_GL, JEES_127_EF, JEES_129_AS).⁵⁸

Thus, shtetls for the present-day Russian Jews, as well as the word "provincial" associated with them, may become a site of memory ascription as well as of cultural appropriation – inasmuch as "authentic" Jewishness is invoked in various scholarly and political projects of the present.

"Jews, yids, and the pride of the Russian people"

Alongside the notion of "provincialism," understood, as I tried to stress, not only and not so much as a geographic, but rather as a general cultural notion (language, behavior, ways of earning of one's livelihood, etc.), one should recall a well-known anecdotal phrase about the "three categories of Soviet Jews." The first group, it says are "Jews proper": these are people who read/ teach literature, attend concerts and exhibitions, work as engineers or physicians – in other words, intelligentsia.⁵⁹ The second group, "the yids," are those who "work in a store," or, more broadly, who are engaged in the intermediary sphere of various services. The third group are world-famous Soviet Jewish ballet dancers, composers, artists, physicists or chess players – these are termed "the pride of the Russian people."⁶⁰

This phrase, "the Jews, the yids, and the pride of the Russian people," is usually presented as a joke, and more often than not, by those who claim to belong either to the third, or to the first group, i.e.

⁵⁸On the present-day "romantization" of the shtetl artisanal occupations in particular see: Hakkarainen 2008.

⁵⁹Cf. a rhymed Soviet saying: "Out of all scholars and physicians each fifth one is not Jewish" (Russ.: *Iz uchenykh i vrachei kazhdyi piatyi ne evrei*).

⁶⁰Here the word "Russian" is used as an ethnic term, *russky*, which stresses the alleged appropriation of these Jewish celebrities by Russians as a people.

the people who are mostly prone of nurturing disparaging attitudes to the “provincials.” As with any folkloric text, this phrase comes in a number of variants: “*B. [a renowned Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish economist, – A. K.] has a favorite joke: if you are a common Jew, they call you ‘yid,’ if you have a higher education diploma, if you achieved something in science, became a PhD, you’ll be ‘a Soviet professor,’ but if you reached some exceptional results, got a Nobel prize, then you’ll be called ‘a great Russian scholar’*” [laughs] (JEES_028_NG_ES); “*In a conversation with Liya Mogilevskaya, a famous concertmaster of the Bolshoy Theater, David Oistrakh said: ‘Jews (in the USSR) are divided into three categories. The one who earns 100 rubles a month is a ‘scurfy yid’; the one who earn 200 rubles is a Jew, and those who, like myself, earns 500 is the pride of the Russian people’*” (Zaltsberg 2009: 234); “*My professor... Lev Yakovlevich Beri, used to say that there are three categories of Jews in the Soviet Union. The first category is ‘yids’ – these who sell things in stores; the second category are ‘Jews’ – these are physicians, who treat people; and the third is ‘the geniuses/ genii of the Russian people’ – these are people who make great discoveries, invents rockets, explode bombs, etc.*”⁶¹

When I started “unpacking” this phrase, asking people what exactly stands behind these three groups, the criterion of profession or, rather, the type of economic activity clearly came to the fore. Leaving aside both the third (the narrowest) and the first (the broadest) groups, here is what my informants said about the second one, the ‘yids’⁶²: “*They are Jews, everything is ok, but they all were engaged in trade ... traders... a slightly lower race*” (JEES_109_SG_GG); “*These are low-browed people... this is not our... we were not around [such people]. Maybe their life turned in such a way that they did not get any education... [for us] to go into trade was a wild absurdity*” (JEES_117_YT_IT); “*Intelligentsia was so much under pressure in Stalin’s time that it couldn’t straighten up. Intelligentsia*

⁶¹Interview with Gavriil Popov, a Russian politician and economist, an ethnic Greek, who served as mayor of Moscow from 1990 to 1992. From a documentary film “Fifth Line. Immigration.” The All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, 2012. Producer: N. Steshina.

⁶²The word “yid” (Russ.: *zhid*, derogatory) could be used irrespective of ethnic origin, e.g. about a person who is “*pseudo-open in his own interests*” or not discriminative enough about food etiquette (JEES_104_VV), or else whose whole behavior is morally questionable (JEES_098_IF). In other words, in Russian the semantic potential of this concept is capable of incorporating an ethical dimension.

wouldn't go into any economic 'schemes' and led calm regular way of life. And there was a different caste among the Jews – professional dealers” (JEES_128_SP); [about the family of a friend] “They are from intelligentsia, the top levels... not 'aunt Sarah from bazaar'” (JEES_052_SU_GK_LL) (also: JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_109_SG_GG, JEES_039_IZ, JEES_123_EO, JEES_061_LS).

Ideas about this differentiation had direct consequences for communicative practices; people nearly unanimously claimed that the “Jews” and the “yids” did not interact much, if at all, on an everyday basis: “There are different circles, different areas... [their] talks are only about money... a completely uncultured milieu! I, for my part, always shunned this milieu... Q: So, these circles didn't cross? A: No they didn't cross... Intelligentsia circles often despised such common people” (JEES_082_LV); Q.: Would you agree that there was a stratification among the Soviet Jews – there were people with education, and there were those who sold things in the stores... A: I think there was a huge stratification! I don't remember anybody who worked in a store to visit our home (JEES_015_RK_SK); Jews working in the stores, storage facilities, etc. were a “certain caste” as compared to intelligentsia Jews. The latter “practically did not communicate with them” (JEES_128_SP); “these 'businessmen' ... they were different from us, I think. Wiser, slier... We lived on our honestly earned money... They had a completely different world” (JEES_083_DT_MK) (also: JEES_036_AL, JEES_099_IK, JEES_052_SU_GK_LL, JEES_128_SP).

One person, raised in a religious family and a practicing believer, suggested that while the differentiation among various Jews was there (“well, you won't discuss things in the circle of janitors”), the synagogue could occasionally bring some of these people together, yet “not on the level of personal relations: you come, attended the prayer – that's it” (JEES_060_TZ).⁶³ Another informant stressed the

⁶³Importantly enough, in the traditional Jewish society there were synagogues organized according to the professional affiliation (synagogues of saddlers, furriers, woodcutters, glaziers – altogether around 30, e.g. Băl_011_024, Băl_011_021, Băl_011_024, Băl_011_001), which meant that a person, no matter what profession he had, could communicate with people of his circle, where occupation as such did not constitute a ground for differentiation. In the Soviet period, more often than not, there was only one synagogue to go to, so “everybody got

emotional need to be “with one’s own,” i.e. Jews, which, when this happened, could make people forget about “caste” differences: ““Traders” could be received at home – *when they were sick*” [the speaker’s father was a physician]. Yet this hardly ever happened “*for family celebrations, because they would have found this boring.*” While there were some “traders” who “*could speak about more things than just money-making,*” what brought them together with the physician was “*the desire to be in a Jewish milieu*” (JEES_067_LT).

While the word “yid,” attached to the second category, is strongly derogatory in the Russian language, and while it carries a trail of various negative cultural associations, a number of my informants rejected the tripartite division of “Jews, yids, and the pride of the Russian people” altogether – either because they foregrounded the idea of the general anti-Semitic climate in the Soviet Union (so, all Jews were seen as “yids,” as one group in face of the non-Jewish majority, or else because this division indeed touched upon such underlying assumptions as “the lack of education,” “non-engagement in intelligentsia profession,” “non-involvement in the sphere of cultural production” as the tangible criteria of internal Jewish differentiation (and some of the informants’ relatives did not meet these criteria).

Here are some characteristic responses: “*I don’t like this formulation. It’s not right. They are all Jews. And for the Russian population they would always become ‘yids.’* Q: *How about internal division, in the Jewish community?* A: *No. All this is important, but there is no division like this. Yidn, yidn. Yiddishkey!*” (JEES_050_LL); “*I don’t agree. I’m offended for the “yids.” They didn’t go into their dealings because they loved them. They were trying to survive. And to provide education for their children. Some were indeed engaged in different dealings, I don’t say no, but that doesn’t mean that they were contemptible ‘yids,’ no, they were struggling for survival*” (JEES_120_GZ) (also: JEES_111_RD, JEES_071_OZ_MK, JEES_061_LS, JEES_120_GZ). One person theorized the attitude implicit in the phrase “Jews, yids, and the pride of the Russian people” within a larger historical context

mixed up” (JEES_060_TZ). It would seem that in the liturgical context social differences could, on the one hand, get more explicit, yet on the other, get neglected.

of Jewish integration into the Russian culture with the attendant loss of their ethnic specificity and the need of self-justification on the part of those who “made it” into the dominant Imperial, and then Soviet culture: *“I don’t agree. All these distinctions, all these talks about yids and Jews... this is close to anti-Semitic discourse... This is a repercussion of Haskalah... a result of internal Jewish critique. Until Haskalah Jews... considered themselves better than anybody else, while goym, the pork-eaters, were the turd. And then it started: ‘No, actually they do have something good after all, and we have drawbacks. And then it turned out that Jews are not a culture at all, but some religious community... while culture is Pushkin, Bach, Dostoevsky,’ and all the rest... This type of thinking emerges with people who lost their true ethnic foundation. They have to justify themselves, to explain something...”* (JEES_064_GK).

In my view, interpretations cited above, even though they may seem very different, testify to the existence of the internal differentiation in the Soviet Jewish community, particularly the way it was felt in a large city such as Moscow. This differentiation seems to be at least partially rooted in a more traditional (pre-revolutionary) status-ridden Jewish society in Russia, which got reconfigured in the new Soviet socio-economic realities: “The caste division is not a fossil relic of the past but is a dynamic and biting force in the lives of the members of the community” (Mandelbaum 1939: 450).

In this work I am focusing on people who were engaged in various economic practices (including the illegal ones), which would put them outside of either the first, or the third group introduced above. Nevertheless I will not label them either “provincials,” or, much less so, “the yids.” I am turning to “common” Jews, usually with not much formal education, engaged in the types of economic activity that was not seen as “prestigious” in the eyes of successful Soviet Jewish professionals or people involved in the production of “culture.” Eventually, it will be my task to explicate the positive content of their collective identity, which, as I will show in one of the subsequent chapters, was to a large degree determined by their place of habitation: Moscow Jewish suburbs.

CHAPTER TWO

“FIGURED WORLD” OF THE SOVIET JEWISH ECONOMY

*“Jews are swindlers, they trade, they hold underground
production workshops – that’s what people said”
(JEES_101_ArV_AnV)*

In this chapter I will construct an account of collective representations of *Homo economicus judaicus* in the last several decades of the existence of the Soviet Union. The term “economy” will be understood here in a broad sense as various practices involving relationship of exchange (in money, goods and services) both within the Jewish community (i.e. among people identifying themselves as Jews) and across ethnic borderlines.

To approach this area of collective representations I will use the term offered by D. Holland, “figured world” defined as a “collectively imagined world” (Holland et al. 2008: 101), “a realm of interpretation in which a particular set of characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al. 1998: 52). As I will try to show, the interpretational power of this concept may be seen through the references people make to it while explaining individual and collective economic agency of Jews at various historical periods, including the pre-Soviet, thus attaching particular meaning to Jewish economy-related choices as well as the economic behavior in general (for instance, it helps to explain why “a Jew who is a store manager” is a tightly-knit bunch of cultural significations that may be unfolded into a “thick description” of its own). Besides, for the situation of the interview, the concept of the “figured world” allows to distinguish the “space for authoring,” when people “reinvent” themselves as particular economic actors, both individually and collectively, in the past as well as in the present.

As I will show, the “figured world” of the Soviet Jewish economy includes non-Jews, whose different economic behaviors shape the boundaries and the identity of the Jewish actors; references to

various political and economic regimes in the Soviet Union in different periods of its existence (early years of the Soviet regime – New Economic Policy of 1920s – pre-war years – socio-political regimes under various Soviet “rulers” – post-socialist time); anti- and philo-Semitic stereotypes, including specific (often “genetic”) inclination of Jews towards business, and, importantly, the images of economic “niches” that Jews occupied in the Soviet society; “survivalist” discourse and even collective “ethnotrauma” (Oushakine 2009: 85) related to Soviet Jewish experience in general, or its economic aspect in particular.

“Jewish riches, Jewish gold”

A steady element of the Jewish economic “figured world” may be called “Jewish riches, Jewish gold”: Jews may be described as “prisoners” of this cultural stereotype, and Russia was certainly not an exception: “*People say, ‘there are no poor among the Jews. Jews always have money, they are resourceful and stingy people’*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); “*Nobody ever believes that Jews can be poor! Nobody, never*” (JEES_024_IB), etc.⁶⁴ Initially rooted in the non-Jewish agrarian mentality, “riches,” and especially “uncountable riches” possessed by Jews show a clear affinity with Slavic mythology of “the other world,” so that in the eyes of the peasant community Jewish “otherness” (social, economic, religious, linguistic, etc.) must have perfectly correlated with their “riches.”⁶⁵

Pre-modern peasant economy usually does not allow for any significant enrichment, or in any case, for creation of any substantial surplus, let alone monetary savings. Against the fact that Jews did not work on land (or, in other words, were not engaged in “real labor” the way peasants understood it), their possession of money, however little, must have looked uncanny and suspicious (for more details

⁶⁴In his 1926 poem “A Jew. To the Comrades from OZET,” V. Mayakovsky introduces this stereotype (“A Jew is carats, // A Jew is currency...// Fiercely rich // and fiercely stingy” (Russ.: *Evrei – karaty // evrei – valjuta // Ljuto bogaty // i zhadny ljuto*” (Mayakovsky 1958: 244) to subsequently topple it over.

⁶⁵Besides, getting rich in folklore inevitably involves a difficult quest on the part of the protagonist (see, for instance, Petrov & Moroz 2013: 290), and Jewish stereotypical “resourcefulness” perfectly meets this requirement. In particular, trade could be viewed by peasant as a “ritual Jewish practice that presupposes special “knowledge” necessary to accumulate gold” (Sokolova 2005: 141).

see: Sokolova 2005: 141).⁶⁶ Jews themselves possessed an internal awareness of this stereotype: “*There is a genetic fear that you’ll be accused of not earning your daily bread. Jews always worked. This [idea] formed because Jews were not allowed to till the land*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV). Moreover, rural imagination portrayed a town/ city as the “universe of abundance,” so that the predominantly urban status of Jews must have only strengthened the association between Jews and riches/ gold. It is thus not at all accidental that already the early Russian ethnographic literature “while following the broad public opinion and simultaneously creating it, pursued the idea of Jewish economic success as compared to other peoples around” (Hakkarainen 2011: 68).

Essentially the connection between Jews and money was structural one: Jews were the primary middlemen between the peasant and the urban markets throughout the Pale of Settlement. This role can possibly be explained not only by the continuity of the traditional occupational engagements, but also by the fact that Jews had “advantages in monetary dealings” as “strangers” who did not “face the same kinds of demands for reciprocity” as the local non-Jewish population (Zenner 1996: 184), or else by the legal accessibility of this role to Jews in the Russian Empire.

The pervasive stereotype of “Jewish riches” possesses a large power of inertia, perpetuating and even gaining a stronger hold of people’s imagination in the absence of the “reality” that might support it.⁶⁷ One particular repercussion of this stereotype that is important for my work are the early Soviet campaigns for “expropriation of Jewish gold,” whereby the Political State Administration started “arresting Nepmen, small traders, artisans, and others in suspicion of hoarding valuables” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 203).⁶⁸ This “gold rush,” as people called it (Sokolova 2005: 142) is an important episode in

⁶⁶Skipping somewhat ahead, one may wonder whether the Soviet criminalization of the privately undertaken economic activities through equating them to “speculation” or “non-labor gains” (Russ. *netrudovye dokhody*) could partially be nourished by this more traditional production ethos – apart from the fact that these activities were pursued outside of the framework of the official socialist economy.

⁶⁷Linguistic evidence of the association between Jews and riches in the recently published Dictionary of Comparisons of the Russian Language: “‘Rich as a yid’ Obsolete. Coll. Derog. About a very rich person. Cf.: Rich as Croesus. Rich as a merchant. Rich as Rothschild” (Mokienko 2003: 123).

⁶⁸This was quite a common situation: “Each time the Soviet state felt the need of gold and currency, they procured those in a very simple way – that of direct requisitioning” (Evelson 1986: 300).

family history of a number of my informants: “...at the time it was, like, gold was taken away from Jews – the country was in need of gold, and they created a special detachment, and they would go around all the houses, collecting gold. And if you, for instance, didn’t give away [gold], they would take everything, and then a person would disappear, and nobody would know where. Q: Did they look for gold specifically with the Jews? A: With the Jews, yes, mostly with the Jews (JEES_088_EK)⁶⁹; “When NEP was over, in [19]28 or [19]29, father was arrested. So, mother gave something to this person [a member of the requisitioning group], wrapped in a kerchief, and later I learned that it was our Pesach dishes” (JEES_090_IA); [During NEP authorities came to confiscate gold] “they were buying valuables because money was nothing at the time. And so, he gave them a pail filled with jewelry [laughs]. And they told him: ‘You should have another pail like this, you should have twice as much’ [laughs] – they were watching him, and very closely at that” (JEES_015_RK_SK) (also: JEES_034_EK_AB, JEES_118_MR_OR, Zeltser 2001: 28, Zalzman 2006: 240, Roziner 1983: 116).⁷⁰ Often, for the refusal to surrender “gold,” people were arrested – “In the course of this campaign almost the whole Jewish adult male population went through the torture-chamber of the Chief Political Administration. (Sokolova 2005: 142). And even though “many of those arrested were soon released – but not before they had agreed, under threats and even torture, to surrender their gold” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 203), some people never came back: “Grandfather committed suicide there [in the NKVD prison, – A. K.]. Couldn’t endure these tortures... because there were no traces of the hidden riches” (JEES_014_EB).

Narrating their family histories, people “interact” with the stereotype “Jewish riches, Jewish gold,” as well as with other clichéd cultural notions, in a variety of different ways; in some cases their

⁶⁹The following famous joke is attributed precisely to the time of “Jewish gold requisitioning” of the early Soviet rule: “‘Extraordinary committee’ members come to the house of Rabinovich at night: ‘Do you have any gold?’ – ‘Certainly, I do, about 100 kilogram’ – ‘Cough it up right now!’ – Rabinovich turns around and calls his wife: ‘Sarah, my golden one, kum aher!’ [come here, Yiddish]” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

⁷⁰In his childhood memoirs, Boruch-Mordechai Lifshits recalls an episode of mass requisitioning of gold in one of Kievan synagogues in 1926: during the celebration of Simches Toyre, “attended by many well-off Jews wearing golden watches, and their wives adorned with golden rings and ear-rings,” communists rushed into the synagogue, turned off electricity, and started tearing off gold jewelry off the women (Lifshits 2014).

statements reflect the internalized views of the non-Jewish environment, in other cases, consciously or unconsciously refute them. What is important to keep in mind while analyzing these narratives is the personal trajectory of the narrator, the fate of his/ her relatives during the Soviet era, his/ her profession in the past, present-day financial situation, position in the synagogue community (if any), horizon of immigration expectations, etc.

Further on, I will distinguish the most conspicuous motifs in the corpus of my interviews that deal with various aspects of what I call the “figured world of Jewish economy.”

Some people try to construct the high status of their family in the pre-Soviet past by referring to its material well-being and high standing in the world of business: “*My grandfather was a merchant of the first guild before the revolution, he was a very rich person, yes!*” (JEES_020_LL); “*He [grandfather] was not just a Jew, he was an established personality in Nizhniy Novgorod trade circle*” (JEES_014_EB); “*My father told me that his mother came from a rich Jewish family, and she had, he claimed, a box full of diamonds*” (JEES_106_EU); “*they were rich, but the revolution straightened things up*” [laughs] (JEES_063_KR); “*The revolution ‘pinched’ them somewhat, but they didn’t lose everything*” (JEES_081_VV) (also: JEES_012_KK_RK, JEES_078_VM, JEES_118_MR_OR). While in the Soviet past such stories could be problematic, the present-day license of business initiative and transition to market economy, new discourses around “entrepreneurship” and “wealth” allow people to “construct their subjectivities in practice” (Holland et al 1998: 31-32), presenting themselves as descendants of once wealthy families with high social status.

Generally, revolution was the major divide in my informants’ family histories, which among other things included their economic status: “The policy called ‘War Communism’, implemented from July 1918 to March 1921, was based on the nationalization of all private enterprises... strict government control, commandeering and confiscation, all of which were damaging to the Jews” (Pinkus 1988: 92). Either because of the early Bolshevik policies, or just because the family had been poor, the ancestors who migrated from the Pale are usually described as completely destitute: “*Those who came here were the Jewish ragamuffins, they all led a semi-hungry way of existence* (JEES_015_RK_SK); “*Sonya had 4*

dollars and 4 golden coins from home; they sold them in Torgsin⁷¹ and rented a room”

(JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

The New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1920s, however short, was another important benchmark in the construction of family stories. More often than not, NEP is presented as an ideal construct, the time of “milk and honey,” and when some got a chance to enhance their family fortune and even retain it for years to come “*Aunt Sonya preserved what was acquired during NEP – golden cutlery, etc., and could afford buying food in the market, and they had an apartment on Chaikovsky street*”⁷²

(JEES_052_SU_GK_LL); “*During NEP, yes – my mother told me that when they arrested some relatives from their shtetl, they commanded them to give away everything. And them... well, the only thing they bought were jewelry – money was of no value then. And allegedly he gave away a bucket full of jewelry*” [laughs] (JEES_015_RK_SK) (also: JEES_058_DG, JEES_015_RK_SK).

Among other things the revolution brought in its wake was increased Jewish visibility in large Russian cities that previously did not belong to the Jewish Pale. While some Jews had certainly lived in Moscow or St. Petersburg prior to 1917, they were not numerous and belonged to specific social and professional layers (bankers, jewelers, rich merchants). The “common” non-assimilated Jewish type, was a novelty for the non-Jewish inhabitants of large urban places, it was, in a sense, a classical “stranger.” While some of these “strangers” sought their place among the Soviet proletariat, another part was trying to pursue the occupations they were familiar with from at home, i.e. trade, small-scale non-industrial production, white-collar jobs (Russ. *sluzhashchie*). This gave rise to a massive anti-Semitic campaign targeted at Jews as a “non-toiling element,” which was again based on the premises that there is “real” labor, like that of an industrial worker, and “easy jobs” that do not qualify for labor as such: “That ‘Jews shunning hard work’ should have become the target of resentment, suspicion, envy, is in

⁷¹Torgsin were state-run hard-currency stores that operated in the USSR between 1931 and 1936. Their name was an acronym of *torgovlia s inostrantsami*, “trade with foreigners” (URL: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torgsin>) (last accessed April 3, 2017). A thorough study of Torgsin may be found in: Osokina 2009.

⁷²Prestigious setting in the center of the city.

part explainable in view of the peculiar impasse in which the Jewish group found itself after a few years of Soviet rule” (Schwarz 1948: 56).

“A cozy warm spot” that Jews are allegedly seeking in large Russian cities emerged as a new strand in the “figured world of Jewish economy” in Russia – to stay for decades to come: “*They always said that ‘a Jew would ensconce in a warm place’*” (JEES_076_MA); “*Workers’ professions were always in demand – at factories, at the construction sites. In trade there was no demand for labor – it’s a warm place, people had their kopeck there, and held at these places*” (JEES_097_AS). Ironically, jobs in retail trade, which attracted many newcomers from the Pale, usually meant working a street kiosk, or “tent,” exposed to inclement weather: “*They [non-Jews] were saying that Jews occupied the ‘warmest’ places.*’ And there was a joke: ‘*Warm places are steamshops, boiler houses, whereas Jews work in cold places: a tent, selling goods*’” (JEES_097_AS); “*My father worked in a wooden kiosk in the street, having only a radiator to warm him up*” (JEES_073_IV) (also: JEES_091_IZ_BB, JEES_114_FK). In one story the metaphor of a “cold” place was characteristically reinterpreted as working nearly in a prison – since, as I will discuss later, trade was always a dangerous sphere to be involved in: “*There was a joke that the Russians took up all the warm places, and we, Jews, were left with cold stores. Q.: Why ‘cold stores’? A.: Because when we speak about stores, the borderline between prison and troublesome life [was very thin]*” (JEES_127_EF). And yet the stereotype seems to have gotten a strong hold on imagination of non-Jewish population of cities such as Moscow or Leningrad: “*You can see how all over Moscow small bread and sausage booths have been set up which are run by Jews. Here you have the prime source of dissatisfaction: here we are in our own city, and there come people from somewhere else who crowd us. When Russians see how Russian women, old people and children freeze in the streets for nine or eleven hours, how they are soaked in the rain bent over the sales stands... and when they see those rather warm [Jewish] booths displaying bread and sausage, they experience the feeling of discontent...*” (Schwarz 1948: 41-42).

After World War II a number of economy-related stereotypes about Jews were “crystallized” and augmented, especially with the beginning of the open state anti-Semitic campaign of late 1940s – early

1950s, as well as the dire situation in the country's post-war economy: *"In the years of my youth, unfortunately, there existed a stereotype: 'A Jew – this is about trade, this about stealing!'"* (JEES_026_IH); *"What is a Jew? A Jew is about procuring something... what else could he do? Obtaining something unobtainable... he can do a shakher-makher⁷³... these were attitudes of the time"* (JEES_006_MM_YZ); *"There is such a belief among people, that Jews always have money, that this is a swift-handed, close-fisted people"* (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); *"It was always said: 'Jews, Jews and trade...' Many years have passed, and Jews left the trade, and this was still going on: 'Jews in trade'"* (JEES_111_RD) (also: JEES_030_GN_MN, JEES_043_GL, JEES_076_MA, etc.)

"Jewish riches" and conspicuous consumption

Discourse of Soviet "riches," whether Jewish or not, may only be understood against the realities of the Soviet distributive economy, where everybody was getting guaranteed, but low, salaries, and where consumption beyond the level of state allocation was immediately visible and suspicious. Danger of conspicuous consumption made those who were making money "on the side" conceal any visible expressions of it, so external observers had to be able to "read" the slightest details of a higher material status, on the one hand, and to use their imagination, on the other: *"It was dangerous to be rich and stick out"* JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB); *"He gave very little money to his wife, she had to live an austere way of life, because at that time one's couldn't 'show' money. Because DAMPS⁷⁴ would immediately arrest you"* (JEES_121_FZ); *"...it was impossible to understand how well-off a person was... All were*

⁷³"Shakher-makher" is a commonly used expression in contemporary Russian, used broadly, not necessarily in association with anything Jewish. According to academician V. Vinogradov, it has two major meanings: 1) 'dishonest, sly deal or trade' and 2) 'small roguish dealer, dodgy conman who can arrange various deals'. The word stems from German Macher, 'a dealer,' and schachern, 'to trade, to exchange, to huckster'; this word came to Russian via Yiddish. In the novel by V. Krestovsky *Egyptian Darkness*, written in 1888, there is a footnote describing the activities of a shakher-makher: "it means partly to speculate, partly to get involved in not very honest dealings." In the evidence from 1874 the word "shakhermakher" gets the following explanation: "(usually about Jews): a petty trader, buying everything and selling everything" (in more detail see: Vinogradov 1999: 820-821). Another, popular etymology of the expression "shakher-makher," associates the first element with Hebrew שחור, 'black,' so that the whole expression translates as "black (dishonest) dealer."

⁷⁴Department Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property, the Soviet financial police, established in 1937 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OBKkSS>) (last accessed April 3, 2017). May also be referred to as DCMSP, Department to Combat the Misappropriation of Socialist Property (Simis 1982: 61).

dressed in a simple way, all behaved in a simple way” (JEES_131_AR); “*When a girl would come to school in leather shoes, they would say: ‘Sure, these Jews, they are rich’*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV) (also: JEES_043_GL, JEES_051_PZ, JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB, JEES_020_LL, etc.).

Against the danger of conspicuous consumption, or public presentation of one’s wealth, the emergence of the “sensationalistic” stories about “Jewish riches” (e.g. hidden “*milk-cans filled with gold*” (JEES_082_LV) or “*crystal vases full of diamonds in his basement*” (JEES_121_FZ)) most probably present the image of some “uncountable wealth” rather than any concrete realities: “...the secret produces an immense enlargement of life: numerous contents of life cannot emerge into the presence of full publicity. The secret offers, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world; and the latter is decisively influenced by the former” (Simmel 1950: 331)).

Historically, in the pre-Soviet past being rich for a Jew was not morally wrong in and of itself; big money and public prestige could go along in a non-conflicting way provided that the rich designated their share to public (charity) needs; being rich, as a matter of fact, was part and parcel of being “noble,” possessing *yikhes*.⁷⁵ The danger of demonstration of one’s material status in the Soviet era, “withdrawal” of riches into the private sphere, in itself was an indicator of the dissolution of the texture of traditional Jewish society: “*The new power strictly oriented the legitimate monetary exchange upon*

⁷⁵In his memoirs, Y. Kotik claims that wealth could be sufficient for high status, especially among the *mitnaggdim*: “Every *mitnagged* gauged his own lineage against that of a fellow-*mitnagged* according to two criteria: lineage of wealth and lineage of learning. Here is how it works: he who learns better, or he who has a thousand rubles, thinks himself more respectable than someone who has only one hundred rubles, and he who has ten thousand rubles sees himself as far superior to someone who has only a thousand rubles, and so on” (Assaf 2002: 400).

C. Rosenthal, on the other hand, argues that there existed a dubious attitude to wealth: on the one hand, answering the question of what was the source of prestige in the Polish town of Stozcek, people unanimously said it was “not money;” on the other hand, naming the most respected members of the community, they invariably pointed out those who were rich, noble and learned. This is explained by the fact that, on the one hand, the value of money was unstable, and on the other, that money was not an end in itself, and gave its owner a chance to perform charitable deeds (Rosenthal 1953: 1-3) (see also Zborowski & Herzog 1952: 75). Characteristically, the protagonist of Sholem Aleichem’s story “If I Were A Rothschild,” written in 1902, fantasized that if he were rich, he would first take his “Sabbath gabardine out of pawn,” or, better, his “wife’s squirrel-skin coat,” buy “a whole house” for their family, and then “provide a new roof for the old Synagogue,” “build a new bath-house,” “put up a hospital” instead of the “old poorhouse,” “build a home for the aged,” “establish a Society for Clothing the Poor,” “a Society for Outfitting Brides,” etc. (Sholem Aleichem 1949: 16-20).

the relations 'individual – state,' thus provoking erosion of internal relations of the Jewish community' (Hakkarainen 2013a: 260).

Within the discussion of “centralized planning” as socialism’s major “fragility” (Verdery 2004: 143-144), the issue of consumption becomes a spring board for conceptualization of socialist personhood and identity. The Soviet state was effectively “suppressing consumer sovereignty” “by making producers exclusively dependent on physical allocation of inputs” (Hedlund 2011: 104), and with this general tendency to “sacrifice consumption” for the sake of “enhance[ing] [the] redistributive power” of the state, issues of consumption became “deeply political.” With people’s consumer demands defined by the state, in accordance with the Party ideology, any deviation from the state consumption models became a political statement (Verdery 1996: 26-27). Therefore, engagement with a “huge repertoire of strategies for obtaining consumer goods and services” (Ibid., 27) in ways “alternative” to the official state distribution system, “conferred an identity” (Ibid., 29) different from that envisioned by the state – both on the production, and on the consumption ends of the line.

Moreover, with no market for real estate,⁷⁶ persistent shortages of consumer goods, mass production of low-quality items, the centralized distribution of most valuable things (from books and clothes to cars), impossibility of foreign travel etc., possession of whatever amount money did not automatically mean access to goods it could be theoretically exchanged for: “Given that the vast bulk of household consumption was simply allocated, via various administrative systems of preference and rationing, the Soviet ruble was de facto limited to function as an expanded form of food stamps. It offered consumer choice only for certain non-allocated goods” (Hedlund 2011: 104).⁷⁷ To put it

⁷⁶The situation improved somewhat in 1960s, when Khrushchev launched the mass construction of cooperative apartments which people could buy with their one money: [a shoemaker, who was making shoes “on the side”] “bought a two-room cooperative apartment, and his daughter was studying piano at the Conservatoire, and his wife never worked – he, a shoemaker, supported them all” (JEES_030_GN_MN).

⁷⁷State procuring agents travelling outside of two major cities, Moscow and Leningrad to the province, would often bring products in-kind that were in short supply or absent in smaller places: “Everybody had money, but one had to stay in lines for meat, for sausage... Q: So, it would be better to bring those? A: Who needs the money? What will do with it? They have the same papers in their purses – who needs them?” (JEES_058_DG). The informant uses the word “papers,” stressing that monetary bills could be no better than simple paper.

differently, Soviet money had different “value” depending, among other things, on the social status of its possessor, which could open certain channels of distribution closed for the general public.

Those who possessed larger amounts of money (which almost inevitably meant that they were gained through not completely legal methods), found themselves in the same conundrum only on a larger scale; even though they could afford more material and social benefits without attracting too much attention of the “organs,” their consumption possibilities were limited: [a rich Jewish acquaintance used to say] *“I have tons of money, but in this country I have no idea where I can spend it! Ok, I have a fur coat, Edward has a car, I live on Rubinstein street⁷⁸ – but then what??? What then???”* (JEES_023_AL_ET); *“Riches is not about money. Where would you keep the money? They [people who had money] could go to the best health resorts, they never had a shortage of food or clothes... or furniture...because to buy furniture was [a huge problem]. But they didn’t have cars – not to attract attention”* (JEES_002_LL).

Where to spend money, or *“quietly eat your caviar”*

Food as something that was consumed behind the closed doors of one’s home, is the most often cited example of how “excess” money was spent; as a matter of fact, many people “measure” the “riches” of others by the food they saw in their houses. In a sense, it was a semi-clandestine type of consumption, which more often than not resulted from the (semi)-clandestine way of earning the money and obtaining foods.⁷⁹ In some ways, foods inaccessible for the majority either because they were in short supply or because of their prohibitive prices constituted a separate “commodity sphere” (Kopytoff 1986: 71) for circumscribed groups of the “rich” people: *“None of them had palaces, they were afraid <...> their houses were semi-dilapidated <...> They didn’t spend their money anywhere. They kept it ‘under the mattress.’ They could eat well behind the closed doors, that’s true... Remember Raika Feigin! She could... she was a big girl, and her father, director of the sausage department, would bring*

⁷⁸One of the best locations in the historical center of St. Petersburg.

⁷⁹One can probably say that “luxury foods” followed the trajectory of Jewish ethnic food that as early as pre-war years had left the public sphere and became *“an increasingly private matter”* (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2008: 537).

a whole big sausage, and she'd sit down and kill the whole of it!" [laughs] (JEES_119_MS_SS); "They didn't show [that they were richer than others]. They quietly ate their caviar... while living in a communal apartment like everybody else" (JEES_039_IZ); "she had two boys, so she would buy a chicken,⁸⁰ cut it in two part, and gave to each boy. They were fat as pigs! Everything went in the stomachs... Everything was hidden. The only thing she could dare doing was to stuff them with food" (JEES_113_IB) (also: JEES_058_DG, JEES_044_LG_IA, etc.).⁸¹

Hoarding was another way of dealing with excess money, and as I will show in the chapter on trade, it was not only a personal strategy, but a systemic feature of the socialist distributive economy. Some people indeed bought "paintings, antiques, furniture" (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB) or "golden things, cigarette cases" (JEES_030_GN_MN) – see above about "milk-cans filled with gold" and "crystal vases full of diamonds."⁸² Yet this was a less safe investment as compared to food – after all, hoarded valuables had to be hidden somewhere.⁸³

⁸⁰By far not the "everyday" food for many.

⁸¹For the majority, however, "a glass of cocoa and a piece of white bread with butter" (JEES_088_EK) or "a sandwich with sausage" (JEES_076_MA) went far beyond not only everyday menus, but even imagination.

⁸²Jeweler was one of the "Jewish" occupations in the Soviet Union, a recognized "subject position" in the Soviet economy: "Us, Jews, invested everything into these things... Q.: Gold? A: Yes, diamonds. Me, too. <...> There were little workshops in Moscow where they faceted diamonds... because in the past it was dangerous to buy expensive furniture, crystal ware... Q: They illicitly faceted diamonds in Moscow? A: Why not? Q: And these were also Jews who did this? Q: Well, of course!" (JEES_078_VM); "Isaac's family was not just well-off, it was rich, they had a private house of their own in Perovo. Isaac was director of a commission shop, but he couldn't care less about this shop – he was dealing with jewelry, gold, watches. His relatives saw him in between his prison terms" (JEES_068_GG); "So, there was a workshop that made antique stuff. Gold-silver-diamonds – all this was in Jewish hands. Specialists in this sphere, all jewelers, were Jews. All others were goofs, they would be arrested in no time. Jews were working cleverly..." (JEES_128_SP). Perovo mentioned in the story is a town in Moscow suburbs, since 1960 – a district in Moscow (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perovo_District) (last accessed April 3, 2017).

⁸³This strategy itself signals the shift of ideological ethos across several generations of Soviet Jews: those who themselves came from the shtetls in the early years of the Soviet rule, inspired by the socialist egalitarian ethics, were less inclined to think about the material aspect of life: "The generation of grandmothers and even parents, raised in 1920-30s – they had a steady dislike to riches and objects of luxury: they would throw away ancient furniture, bought new junk instead. This was so until 1960s – riches were seen as indecent" (JEES_052_SU_GK_LL). Here we essentially come back to the issue of internal variegation within the Soviet Jewish population – certainly, not everybody sought money. After all, as Joseph Brodsky observed about his post-war childhood years, "The amount of goods was very limited, but not having known otherwise, we didn't mind it. Bikes were old, of prewar make, and the owner of a soccer ball was considered a bourgeois. The coats and underwear that we wore were cut out by our mother from our fathers' uniforms and patched drawers... So we didn't

For Marx gold and silver, this “wealth in preserved form” is a type of “surplus,” or “superfluous commodities” constituting “the proper sphere of exchange”; yet it is the “continual throwing of commodities into circulation” that is “the first condition of hoarding” (Marx 1904: 168-170). In other words, hoarding is but a particular stage in the continuous process of exchange, and cannot exist outside of the sphere of exchange. It seems that in the socialist planned economy with its ban of private production, danger of conspicuous consumption and a limited consumer supply, hoarding of valuables acquired a more irrational character in the sense that things hoarded (golden items, diamonds, etc.) had much lower potential to be put back into the production-based money-generating exchange. While as symbolic objects they undoubtedly retained their power, and thus could participate in non-production types of exchange (as gift, dowry, objects to bequeath, etc.), once they were obtained by the “surplus” money generated outside of the framework of the socialist production, they would become, to use S. Oushakine’s term, a type of objects “with no destination” (see: Oushakine 2014) as far as their productive potential is concerned.

The range of objects and foods that are usually named as “prestigious,” worthy of “procuring,” signifying the status of the ones who consume them is a rather limited one (caviar, sausage, carpets, crystalware, fur coats, jewelry, pictures, furniture). One would wonder whether the reason for this is not so much the limited field of available consumer items (after all, the black market could provide for more variety), but what S. Oushakine called “quantitative style”: it is the quantity of goods, as well as their price, that dominate the imagery of those who become rich.

“Legalizing” “big money”

In the socialist distributive economy, one of the biggest headaches for the “people of means” was to “justify” the possession of large sums of money or expensive things, since “big money” was inevitably associated with illegal ways of getting it. Here is one classical Soviet trick of how this was done: [about rich traders:] “*Nobody had a car – everybody was afraid to get it. So, S. bought a lottery*

develop a taste for possessions... Somehow, we preferred ideas of things to the things themselves, though when we looked in mirrors we didn't much like what we saw there.” (Brodsky 1986: 27).

*ticket twice the price of the car. And then he even paid the local newspaper to publish an ad: 'A dweller of Malakhovka settlement S. won a Zaporozhets [in a lottery]'*⁸⁴ *Legally won. He officially presented the lottery ticket in the Savings Bank, they verified it, everything was ok. And he was riding around in this Zaporozhets, which at the time was 3 – 3,5 thousand rubles. And then he officially sold it and bought Zhiguli*⁸⁵ (JEES_097_AS). Paying twice for a winning ticket obviously did not present a financial problem for S.; finding a person who agreed to sell the ticket was a strike of luck.

There were, however, contexts where lavish spending would be exempt from much suspicion; primarily this would be true for family celebrations, especially weddings and funerals.⁸⁶ Sometimes one of the main reasons for “Soviet potlatches” was to “destroy” the amounts of money that would be too dangerous to keep and/ or to spend: “*In 1950-s B. earned 12 thousand rubles, and decided to by a 'Pobeda' car.*”⁸⁷ *His mother-in-law, a very wise and educated woman, as well as his wife, told him: 'Are you nuts? You'll buy a car, and then DAMPS will come here and confiscate all our belongings.' ”* Following which, instead of buying a car, B. organized a grandiose communal feast: “*All of Malakhovka was celebrating for two weeks for my 12 thousand rubles*” (JEES_100_MZ). B.’s grandson today strongly disapproves of this “stupid” squandering of money (which in effect was a type of “noble expenditure” (Mauss 1966: 66)): among other things this reaction shows traits of the traditional character of communal spending, which the grandfather still shared, became largely preposterous for his grandson’s generation.

Needless to say, Soviet banks, closely controlled by the state, could not be trusted, especially for large sums of money; so the “wise mother-in-law” from the example above was trusted with keeping the

⁸⁴The cheapest Soviet make (one of the nick-names: “soap-box”), similar to East German Trabant.

⁸⁵A better class car.

⁸⁶On the wedding as a ritual site of spending see: Isard 2008 and Hakkarainen 2011: 74-75. Funerals were to some extent also exempt from suspicion: “*The cemetery monument, yes, allowed judging [about the level of prosperity]*” (JEES_131_AR).

⁸⁷A cult post-war Soviet car (its name literally means “Victory”), one of few exported cars (see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GAZ-M20_Pobeda). (last accessed April 3, 2017).

“common bank/ pot”⁸⁸ in possession of a group of local dealers: *“In the yard near the garbage, a metal thing was sticking from the ground, with a metal box with a lock. Their money was kept there <...> This box didn’t look like there might be money there. A pole with a jar, somewhat like a tzedaka box. P. said, there was 100 thousand rubles there on a regular basis”* (JEES_100_MZ).⁸⁹

Possessing “extra money” was not only an asset, but also a liability in the sense that it was tied up with a number of Soviet institutions, which allowed for its generation with a certain benefit for themselves. This “junction” between official and clandestine structures was a very typical feature of the socialist regime, and as far as economy is concerned, provided for the inseparable existence of the “first” and the “second” economic spheres.

Clandestine producers making money “on the side” of the official production network had to pay to the police to close their eyes on particular economic schemes, or else to the representatives of the Soviet financial police, or even to investigators and judges who could lessen one’s jail time, if not to completely exempt one from punishment: *“Their life was not a piece of sugar... they had their fair share, in the sense that they were shaking in their boots of fear. And they paid as much as was expected of them. To the cops. In the past there was no racket – the only racket was a state racket”* (JEES_119_MS_SS); *“DAMPS is like our today’s small-scale racketeers. You give them a bribe, and, like, go away, don’t stay in the way, I’m working”* (JEES_127_EF); *“A long prison term was looming ahead of my father. Q.: Did you buy his way out? A.: Yes, money, certainly, certainly, certainly. To the investigator. We had good luck”* (JEES_023_AL_ET) (also: JEES_121_FZ, JEES_127_EF, JEES_068_GG). In a way, these monetary exchanges was a type of “second economy” in its own right.

⁸⁸“Common bank/ pot” (Russ. *obshchak*): in the thieves’ jargon, a common fund of money (e.g. in the prison) under the supervision of a trusted person (<https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%E1%F9%E0%EA>) (last accessed April 3, 2017). (in Russian).

⁸⁹Like in E. Poe’s “Purloined letter,” the success in finding the hidden treasures depends on the “identification of the reasoner’s intellect with that of his opponent” (Poe 1946: 601). We may safely assume that the policemen were not Jewish, that they knew about the money hidden in the house – and that the dealers knew about their intentions to find it. The “identification” obviously did not happen, and the dealers’ trick proved to be as effective as that of Poe’s protagonist. Additionally, convergence of “riches” and “junk” is significant not only semiotically, but also in view of the following chapter on the Soviet “junk-yard Jews.”

Later on, the emigration process incurred multiple expenses as well, sometimes of a completely unexpected character: people had to pay for the cancellation of Soviet citizenship (900 rubles in 1979-80, JEES_012_KK_RK) and for some period of time also for having received Soviet higher education and academic degrees (JEES_041_MR_LD_LR). People were also responsible for a full repair of their apartments, whether state-owned or cooperative, before they could legally leave (JEES_012_KK_RK).

Several informants referred to what may be called “Jewish immigration credit” that emerged precisely because of multiple Soviet limitations mentioned above, and in may be looked at as the traditional Jewish usury taking place in specific political circumstances: “*Some people had money... You have money, and I don't. I have to buy the ticket, pay for the visa... some people paid their children who were getting divorced and left children behind. So, you'd go to some Jew who has the money... And he just gives money so – no receipt, no nothing. And then here [in America] you pay back according to the exchange rate you had agreed upon [to the trusted person of the lender]*” (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB). People tend to see this practice in terms of “*support*” and “*rescue*” they received rather than “*usury*,” and stressed the trust upon which such relations were premised: “*over ten heads, over ten hands*⁹⁰ – *people trusted each other*” (Ibid.). However, others mentioned that this trust was not always justified, and that some people earned good money on it (JEES_064_GK).

And yet with all that, my informants generally agreed that in the Soviet time there was no direct connection between the accumulation of money and emigration: until early 1970s emigration was problematic to begin with (e.g. JEES_097_AS, JEES_131_AR, JEES_128_SP), and then there were drastic limitations on how much money emigrants were allowed to take along (400 or 500 dollars per family in 1980s (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB)).⁹¹ In such a situation having too much money was

⁹⁰In other words, people would rely on friends of friends, on people whom they did not really know.

⁹¹It is important to mention that possession of foreign currency was considered a crime in the Soviet Union and entailed very real prison terms: “*So, this Yakov Lazarevich spent 5 years in prison because they found dollars in his house... They conducted a search, yes. And they found dollars – now this would be just funny – 200 dollars or something, but at that time it was a lot of money*” (JEES_108_AP). In 1961 an infamous Article 88 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code increased the punishment for possession of foreign currency from 3-15 years to the death sentence (e.g. JEES_020_LL and many others).

“terrible” (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB), since it was very difficult to do anything with it. At times people simply left the money to relatives when they were emigrating: [one of the uncles was very rich] *“When he was leaving [to America] he couldn’t spend all of his money, so in 1970s he left my father 50 thousand rubles”* (JEES_064_GK) – an immense sum at the time.

Money-related considerations briefly described above, although not all of them were characteristic exclusively of Jews, will help pave the way for my further analysis of the Jewish economic niches in Moscow suburbs. In the remaining part of this chapter I will introduce several more discursive strands that will help discuss the “figured world of Jewish economy” as a specific “cultural realm” and “community of practice” (Holland et al 1998: 51, 57) as well as to anticipate various emphases in my informants’ narratives that posit particular sorts of characters and their dealings with one another (Ibid., 59) as well as to the narrators themselves.

“Jewish predisposition towards entrepreneurship”

This is a pervasive motif in all of my interviews; people, whether Jewish or not, no matter whether they themselves engaged in business, endowed Jews with exceptional entrepreneurial savvy as a nearly essentialized ethnic characteristic: *“A Jew was always doing things where one had to spin around. To gain somebody’s confidence, to establish connections, to do three things at a time: to talk on the phone, to write out a document, and to calculate, ‘how much will I have from the deal’”* (JEES_022_LG); [Jews have] *“more energy, then faster thinking in assessing the situation and making a conclusion. A Jew will get through everywhere, will do everything, will get everything. A Jew is sly”* (JEES_003_MM); *“This is an inevitable entrepreneurial vein: as soon as there is some kind of lacuna, some kind of slot that allows for its expression, for the creative entrepreneurship, it certainly gets filled by Jews”* (JEES_024_IB) (also: JEES_107_NL, JEES_052_SU_GK_LL, JEES_052_SU_GK_LL).⁹²

⁹²In the novel by L. Levanda *Confession of a Wheeler-Dealer* published in 1880, “by far the most highly developed portrayal of the St. Petersburg Jewish financial elite,” Mordechai Shmalts, the protagonist, “insists that Jewish commercial ascendancy resulted from “our temperament, our asceticism, our intensive and inexhaustible activity”: While wheeler-dealers of other nationalities are more often than not people with human passions and desires, epicureans easily distracted from business by music, or painting, or women, or horses, dogs, hunting, sports, card

Often Jewish predisposition towards entrepreneurship was given a genetic explanation: “*This is the experience of lengthy survival... because they were always in such situations when they had to get out of a scrape to survive physically. This exists on the genetic level*” (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB); “*Nature taught us this [to be resourceful], because there were so many Jewish diasporas, so we evolved... Q: So, you think this is preserved on the level of genes? A: Certainly. Preserved and gets augmented... This is genetics. Q: So, these are some special different genes? A: Naturally! By way of selection. This is... The Torah does not reject this*” (JEES_118_MR_OR) (also: JEES_050_LL, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_034_EK_AB).

One can recall that this kind of “genetic” reading had an important precedent in the beginning of the 20th c. discourse on “racial Jewishness,” which, even though its proponents tried to evade the “anthropological notion of race,” failed to fully escape the “racial” component in the traditional sense of the word, i.e. as the “shared physical traits and notion of blood” (Hoffman 2005: 69). The emergence of this discourse – which was not limited to prerevolutionary Russia only – was provoked by the large-scale modernization processes that created the situation where Judaism could no longer serve the universal framework of the Jewish identity. In search for alternative identitarian features, the “racial residue,” primarily that of “shared blood,” remained then an irreducible component of the secular Jewish identity. One may argue that the present-day genetic explanations of complex social phenomena may have something in common with the identity search a hundred years ago as a reflection of the “post-traditional,” post-Holocaust Jewish condition.

One particular quality seen as decisive of successful entrepreneurship is the intellectual ability to work with information that, again, may be seen as a genetic Jewish quality, simultaneously denying this ability to the non-Jews: [making money requires] “*a certain cognitive culture, because first of all one has to invent a certain scheme, a construction that would work... One had to come up with the idea of how to get the materials, how to realize them. Ability to arrange things...*” (JEES_064_GK); “*Jews can*

games – we Jewish wheeler-dealers are neither fascinated nor distracted by anything not directly related to business” (Nathans 1999: 120).

find their way in business very quickly. And, obviously, they get in the know much faster than anybody else, their system of information works very well... This is the experience accumulated over decades, centuries... Q.: You mean, genetically? A.: Genetically, genetically, genetically (JEES_028_NG_ES); "...it's the same as chess playing – calculating variants in advance" (JEES_013_IS_AH), "They had a good kop."⁹³ This is on the genetic level" (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB) (also: JEES_128_SP, JEES_088_EK, JEES_060_TZ, JEES_032_AB, JEES_086_AR).

Information in the Soviet “planned” economy indeed played a crucial role, both for ordinary consumers and for people professionally involved in the sphere of production and distribution. Knowledge of where one can officially purchase or non-officially “get” things was supposed to be a prerogative of the top economic administrative organs, whereas “voluntary horizontal exchange” between the actual producers was to if not fully suppressed, but at least strictly supervised from above (see: Hedlund 2011: 95). Even though a large army of “planners” was mobilized for the “scientific calculation” of demand and supply, which included formulation of the “rational norms of consumption” of all goods and services by all different groups of the Soviet population, this activity seems to have been doomed to failure from the start: even Soviet economists themselves had to admit that such factors as “historically formed habits of consumption” or “cultural level of population” had to be removed from these calculations for the sheer impossibility of accounting for them (e.g. Levin & Yarkin 1984: 255-259).

In a short but provocative article Clifford Geertz focuses on the phenomenon of the bazaar, which, he argues, “becomes, like the word market itself, as much an analytic idea as the name of an institution” (Geertz 1978: 29). What constitutes the core of Geertz’ argument, and what is simultaneously instrumental to my analysis of the Soviet economy, is the idea that in the “bazaar” type of economy information, although “maldistributed and inefficiently communicated” (Ibid.), presents the largest value for the participants, so that possession of information about who owes what and at what

⁹³‘Head’ (Yiddish).

price things are offered in different segments of the bazaar becomes as much an asset as the goods themselves.

Within all the economic niches I will be discussing in the second part of this work, i.e. small-scale artisanal-like production, trade and junk-yard business, especially in their not-fully-legal part, one was in dire need of information as to where in the first sector of the economic network one can get surplus resources and whom one should talk to in order to obtain them; where, sometimes across a fairly large territory, one can get specific materials or details to fill the gaps created by the official supply agencies; where and how to get better food stuffs to sell in the state store to meet the state target, or how to make sure the due items are delivered in full amount, etc. All this inevitably turned people involved in semi-clandestine production and distribution into information experts par excellence, or, to use the Geertzian expression, perfect “bazaari” (Geertz 1978: 31). In addition, the absolute value of personal “connections” for establishment and maintenance of “grooved channels [of] clientilization” (Ibid., 30) turned them into horizontal networking agents as well – something that the state would want to suppress if this had only been possible.

“Jewish work ethic”?

Responses to questions about “Jewish predisposition to entrepreneurship” included a number of ethical statements related to Jewish value orientations *vis-à-vis* various economic choices, individual and collective virtues exercised in operations of production and exchange and the Jewish “honor code” in relation to other Jewish and non-Jewish economic actors. Altogether, these statements constitute what may be called the “Jewish work ethic” as a system situated in specific Soviet realities.

One of the most prominent concepts in this group is the concept of “honesty.” In the Soviet era it had two particular embodiments; the first one concerned relations of individuals to the state and its institutions, while the second concerned individuals’ relations to other individuals. The notion of “being completely honest” would vary depending on a particular context within which the interaction takes place. In the words of D. Dallin,

“To the average Russian today, the Soviet State is a powerful, impersonal giant. It is strong and rich while he, the poor, miserable citizen, is weak and constantly bedeviled by the wolf at his door. Consequently, two ethical scales exist side by side in Russian life. Dire necessity forces thousands of Russians to evade or break the laws. The number of such law-breakers is large, so large that illegal practices constitute the rule rather than the exception <...> A Russian may violate the laws by selling thousands of rubles worth of government property and think nothing of it. <...> You do not cheat your neighbor that would be unthinkable. But appropriating or diverting a little of the State’s property? Making things a bit easier for yourself and your friends and associates? That is another matter” (Dallin 1949: 679-680).

While the very existence of these two scales might have well been carried over from the earlier past,⁹⁴ drastic discrepancies between the official Soviet ideology and the realities of people’s everyday life only strengthened this “doublethink” that in its turn “gave license” to different sets of practices in public and private spheres of life: “*We were all honest, all kind, all supporting our party... we’re building socialism, we finish building it...’ – and in reality there were lies, deception, dishonesty, hypocrisy, cynicism*” (JEES_001_ER).

Socialist property being “one of the pillars of the Soviet system” (Gorlizki 1999: 1249), taking a share of it was not perceived as morally reprehensive as stealing from other people; often “diverting” of socialist property is described with the use of verbs designating other types of exchange such as *to take*, *to obtain*, *to borrow*, etc. Moreover, one may even speak about the “collective front of people’s solidarity” against the state as the primary owner of economic resources; cf.: “doubtless the most common economic crime in the USSR is stealing from the state, under which we subsume stealing from all official organizations, including collective farms. All sources agree that it is practiced by virtually everyone, takes all possible forms, and varies in scale from the trivial to the regal. All also agree that the

⁹⁴Analysis of linguistic concepts further confirms the existence of different codes of morality and performance depending on the particular context and communicative agents involved, cf.: “Opposition of justice and legality, which is impossible to express in many languages, is self-evident for the Russian language, and is extremely important” (Levontina & Shmelev 2000: 281). The notion of ‘honesty’ is less associated with the field of ‘legality’, but rather with ‘justice’, which possesses not only social, but also spiritual connotations.

In the novel *The Little Golden Calf* by I. Ilf and E. Petrov the protagonist is going through “all the four hundred honest means of obtaining money, and although among them were such gems as the organization of a joint stock company for raising a ship with a cargo of gold bullion that had sunk during the Crimean War from the bottom of the sea, or a large Easter celebration for the benefit of the prisoners of capitalism, or a concession for taking down old store signs, not one of these fitted the given situation. So Ostap had invented the four hundred-and-first method” (Ilf & Petrov 1961: 166), or M. Lermontov’s “honest smugglers” (Lermontov 2001: 69).

public takes it for granted, attaches almost no opprobrium to it – and, on the contrary, disapproves of those who do not engage in it” (Grossman 1977: 29). This would have been the case in the context of everyday life as well in situations directly related to production and distribution; it also seems that this “collective front” grew ever stronger under to reach its peak by the “fully developed” socialism.

Against this background we can see more clearly the motif of “one’s ancestors’ crystal honesty” in relations with the state, which in the interviews was presented as somewhat “pathological”: “*During the siege of Leningrad, the uncle was a drug-store director, yet he never took any drugs home, so his pregnant wife died of hunger*” (JEES_117_YT_IT); “*Father was very honest – working in a bakery, where one was allowed to eat bread on the premises, he never touched it and ate only a herring sandwich brought from home*” (JEES_008_SS). Some of those examples may fall into the category of “ideological poverty”: [Mother] “*was a financial inspector who until 80 years old lived in a communal apartment on the attic. Although she could apply for a room... Many people would say that she was ‘not of this world.’ All other inspectors were always walking around with the bags full*” (JEES_091_IZ_BB) (also: JEES_068_GG, JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_117_YT_IT). What is implicit in such stories is, in my view, a desire, both on the part of the people described and on the part of the present-day informants, to escape the “negative profiling” whereby Jews were associated with deception, monetary dealings, speculation and the like: “*The trouble of Jews was that they cannot be bad. Everybody can be bad, and Jews cannot*” (JEES_013_IS_AH).⁹⁵ In other words, texts like the once quoted above may perhaps be called examples of “narrative hypercorrection.”

As opposed to relations with the state institutions, the main principle of “horizontal” ethic among Jews is seen as a nearly unconditional mutual help: “*All Jews help each other...*” (JEES_128_SP); “*The provincials supported each other*” (JEES_041_MR_LD_LR); “*Jews survived because they would stick to each other <...> This exists on the genetic level, ingrained in the subcortex*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV). This principle is sometimes presented as a specifically Jewish one, contrasted with the desire of the

⁹⁵As a Russian saying goes, “*If a Russian steals something, they say: ‘A thief stole,’ if a Jew steals, they say: ‘A Jew stole.’*”

Russians to live equally poor and unhappy to the point of destroying anybody who would do better:

“There is a joke: A Jew says: ‘Here, I have a little shop, I’m working in it, and everything is fine, and I can help my neighbor, and then we’ll together help Isaac – let him have a chance to work, too. And the Russians would go – ‘Masha, does your husband drink?’ – ‘He does’ – ‘Mine does, too’ – ‘Let’s hook Vasily [a neighbor] to drinking as well!’” (JEES_105_VG) (also: JEES_119_MS_SS).

However, alongside with these general, and perhaps to some extent apologetic representations of Jewish mutual help and honesty towards other Jews, one comes across the motif that may be called “breach of Jewish family solidarity,” frequently concerning injustice committed by one’s greedy relatives. This motif falls in line with a folkloric plot about being deprived of one’s share of discovered treasures, stories of the poor who have to eke out their miserable existence while their relatives are wallowing in money, as well as the punishment incurred upon those who did not want to share. In one story, the aunt of the narrator would not allow other relatives to communicate with the paralyzed grandmother for fear that she would disclose where she had hidden her late husband’s gold; upon her death, the aunt allegedly appropriated the treasure that should have belonged to all family members, and mailed it in a package to the United States, where she was going to emigrate. The package did arrive, but its contents were stolen (JEES_024_IB). In another story, precious stones and golden coins that were accumulated by grandfather, a jeweler, were likewise given to one of the aunts who would not share it with the informant’s family – yet again, the treasure did not bring any good luck to the aunt: all of her family died one after another (JEES_118_MR_OR). The family of another informant had to “*live virtually in a shed,*” while their rich relative in a suburban settlement nearby did not budge an inch to make their life more decent (JEES_083_DT_MK).

None of those such different representations, either “Jewish mutual help” or “breach of family solidarity” should certainly be taken at face value; as with the following notion, that of “trust,” both extremes are consistent with the “figured world” of Jewish economy.

“Trust” is another key concepts frequently invoked by my informants. Usually it is presented as the ideal template in the stories about Jewish economic practices: “*Here, the Torah says that there*

should be a minyan, 10 Jews, and somehow unconsciously... Jews should be together, not separately. A Jew tries to associate with another Jew, and when there is a chance to earn whatever, he doesn't call Petya,⁹⁶ but he says: 'Moishe, Leo, there is a chance to earn something' (JEES_096_EB). Particularly in trade, in the words of another informant, *"there was something like a mutual responsibility and covering up with each other, so they accepted mostly their own people"* (JEES_065_VT_GK). Another person recalled that his uncle would invite mostly his Jewish friends to work in the artel: Q: *Why so?* A: *Because... Trust only your own brother... You would look for people who won't denounce you to the authorities. Because all this was illegal*" (JEES_034_EK_AB)⁹⁷ (also: JEES_020_LL, JEES_028_NG_ES, JEES_028_NG_ES, JEES_044_LG_IA, JEES_092_NB, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_113_IB, JEES_119_MS_SS, JEES_131_AR). In a smaller community like the ones I will be discussing further in this work, ethnic trust as such could often be augmented through kinship relations and membership in a local Jewish community: [Jews involved in illegal business] *"had kinship ties, like, 'our grandfathers were relatives' <...> For instance, I decided to open an underground workshop – whom shall I tell about this first? To whoever I know better. And who do I know better? Jews... Who I know won't let me down, whose character I know <...> Especially if it's illegal, I'd much more prefer... my circle. This happens somehow unconsciously... for me to be assured..."* (JEES_096_EB).

A specific group of texts refers to a special honor code among Jews involved in illegal production, for instance, when one member of the clandestine group would keep the common bank until the rest would return back from prison and would not spend anything for his own needs – *"honesty to the point of craziness,"* as his daughter defined it (JEES_123_EO), or else when upon the death of the previous head of the office, the lion's share of the illegally generated income would be given to the new boss, even though he was not aware about the practice; the father of the informant who performed this generous act was later publically praised by the highly satisfied new boss as *"an honest and decent*

⁹⁶Short for Peter, a typically non-Jewish name.

⁹⁷Cf.: *"Az a Yid vet Yiden nit aroisgeben': a Jew will not denounce [other] Jews"* (Yiddish) (Pinkus 1971: 45).

person” and appointed for the position of the trade union committee of the storage unit (JEES_059_IV, JEES_073_IV) (also: JEES_113_IB, JEES_065_VT_GK, JEES_131_AR).

In other words, in certain realms such as (semi)clandestine entrepreneurship “Jewishness” could be seen as an asset, signaling both initial possibilities and additional opportunities. Often a person would be taken into “business” not because he or she had skills indispensable for its development, but because he or she was Jewish (and also, perhaps, a distant relative of somebody who was already in that business). The crucial thing here was the trust to “one’s own,” in its own turn based on the special socio-political “slot” that Jews were put in under the Soviet regime as well as the shared ethnic memory of collective survival in Russia at different historical periods in the past.⁹⁸

Importantly enough, the practices based on trust would not result in emergence of exclusively Jewish economic niches, or, in other words, would not create the situation of “economic tribalism” (Baron & Kahan 1976: xi). The first reason for this was that any economic enterprise, however small, required efforts of a fairly large number of people not only in production, but also in the selling of goods: *“purely ethnic business was rare, because any business required marketing of the product. And marketing cannot be ethnically colored... Each clandestine producer thought that the wider the range of consumers, the more profitable it is”* (JEES_020_LL). The second reason was more political: a large concentration of Jews in any particular sphere or organization would immediately attract attention “from above.” Besides, non-Jews were trusted, too – especially when they had a vested interest in the semi-legal business operations: [Jews were] *“the brain center, and to live at ease, it was necessary to let others earn, too. Non-Jews. I think this is also a sign of intelligence”* (JEES_028_NG_ES).

Paradoxically enough, even such a paradigmatic Jewish ethnic occupation as baking of matzo, which was more often than not done in secret, gave a chance to earn extra money to a fairly large number of

⁹⁸In one case a person was claimed to make distinctions across ethnic lines in her small-scale usurer business: *“She was lending money only to the Russians, with a small interest... Her consciousness didn’t allow her to charge interest on the money lent to Jews, and about the Russians she used to say ‘They oppress us, and I will oppress them’”* (JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

non-Jews: “Vladimir would hire goyim [for illegal matzo baking], but generally offered an opportunity to earn money for his own” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV) (also: JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_097_AS).⁹⁹

As is the case with “honesty to one’s own,” representations of Jewish trust to each other were offset by a number of texts about “Jewish trust betrayed,” when Jews denounced other Jews to the Soviet authorities. This could happen in the context of competition among Jewish store managers for the scarce “funds” allocated to their stores, so some of them were outbidding the goods paying the deliverers on the top, which caused scandals among other managers (JEES_097_AS), or reported one employee to the police for making money “on the side,” while the whole personnel was engaged in the practice on a large scale (JEES_086_AR). One person who was clandestinely producing matzo in a Moscow suburban settlement is suspected of notifying the police about the other group of Jews involved in the same business, i.e. competitors – the latter were put into prison for two years (JEES_097_AS) (also: JEES_073_IV, JEES_086_AR, JEES_100_MZ, JEES_121_FZ, JEES_120_GZ).¹⁰⁰

Again, images of “Jewish trust” vis-à-vis the stories about this trust betrayed, should not be seen as mutually exclusive; whether portrayed more along more “positive,” or more “negative” lines, they are “recognized” as Jewish actors within the collective cultural imagery of post-war Soviet Union, or the historically specific “figured world of the Soviet economy.” Seemingly opposing features ascribed to Jewish practices in the sphere of economic exchange testify to the complexity of this cultural type, which works against both “positive” and “negative” representations.

In his article “Beautiful Jew, the Moneylender,” A. Morris-Reich, analyzing the process whereby G. Simmel “rehabilitated the stereotype of the Jew,” suggests that precisely due to the connection of

⁹⁹The situation could be similar in the former shtetls, e.g. Tul_05_006_FP.

¹⁰⁰In a very telling example from the Moldovan town Bălți, when a clandestine entrepreneur got imprisoned, the authorities wrote a letter to his wife, as if he wrote it himself, asking her to give the authorities all the money hidden in their house in exchange for his freedom; since the letter was written in Yiddish, she jumped at the bait: “*she had such a strong faith that no Jew can commit such a mean act... or maybe it was just her stupidity... but she never suspected that the note could have been falsified.*” The money, 400,000 rubles, was indeed transferred to the authorities, yet it is highly doubtful that the prisoner was released as a result (Băl_011_041). In other words, the significance of the ethnic factor should not be seen as absolute; after all, Jews were heavily represented in the Soviet political organs, especially in the interwar period.

Jews and money on the level of cultural stereotyping, the Jewish moneylender is “beautiful” in its “existential authenticity,” or the correspondence to the “specific (stereo)type” (Morris-Reich 2003: 138). As I will try to show in the second part of my work, within the realities of the planned Soviet economy the stereotype of the “entrepreneurial Jew,” with all possible “negative” and “positive” characteristics ascribed to it, may also be seen as culturally “authentic” not only through the connection with money, but in a broader sense, through their performance in the Soviet economy, including its clandestine sphere. Ascribed Jewish characteristics such as “predisposition towards entrepreneurship,” specific collective values related to the realm of economic exchange, and certainly, various practices related to money (“making” it, accumulating it, transferring it into “riches,” legalizing it in various ingenious ways, spending it in specific ways, using it to facilitate legal and illegal economic transactions, etc.)¹⁰¹ create a specific cultural slot, which may not be occupied by other economic actors. As I tried to show in the previous chapter on “varieties of Soviet Jewishness,” this slot was not the only one, and its formation was to a significant degree determined by the geographical factor.

Among other things, geography implied distance from the Soviet political power: “After the advent of the Soviet regime, Jewish entrepreneurial money had a different “life” in the center and in the periphery... In the center, in a big city, the power required larger degree of loyalty of the Soviet citizens, as compared to the periphery... Entrepreneurship in the periphery enjoyed the tacit support of the community as a whole, and supported this community in its own turn” (Hakkarainen 2013a: 260-262). In the next chapter I will move to the specific geographical setting of Moscow suburbs that were neither “center,” nor “periphery,” to discuss how it produced a particular configuration of Jewish economic practices, conferring upon those involved in these practices a specific Soviet Jewish identity.

¹⁰¹About money in particular, one of Leo Tolstoy’s character famously said, “Women are exactly like the Jews, who by their financial power to compensate for the oppression to which they’re subjected” (Tolstoy 2008: 120).

CHAPTER THREE

“THE SOVIET JEWISH PALE”: MALAKHOVKA AND SALTYKOVKA

“A Galuth Jew woke up within me – I felt impelled to get going, to get going, to get going” (Kotik 2012: 84)

Prologue: Chaim Goldovsky comes to Malakhovka

In 1933, 48-year old Chaim Goldovsky and his wife, 40-year old Sarah Goldovsky finally yielded to the persuasions of Chaim’s sister who by that time already resided in Moscow, and left their Ukrainian home place called Zvenyhorodka to come to the capital of the new Soviet state. Unlike many Jews who left the Pale for large Russian cities in the 1920s and 1930s, the couple neither had any intentions to “make a new start” elsewhere, or any particular skills that would be in any demand by the big city. We do not know what Chaim did for a living prior to the revolution, what he thought of the new regime, or what were his means of sustenance in the first years of the Soviet rule. We only know that in 1933 Chaim and Sarah, like many other shtetl Jews in Ukraine, found themselves hostages of the political and economic conditions created by this new power: they were fleeing *Holodomor*, the Ukrainian hunger of early 1930s “created” in order to “tame” potentially insurgent regions of the new Soviet Empire (see, for instance: Klid & Motyl 2012). This is not to say that life in Moscow, especially for the new internal immigrants, was, to use a Jewish expression, “milk and honey” – and yet, as Chaim’s sister insisted in her letter, “*while our life is not a piece of sugar, in comparison to yours, it’s better – so, come*” (JEES_130_DT). So the couple, already not in their prime youth, moves to Moscow.

Even though hard-pressed for physical survival, Chaim did not wish to surrender things he grew up with in his Ukrainian homeland: observance of Sabbath and other Jewish holidays, kosher food, synagogue community life – things that were basic for his understanding of himself as a Jewish man,

head of the family. He was not, for instance, prepared to take “*any kind of job*” (Ibid.), even a position in a Moscow theater: it was a secular institution, where one had to work on Saturdays.

And yet, although Chaim lefts a meaningful Jewish world behind, he succeeded in finding a niche of his own in the new place. By the beginning of 1930s Moscow had already become a new home for many former inhabitants of the shtetl, Chaim’s sister being one of them. These were different people – highly motivated youth who became students in various higher educational institutions of the capital, professionals who were in high demand by the new socialist state, people serving in various Soviet political “organs,” etc. Whatever those people’s ideological allegiances by that time, we can safely assume that most of them had a functional knowledge of Yiddish (even if they preferred not to use it as much and/ or publically), possessed fairly vivid memories of their not-so-distant past in the shtetl, and – as a part and parcel of those – a set of ethnic sentiments that in spite of the new egalitarian ethics and rhetoric made them sensitive to the issue of “one’s Jewish own.”

In other words, upon coming to Moscow Chaim discovered a Jewish milieu, and got to know Jews like himself: “*they were getting to know each other, one through another...*” (Ibid.). It is from this milieu, these “Jewish connections,” that help came when he most needed it: he was offered a position of a guard at a Jewish cemetery in the settlement of Malakhovka, about 30 kilometers away from Moscow. Far from being a Klondike, this position fully suited Chaim: being a cemetery guard he could continue observing Jewish rites and yet not die of hunger. At the time, the cemetery was very small; it belonged to the Jewish community of Malakhovka, officially registered in 1932.¹⁰²

The story of Chaim Goldovsky introduces a number of important points relevant for this work: it exhibits the clash between the Soviet anti-religious ethos, and the individual and collective identity of those who were socialized within the religion-oriented tradition and were not ready to give it up, whether altogether, or in part. It stresses Jewish networks that individuals resorted to on various

¹⁰²The first Jewish burials at Malakhovka cemetery appear in 1920s; as their number grows, the Jewish plot receives its status of a Jewish cemetery to later become “the second most important Jewish cemetery in Moscow vicinities” (Charny 2002b).

occasions, including cases when these individuals could or would not fully accept Soviet social and ideological conventions. It presents a characteristic trajectory from the shtetl to a big (in this case, the biggest) Soviet city, yet with an important shift back to the suburbs.

With all that, Chaim's story introduces the main setting of this dissertation: the "circle" of suburban settlements around Moscow densely populated by Jews from the early years of the Soviet rule until the collapse of the USSR, and to some extent even until now.

This work is about Soviet Jews who came from the Pale in 1920-30s, and who, whether on their free will, or not, ended up in the city's suburbs, where they created a "Jewish life" not unlike that in their old home places. It's about people who felt themselves Jewish and tried to live a "Jewish life" in as much as they could imagine it, and in as much as they had access to things Jewish. It's about people who placed a large value on relations with one's own – and yet not to the exclusion of their non-Jewish neighbors. And most importantly, this book is about those who, knowing through their own experience that life was not "a piece of sugar," tried to make it a little better by creatively accommodating to various constraints of the Soviet "planned economy."

Chaim Goldovsky and his wife Sarah lived in Malakhovka till 1959, when their little house on the cemetery premises was burnt during the pogrom; Sarah died in the fire, while Chaim survived and lived for another year (see: Pinkus 1988: 231; *Sovetskie evrei pishut...* 1993: 420-421, 479-480, Synagogue fired... 1959; Malakhovka – A Soviet Admission 1960). Their grave, at the very entrance of the cemetery, has a special significance for the local Jewish memory.



III. 1: Grave of Chaim and Sarah Goldovsky, Malakhovka cemetery. 2014, photo by the author.

Formation of the circle of Jewish settlements around Moscow

“My family came to Moscow to survive”
(JEES_101_ArV_AnV)

Jews started moving to the Moscow suburbs as early as the second half of the 19th c.; primarily these were people who could not get into the quota for official permission to obtain the right of residence in the city itself: *“Jews would settle here [in Saltykovka] in the end of the 19th c. Those who were not allowed to live in Moscow”* (JEES_074_GR); *“Jews live here [in Saltykovka] since 1875... There was a bunch of Jews here, and a synagogue. The first one burnt down before the revolution”* (JEES_059_IV); *“In 1866 or 1868 the road for prince Saltykov was being built, and the railway station. Jews started settling around this station – they were cabmen, shoemakers, tailors... Some had their booths in Moscow, but made shoe polish and shoe laces here”* (JEES_073_IV). According to the Jewish Encyclopedia published in 1911, the number of Jews living in urban settlements near Moscow amounted to 444 (340 men and 104 women), whereas by 1880 it reached 782 in urban settlements, and 193 – in rural settlements (*Moskovskaya gubernija* 1911: 340). By the most part, these people were “artisans and traders of modest means,” living “primarily along major routes and railways, which made

it easier for them to get to Moscow, and where there were better opportunities for trade due to a large number of travelers.” Saltykovka was among such places; the local Jewish community was established here as early as 1879 (Snopov 2002: 73).

Expulsion of Jews from Moscow in 1892, when certain categories of people who prior to this had the legal rights to reside in the city (e.g. Jewish artisans, retired soldiers and their families, somewhat later – medical students, merchants of the 1st guild, see: Gimpel’son & Bramson 1914: 189-196, Vermel’ 2003: 58-64, Kupovetsky 1987: 63-65, Klempert 2002: 100-101, Snopov 2002: 74-75) is often seen by my informants as the key event that precipitated a sizeable transition of the Jewish population to Moscow suburbs: “*When they were thrown away from Moscow, they tried to settle nearby, so that it would be faster to travel to the city*” (JEES_131_AR); “*They started evicting Jews 20 miles away from Moscow. And so, Malakhovka, Saltykovka – this is like the Pale of settlement*” (JEES_057_MA_DG_IV) (also: JEES_073_IV, JEES_075_AS). There is, however, no reliable statistics on how many former Jewish Muscovites indeed ended up in the city suburbs rather than moving back to the Pale or abroad; we only know that after the onslaught upon the Jewish religious institutions in the city, “more religious communities were left on the city outskirts and in the nearest suburbs of the Moscow province,” and that “many Jews who had arrived [from the Pale] illegally were settling here” (Snopov 2002: 75).

From the Pale to Moscow suburbs: patterns of Jewish migration

Several waves of internal Jewish migration from the Pale, abolished in 1917, contributed to the formation of “circle” of Jewish settlement around Moscow. Below, I will describe these waves in more detail.

Wave 1: 1915-1916.

With the beginning of World War I and the massive flight of the Jewish population from the front line territories, “the Pale de facto got broken” (Vermel’ 2003: 44). Thousands of Jews inundated Russia’s internal provinces and large cities. In the words of one of my informants, it was “*a true Jewish exodus*” (JEES_082_LV). Moscow played a special role for the Jewish refugees from the battle zone:

while Petrograd concentrated its war-time efforts on the regions of the migration, Moscow Jewish aid organizations overtook the responsibility for job placement of the refugees in the central provinces of Russia, and Moscow itself became the city of the most important Jewish refugee destination (Freitag 2004: 69-70).

True, among the new Jewish Muscovites there were people of substantial means – merchants, traders, industrialists (Vermel’ 2003: 117), yet the majority were badly in need of food, accommodation, and work; multiple Jewish charity organizations and private persons joined in to alleviate the difficulties of the newcomers (Ibid., 117-118; Lobovskaya 2003: 45-47). Originally, the employment situation in the city was rather benign: “urban economy flourished, labor was in demand,” and up to 92% of all refugees who applied for jobs were employed; however, by 1916, with the increase of the Jewish migration flow, “job placement became a more difficult matter” (Freitag 2004: 73).

However, as the war was going on, Jews were “traditionally” scapegoated for the country’s defeats, both military and economic. Accusations of espionage for Germany brought about forced deportation of the Jewish population from the front line territories.¹⁰³ A food crisis was attributed to the fact that Jews “speculate, raise prices, hide metal coins, transport gold in coffins, etc.” – which, among other things, produced spontaneous raids in Moscow, when Jews were detained for no particular reason (Vermel’ 2003: 118-119).

Formation of large Soviet urban culture in 1920-30 clearly had a “Jewish accent.” Jews arriving from the former Pale into large Russian cities became the “largest” of “ethnic minorities,” and simultaneously the most “visible” one. The cultural encounter between the newcomers and the local city population might have been not unproblematic:

It is natural that people in big cities should have this premonition of danger since the proportion between the number [of Jews] and the population is not at all maintained in the machinery of government, in the setup of everyday life, nor yet in other spheres... The point is not antisemitism, the

¹⁰³In detail about forced deportations of Jews during World War I see: Lohr 2001.

point is that there is an increase in national discontent, national sensitivity, vigilant attitude on the part of other national groups. <...> The masses say that there are too many Jews in Moscow. Bear this in mind but don't call it anti-Semitism (Schwarz 1948: 41-42).¹⁰⁴

With all these factors present, and most importantly, since officially the Pale had not been yet abolished, Jewish organizations started allocating Jewish refugees “in the outskirts of Moscow and its suburbs – Malakhovka, Saltykovka, Perlovka, Maryina Roshcha, Davydkovo, Cherkizovo, Koptevo” (Lobovskaya 2003: 46). Refugees themselves often “tried to get settled in the suburbs, where the control of authorities was, as usual, weaker” (Snopov 2002: 76). Although many of these places were dacha settlements, i.e. intended for summer sojourn of the city dwellers,¹⁰⁵ “the majority of the houses were fit for winter living” as well (Ibid., 79), so the newcomers could rent rooms from the owners year-long.¹⁰⁶

Wave 2: 1920-30s.

During this time, when the Pale was already no more, Jews were fleeing the civil war and pogroms, the calamitous economic situation in the shtetls precipitated by the new economic regime inaugurated by the Soviet authorities, as well as the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s. (e.g. JEES_106_EU, JEES_089_AS_NB, JEES_057_MA_DG_IV etc.). By 1923 “there were 87,975 Jews officially registered in Moscow, with a considerable part of it settled in the nearest suburbs of the capital” (Lobovskaya 2003: 52). By 1926 this number grew even larger: “131,244 in Moscow and 11,124 in Moscow province: an increase of 1.5 times in the city and by 5.5 times in the province” (Snopov 2002: 76).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴One semi-fictional evidence occurs in the novel by L. Ulitskaya, where the protagonist refers in his letter of 1916 to the concerns of some old city dwellers that Moscow is losing its authentic image because the refugees (i.e. Jews) are spoiling the Russian language, particularly, confusing the right stresses (Ulitskaya 2015: 418).

¹⁰⁵On the concept and history of the Russian *dacha* (suburban summer housing) see: Lovell 2003 and Malinova-Tziafeta 2013.

¹⁰⁶Jews were certainly not the only migrants at that period. On the large-scale population migration after the revolution and the Civil War and the state attempts to organize migration along “scientific” and simultaneously “socialist” lines, see, e.g., Buckley 1995: 901.

¹⁰⁷The dramatic increase of the Jewish population in Moscow found its reflection in the folklore of the time. One joke of 1926 portrays a group of Jews on a train bound to Moscow; one boasts the goods he is going to sell, the other

In the early 1920s there was a considerable outflow of non-Jewish Moscow residents from the city, driven by drastically insufficient food provision, energy crisis and contagious diseases. Most fled to the rural areas, whether they had relatives there, or not – there one could secure at least the minimal livelihood off the land. Jews, on the other hand, flooded into the large cities, which considerably “affected Moscow’s ethnic balance” – in particular, the percentage of the Jewish population of the city grew to “2.7 percent,” thus becoming its “second most numerous group” (Colton 1995: 124-125).¹⁰⁸ When the non-Jewish population would return after several years, they would find a lot of Jews occupying various official positions in the Soviet apparatus; this would be one of the reasons for the growth of anti-Semitic feelings in the city.

The professional profile of Jews who settled on the outskirts of Moscow and in the city vicinities was distinct from that of those who found their niche in Moscow proper in that “artisans and traders were a notable group here, although there were some representatives of other groups, e.g. white-collar professions, here as well” (Snopov 2002: 79). In some way, professional composition of the new metropolitan Jewish population tended to evince more “traditional” features in as much as it moved further from the city center in terms of their permanent dwelling. This concerned not only occupational specializations, but the lesser degree of assimilation in terms of the language, habitual way of life, religion.

talks about some projects he is going to implement, the third one says, he is visiting his relatives in the city. The turn comes to an old Jewish woman; she has neither goods to sell, nor relatives or friends in Moscow. “So, why are you going there?” ask her travel companions. She goes: “You see, I’m an old person, it’s time for me to die, so I want to die there, among my own” (Ljubchenko 2003: 183). Another joke of 1929 gives an advice “how to stop pedestrian traffic in Moscow, on Tverskaya street”: “One has to shout loudly: ‘Rabinovich!!!’ – and most of the pedestrians will stop and turn your direction” (Ibid.).

¹⁰⁸An important topic related to this is the patterns of distribution of the Jewish population in the Soviet Moscow, first because any compact ethnic enclave demonstrates different socio-economic and cultural patterns as opposed to districts with ethnically mixed population, and secondly, because the borderline between the city itself and its suburbs was changing over time, so that former suburban settlements would get incorporated into the urban precincts. However, given the space constraints I will leave this topic for future research. On the compact settlement of the Jewish population inside Moscow in various historical periods see: Vermel’ 2003: 29-43; Gessen 2003, Marek 2003, Marik 2003, Kupovetsky 1987: 62-63; Snopov 2002: 78-81; Lobovskaya: 2003: 52-53, Freitag 2004: 103-116, 242.

In his book “Laborer Jews in the Struggle Against Religion” (1931) A. Kirzhnits mentions, alongside the old centers of “Chassidic obscurantism” such as Medzhybizh,¹⁰⁹ Cherkizovo (a Moscow suburb then, later a city district), as the place of high concentration of artisans¹¹⁰ who are still involved in old “non-socialist” practices, primarily, religious observance (Kirzhnits 1931: 8). Small wonder that Bolshevik anti-religious (anti-Judaism) efforts were targeted primarily at such geographically marginal artisan/ trader communities as Cherkizovo, where, for instance, a treaty was signed, between the activists of Central Jewish Workers’ Club and the locals cooperated artisans to oust the remnants of religious observance (Ibid., 38).



Ill. 2: Anti-religious meeting in Cherkizovo (1929)

The text below the picture reads: “Jewish laborers are engaged in a strenuous fight against religious holidays. A crowded anti-religious meeting was held in the settlement of Cherkizovo on October 4. The picture shows the anti-religious staging during the Cherkizovo meeting.” (The vertical part of the Yiddish slogan on the photo is a popular Soviet call to fulfill the 5-year plan in 4 years, the left part of the slogan, although it is not seen in full, clearly juxtaposes religion that “deters from...” (Yiddish: “*religie farhalt...*”) and socialism that, on the contrary, allows to move forward).

Source: *Bezbozhnik*, № 22, November 1929, P. 7.

¹⁰⁹A town in South-Western Ukraine, birthplace of the Jewish Hasidic mystical religious movement (in more detail see: Rosman 2008: 1143-1144).

¹¹⁰In March, 1928 the number of Jewish artisans in Cherkizovo counted 2 thousand people (Bobovich 1928: 6).

Moscow vs. Moscow suburbs: choice of residence and its constraints

The decision to stay in the suburbs rather than in the city itself was not always a free choice. The first major factor was the enormous proportions of the housing crisis in Moscow; while in 1912 the population of the city counted slightly over 1,5 million people, by 1926, after the war-related decrease, it was already over 2 million, to reach 3,5 million by 1936, and 4 million in 1939 (Vydro 1976: 12-13).¹¹¹ In 1920s housing constraints made even some native-born Muscovites rent rural houses and building annexes outside of Moscow to live there permanently; such people were living in the suburbs not only in summer but in winter as well, commuting by railroad to the city and back every day to reach their work place (Razgon 1996: 23-24).

Some of my older informants remember the housing conditions they or their relatives lived in when they initially came to Moscow: “*Moscow was monstrously overcrowded – I lived in a communal apartment with 22 other people*” (JEES_081_VV); “*We lived in a communal apartment in Moscow, and had 50 neighbors. A large number of stoves in the kitchen, and all women cooking at the same time*” (JEES_121_FZ);¹¹² “*The older brother of my father’s lived in Moscow, there were six of them, and they had 2 rooms in the basement; each spring the rooms got flooded with water*” (JEES_096_EB) (also: JEES_099_IK, JEES_126_VS). The situation of the newcomers was even more precarious: while “crowds of people [were] crammed in places where one just can’t live,” they saw “people from other parts of the country coming here and occupying apartment space” (Schwarz 1948: 41). Among other things, this gave rise to popular anti-Semitic sentiment: “Jews were charged with invading the larger cities and aggravating the severe housing emergency. Complaints about “overcrowding of the cities” were combined with sundry charges aiming at Jewish “invasion” and “intrusion” (Ibid., 43).

¹¹¹This crisis was already acutely felt before the revolution: a 1911 brochure advertising houses with land plots in Malakhovka opens with a statement that “the apartment problem in Moscow has reached the dimensions of public disaster due to the steady growth of Moscow’s population... and does not stand a chance of being solved for the benefit of the tenants” (*Malakhovka i Kasimovsky poselok* 1911: 1).

¹¹²On the Soviet communal apartments see: Utekhin 2001.

While the “territorial dimension” was crucial for Jews in pre-revolutionary Russia owing to the existence of the Pale (Nathans 1999: 107), under the Soviet regime this dimension preserved its importance due to various political restrictions not necessarily targeted at Jews only, but nevertheless shaping their residential and migration choices.

The most pressing of these restrictions came with the passportization process that started in 1932, the major aim of which was “alleviating part of the stress placed on these two cities and encouraging the development of other urban areas” (Buckley 1995: 902). More specifically, introduction of the passport system aimed at deporting people whom the authorities viewed as “unreliable” (such as former “exploiters,” *déclassé* people and other “alien class elements”) from large cities,¹¹³ as well as to curb massive flows of people coming from the provinces to these large cities, especially after the beginning of collectivization in 1928 (in more detail see: Baiburin, *in press*). In the socialist state migration, rather than being “subject to the whim of the individual or the market,” was to be “scientifically managed” by the state (Buckley 1995: 904, 896).

One of the most important marks in the new Soviet passport became that of police registration (Russ. *propiska*), which largely bound people to a particular place where they were lived. *Propiska* gave one the right to seek employment in the place of registration, to use medical and postal services, to send children to kindergartens and schools, to be entitled to food coupons, etc. – all of which consequently turned into special “privileges” for the owners of the “right” registration. Without the “registration” stamp in the passport one had to leave the place.

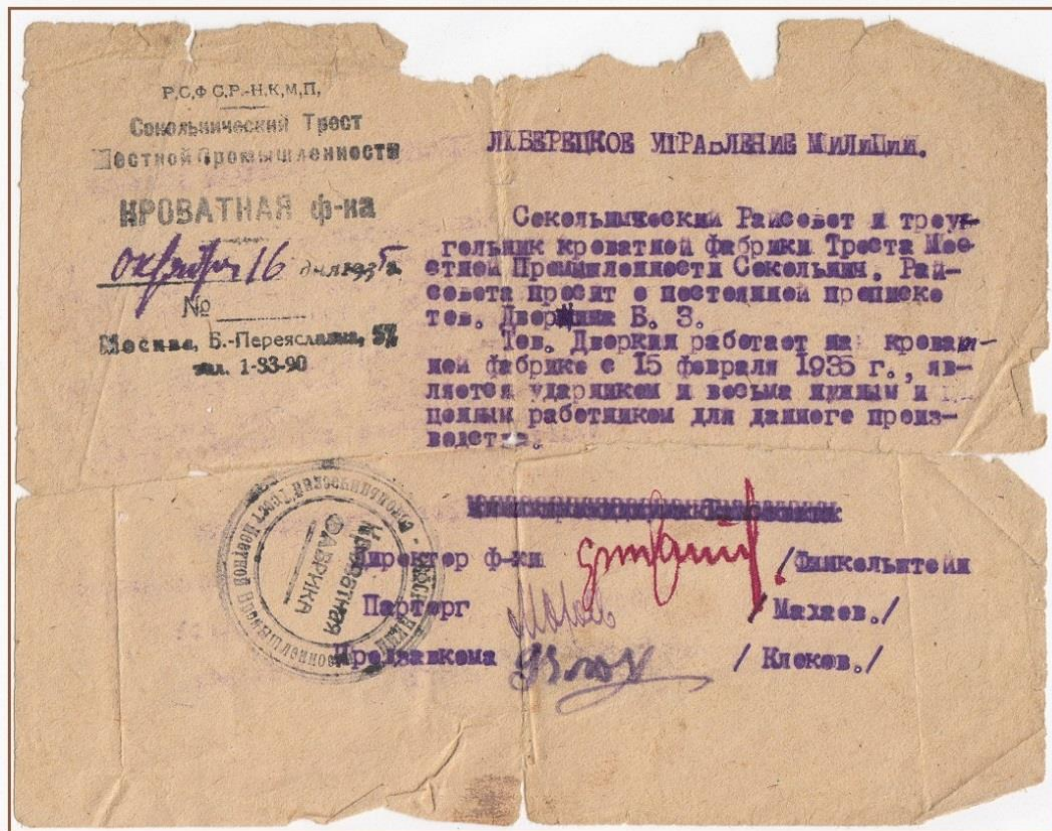
The most important requirement for one seeking registration was the presence of the “dwelling space” (Russ. *zhilproshchad'*), which could be a private rural house, an apartment in the city, or, more often than not, a room in a communal apartment.¹¹⁴ Clearly, the absolute majority of the Jewish

¹¹³Religious leaders, for example, were prohibited from living in large cities (see: Osipova 2002) – which was important against the fact that Malakhovka was a major Chassidic center.

¹¹⁴In his book *Punishment by Housing*, M. G. Meerovich writes: “Housing [was] the main tool in the hands of the Soviet regime to regulate people’s behavior... The power [was] constantly directing its efforts towards binding

newcomers did not have this official “dwelling space,” which made the possibility of getting permanent Moscow “registration” quite problematic. In the suburbs, however, the situation was somewhat easier: here they could temporarily rent a room from a private homeowner and get some kind of a job: “The population of suburbs grew even larger in 1933, after the introduction of the institute of *propiska*, which made the entry to Moscow severely limited” (Snopov 2002: 80-81). Quoting, in 1939, an immigrant Jew coming from the USSR to France, S. Pozner writes:

“...there are not less than 400,000 Jews in Moscow. This number would have been larger hadn’t it been for the strictly implemented rules on the right of residence in Moscow... according to which the residence permission is given only the workers, white-collar employees, and their parents who are unable to work. Since these rules are not applied to the vicinities of Moscow, which are connected with the city by multiples routes, a large number of Jews lives now around the capital, 50-60 km. away from it; they spent the whole day in Moscow and returned back home only for night. Thus the Jewish population of Moscow actually reaches 500,000 people and is the largest one in Europe” (Pozner 1939: 258).



III. 3: Solicitation to the militia department to provide the permanent police registration (1935).

together a person, the place of his work, and dwelling” <...> “Possession of housing gives the power the possibility to influence those who do not want to submit to the general way of life and labor” (Meerovich 2008: 196, 147).

The text reads: “TO THE LJUBERTSY MILITIA OFFICE. Sokolniki District Council and the triangle¹¹⁵ of the bed factory, Local Industry Trust. The District Council solicits permanent registration for comrade Dvorkin V. Z.

Comrade Dvorkin has worked at the bed factory since Feb. 15, 1935, is a shock-worker, and a very useful and valuable employee for the production process.

Director of the factory [signature] /Finkelshtein

Party organizer [signature] /Malyaev/

Trade union organizer [signature] /Klokov/

October 16, 1935.

Courtesy of V. Z. Dvorkin’s son.

It is noteworthy that Sokolniki, where Dvorkin works, is a district in Moscow, whereas Ljubertsy is a suburb, where he seeks to obtain registration.

The son of V. Z. Dvorkin particularly drew my attention to the Jewish name of the bed factory director, implying, that he was “helping his own.”

The first place one’s family stayed upon arrival, as well as the search for better living conditions is present in virtually every interview. Difficulties of getting the official permission to stay in Moscow is a frequent element of these stories: [In 1933] “*We were not allowed to live in Moscow – we had to live not even in Moscow region, but in Vladimir region,¹¹⁶ Petushki station. We didn’t have the right to come without propiska, and Moscow region wouldn’t give it to anybody... There were lots of Jews here because Jews couldn’t live in Moscow... they were not granted the propiska*” (JEES_106_EU); “*It was easier to get a hold in the suburbs... to get a propiska in Moscow was difficult*” (JEES_107_NL); “*Our family constantly moved – people wouldn’t rent their apartment for a long time... then we got a permanent propiska... through acquaintances*”¹¹⁷ (JEES_124_MK).

What attracts one’s attention in the stories about how difficult it was for Jews to become official dwellers of Moscow, is the overlap of restrictive discourses: the earlier prohibition for Jews to live outside of the Pale and the near impossibility to move right into the city of Moscow in the 1930s. One can hypothesize that the overlap of these two discourses suggests the presence of a “restrictive meta-narrative” in Soviet Jewish collective memory, in its own turn stemming from state anti-Semitism as

¹¹⁵Three major positions in the organization: director, party organizer, trade union organizer.

¹¹⁶A region bordering Moscow region.

¹¹⁷I.e., “economy of favors,” i.e. in circumvention of the general regulations.

well as general conditions of citizenship in Russia prior and after the revolution. Here are some examples of this overlap: [about Moscow suburbs] *“Well, this was a type of a Pale... well, not precisely like the Pale of Settlement, but... By and large, when Jews were coming to Moscow, they were not given the propiska there... So, these suburbs... it’s like in Ukraine, in Kiev... the district of Podol, the Jewish Podol¹¹⁸ ... here it was the same”* (JEES_086_AR); *“Q: Was it easier to find a place to live in the suburbs of Moscow? A: The Pale... They couldn’t live in Moscow itself. Q: But we are speaking about the Soviet time. A: In the Soviet time this was very expensive [to live in Moscow]”* (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); [responding to the question of Soviet Jewish settlements around Moscow:] *“Yes, yes, yes [Jews lived here]. Only not in Moscow!.. In Moscow, in Petersburg – which Jews were allowed to live there? Merchants of the first guild, retired tsarist soldiers who had served for 25 years, and artisans, the real specialists – yet not anywhere in the city, but in certain areas only... besides, if you want to live in Moscow itself... they either were getting baptized or something...”* (JEES_086_AR).

The second important factor limiting the possibility of settling in Moscow was related to the new system of social statuses introduced by the Bolsheviks, with the differentiating scale of political and general citizen rights associated with them. Depending on the imputed degree of “bourgeois identity,” defined through one’s pre-revolutionary social position, political allegiances and occupation, certain groups of population were denied full social membership under the new rule.

Traditional occupations, characteristic of the majority of the Pale Jews prior to the revolution (trade, commercial mediation, private artisanal production), were not seen as sufficient for full “working-class credentials” (Alexopoulos 2003: 2). Based on the absence of land-related experience and the virtual lack of “true” (industrial) proletariat, the new power saw Jewish collective identity as “alien” to the new regime: “The party leadership did not explicitly associate trading and ethnicity, but the patterns of disenfranchisement make this correlation unmistakable. <...> Anti-capitalist rhetoric often associated the “merchant-thieves” with foreigners and Jews” (Ibid., 57). J. Hessler likewise observes

¹¹⁸Podol is a historical neighborhood of Kiev, a residence of the poor Jewish population engaged in industry and trade.

that during the early Bolshevik anti-trade campaigns “specific ethnic groups... were bound to suffer disproportionately,” and in the former Pale these new policies were often seen as directed specifically against Jews, “against each and every one of the Jewish population, who were all declared to be speculators and marauders” (Hessler 2003: 27). The period of New Economic Policy of 1920s, when many Jews re-opened their old pre-revolutionary businesses or established new ones, only strengthened the association between class and ethnicity: “In many areas a NEP-man had become synonymous with a Jew” (Ball 1987: 99-100). In an article with the telling title “Speculators, swindlers, and other Jews” A. Sloin notes that “The post-revolutionary reconcentration of Jewish actors within the realm of circulation evoked uneasy pre-revolutionary associations between Jews and trade” (Sloin 2010: 105). These associations would soon entail a range of political and social restrictions for large numbers of the Soviet Jewish population.

These restrictions were collectively expressed in the already mentioned term “*lishentsy*,” literally “deprivees,” which, although technically this meant “deprivation of the voting rights,” involved the loss of the “myriad other essential rights as well, such as access to housing, employment, education, medical care, and a ration card for essential food items” (Alexopoulos 2003: 3). In some former shtetls 40-60% of Jews on average were classified as *lishentsy* – a status that was “inherited” by their children as well (Shkol’nikova 1996, Veitzblit 1929: 80). Throughout the existence of this status (it was abolished only in 1936, with the adoption of the new Constitution), the percentage of Jews branded as “*lishentsy*” was higher than in any other ethnic group in the Soviet Union (Budnitsky 2012: 138; Kimerling 1982: 44-45; Ivanovich 2002: 60-61; Estraikh 2004: 200, 205; Zalzman 2006; Zeltser 2001: 29-31; Zeltser 2006: 6); one person characteristically summarized: “*Lishensty, it was like de-kulakization of the Russians*” (JEES_015_RK_SK).

A considerable number of my informants remember various restrictions their families were subjected to on the basis of their *lishentsy* status: [grandfather was a private producer of carbonated water, and as such got the status of *lishenets*] “*Uncle Leo went to Moscow to apply to an institute, but it was impossible – he was a lishenets. Then grandfather transferred the right of ownership for water*

business to my father, so Leo and another brother, Moses, could become students... One had to bring a certificate on the parents' occupation, one had to fill a questionnaire..." (JEES_111_RD); *"My aunt was expelled from the 3d year of the medical school as a daughter of lishenets"* (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); *"Grandfather was a medium-scale businessman, he was engaged in commerce, he financed something... so my father, coming from such a family, he couldn't become a medical student right away, so he first worked as a manual worker for so many years, and then as a 'laborer' was accepted to the institute"* (JEES_098_IF); *"It was impossible for them to find a job, yes... their children couldn't get higher education – it was similar to those coming from noble families"* (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB). Even though after 1936 the status of lishenets technically disappeared, it had a certain power of inertia, and could "echo" in various situations such as career promotion much later; in one case of 1950s, the mother of the informant could become head of a small suburban factory producing musical instruments, yet it was found out that her father *"was a smith, an exploiter. Because a smith can't work without an assistant... So, he was an exploiter, and she couldn't become a party member"* (and consequently, head of the factory) (JEES_110_AK).

One can safely conclude that Soviet strategies of making Jews into Soviet citizens was largely similar to what B. Nathans called "selective integration" exercised by the tsarist regime, "whereby certain categories of "useful" Jews were granted the rights and privileges of their Gentile counterparts according to social estate, including the right to permanent residence outside the Pale of Settlement" (Nathans 2002: 17). In the Soviet case only the "productive" Jewish population, or those who were ready to discard the old "non-productive" way of life could become full-fledged members of the new system. And although a considerable number of those who embraced this offer indeed succeeded in making Soviet careers, sometimes even very impressive ones, this came at the price of full assimilation and loss of ethnic identity – to quote this phrase again, these became *"not Jews at all, [but] Russian intelligentsia"* (JEES_092_NB). The latter certainly meant a novel set of restrictions and regulations – ideological, political, economic, etc. By its selective strategies of acceptance, for Jews and non-Jews alike, the Soviet regime aimed at instilling fear in those who were rejected, and expected unconditional

loyalty on the part of those who were “cleared” of political suspicions. In 1920-30s Jews were presented in both categories; even though the boundaries between them were not cut in stone and eventually the division was altogether abolished, different trajectories along which Jews were becoming Soviet citizens could not be insignificant for the formation of varieties of Jewish collective identity under socialism.

Lishentsy as one of the “stigmatized, “untouchable” groups in the Soviet society” (Fitzpatrick 1993: 755) naturally tried to escape political and social limitations imposed upon them; particularly, many cherished hopes that their “exploiter” background could be hidden or forgotten if they moved to large Russian cities and perhaps even change or modify their names (Razgon 1996: 23, Snopov 2002: 80, Shkol’nikova 1996). In some cases, it was relatives of those deprived of voting rights who would resort to this strategy: *“When grandfather [a lishenets] died, grandmother moved to Moscow to escape associations with him”* (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); *“Older brother and sister of my mother’s had left Uman¹¹⁹ before the war because they were lishentsy: grandfather was in private business, he cooked gefilte fish at some place... Since they were lishentsy, they couldn’t study in higher educational institutions, although there were such in Uman, so they left”* (JEES_040_NZ); *“One could hide here. Nobody could care less...”* (JEES_073_IV); *“No place to stay in Moscow – one can settle in Saltykovka, Bakovka, Perlovka, Malakhovka¹²⁰ – with distant, eight, twenty-nine times removed relatives. Landsmanshaftn were created”* (JEES_067_LT).

However, moving to Moscow was getting progressively difficult not only because of its overcrowded conditions. In view of the passportization of 1933, a special Instruction was released, stipulating, which groups of population will not be granted passports in Moscow, Leningrad and Khar’kov, and who thus will not have the right to live in these cities, as well as within 100 kilometers around Moscow and Leningrad, and 50 kilometers around Khar’kov. These persons were supposed to

¹¹⁹A city in central Ukraine, a famous Chassidic pilgrimage cite to the grave of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.

¹²⁰The names of suburban settlements near Moscow.

leave the above mentioned cities within the 10-day period.¹²¹ Among these, there were persons deprived of election rights according to the Instruction on the Election to the Soviets issued on October 3, 1930, in particular, “persons using hired labor for the sake of deriving profits,” “persons who are or were engaged in trade,” “artisans and craftsmen using hired labor,” “private traders, commercial middlemen,” etc.¹²² Thus not only the newly coming *lishentsy* officially lost the possibility of getting settled in Moscow, but those who were already residing there had to leave.

As a result of these political processes, the Moscow suburbs became a destination area for a number of Jews who for various reasons could not stay in the city itself. This largely accounts for the second and major wave of Jewish migration to settlements surrounding Moscow.

Certainly, not only Jews were seeking “refuge” away from their home places. With the beginning of collectivization in the end of 1920s many peasants were likewise trying to flee their villages and become manual workers at multiple factories and plants of the capital. While they were not entitled to passports to begin with, lesser political control in the suburbs made this destination particularly attractive for them (see: Morozova 2015: 14). Besides, those fleeing from Stalin’s political repressions, whether Jews or not, often found suburbs to be a safer place to stay: “*In [19]37 they fled, and ended up in Kuntsevo...¹²³ and this was general Soviet migration. Reasonable people, they figured out that when somebody in the family or among closest friends is arrested, one has to flee. Reasonable people run to the suburbs – [for the organs] there are things to do in the city itself*” (JEES_089_AS_NB).¹²⁴

One of my informants voiced an idiosyncratic version of why Jews would come to Malakhovka in the 1920-30s: in his understanding, it was because of the two Jewish orphanages organized in the

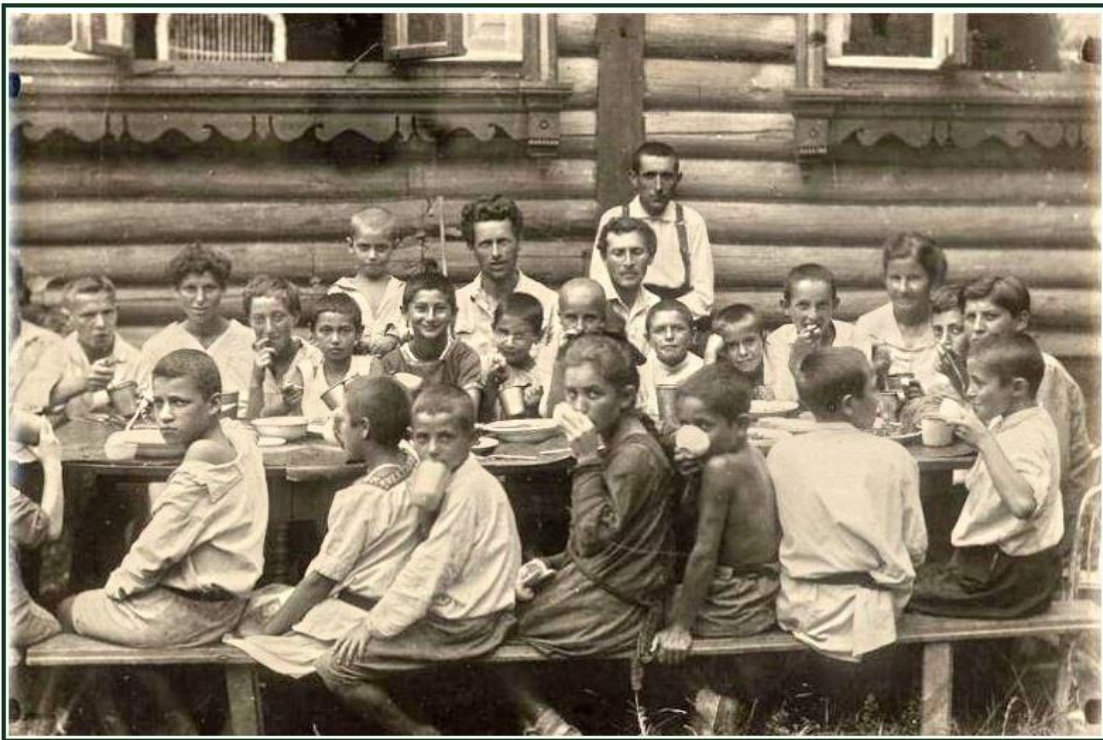
¹²¹GARF. F. 3316. Inv. 64. File 1227. P. 68 (quoted from: Baiburin, *in press*).

¹²²URL: <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=ESU;n=29843> (last accessed April 3, 2017). (in Russian).

¹²³A suburb to the West of Moscow, which became a part of the city in 1960.

¹²⁴About practices of registration (*propiska*) at different periods of Soviet rule see: Matthews 1993, esp. Ch. 5, “The Bureaucratic Morass.”

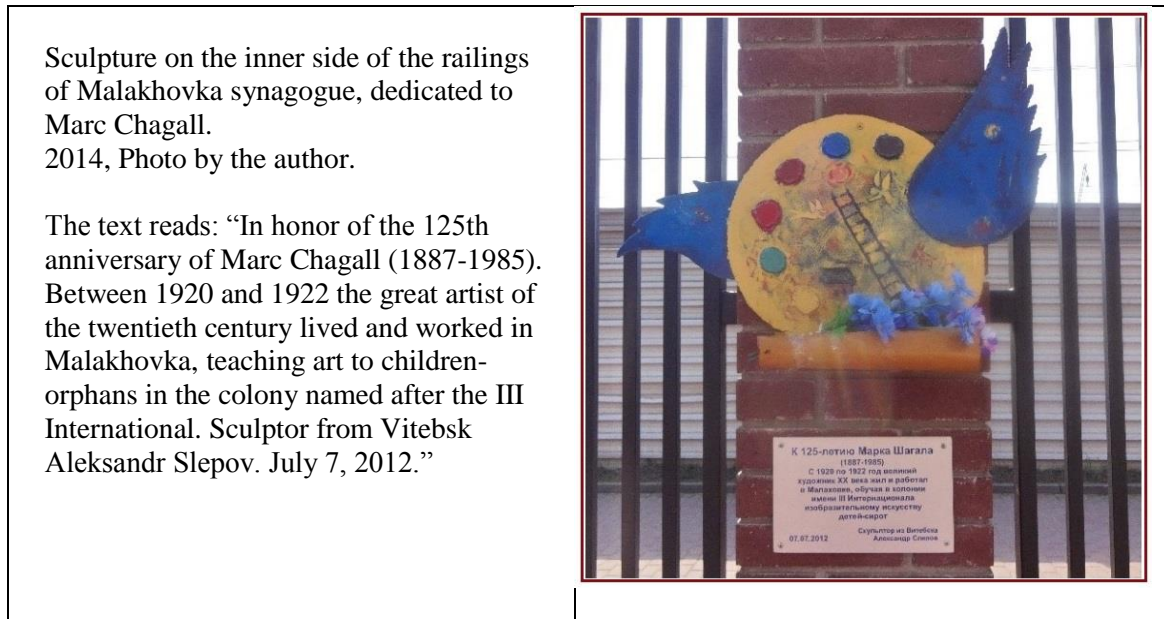
settlement for the children orphaned in the course of World War I and the Civil War pogroms; in his view, “many inhabitants of Odessa and other large cities, especially the childless ones, came to Malakhovka and settled here having in mind to adopt children from the orphanage” (JEES_127_EF). This version does not stand any documentary or oral history test (e.g. there was not a single story recorded about anybody from the local Jewish community ever adopting a single child from the orphanage (also called “colony”), or even having any interaction with any of the children or teachers. However, the Jewish orphanage of Malakhovka being so famous because of Marc Chagall (as well as a number of famous Jewish literary men) who taught here in the early 1920s, it sometimes turns into an overbearing identity symbol of the place, making people create arbitrary connections between this symbol and other local realities. On the school for Jewish children in Malakhovka see: Loginova 2016, Freitag 2004: 209-210, Ulitsky & Feldman 2012: 158, 176-177).



Ill. 4: Marc Chagall in Malakhovka Jewish orphanage (1920s).¹²⁵
(Chagall is sitting in second row from the top, extreme right)

¹²⁵Source: <http://www.lechaim.ru/ARHIV/99/geyzer.htm> (last accessed April 3, 2017). (in Russian).

However, attempts to adopt the name of Marc Chagall as a symbol of local Jewish community seem to be rather marginal. Perhaps, the strongest expression of such attempts is a small sculpture dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the painter placed on the inner side of the railings of Malakhovka synagogue. It features an easel with two blue wings and a brush, together with the text commemorating Chagall’s teaching at the local Jewish orphanage in early 1920s.



Ill. 5: Sculpture dedicated to M. Chagall in Malakhovka.

Wave 3: World War II and after

The last arrival of Jews from the former shtetls happens at the very end of World War II and in the first years after the war; many of those who came back from the front or evacuation, or survived the German occupation in their home places, who could not find any means of survival in the war-wrecked small places of Ukraine and Belorussia, and who at times encountered strong anti-Semitic attitudes on the part of the local population, chose to join their relatives, however distant, or even acquaintances, in Moscow suburbs in search for a new, and perhaps, better life.

Here are some characteristic explanations of why people came: “A large flow came after the war, a very large one. Nobody wanted to return to Ukraine – anti-Semitism, pogroms... everybody came closer to the capital” (JEES_128_SP); “After the war they came back to Kiev, but it was a hotbed of

anti-Semitism, and for lawyers or notaries there was nothing to do there. Grandfather couldn't find any job there, so the family started moving closer to Moscow – there were some fellow countrymen here, not even relatives. In the ruined Moscow suburbs they were in need of every profession, so it was easier to get a job here... No idiot would go to suburbs from Moscow itself. No luxury conditions, but a sure job, so you won't die of hunger. Plus, some Jews around" (JEES_053_LT); *"Many Jews came here after the war – from Ukraine, Belorussia, from the evacuation in Kazakhstan... Moscow always looked like a 'dainty bit,' everybody thought, it was paradise on earth"* (JEES_074_GR) (also: JEES_057_MA_DG_IV, JEES_058_DG, JEES_083_DT_MK, Vermel' 2003b: 48).¹²⁶

By the post-war time Jews who had come to Moscow suburbs in 1930s were already perceived as local "old-timers" – hence, the new distinction between "the newcomers" and "native-born": [on the mass coming of Jews after World War I]: *"I. must know who among the Jews are the newcomers, and who are native-born"* (JEES_075_AS); *"There was a little house nearby, and we considered a Jewish family who lived there 'native-born.' Because as far as I remember... their children were born here"* (JEES_077_VC). Childhood memoirs of one of my informants retained an image of these post-war newcomers in the then suburban town of Kuntsevo briefly mentioned above. For her these were *"survivors from [German] ghettos,"* who *"could never adapt, never socialize,"* who looked *"extremely wretched,"* and whom their distant relatives *"took out of mercy."* She remembers how these people lived here *"because as a rule they didn't have children of their own. These elderly women would shove a bread cracker into my hand, and I knew that I shouldn't offend them or hide from them... They looked like they were dying out"* (JEES_089_AS_NB).

These three waves of internal migration brought different Jews to Moscow suburbs. Certainly not all present-day Jewish suburban dwellers or their ancestors came with either of those waves: there were many individual trajectories that made people into permanent dwellers outside of the city proper. Some

¹²⁶V. Bukovsky remembers post-war Moscow as even more crowded than before the war, especially after its old inhabitants came back from evacuation or the front line. People "lived in cellars, barns, barracks, huts, and every flat had several families crammed into it. Even before the war communal flats had been cramped, but now the situation was far worse" (Bukovsky 1978: 86).

people moved from Moscow when the city started expanding, and their old houses were demolished; others had to move because their city apartments were taken away from them after the arrest of a family member during Stalin's repressions, somebody else was sent here to work in specific organizations such as schools, construction sites or new enterprises (e.g. JEES_084_LL, JEES_094_MG_RG, JEES_099_IK, JEES_107_NL, JEES_112_FK, JEES_117_YT_IT, JEES_118_MR_OR, JEES_120_GZ). Formation of the "circle of Jewish settlements" around Moscow was a complex process precipitated by various social, political and economic factors, and involving both Jews and non-Jews. However, the large concentration of Jewish newcomers who arrived here in the course of several decades, gave these places an unmistakably Jewish identity, which I will discuss in the second part of this chapter in more detail. Life in the urban-rural nexus was not a ghetto-type experience by any stretch, yet the more compact habitation as compared to that in Moscow was a significant factor that shaped this specific identity.

The three waves of Jewish migration (1915-1916, 1920-1930s, and 1940s) played a decisive role in creating a circle of Jewish settlements around Soviet Moscow. In the past, according to my informants' memoirs, one could observe the tangible by-product of these successive migrations in the local architectural arrangements. The following description is very telling in this respect: Kuntsevo suburb consisted of

"wooden houses, it was a summer resort, 12 kilometers away from Moscow... A relative of mine, my sister's husband, lived there in a house that was jokingly called 'Palestine house of national defense' [laughs]. Jews came there, and then they invited their relatives, and those invited their own... So, my sister's husband, they bought a village house, and all the Jews were gradually arriving, and they would built little annexes to the main house, and eventually about 20 families lived there together. All from Ukraine. And they spoke three languages there [Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish] – only Jews lived in this house. They had little wretched rooms, and they kept their firewood in the shed outside" (JEES_117_YT_IT) (see also: Razgon 1996: 24).

The house described above disappeared when Kuntsevo ceased being a suburb and became a district of Moscow, yet a similar one, perhaps on a somewhat smaller scale, still exists in Malakhovka:



Ill. 6: An old house in Malakhovka. 2014, photo by the author.

The house was gradually expanding through new annexes and outbuildings as more members of the extended family were moving in.

Circle of suburban Jewish settlements as a “Soviet Pale”?

In the course of the socio-political processes described above, a circular pattern of settlements with compact Jewish population emerged around Moscow; none of them were exclusively populated by Jews, yet the percentage of Jewish dwellers was large enough for people to regard these settlements as “Jewish.”¹²⁷ Situated in the nearest proximity to Moscow, and yet separated from it, these settlements could be described as near-, or quasi Soviet Jewish townships (Russ. *mestechki*), where Jewish ethnic life was preserved longer in comparison with the large megalopolis nearby. Some of those suburban settlements or areas got “swallowed” by Moscow as it was expanding; others ceased to be Jewish as Jews moved to other places.

Jews who succeeded in finding a place to live in Moscow itself often were younger people, who would get “dwelling space” from educational institutions or work, or else joined their relatives who

¹²⁷Perhaps, the only comparable concentration of Jews could be found inside Moscow Jewish “enclaves.”

already worked at various Soviet institutions and organizations; this way the newcomers would get dispersed in various districts of the city and more often than not lose the “Jewish milieu” of their Ukrainian or Belorussian homeplace. The majority of such younger newcomers, motivated by the new possibilities offered to them by the new regime did not aspire to keep the traditions of the past.¹²⁸ Suburban residence was more compact and often meant that large multi-generational families lived together; moreover, people who settled beyond the city line, especially the socially discriminated ones such as *lishentsy*, were less inclined to the assimilation inevitable in a large city:

Out of all social groups, artisans and traders were mostly prone to keeping the traditional way of life. As opposed to other groups of the Jewish population, the major impetus of their migration to Moscow was not so much the desire to leave the wretched world of the shtetl and to sever connections with the habitual way of life, but reasons of a pronouncedly economic nature. Even before the revolution the innermost desire of many Jewish artisans and traders was to get into the new markets beyond the Pale, where competition was not as high as in their home places (Snopov 2002: 78).

The majority of Jewish settlements around Moscow formed to the East and North of the city; those in the West became a part of Moscow much faster and thus lost their ethnic specificity; below I will reconstruct this pattern based on oral interviews as well as a few existing written sources.

Today’s Moscow city line is delineated with white dots; most of the places within the border were settlements or distinct areas at some point in the 20th c. The map contains a certain degree of proportion approximation, especially as far as showing small places against a large background area, yet it gives a general picture of Jewish presence in Moscow suburbs.

¹²⁸This is certainly a generalization; for instance, Jewish religious life in Moscow was active until the mass closure of the synagogues at the end of 1920s – beginning of 1930s, clandestine cheders and yeshivas were organized, etc. (for more detail see, e.g., Snopov 2004, Zaichik 1995, Freitag 2004: 285-299). Given the desire, Moscow Jews would likewise “*find each other and create a little microcosm of their own*” (JEES_083_DT_MK).



III. 7: Circle of Jewish settlements around Moscow (reconstruction):

Eastern direction: 1 – Kratovo, 2 – Bykovo, 3 – Udel'naya, 4 – Malakhovka, 5 – Kraskovo, 6 – Tomilino, 7 – Ljubertsy (including Ukhtomsky settlement), 8 – Veshniaki, 9 – Kuskovo, 10 – Perovo, 11 – Novogireevo, 12 – Saltykovka, 13 – Zheleznodoroznyi (formerly, Obiralovka), 14 – Izmailovo, 15 – Cherkizovo.

Northern direction: 16 – Rostokino, 17 – Losinoostrovskaya (Babushkin), 18 – Perlovskaya, 19 – Taininskaya, 20 – Bolshevo, 21 – Tarasovka, 22 – Kliazma, 23 – Mamontovka, 24 – Pushkino.

Western direction: 25 – Odyntsovo, 26 – Bakovka, 27 – Triokhgorka, 28 – Nemchinovka, 29 – Novoivanovskoe, 30 – Firsanovka, 31 – Khimki, 32 – Tushino, 33 – Khovrino, 34 – Nikol'sky, 35 – Koptevo, 36 – Pokrovskoe-Glebovo, 37 – Pokrovskoe-Streshnevo, 38 – Vsekhsviatskoe, 39 – Petrovsko-Razumovskoe, 40 – Kuntsevo, 41 – Ochakovo, 42 – Davydково, 43 – Fili.¹²⁹

This map will be referred to throughout further discussion.

A major incentive to live outside of the large city in a smaller place was the possibility to be “among one’s own, the Jews”: in contrast to those who wanted “get assimilated” in the big city, those who chose Saltykovka or Malakhovka “were people who perhaps identified themselves more with Jews”

¹²⁹Classification of Jewish settlements and areas based on the time of their merging with Moscow and on the geographical positioning in respect to the city center, see: Groman 1997.

and “*wanted to stay in this milieu*”; it is in this milieu that an individual “*could be treated as a person of honor*,” whereas in a big city he or she would be “*lost among the aliens*” (JEES_082_LV); [while in the Pale] “*people got used to living in large clans... so they continued living in clans here a well... one among one’s own*” (JEES_123_EO); “*Grandfather and grandmother spoke only Yiddish, and this generation wanted to be among their own in all possible ways... All these Soviet assumptions like internationalization and all that... – yet people still wanted to be among one’s own because they felt different... It was a comfort of sorts, when a person knew that he would be immediately understood, that he won’t have to explain why he feels this or that way*” (JEES_131_AR);¹³⁰ one of my informants remembered how in the 1950s, when he was a child, his mother would take him with her to the market, and “*in every hundred meters we would meet a Jewish woman, and mother would talk with her in Yiddish*” (JEES_059_IV).

Security and communal support are presented as another major distinction of suburban Jewish life: “*There was no anti-Semitism here. Local dwellers [non-Jews, – A. K.] knew that since we are the majority here, if you start something like this, you’ll get a good lesson... Well, rural dwellers are decent people anyway*” (JEES_086_AR); “*when we joined the housing cooperative... we had to deposit all the money in advance. And the Jews collected and gave us the money without even a written note that we owe it to them... We were nearly starving then, and once uncle Lekek [a neighbor, – A. K.] came to us, brought the Pesach wine, and somebody brought money, and my mother said: ‘Please, no...’ – but he said: ‘When you have the money, you can give it back’*” (JEES_083_DT_MK); “*It was a Jewish settlement, everybody literally knew each other; while you walk along the street, you’d say ‘hello’ to ten people... Store managers were all close people so to say. You could always walk into a store and just*

¹³⁰What speaks in favor of such description of community cohesion and unconditional acceptance of each other is the assertion that all local Jews, especially in smaller settlements, had a nickname (e.g. JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). This indeed may be seen as one of the markers of a tightly knit network of communal relations such as the one that existed in the “classic” shtetl. With regard to nicknames, S. Kassow writes: “...what made a shtetl different from a provincial city was that the shtetl was a face-to-face community. It was small enough for almost everyone to be known by name and nickname. Nicknames could be brutal and perpetuated a system that one observer called the “power of the shtetl” to assign everyone a role and a place in the communal universe” (Kassow 2007: 6-7). However, the topic of nicknames in the Jewish settlements around Moscow requires additional field research.

borrow something if you didn't have enough money" (JEES_119_MS_SS) (also: JEES_108_AP, JEES_104_VV, JEES_101_ArV_AnV). These representations of the past are largely idealized, especially after the local Jewish communities dwindled during the mass immigration of the 1990s, arrival of numerous migrants from the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union (JEES_075_AS), and the general "commercialization" of everyday life

In other words, there were indeed certain gains of turning semi-insular, even though at the expense of losing obvious benefits of living in a large metropolitan place. The suburban pattern of settlement was thus one of the Jewish responses to the early Soviet challenge of urbanism and rapid modernization, as well as an adaptive response to the integration offers that the Soviet regime made to various social groups of the Jewish population.

No other large city in the Soviet Union possessed an accompanying circle of Jewish settlements such as that in Moscow suburbs; a number of people maintained that this pattern may be described as "the Soviet Jewish Pale": "*The 'Pale,' yes – that's how it was called among one's own. This is to say, everybody knew that these were Jewish places (mestechki)*" (JEES_068_GG); "*This is a conventional pale... officially, certainly, it did not exist*" (JEES_065_VT_GK); "*a migrated pale*" (JEES_131_AR); "*this [Jewish] settling happened in Moscow suburbs*" (JEES_130_DT). People could compare the geography of Moscow's suburbs with the territories of historical Jewish habitation: "*Q.: Can one say that this was a Soviet Pale of sorts? A.: Yes, yes, yes! It's like Podol,¹³¹ the Jewish Pale in Kiev. You're welcome to live in Podol. Not in a large city, not in the capital of the province. Near Moscow – you're welcome*" (JEES_086_AR).¹³² To some extent this association might be strengthened by the fact that during Moscow evictions of the end of the nineteenth century a famous Russian Jewish painter Isaac Levitan was banished from the city and for some time lived in Saltykovka, so to speak, "beyond the

¹³¹See footnote 118.

¹³²A recent film produced with support of Avi Chai foundation is characteristically called "Malakhovka: A Jewish Shtetl Near Moscow" (URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Co41LzTrj7k>) (last accessed April 3, 2017).

pale” – a fact well-known to local dwellers (JEES_076_MA, JEES_075_AS, JEES_062_AG_IT, JEES_131_AR, JEES_073_IV).

The Jewish character of Moscow suburban settlements was widely presented in local folklore, particularly, the geographical onomastics: “*At that time... in Malakhovka, Kraskovo, Tomilino... all the way from Ljubertsy to Ramenskoe, there were lots of Jews in these. This was called Moscow suburban Birobidzhan.*”¹³³ As you ride in the suburban train, [somebody would say:] ‘*Get out, it’s Birobidzhan*’” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV), or else: “*Here we are, next stop – Israel*” (JEES_107_NL), [about Malakhovka] “*It was said, ‘little Israel’ – most Jews said so*” (JEES_096_EB): “*Malakhovka was a Jewish place – when I studied in the secondary school, they called it ‘Tel-Aviv’ there*” (JEES_109_SG_GG), or else, “*by the similarity with the Jewish word for ‘angel’ was jokingly called Los-Angeles*” (Grinberg 2013) or ‘*Meilakhovka*’” (JEES_065_VT_GK).¹³⁴ In one of the anti-Semitic leaflets left by the pogromists in Malakhovka in 1959, the settlement is called the “Second Jerusalem” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 140) (also: JEES_114_FK, JEES_130_DT, JEES_106_EU).¹³⁵ As to the attitude with which such names were pronounced, it could vary from “*humor*” and “*no evil feelings*” (JEES_119_MS_SS) to open “*anti-Semitism*” (JEES_123_EO) and “*contempt*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV); but most people admit that especially because they were uttered publically, they perceived such names with “*some habitual strain*” (JEES_111_RD) and got offended (JEES_107_NL, JEES_065_VT_GK, Razgon 1996: 27).

Another type of “Jewification” of Moscow suburbs can be found in internal Jewish folklore that presents imaginary local geography as centered around a particular settlement, particularly, Malakhovka: “*They used to say: ‘Do you know where Moscow is situated? It’s right in the vicinities of*

¹³³Center of the Jewish Autonomous Area in the Russian Far East.

¹³⁴The Hebrew word מַלְאָךְ (malakh) means ‘angel’.

¹³⁵The same was true about Jewish enclaves inside Moscow; thus, Novogireevo (№ 11 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements) could be called Novoevreevo (roughly, “Newjewishville”), and Ismailovo (№ 14) – “Israilovo” (Groman 1997).

Malakhovka” (JEES_128_SP, JEES_094_MG_RG); or else: “*Moishe, do you know how to get to Moscow? – Chaim, this is very easy! You get to Malakhovka, and then you easily find Moscow*” (JEES_107_NL). The centrality of Malakhovka could be stressed by juxtaposition not only with the nearby Moscow, but other large cities as well, in Russian and beyond: “*Train ‘Malakhovka – Paris’ is passing by Leningrad*” (JEES_121_FZ); expression “*To go to Malakhovka through Paris*” (var. – Odessa) meant to go in roundabout ways rather than to choose a short and easy route (JEES_081_VV, JEES_094_MG_RG, JEES_114_FK). Turning of the relatively small locality into a place of global significance (cf.: “*Champion of the world, Europe and Malakhovka*” (JEES_096_EB)) may perhaps signify Jewish sentiments about their diasporic existence, in this case, living in a “Pale” of sorts, largely constrained as to the possibilities of leaving it, and yet being particularly sensitive about the existence of the larger world “out there.”

It is clear that by calling the circle of suburban Jewish settlements the “Soviet Pale” people had in mind not just their geographical arrangements or even the fact that the choice to settle there was not always free. Rather, this claim contained broader cultural assumptions related to the specific Jewish life that emerged in these settlements, and, by implication, a Jewish identity type different from that of a large megalopolis.

To what degree does the name “the Soviet Jewish pale” warrant its designation?

Due to more compact habitation, closer network of communication in the Jewish milieu, presence of the religious core of the local community and specific occupational profile, Jewish suburban identity regime differed from that of the large megalopolis nearby. Virtually all small suburban communities had a synagogue or a minyan that for security reasons¹³⁶ moved from one wooden house to another; Malakhovka and Saltykovka, which I will focus in this work further on, each had a Jewish cemetery (now these are two out of three existing Jewish cemeteries in Moscow and Moscow region), clandestine

¹³⁶To conceal its true purpose from the authorities, the synagogue in Malakhovka was built in 1932 as an “artisanal workshop,” which obviously produced no suspicion as such (Glimcher 2003a: 3; Lebedev 2009).

heders or at-home religious education for boys (Grinberg 2013, Glimcher 2003b, Malakhovka: Jewish Aspect),¹³⁷ a *shoykhet* (ritual slaughterer).

The possibility of religious life as a part of the community experience was another consideration that determined the choice of suburbs over the big city, especially for the older people. Besides, a synagogue in the rural area experienced less of the political surveillance that would be inescapable in the big city.¹³⁸ The presence of Jewish cemeteries in [Malakhovka and Saltykovka was an additional factor that made these two settlements especially attractive: “*Grandfather Rachmiel came here [to Malakhovka, – A. K.] because there was a synagogue here, and he was deeply religious. There were rabbis in the family, and all children had studied in the Jewish school in Zhlobin*”¹³⁹ (JEES_096_EB); “*For some time they didn’t do the bathing of the dead body in Saltykovka, so they would go to Malakhovka for that*” (JEES_083_DT_MK); “*Q.: Can Malakhovka be described as a ‘Jewish settlement’? A.: Certainly. And inhabited by religious people at that*” (JEES_094_MG_RG). The local joke attributes Jews’ preference to settle to the east of Moscow to the fact that this way “*the city does not obstruct their view of Jerusalem*” (JEES_057_MA_DG_IV). During Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign of late 1950s – beginning 1960s, Malakhovka Jewish community was under threat of official closure, and the only circumstance that saved it, was that the pogrom of 1959, when the house of Chaim and Sarah Goldovsky on the Jewish cemetery was burnt down, became known internationally (Charny 2001: 282-283, Pinkus 1988: 231), and the authorities did not want any political complications.

¹³⁷During the Soviet period Malakhovka became a major center of Hasidism in the European Part of the Soviet Union (Osipova 2002, Charny 2002b).

¹³⁸This may also explain why some Moscow Jews preferred going to suburban synagogues, for instance, to buy matzo (JEES_097_AS, JEES_132_MK). In a short story by L. Ulitskaya, “Genele the Bag Lady,” the protagonist, an old Jewish woman from Moscow, performs an annual ritual of buying the Passover chicken, her only chicken of the year, and goes to Malakhovka to have it ritually slaughtered: “For Genele, the whole complex faith of the ancestors, multiple limitations and prohibitions that lost their original rational significance after thousands of years, were connected with this brainless clean bird, embodying the Passover lamb” (Ulitskaya 1994: 41). Incidentally, the *shoykhet* (ritual slaughterer) lived on Tolstogo street (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV) – one of the Jewish streets on the map of Malakhovka to follow, P.142.

¹³⁹A town in Belorussia with a large Jewish population.

The “not-fully-urban” identity of suburban Jews receives a special commentary in several interviews of permanent Moscow dwellers; the most typical response is that there is a clear distinction between “us” and “them”: *“People living in Malakhovka – these are clearly not Muscovites! They are Malakhovites [laughs]. It’s not derogatory, it’s different. They are different. They are not Moscow dwellers. Not large-city dwellers... When I was small, there were Jews all around me, these were employees in various institutes, ministries... scientific labs... the circle of my grandfather, grandmother and my parents. And those [in Malakhovka, – A. K.], I don’t know what they were doing. As far as work in concerned, they belonged to a different circle... maybe, they were in trade. In our family they could say ‘Ah, these Malakhovites,’ somewhat, I think, condescendingly... Let’s say, I’m a designer, a PhD, a physicist, whereas them... they are Malakhovites! [laughs]. This is a professional differentiation, and a geographical one at the same time”* (JEES_133_DS); *“Provincialism. A Soviet analogue of provincialism”* (JEES_131_AR). Some people explained such attitude by the general “snobbism” that is present with all metropolitan dwellers, not necessarily Jews (JEES_109_SG_GG), yet the Jewish case seem to be specific precisely because of the notion of “provincialism” discussed above.

Suburban Jews seemed to be much less inclined to recognize this difference (e.g., JEES_127_EF, JEES_095_AV_AL_II_MS, JEES_096_EB, JEES_115_DA, JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV), or else stressed that only some of those suburban Jews (particularly, the traders) warranted such an opinion on the part of Muscovites occupying high positions in the Soviet hierarchy (JEES_099_IK). However, the condescending attitude to people coming from a big city could be present among the suburban dwellers anyway; as one person said, when Moscow relatives would visit them in Malakhovka, they would put on the best dishes and cook the best meals, *“because Muscovites are coming,”* whereas *“if our local ones are visiting, one could do everything simpler”* (JEES_123_EO).

A number of suburban settlements around Moscow were historically summer resort places; against the pervasive argument that Moscow is overcrowded and its ecology leaves much to be desired, suburban residence may be presented as a cleverer choice on the part of those who take care of their health: *“Jews are smart, they chose places outside of the city... here there are pines, sandy soil, best*

climate. Jews are smart!” (JEES_112_FK); “*Jews, being somewhat more advanced than the Russians, knew that one can enjoy the healthiest climate here*” (JEES_087_LG); “*There is folklore around this – that Jews lived all along this railroad, and one phrase would be constantly repeated: ‘A Jew, he loves the pine’*” [laughs]” (JEES_064_GK) (also: JEES_079_YS, JEES_088_EK, JEES_096_EB, JEES_107_NL). Some Moscow Jews likewise believed in the health-related argument, yet it was obviously not strong enough for them to move to the suburbs (e.g. JEES_064_GK, JEES_081_VV). Many Moscow Jews would come here during summer time to either live in their own wooden houses, usually allocated to them through their work places, or else to rent a room or a house from permanent dwellers (e.g. JEES_065_VT_GK, JEES_081_VV, JEES_090_DA, JEES_112_FK, JEES_120_GZ; JEES_079_YS, JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS, JEES_087_LG, JEES_120_GZ). However, I could not discover any narratives about encounters between the two groups beyond the mere references to the “local dwellers” or “big city” Jews; it looks like each group led a relatively self-contained life during summer time.¹⁴⁰

One particularly telling description of the perceived differences between the two groups came from a representative of the top Moscow Jewish intelligentsia, who viewed an “exotic” Jewish type on the local suburban train going to Kuntsevo,¹⁴¹ about 15 years ago:

“A non-educated Jew... perhaps, he lived there all the time [i.e. never moved to the city itself, – A. K.] ... he looked like a junk man or something... I was stunned by the very presence of such... such an authentic Jew, who looked like he never studied anywhere, who was a shoemaker or a junkman... I only retained the flavor of this impression... first, he was speaking all the time about being Jewish – instead of hiding this circumstance, he was demonstrating it. He spoke of the Jewish life, Jews, about all this... to the people around him... A savage! A savage!”
(JEES_089_AS_NB, JEES_092_NB).

¹⁴⁰The main source of popular knowledge about the Jewish presence in suburban settlements for the general public was a song by a famous Soviet bard, Vladimir Vysotsky; written in 1964, it is called “Anti-Semites,” and has the following stanza: “They built summer houses along Kursk and Kazan’ railways // and live there as gods” (Russ.: “*Po Kurskoi, Kazanskoi zheleznoi doroge // postroili dachi, zhivut tam, kak bogi*”). It is precisely Kursk and Kazan’ railway stations where east-bound trains originate, particularly, to Saltykovka and Malakhovka.

¹⁴¹Kuntsevo is № 40 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

Not only does this text suggest the presence of two varieties of Jewishness existing in the nearest proximity to each other, it also stresses that Moscow Jews might view the suburban ones, less educated, engaged in more traditional occupations as more “authentic” (and, simultaneously, more “provincial”) – certainly, against the stereotypical image of the shtetl Jew, more often than not as described by Sholem Aleichem. In other words, the presence of suburban Jews allows ideal representations of “bygone” and at the same time “real” Jewishness on the part of the urban Jewish intelligentsia who might regard them as “civilizationally” different and thus put in a Jewish “savage slot.”¹⁴²

Although – and that should be particularly stressed – among suburban Jews there were teachers, physicians and engineers, in other words, the “suburban” Jewish community was not homogenous, this was the only “available” type to project Jewish “otherness” upon; and if, as I noted earlier, “provincialism” of the shtetl in the former Pale would at times get positive evaluations, this does not seem to work in case of suburban Jewish settlements: people living there are “stuck somewhere in between,” they are not “fully modern,” and urban dwellers might regard them with fear of self-recognition since they evoke images of the past that had to be overcome only two-three generations back to get fully integrated and be successful in the new socio-economic realities – but then was perhaps never overcome in full (cf.: *“I think that genetically all presently living Jews irrespective of education possess provincialism <...> All of a sudden something incongruous comes out! Clearly from the depths of that province in the Pale. Small-mindedness, narrowness”* (JEES_040_NZ).

With the virtual absence of encounters between metropolitan and former shtetl Jews in the post-war years, suburban Jewish life in the proximity of Moscow was so to speak more “ethnographic,” and

¹⁴²With the present-day preoccupation with Jewish “authenticity,” in itself directly related to the issue of post-modern Jewish identity (e.g., Charmé 2000: 133), this reaction is largely similar to how at the turn of the 20th c. German Jews treated the “caftaned, Yiddish-speaking Hasid of Eastern Europe, seemingly impervious to the lures of modernization and unaffected by a desire to participate in the wider world” as “the true Jew” (Markowitz 1990: 183).

its very presence could create a meaningful emotional and self-reflexive potential with regards to the very meaning of the notion “Soviet Jews.”¹⁴³

Malakhovka and Saltykovka

I chose to concentrate on these two settlements¹⁴⁴ for a number of reasons: these were and are the two best known places with pronounced Jewish “branding”;¹⁴⁵ each settlement, especially Malakhovka, was associated with a number of smaller Jewish settlements around, or, in other words, formed a territorial cluster; these are the two settlements that till now present their Jewish identity, whereas others were either merged into the city and lost their ethnic specificity, or do not have any significant Jewish population anymore. Having certain things in common, “*their own aura*” (JEES_131_AR), these two settlements have distinct local identities: “*Saltykovka is a world of its own, and Malakhovka is a world of its own, these are different worlds of the suburban Jewish province*” (JEES_082_LV).

As I already noted above, none of the suburban Jewish settlements, including Malakhovka and Saltykovka were exclusively Jewish demographically; moreover, as far as statistics is concerned, we do not have any official figures as to the ethnic composition in places of this size.¹⁴⁶ The figures I was able to locate in various published sources are the following: based on the 1926 All-Union census of population 20% of Malakhovka residents were Jewish (Kupovetsky 1987: 68), which at the time amounted to 805 people (Snopov 2002: 79). In 1930s the Jewish population of the Moscow region

¹⁴³Discussing the literary embodiments of the Soviet Jewish identity, M. Krutikov comes to a characteristic conclusion: “It is not accidental that Russian literature failed to create a “Jewish myth” of Moscow, even though Moscow was the largest and the most dynamic Jewish centers of the USSR. “Jewish faubourg (Russ. *slobodskoi*) myth” of such places as Cherkizovo, Ostankino, Marjina Roshcha, Tomilino – places that emerged around historical Moscow with the arrival of Jewish refugees at the beginning of World War One and expanded in the first years of the Soviet regime <...> It is this former Soviet periphery that actively brings forth metaphoric and symbolic constructions of the ‘Jewish chronotope’” (Krutikov 2014: 114).

¹⁴⁴Malakhovka is № 4 Saltykovka is № 12 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

¹⁴⁵Cf.: “My late father and other Moscow Jews called Malakhovka... ‘a non-official capital of the Jewish autonomous district in the Moscow region’” (Groman 1997).

¹⁴⁶Cf.: “The Soviet census of 1959 provided virtually no information about cities and towns in the USSR. Whilst total population figures are given for most towns in the census, further analysis by, for instance, ethnic origin or nationality is only provided for the capitals of the 15 Union Republics plus the three cities of Leningrad, Kaunas and Sevastopol. This means that the Jewish population of most Soviet cities is unknown” (Millman 1971: 13).

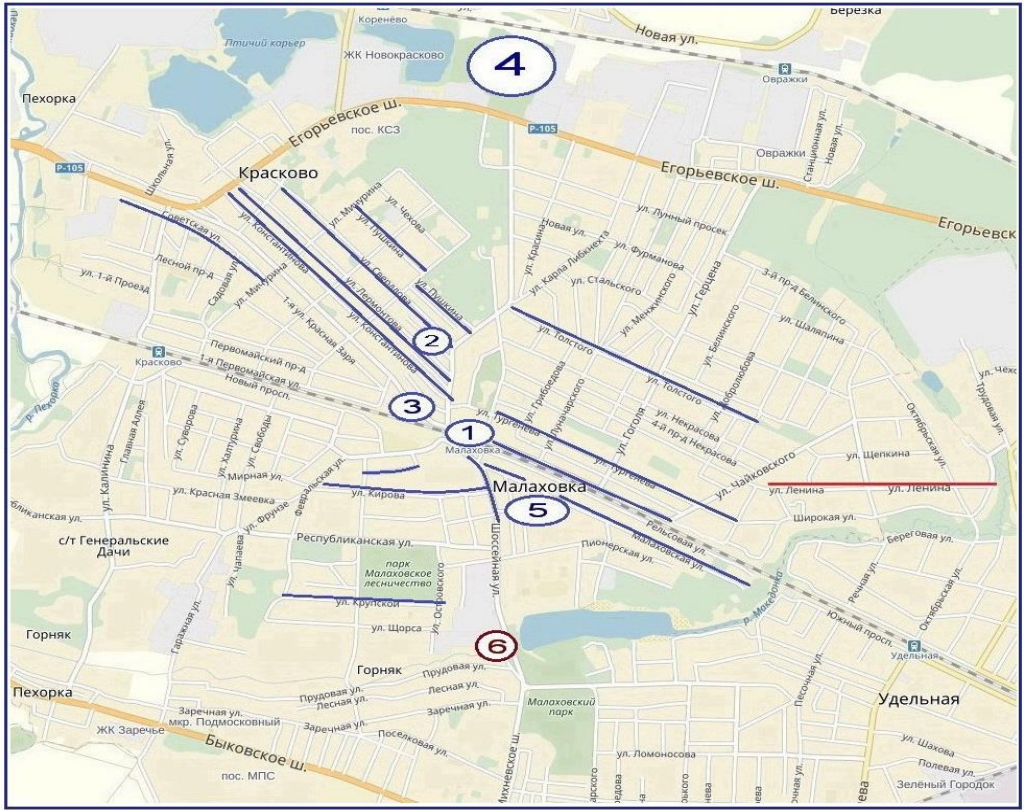
increased by 381% and reached the number of 53,000 in 1939; at the time Malakhovka had the largest Jewish community of 1,660 people, or 10,2%, since the total population of the settlement was 16,300 (Snopov 2002: 81-82). For the end of 1950s Pinkus & Frankel provide the number of “some 3,000 Jews” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 494).¹⁴⁷

Equally telling are the ethnographic images of “many Jews” that nearly all my informants attribute to these Jewish settlements, particularly to Malakhovka: “*Approximately half of the population of Malakhovka was Jewish. Large Jewish families with many children were sitting on the lake shore – that’s 1960s*” (JEES_065_VT_GK); [in 1960s] “*there were statistics that 40% of Malakhovka was Jewish... They said: 20% of permanent dwellers, and 40% in summer, since those who were coming in summer were mostly Jewish*” (JEES_121_FZ); “*The predominant majority of Malakhovka was Jewish – more than half*” (JEES_105_VG); “*Saltykovka is a Jewish place. There were many Jews there, although I can’t give the number. But in any case, [one could see] here is a Jew, here is a Jew, there is a Jew...*” (JEES_076_MA) (also: JEES_093_MZ, JEES_075_AS, JEES_074_GR, JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_117_YT_IT, JEES_111_RD, JEES_102_YK). Some people admit that their estimations of the number of Jews are based on the fact that “*it was mostly Jews who visited our house*” (JEES_131_AR), or else by the memories of Jewish religious celebrations, when Jews were coming “*crowd after crowd*” from the alley where the local synagogue was situated (JEES_111_RD). Apart from subjective perception, the image of “many Jews” or “Jewish majority” can perhaps be explained by the augmented visibility of Jews in significant public sites of the local geography; in particular, as I will show later on, this concerned the sphere of trade, from small tent-like establishments to large stores and the market, the Jews were dominating.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷The last two figures, 1,660 and around 3,000, meet the criteria suggested by Lee Shai Weissbach in his analysis of Jewish life in small American towns: “four-digit Jewish population”; as the community reaches this threshold, it finds itself “on the verge of becoming a midsize Jewish center,” since this number allows for the “maintenance of an active communal life” with the “fundamental communal institutions” (Weissbach 2005: 29).

¹⁴⁸Cf.: [in Charlottesville, Virginia, in the 1920s] “a trip around the courthouse square would have convinced any newcomer that the Jewish community was closer to a majority of the population than the small but successful minority it really was” (Weissbach 2001: 110).

In my interviews I consistently asked about the streets in the settlements with large or predominant Jewish population; below is the map of Malakhovka where such streets are marked with blue color:



III. 8: The map of Malakhovka.

1 – Malakhovka train station; 2 – Old synagogue; 3 – New synagogue and the Jewish Community Center; 4 – Malakhovka cemeteries (Russian and Jewish); 5 – Malakhovka market; 6 – Electro-mechanical plant.

Malakhovka was unofficially divided into the “cottage part” and “industrial part”; the cottage part was rapidly growing in the first decade of Soviet rule, when not only old summer houses were expropriated from the former owners and given to various Soviet institutions and organizations, but the new streets with cottages for the emerging Soviet elite, whether Jewish, or not, were laid out (see: Colton 1995: 187, 512).¹⁴⁹ The industrial part was formed soon after World War II with the construction of the electro-mechanical plant (№ 6 on the map above).

¹⁴⁹More often than not, these people came to Malakhovka only in summer (JEES_065_VT_GK). The area of Soviet construction is represented by the red line (Lenin street) on the map of Malakhovka.

Jews traditionally settled “*close to each other*,” mostly in the center, that is “*around the market*” (№ 5 on the map) (JEES_107_NL), as well as in the upper, more prestigious and older part of the settlement – streets Turgenevskaya (JEES_096_EB), Konstantinovskaya (formerly, Aptekarskaya) (JEES_097_AS), Sverdlova, Pushkina, Tolstogo, Sovetskaya, Yuzhnaya, Lermontovskaya, Krupskoi (JEES_097_AS), Pushkinskaya, Lermontovskaya, Turgenevskaya (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV), beginning of Shosseinaya and Kirova (JEES_107_NL). It was in this part, on Korenevsky blind alley, that the old synagogue was situated before it burnt down in 2005 (№ 2 on the map). Very few Jews lived in the “industrial,” or “worker” part – among other things, this was considered “non-prestigious” (JEES_107_NL).

Presented on a map, the Jewish streets in Malakhovka produce a characteristic pattern of the densely inhabited Jewish center around the railroad station and the market, surrounded by the non-Jewish periphery. This pattern is strikingly similar to a classical arrangement of the pre-revolutionary shtetl in the Pale of Settlement: Jewish commercial center surrounded by non-Jewish streets, gradually merging into the surrounding rural area. Further on in this work I will argue that this is not a mere coincidence, and that Jewish economic practices in particular were closely related to the spatial aspect of Jewish habitation in suburban settlements.

CHAPTER FOUR

MALAKHOVKA AND SALTYKOVKA: A SOVIET JEWISH RAILROAD NARRATIVE

“The Soviet regime lived its own life, and Jews lived their own. As much as it was possible, avoiding conflicts with the power” (JEES_011_AN)

Travelling, being-on-the-way reflects some deeper existential mode of Jewish being, usually expressed in such tropes as “homelessness,” “rootlessness,” “displacement,” etc. This, however, is not only too general, but presents a risk of detachment from a historically situated experience of moving in space.

Suburban settlements present a very opportune example to discuss one example of the experience of movement through space, namely, commuting by suburban trains (Russ. *elektrichka*, coll., from “electric train”) with particular emphasis on how it reflected the Jewish experience of living outside of a large city, yet connected with it through multiple ties. Besides, a look at regular encounters with both Jewish and non-Jewish passengers, as well as the representatives of the state administrative system, can contribute to our understanding of how ethnic differences were constructed and explicated, or, in other words, how Jewish identity practices were shaped in the public space of suburban transportation. Apart from this, railroad being an “assemblage” of various physical properties and social relations, one can look at how local railroad enabled diverse Jewish economic activities, including the space for invention it provided for informal economic decisions.

Since the beginning of their construction, railroads played a major role for the fates of the Russian Jews; it was an important condition of modernization of the Jewish society in the late nineteenth century, when the construction of railways broke the isolation of the shtetl from the bigger world of the Gentiles (e.g. Kotik 2012: 38), turned many former small townships into places of industrial

production,¹⁵⁰ and stimulated the influx of capital into them accompanied by the boom in local trade and economy.¹⁵¹ Various expulsions and relocations of the Jewish population were invariably associated with painful experiences in the train stations and on the way to new places (e.g. Kliachko 2003: 306). Migration by train from the (former) Pale to larger places was another instance of a “massive dislocation in Jewish life” that reflected Jewish communal experience of being “in flux” (Garrett 2003: 23). Evacuation trains, when people were fleeing from the advancing German troops, as well as return from evacuation, often made difficult by various bureaucratic regimes are steady motifs in many people’s family stories (e.g. JEES_008_SS, JEES_019_OZ, JEES_051_PZ, JEES_081_VV, JEES_058_DG, JEES_106_EU, JEES_130_DT, JEES_086_AR, JEES_120_GZ, etc.). The image of trains prepared to transport Jews from big cities in the last years of Stalin’s rule, the so-called “dark years of Soviet Jewry,” likewise looms large in Jewish collective imagination (e.g. JEES_076_MA, JEES_068_GG, JEES_069_GK).

As far as the local, rather than long-distance trains are concerned, they have been playing a major role for suburban dwellers, whether Jewish or not, since the end of the nineteenth century. The pre-revolutionary “dacha-boom,” when massive construction of summer houses started in Moscow vicinities, stimulated rapid development of suburban railroads (see, for instance, Lovell 2003, esp. Ch. 2 and 3; Malinova-Tziafeta 2013, esp. Ch. 4; Snopov 2002: 79). Already in 1911, a commercial advertising informs potential land-plot buyers in Malakhovka that “the present-day connection with Moscow is extremely convenient. A host of suburban trains of Kazanskaya railroad, running throughout

¹⁵⁰As was the case, for instance, with the Moldovan Jewish township of Bălți; at the time local newspapers specifically stressed the “providential” nature of it acquiring the railroad for the town: “Soroca, Orhei, Izmail, Hotin, Cahul do not have railway communication, whereas Tighina and Akkerman, due to their geographic positioning cannot play a significant role in the commercial and industrial life of the territory, so Bălți was destined to overtake the dominating role in the life of our province <...> The town’s development starts in 1894, with the construction of the railroad that connected Bălți with the outside world” (Beron & Rosentuler 1935: 17).

¹⁵¹As B. Nathans notes, Jewish railroad financiers such as the Poliakov brothers “loomed large enough in the Jewish popular imagination to become known as a ‘shemindefernik’,” a nickname signifying a “railroad man” (Nathans 1999: 118, 141) (also: Badanes 1884: 23-26).

the day, including fourteen speed trains, cover the 25-mile stretch between Moscow and Malakhovka in 37 minutes” (*Malakhovka i Kasimovsky poselok* 1911: 9).

It was mostly the Russian nobility who could afford building or buying a summer house, whereas less affluent people would opt for renting a house or a couple of rooms to stay there during summer time. According to the local lore, Leo Tolstoy wanted to buy a house near Saltykovka, but something went wrong with the deal, which might be the reason why Anna Karenina flings herself beneath the wheels of an onrushing train precisely there, near the station of Obiralovka¹⁵² (JEES_075_AS) (also: JEES_077_VC, JEES_057_MA_DG_IV).¹⁵³ Among other things the local railroad is clearly associated with danger – a number of local inhabitants became its victims at various periods of the Soviet time (e.g. JEES_074_GR, JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_124_MK, JEES_079_YS); as one person stated, “*adventures of Anna Karenina are sitting somewhere at the back of people’s mind*” (JEES_067_LT).¹⁵⁴

By a tragic and somewhat uncanny coincidence, it was precisely here, between the stations of Saltykovka and Kuchino, that the mother of one of my informants, then a young woman with two small children, threw herself under the local train after having lost her husband and consistently failing to find any job to feed her family. This happened in 1953, one month before Stalin’s death, during the massive anti-Semitic campaign that was launched in the wake of the infamous “Doctors’ Plot”¹⁵⁵: in places

¹⁵²Obiralovka is the old name of Zheleznodorozhnyi, № 13 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

¹⁵³One can trace a curious literary coincidence here, namely, with the curse that Sholem Aleichem sends to the railroad station Baranovichi in the “Railroad Story” with the same name – “May it burn down, this Baranovichi station.” According to Dan Miron, it was at the station of Baranovich, “an important railway intersection but a provincial town on the border of the Ukraine and Belorussia,” that the writer felt extremely sick and was diagnosed with “open pulmonary tuberculosis,” “for weeks” was “bedridden in this foreign place,” and “was privileged,” – as he said, – ‘to see face to face his majesty, the angel of death’” (Miron 2000: 257). In other words, in both cases one can perhaps speak of a small “literary revenge” to places where authors had personal unpleasant experiences.

¹⁵⁴Even a mentally ill person who set the old Malakhovka synagogue on fire in 2005 allegedly died after he was released from prison under the wheels of the local train (JEES_109_SG_GG).

¹⁵⁵Doctors’ plot (also: doctors’ affair, plot of “doctors-saboteurs” / “doctors-killers”) “was the most dramatic anti-Jewish episode in the Soviet Union during Joseph Stalin’s regime, involving the ‘unmasking’ of a group of prominent Moscow doctors, predominantly Jews, as conspiratorial assassins of Soviet leaders. This was accompanied by show trials and anti-Semitic propaganda in state-run mass media. Scores of Soviet Jews were promptly dismissed from their jobs, arrested, sent to the Gulag, or executed” (in more detail, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctors'_plot). (last accessed April 3, 2017).

where the woman was looking for a job she would be openly told: “*We don’t take Jews, they are the enemies of the people, they poisoned our government.*” In the words of her son, it was complete “*hopelessness*” that pushed her towards this act (JEES_076_MA).

Whereas the railroad near Saltykovka has literary associations with Leo Tolstoy, the stretch of the railroad between Malakhovka and Kraskovo is known through a famous short story by A. Chekhov, “A Malefactor” (Russ. *Zloumyshlennik*): written in 1885, it portrays a local peasant who, together with other village dwellers, was undoing the nuts with which the rails are affixed to the sleepers to use them as fishing weights (JEES_097_AS). A. Chekhov came to Kraskovo in the middle of 1880s to visit another famous writer V. A. Giliarovsky, and during the stay heard of a peasant who made this use of the railroad for his personal needs (see: Kleev 2011: 52).



III. 9: Station Malakhovka, Moscow suburbs. Beginning of the twentieth century. Courtesy of Malakhovka Museum of History and Culture.

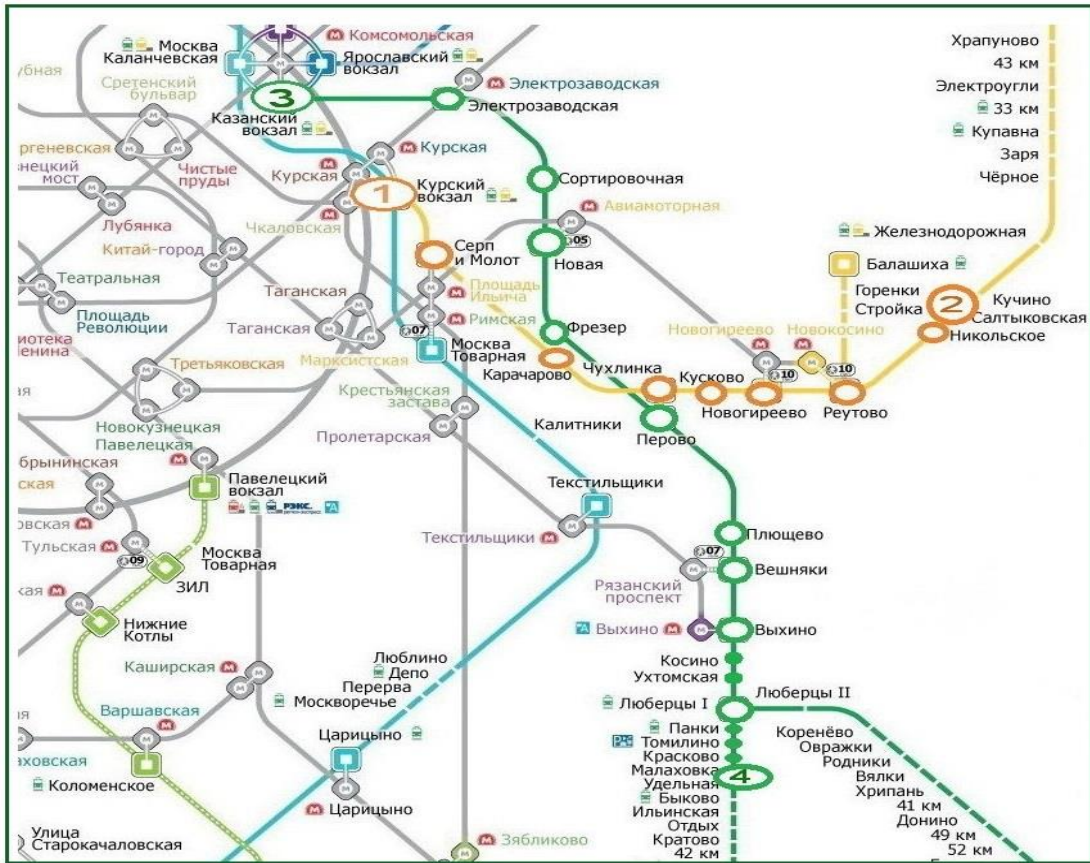
Suburban railroad connecting megalopolis and the surrounding settlements and towns is an example of Soviet modernization/ industrialization regime in that it reflected the concentration of state

capitals in the center, where major industries and job places were created, or, in other words, the hierarchical organization of production and social order. The railroad featured a number of bureaucratic regimes; first of all the already mentioned registration (*propiska*) regime, which prohibited people from the suburbs from moving into the city at will. Secondly, there were various regimes related to travelling back and forth to one's job place, especially if that took many hours and required different means of public transportation – in this sense, the strict Soviet control of employees' arrival at work may be seen as an example of “etatization of time,” whereby the state performed intentional and non-intentional “seizures” of people's time, thereby “producing subjects who would not see themselves as independent agents” (Verdery 1996: 56).

Even though these regimes did not bare an exclusively Jewish character, and in that sense are not directly comparable to the restrictions that had existed for Jewish movement outside of the Pale, Soviet Jews, like other suburban dwellers were caught in the workings of these regimes, having to accommodate their life in accordance with train schedules. For instance, the mother of one of my informants had to spend as many as five hours daily to get to her work place in Moscow and back – before she could not endure this anymore and found a local employment in Malakhovka (JEES_097_AS). Another person spent four hours every day to get to her work place in the printing house in Moscow (JEES_120_GZ). As compared to summer-house dwellers, suburban railroad transportation was a permanent necessity for local inhabitants, the key means of transportation structuring their everyday existence.

Travelling in suburban trains is organized around short (4-5 miles) segments, with the train covering each of them in 3-5 min. The specific “chronotope” of suburban train transportation requires passengers to be constantly time-conscious not to miss their station – especially if the car is full; trains are mostly packed in the mornings and in the evenings (work-related cycle), as well as in the summer time. The distance between or among places is measured by the number of stations and the time necessary for the train to go from one to another.

Of the two settlements discussed here, Saltykovka is 8 stations removed from Moscow (orange dots on the map bellow), which is about 25 min. of travelling in today’s trains; Malakhovka is 15 stations away (green dots on the map bellow), and it requires about 40 minutes to get from it to Moscow.



Ill. 10: Suburban railroad connection from Moscow to Saltykovka and Malakhovka. 1 – Kazan’ railway station (Moscow); 2 – Saltykovka; 3 – Kursk railway station (Moscow); 4 – Malakhovka

Until 1950s suburban trains were driven by steam locomotives, until the government decided to transfer the railroads with most intensive freight and passenger transportation routes to electric traction; suburban railroads around large industrial centers were among the first candidates for this shift (Rakov & Ponomarenko 1956: 3).



Ill. 11: Suburban electric train.

Inscription under the picture: “Electric train of suburban railroad transportation arrived at the station of Mamontovskaya,¹⁵⁶ Moscow suburbs” (Source: *Soviet Union*, № 8 (42), August 1953. P. 32). These electric trains looked exactly the same over the several following decades.

Suburban trains: explication/ production of differences

Soviet suburban trains were similar to the “3d class cars” in prerevolutionary trains; they were not divided into “classes,” did not have any compartments, people were sitting on wooden benches in a common carriage. Since very few people had cars or could even dream about those (e.g. JEES_078_VM, JEES_051_PZ), suburban trains were in a way an example of “forced democracy” that brought together people of different social statuses, professions, ages, ethnicities, etc.

¹⁵⁶Mamontovskaya is № 23 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.



Ill. 12: Inside a Moscow suburban train (1950).
(Source: *Ogonek*, № 38 (1215), Sept. 17, 1950.)

Various encounters that people had while travelling on a suburban train could best be described as relations of local practice, where social differences would be recognized, ascribed or actualized in specific communicative situations. This was particularly important since no explicit “rules” existed that could explain what Jewishness meant in terms of social “otherness” – either because such rules were intentionally concealed by the state power (as far as its discriminatory practices are concerned), or because they existed as certain tacit assumptions of everyday interactions.

While short trips in Soviet suburban trains were not particularly conducive to story-telling, as was the case a century prior to this (cf. “The third-class train car was the place where Jews from the shtetls and cities of Eastern Europe would, typically, meet, conduct business, speak Yiddish, and talk about their families” (Garret 2001: 67)), I recorded many memories *about* various travelling encounters, where Jewishness played a constitutive role.

The first type of such narratives deals with the notion of marginalization or direct danger that Jews were subjected to during their train travelling. For those safely living on a “Jewish street” among Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors whom one well knows, in a suburban settlement, railroad encounters could become instances of “exposure” of their Jewishness in an ethnically mixed train.

Above I have already given some examples of “judaization” (Garret 2001: 67) of suburban settlements through popular nicknames and ostensibly Jewish comparisons, which for many sounded as an offence. The following example provides a vivid description of the social atmosphere in late 1940s when Stalin’s last anti-Semitic campaign was already in full swing: “*Once I get into the suburban train after work, get seated. Lots of people around... A man is sitting opposite from me, and looks at me in a most unceremonious way... I think to myself: 'Why is looking like this?' Well, what can I do – I pretend I don't notice anything. Suddenly he goes: 'Sooo – I'm going to throw you away from the train right now! And you'll fly!!' And – silence. Nobody interfered. Silence! This was the most scary thing. I will never forgive this silence... After this incident I never knew whether I'd make it back to my home*” (JEES_120_GZ). To some extent – and especially for certain time periods such as the one described in this example – beginning of 1950s – one may indeed compare the Soviet Jewish railroad experience with that they had in the early twentieth century, when after the “waves of pogroms the train was... a reminder of the relative lack of safety in public spaces” (Garret 2001: 69).

Certainly, not all train encounters were as traumatic; after all, the train was also a place where various Jews met each other – those originally from Ukraine or Belorussia, those more “intellectual” and more “traditional” ones.¹⁵⁷ While already in the Middle Ages “a Jew could come to any point of the globe known at the moment and with high probability meet there with other Jews, his co-religionists” (*Tri evreiskikh puteshestvennika* 2004: 5), then Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Empire that “gathered” so many various Jews from the former Pale, was an ideal place of Jewish meeting and interaction. In particular, some of my informants or their relatives met their future Jewish spouses

¹⁵⁷Cf. the example of meeting a “savage Jew” on a suburban train quoted above.

precisely on board suburban trains (e.g. JEES_120_GZ, JEES_106_EU, JEES_117_YT_IT, JEES_120_GZ).

According to L. Zunz, two major paradigms may be distinguished in classical Jewish travel-writing – the “Jewish” and the “practical” one (“judisch und praktisch”); while “the first focused on the knowledge of the Holy Land, on the fates and habitation of dispersed Israelites, the second one were accounts in the interest of trade or production, or stories for the readers’ entertainment” (*Tri evreiskikh puteshstvennika* 2004: 10).¹⁵⁸ Jews travelled to Moscow suburbs for both “Jewish” and “practical” reasons. The first one is primarily represented in the visits urban Jews made to smaller suburban synagogues for Jewish holidays: “*Jews from all around would come to my father-in-law’s synagogue to pray for major holidays. There were cantors, too – from Moscow. Even Alexandrovich¹⁵⁹ came from the Big Theater. And Yurt [another cantor, – A. K.]. And he stayed with us for the night*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV); “*Sometimes the believers would stay [in our house], because they couldn’t travel on a Friday*” (JEES_096_EB). In late 1970s – early 1980s, clandestine Jewish education for children of refuzeniks partly took place in suburban summer houses rented as resort places for “multi-children families” (Matlina 2011: 19, 30-38, 147).

There were also “practical” reasons for both residing in and traveling to the suburbs. To begin with, economic considerations played a significant role for the decision to settle in the suburbs: many traditional artisanal occupations that the Jewish refugees brought with them, especially in the first and second migration waves, perfectly matched the nature of suburban economy, where “*small-scale productions reigned*” (JEES_020_LL). The size of the local Jewish communities, as well as their internal cohesion and the structures of domesticity, enabled people to build economic networks based on trust, when “*somebody was engaged in the artisanal production, somebody was selling something – and everybody knew everybody else*” (JEES_053_LT). Dense habitation in the central part of the settlement

¹⁵⁸With reference to: Dr. Zunz. *Gesammelte Schriften. Geographische Litteratur der Juden.* 5. 147.

¹⁵⁹About Mikhail Alexandrovich see: Loeffler 2008: 1232.

defined specific meeting points, such as the farmers' market, where "*all issues were discussed, all kinds of business ties were established*" (JEES_123_EO). As I will show later, apart from the market, Soviet stores in settlements such as Malakhovka and Saltykovka were almost exclusively operated by Jews; these stores tended to concentrate in the central part of the settlements, around the railway station, where there were more permanent as well as temporary customers (passengers coming to the settlement by railroad) (e.g. JEES_097_AS, JEES_127_EF, JEES_019_OZ). The same was true about trade that took place in small kiosks, or "tents" – those were either affiliated to larger stores, or operated on their own – and again, mostly by Jews (e.g. JEES_067_LT). The Jewish "peddling" trade that flourished in the immediate post-war period, usually took place not only at railway stations, but in the trains themselves (e.g. JEES_076_MA, JEES_101_ArV_AnV). Warehouses as important junctures in the trade-and-shipment process were likewise a part of the local transportation system and tended to cluster around railroad stations. It is obvious that since the railroad is essential for transporting of goods, train stations become a "symbol that marks the conflation of commerce and travel" (Garrett 2003: 118); stories about traveling for trade purposes are present in nearly every narrative of the Soviet Jewish trade.

Control over trade, or marketing of goods, was crucial for the suburban economy due to its semi- or non-official component; its emergence was inevitable already because it was required for religious practices, (particularly for matzo baking), but in the Soviet economy of shortages it went far beyond the religious context. Local flea markets, famous locations both in Saltykovka and Malakhovka, were another venue where this local clandestine produce found its customers. Jewish supply agents (Russ. *snabzhentsy*), whether those officially representing Soviet production units, or those seeking production materials and/or business partners for clandestine production, would be railroad travelers *par excellence* (JEES_020_LL, JEES_050_LL, JEES_082_LV). In sum, people generally describe their experience of living outside of the big city as staying "close, but detached"; on the one hand, living, for instance, in Saltykovka, one lived "*40 minutes away from Red Square*" (JEES_083_DT_MK) (also: JEES_069_GK, JEES_086_AR, JEES_019_OZ, JEES_068_GG), on the other, the actual travel time which included the trip to the railway station, the travelling in the train itself and probably by other means of public

transportation, as well as the dependence on the schedule of the suburban train “*not to miss the last train back home*” (JEES_111_RD) certainly made the distance very real.

The notion of “being detached,” in this case, from the center with its concentration of political power, is extremely important for the understanding of Soviet experience, including the Soviet Jewish experience. As A. Yurchak argues, the life of Soviet citizens, unless they belonged to party officialdom, unfolded in a “parallel” space, which did not imply any active opposition to the political regime. Yurchak observes that “it is more accurate to speak of parallel culture than of counterculture or the underground, both of which imply resistance to or subversion of official ideology and culture, and thus an involvement in their official logic” (Yurchak 1997: 163). Against various anti-Semitic campaigns of the state, many post-war Soviet Jews particularly wished to stay “invisible” for political gaze from above (e.g. JEES_011_AN, JEES_063_KR, JEES_050_LL), or, in the phrase describing similar post-socialist popular sentiments, “simply being left alone by the state to get by as best as possible is as much as they can hope for” (Dawisha 2005: 493). A typical piece of advice given to a person occupying the position of some “visibility” in the late 1940s was: “*If you want to stay alive, leave your work and go underground*” (JEES_043_GL) – which the person did, switching to the lowest-paid manual work, and thus most probably escaped persecutions.

Staying outside of large cities was one of the ways of being “out of sight, out of mind” vis-à-vis the Soviet state; as I will show later, this was particularly important for economic engagements suburban Jews were involved in: “*Because there was less control... so, entrepreneurial people succeeded living fine. Less control*” (JEES_118_MR_OR); [clandestine production] “*gave a possibility of having some life of your own. Q.: Freedom? A.: Yes. That’s why they settled in suburbs. Q. Somebody said, ‘The Soviet regime had its own life, and Jews had their own...’ A.: Absolutely! I totally agree*” (JEES_131_AR) (also: JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS). Besides, it was easier to “settle” problems with a few local non-Jewish policemen (JEES_082_LV) rather than to deal with non-familiar law enforcement agents in a big city.

Railroad was constitutive for Jewish suburban economic survival. Regular commuting by local trains was partly a necessity caused by governmental restrictions, and partly as a conscious choice to live outside of the big city; economic considerations played a considerable role in this choice. Jewish economic practices that emerged in suburban settlements around Moscow will lie at the core of the second part of my work.

PART II

CHAPTER FIVE

“IN THE SHADOW OF THE TALL FORESTS OF SOCIALISM”: POST-WAR ARTELS

Artel as a way of transition to socialist production

Artel, a word that is usually translated as “(craft) cooperative,” refers to small-or medium size producer units engaged in either permanent or temporary (seasonal) types of work such as construction, fishery, hunting, mining of precious metals, production of art objects, etc. Artels were known in Russia as early as the XI-XII c.,¹⁶⁰ and in pre-revolutionary time presented a viable and widely spread type of economic organization.¹⁶¹ In the early Soviet rhetoric they were collectively branded as “capitalist enterprises that used hired labor or became economically dependent from whole-sale purchasers, traders or usurers” (Buzlaeva 1975: 252). Although Soviet collective farms technically were agricultural artels, or voluntary association of land workers, one may guess that precisely because they were far from being voluntary, the notion of “artel” in present-day perception is primarily associated with its historical, pre-revolutionary meaning.

With all that, the early Soviet authorities saw artels as an important link in transition from small-scale “capitalist” to the “socialist” way of production; In particular, V. I. Lenin in his work “On cooperation” came up with the slogan that cooperation (i.e. incorporating of private producers into state-controlled worker groups) was the key stage of introducing socialism as such: “Presently, the social order that we must support more than usual, is the cooperative order” <...> “Given the collective

¹⁶⁰More about early artels in: Kalachev 1884, Isaev 1881. On the pre-revolutionary development of artel movement and the “artel boom” of the beginning of the twentieth century see: Averjanov et al. 2014: 213-227.

¹⁶¹In more detail see: <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C0%F0%F2%E5%EB%FC> (last accessed April 3, 2017). (in Russian).

ownership for the means of production, the class victory of proletariat over bourgeoisie, the order of civilized cooperators is the socialist order” (Lenin 1970: 371, 373). Although the aim of the new regime was to make everybody “without exception” (Russ. *pogolovno*) participate in cooperation (Ibid., 372), since his article is written in 1923, when the New Economic Policy was in its prime, Lenin limited himself mostly to peasant cooperation (Ibid., 370) rather than expanding it to the sphere of non-agricultural production. Fully determined to eradicate private economic initiative as such, for a short time being the regime was “taking time” with non-peasant groups in hope that they could rescue the country from the economic quagmire where it found itself by early 1920s.

The very names of many pre-war artels clearly show that they were conceived as an element of the socialist modernization project, which was to radically transform the very nature of manual labor: : “Shock worker” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Vol. I. P. 141); “Named after the Third Five-year Plan” (Ibid., P. 151), “New Dawn” (Ibid., P. 163), “Lenin’s Way” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Vol. II. P. 167) “Paris Commune” (Ibid., P. 238), “Hammer of October” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Vol. III. P. 6), “Red Nail-Maker” (Ibid., P. 33), “Named after Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army” (Ibid., P. 161), “Red Turner” (Ibid., P. 173), “Red Artisan” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Vol. IV. P. 82), “Forward!” (Ibid., P. 150), “Culture” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Vol. V. P. 76), “The Way of October” (Ibid., P. 167), etc.¹⁶²

In the wake of Lenin’s passionate claims, a large cooperative movement started in the country, whereby the state legislation created priority conditions for the development of cooperation-based production, which first and foremost meant “preferential provision with monetary and material resources, lowering of taxes, etc.” (Kondurushkin 1927: 120). In 1925 there existed 8,600 artisanal cooperatives in the country – and by the year of 1941, when the process of artisanal cooperation

¹⁶²The discrepancy between such high-flown slogan-like names of artels and their status in the general structure of the socialist economy was well perceived from the beginning; a popular joke gave artels one generic name: “Labor Lost” (Russ. *artel’ Naprasnyi Trud*) (e.g. JEES_020_LL, JEES_019_OZ, JEES_127_EF). This name counts among idiomatic expressions of the Russian language and signifies “enterprise working in a non-regular way, producing poor quality production,” or “useless work” (Mokienko & Nikitina 2007: 19).

country-wide was “largely completed,” the country had 25,600 producer cooperatives with the membership of 2,6 million people (Buzlaeva 1975: 252-253).¹⁶³

Perhaps due to this somewhat preferential treatment, as well as the broad politicization of the cooperative agenda during the implementation of Lenin’s “cooperative plan,” early cooperatives would at times turn into venues for quick illegal enrichment; thus, the era of the New Economic Policy gave rise to multiple “fictitious/ scam cooperatives” (Russ. *lzhekooperativy*) that were legally registered and received state funding and materials, but in reality would only create a semblance of production activity to disappear after a short period of time (e.g. Kondurushkin 1927: 121).¹⁶⁴

The resolution “On the reconstruction of work and organizational forms of producer cooperation” issued on July 23, 1932, i.e. after NEP, further stressed special privileges of artels to procure certain types of production materials on their own (with the exception of those in short supply such as leather, wool, cotton), including junk substances of various kinds fit for further processing into mass-consumption goods, and – equally important – to independently sell their own production in the markets as well as through state and other cooperative organizations. Moreover, the resolution stated that products manufactured from the self-procured materials could be sold at market prices rather than at fixed state prices (*Ekonomicheskaya zhizn’ SSSR* 1961: 275). Non-cooperated (individual) artisans were subjected to ever growing limitations on the part of the state (see: Osokina 2000: 220-221). All this testified to a special position of producer cooperatives within the rigid system of the planned Soviet economy.

De jure, “cooperative property” did not fully coincide with “socialist property”; the former was based upon voluntary socialization (Russ. *obobshchestvlenie*) of the members’ privately owned means

¹⁶³ In more detail on the cooperative movement during the New Economic Policy see in: Averjanov et al. 2014: 232-250.

¹⁶⁴ Two most famous literary examples of such false cooperatives may be found in Ilf and Petrov’s novel *The Little Golden Calf*: the first is the “Industrial artel Revanche” organized by an underground Soviet millionaire Koreiko (Ilf & Petrov 1961: 55-63, Ch. 5, “The Underground Kingdom”), and the second is the protagonist Ostap Bender’s artel “Horns and Hoofs” (Ibid., 168-181). See also: Zeltser 2001: 7-8, Averjanov et al. 2014: 248-249, Gradov 1938 (a false artel that conceals a religious sect who want to subvert the Soviet regime).

of production and monetary deposits; however, against the socialization of all essential means of production under socialism, cooperative property was in essence not much different from the state socialist property (see, for instance, Kozyr' 1975: 235). In the early years of Soviet cooperation its "material basis" could indeed have been formed out of individual members' contributions, but in later years, especially in the post-war period, it seems that it was primarily the state that "transferred... its property to cooperatives" in order to sustain them as production units (Ibid.).

The dependence of cooperative producers units such as artels upon the state varied in different periods of the Soviet rule; yet in general it would perhaps be too uncritical to dismiss differences between the cooperative sphere and the first socialist sphere of production, as some authors do (e.g. "dependence upon the "state planning system... transformed [Soviet cooperatives] into a bureaucratically centralized system, no different from the state trading and procurement system" (Matusevich 1992: 51)). As I will discuss later in this chapter, until the very end of the Soviet regime, cooperation constituted a production sphere with somewhat different rules of game, which afforded additional benefits to those who could make use of this difference.

Soviet cooperatives in the shtetl

Preferential treatment to early producer artels as opposed to individual craftsmen working on their own was particularly important for the shtetl population, where, as was mentioned in the Introduction, the number of private artisans and craftsmen of various specializations and of various levels was so high. For the Jewish producers, it would seem, the choice to cooperate was tantamount to staying physically alive; in 1928, during the meeting of the statistical and economic commission of the All-Russian ORT, the "intensified cooperation" of Jewish craftsmen and "forceful introduction" (Russ. *nasazhdenie*) of producer artels was put forth as the most urgent task. This was supposed to solve the problems of "access to raw materials in short supply, production marketing, competition with state production units, re-qualification of the excessive number of artisans," etc. (L. Z. 1928: 12-13).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵In particular, artels saved many Ukrainian Jews from death by hunger in early 1930s, since they were providing ration books for their members (Chapin 2000: 653).

Although the terms of joining Soviet cooperation for Jews were not as harsh as in case of peasant collectivization (see, e.g. Zeltser 2001: 5-7), in 1920-30 the regime directly exhorted Jews to become members of artels, which was a part of the state politics of “productivization” of the Russian Jewish population: “In order to survive, they were forced to unite in co-operatives, or artels (associations for common work). The Soviet authorities saw these as a rather progressive mode of production, an intermediate stage on the way to mechanized manufacturing” (Estraikh 2004: 201).



Ill. 13: ORT poster advertising support of Jewish artisans (1930).

ORT (Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia) Poster, 1930, advertising technical support and consultations for Jewish unemployed, artisans and small-scale private craftsmen. Among other things, in the bottom, it mentions “support in artel organizations.” Author: M. O. Dlugach. (Source: Stampfer 2008, color plate 32 related to the article; Collection of Yeshiva University Museum, New York).

Against the nineteenth century projects of the Russian government to make Jews into agriculturalists, the Soviet campaign of Jewish “productivization” was not novel; moreover, even the major idea that justified governmental attempts in both cases, that of the “non-productive” nature of

trade,” was a shared rationale – even though in the nineteenth century it was inspired by the ideas of Physiocrats (see: Kahan 1986: 43), whereas the revolution, by the new Soviet productive ideology.

Indeed, shtetl artisans and craftsmen fared much better after the revolution as compared to private traders of all sorts; while in the more traditional, pre-Soviet time they ranked considerably lower in social hierarchy in comparison to traders (to the point that even the poorest hunger-stricken huckster wouldn't marry his daughter off to a craftsmen,” proudly claiming that there were “no tailors or shoemakers in the family line,” Veitzblit 1929: 41; also: Paperna 1911: 302), under the new production-oriented ideological order they moved forward to the “socially correct” position of “shtetl proletariat.” Artisans' eligibility for membership in cooperative organizations such as artels, and hence material support provided by those, brought about a virtual “honeymoon of improvement of their social status,” especially if they targeted their production to the peasant rather than shtetl market (Libes 1926: 64-67).¹⁶⁶ Joining of artels was an important survival strategy for *lishentsy*, people deprived of voting and other political and social rights. They were accepted to cooperative organizations because they could contribute additional financial resources for their activity, although after a while they were “purged out” and replaced by poor artisans (Zeltser 2008: 73-74).

Soviet artels were never officially established as ethnically specific (Jewish) units, yet within the former Pale the number of Jewish artisans in cooperative organizations reached a very high percentage (sometimes up to 70-75% in Ukraine and 80-90% in Belorussia), with Yiddish as the “main working language” (Ibid., 74).¹⁶⁷ Discussing the economic processes over the period between 1918 and 1927, the

¹⁶⁶Similar “productivization” process took place in a shorter, more “condensed” way in the Polish territories annexed by the USSR in 1939; during the twenty one month between the beginning of the Soviet occupation and the German invasion of the Soviet Union, local self-employed artisans “enjoyed special favour from the Communist rulers” and were “considered proletarian” based both on their material standing and ideological allegiances. While such artisans were allowed to operate on their own, the impossibility to get raw materials necessary for the production and especially the high taxes imposed by the new regime likewise pushed many to join the Soviet artels (see: Pinchuk 1991: 52-56).

¹⁶⁷The following example from Bălți (Moldova) shows that certain features of Jewish “economic tribalism” (Baron & Kahan 1976: xi) were preserved in the former shtetls in the post-World War II period as well; this story tells about a Ukrainian shoemaker, a good specialist, who was seeking employment in a shoe-production artel in Bălți, but would be turned down in all of them but one. In this last one “*somebody asked him: ‘Who was your teacher?’ And he says, for instance, ‘Yosl Sternberg,’ – and starts speaking Yiddish. A Ukrainian guy! And when he started*

book “Private Capital in the Soviet Court” gives long lists of artel “owners” charged with various economic crimes, most of which names are Jewish – e.g. “Meer, Estrov, Gutman, Raskin, Nemirovsky, Finkelshtein, Lenger, Kolontyrsky, Veinsberg, Pliner” (Kondurushkin 1927: 122) (also: 124, 162, 163, 204, 205, 207, 230-231).¹⁶⁸ The author particularly stresses “connections and acquaintances” that helped private entrepreneurs succeed in their business, a feature that Lenin called “petty-bourgeois conventionality of everyday economics” (Ibid., 202), and concludes that the criminals present an image of “a typical dealer whom the revolution raised to the surface” of social life (Ibid., 162). These early processes – which are, quite paradoxically, almost never involved in the discussion of state “economic anti-Semitism” in the USSR¹⁶⁹ – perhaps more than any others warrant description in terms of the “‘shtetl spirit,’ or the spirit of enterprise” that “survived... under virtually any conditions,” due to which “thousands of shtetl entrepreneurs managed to acclimatize to the Soviet environment and to find semi-legal (or completely illegal) outlets for their ventures” (Estraikh 2004: 212).

While Jewish artels signified the achievements of the Soviet regime in “productivization” of the Jewish population, what the regime feared perhaps not less than economic crime, was that such artels would be used, primarily or not, for Jewish religious observance. Indeed, the ability to abstain from work on Sabbaths was a major reason for many Jews to work in artels before the war: “...in the 1920s, cooperatives with a Jewish majority did not operate on the Sabbath or holidays. Some artels even sought, unofficially, to satisfy the needs of religious Jews” (Zeltser 2008: 73). This would have certainly been impossible in the first, industrial sector of the Soviet economy, deeply politicized and rigid in its

speaking Yiddish, they saw that he should be accepted. Q: So, he couldn't get in at first because these were exclusively Jewish artels? Inf.: They were mono-ethnic – with very rare exceptions. And so, they accepted him. There was no dire need for that, but... [what he said] was a sign of his level of qualification (Bāl_011_041). It is hard to say whether in this case it was Yiddish or the “proper apprenticeship with proper masters” (Baron & Kahan 1976: 156) that served as a “pass” into the trade for a non-Jewish person, but it perfectly shows the ethnic specificity of small production units such as artels in the former Pale of Settlement.

¹⁶⁸A more detailed description of one such case see in: Osokina 2000: 229-230.

¹⁶⁹Cf.: “NEP, it's when they gave freedom to these artel workers, and food reappeared in the country after the time of hunger... but then all this was terminated, and all our Jews went through Lubianka” [KGB prison in the center of Moscow, – A. K.] (JEES_078_VM).

production regime, and especially with the beginning of Stalin's experiments with the work week intended "to keep the Soviet people continually at work" and virtually to turn them into "supremely efficient robot-like creatures" (Foss 2004: 46) (also: Kingsbury 1935: 243-248, Schwarz 1951: 268-277, Echlin 1938, Ivanov 2006: 143, etc.).

In his book "Laborer Jews in the Struggle against Religion" A. Kirzhnits focuses precisely on the juncture between professional affiliation and the predilection towards religious observance; while he stresses impressive results in the "liberation from the influence of religious traditions" and "the rabbinical clique" (Kirzhnits 1931: 67), he observes that artisans remain the most "backward" group of the Jewish population: many of them still do not work on Saturdays (30) and celebrate Jewish holidays (21, 72-73). By and large, cooperation is seen as a niche where "entrenched accomplices of the cult" continue their activity by supplying workers with kosher meat (65, 75), diverting state resources, in particular, fabric, which is short in supply, for funeral shrouds (*tahrihim*) (76), and exploiting workers in illegal matzo bakeries (7).¹⁷⁰

The practice would continue in 1930s, when a number of artels were established by "religious Jewish craftsmen" precisely for the purposes of religious observance; these artels, although they could "include some of the religious service personnel, sometimes a rabbi, a slaughterer, or a teacher <...> nominally employed as craftsmen" were still engaged in production, utilizing their members' "previously existing network of social contacts" as far as "supply of critical raw materials" or "the sales of finished products" were concerned (Kahan 1986: 194). Against this, the fact that many former synagogues were transformed into "artisans' clubs" looks rather intriguing – one may only guess whether their new name really signified a drastic change of what was happening inside these buildings:

¹⁷⁰While there are no figures available on the number of Jewish artisans in Moscow suburbs, in the city itself Jews composed up to 35-41% of all watch-makers, 34% of all shoe-makers, and "somewhat smaller percent of tailors as compared to Ukraine and Belorussia," where their number was as high as 70-80% (Zinger 1928: 13). Characteristically enough, when famous Yiddish writer Avrom Reyzen arrived in Moscow from the United States in 1929, he was ceremonially greeted at the railway station by representatives of a number of Jewish organizations of the city; among those were not only "Jewish schools of Marjina Rosh and Malakhovka," but "primarily Jewish artisans of craft cooperative "Labor Credit" and "Self-Activity" (Russ. *Samodejatel'nost'*) (Estraiikh 2015: 106-108).



III. 14: Synagogues turned into artisanal clubs (1931).

The title on the top reads: “*Opiate dens*¹⁷¹ – INTO HOTBEDS OF CULTURE”

Picture 1: Club of woodworkers in the building of the former Ijublinskaya¹⁷² synagogue (city of Vitebsk, BSSR); Picture 2: Former synagogue, transformed into a craftsmen club (town of Uman’, USSR). (Source: *Bezbozhnik*, № 24, Dec. 1931, P. 17).

Using artel affiliation as a form of “disguise” was especially characteristic of the Chassidim who, while formally being artel members, usually worked at home in the time free from religious duties, which included religious education of the children, preparation of ritual slaughterers, etc. (see: Osipora 2002, “Change of Jewish religious life with the end of NEP” in Ch. 1). Chassidim also used artel membership to get “legalized” in the vicinities of large cities such as Moscow – especially because for the most part they fell into the category of *lishentsy* as active followers of the “religious cult”; joining an artel as a legal way of staying in Moscow suburbs was a “customary” way of individual and collective migration for the purposes of reinstating religious life at a new place (Ibid., Ch. 3, “Destruction of Chasidic communities in Moscow and Moscow region”) (see also: Charny 2002a, Snopov 2002: 80). One of my informants remembered one such artel in the town of Egor’evsk, 101 km. away from

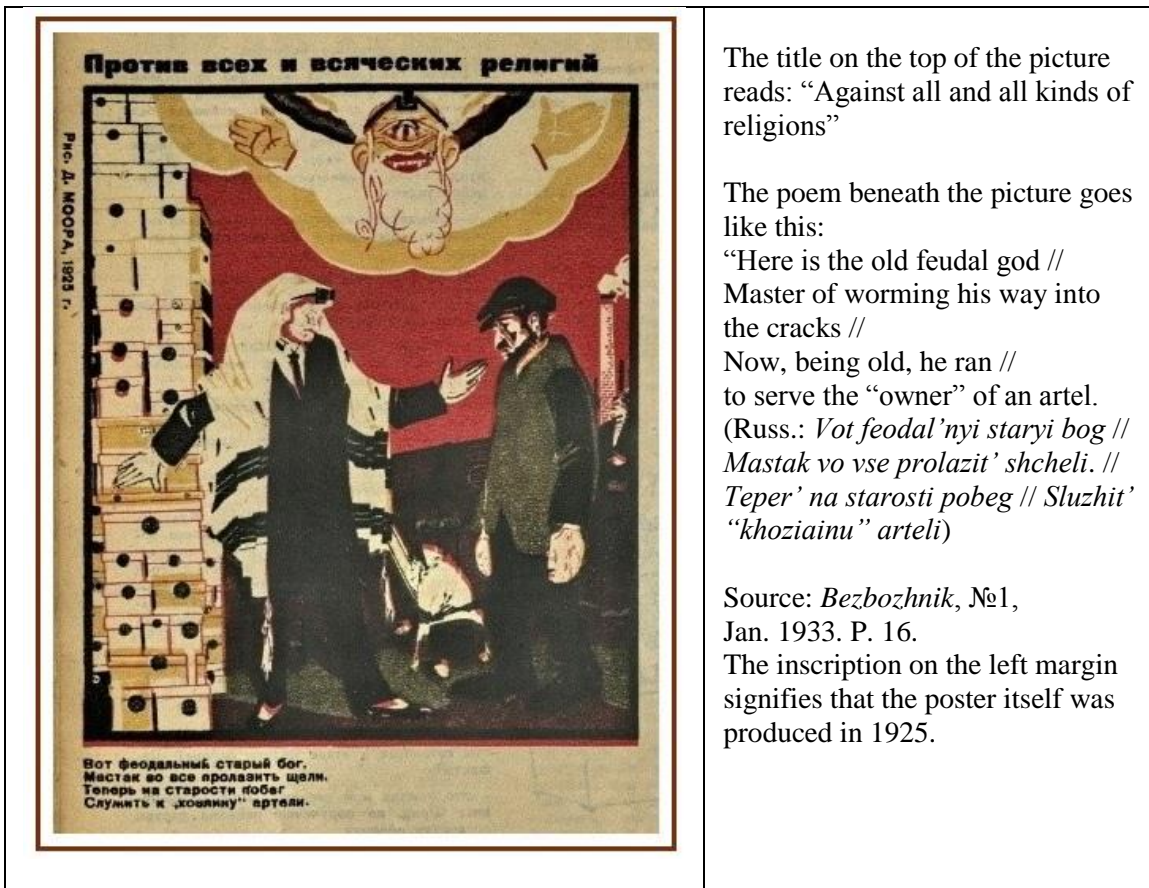
¹⁷¹A reference to a much popularized phrase by Karl Marx, “Religion is the opium of the people.”

¹⁷²Most probably a misprint for “Lubavitcher.” There were indeed a number of Chassidic synagogues in Vitebsk (see: Karpenkin 2016: 165-169), yet it is hard to tell, which one is represented on the picture above.

Moscow, with a characteristic name “Nagorea,” which was supported by the Joint Distribution Committee and consisted of people who observed Sabbath (JEES_060_TZ).

Being aware of these hidden religious practices, Soviet authorities channeled particular efforts for anti-religious propaganda in places with large concentration of Jewish artisans, including those situated within the city limits, such as Marjina Rosha and Cherkizovo (Freitag 1999: 183, 194).

Soviet visual propaganda made its due contribution to these efforts:



Ill. 15: Poster “Against all and every kind of religion” (1925/1933).

The picture characteristically shows the difference between artel production and large socialist enterprises; while artel uses the work of hired labor (a squatting child between the two standing adult figures), the latter is embodied by the smoking chimney in the background; artel is portrayed as a more primitive production unit since it manufactures some kind of rough boxes stacked on the left – clearly not a considerable input into industrialization process. The rabbi’s gesture perhaps expresses the prohibition to work on a certain religious holiday. The word “owner” in the poem is not accidental; taken into quotation marks, it attempts to make an ironic subversion of the popular image of artels as “not-fully-Soviet” production units, since the sole “owner” of socialist enterprises was certainly the state.

Against what was discussed above one may hypothesize that a specific connection between economy and ethnicity was formed during the first two decades of the Soviet rule, when large numbers of Jews from economically undermined shtetls joined Soviet cooperative organizations such as artels in order to survive and perhaps keep up their religious practices. The pre-revolutionary stereotype of Jews not being engaged in “real” labor could also persist in a modified form under the new realities: if previously this meant not working on the land, now it signified working outside of the “most progressive” industrial sector of the Soviet economy.

These and other relevant topics will be discussed later in this chapter in relation to Soviet post-war artels as they existed in Moscow Jewish suburbs.

Post-war artels in the Soviet Union.

While during the initial period of the Soviet rule artels were seen as a progressive type of economic organization due to their role in re-orienting the national economy to the socialist track, in the post-war period the attitude to artels seems to have changed. They were still seen as an intermediary stage of turning “small-scale commodity (Russ. *melkotovarnoe*) production” into “communal socialist economy, re-educating of small-scale proprietors into a person of collectivist mentality” (Artel 1950: 123) – yet the very presence of such “small-scale” production units seem to have turned into a certain burden for the rapidly centralizing economic regime. Besides, after Stalin’s famous assertion, made as early as in 1939, that “in essence” socialism is already built in the USSR, the very status of producer artels functioning on slightly different grounds as compared to the enterprises fully with socialist administrative economy was ideologically somewhat problematic.

Soviet teleological rhetoric of progress, whether political, social, or economic, placed artels into the “archaic” economic slot, as something lagging behind the more advanced and modern types of economic activity: “Each economic formation is defined by specific forms of cooperative formations. Artels emerged in under-developed economic systems, with the dominance of the natural economy and

primitive forms of trade” (Nikolaev 2007: 28).¹⁷³ This was a logical continuation of the interwar perception of artisans as “not-fully-proletariat,” a “petty-bourgeois” and “backward” group that “lacked modernity” and was “inconsistent with their [communists’] visions of a modern, socialist, industrial economy (Fitzpatrick 1986: 187, 210). As time went on, this attitude seems to have grown stronger, which must have been one of the reasons why post-war artels received so little attention in scholarly research, whether at the time of their existence, or later on.

On the other hand, post-war economic realities – devastation of the economic infrastructure, specific demographic situation with a considerable attrition of the working-age male population,¹⁷⁴ dire material circumstances of the majority of population etc. – were perhaps comparable to the that of early 1920s, immediately after the Civil War and the policy of “war communism.”

Living “*beyond the pale of poverty*”

A Russian historian of everyday life N. N. Kozlova observed that shortages were such a pervasive phenomenon of the Soviet regime that the whole history of the country “can be written from a particular perspective: when various things were missing” (Kozlova 1996: 31). The post-war years were perhaps the “darkest” in this respect: the general economic crisis at the time meant the lack of dwelling, abysmally low salaries, drastically insufficient support of war invalids, extreme need for basic everyday commodities and foods.

Living conditions, as I already mentioned earlier, could be rather appalling. It was not uncommon for a family of 7-8 people to live in a 10 square meter room, whereby “*some people had to sleep either*

¹⁷³In his poem “The last craftsmen” (Russ. *Poslednie kustari*), a famous Soviet Jewish poet Boris Slutsky wrote: “They worked from dawn to dawn // these fanatics of individualism. // In the shadow of the tall forests of socialism // Craftsmen were nurturing their little bushes” (Russ.: *Rabotali s zari i do zari // fanatiki individualizma. // V teni bol’shikh lesov sotsializma // svoi kusty rastili kustari* (Slutsky 2011: 32). The word “bushes’ in this stanza (a homonym to the work *kustar*’, craftsman, not etymologically related to it) is clearly juxtaposed to the word “forest” that implies large-scale economic endeavors of the socialist state; besides, the Russian word *lesa* is polysemic: it may signify both “forests” and “scaffolding” – in the latter case lowly pursuits of craftsmen are presented as insignificant against the large-scale construction projects of the new regime.

¹⁷⁴Many women after the war became the only bread-winners for their families, cf.: “*Men died on the front lines, women were left with kids – these women were the major work force in artels*” (JEES_114_FK); “*There were millions of women after the war, who had no particular education, but could read and write – all of them were craving for some kind of work*” (JEES_081_VV).

on the table, or under it” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV)¹⁷⁵ (also: JEES_097_AS); many were waiting for the official “improvement of dwelling conditions” for decades (JEES_086_AR); war invalids, although they were supposed to get preferential treatment as far as housing is concerned, could be arbitrarily denied such improvement – one of my informants had to take shelter in an attic for as long as 35 years until eventually he was allocated a room in a communal apartment by the factory where he worked (JEES_076_MA).

It seems only natural that “in any period of famine or near-famine... access to food looms first and foremost in people’s consciousness” (Filtzer 1999: 1027). One of my informants metaphorically described post-war years as “*living beyond the pale of poverty*,” with the ultimate horizon of expectations “*to eat enough*” (JEES_083_DT_MK). Even in the nearest proximity to Moscow people are remembered to bloat with hunger (JEES_122_MR), to feed their children with press cakes (Russ. *zhmykh*) just to fill their stomachs with something edible (JEES_086_AR) and to exchange a pot of home-grown potatoes for a spoon of butter and a little bit of tea at the farmers’ market (JEES_074_GR). In one case, already in 1950s, a person had to sell a pair of lacquer shoes, one of his top treasures, to buy a fish for his mother-in-law to celebrate Rosh Hashanah (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). The image of a rich classmate, the son of a clandestine producer, eating sausages for breakfast, is presented as a case of unimaginable luxury of the time (JEES_108_AP).

The situation with consumer goods was likewise calamitous: “in 1946 the Soviet clothing industry produced one-quarter of a piece of underwear, less than one pair of socks, and half a pair of shoes for each of its citizens. Soap was almost impossible to acquire” (Filtzer 1999: 1018). Wearing your school uniform the entire day for the lack of any other clothes was everyday reality for many children (JEES_108_AP), as was sharing one pair of shoes among several siblings (JEES_111_RD); one cooking-pot per family was seen as normal, and was used for all cooking needs (JEES_041_MR_LD_LR).

¹⁷⁵1 square meter, a common unit of measurement for living space in Russia, roughly equals 10.5 square feet.

It would only seem natural and expedient in a situation like this, to make all the best efforts to fill the multiple gaping holes in the national consumer demand – and such attempts were indeed undertaken. In her article “A Postwar Perestroika? Toward a History of Private Enterprise in the USSR” J. Hessler argues that the first post-war years in the Soviet Union may be defined as a “perestroika” of sorts, since not only was small-scale entrepreneurship enabled in these years, but also because “ordinary citizens as well as bureaucrats could imagine a postwar future distinct from the economic, political, and repressive model of the 1930s” (Hessler 1998: 517, 518). While during the war years non-state (informal, private) trade and artisanal production often constituted the only means of survival both for producers and for their customers, and because it continued flourishing after the war, attempts were made, on the part of the top-level politicians in conjunction with some local party leaders, to legalize, or, rather, decriminalize, certain types of private entrepreneurship while simultaneously turning it profitable for the state. In fact, these were attempts at reinstating some of the elements of the New Economic Policy for the sake of resolving economic problems of the country, first and foremost, food-related problems (see: Zubkova 2000: 71). For the initiators of these reforms, the deplorable situation with production of both producer and consumer goods, as well as the large-scale tasks of post-war economic recovery seemed to constitute sufficient grounds for a certain allowance to private agency in the economic sphere. These attempts, however, failed first and foremost because of the inability of their initiators to “question the broader implications of their approach” (Hessler 1998: 533) or, in other words, the ideological consequences of their initiative.¹⁷⁶

For the party authorities, losing of the grip on the economy would entail the loss of political control; instead of the way chosen in the 1920s, i.e. the temporal legalization of small-scale private

¹⁷⁶One of the major figures in this initiative was Grigory Lazarevich Marjakhin, at the time Chief of Taxes and Duties Administration, a person of obviously Jewish background. The only reference that I was able to discover about his further life and career emerged in the “Note on the number of Jews among nomenclature employees of the central apparatus of the USSR Ministry of Finances, composed in response to an anonymous letter to A. A. Zhdanov” (then the first secretary of Leningrad CPSU city committee): from this note it follows that G. L. Marjakhin was one of three Jews who were “dismissed” from their positions in either 1947 or 1948 (Khlevnjuk et al. 2002: 265) (with reference to: State Archive of the Russian Federation, F. P-5446. Inv. 59. File 46. Pp. 146-148).

economic initiative, this time they followed a different path: allowing more leeway in terms of production and its marketing to small producer units within the so-called “local industry” (Russ. *mestnaya promyshlennost’*) as a particular sector of the state production structure. Local industry designated enterprises generating production for the local needs, utilizing local resources or leftovers from industrial and agricultural enterprises, and mostly small- and medium-scale in size. On August 22, 1945, the USSR Council of People’s Commissars adopted a decree “On the measures to increase mass consumption goods and food stuffs by enterprises of the local industry, producer cooperation of cooperation of invalids.” This decree stipulated that 50% of the production generated at the local industry enterprises may remain at the disposal of local party executive bodies (rather than be shipped away to meet the state production targets), that certain types of artel-manufactured commodities (such as furniture, barrels, bricks, chalk, shingles, etc.) were exempt from centralized distribution, in other words, could be sold by artels themselves, that artels are allowed to produce spare details for equipment placed at the major industrial enterprises, collect and use scrap materials for their production, and that larger state industries were responsible for rendering technological help to artels and artels of invalids (in more detail see: *Direktivy KPSS... 1957: 867-873*). A year after, on November 9, 1946, further regulations on the cooperative trade and production followed, that allowed organization of “tailor, shoemaker and repair workshops, as well as hair-dresser saloons and workshops for the production of mass-consumption goods,” purchasing of the surplus of local agricultural produce “on the basis of prices formed at the market,” and also granted a number of taxation benefits to cooperative production units (*Direktivy KPSS... 1958: 110-111*).

One can hypothesize that in the wake of this political course artels as small-scale producer units were granted a “temporary indulgence” in hope that they could at least partially decrease the pervasive shortage of consumer goods and food stuffs, alleviate some of the production burden in the industrial sphere, as well as to take some employment pressure off the first sector of economy, especially as far as

employment of war invalids was concerned.¹⁷⁷ I also argue that until their abolition in the late 1950s and early 1960s, multiple artels not only became essential for survival for a fairly large number of people, but also a niche where private economic agency, banned from other spheres of the socialist economy, found its temporary abode.

Artels as “not-fully-socialist” production units?

According to their statute, artels were cooperative organizations that establish their production process on the basis of its “communal socialist property”; upon the approval of the general meeting of its members, an artel became part of the cooperative Producer Union (Council) and conducted its work under its supervision. Artels formulated their production targets that were approved by the Producer Union, but also had to comply with “state obligations” as far as their output was concerned (e.g. *Ustav... 1953*: 1-6).

In the Soviet economy, cooperative sector was the third production sphere following industry and agriculture; although this sector was operating on slightly different grounds in terms of obtaining production materials (possibility of obtaining materials on their own, either from state enterprises, or from the population) and distribution of its production (which could be done through state as well as cooperative channels), cooperation, including producer artels as its element, certainly were a part of the Socialist production mechanism. In particular, they were part of the Soviet “five-year-plans” (*Zakon o piatiletnem plane... 1949*: 39), which in its turn meant continuous “struggle” to meet the state targets, organization of the “socialist competition,” “strengthening of the socialist organization of labor and “communist upbringing” of artel members (Ibid., 3-4).

The argument that the cooperative sector in general, and producer artels in particular lay “outside of the sphere of socialism” and thus did “not comply with the principle of the construction of socialism”

¹⁷⁷As a matter of fact, similar considerations decided the fate of artels in the 1930s, when it turned out that the “collapse of artisan and craft industries” brought about extreme shortages especially of the goods produced predominantly in such small-scale production units. Even some top political officials had to interfere and call “for a new appreciation of the value of artisanal production” as well as for its stronger state support. As a result, the possibility of artels to be “superseded by large-scale, mechanized factory production” was not enforced at the time (see: Fitzpatrick 1986: 215-220).

rationing coupons, official “labor books” that artel members would receive and the calculation of the years of “work experience” (Russ. *stazh*), necessary for pension award, etc. Artels were functioning in state-appointed workshops, paid state taxes and were controlled by the state financial organs. In other words, in essence the themes as well as the rhetoric of the journal were not different from what one would have found in publications on the first, industrial sector of the Soviet economy.



Ill. 17: A page from the “labor book” (1950s).

A page from the official labor book (Russ.: *trudovaya knizhka*) of Batsheva Aronovna Belyat, indicating that from August 1954 to March 1955 she was employed as an accountant in the “*Inkoopkach*” artel in Leningrad (2d entry from the bottom). Courtesy of B. A. Belyat’s daughter.

On the other hand, and paradoxically enough, common people who were and are not necessarily familiar with official foundational principles underlying artel organization, often describe them as “not (fully)-Soviet” production units, or “not (fully)-socialist” niches in the Soviet economy: “*I don’t think this was state production... they had to register, but then there was no private property at the time*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); “*this was private production registered under... under the jurisdiction of the*

state” (JEES_130_DT); “*Artels were functioning virtually as private [units]*” (JEES_105_VG) (also: JEES_126_VS, JEES_109_SG_GG, JEES_123_EO).

Characteristically, they often draw analogies and even construct a direct continuity between post-war artels and production units that existed in the time of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, when private economic initiative was decriminalized, albeit for a short period of time: [artels] “*were private... it was some kind of NEP rudiment... I guess, they were some kind of very-very small businesses of sorts*” (JEES_024_IB); “*artels, they existed for 2-3 years only, right after the war, when the black market existed openly... It was like a mini-NEP then. Artels were an echo of NEP*” (JEES_052_SU_GK_LL); “*Although they say that NEP was ‘strangle’ by 1929-1930, in reality all this went on till the beginning of the war in this or that form, less so in the center, more in the province – because there was no light industry production that could satisfy the population*” (JEES_051_PZ) (also: JEES_046_EP, JEES_119_MS_SS, JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS, JEES_112_FK).

Continuous associations between NEP and post-war Soviet artels, apart from the assumed “non-socialist” nature of this production unit as such, seem to hinged on three key ideas: 1) the “rudimentary”/ “primitive” nature of their production process and the types of goods they manufactured; 2) the idea, although not pervasive, that artels were venues of illegal personal enrichment and consequently the danger associated with this both in the 1920s and in the post-war period; and 3) that artels were more often than not “Jewish places.” Below, I will illustrate all of these three key ideas.

1. Artels as a “primitive” production unit.

The very existence of these artels fully exhibits the Soviet paradox of simultaneous existence of two distinct economic “orders” (Russ. *uklad*): the highly industrial technological sector (heavy industry, military production) and the sector of consumer goods and services that was more often than not financed according to the “residual principle.” Rapid pre-war industrialization and post-war economic restoration, the two lengthy “mobilization” periods of the Soviet regime, happened at the expense of the production of consumer goods – which might be seen not only as a typical feature of the

“centralized” economy as such, but also of the larger ideological ethos of the Soviet regime, which regarded common people as expendable resource necessary for the state to attain its far-reaching aims.

French historian and sociologist Allan Besançon called the “innumerable artels” of the post-war and later time a “life buoy making it possible to cross the turbulent waters of the socialism under construction and not to perish in the process” (Besançon 1998: 281); my interviews fully support this idea: “*This producer cooperation emerged after the war. [Everything] was missing, people had died on the front line. It was necessary to produce small-scale goods*” (JEES_117_YT_IT); “*Invalid artels, yes... they helped people survive, just survive. Nobody was prepared to “nurse” them at the time*” (JEES_083_DT_MK); “*there were especially many of them [artels] after the war, and they helped the state a lot to produce these petty things*” (JEES_105_VG). Importantly enough, as the last example suggests, producer artels, by filling the gap in the production of consumer goods, were crucial for the successful advancement of the first sector of the Soviet economy, industrialized and technologically advanced (in the time-specific sense of the word) – something I will return to further on.

My informants consistently evinced the image of artels as a “primitive” place – both in terms of how they looked, and how their production process was organized: “*[it was placed] on a semi-basement level... We got downstairs, and saw... whatchamacallit? a kind of sawbucks, two sticks here, and a middle stick across, and small nails around, and women were sitting and weaving belts of some nylon thread... Everything was on the lowest level... it was an artel*” (JEES_002_LL).

“Producer Cooperation” journal published, for instance, articles on the new methods of repairing men’s shirts in artels: since, the author says, it’s mainly the cuffs and the collar of a shirt that wear out, one cuts a piece of fabric from the back of the shirt, sews new cuffs and collar out of it, and substitutes the cut-out piece with a different piece “of a suitable color” (Peips 1957: 19). There were special artels that darned old socks (their services were in high demand) (Malyshkin 1958: 14), or dyed old shoes to prolong their service life (Meltser 1959: 38). A number of cooperative rental offices provided people with the most basic items that they could not afford buying, such as table-lamps or chess boards

(Margolin 1958: 22-23). In other words, artels were very compatible with the economic devastation left in the wake of the war: “rudimentary” demand was meeting here the “rudimentary” supply.



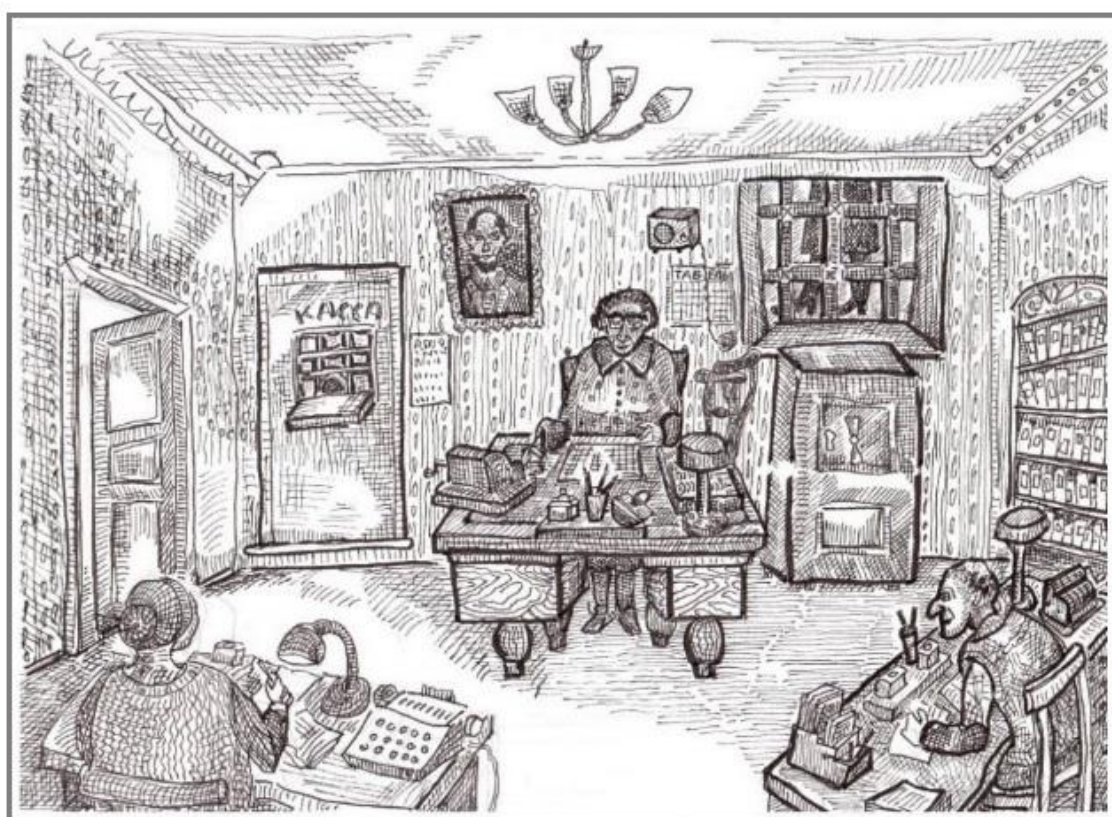
Ill. 18: Artel employees, Leningrad, ca. 1956.

Artel “*Nadomnik*” (Outworker artel) was situated in the semi-basement of the house (windows behind the metal bars). Courtesy of Leonid Yakovlevich Grol’man, whose mother is in the top row, on the far left.

To get inside, one had to go down the stairs and enter through the “*iron-shod door with a very heavy bar.*” Since the artel was situated beneath the street level, at times it would be flooded with water. The artel was associated with a number of workshops (Russ. *tsekhi*) and warehouses, scattered around the city: officially it was an “invalid artel,” so many of its employees were handicapped and worked at home. They wove string bags and carpet beaters, sewed socks, mittens, bags and hats, bound books and documents, and even manually reproduced works by famous Russian painters. An abacus was the main working tool of L. Grol’man’s mother, an accountant – she was part of the “*healthy work force*” (Russ. “*zdorovaya sila*”) always employed in the invalid artels. L. Grol’man also recalled many Jewish names of the artel employees, mostly accountants and cashiers: “*There was a stunning person there, a Jewish*

cashier. I was always surprised – he counted money in Yiddish: *ejns, tswey, dray, fir...* Sometimes he would secretly give calendars of Jewish holidays to my mother, self-made calendars on a photographic paper, 3 by 5 centimeters in size”¹⁷⁹ (JEES_022_LG). Next to the bookkeeper’s room there was the so-called “Red corner,” a special room for conducting political studies and meetings of the local (artel) party organization.

At my request, L. Grol’man drew the interior of the artel, namely, its bookkeeper’s room, where his mother worked and where he spent a lot of time as a child.



Ill. 19: L. Grol’man. In my mother’s artel. Courtesy of L. Ya. Grol’man.

The “primitive” character of artels as production units may also be seen in the descriptions of the goods they manufactured. Artels produced “*plastic buttons, gowns, shirts... everyday things*” (JEES_077_VC), “*petty stuff like reels of thread, shoelaces, some hats*” (JEES_131_AR), “*butter*

¹⁷⁹Approximately 1 by 2 inches.

dishes, all kinds of toys” (JEES_090_IA), “They didn’t produce luxury goods, they produced mass consumption goods, which was necessary for all, like pots, spoons, ladles...” (JEES_068_GG) (also: JEES_078_VM, JEES_059_IV, JEES_111_RD, JEES_129_AS, JEES_091_IZ_BB, etc.).



Ill. 20: Samples of artel production (1950s).



Ill. 21: Inside producer artels (1950s).

Picture 1: Shoe-repair artel in Moscow. Source: *Producer cooperation* Issue 1, January 1955. P. 17. Picture 2: Watch-repair workshop; on the foreground – foreman V. M. Khavkin. (Source: *Producer cooperation* Issue 10, October 1956. P. 9).

Low degree of specialization

Another important feature of artel production was the low degree of specialization: many artels produced a large variety of small non-related goods, no matter what the official production profile of the artel could have been. Here is, for instance a range of object produced by a Saltykovka artel “Sport and

Hunting” (*Sport-Okhota*), established in 1946, and situated on the same street as the present-day synagogue: “nets, coils, men’s and women’s shoes on a rubber soil, slippers, straps for men’s watches, nail files, combs, whistles, dog collars, dog muzzles, canvass gun cases, gun waddings, caps for pens, butter dishes, children’s guns, shooting targets...” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1222. Pp. 128-129).

The very fact that a productive unit manufactures such an array of not always related small-scale things is suggestive of its economic standing, in particular, the “pre-modern” nature of economic exchange it is involved in, where the variety of items produced creates an additional “safety valve” by providing potential marginal benefit to the sum total of merchandise sold.

The low degree of narrow specialization in artels is also comparable to the strategies of Jewish peddlers who used to trade manufactured goods and foods in the villages under more traditional economic arrangements: the greater the variety, the higher the chance that at least some of it will be sold, and the more one can perhaps maneuver the price. J. Kugelmass quotes a description of a category of traders known as “*vos es lozt zikh*” (Yiddish), i.e. buying and attempting to sell “whatever may be of any use”: “His wagon was surrounded by a type of trader called ‘*vos es lozt zikh*’. They touched the butter, cheese and eggs and they asked the peasant what the prices were. They haggled, they made a fuss and they argued about the merchandise” (Kugelmass 1980: 34). The other way of describing this type of peddler was “what-have-you-to-sell-men”: these were people “who bought from the peasants anything they had for sale to be resold either to other peasants or to the people living in the town” (Chapin 2000: 326). The junk business that will be discussed in Chapter 7, in a way epitomized this strategy: collection of as much as possible of items and substances of very low exchange value for the purpose of turning quantity into quality.

This “assemblage” of things produced may be seen as an indicator of a particular type of dominant forms of production and consumption – in this case, of the socialist economy that consistently produced shortage of various consumer goods. On the other, such “constellations of tangible objects” allow to discern the “institutional infrastructure, classification protocols, and ideological values” (Oushakine 2014: 201-202) that enable their very emergence. Significant for our case is the relation to

small-scale artel production simultaneously to the “socialist” and the “shadow” economic regimes. In addition, production and consumption being practices connecting people and material objects, the latter embody human relations involved in their production and exchange; in that sense, material objects “evoke” their “developmental histories” precisely “by virtue of the activities of which they were previously a part” (Holland et al 1998: 61). This idea will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter in relation to clandestine artel production.

Low degree of specialization can also be found on a larger level of operations: many artels had a number of affiliate “workshops,” each producing different, and even unrelated goods. For instance, “Pekhorskaya” artel in the settlement of Tomilino¹⁸⁰ was engaged in production of cotton, woolen and semi-woolen yarn, socks and stockings, knitted underwear, silk kerchiefs, and also did “peat transportation” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Pp. 223-224 rev.) – most probably from the sites of its extraction in the rural area to peat-processing facilities in Moscow. “Podmoszagotprom” artel in Ljubertsy¹⁸¹ was engaged in chemical production (paints, primers, oils); production of yarn, ropes and clotheslines; manufacturing of wadded work clothes and pillows; manufacturing of men’s and women’s clothes such as shirts and underwear; and also collected household and industrial junk, bones, horns, hooves, scraps of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, etc. (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1228. Pp. 133-136). Many artels additionally collected logs and firewood “as an addition to the main activity.” It seems that the underlying principle of artel functioning was that the larger the scope of production activities, either within each particular production unit, or among the units associated to one artel, the more chances that artel would survive as a production unit, meeting the state targets, and perhaps producing something on top of that.

This officially “in-built” low degree of specialization could indeed mean production “on the side,” without controlling organs being aware of this. At times inspection raids would discover such

¹⁸⁰Tomilino is № 6 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements, next to Malakhovka.

¹⁸¹Ljubertsy is № 7 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

facts: “Recently we have visited a number of markets in Moscow. At some point we see a sign: “Artel Promgvozd” [nail-manufacturing artel, – A. K.]. This artel should produce nails only. So, what else can it sell? And just imagine, there is everything in their trade tent, even ready-made clothes” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File. 1412. P. 152).

Low quality of artel production

The situation of persistent shortage of consumer goods made Soviet customers not particularly choosy about the products available on the market simply because there was not much to choose from. In other words, it was not particular features of the goods that people were looking for in terms of convenience or fashion (consumer value), but the availability of goods as such, as nomenclature items (a pair of shoes rather than some specific pair of shoes). While even the goods produced in the first socialist sphere more often than not left much to be desired, the quality of artel production is usually described as low – and even abysmally low: “*they bought semi- or fully rotten materials of no quality, and then produced something out of it*” (JEES_074_GR); “*I think their goods were of poor quality. Not like the factory goods*” (JEES_117_YT_IT); “*I remember that their knitwear was trashy... well, their whole production, their equipment... it was like do-it-yourself stuff*” (JEES_112_FK).

Complaints of the poor quality of artel production were coming from all over the country and could reach the top political authorities, although it is not clear whether this was done in expectation of larger financial allocations into the cooperative budget, or in hope of punishing those guilty of disrupting the production order. Some details of official reports to the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR mention bear a nearly satirical character, mentioning artel-produced “combs that scratch and cut the skin, mineral soap that doesn’t lather, plywood satchels that can’t be used” (GARF-1. F. A259. File 201. Pp. 26-26 rev.), “buttons that have different number of holes – two, three, five, whereas some others don’t have holes at all” (GARF-1. F. A259. File 201. P. 28 rev.), “toys that are done is such a primitive way that it is totally impossible to tell whom they represent, so for just in case they are marked as ‘dog’ or ‘hare’” (GARF-1. F. A259. File 201. P. 28), or “dark grey tooth powder that causes tooth enamel to fall off... local population, knowing the quality of the tooth powder, doesn’t buy it, so it’s

being sold to passengers on the railway stations” (GARF-1. F. A259. Inv. 6. File 201. P. 28 rev.). Low quality of artel production is often criticized in the “Producer Cooperation” journal (e.g. Petrushev 1955: 5, Babashkin 1955: 39, Davydov 1960: 39, etc.), calls to improve it are to be found throughout its publications.¹⁸²



III. 22: Caricature about the low quality of artel production (1953).

The major justification that artels themselves tried to put forward against the low quality accusations was that they “produce on the basis of leftovers” and hence “cannot make high quality goods” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1412. Pp. 196-197). However, there was another and more important reason for that – shared by both artels and large industrial enterprises. Both were attempting, whenever possible, to produce more expensive goods to meet the state targets, where the main indicator was the fulfillment of the plan “in gross” (Russ. *po valu*), counted both by the number of items produced and the money that went for its production. While the issue of whether the goods produced would be sold, or not, was not priority measurement, artels in particular seem to have been caught in a specific economic dilemma: to produce cheap goods of mass consumption that would be quickly sold out, in which case, however, artels were running the risk of not meeting the state targets – or to produce more

¹⁸²Similar complaints were pervasive in 1930s as well (see: Fitzpatrick 1986: 226-227).

expensive, although not necessarily higher quality goods, to comply with the state requirements. It looks like at least some artels preferred the second strategy: “Instead of the fixed assortment of goods necessary for the population, many enterprises and artels produce large amounts of expensive unusable cosmetics, toys and low-quality haberdashery” (GARF-1. F. A259. File 201. P. 24), “...producer and invalids’ artels... pursuing the increase in gross production... tried to meet the state targets through more labor-intensive and more expensive goods, often not necessary for consumers, and of very low quality... The state targets were not fulfilled in such categories of such highly required goods as clay dishes, clothesline, barrel-wear, school supplies, padlocks, headwear, table- and kitchen-wear, etc.” (GARF-1. F. A259. File 201. Pp. 25-25 rev.). As a result, the alternative expensive production was accumulating in the warehouses, not being able to find its buyer, at least locally (e.g. GARF-1. F. A259. File 201. P. 26). The lack of demand in the economy ridden with shortages, especially in the immediate post-war years, is noteworthy on two counts. First, this might signify, as in the examples above, the truly severe low quality of things produced that annulled even the most pressing demand for manufactured goods. Secondly, and more importantly, overstocking of artel-produced goods brought further evidence that they were essentially state enterprises, since overstocking, whether intentional (in the form of hoarding), or not, may be called one of the prominent features of the Soviet “economy of shortages.”

The low quality of artel production, although it was certainly an issue at the time, should not be overemphasized; numerous examples that will be quoted below show that no matter how “primitive” their production could have been, artels were still implementing the basic market principles of “supply and demand” by manufacturing everyday goods necessary for the population.

However, the official discourse on “low quality” opens up two additional considerations.

The first is related to what may be called “the loss of the poetics of manual labor” characteristic to artisanal-like production as such: Soviet artels, although originally rooted in traditional artisanal production, by the post-war time turned into mass-production units manufacturing standard “impersonalized” production – which, among other things, further testifies to the fact that they were but

cells in the overall Soviet production structure. This loss of emotional attachment to things produced may be one of the reasons for their low quality.

The second related consideration, or rather, question, may be formulated as follows: to what extent did the low quality of artel production evoke associations with the low quality of Jewish artisanal products in the past, particularly, in pre-revolutionary period, which was still remembered by a considerable number of people in 1940-50s? At this earlier period the non-skilled nature of much Jewish artisanal engagement often made Jews non-competitive on the growing and rapidly modernizing Russian market: “The turn-of-the-century market increasingly demanded sophisticated products, but Jewish artisans continued to be involved in less developed sectors of work and produced goods of low quality, reinforcing the negative stereotype of “Jewish bungle”” (Estraikh 2009: 9). Could then the very “low” nature of Soviet artel production bring back old associations and strengthen the perception of artels as a “Jewish place”? This question will be at the core of the further discussion in this chapter.

2. Artels and the second economy

*“How can one get rich in a planned economy?
One has to “go to the left”¹⁸³ (JEES_017_MB)*

*“Soviet rules were created precisely
for people to go around them” (JEES_127_EF)*

Earlier I noted that many people now think that artels were private rather than state production units; it seems that among other things this perception may be explained by common knowledge about the clandestine production that was conducted in them alongside with the official one. Created or, rather, revived in post-war period for the purpose of “healing up the wounds incurred by the war,” of which production of mass consumption goods and job placement of invalids were a part, artels clearly outgrew the original premises upon which they were legitimized.

¹⁸³A Russian idiom meaning “to do things in a not-fully legal or illegal way.” “Left” is often used as an adjective, to signify, for instance, that certain goods were not produced or sold in the legal way (“left goods”).

The already quoted “Annual reports of producer cooperative artels,” a 32-volume collection kept at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, afford a glimpse of artel structure, organization, and production role; below I will concentrate on the data for Moscow region in the years between 1946 and 1950.

What immediately strikes one when in these reports, is the number of artel employees; in most cases it is large enough to turn artels into small factories in their own right, and certainly larger than a small-size settlement-based production unit would imply, e.g.: 98 people (artel “Cooperative Dawn,” Malakhovka), 105 people (artel “Sport and Hunting,” Saltykovka), 252 people (artel “New Life,” Saltykovka), 210 people (artel “Tomilino¹⁸⁴ glove-maker”), 156 people (artel Metal Processing, Malakhovka), etc.

There are several explanations for this. First, most artels had a number of affiliated “workshops” (Russ. *masterskie*, or *tsekhi*) in various settlements, towns and villages in the vicinity, and the total number of workers of a particular artel included the total number of those working in these shops. For instance, artel “New life” (founded in 1945), based on the settlement of Saltykovka, had 186 employees who worked in eight different places: four hair-dressing saloons (settlements Saltykovka, Nikol’skoe, Gorenki, and the town of Reutovo), three photography workshops (settlements of Saltykovka, Nikol’skoe, and the train station of Zheleznodorozhnaya), and a workshop for “Other producer activities” in the settlement of Nikol’skoe (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1219. Pp. 136-137); “*artel could be divided into many workshops. I think we had one such workshop in Novosaltykovsky settlement*” (JEES_083_DT_MK). Sometimes a “workshop” could consist of only one person (e.g. GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1228. P. 136). Thus people may be speaking about any of those workshops calling them “artel,” but in reality it could have been one artel rather than eight, as in this case. Therefore, the actual number of artels could be smaller than what people would mention in the

¹⁸⁴Tomilino is № 6 on the “Circle of Jewish settlements around Moscow” map.

interviews. This distributed, rather than centralized structure of artel production most probably created additional possibilities for covert supply of production materials as well as reporting.¹⁸⁵

The very existence of such affiliate workshops is directly related to the question, of how many artels were there. Archival materials on the “Production activity reports of producer artels” in the Moscow region, particularly for the period between 1946 and 1950 that I looked at, contain information on around 500 artels, including those that were not situated in the nearest proximity to the city. For the two settlements under discussion, one finds only 9 entries, 4 for Saltykovka and 5 for Malakhovka, yet most of them had those workshops in the nearby settlements. The claim of one informant who said that in the years of 1950-60s there existed “125 artels” in Saltykovka only (JEES_068_GG) seem to be too high because a) he most probably counted artel workshops as independent artels, b) these workshops might have belonged to artels officially situated elsewhere, c) he could count at-home workers, whom he knew as artels in their own right. However, the very image of “a host of artels” is noteworthy in itself.

Secondly, artel employees often worked at home, in which case they would be called *nadomnik*, literally “at-homer worker,” or an “outworker,” implying occupation outside of a formal economic structure: Q: *Can one say that if it says in the document that there were 210 people in the artel, that some of them were working at home?* A: *Over a half for sure* (JEES_109_SG_GG).¹⁸⁶ Essentially this was a “putting-out system,” and especially it prevailed in the “invalid artels” created for people with limited capacities. Interestingly enough the number of at-home workers associated with particular artels, is never specified in the official reports; the conventional phrase about the number of employees usually

¹⁸⁵One of the claims for the necessity to “specialize” artels in the middle of 1950s, or, in other words, to homogenize their production output, was that “preservation of small-size, territorially disjunct workshops makes it difficult to organize the due registration of the production manufactured” (Petrushev 1955: 5).

¹⁸⁶One curious example proves this idea: a tailor artel was officially registered in my own house in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) on Chaikovskogo St., H. 12; according to the archival document, it employed 348 members. Considering the size of our 4-storied house, as well as the necessity to place some equipment in the artel, even if the whole house had been surrendered to the artel only, no more than a third of these 348 people could have possibly been squeezed in – and even in this case they would have been packed like herrings in a barrel. In other words, it is clear that the majority of these people were working at home (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 895. Pp. 145-145 rev.).

goes like this: “175 people, including at-home workers” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. P. 223), or “56 people, including at-home workers” (Ibid., L. 33). “Home-based” production could involve other family members, including the children and the elderly: “*In the evenings, she’d brings buttons from her artel, and we, the children, would sit down, and help her – either sewing them on, or arranging them on the basis of color...*” (JEES_108_AP); “*So, yesterday I received raw materials [in the artel], and the next day brought them the ready goods. They immediately go: ‘How did you do this?’ And I say: ‘Well, kids from my street got together and did it’*” (JEES_094_MG_RG).

In essence, this was a clear case of the use of “hired labor,” a major ideological infringement upon the socialist production ideology. Since artel members were usually paid on the basis of how much they produced, involvement of “family labor force” obviously resulted in higher salaries that artels had to pay to its employees. In some cases it would turn out that artel members’ productivity was higher than with the industrial workers: “How does such a high percentage of salary happen?... It turned out that at-home workers overfulfill the norm by four times and more. We inspected several at-home workers and found out that some of them work by the whole families, and that’s how we get such high salaries per person” (GARF-2. F. 396. Inv. 2. File 95. P. 45).

This, however, did not constitute a “second economy” in the proper sense of this word; activity “for private gain” and/or “in knowing contravention of existing law” (Grossman 1977: 25) implied “theft of state or public property” (since no other property officially existed). This could assume either of two forms: “Goods are diverted from the state-run economy into the illegal black market” or “raw materials, equipment, and labor are diverted clandestinely into privately organized enterprises for the production of goods” (Neznanskii 1985: 99). Artels as production units mostly resorted to the second strategy, whereas the first one was more typical of the trade network (Ch. 6 of this work); however, the close relation between clandestine production and its distribution make this distinction somewhat conventional.

In his short article “The Black Market in Russia” (1949), David Dallin drew a very representative picture of the simultaneous workings of these two strategies while describing the virtual initiation of a young employee into the world of the Soviet second economy:

“Sasha was elected a department head. He began to wonder. Why was it that the other artel in the town was always busy, while his organization was idle half the time because there wasn’t enough cloth?

Sasha’s artel depended upon a large textile mill for its raw material. Sasha went to see the head of the Distribution Department of the textile mill. After talking about the weather, the war, and fabrics and prices, Sasha finally got up enough nerve to ask: Why wasn’t his artel getting the cloth? ‘You can have 10,000 meters-a month,’ he was told, ‘If you pay one ruble per meter more than the fixed price.’ The deal was concluded. No receipts were given and the “extra” price, of course, was not entered in the books. <...> Some of the shirts made by Sasha’s artel were diverted to the “free market.” The managers of the State-owned stands sold a few of the shirts at fixed government prices to the customers who waited in long queues. The greater number was sold as they say in Russia ‘to the left,’ that is, on the free market at the highest price the traffic would bear” (Dallin 1949: 678-679).

Connections with the proper people; being forced to pay on the top for something that one could be formally entitled to, as well as for extra benefits; misrepresentations in the official documents; divergence of produced goods from the socialist market; presence of consumer demand large enough to put up with the increase of retail prices, as well as the readiness on the part of consumers to buy goods on the black market – in this description we see all these key features of the “real” Soviet economy, positioned between the official and the clandestine economic spheres.

Importantly enough, artels such as the one described above could only function and bring profit, whether envisaged by the state targets, or additional, “left” profit only if their production was good enough for consumers to buy them, which to a certain degree invalidates the discourse on the “trashy quality of artel production” that was mentioned above – or, rather, poses the question, for what purpose and in which context this discourse was constructed. It seems that in any case, however “low” in terms of quality was their production, artels nevertheless aimed to meet the basic market principles of supply and demand, and that they were doing this largely by their own initiative and through their own means rather than following prescriptions from above. Particularly artels as small production units were able to do this by manufacturing small quantities of certain goods to be able to estimate how well they are

purchased, and quickly make changes if necessary: *“They were sewing stuff in small batches, and looked whether it’s sold, or not. They’d reduce the price if necessary. They were more flexible”* (JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

Meeting the real consumer demand, rather than producing goods on the basis of the targets pre-calculated by the state planning organs, often very inadequately so, was one of the official aims of artel production. Commenting on the already quoted Resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers issued on November 9, 1946, a special meeting of the management of trade warehouse facilities and cooperative stores (Moscow, Feb. 20, 1950) particularly stressed that producer cooperation was granted a permission to create its own trade network “so as to increase the production of mass consumptions goods through the direct connection with consumers, by studying the demand of the people” (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1412. P. 2). This would be even more true when it came to the production of “on-the-side” goods, which were to fill the gaping demand of the population. In a sense, cooperation was given a certain “carte-blanche” within the Soviet production structure:

“The state granted the cooperation with the right to feed people, to sustain them. You walk into a cooperative store – you find anything you need, underpants-watches-brooms, I don’t know, what... the state would say: ‘There is cooperation on the local level, so go ahead, provide for the people. We give you resources, we allow you to organize production, yet all of this under the ‘roof’¹⁸⁷ of the state’ <...> cooperation was a state within the state. It was the strongest link in the Soviet system, it was a closed cycle: from procuring raw materials, to production and marketing” (JEES_128_SP).

The following judgement, expressed at the time when artel movement was still in full swing, seems to capture this phenomenon quite accurately: “In a sense, the producers’ cooperative movement is a quasi-autonomous refuge for private enterprise in Soviet society which is tolerated as a valuable source of goods, services, and labor at relatively low cost. It has the status of a second-class industry and it enjoys few benefits from State investment – yet its craftsmen members somehow manage to

¹⁸⁷Russian expression meaning “under the legal jurisdiction of...,” or “under the cover of...”

produce essential consumers' goods at a level of net productivity comparable to that of the more favored State worker" (Leedy 1957: 1064).¹⁸⁸

Virtually all oral descriptions of artels stress their double positioning between the official and the clandestine spheres of production: "*They [artels] were making money on the goods in short supply. Something is missing in the stores, people need something, and handymen would immediately emerge in the artels, and would start working, solving the problem...*" (JEES_105_VG); "*in artels, one had to know how to organize production. Half for the state, half for oneself*" [laughs] (JEES_111_RD); "[artels were doing] *geshefts*,¹⁸⁹ *money making... lots of things were produced parallel to the state plan. In Kosino*¹⁹⁰ *there was a knitwear factory, so there was a lot of 'left' wool*¹⁹¹ *there, and they were manufacturing lots of cotton blouses out of it*" (JEES_097_AS) (also: JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_124_MK, etc.).

Socialist economy being a "classical" version of "resource-constrained economy" – as contrasted with the capitalist "demand-constrained system" (Kornai 1979: 804), raw materials and other production resources become its major asset (see: also Verdery 1996: 20-22, Dawisha 2005: 481; Berliner 1954). The state made its best efforts to organize strict control over the centralized allocation of resources to production units of various levels. The only way of getting production materials for on-the-side production was "diverting" them from the state: "*Shadow entrepreneurs were stealing raw materials from the state. At that time the state possessed everything. They would join the cooperation structure...*

¹⁸⁸In his novel *Life of Alexander Zilber* A. Karabchievsky describes artels in the following way: "This was a politics akin to the new NEP. You invest money – you get money. You do more, you sell "on the left" – just don't get caught, that's it. Private initiative was taken under control and channeled into the right directions. And all of a sudden, everything necessary for the production was discovered in the hungry post-war country: machines, spaces, materials, clever specialists and honest workers, and certainly able traders. Satellite shops one after another – from the artel "Fighter," artel "Forward," artel "Bolshevik" – ribbons, lace, shoes, and most importantly, hardware..." (Karabchievsky 2001: 196).

¹⁸⁹A Yiddish word for "business," not necessarily fully legal and usually pursued for profit. Borrowed by the Russian language in the same meaning.

¹⁹⁰A former settlement to the east of Moscow, in Ljubertsy district; became part of the city in 1985. Ljubertsy is № 7 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

¹⁹¹ Most probably, the person wanted to say "textile leftovers."

and organize their production there <...> Jews discovered this scheme. We discovered it'

(JEES_128_SP). It is significant in this sense that Moscow suburbs, in particular, Ljubertsy and Balashikha districts, were zones of pre-revolutionary large-scale industrial production, with appropriate infrastructure, production facilities, etc.: *"All of Balashikha is a textile district... weaving-mills... in Zhelezodorozhnyi, in Reutovo, in Balashikha... here, here, and here. At least three"* (JEES_076_MA); *"All of Balashikha, and all of Moscow region in general are Morozov textile factories. Savin's cotton-spinning factory... Reutovo – also a factory, the main enterprise in the town"* (JEES_078_VM).¹⁹²

During the Soviet rule many of these old factories were used for the same purposes, so the state production resources were located in the nearest proximity of the cooperative network.

Apart from utilizing the local resources, artels could also establish far-reaching networks of exchange to acquire the necessary production materials: *"We would get the yarn from Astrakhan"¹⁹³ – Naum Davydovich [the head of the artel, – A. K.] trusted me, a young guy then, with money, and I would go there with 100, 000 [rubles] on me. Q.: Why did you have to travel that far? A: Well, ours was an invalid artel, and we were as if buying low-quality tangled yarn at the low price – but indeed it was arranged so that we were bringing them the money and getting good yarn... there were geshefts like this"* (JEES_078_VM). Cross-territorial ties were often necessitated by the unique nature of the materials necessary for production: *"Furriers sometimes had their own agents go to Siberia, to the special farms, for blue fox pelts, or silver fox pelts... my classmate's father was a furrier"*

(JEES_015_RK_SK). Such ties were essential for the marketing of the clandestinely produced merchandise – to sell them locally would be tantamount to *"suicide"* (JEES_073_IV), since it would be

¹⁹²At that time, many famous Russian entrepreneurs had their summer houses in the nearby settlements, such as Malakhovka and Saltykovka: *"Lensky, a plant-owner, porcelain producer Griazev... a large land plot belonged to Morozov, that very Morozov, Ryabushinsky's manager, lived nearby"* (JEES_074_GR) (also: JEES_062_AG_IT, JEES_077_VC) – before their houses were expropriated for the needs of the Soviet regime. In fact, until 2013 old Saltykovka synagogue was situated in an old two-storied wooden mansion of such kind, which after the revolution was used as a teachers' community house. Savva Morozov and Pavel Ryabushinsky are two well-known prerevolutionary Russian entrepreneurs, both of Old Believer background.

¹⁹³Over 800 air miles from Moscow.

much easier to discover the producers, and besides it was more profitable to do wholesaling to other regions; while usually my informants could not name those, one person remembered that locally-produced kerchiefs were sent to Mordovia and Chuvashia (JEES_097_AS), republics in the Volga region of Russia. One person's brother, himself a producer of on-the-side goods, told him that when he once came to Ukraine on a business trip, he was surprised to see that "*all people were walking around in our pants – while previously they didn't have anything to wear*" [chuckles] (JEES_111_RD).

Obviously, the very possibility of "arrangements" related to the obtaining of production materials and marketing of ready merchandise depended on a number of factors. The first one has to do with the information, generally "maldistributed and inefficiently communicated" (Geertz 1978: 29) in the Soviet economy, which censured "horizontal" economic exchange among economic agents except for those that were directly controlled by the state (executed by the so-called official "supply agents"). The license to produce, given to the cooperative sector, inevitably brought about forms of horizontal exchange like the one described above, which essentially meant that cooperative producers had to become information experts or, "bazaari" (Ibid., 31), obtaining information about where can one get the desired materials; how much one is expected to pay for them (on the top); which additional benefits, alongside with the monetary one, might the other party require, etc.¹⁹⁴

Apart from the informational aspect, this not-fully-legal or completely illegal type of exchange hinged on informal connections indispensable for the very establishment and maintenance of the "grooved channels [of] clientelization" (Ibid., 30); these, in their own turn, presupposed a high degree of mutual trust. Summarizing the benefits of suburban production, one person observed:

"...money was closer here. The market was closer. It was easier to earn here. In Moscow you have KGB, you have police – and here everybody is from your own, nobody will denounce you. After all, they [artels, – A. K.] did not produce exclusive goods – they produced cheap mass

¹⁹⁴It is hard to resist associations between such Soviet "bazaari" and Sholem-Aleichem's protagonist of *Menakhem Mendl the Matchmaker*, whose main asset was information about people "eligible" for marriage across a large territory of the Pale (see: Sholem Aleichem 2002: 84-85) (also: Paperna 1911: 321). Being strictly an inter-ethnic business, at least at the time, not liable for state taxation, matchmaking could clearly qualify for pre-revolutionary Jewish "second" economy. Soviet "bazaari" were, in a way, also "matchmakers" in finding out and connecting various producers and distributors of goods both to ensure the fulfilment of the state production plan and to facilitate additional production on the side.

consumption stuff that everybody is in need of – pots, spoons, ladles... And in Moscow the competition was large... People were coming here [to buy artels' goods]" (JEES_068_GG).

As this example implies, the networks that sustained the clandestine part of artel functioning also had a vertical dimension: while the local authorities were usually aware of extra-legal procuring of production materials and/or of their extra-legal marketing, they had to be paid so that they would condone these practices: *"When these artels were inspected, when they were writing these reports... I think, these people were just paid, that's it" (JEES_124_MK); "They worked in this artel, and then it would be dissolved, and they would organize a new one so that it would be more difficult to find traces... Well, some representatives of inspection organs was certainly having their share of this all, and when it would come to a critical point, they would close [the business] and opened something new" (JEES_126_VS).* Moreover, the degree of involvement of the political authorities in the clandestine production and distribution sphere could be high enough to speak about complicity based on financial interest, and as a result, rendering of protection to the illicit producers: *"Each head of the artel had connections. He was keeping afloat, certainly, paid somebody for that... And a moment would come, he was sent a signal, and he'd close the artel and transfer it [elsewhere]" (JEES_126_VS).*

This situation is noteworthy from the historical point of view: as S. Hedlund argues, many old ("Muscovite") patterns of social behavior never disappeared in the Soviet period and were, as a matter of fact, "reconstituted" in the context of the "planned economy." One such practice was "*kormlenie*," lit. "feeding," or "nourishing," – an alternative remuneration when appointed officials were allowed "to feed" off the lands they were tasked with administering" instead of "being paid fixed wages" on the part of the state. This only undermined the whole idea of "contractual relations" with the state, and formed a deeply entrenched notion that one has the license to squeeze resources out of one's administered territory, as well as creating a hierarchy of positions that were more or less "lucrative" in this sense (Hedlund 2011: 111-120, 133).¹⁹⁵ The situation when local officials (members of the regional

¹⁹⁵More on "feeding" as the leading principle of Russian polity over four centuries, including the Soviet time, see: Kondratjeva 2006 (in Russian) or Kondratjeva 2002 (in French).

party committees, militiamen, court representatives, etc.) would try to benefit from illegal production conducted on their territory is an obvious case of this “feeding” orientation: each clandestine entrepreneur knew that a certain amount of money should be allocated for state officials: “*They [illegal producers, – A. K.] had hard life, and they paid their ‘dues’ to the cops. There was no racket at that time – the only racket was the state racket*” (JEES_119_MS_SS); “*Relations between artels and the state were certainly constructed on the basis of personal contacts. With the factory managers, or leaders of whatever party organizations... Those all were getting their tribute, irrespective of their alleged uncompromising ideological stand [laughs]. It is clear how my grandfather would solve these things: he would carry envelopes [with money] to them*” (JEES_131_AR) (also see: Simis 1982: 150).

In fact, this high degree of embeddedness of clandestine production and distribution into local social relations, particularly of the “vertical” kind, led to what in the Soviet discourse came to be called a “merger” (Russ. *srashchivanie*) of private entrepreneurship structures and political power of various levels (e.g. GARF-2. F. 396. Inv. 2. File 93. Pp. 129-130), or “development of ingrown ties of small-scale artisanal production with personal material interests of state officials and planning organs” (see: Evelson 1986: 22; 71). This, one might guess, was one of the real reasons why artels were so short-lived: the expansion of such an “irrepressible market” was tolerated only within certain limits, and was not supposed to expand, especially through involvement of political representatives.

In any case, establishing and maintaining close relations with the representatives of the power structures are easier in a smaller place than in a large city, where they are more numerous to begin with, and might also compete among themselves for the “feeding” benefits. Size-wise, suburban settlements were most favorable in this respect; “being far away” from the political power, often mentioned as an important consideration for living outside of the big city, meant precisely that: having to deal with a limited number of its representatives, with whom one is also closely familiar with.

Artels and “the big money”

As the example of shtetl craftsmen and artisans clearly demonstrates, pre-modern manual economic activity usually brings just enough for survival, and in any case does not make one “rich.”

What was different in the Soviet planned economy with its persistent shortages of everyday goods and food products, was the consumer demand that by far exceeded the existing state supply, which was especially true in the first post-war decade. The “market” was ready to “swallow” everything, and the official “light industry” was not a competitor for the cooperative sector, since it obviously did not cope with the existing demand.

Only in this situation artisanal-like production such as the one that was taking place in artels, could turn into a lucrative occupation even without major infringement on the legal code: “*People who worked in state organizations, they didn’t earn much. Let’s say, an engineer – 100-120 rubles [a month]. A person working in an artel would get 2 – 2,5 thousand*” (JEES_109_SG_GG). Certainly, this did not happen always and everywhere – yet there were certain in-built mechanisms that allowed artels to negotiate their production targets in advance, which would have a direct consequence for the size of their salaries; especially this was true about the invalid artels, where it was easier to justify lower production output: “*...how can an invalid plan anything? What if he feels sick half of the days?*” (JEES_022_LG). As a result, artel workers could fulfill several norms a day, which increased their salaries proportionately: “*...with some [artel] workers the salary reaches 300-400% of the existing tariff rates. In June, the average salary in the “Kommutator” artel (Moscow) amounted to 1,250 rubles, with the tariff rate being 485 rubles*” (GARF-2. F. 396. Inv. 2. File 93. P. 154). This situation was characteristically labelled “squandering of state resources” (Russ. *razbazarivanie*), although in essence these people were producing more than they were expected to, even if their remuneration was higher. Perhaps, what enraged the inspection organs more than anything in cases like these was the blatant infringement upon the socialist principle of “egalitarian distribution” (Russ. *uravnitelnoe raspredelenie*) that the artel members could dare disregard by legally earning that much while performing such a lowly job. Yet this was not yet the “second economy” as such.

With the second economy one enters the sphere of various types of “economic crime under socialism” – a topic much written about at the time since, again, economic control and political control were principles immediately bearing upon each other. Various types of “theft” (Russ. *khishchenie*) of

socialist property was one of the major transgressions with which the power was engaged in a continuous “struggle” during all the years of its existence, more or less successfully so. Cooperative sphere was certainly one of the arenas of this struggle. For instance, in the year of 1953, the amount of product “shrinkages (Russ. *nedostacha*), embezzlement and theft” in the cooperative sector of the country’s economy amounted to “607,6 million rubles,” the sum so large that “it exceeds almost by two times the amount of shares collected from cooperative members in the same year” (GARF-2, F. A-506, Inv. 2, File 134. P. 1). Various misrepresentations of the monetary sums earned or paid to artel members, use of fictitious purchase invoices, complete lack of purchase agreements for materials used in artel production, unjustified large sums of money allocated for business trips (*Ob usilenii bor’by...* 1948: 4-5) – all those and many more types of the socialist property “theft” may be found in official discussions and rulings with regard to the cooperative sector. Producer Cooperation journal published multiple articles about theft of socialist property in artels, e.g.: Chudnovsky 1959: 39, Kolesov 1956: 36-37,¹⁹⁶ Feofanov 1956: 32-33, Nasonov 1960: 17, *Okhrana sotsialisticheskoi sobstvennosti ...* 1955: 1-7, Raevsky 1956: 32-33, Pokrovsky 1957: 39, Rumiantsev & Abramov 1958: 16-17, etc.

However, there was one particular type of economic crime that seems to be particularly “envisaged” in case of the cooperative sphere – private entrepreneurial activity, again, in a variety of its forms. Obviously, it was closely related to “theft” of socialist property as one of its mechanisms, yet constituted a specific type of economic crime. While private entrepreneurship could certainly not be ruled out in the first, much more strictly supervised sphere of the Soviet economy, cooperation was much more suspicious in this respect – and for a good reason; “underground private enterprise gets its strongest foothold in the smaller factories, [particularly in] those parts of the *promkooperatsiya* (industrial cooperation) system, known officially as cooperative artels” (Simis 1982: 146).

¹⁹⁶This article describes an artel supply agent with a typical Jewish name Leo Aronovich Glazenberg, who organizes illegal surplus production of women’s handbags involving his Jewish friends working in other artels as well as in the trade network – to sell additional goods; Blatant conspicuous consumption and dissolute way of life, eventually bring about Glazenberg’s arrest. Although the article is called a “*feuilleton*,” the amount of specific details make one think that it is based on a true case.

The expression “private trader,” or “private entrepreneur” (Russ. *chastnik*) is most common in the regulations of the cooperative sphere of production and distribution; here are some of the most typical legal infringements involving such private economic agents: “use of equipment illegally possessed by private traders,” “allowing private traders to use the artel for personal gain,” “breach of the established order of ready product registration... which was used by private traders in fictitious operations for huge sums of money,” “use of private traders’ resources to organize the sales of production” (*Ob usilenii bor’by...* 1948: 3); “use of the artel name by private traders,” “failure to socialize privately-owned equipment of the artel members,” and “appointing of the owners of this equipment artel managers” (*Ibid.*, 4); organization of “fictitious cooperatives that use cooperative form as a cover, use cooperative privileges and benefits for the purpose of private gain of their members” (Gelfer 1959: 15), “penetration of private traders into cooperation for the purposes of private entrepreneurial activity” (*Ibid.*, 16). The “top secret instruction” of the Chief Militia Administration, Department Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property, published in 1954, particularly stressed that “The struggle with speculators and dealers who made their way into producer cooperation and local industry, especially with those who organize private production under the guise of cooperative and state enterprises, acquires particular acuity since their actions are directly undermining the measures of the Party and the Government aimed at the increase of the wellbeing of the Soviet people” (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 127. P. 139).

The “harm” that the private producers cause to the well-being of the Soviet people is, however, never specified – same way as their input into the production of additional goods for the same people is never mentioned (sold “on the left,” their goods as if lost their consumer value). Speaking in purely economic terms, it seems that according to the logic of the Soviet system, the crime of these people consists in the very fact that they got a larger share of some “socialist good” than what they were entitled to, thus depriving others of their respective shares.

One may wonder in this respect whether G. Foster’s famous idea of the “limited good” (a “cognitive orientation,” inherently based in the rural mentality, according to which individual material ascendance always happens at expense of the rest of the community, see: Foster 1965) constituted one

of the premises of the Soviet planned economy as well. And whether the socialist egalitarian ethos (reserved, especially in later Soviet regime, primarily for the “common people,” most of whom were efficiently relegated to the basic level of subsistence)¹⁹⁷ could not be traced back, among other things, to the peasant background of the majority of Soviet urban dwellers, including the Soviet political elite. Further on, one may wonder whether the Soviet Jewish population, or at least some part of this population, could be exempt from this “orientation” due to the ability to see and use economic opportunity, possibly mediated by the ethnic tradition.¹⁹⁸

Profit generated through private entrepreneurship had a specific designation in the Soviet criminal code: “non-labor income” (Russ. *netrudovye dokhody*); even though this might sound paradoxical, since people were investing their personal labor into production, the socialist system followed a different logic – anything that was manufactured outside of the state system of production bore so to speak a “parasitic” character, and thus had nothing to do with the “selfless labor of the Soviet people for the sake of socialist construction.” In this specific ideological context money “turned out to be extremely politicized. It signified not so much the result of their economic activity, but their trustworthiness and loyalty to the state <...> Entrepreneurial money created through trade and independent production (artisanship), whether large or small, was the money of disloyalty to the Soviet regime” (Hakkarainen 2013a: 261).

This “disloyalty” could not be “larger” or “smaller”: even production “on the left” out of necessity, for bare physical survival, would inevitably signify violation of allegiance to the socialist state. It should be stressed that many, if not most of the small-scale producers did not generate huge

¹⁹⁷In a counter move, Soviet people came up with a whole range of economic practices aiming precisely at augmenting one’s “limited allotment” of goods – or reducing it with the others: attempts at getting into special categories of population entitled to better provisioning, spontaneous regulations limiting of the number of items to be sold per person, “withdrawing” certain amounts of goods from the state trade network to “distribute” them “on the side,” the whole system of the economy of favors (Russ. *blat*), etc.

¹⁹⁸In a characteristic dispute with his Russian neighbor, one suburban Jewish entrepreneur told him: “*Your children can’t wait till you die to inherit your only house, whereas I make it so that each child of mine gets an apartment of their own for their 18th birthday. Let them live*” (JEES_078_VM).

additional income though their “on-the-side” engagements: “*We couldn’t live on my father’s salary. So, he started sewing these panties... on the left. And they [in the artel] they somehow didn’t register them. And he was very, very much afraid*” (JEES_111_RD); “*They contrived to earn some ‘left’ money – because the ‘right’ money was so meager*” (JEES_022_LG). Certainly, more “sensationalistic” stories about “big money” would be not only better remembered, but also had a better chance of finding their way into official criminal documents, which may produce an impression that all clandestine producers of artel level would always become very rich – and indeed, such stereotypes were found in my interviews: “*They said: ‘Where do you work? In the artel? Oooo! Then robbers can be already sent to you’*” (JEES_074_GR); “*They officially earned 90 rubles, but lived as gods. [Our friend] was working in an artel. And my husband, who visited him at his work place, said: ‘You enter – and you already smell money’ [laughs]*” (JEES_113_IB); “*In the artel one could fardinen*”¹⁹⁹ (JEES_094_MG_RG); “*Artels were focused on earning a lot of money*” (JEES_099_IK).

Some such stories would become part of the local lore – especially when, like in the story below, they contain the motif of how one outwits authorities: “*There was the family of D., on Lermontovskaya street, and its head, a clandestine producer, was put away for 15 years. This was in the end of 1950s – beginning of 1960s. And they confiscated all the possessions in his home, leaving only bare walls. But the DAMPS did not pay attention to the piece of rusty pipe on his land plot. It was filled with pre-revolutionary coins. His wife knew about the content of the pipe, so when he was released, they started living on this money*” (JEES_097_AS). Stories like this clearly sustained the connection between the general stereotypes of the “big Jewish money,” on the one hand, and of the “big artel money,” on the other.

Certainly, the very possibility of earning “on the side,” as well as the amount earned, largely depended on one’s position in the artel structure. As I already noted previously, the head of an artel (Russ. *direktor*), an official Soviet position, is often referred to as “owner” or “proprietor”: a very telling

¹⁹⁹‘Earn’ (Yiddish).

slip of tongue revealing how people see both the purpose of artel production (generation of profit), and its internal hierarchy (the owner naturally gets the largest share of profits): “*The owner of this artel lived well, this I know. How much did artel workers get? Well, my father-in-law, he was just a salesperson there, getting his fixed salary, not the profit dividends... The director, or the boss, he was person number one there, and he certainly skimmed the cream off it*” (JEES_076_MA); “*Many of them [ordinary artel members] were working at home, earning mere kopecks. These were true paupers! Well, the organizers of this all, they used their labor, these were con artists*” (JEES_129_AS); [artel management] “*gave some the chance to earn on the top – they knew, whom to give this chance, this was not random*” (JEES_124_MK) (also: JEES_097_AS, JEES_083_DT_MK). To begin with, not all the common workers knew about the clandestine aspect of production in their artels: “*a worker sitting next to you could be unaware [that you are manufacturing goods “on the left”], he could think you’re over-fulfilling the state target...*” (JEES_124_MK). This may explain why for some of my present-day informants the only association with the word “artel” is that of a low-paid non-prestigious job rather than that of privately conducted entrepreneurship – although there certainly might be other reasons for that.

Artels as a Jewish business?

“Artel, it was a modest Jewish organization, and we worked in it” (JEES_078_VM)

Thus artels as a type of producer organization existed throughout the post-war Soviet Union; some of them traced their history to 1920-30s, others were instituted during the war or in the years immediately afterwards. Not having any statistics, we can nevertheless assert that some of these artels were engaged in the production of the “on-the-side,” or illegal goods. How then now do we explain the third, ethnic element of this production framework? What in particular stands behind the epigraph above?

Any official statistics on the ethnic composition of artel employees, if such existed to begin with, is nearly impossible to discover. While filling out the “ethnicity” paragraph was required in a variety of

paper forms in the Soviet Union, various production activity reports very rarely singled it out. I was able to track down only one archival collection titled “Annual reports of the Regional Council of Producer Cooperation on the work with cadres for the year of 1950,” containing a “Report on the Work with Cadres in the Chief Administration of the Producer Supply Office,” where all employees were separated into categories according to ethnic origin. From the table presented in the document it follows that Jews are the most numerous category after the Russians, composing 49 out of 180 workers total (against 120 Russians), and far ahead of other ethnic groups such as Ukrainians (4 out of 180), Byelorussians (1 out of 180), Tatars (1 out of 180) and Armenians (2 out of 180). The major positions Jews occupied in the office of supply management are: deputies of the Chief Committee Director, Heads of the Department of the Chief Administration, Deputies of the Heads of the Department of the Chief Administration, engineers, technologists, commodity specialists (Russ. *tovaroved*), economists, directors of food storage facilities and their deputies, accountants of the food storage facilities, etc. (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1942. P. 243). While the ratio of 49:180 indeed implies high Jewish representation in this case, we do not have figures pertaining to the number of Jews among the average artel employees.

According to my other source, the interviews, suburban Moscow settlements could indeed be described as a fertile ground of Jewish artel-based economic activity: “*Artels, this is a Jewish business – I would agree with this 100%*” (JEES_119_MS_SS); “*Q.: I was told that artels was a Jewish place... A.: Certainly! [chuckles] All business comes from Jews*” (JEES_130_DT); “*These were Jews. They invented this business*” (JEES_099_IK), etc. The most common internal explanation given for the high representation of Jews in small-scale production units such as artels boils down to the idea that Jews are “entrepreneurial,” “resourceful,” and “industrious” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_078_VM, JEES_074_GR, JEES_077_VC, JEES_105_VG, JEES_097_AS, JEES_102_YK, JEES_109_SG_GG). In particular, people emphasize that Jews “*were trying to find vulnerable points existing in the [state] industry*” (JEES_131_AR), designed ingenious ways of getting state production resources, and used them to generate production of their own (JEES_099_IK, JEES_128_SP, Evelson 1986: 22).

Indeed, artels may be seen as a space of economic invention pretty much on every level of their activity: acquisition of materials necessary for the “left” production, contriving ways of manufacturing goods off the books, substituting unavailable production materials for others available at hand, changing technologies of production, getting the “surplus” goods to the consumers, etc. Here are but two examples of this: “*So, for instance, German tablecloths and Polish coverlets were considered fashionable at the time. So, Naum Davydovich did the following trick: we produced cheap Jacquard coverlets, 9, 12, 14 rubles each – whereas the German ones cost 28, 32 rubles. So, what did we do? We selected yarn of the right colors and did a pattern on our coverlets similar to that on the German ones, and then sold them as German. The price difference was ours*” (JEES_078_VM). Or: “*My friend’s father worked in an invalid artel, and they, as all smart Jews, found a way... they started producing plastic napkins, which were considered wonderful at the time. They were getting the material somewhere, and then – one has to have a Jewish head for that – they adjusted sewing machines that were used in the artel to cut this material: inserted a knife instead of the needle, put three layers of this plastic, and cut it according to a pre-cut pattern. And then they sold them on the flea market, and made good money on that*” (JEES_015_RK_SK). One person even suggested that the “*freedom of creativity*” was a major reason why certain people would chose artel over a state-supervised production enterprise (JEES_099_IK). Indeed, if “*ingenuity to improvise solutions*” (Dunn 2004: 17) was to some degree an inevitable “*survival kit*” of all socialist subjects,²⁰⁰ clandestine producers had to be much more inventive and resourceful than the majority of Soviet people and even employees of large Soviet enterprises.

However, these explanations do not provide an answer as to which factors, both historical and contemporaneous, shaped the post-war Jewish economic behavior in the Soviet Union – particularly, bringing Jews to small production units such as artels.

²⁰⁰Focusing on the Polish case, E. Dunn observed that even the rank-and-file workers at state enterprises, supplied by the necessary production materials through governmental planning, had to constantly contrive ways of fulfilling production plans, substituting unavailable production materials for others at hand, changing technologies of production, etc. (Dunn 2004: 16-17).

In my view, one can distinguish three major factors: 1) the age, as well as the time of migrating from the Pale by those who became the primary actors in the post-war sphere of the Soviet cooperation; 2) change of life trajectories as a result of the war and 3) state post-war anti-Semitism. While the second factor is ethnically neutral, in the Jewish case it only strengthened the other two.

1. Age and the time of coming to Moscow suburbs

In the sociological profile of those who were primarily engaged in post-war artel production, one cohort particularly stands out: people who were born either at the very end of the 19th c., or at the very beginning of the 20th – roughly the age of Chaim Goldovsky, maybe slightly younger than him. This cohort could be exposed both to the more “traditional” world of Jewish business, certainly witnessed the entrepreneurial realities of the New Economic Policy, and perhaps were even actively engaged in those: *“...these were people who were formed before the revolution, who in the 1940s were 50, 60 years old. People who received this entrepreneurial drive from their parents and preserved it <...> And so, when the state slightly opened this possibility of private or semi-private, or disguised private entrepreneurship, these people started using their talents, ties, skills...”* (JEES_014_EB); *“There was an artel ‘Kozhdetal’ here, and they manufactured some shoes there, plastic heels, plastic capes... old Jews worked there, made their gesheft and had good money on that... Well, when I say ‘old,’ I mean men of 40, 50...”* (JEES_097_AS); *“it was the great-grandfather who worked in an artel; after the war he was already over 60 years old, so he was born approximately in 1880s. He was a commercial director of the artel, and used his money to support all of his three wives and three daughters”* (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS) (also: JEES_128_SP, JEES_052_SU_GK_LL, JEES_099_IK).

Although it is hard to make any reliable judgements about this rather fuzzy age group, one can safely assume that they were born in the Pale, came to Moscow in 1920-30s as adults, perhaps possessed a working knowledge of Yiddish and retained elements of the religion-based identity. The sheer age of this cohort seems to have a double bearing on their economic engagements: on the one hand, they could have had some prior experience in the world of business, maybe even in artel business as such, but on the other, by the post-war time they were already rather old to become large-scale

clandestine entrepreneurs (Russ. *tsekhoviki*) – although the third sector of the Soviet economy was the major spring board for the “future owners of private enterprises” as well (Simis 1982: 158).

Besides, many of these people bore the major brunt of adaptation in the new environment, and could not get any substantial Soviet schooling and/or formal diplomas that would allow them to seek employment as engineers, physicians, teachers, and the like. The cooperative sphere, whether in production, or in distribution of goods, virtually became the only available niche for such people: “...only elderly people, with no education, were involved in this... business, shadowy or semi-shadowy. The younger ones, they would already become sewing machine technicians, and worked on a sewing factory” (JEES_020_LL); [about his grandfather, a store manager and inventor of multiple business “schemes”]: “Grandfather had four classes of the Soviet school and wouldn’t study more” (JEES_100_MZ); Q.: *So, who worked in these artels?* A.: *Old people, those who were nearing the end of their lives* (JEES_114_FK). People born in the time period roughly between 1880s and 1910s and socialized in the shtetl, possessed a variety of artisanal skills that they brought from the Pale to their new home in Moscow suburbs; they were tailors, shoemakers, furriers, watchmakers, glaziers, cabmen, bakers, producers of carbonized water, etc. One would guess that often such people got their professional skills in a traditional/ pre-modern way – through repetition rather than formal schooling: “...you sit there and look, how to heel a pair of shoes, how to glue... how to work with a needle – so, you already have some practice... Apprentices sit near the master and learn... they didn’t study in schools” (JEES_102_YK). Therefore, many of them perhaps could not compete with the workers who learned the same professions in a more institutional way, for instance, in a professional secondary school, and thus were much less competitive on the “job market.”

Grandfather of one of my informants, Yohanan Rafalovich, born in 1894, was a characteristic representative of this cohort – with the only difference that he was not born and raised in the shtetl, but rather in the city of Nikolaev near Odessa, since he came from the family of the merchant of the first guild, who as such were officially exempt from the requirement to live within the Pale. Moreover, he

belonged to the famous Rafalovich banking house of Odessa,²⁰¹ so his attitude to the new regime could be guessed quite easily: *“He didn’t like the Soviet regime – at all. And he said, he’d never work for this power a single day. And so, he was working in an artel. He was a clandestine producer”*

(JEES_131_AR). Yohanan came to Saltykovka when he was around 40 years old, and his choice of place was determined not so much by the fact that it was cheaper to live in the suburbs (in fact, he must have brought some money earned during successful business in Odessa during the civil war), but by the fact that it was a Jewish place, where one could speak Yiddish and be “among one’s own”; religion also played a role in this decision. He certainly could not fully escape contacts with the Soviet regime – after all, he was working in the official artel in Malakhovka (where he had to travel every day in horse-drawn carriage), yet he and a group of other Jews organized weaving production on the side; his wife never worked, and he helped all of his relatives. Even in the 1970s, being already very old, he had a small loom installed in his room and weaved little carpets as an “at-home” worker associated with a small factory. An interesting episode illustrating Yohanan’s “entrepreneurial spirit” took place in Samarkand, where he came to join his evacuated family: when he saw that his wife and son were nearly starving, he immediately *“found Samarkand Jews, quickly came up with some scheme, they got organized, and next day his family had everything necessary”* (Ibid.).

²⁰¹On the Rafalovich family see: Zipperstein 2008: 1277, Kreis 2008: 1513-1514, Ananjich 1991: 8, 10, 11, 19, 55, 132, 134, 135.



Ill. 23: Yohanán Rafalovich with his sisters Bella and Sonya, ca. 1925-1926.
Courtesy of A. Rafalovich, granddaughter of Y. Rafalovich.

Under different circumstances, people born at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th c. could have become the last small-scale artel-type “pre-modern” producers in the Soviet Union, since all of them wanted their children to benefit from the new educational possibilities and get away from illegal business – yet a number of factors interfered with this.

2. The war

People born in the 1920s, whether still in the shtetls, or already in large Russian cities, were the first fully Soviet Jewish generation that did not remember either any “traditional” Jewish entrepreneurship in any form, or the temporary revival of business activities in 1920s. These people of the age of “children” of Chaim Goldovsky were socialized in the Soviet society, most probably were not religious, yet could have retained certain elements of Jewish everyday life. These were people who did have a chance to get higher education and become Soviet specialists in whatever walk of life – yet at the time when they would have been ready for that, their trajectories were interrupted by the war.

Most of these people were at the front during the war, and those who returned home, often as invalids, had to face the dire economic realities of the post-war time, often turned into principal bread-winners for their families, sometimes including survivor relatives who joined them from Belorussia or Ukraine. Besides, lots of women were widowed and had to raise their children alone. In this situation, getting education or acquiring a profession was not an easily available choice: “Demobilization... turned out to be a serious problem for many, first of all for the youngest ones, born between 1923 and 1927 – i.e. those who left for war from school, not having received any profession or a stable social status” (Zubkova 2000: 28).

Again, as in the case of the previous generation, the only available choice for many was to join the cooperative sphere, whether artels, or trade, where one did not need any formal diploma and often not too many skills to start earning money right away: Q.: *Why did your father decide to work in this artel?* Q.: *After the front, it was difficult to find a job. And then, there was the family – he had to feed five people. And no real education except for the secondary school (JEES_123_EO); “Their artel was manufacturing sunglasses. Nice people worked there, former soldiers, war invalids, decorated with multiple orders. But they couldn’t do anything else... and this was a gesheft of a sort... Q.: Were these people Jewish?* A.: *They were (JEES_094_MG_RG); “mostly invalids worked there, who could not work at a factory or something – there were so many of them after the war. So, the state decided to remove them, so they wouldn’t be an eyesore, boxed them in those quiet corners of artels. These people, who lost their health, lost their legs, their arms – they did not get anything from the state”*

(JEES_129_AS) (also: JEES_030_GN_MN, JEES_050_LL, JEES_041_MR_LD_LR, JEES_090_IA, JEES_097_AS, JEES_100_MZ, JEES_111_RD, JEES_121_FZ).²⁰²

²⁰²Through an accident that does not have anything to do with artels in general or invalid artels in particular, among a number of euphemisms (or what in linguistics is called “ethnophaulistic pseudo-ethnonyms”) for “a Jew” was “an invalid of the fifth group” (Russ. *invalid piatoi gruppy*). This name contains a reference to the practice of Soviet medical system to classify various physical and mental disabilities according to several “groups” (first, second, third...), which corresponded to different degrees of “labor capability” loss. The history of this metaphor, which became truly pervasive in the late Soviet society, goes back to 1930s, when the question on “ethnicity” was introduced into various Soviet identification documents – to become mandatory in the most important of those, the passport, in 1974. “Ethnicity” (Russ. *natsional’nost’*) in the Soviet passport was believed to come as question № 5

This is not at all surprising, therefore, that this generation is also described as “lacking education” – which is often juxtaposed to the commercial success they enjoyed nevertheless: “*Clandestine businessmen? Their education was 4-5 classes. Store managers – the same. Yet they were making huge money!*” (JEES_097_AS); “*Their intellect equaled zero. K. – three classes of education, S. – three classes of education, my uncle – three classes. S. couldn’t even write!*” (JEES_128_SP), etc.

19. Род занятий с начала трудовой деятельности			Род занятий с начала трудовой деятельности		
С какого по какое время (месяц, год)	Название местности (село, район, город, округ, область, край, республика)	Занятие или должность, в каком предприятии, учреждении	С какого по какое время (месяц, год)	Название местности (село, район, город, округ, область, край, республика)	Занятие или должность, в каком предприятии, учреждении
с 11-1939 по 11-1941	г. Москва	телеграфист Наркомлеса СССР	с 11-1949 по 11-1950	г. Талдом Московской области	заведующий снабжением артели „Швейников“
с 11-1941 по 11-1941	г. Москва	ученик пекаря, пекарь мелкого-стремового хлеба	с 11-1951 по 11-1951	г. Москва	слесарь Ремстройтреста
с 11-1941 по 11-1942	ст. Тольяма Сухопутного района Лоддовской АССР	отбыл наказание, назначен для несовершеннолетних	с 11-1951 по 11-1953	г. Москва	завскладом Министерства лесного хозяйства РСФСР
с 11-1942 по 11-1945	Советская Армия	работой 17 артиллерийской дивизии в 8 Свардейского танкового полка	с 11-1953 по 11-1954	г. Москва	инспектор Министерства сельского хозяйства
с 11-1945 по 11-1946	Советская Армия	18 сержант в 8 Свардейского танкового полка	с 11-1954 по 11-1957	Кустанайский район Кустанайской области	зам. директора по зав. части зернохолода ИЧ. Табова
с 11-1946 по 11-1947	Советская Армия	18 сержант в 8 Свардейского танкового полка	с 11-1957 по 11-1958	г. Москва	наладчик отдела снабжения треста „Мосбл.нефтепромстрой“
с 11-1947 по 11-1947	Советская Армия	18 сержант в 8 Свардейского танкового полка	с 11-1958 по 11-1960	г. Кунцево Московской области	наладчик отдела снабжения СПУ-3 треста „Спецстроймонтаж“
с 11-1947 по 11-1947	п. Удельная Раменского района Московской области	не работал	с 11-1960 по 11-1965	г. Люберцы Московской области	зам. управляющего канторой райтехснаба Исполкома Райсовета
с 11-1947 по 11-1948	г. Москва	мукоσει лекарни школы ФЗУ №1 треста Хлебоземля	с 11-1965 по 11-1985	г. Люберцы Московской области	директор базы УКСА Мосжилспецкома
с 11-1948 по 11-1949	г. Москва	кладовщик института стекла	с 11-1985 по 11-1988	г. Люберцы Московской области	Мастер-контролер Контроля партийно-героики.

III. 24: A page from the CPSU registration card (1940s).

Leonid Isakovich Umanov, b. 1924, was demobilized in 1947 as a war invalid, and after the war lived in the settlement of Udel'naya.²⁰³ As this page from his registration card (Russ.: *uchetnaya kartochka*) shows, at first he was unemployed for several months, worked for a year as an apprentice in the bakery, then (May 1948 – April 1949) was employed as a warehouse keeper, between April of 1949 and December of 1950 worked as the head of the procuring unit of the tailor artel in the town of Taldom, Moscow region (first entry on the right page), and later on was a procuring agent in a number of cooperative organizations. Umanov's employment trajectory also shows constant movement between Moscow and the city suburbs. Courtesy of L. I. Umanov's widow.

(although in reality it did not), and thus was usually referred to as “the fifth point” or “the fifth line.” Expression “the fifth group” became a creative development of this (more in: Baiburin, *in press*). This “invalidity” implied limitations in the spheres such as higher education or professional careers, and although anybody who “failed” to be born a representative of the “titular nation” could run into a situation where he or she would be discriminated against precisely on these grounds, in the context of state anti-Semitic policies it was Jews who became the primary object of such designation.

²⁰³Udel'naya is № 3 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

3. Post-war state anti-Semitism

A lot is written about state anti-Semitism in the post-war years, e.g. Gilboa 1971: 146-352, Gitelman 2001: 144-174, Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 83-96, 194-201, Vaksberg 1994, Brandenberger 2005 to name but a few. Usually, however, researchers focus on the most outstanding victims of this campaign such as members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist committee, writers, or top medical professionals. Yet large numbers of common people likewise suffered major discrimination both at work and in everyday life. Another issue that is rarely addressed is how those Jews who lost their jobs and were turned down from educational institutions earned their living in these years. It is certainly impossible to make even approximate estimations of the number of such people. One can only more or less safely assert that this number was fairly high: “As ever more institutions, posts, and entire fields of professional activity were closed to Jews beginning in the mid 1940s, many turned to underground dealings in the economic sphere” (Ro’i 2008: 454). E. Evelson, a Soviet lawyer who defended a large number of people accused of illegal production and distribution of goods, stressed that often these were Jews, including the elderly, the sick and invalids, who in the post-war years were forced to leave their occupational sphere and seek “shelter” in trade and cooperative production (Evelson 1986: 15).

My interviews afford the conclusion that some of these people had to move to the third, cooperative sphere of the Soviet economy, which was much less affected by the anti-Semitic campaign due to its special status in the structure of the socialist production and less “visibility” as compared to the first sector. As a result, Jews who under different circumstances would not have considered small-scale artisanal production, came to work in artels for the sake of physical survival: “*There were lots of artisans, predominantly Jews – in [19]49, after the extermination of the Anti-Fascist committee, a massive purge of Jews from the ‘middle layer’ was launched, so they started coming to artels*” (JEES_052_SU_GK_LL); “*The only place where those Jews who were fired in 1952 and earlier could go, was construction.*²⁰⁴ *As well as artels*” (JEES_068_GG) (also: JEES_096_EB, JEES_059_IV,

²⁰⁴It seems that the construction sphere was somewhat exempt from the effects of the state anti-Semitic campaign – perhaps, because it was so crucial against the housing crisis in the country, especially in the first post-war decades.

JEES_099_IK, JEES_060_TZ); “*In the end of [19]40 – beginning of [19]50s a horrendous anti-Semitic campaign starts. To find a job with a last name like Katzman was virtually impossible. Or, Shmulevich... So, where to go? Here, into those small places... same way as in the time of the Pale of Settlement, people would become artisans, would go to artels, see?*” (JEES_001_ER).

It seems that some “allowance” was given only to Jews who came to occupy their positions before the war: according to the non-official “policy of the nail” (Russ. *politika gvozdia*) (“not to hire, not to fire, not to promote”) they had a high chance of staying in their places: “*With the rabid anti-Semitism on the part of the state [there was] this ‘policy of the nail’: not to pull out the old ones, not to hire the new ones*” (JEES_127_EF); “*Those who were there before the war, who came before the anti-Semitism started, they would usually stay*” (JEES_001_ER) (also: JEES_034_EK_AB, JEES_086_AR). However, in the absence of any reliable statistics it is impossible to even approximately estimate the size of this group.

K. Simis argues that the post-war anti-Semitism, particularly purges from the “party and state hierarchies,” as well as discriminatory policies regarding “university admission and hiring,” was the major “historical reason” that “the underground business world in the large cities of Russia, the Ukraine, and the Baltic republics has been predominantly Jewish.” As a consequence, “large numbers of Jews, not members of the intelligentsia, and not having won academic or professional standing, found that they were forced into underground businesses” (Simis 1982: 153) (also: Evelson 1986: 15). To a large extent that must have been true, although this perspective is perhaps too straightforward; besides, it does not take into consideration that as in case of any campaign, its swing would be reduced in as much as one would move from the center to the periphery, and that a lot depended on the will and ability of local leaders to go against the grain of the political trend launched “at the top.” For instance, the father of one of my informants was working as a chief physician in a small provincial township on the border between Moscow and Tula regions. In the fall of 1952 he was accused of “squandering of socialist

As a result there many Jews in construction, usually in the middle level, not higher than foremen (JEES_068_SG; JEES_109_SG_GG). On the large percentage of Jews in construction see: Snopov 2002: 83.

property” on a totally false pretext, and was about to lose his job. However, the leader of the local party executive committee refused to fire him: “*I have no other physicians. Nobody will come to work here*” – and the case was simply dropped (JEES_053_LT).

However, post-war anti-Semitism, or “post-war politics of cadres” as it was euphemistically called (Evelson 1986: 218) certainly did considerably constrain Jewish educational and professional choices; moreover, the forced change of employment trajectories whereby a certain part of the Jewish population had to seek jobs in the third sphere of economy may be seen as the first expression of Soviet economic anti-Semitism, or a situation when Jewish economic choices became “limited by non-Jewish society,” although not through any overt “laws and regulations” (Teller 2008a: 443). To some extent the situation could have been similar to the early years of the Soviet rule when those Jews who were libeled “*lishenets*” simply could not find a job in the “socialist sector”: such people were forced to seek means of livelihood elsewhere, and many, one can assume, were “spurred” not by “entrepreneurial spirit” (Hessler 2003: 277), but rather by the bare necessity.

Besides, state anti-Semitism of 1940 – early 1950s must have revived the collective memory of governmental persecutions in the past, so in its own turn this “withdrawal” into the less “visible” sphere of the socialist production could be seen as an adaptive response to the Soviet political realities (which, as I noted earlier, was also one of the reasons why Jews chose to settle outside of the big city to begin with).

This relates to another consideration that many of my informants singled out as one of the reasons why some Jews preferred to work in artels rather than in the first, more rigidly controlled sphere of the socialist economy. On the one hand, while occupational/ professional affiliation was a major ground for internal differentiation among Soviet Jews, working in artels was clearly a non-prestigious engagement, implying specific identification: “*To work in artel was as shameful, as to stand in the market and sell things... [People would say:] ‘Speculator! Huckster!’*” (JEES_068_GG); “*at first [right after the war, – A. K.] nobody payed attention, but by 1950s, if somebody would say that he works in an artel, this was already... undignified*” (JEES_074_GR). Even the additional financial possibilities did not necessarily

outweigh the lack of public esteem for the occupation: “*It was profitable, but many were still ashamed of it...*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV) (also: JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS, JEES_105_VG JEES_126_VS, JEES_107_NL).

However, on the other hand, the lack of prestige was outweighed by such an important consideration as the possibility of greater freedom – first of all, due to a more flexible work schedule, but also in a broader sense, as a possibility to stay at some distance from the operations of the central political apparatus – although, certainly, not fully out of its reach: “*it was a world of its own, all these little shops, cooperatives, artels... [but] they liked doing this, they were in their own environment, they had some kind of independence, see? There is something about this. These were not the same people who wanted to get assimilated in the Russian culture*” (JEES_082_LV).

Cooperative sector is indeed described as more “humane” compared to the first, main sphere of socialist production: “*there was no ‘labor discipline’ there, people would establish their working schedules and vocation themselves – whereas others worked as galley slaves*” (JEES_099_IK) (also: JEES_131_AR, JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB, JEES_060_TZ). “At-home” workers naturally worked at their own pace, too.

Earlier in this chapter I noted that in 1930s many artels were organized by religious Jews largely for the purposes of observing Sabbath and other Jewish holidays while at the same time complying with the state requirement of mandatory productive labor. This consideration was still invoked in the description of post-war artels, yet mostly in reference to the representatives of the older cohort of artel members: “*Great- grandfather, he was already over 60 after the war, he was a commercial director of the artel. And he spent every Saturday in the synagogue – so, if artel itself worked on Saturdays, then it worked without him there*” (JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS); “*There were lots of artels, all kinds of cooperatives... Here, my father worked in the system of invalid artels.*²⁰⁵ *For the sake of Shabbat. Several Chassidim were among the employees, too <...> The state introduced a five-day work week for*

²⁰⁵The informant’s father was born in 1904.

*invalids, and the production targets there were lower... Q.: Were there a lot of people for whom observing Shabbat was important after the war? A.: You know, there were. And you know, in the year of Lenin's 100th anniversary [1970, – A. K.], the subbotnik²⁰⁶ was announced, and one couldn't fail to show up. So, my father and another person from his artel, Meyer Rappoport, they did come – but they did not work” (JEES_060_TZ). The possibility to negotiate one's work schedule with artel management also helped observant Jews bypass the obligation to work on Sabbaths: “*There was an agreement there, and he never, never worked on Saturdays! This was his condition. But since they had to comply with the production plan, when the Sabbath would be over, he would go and work there during the night – they gave him the keys, he was trusted. He worked the whole night, and if he had some time to sleep in the morning, he'd come home, because it was so close*” (JEES_083_DT_MK).*

In March of 1967 the Soviet government adopted a law on the transition to five-day working week with two days off, Saturday and Sunday – officially “for the purposes of alleviation of the working conditions” and “broadening of possibilities for the further enhancement of working qualifications and cultural level, as well as more rational production organization and the growth of labor productivity. (*Postanovlenie...* 1986: 156). Jews, whether religious, or not, interpreted this innovation with a joking phrase: “*What have the Soviets ever done for us?*” (e.g. JEES_099_IK, JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_103_LM); certainly this new law meant much more for those who tried to observe Shabbat.

“Embeddedness” of Soviet Jewish clandestine economy

Factors listed above (age of the oldest cohort involved in small-scale cooperative production as well as the time of their migration from the former Pale; radical interruption of professional trajectories incurred by the war in the next generation; low educational level as a result both of migration and the war; post-war economic anti-Semitism) constitute essential social parameters that explain high Jewish representation in artel-level economy. The structure of compact habitation of Jews in suburban

²⁰⁶Mandatory unpaid work on a Saturday (Russ. *subbota*), ideologically seen as a means of fostering the spirit of future communist labor, “officially claimed to be based on voluntary enthusiasm of the masses” (Yurchak 1997: 181) (in more detail, see: Zemtsov 1991: 326). If organized on a Sunday, it would have been called *voskresnik*, from “*voskresenje*,” ‘Sunday’.

settlements around Moscow, including the preference to live in the center of the settlement, value put on maintaining linguistic milieu, traditions of Jewish commonality as well as mutual self-help, which I will discuss in the next chapter in more detail, – the convergence of all these circumstances contributed to what may be called “social embeddedness” of post-war Jewish economic practices such as discussed here. On the other hand, one can also speak about their “cultural embeddedness” in the sense that the significance of economic choices, the value attributed to specific professional engagements, as well as the actual practices of conducting the economic activity were in this case also shaped by the shared history of Jewish economy in the shtetl and during the New Economic Policy – or, in other words, a set of cultural dispositions at the core of collective memory and family history.

These cultural dispositions also included beliefs in the special Jewish “entrepreneurial spirit,” certain rules of conducting economic transactions with other Jews and non-Jews, the presence of specific Jewish entrepreneurial culture with a focus on artisanal engagements and middlemen activities, the patterns of interaction with the authorities around the economic matters, etc. The latter from the first glance might not seem specifically Jewish – settling things with bribe, for instance, has always been a part of general Russian “business culture,” yet with limitations imposed along ethnic lines in the pre-revolutionary time, some such skills emerged as specifically Jewish. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century a Russian-Ukrainian ethnographer A. S. Afanasiev-Chuzhbinskyi made the following comment on the special bias against Jews on the part of tsarist governmental officials: “Being constantly oppressed by the local authorities, Jews did not only lose the habit of respecting the law, but learned to circumvent it through various loopholes and especially through bribe <...> A Jew knows that even though his case is just, he has to “blandish” a number of people, so they have a dense network among themselves, and they constantly keep relationships with all governmental offices through their trusted agents” (Afanasiev-Chuzhbinskyi 1893b: 293). Prohibition to reside outside of the Pale of Settlement produced its own set of by-pass strategies (paying the local officials, forging documents, etc.); since at some point artisans were allowed to live in the cities outside of the Pale, some people tried to live under a false artisanal identity: “*Khar’kov was equaled to large capital cities, and a Jew could live there only*

if he was baptized, or had higher education, or was a merchant. Grandfather didn't have any of those. So, he was registered as an artisan, and had an incredibly nice residence permit [laugh]). Artisans were allowed... [to live in large cities like this] But he was doing something very different... they had a three-room apartment, and a sewing machine stood there, with a cut-out shirt, which could never get finished... Q.: Well, the local policeman must have known that [this was fake] ... A.: Certainly, he knew – certainly” (JEES_046_EP). Or: “Grandfather was a real craftsman till the end of his life, clandestinely made shoes for individual clients, and he had a good ‘cover’... the entrance door was double, which was normal – like, for the sake of warmth. And this door was always closed, they entered through the kitchen door. In between these double doors he kept all his tools for shoemaking. Like, a cache. He'd open it, sit down and work. And if he heard some noise, he'd quickly close the doors back” (SPb-023_ES).

Smuggling of goods and people has always been one of the bases of livelihood for Jews of border-line territories; the importance of smuggling for survival especially grew in the tumultuous years after the establishment of Bolshevik rule and the economic catastrophe of the shtetl: “in a period of war and revolution, when the collapse of empires gave way to successor states that drew new boundaries, scar-like, through the heart of the former Pale of Settlement, boundary-crossing and law-breaking became a daily reality for many Jews, whether Mercurian or otherwise by ‘nature’” (Sloin 2010: 104) (also: Tan 1926: 16-17, JEES_068_SG, JEES_052_SU_GK_LL, Tul_05_101_VS, Mog_04_02-15_CG_SS, MP_07_003_VV, Bäl_011_007_LKh, Sirotiner 1926: 98, 101, 105-106, Pul'ner 1926: 179). In the first years of the Soviet rule, with the “totally corrupt nature of the regime facilitate[ing] bribery and private trade,” “middle-class Jews who were the targets of Soviet nationalization and collectivization programs usually managed much better than many others, because they knew how and where to hide whatever property they retained, and that often formed the basis of (forbidden and illegal) private trading, which in its turn involved Soviet functionaries and officials” (Bauer 2009: 161). This embeddedness, in other words, possesses a cultural dimension – in as much as the meaning of economic

practices, the stakes of investments, career choices, etc. reflect a set of dispositions shaped by the ethnic history and thus how in turn these dispositions are re-actualized in the economic activity.²⁰⁷

Taken together, these social and cultural factors allow us to speak about a substantial degree of embeddedness of Jewish post-war economic practices such as small-scale artel production, possibly including the clandestine part, in suburban settlements like Malakhovka and Saltykovka.

The very concept of “embeddedness” is perhaps one of the major controversies between formal economists who look at economic behavior as abstracted from the social context within which it takes place (cf.: “self-interested behavior affected minimally by social relations,” Granovetter 1985: 481) and economic anthropologists who emphasize the role of “non-economic institutions” (kinship, religion, ethnicity, etc.) in shaping people’s economic behavior. The notion of embeddedness was theorized by K. Polanyi with regard to the distinction between two types of economics, “formal” and “substantive”: the latter holds that “human economy is an instituted process” and is “embedded and enmeshed in institutions, economic and noneconomic (Polanyi 1968: 127). The major analytical limitation of Polanyi’s approach seems to be its insistence on a correlations between the types of economic exchange (reciprocity, redistribution, exchange) and the types of societies in their “evolutionary” development (peasant, feudal, capitalist) that they correspond to. Within this perspective the degree of embeddedness was seen as the degree of economy’s “modernization”: the less “modern” the economy, the stronger the influence of the social context since it simply lacks economic “institutions” in the contemporary sense of this word. Besides, embeddedness is regarded as a factor of restraint produced upon people’s economic choices, making the whole economic behavior less efficient (Ibid., 128-132). Polanyi’s views were later developed and in some ways challenged by M. Granovetter, who among other things argued

²⁰⁷As a counter-part to this, a number of people spoke of typically “non-Jewish” niches in the Soviet economy; those would often be formulated like “jokes” (Russ. *anekdoty*), such as “*Jew, a street-car driver*” (JEES_018_MK), “*Jew, a plumber*” (JEES_022_LG), “*Jew, a janitor*” (JEES_028_NG_ES, JEES_127_EF), “*Jew, a collective farmer*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). “*Jews were not laying trains sleepers*” (JEES_013_IS_AH) (Var.: “*asphalt or paving stones*”) (JEES_128_SP), one has to be an “abnormal Soviet Jew” to work at a metallurgical plant (JEES_076_MA); realization that Jews can work as common manual workers produced a “*profound surprise*” in many Soviet Jews who immigrated to Israel (JEES_028_NG_ES).

against the “neglect of ongoing structures of social relations” in the analysis of modern industrial societies in the West (Granovetter 1985: 481) (also: Hedlund 2011: 102, 110, 160; Verdery & Humphrey 2004: 16-17). This analytic move in its own turn produced discussions on the sustainability of the “over- vs. undersocialized” dichotomy, i.e. the degree to which individuals in different types of societies are free to undertake economic choices of their own, the role of custom in shaping present-day economic institutions and practices, the issue of “rationality” of economic choices, etc.

These theoretical developments are important for my study on several counts. First, one may ask whether the virtual prohibition of private economic agency under socialism itself created conditions for higher degree of economic embeddedness, at least in certain sectors of its economy. And if so, then, secondly, whether social and cultural factors that affect the economic performance in these sectors can be seen as historically continuous with the pre-Soviet past.

The first question may be approached in the following way. In a market economy, legal production sectors, at least ideally, are formed in accordance with the law of demand and supply: it is the employees who have better expertise in a given area and can perform a certain job more efficiently that get selected to work in it. Employees’ personal background, whether ethnic, or racial, or religious, etc. is excluded as a factor not having any direct relation to the process of production. Ethnic niches in such economy may emerge in cases when, for example, a particular ethnic group produces its culturally unique product (e.g. Amish crafts) or if it lives in a circumscribed territory that supplies it with unique resources not to be found anywhere else. The situation is different in a non-market economy, particularly the socialist planned economy that virtually prohibited private economic agency as such, or criminalized something that lies at the core of market relations. In this economy, if private entrepreneurship emerges at all, it emerges clandestinely, so the “recruitment pool” of potential employees gets radically reduced from the very beginning. Borrowing A. Yurchak’s term “*svoi*,” meaning “one’s own,” or “like-minded” people (Yurchak 2006: 287), one can say that such candidates had to be “*svoi*,” yet not so much in the political sense of opposing both “activists” and “dissidents” of the regime, but first and foremost trustworthy with regards to the clandestine economic enterprise. This,

however, did not necessarily mean that they would be better at a given work – yet it was their reliability that was primarily at stake. In other words, efficiency could have been sacrificed for the sake of secrecy.

Establishing clandestine entrepreneurial bonds along ethnic lines was perhaps the most obvious solution, especially in a context such as suburban settlements, with a sizable yet compact Jewish population recently coming from other regions, valuing their common linguistic and religious identity (even though in a reduced version of those), similar (usually not very high) social status, bonded by multiple ties based on the shared place of origin and its traditions, current neighborhood, possibly kinship, and most importantly, shared collective memory. Several people stressed that Jewish suburban life was “*semi-patriarchal in essence*,” that “*most head of households were people from the shtetls, mostly artisans, with very few representatives of intelligentsia*” (JEES_020_LL), and that the “*interlayer of ‘shadow Jews’*” presented “*a special caste, Jewish commercial estate of sorts*” (JEES_128_SP). Another person contrasted the Jewish “life ethos” with that of the Russians, which made entrepreneurial ethnic consolidation possible in the first, and questionable in the second cases: “*The Russians do not have kinship ties, they are in a different civilizational phase, they don’t know their ancestors, they don’t have informal kin-based relations. Even the twice-removed relatives are not known. In this sense Jews were much more archaic due to persecutions, isolations, etc.*” (JEES_085_NB_TT). All these specific social and cultural features facilitated formation and maintenance of supply, production and distribution networks as *Jewish ethnic networks*, where “kinship” and “economy” turned into two principles “bearing on the other” (Strathern 1985: 192).

The new political and economic order could not wipe out “continuous (‘traditional’) social forms [that] included the family, religious groups, and nationalities” (Edele 2007: 356) and the types of agency they facilitated. The prohibition of private entrepreneurship imposed from above, ideologically-conditioned rather than the economic in nature, provoked a not strictly economic response “from below” in the form of ethnic consolidation for the purposes of on-the-side production. This principle was certainly at work in other social and geographical settings, where it involved different social actors (see, for instance, Mars & Altman 1983 on the second economy in the Soviet Georgia), yet the major principle

stayed the same: “second” economy tended to be ethnic in proportion to the degree of its official prohibition. In Moscow suburban settlements this brought forth Jewish clandestine economic practices on the level of artel-type production.

Importantly enough, one may also regard “embeddedness” in contexts like these not only as a factor “constraining” economic performance (e.g. Granovetter 1985: 482), but rather as a principle enabling and facilitating certain type of economic activity to begin with, and moreover, making them efficient. In other words, surplus (clandestine) goods were generated due to the existence of specific networks of relations, which to a large degree were rooted, or embedded, in social and cultural predispositions characteristic of the suburban Jewish culture in the post-war period. Ethnicity (Jewishness) in this context turned into an asset, not only a liability. While the productive role of ethnic tradition is certainly not a new topic in economic anthropology, ethnic clandestine entrepreneurship under socialism has been hardly ever studied within this framework.

The principle of consolidation along ethnic lines should not, however, be taken too simplistically.

On the one hand, indeed, the very nature of clandestine production “*sharpened ethnic boundaries*” (Verdery 2005: 170, 172), and some of my informants stated precisely the principle of exclusion at work in clandestine entrepreneurial networks – whether it concerned general “ethnic solidarity,” or the “initiation” into the networks of secret production: “*Mother was fired during the ‘Doctors’ plot, and she came to work in the artel – out of hopelessness. At first she was unemployed for half of the year, and they accepted her to the artel. Perhaps, because the chief engineer there was Jewish*” (JEES_042_LG); “*Mostly Jews [worked in these artels]. Because you take an alien – he will denounce you... can denounce*” (JEES_086_AR), “*This was a science in its own right. So, only one’s own people were taken there. Q.: In other words, the trustworthy ones, and the Jews? A.: Certainly, certainly. Only one’s own people*” (JEES_099_IK). One person described the atmosphere in artels with the word *semeistvennost’* (JEES_059_IV), which in Russian derives from the word *semija*, ‘family,’ and is usually translated into English as “nepotism,” or installing one’s relatives in (important) positions at the same enterprise. It is noteworthy that during the anti-Jewish purges of late 1940s – early 1950s,

parallel to political motivations (the notorious accusation of being “rootless cosmopolitans,” primarily implying the lack of loyalty to the state), state propaganda appropriated the slogan of “struggle against nepotism of nomenclature employees,” i.e., against the alleged predilection of Jewish state officials (“the middle and most numerous layer of the Jewish elite,” Kostyrchenko 2009: 224-225) to place their kinsmen in the same institutions or organizations. In accusing Jews of prioritizing kin interests over those of the state, the official rhetoric made a resort precisely to socio-cultural dispositions described above.²⁰⁸ What is important for us with regards to such texts is not the tendency towards Jewish ethnic consolidation as such, but rather the historically contingent ways this consolidation took specific socio-economic forms.

On the other hand, the principle of “accepting only your own,” even in case of the clandestine business, did not completely exclude non-Jewish actors; in other words, even if we admit of the existence of certain “economic tribalism” (Baron & Kahan 1976: xi) in areas such as artel production, it does not seem to have been absolute. After all, even though suburban Jews lived in a compact way as compared, for instance, to the Jewish population of Moscow, they were part of the common Soviet Russian-Jewish milieu, had multiple ties across ethnic lines, including mixed marriages, etc. As a result, one could become a “svoi” even not being Jewish: “*Clandestine entrepreneurs were all Jews, with only a few Russians among them, maybe one percent. One could get a place in the artel only through personal ties (Russ. po blatu), they wouldn’t take people from the street, only ‘their own.’ Russians were also accepted – but only those whom they trusted through ‘their own’*” (JEES_097_AS). One of my oldest informants, a Russian, married a Jewish woman of Malakhovka: the husband of his wife’s

²⁰⁸In his notorious anti-Semitic essay “Pinya from Zhmerinka” published in 1953 in the satirical journal “Crocodile,” V. Ardamatsky draws a picture of such ramified nepotism network that allows its members to steal state property and become impudently rich at the expense of honest citizens of the town: Pinya “appointed David Ostrovsky as head of the chemical shop of his industrial combine. David’s son became, correspondingly, an agent of the supplies section. Rakhil Palatnik occupied the desk of the chief book-keeper. Accordingly, her son-in-law, Shaya Pudel, became her deputy. Roza Gurvich was made economic planner, and her husband was put in charge of the supplies. Zyama Milzon, Pinya’s brother-in-law, was given a position in a utensils shop. Yasha Dainich, Bunya Tsitman, Munya Mironchik, Munya Uchitel, Benya Rabinovich, Isaak Paltin and others were appointed to other positions” (Ardamatsky 1953: 13 or Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 133-134).

good friend gave him an oral recommendation, and he was accepted to one of the local artels (JEES_105_VG). In other words, while “trust” indeed may be seen as a function of the common ethnic background, this does not exclude other origins of trust – after all, as I noted earlier, “collective solidarity against the state” was a strong unifying ethos of many Soviet subjects irrespective of their ethnic origin.

Besides, any clandestine business, however small, involves a large number of participants at various stages of production and marketing, especially if the commodities produced belong to the category of mass consumption goods rather than being ethnically specific.²⁰⁹

Among other things, these considerations suggest that the boundaries of the “Jewish community” in suburban settlements were rather fuzzy and penetrable, and that its “consistency” as group (Feldman 2004: 115) is largely an analytical concept that facilitates ethnographic work. One may wonder whether this comes from the fact that Jews of suburban settlements were a minority among the largely non-Jewish population, but on the other hand, has not it always been so, even if we speak about shtetl culture?

Conditions of Jewish artel-level entrepreneurship in suburban settlements around Moscow were such that it not only “sharpened ethnic boundaries,” but paradoxically also strengthened economic ties across ethnic borders. Although artels fall into the category of small-scale production units, they still involved a fairly large number of rank-and-file workers to do the actual manufacturing. The difference between the artel management and these common workers often reflected an important ethnic divide: with Jews performing the role of the managerial “brain center,” and workers coming from mixed ethnic backgrounds: [clandestine production in artels] “*would be organized by one person, who himself didn’t*

²⁰⁹At the same time, even matzo baking, this a paradigmatic Jewish ethnic business, largely clandestine in the USSR as a money-generating enterprise, was relying on non-Jewish workers – particularly in Malakhovka, where is assumed the size of a supra-local business, providing matzo to Jews in a number of other places: “*Goyim were waiting for the Jewish Passover – they were hired for matzo baking*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); “*half of the people involved [in matzo baking] were Russians*” (JEES_097_AS). None of those non-Jewish workers ever denounced the organizers to the authorities: monetary consideration overweighed any others, even if these others existed to begin with.

work, he was a manager. Russians, too, could work there. Actually, it was predominantly the Russians who worked – where would you find 450 idiots among Jews [to do that kind of work]? [laughs]” (JEES_119_MS_SS) (also: JEES_124_MK, JEES_099_IK). Certainly, this division cannot be taken as absolute, although examples from other ethnically mixed territories generally support it.²¹⁰

The mother of one of my informants worked in the local artel as a commodity warden (Russ. *zavkhoz*) and over years not only “*used to working with Jews,*” who were “*normally managing the whole thing,*” but even started understanding Yiddish, used as a secret language to discuss certain types of deals: “*So, she says, ‘I can’t talk with them [in Yiddish], but when they speak, I know what it is about. I understand. Sometimes they start talking with each other, and I would say: ‘No, this won’t go...’ – they would open their eyes wide: ‘How come? Do you understand?’ – and I’d say: ‘How many years can one work here and not understand?’*” (JEES_077_VC).

²¹⁰About a similar distribution of ethnic roles, with Jews designing the clandestine economic scheme, and Moldovans performing the “scut work” in it, see: Kushkova 2013: 91. Characteristically, some people saw this as a proof that, again, Jews did not see their own gain as happening at the price of exclusion of the others: “*They know how to steal, but they also share <...> They don’t gorge by themselves, they eat together with others.*” <...> *Jews have never been stingy. And nobody ever said so, that Jews are stingy. A Jew is sly, clever, inventive, he knows how to take, but he will always share*” (Băl_011_021_EV). This idea certainly poses a very important question about the very definition of “ethnic business” in multi-ethnic settings.

СВЕДЕНИЯ О РАБОТЕ						
№ записи	Дата			Сведения о приеме на работу и увольнении	работу, перемещениях по (с указанием причин)	На основании чего внесена запись (документ, его дата и номер)
	Год	Месяц	Число			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1941	VI	15	Принята на работу в артель "Труженник" на должность кладовщика пассажира.	Артель "Труженник" в г. Салтыковка	расшифровка № 9 от 15/VI/41г.
2	1946	III	9	Уволена по соглашению сторон.	Артель "Труженник" в г. Салтыковка	расшифровка № 9 от 9/III/46г.
3	1947	III	19	Зачислена в колхоз "Советский" в качестве кладовщицы.	Производственный пункт Толошихинского Райпроколхозцентра	Ар. № 78 от 16/III/47г.
4				Зачислена в колхоз "Советский" в качестве кладовщицы.	Артель "Труженник" в г. Салтыковка	

III. 25: A page from the Labor book of Anna Dmitrievna Chertkova (1940s). The page indicates that she was employed in the artel “Truzhenik” (Russ. “Laborer”), in Saltykovka, in 1941-46 (first entry from the top). Courtesy of A. D. Chertkova’s daughter.

I would also argue that the relation of the post-war clandestine artel production to the pre-revolutionary and NEP Jewish economic engagements may be construed not as a direct succession, but rather as a continuity on the level of embeddedness of social and cultural predispositions towards occupying similar niches within a given economic structure. Even though some of the artel entrepreneurs might have had a family history of similar engagements (as, for instance, in case of Y. Rafalovich), it was not about following some “pre-given” professional scripts, but rather about a creative adaptation to the new socio-economic and political realities.

These realities were such that the process of socialist modernization was partial at best, focusing primarily on select spheres of economy such as heavy industry or military production. “Increase of the wellbeing of the country’s population” was not absent from this modernization rhetoric, yet clearly not the first economic priority. The virtual ban on private economic agency, abolition of the institution of private property, centralized allocation and distribution of producer materials and manufactured goods –

all this was clearly a step backward compared to the market-oriented economy – especially in view of how Soviet planned economy actually worked, and not how it was theoretically envisaged or ideologically promulgated. Persistent shortages of consumer goods and food, especially acute in the post-war period, made the regime, in spite of its modernization rhetoric, rely on the production of the pre-modern, artisanal-like, nearly manual type, in order to fill the widening gap in the production of everyday necessities – hence, the temporary license given to cooperative production units such as artels.

From this perspective, the Jewish role in artel production, including its clandestine aspect, may be deemed progressive in the sense that it was oriented towards the actual demand of the population, which is an underlying principle of the market economy. Paradoxically, this progress was associated with the reinvention of the archaic forms of production rather than with “commerce or banking, technical expertise pertaining to industry, or in the accumulation of... capital” (Kahan 1986: 83) that Jews are often credited for in the context of economic history. In the planned economy, with the simultaneous existence of industrial and “semi-patriarchal” modes of production, Jewish small-scale entrepreneurs like the ones discussed here carried the “spirit of the market” while remaining in the “pre-industrial” economic niche. Paraphrasing a popular Jewish song, one can perhaps say that while “making one step backwards,” they “made two step forward,” and it is not at all accidental that many people now see clandestine entrepreneurs as “*harbingers of the future economic relations*” (JEES_043_GL), i.e. the post-Soviet market economy.

The one-generation business?

While no economic, which is to say, ideological “disloyalty” was to be officially tolerated by the regime, it always kept a watchful eye on the cooperative sector, at times waging a true war against clandestine producers. After all, in the socialist economy they also had their “targets” to meet. Stories of financial militia persecutions are very common in almost every narrative about people who worked in Moscow suburban artels: “*Militia were after them all the time, especially in 1950s when I came here... people would hush any conversation about artels*” (JEES_099_IK); “*They would be put to prison quite often – half of Saltykovka who was in this business, they served their terms*” (JEES_073_IV); “*They*

would find themselves in the dock very often” (JEES_128_SP). This largely explains why the question about cadres in producer cooperation always loomed large both in their internal documentation, as well as in the public discourse on the economic crimes under socialism: “...over the three last months about 100 people were fired and arrested in the Administration of Producer Cooperation of the city of Moscow. Among them are heads of the satellite stores, salespeople, chief accountants, heads of workshops – and besides, a fairly large group of artel chairmen...” (GARF-2. F. 396. Inv. 2. File 95. P. 23); “Such [enormous] size of theft and commodity shrinkage results from the fact that many leaders of the cooperative organizations keep entrusting commodity and financial values to unreliable persons, including those having a record of embezzlement in the past. Swindlers and crooks get access to commodities and monetary funds” (GARF-2, F. A-506, Inv. 2, File 134, P. 2). The journal of “Producer Cooperation” consistently published articles criticizing particular artels for hiring people with a previous criminal record, mostly related to “embezzlement” and illegal “monetary appropriations,” e.g. Kavokin 1957: 3-4, Chudnovsky & Shevelev 1957: 6-7, Rumiantsev 1957: 35-36, etc.²¹¹

Against this, the generation of artel producers could be the first entrepreneurs in their families – and more often than not, also the last: all of them wanted their children to get a good Soviet education and to stay as far as possible away from their business: “No mother wanted her child to work in the artel. Because this would most certainly entail prison. By 100%. Everything was official only on paper. In order for the artel to keep afloat, half of what it was doing was illegal” (JEES_119_MS_SS); “Q.: So, your grandfather did not want to pass his [clandestine] business to your father? A.: No. He understood it was dangerous, and... nobody knew that the Soviet regime will once be over [laughs]. So, nobody here inherited anything, next generations lived a usual Soviet life” (JEES_131_AR); “They were giving their children good education, their children would go to music or medical schools – they didn’t want to pass... [their business to them]” (JEES_113_IB). In most cases children of clandestine artel producers

²¹¹With a pun on the adjective “national,” which on the one hand refers to the “Gross national product,” but on the other, translates as “ethnic” in Russian, the narrator in Y. Karabchievsky’s novel observes: “Not all of those imprisoned were Jews, but one quarter – for sure. But even if it had been one tenth – the percentage would be still fantastic. National product – what else can one say?” (Karabchievsky 2001: 196).

indeed became professionals of all kinds, which not only emphasizes the amazing speed of socio-cultural transformations that happened in the Jewish milieu in the twentieth century Russia,²¹² but also shows a significant divergence with the patterns of professional succession in the more traditional Jewish society, where trade was usually passed from father to son, resulting in formation of artisanal “dynasties” (see: Kushkova 2010: 246-248).

The end of artels

Existence of virtually semi-autonomous and not fully controllable production units such as artels could not be tolerated by the regime for too long. Besides, they seem to have fulfilled the main purpose which allowed for their legitimization within the Soviet planned economy to begin with: filled the gap in the post-war production of everyday consumer items and foods that the state was unable to carry out on its own.

Preparation for the liquidation of artels was gradual; as early as 1955 “Producer Cooperation” journal started publishing articles with the clear implication that the small-scale character of their activities is not beneficial for the state, particularly from the point of view of control: “many employees are clearly interested in the preservation of small, territorially disconnected workshops, where it is difficult to organize the adequate accounting of the manufactured production” (Petrushev 1955: 5). The “struggle” for “enlargement” with parallel “specialization” of artels, i.e. putting an end to the practice of production of a broad range of not necessarily related goods was likewise launched at the time (e.g. Danilov 1955: 48-49, Zhukovsky 1956: 8-9, Klimov 1959: 4, GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 135. P. 145).

²¹²The protagonist of the famous play by Alexander Galich *Matrosskaya Tishina*, a warehouse manager Abram Schwarz from the Ukrainian town of Tul’chin, has a dream: while he spends his life “weighing nails, delivering soap and quarreling with providers,” his son David with a violin in hands is standing on stage of the big Philharmonic Hall, surrounded by nicely dressed people, and then his name is announced, David Schwarz, and “he plays a mazurka, and everybody is applauding, and giving him flowers, and asking for more, and more, and more...” “And then,” – says Abram to his son, – “you will inevitably remember about me! And you’ll say to these people: ‘It’s my father who made me what I am! My dad from a small town of Tul’chin! He was a drunkard and a swindler, my dad, but he wanted his blood, his son, to know how happiness tastes’” (Galich 1991: 273-274).

What was eventually at stake was the full appropriation of the cooperative production sector by the state; in the governmental decree published on April 14, 1956, the justification for this takeover was rhetorically presented along economic lines: “presently many enterprises of producer cooperation ceased to bear artisanal character and essentially do not differ from enterprises in the state industrial sphere”; “the contemporary level of production in these enterprises, as well as their technological equipment require the change in the forms of their administration and a more qualified technological management” (*Reshenija... 1968: 297*).²¹³ Multiple publications emphasizing the increase of mechanization and modernization level in artels, radical increase in production outputs that this entailed, the change of the manual character of labor, etc. immediately followed in support of the new state policy:



III. 26: “AS IT WAS – AS IT IS NOW” (the end of artels) (1960).
Source: *Producer cooperation* № 8, August 1960, P. 15.

This rhetoric, however, does not seem to agree with the parallel publications on the “poor quality of artel production,” published in the same journal, or the “primitive nature of artels as production units” that, as I noted previously, is nearly pervasive in all interviews. It looks like the appropriation of the

²¹³As a matter of fact, state “appropriation” of artels had started even earlier, when during the war artels were forcefully merged with industrial enterprises for the sake of increasing military production; over the war years the number of artel employees was reduced by nearly 40% (Seniavskiy & Tel’pukhovskiy 1971: 145).

cooperative production had to be justified at any price, and that the most crucial factor was the overall change of attitude to cooperative production in relation to the first sector of the socialist economy. Thus, official documents of the time criticized the existing “parallelism” between cooperative and state production that leads to the “diffusion of raw materials, equipment, machinery, and auto-transportation means” (*V interesakh sovetskogo naroda* 1960: 1), although any direct mention of the clandestine component of the cooperative production would have certainly been impossible since in the official discourse it existed only in the forms of random “survivals” of the past. At the same time, it was clear that the state was not ready to fully disable the cooperative production sector since it still alleviated a considerable burden of the first sector of the socialist economy, therefore the state chose to seize the existing facilities to secure both the production-related and an ideological grip on cooperation within its own economic and political infrastructure. Perhaps, one can argue that the state “utilized” small-scale cooperative production for its own purposes, and terminated it when it fulfilled its economic role – not unlike what happened with private enterprise and trade at the end of NEP (see: Hessler 2003: 101-102).²¹⁴

For common people, especially for those who were involved in artel production, it was not difficult to see through the state intentions: “*artels, this was a wonderful thing – but they were difficult of watch over. And since our power certainly has to control everything, they were closed*” (JEES_022_LG); “*Artels became state factories sometime in the beginning of [19]60s. It was already a different form of property – like, enough of the private-cooperative [form]*” (JEES_090_IA); “*The power found a way to liquidate these artels. Probably, because it started watching closer to all this [private production activity]. The big units appeared, the small ones were scattered*” (JEES_112_FK).

In the period between 1956 and 1960 around 1,9 million remaining artel employees became workers of the state production structure (Seniavskiy & Tel’pukhovskiy 1971: 146). The very physical

²¹⁴To quote A. Karabchievsky again, “...when the production was fully set, and everybody had enough pots and buckets, then all the property was confiscated from the culprits, and the artels they organized were declared state factories” (Karabchievsky 2001: 196).

framework, including the infrastructure, of artels was thus done away with. Soviet private entrepreneurship suffered a substantial blow and had to reconfigure itself in the new circumstances.

<p>Балашихинская артель инвалидов ПРОДАЕТ</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 51 резиноплетельную машину на 150 концов для 4 и 6-жильной продерочной резины. 2. Пресс-формы для пеналов к губной помаде. 3. 1 тонну резиновой нити 0,6 и 0,8 мм. 4. Оборудование и фурнитуру для часовых ремней. 5. 300 кг лоскута от шарфовой ткани. 6. 60 000 м фотопленки негативной в коробках по 300 м. 7. 20 000 м фотопленки цветной. <p>Адрес артели: ст. Салтыковка, Московской области, ул. Заречье, 205. Телефон: Ж 3-90-04, доб. 1-39.</p>	<p>Balashikha artel of invalids <i>SELLS</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 51 rubber weaving machines for 4- and 6-band elastic waistband. 2. Press forms for lipstick cases. 3. 1 ton of elastic waistband, 0.6 and 0.8 mm. 4. Equipment and accessories for watch straps. 5. 300 kg of scarf fabric rags. 6. 60,000 m of negative photographic film, in boxes, 300 m in each. 7. 20,000 m of color photographic film. <p>Artel's address: station Saltykovka, Moscow region, Zarechje st., 205. Phone: Zh 3-90-04, ext. 1-39</p>
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III. 27: Advertisement for an artel closeout sale (1960).
Source: *Producer cooperation* №5, May 1960. P. 6.

CHAPTER SIX

SOVIET JEWISH TRADE AND SOVIET JEWISH TRADERS

“Some Jews went into the revolution, others went into trade” (JEES_113_IB)

“Jewish traders” such as store managers (*direktor magazina*), store accountants, sales personnel, commodity specialists (*tovarovedy*), warehouses employees, etc.) constituted a clear “subject position” in the popular discourse related to the Soviet economy, and not unlike the Soviet “conmen” of the interwar years “engaged the Soviet imagination with unusual intensity” (Fitzpatrick 2002: 557). Even today, in everyday conversations, including interviews, a phrase like the following would express “things taken for granted”: “*A Jew who is a store manager, this is such a symbolic object, right?*” (JEES_023_AL_ET). Which factors contributed to the formation of this “subject position” and how can one unpack internally self-evident cultural meanings of phrases like the one above?

One would have to go back in time. As is well known, trade was one of the two major Jewish occupations (alongside with various artisanal pursuits) in pre-revolutionary Russia,²¹⁵ where ownership of land, with minor exceptions, was prohibited for Jews. Depending on specific economic configurations of the areas where they lived, Jews performed the role of commercial mediators simultaneously on several levels: local, regional, and international. Trade remain an enduring symbol of past Jewish professional identity at every level from petty peddlers to large store owners. The majority of my present-day informants can find a trader in their family history: “*[father’s] family was poor, yet some kind of a small shop they certainly had*” (JEES_111_RD); “*great grandfather had a small shop – but what kind of shop it was? They sold kerosene there, flour... everything together, as they do in the*

²¹⁵See, for instance, Alenitsyn 1886, Mysh 1881, Isaevich 1892: 45-50, Dynner 2014 (esp. Chs. 3, 5, 6), Kalik 2008.

villages” (JEES_030_GN_MN); “*great grandfather was a broker, and traded most probably in wood. Grandfather was a sugar acceptor... he did purchases*” (JEES_046_EP); “*Great grandfather was doing geshefts – it was said about him that he would go to Rumania to trade something... he’d go back and forth all the time*” (JEES_082_LV) (see also: Teller 2008b: 1894).

The crucial function that Jewish traders performed in the Pale was providing exchange between the shtetl and the surrounding peasant communities. Jewish traders would travel, usually in a horse-driven carriage filled with manufactured goods, to the villages of the region, and either sell, or exchange these goods for rural agricultural produce: “the essential economic function of the shtetl was to serve as a market town, a point of intersection between an agrarian hinterland and a predominantly Jewish settlement” (Kassov 2007b: 124). This exchange constituted the very foundation not only of the Jewish shtetl economy, but also of the non-Jewish peasant subsistence regime in the territories of the former Pale.²¹⁶

Another important thing that to a considerable extent explains the stereotype of “Jewish riches” discussed earlier, is the fact that in the low-monetized “natural” peasant economy Jews clearly stood out as a group possessing cash, which only added to the symbolism of Jews as “trade people” (Hakkarainen 2011: 92-93).

Soviet prohibition of private trade during the years of War Communism (1918-1921) doomed the shtetl to economic and social catastrophe. This prohibition as such can only be understood along ideological rather than economic lines: private agency in trade was “incompatible with the politics of “planned economy”” (Brutskus 1999: 295), i.e. the central role the Soviet state appropriated for itself in economic and thus also in political matters. This new course dealt a major blow to the traditional framework of economic exchange in the former Pale of Settlement. As A. Bragin wrote in the middle of the 1920s, “Each step forward of the Soviet economy is simultaneously a step backward of the economy

²¹⁶Even within the context of the evictions of Jews from the villages in the early nineteenth century governmental officials had to admit that “by buying grain on the spot, the Jew saves the peasant from wasting his time in traveling to the city. Altogether in rural economic life the Jew plays the rôle of a go-between, who can be spared neither by the squire nor by the peasant” (Dubnow 2001a: 354).

of the Jewish masses <...> The economic future of the USSR is the future of the hammer and sickle only, so all the constituents of the Jewish economy are bound for destruction” (Bragin 1995: 213). Prohibition of private trade and arbitrariness of Soviet financial agents who were enforcing it (Kiper 1930: 70) immediately brought forth various subterfuges, most notably, in the drastic increase of smuggling goods over the border, so that “by the beginning of NEP people grew out of the habit of legal trade” (Sirotin 1926: 105). Apart from the prohibition itself, it was certainly the general economic impoverishment of the peasant population, the main consumers of the Jewish merchandise, that speeded up the catastrophe of the Jewish shtetl trade, as well as the possible refusal, on the part of peasants, to trade with Jews “for fear of unpleasant consequences” (Hessler 2003: 27), i.e. political repressions. By the middle of 1920s Jewish private trade in the shtetl is described as being in the state of “agony” (Tan 1926: 21) or completely “killed, same as middlemen activities” (Bragin 1995: 213).

As I noted earlier, during the 1920s trade as occupation lost prestige in the eyes of the shtetl community: if previously traders of all sorts stood on a higher societal level as compared to artisans and craftsmen, now that the latter radically “upgraded” their status to become the “shtetl proletariat,” trade lost its attraction not only because it could not provide material support, but also because it was relegated to the lowest level of new value hierarchy and often became a dangerous occupation to be involved in (e.g. Schwarz 1948: 63, Tan 1926: 19, Veitzblit 1929: 71-72).



Ill. 28: “Empty marketplace, shut down by Soviet restrictions against private trade, Shklov, USSR, 1920s.” (YIVO) (Teller 2008: 1892)

The New Economic Policy of 1920s brought about limited tolerance towards private trade and private production. Instead of the early Bolshevik principle of controlled allocation of good and foods – which was to become the underlying foundation of the Soviet planned economy,²¹⁷ these years saw partial reinstatement of the market, including social practices and relations. While this happened only several years after the termination of the pre-revolutionary private trade, the actors, including the Jewish actors who tried to benefit from these new circumstances, were often the people with the previous trading experience, provided, of course, they survived the civil war, pogroms, and the harsh political and economic measures of the War Communism. There were several such people in my informants’ families: *“Mother was a hat maker, and sold her production in Poland, in Warsaw itself. Felt for hats came from Warsaw, too. This was in the 1920s, she was a private entrepreneur during the NEP”*

²¹⁷It is very telling in this sense that the “Soviet language” would regularly substitute verbs such as “to sell” and “to buy” with the alternative ones, signifying the types of exchange different from those inherent to trade, e.g. “to give” or “to throw away” (in the meaning of “to sell”), “to procure” (in the meaning of “to buy”), etc. (in more detail, see: Zemtsov 1991: 136-137). In other words, Soviet trade was a specific type of exchange relations, and the words itself should not create the illusion that it was similar to trade in a market economy.

(JEES_114_FK); “[grandfather] was a businessman during NEP, he had a candy store”

(JEES_058_DG); “During NEP they were baking bread – this was their private business”

(JEES_088_EK). Besides, by the NEP period some Jews had already succeeded in moving to large Russian cities: “In Moscow, almost a third of the biggest NEP traders were Jews described as “newcomers” (Russ. *priezzhie*), presumably part of the large Jewish migration from the Ukraine and Belorussia to Moscow that took place in the first years of the revolution” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 194). These people used the favorable opportunities to establish their trade enterprises in the new place: “Aunt Dasha with her family were rich: she had a successful marriage with Solomon Glikin, who came from a family with “serious money”: in the 1920s they owned a store ‘Death to Husbands’²¹⁸ on Petrovka street,²¹⁹ as well as something right on the place where they had constructed ‘Moscow’ hotel later. They had an individual apartment, too” (JEES_081_VV); “Grandfather, Dovid-Yankel, was in commerce, visited London and other places. Then in Moscow, in the 1930s, he switched to small-scale commerce, was constantly ‘spinning around,’²²⁰ and managed somehow. He didn’t produce anything, he was in trade” (JEES_086_AR). Mass Jewish migration brought about higher Jewish visibility in traditionally non-Jewish Russian cities, which was only increased by Jewish engagements in trade establishments as public venues for interethnic encounter. At this time stereotypes relating Jews and trade/ money, or “profiteer stereotypes” (Schwarz 1948: 41) were revived with unusual force: “Jews were blamed for engaging in business and being inordinately successful. Under the NEP, private retailers, once licensed, were permitted to sell their wares as they saw fit, free from minute control and supervision. They had plenty of merchandise, enjoyed a brisk turnover, met the consumers’ demand”; [against the poor conditions of governmental trade] “The blame was shifted to the independent retailer, the ‘speculator,’

²¹⁸Russ. *Smert’ muzhjam*, usually the name of stores selling expensive women’s clothes or underwear.

²¹⁹One of the major old streets in the center of Moscow.

²²⁰The informant used an expression, identical in structure and meaning in both Russian and Yiddish, “*krutitsia*,” “*dreien sich*,” which literally means “spin around” – usually to earn the living.

the ‘Jew.’” (Ibid., 42). Although old in essence, these were the new Soviet stereotypes that placed trader Jews in a specific position within the new Soviet economic structures and realities.

However, the New Economic Policy could not redeem the damage wrought by the overall Soviet economic and political policy: Jewish private trade at the time predominantly represented low-scale pursuits, concentrating “at the bottom” of the trade network, and was in the state of constant flux: firms constantly closed down to give way to similar short-lived firms (Klushantsev 1927: 4-5). Besides, by that time professional succession was interrupted on the family level: even large-scale traders did not want to teach their sons their trade (Veitzblit 1929: 71) – among other things, because involvement in trade would inevitably label one as a “deprivee.” Escaping this “trader-stigma” was a major concern for many Jewish young people since their parents’ trader background would be automatically transferred to them as well.

While the new regime took clear course at elimination of the private trade, including that conducted by Jews, it did not abolish trade as such, but rather tried to “domesticate” it under the state supervision, as well as to use it for the purposes of “ousting” the remaining private commercial pursuits. State and cooperative trade network, deployed by the new regime throughout the country, including rural areas that had previously relied on Jewish traders, significantly undermined private trade in the shtetl. Even though from the beginning state commercial enterprises could not compete with the private trade with its established channels of clientilization and a widely ramified structure, gradually it became the “mighty adversary” (Bragin 1924: 8) of private exchange operations. Enjoying better provision by the state, as well as infrastructure and transportation support, the new state establishments started “running ahead of the private [trade]” after a relatively short period of time (Klushantsev 1927: 4). Apart from the growing taxes and difficulties in obtaining state credits, “state and cooperative retail prices on many goods were sharply lowered early in the year, leaving many private business unable to compete” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 201).



Ill. 29: Semion Isaakovich Rynkovsky (behind the counter, next to the scales), head of the cooperative food store in Melitopol (Ukraine), late 1920s – early 1930s.
Courtesy of S. Rynkovsky's daughter.

The other major problem was prohibitive taxes imposed upon private trade, which rendered much of it either impossible or ineffectual as a money-generating activity; a popular poem of the time (originally most probably in Yiddish, although I only have the Russian version of it), comments on the hopeless situation of private traders suffocating under heavy taxes: “A shopkeeper buys a patent, he is stifled by a financial agent, the shopkeeper runs to consult with a rabbi, and the rabbi tells him: ‘My child, this is the Soviet regime’” (Kirzhnits 1931: 21-22).²²¹

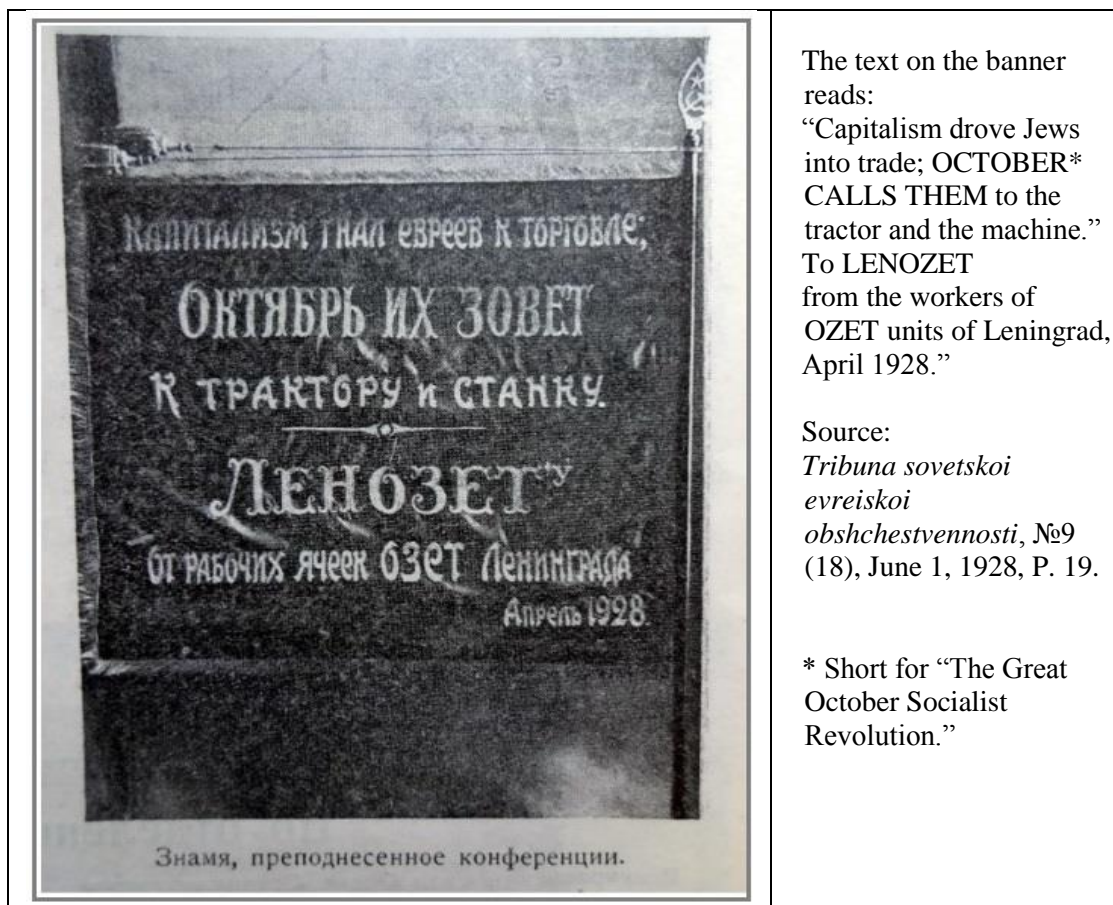
²²¹As Anna Shternshis observes in her analysis of the transformation of the song “Dayenu,” performed during Passover Seder, and “recites all the benefits the Jews have received from God,” by 1930s one can find versions of this song “as being sung by counter-revolutionaries,” “explaining the reasons for the interruption of the NEP campaign and show[ing] that “capitalist elements” will survive if they are given the slightest opportunity.” In one particular version there are the following lines: “If the Bolsheviks just came // And did not take anything // It would be for us quite... enough. Even if they took somethings, // But only let us trade, // We would get everything back //

Thus while the NEP to a certain extent animated Jewish private trade, at least initially, it should not be idealized (as it often is) as a prime time for private entrepreneurship of any sort; “by the end of the period, the Russian Jewish merchant was largely a thing of the past” (Teller 2008b: 1896). Most importantly, this meant the disappearance of the traditional Jewish economic niche and the complete destruction of the very texture of the Jewish economic life in the Pale: “the advent of collectivization in 1928–1929 ended what was left of the traditional market relationship between the shtetl and the surrounding countryside” (Kassow 2007: 17).

Apart from the broader ideological implications, severe restrictions placed by the state on private trade expressed the intention of the new power “to wean Jewish actors from “traditional” Jewish economic practices” (Sloin 2010: 106) as “parasitic” and “non-productive.”²²² This was part and parcel of the Jewish “productivization” politics, although, as I noted earlier, private artisans and craftsmen were treated in a more lenient way since they were seen as nearly-proletarian, given the almost complete absence of the “real” industrial proletariat in the shtetl. In the Bolshevik discourse, Jewish trade in the shtetl was more often than not presented as an evidence of the pre-revolutionary anti-Jewish discriminatory politics that severely reduced not only Jewish mobility, but also educational and professional choices – something that the new regime put an end to. The economic collapse that the forced termination of private trade brought about in the shtetl was mentioned rarely, if at all: Jews were clearly among those whom the new power liberated from the tsarist “prison house of nations,” as V. I. Lenin loved to repeat.

And this would be... enough. We would trade unsuccessfully, and if there were no financial [e.g. taxation] department, // We would do away with them, // And for us it would be... enough!” (Shternshis 2006: 34).

²²²A famous Soviet Yiddish song “Dzhankoi” (the name of one of the train stations and of a Jewish agricultural districts in Crimea), explicitly rejects the old trader stereotype: “*Ver zogt, az yidn kenen nor handlen, // Esn frische yoykh mit mandlen, // Un nit zayn keyn arbetsman!*” (“Who says that Jews can only trade, // Eat fresh soup with almonds, // And not be workers!”) (Shternshis 2006: 120). “Almonds” is not a very fortunate translation here; a better one would be “soup nuts” that resemble almonds.



Ill. 30: The banner presented to the Second Regional Conference of the Leningrad OZET (1928).

However, not everybody followed the governmental incentive to switch “to the tractor and the machine.” In the State Archive of the Russian Federation I came across a number of “Personal Profiles for Human Resources” (Russ. *lichnoe delo*) of the Chief Administration of Purchasing and Supply, RSFSR Commissariat of Light Industry, produced between 1940 and 1948 – one of the few documentary collections that not only traces the professional trajectory of the employees on file, but also records their ethnicity. At least seven people in the personal cases file I looked through may be distinguished as a category of the “old Jewish commercial professionals,” who started their careers in the pre-revolutionary period and then segued into Soviet trade-related positions. Just to give several representative examples of this cohort: Matvei Osipovich Feygelson, born in 1890 in the shtetl of Glubokoe, Vilno province. Between 1910 and 1916 worked in three private trade houses in Dnipro (then Ekaterinoslav), and one Producer Partnership, after 1918 was employed in the Commissariat of People’s

Economy in Dnepropetrovsk, and then moved to Moscow where he worked in the Supply Administration of the coal industry (1922-1923), and then from 1923 to 1953 in various supply departments for forestry supply (GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 79. Pp. 305-305 rev.). Or else Naum Semenovich Man'kin, born in 1880 in Gomel, who between 1906 and 1910 worked as a travelling salesman of a private producer unit in Saratov, between 1910 and 1928 – as a “fiduciary” for the sales of ready-made goods at a private factory with branches in Warsaw and Moscow, and then under the Soviet regime occupied various managerial positions in the shoe-manufacturing industry, both state and cooperative, in Berdichev and Moscow and worked as the head of supply departments of various Moscow state factories (GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 81. P. 246). Solomon Abramovich Tovbin, born in 1888 in the village of Selets, Mogilev province, graduated from the Vilno Trade School in 1909, between 1909 and 1911 worked as an employee at the private bread firm of A. I. Katz in Samara; starting in 1920 was employed as the head of supply departments of various Soviet food trade organizations, first in Smolensk, then in Moscow (GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 82. Pp. 202-203). Lev Abramovich Khazanov, born in 1893 in the shtetl Khislavichi, Mogilev province, between 1910 and 1914 was employed at the private raw material warehouses in Smolensk, working with “cotton and hemp.” Since 1918 occupied chief positions at various Soviet trade and distribution organizations, where he was responsible for raw materials supply – first in Smolensk and its region, then in Moscow region, and Moscow itself (GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 82. Pp. 310-310 rev.).

While it is certainly impossible to make any reliable judgements based on one collection only, one still may hypothesize that at least initially the new regime had to rely on trade professionals such as these, whether Jewish, or not, in order to lay the foundations of the Soviet trade network and launch its activities on a large scale. It is also noteworthy that the representatives of the group described above were all born between 1888 and 1893, and in this sense are similar to the oldest cohort of Jewish workers in small-scale production units such as artels. Likewise, it was their pre-Soviet professional experience that established them in the new economic structure, and the transition of former private traders into Soviet cooperative and state trade organizations was a rather logical move. It was precisely

these people that were targeted by a “series of purges” after the termination of NEP, which pursued the aim of “root[ing] out concealed class enemies (former Nepmen and kulaks)” from the system, and “build[ing] a trading apparatus free of “NEP spirit”” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 207). However, when in the middle of the 1930s, with the adoption of the new Constitution, “most forms of official social discrimination had been dropped,” it turned out that “about 10 percent of all employees in state and cooperative trade – roughly 100,000 persons – had formerly worked in private trade” (Ibid., 208).

Outside this group of “veteran traders,” who more or less successfully adapted to the new ideological and economic realities, what brought new people, particularly Jews, to the Soviet trade? What made them choose “trade over revolution,” or, in the broader sense, over the opportunities for upward mobility offered by the new regime? In discussing this question, I will again concentrate on the case of Jewish suburban settlements around Moscow.

Adapting old skills to a new situation is one is seen as one such explanation, particularly, for the oldest generation of migrants: “*What did the Jews do in the shtetls? They were in trade among other things. And [in 1960-s-70s] there were still people whose parents were trading, and they were already old enough [to remember, to learn] – so, they would come to large cities and do the same as their parents*” (JEES_043_GL); “*let’s say he was a counterman of some merchant, right? So, whether you want it or not, life will teach you how to deceive in order to live, right? So, he already has an experience, he already knows how to do things*” (JEES_086_AR); “*In the olden time Jews were limited in terms of education. So, they were practical people, they had to work in stress... and gradually, with a head on one’s shoulders, one could become a store manager*” (JEES_032_AB). While there are indeed a number of people with a trading background in their family history, continuities such as these are more often than not hinge on a “genetic” explanation: Jews have a strong inner predilection to work in middleman operations, hence their historical occupations in the sphere of trade: “*There were lots of Jews among merchants... Jewish brains work that way*” (JEES_003_MM); “*A Jew as a store manager, he knows what to do with the store. Q.: How does he know? A.: It’s purely... on the genetic level. Q.: Genetic level? A.: Sure. He know what needs to be done so that the store doesn’t go bankrupt, which*

goods should be purchased, and which should not... A Jew is either a good composer, or a good trader. This is written in his karma" (JEES_118_MR_OR); "*Farther went into trade very early. They used to say about him: 'Already in his mother's womb David was sitting on a bench selling apples.' At 14 years old he would go to Mariupol' to trade wagons of apples – he could be trusted with this, and he did this wonderfully*" (JEES_101_ArV_AnV) (also: JEES_114_FK, JEES_062_AG_IT). Construction of such "hereditary," or genetic successions is a strong element of popular imagination, and as such a part of the "figured world" of Jewish economy.

However, by no means did everybody with a trader background went into Soviet trade, while many of those lacking family or personal trade experience, did become part of the Soviet trade network. Most explanations for the lack of any trader succession are very similar to those given with regards to Jewish involvement in small-scale producer cooperation discussed earlier: the lack of any, particularly Soviet, education, the war that affected people's professional trajectories, state anti-Semitism.

First of all, Soviet trade, usually on the lowest level of its structure often was the only available migration choice for the newcomers who arrived from the Pale with no particular profession of their own and ended up in a small place with fewer employment choices to begin with: "Q.: *How did your father chose his profession? A.: It chose him itself... Trade. What else to do? A young guy, came over here... what could he do? Q.: Are you saying that trade was the easiest thing to go into? A.: The easiest, for sure*" (JEES_119_MS_SS); "Q.: *How did Jews end up in trade? A.: Well – what else could they do? Q.: But didn't one have to know the field? A.: One didn't have to know anything [to work in trade]!*" (JEES_111_RD); "*my aunt came here with no education whatsoever, and first she started selling sunflower seeds at the market, and then my father fixed her in the Settlement Consumer Society²²³ store, and she started selling carbonated water there – a wheeled cart was standing on the street, with ice in it...*" (JEES_111_RD).

²²³A local suburban cooperative organization.

While people might describe Soviet trade as “easy” (“*you receive the goods, you have to sell them...*”), especially in comparison to the present day “business” (JEES_043_GL), and not requiring any “*intellectual feat*” (JEES_058_DG), the ability to count and to manage large volumes of information is usually seen as specific Jewish features absent among the other populations: “*In the Soviet time Jews worked in every store. Because it was about a large list of goods, a broad assortment. Russians couldn’t cope with such volumes of information: customers, money, merchandise, debits, credits, documentation...*” (JEES_088_EK) (also: JEES_111_RD, JEES_013_IS_AH).

The lack of education was again a dominant motif in the description of the “war generation,” i.e. people who instead of studying had to go to war and could not afford studying upon return: “*Mitia Kiderman was a veteran, during the war he was in reconnaissance... Many store managers were veterans*” (JEES_097_AS); “*after the war there many Jews who could not get education, so they would go into trade, would become store directors...*” (JEES_096_EB); “*I know that many who returned from the front as invalids, they went into trade, not even looking for any profit, but just because there was nowhere else to go. Here, there was a certain Fima Zvigel’sky – he was the deputy manager in a haberdashery store, I think. He had big problems with hearing, and something wrong with his leg – he walked with a stick*” (JEES_050_LL). In some people’s perception trade was not a profession in the proper sense of the word, but rather an occupation alternative to “work” as such (e.g. JEES_013_IS_AH, JEES_094_MG_RG).

Again, as in the case of small-scale producer units, the lack of education and state anti-Semitism would come together, making trade the most likely employment possibility: “*At some period there were a lot of Jews in the stores. Because Jews were not allowed to go anywhere, to get education*” (JEES_094_MG_RG); “*You know what? According to the official statistics there were 16-17% of Jews among the revolutionaries. Why? Because of all these prohibitions and limitations in the Pale, ban on certain professions – so, they would go into struggle. Same here: you don’t get accepted here, you don’t get accepted there, whereas trade is where one can make money. Make money where you can do it*”

(JEES_076_MA) (also: JEES_059_IV, JEES_112_FK, JEES_058_DG, JEES_012_KK_RK
JEES_007_RL).

To sum it up, popular imagination presents the choice of trade on the part of some Jews in the post-war period both in apologetic (it happened so that they had not received any education, and then had to face severe restrictions in their upward mobility), and in affirming terms (Jews are simply better than anybody else for trade, whether due to family/ genetic memory, or to the “innate” ability to count and organize business, etc.). The former implies that had they had the choice, they would have gone into other walks of life, while the latter presents trade as natural and even desirable option. However, apart from these two differing sets of explanations, the situation is further complicated by the social image of trade that existed virtually throughout the existence of the Soviet regime, and to some extent may still be seen nowadays.

Soviet trade and the issue of prestige

*“We never had thieves in our family,
and never had traders”* (JEES_117_YT_IT)

Being part of the service sector (Russ. *sfera obsluzhivaniya*), for a long time trade was not seen as a “productive” sphere as such, but rather was “expected to relieve industry from the burden of produced commodities, as well as to recuperate – whenever possible – the original expenditures”; and even when in the 1970s trade was endowed with a “productive” function, it was “supposed to produce tovaroooborot, or the aggregate volume of commodities to be transmitted through wholesale and retail networks to the consumer” (Oushakine 2014: 218-219). In some ways, the basic re-distributive principle at the core of the socialist “planned economy” opposed the very idea of trade as a monetary exchange based on supply and demand: everybody was “entitled” to a certain amount of consumer goods, the production and distribution of which were allegedly “scientifically pre-calculated.”

The overall historical view of trade in Russia relegated it to the level of a “non-respectable occupation,” which is reflected in a broad range of words with expressly negative connotation to describe “profit” (Miljokhina 2005: 331-332). On the top of that, against the general Soviet production

ethos, emphasis on heavy industry, shock-working, over-fulfilment of production plans, etc. trade enjoyed the lowest degree of prestige, additionally aggravated by the ubiquitous belief, which I will discuss below, that trade almost inevitably involves the breach of law.²²⁴ As a result, people describe trade as “*the dirtiest, the most abominable thing to do... terribly non-prestigious*” (JEES_001_ER); “*this was a shameful profession – such was the perception at the time*” (JEES_015_RK_SK); “*it was considered a very low [occupation]*” (JEES_039_IZ) (also: JEES_028_NG_ES, JEES_044_LG_IA, etc.). General associations of “Jews” and “trade,” devaluation of Jewish trade in early Soviet years, when, as was noted earlier, the traditional socio-professional hierarchy was turned upside down, as well as the collective and family memory associated with 18-year long socio-political limitations based on trader status, further problematized the image of trade – both for those Jews who were not involved in it and tried to distance themselves as much as possible from any associations with it, and for those who for various reasons ended up in the Soviet trade network. For several of my informants “father-trader” was tantamount to a shameful family secret not to be divulged to the outsiders: “*What do Jews do? They are swindlers, they are in trade... that’s what people said. Children had to tell that their father was working as an engineer at a factory*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV); “*When I was applying to the institute, I was asked, what was my father by profession... And I didn’t want to say he was a salesperson, so I said – a bookkeeper... In my perception... I didn’t want to [stress] that a Jew, in trade...*” (JEES_111_RD). Even now, so many years later, one person commented on the fact that her acquaintance’s father was a store manager in the following way: “*That’s unpleasant. I do not envy her*” (JEES_035_IB). In other words, involvement in trade is not only a “stigma” for life, but is “passed on” down the generations.

²²⁴In his memoir novel *Craft* (Russ. *Remeslo*), in the chapter with a characteristic title “Business is not a Vice,” Sergei Dovlatov thus recalls the Soviet attitude to business-like activities: “In Moscow, it is the wheeler-dealers who call themselves ‘business people.’ Notions such as ‘broker’ or ‘businessman’ are associated with the prison bars. Especially the literary, bohemian milieu is contemptuous of the entrepreneurial spirit... it is abominable for us even to utter words such as ‘debit’ or ‘credit.’ In our mind, it is better to steal than to sell. Somebody who stole a roll of plastic wrapper at a factory is seen nearly as a hero, whereas a Georgian who legally sells lemons in the market is an object of endless disdainful jokes” (Dovlatov 1985: 162-163).

The existence of a special word *torgash* (roughly, “huckster”) in the Russian language is very telling in this sense. Although it derives from the same root as the word *torgovlia*, trade, it signified more than simply one’s employment as a “trader”; it implied a specific way of life with orientation towards gain-seeking, pettiness of interests and, as the Russian expression goes, general “lack of culture” – or, one may say, a certain habitus with specific value orientations and patterns of behavior. One informant’s uncle, an engineer, explained to his nephew, then a 16-year old boy, that *torgashi*, although they were also fully Jewish, were “*a lower race*” and “*vulgar people*” (JEES_109_SG_GG), and everybody agreed that the word itself was “*derogatory*” and “*offensive*” (e.g. JEES_022_LG, JEES_110_AK). Clearly, not everybody involved in trade, whether Jewish, or not, would be automatically labeled “huckster,” yet it seems that Jewish intelligentsia had a particular inclination to detach itself from Jewish traders of all sorts to escape associations with the ignominious pursuit along the ethnic lines.

However, as was already noted earlier, persistent shortages created by the Soviet “planned economy” brought about an alternative scale of prestige based on the ability to “procure,” or “get hold of” (Russ. *dostat’*) various foods and consumer goods, not readily available, if available at all; those working in the sphere of trade were obviously standing closer to the trough, which could increase their social status and in any case turn them into desirable “connections,” into “people who had an important social resource and access to certain goods were in turn a resource for the whole community” (Hakkarainen 2013b: 196). Hence, the head of a meat shop could be described as a “*king*” (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB), implying his near-sacred function of distributing the product that was always in high demand; employment as a head of a fruit-and-vegetable storage was seen as a “*colossal career*” (JEES_045_TD_AL).

Among these competing considerations about prestige and money, as well as various constraining and empowering factors, one had to choose his or her professional trajectory. Here is one particular example of how such choice was made. Bronia Zaretskaya, born in 1913 in a township in Gomel province (Byelorussia), came to the Moscow suburbs in 1937. Upon graduating from a drafting school

she worked as a draftsman, and never had any exposure to trade. However, with the beginning of the war and the departure of her husband to the front, she started selling ice-cream where she added some semolina to make it more nourishing and to sell it faster; because of this, her two children survived, unlike the children of many others. Upon returning from the war, her husband, “*an intellectual to the core,*” with “*phenomenal memory, capable of telling the page of any citation from any book,*”²²⁵ was employed to teach Soviet history in a military school, yet what he was earning there was not nearly enough to feed the family, which by that time had three children. So his wife quit her drafting profession and started working in a small kiosk affiliated to a large store, and over the years was promoted to the deputy manager of that store. She went into trade “*to survive,*” and it was she who was earning the money, and “*didn’t hold this against*” her husband (JEES_019_OZ).



Ill. 31: Bronia Chaimovna Zaretskaya working in a satellite shop in the town of Babushkin,²²⁶ middle of 1950s. Courtesy of B. Zaretskaya’s daughter.

²²⁵This is a traditional Jewish motif: a boy knows Talmud so well that he can pinpoint the chapter and the page of any randomly given quotation (e.g. Paperna 1911: 291, Sholem Aleichem 1985: 72) (variant: “to know Talmud by the needle” (Russ. *na iglu*): a page of the book would be pierced by a needle, and a student would be able to tell each word pierced in all of the pages beneath (e.g. Paperna 1910: 26).

²²⁶Babushkin (Losinoostrovskaya) is № 17 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

This story is indicative both in how we think about the continuity of Jewish economic practices over time and in how we define the role of women in the Soviet economy.

In the large corpus of 19th c. literature, whether memoir, or fiction, about Jewish traditional shtetl culture one comes across a steady socio-cultural pattern: the wife is solely responsible for the family business, from management of a small shop to large-scale production and commercial engagements, whereas her husband is a scholar, spends all his time in the synagogue, and has no relation to his wife's business that support the family (e.g. Chubinsky 1872: 84, 98; Paperna 1911: 295; Berlin 1861: 40; Roziner 1983: 39). Describing the female role in the shtetl economic life, A. Teller observes: "Women played a significant role in mercantile activity, either helping out in the family business or supporting the family alone while the husband devoted himself to religious study" (Teller 2008b: 1894); "...in many cases, the woman worked in the home or in a store, while her husband was away on business <...> elite sectors of Orthodox Jewish circles emphasized the importance of women's economic activity as a means of freeing men for religious study" (Teller 2008a: 444).

This pattern is noteworthy on several counts. First, it was clearly understood that in the shtetl scholarship alone would by far not always provide one's family with a bare subsistence: "...Grandmother Temele was a saintly woman who never assumed that it was her husband's duty to support her. She left him to his beloved Torah and cabala and herself traveled to Warsaw to buy goods and to earn a living for her family, since her husband's wages could not keep a bird alive" (Singer 1987: 18). Secondly, and most importantly, such gender distribution of family roles was thoroughly rooted in unquestionable preeminence of the spiritual world over the temporary, social one, so, on the one hand, such scholar-husbands would be as if "absent" from the world of human world with its materialistic concerns, known to the community solely through the names of their wives, e.g. Reb Berishl Hinda's (Berishl [husband of] Hinda) (Singer 1987: 155-156), Eliote Hasle's, Meishke Dine's (Paperna 1911: 295), and on the other, their wives were seen as entitled to a reward in the other world for their bread-winning efforts (e.g. Chubinsky 1872: 98, Berlin 1861: 40).

It is hard to tell how common this pattern was in the Soviet context – or, for that matter, even in the shtetl realities. However, irrespective of its frequency, I argue that it should be viewed not as a direct successor of the one that existed in the shtetl, but “synonymous” to it. First, because of the lack of spiritual “justification” – not only because this particular family were not believers, but because the husband’s teaching of Soviet history is not exactly the same as studying of Torah. Secondly, Zaretskaya’s gainful employment as such was completely natural in a society where a family could hardly survive on one salary only, although there was a tacit assumption that men should contribute more to the family budget.

However, against these differences, there are some commonalities as well: Zaretskaya is employed in a “lowly” sphere, being fully aware of the downshifting it entailed to become a salesperson after being employed as a draftsman (in her daughter’s words, “*she even looked like she was from the intelligentsia, not like a saleswoman*” (JEES_019_OZ)). Against this, her husband’s teaching job, not very lucrative by definition, still enjoyed official recognition, which was perhaps all the more noticeable because he was Jewish. So the existence of the two parallel scales of prestige is again present in this case, as in the shtetl pattern – yet the very definition of what is prestigious, has undergone a major transformation. Moreover, as was noted earlier, the situation of pervasive shortages served as an economic corrective to the general view of trade as a non-prestigious occupation, and Zaretskaya’s efforts were rewarded right away: apart from the immediate family, she also supported all the distant relatives from her native township coming to Moscow for higher education, by giving them temporary shelter and, very importantly, feeding them, which was the largest problem of the time. These relatives later recalled how much they were envied by their classmates: “*you’re so lucky, you have your aunt, you can visit her and eat full at least once a week*” (Ibid.).

Another important issue that Zaretskaya’s case is related to is the gender distribution within the Soviet trade network. On the one hand, a generic image of a salesperson is often (although not exclusively) that of a woman; one of the explanations, relevant for the 1930s, is provided by S. Fitzpatrick in her study of what happened to former NEP-men: after a series of purges of such people

from the Soviet trade “it was decided that since workers were in short supply the emphasis should be put on recruiting workers’ *wives* for employment in trade. Women, after all, were peculiarly suited to work in trade: in this area, “female labor is often more effective than male labor, especially with respect to the quality of service for the customer”” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 208, with reference to the newspaper *Sovelskaia trgovlia* (“Soviet Trade”), No. 5 (1933), p. 74). In the post-war years, it seems, the predominance of women in trade may be explained both by the easier access to this sphere for a person with no special education (so, for instance, many women who lost their husbands at war could easily join it), as well as by the general low prestige of the profession, which would prohibit young men from going into it. As far as the top layer of the Soviet trader cohort, particularly, store managers, is concerned, they were more often than not men, and in many cases also men who had a war experience behind them – which could add the spirit of “trench brotherhood” solidarity to their relations.

Jewish trade in Malakhovka and Saltykovka

“After the war Malakhovka was a center of trade – of the Jewish trade” (JEES_114_FK)

Existing publications contain only one short description of trade in the Jewish Moscow suburbs: “Not only in Nemchinovka, but also in Koptevo, [Jews] were sewing things and selling them through governmental stores; this business (not completely legal, to put it mildly) was called “*gondlovat*” (from Yiddish “*handln*,” ‘to trade’). Apart from tailoring items, Jews from Nemchinovka produced suitcases, manufactured kerosene lamps. Malakhovka Jews were engaged in trade, worked as accountants and book-binders. In Pushkino²²⁷ Jews worked in watch-repair shops, cafeterias and warehouses, and knitted then fashionable berets on simple knitting machines” (Razgon 1996: 29). No other descriptions or even references to any commercial activities in Moscow suburban settlements seem to exist – at least I was not able of discovering any. At the same time, Jewish trade is the most pervasive motif of virtually all memoirs about suburban settlements, whether on the part of “*intelligentsia*” people, or not: “*In my time*

²²⁷On the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements Koptevo is № 35, Nemchinovka is № 28, and Pushkino is № 24.

there were lots of traders in Malakhovka. Saltykovka was more about artels, and in Malakhovka they primarily worked in stores. Store managers were nearly all Jewish, same as salespeople”

(JEES_065_VT_GK); *“In Malakhovka it was mostly Jews who were trading... they were holding all the threads in their hands”* (JEES_108_AP) (also: JEES_114_FK, JEES_106_EU, JEES_096_EB, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, etc.).

What may at least partially account for such collective representation is the fact that not only was trade happening in a visible public space, but also that most of the stores were concentrated in the center of the settlement, on both sides of the railway station, as well as in and around the farmers’ market nearby (see the map of Malakhovka on p. 142). Together with the predominant pattern of dwelling in the center of the settlement, this could additionally strengthen the impression of their “Jewish” character – not unlike the small towns in the late nineteenth – first half of the twentieth century America, where “in many small towns locals had the impression that Jewish merchants actually dominated the local downtown shopping environment” (Weissbach 2001: 110).²²⁸

On the basis on my interviews, trade in Moscow suburban settlements roughly in the first two decades after the war can best be described with an image of a large bazaar, which I use here in a metaphorical sense as an extensive realm of exchange involving both new and second-hand goods, happening in designated or arbitrary venues, and featuring various degrees of legality from the point of view of the regime. The special role of the bazaar as the lowest level of trade has become central from the very beginning of the Soviet rule and virtually never lost its significance throughout various periods of the regime’s existence. The effects of the Soviet economic policy were such that there have always been groups living under the subsistence level and thus obligated to engage in more or less rudimentary

²²⁸“Economic over-domination of Jews” was one of the central motifs of the pogrom of 1959, when Chaim Goldovsky’s house was put on fire and his wife died; in the anti-Semitic leaflet scattered by the pogromists there were the following words: “As you enter the stores and shops of the Second Jerusalem (Malakhovka) you will everywhere see the fat countenances with their impudence who look with contempt upon every Russian” <...> Jews “amass profits for themselves,” they “seized the main jobs, and, with their connections, drew each other in...” (The Malakhovka Affair 1959: 10-11) (the full text in English may be found in: Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 139-140).

exchange on the side to physically survive.²²⁹ Different groups would at different times find themselves at the bottom of the socialist “allocation pyramid,” or altogether outside of it. In the post-war time the number of such people was particularly large: invalids, people with no education such as returning veterans, the elderly who lost their bread-winners and remained with no means of subsistence (pension system in the USSR was introduced in the 1930s, but finally established as late as 1956, and one had to meet a number of conditions to be entitled to a pension), people who could not find jobs due to ethnic discrimination, etc. Besides, severe shortages of virtually everything – food, clothes, everyday objects, and the like pushed even those who were part of the formal Soviet allocation network towards commercial activities on the margins of the official trade system – simply to make ends meet.

My materials provide evidence that this period revived peddler-like individual trade, certainly non-authorized and yet to some extent condoned not only due to the sheer scope of the practice, but because it could bring material advantages to those who were supposed to suppress it. Some people both produced and sold their wares, which may be seen as another pre-modern feature of their economic engagement: “*My father’s brother could reproduce paintings of the great masters, with no education. He would draw little squares on oilcloth, and drew, and then sold those pictures on the market in Ljubertsy,²³⁰ and they lived on the money he would earn on these pictures, when he came back after the war*” (JEES_114_FK); “*When father came back from the front, the stores were empty, so I remember he started making those candies, not the chocolate ones, of course, and then he’d travel around the region plying his wares, and brought some money back home, and we started living a tad better. Jews would adapt, they could procure sugar... he’d travel around these little Jewish... townships, and sold [candies]. He did all this alone*” (JEES_106_EU). Others were official artel employees, responsible for the marketing of artel production in a similar “peddler” way: “*my father-in-law, he worked in the artel*

²²⁹On the first years of the Soviet rule, when private traders had to “move outdoors,” and common people (including representatives of the former wealthy classes) had to trade their possessions in the “makeshift bazaars” see: Hessler 2003: 28-30. In general, private trade of the time had to “concentrate in the lowest levels of the trade network, including peddling and bazaar trade, in other words, small-scale retail activities” (Klushantsev 1927: 10).

²³⁰Ljubertsy is № 7 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

that produced sweets – lollipop, candies... So, he stood with this production on the train platform, or else he'd sell it in the suburban trains. He had an official paper that he was allowed to do this" (JEES_076_MA). Old Jewish tailors could sell their production "at the curb": *"They would put down a crate, and start their trade"* (JEES_102_YK).

These examples illustrate well the low status of artels in the Soviet production system. Besides, artels could help Jewish women or the elderly, left with little means of existence, by providing them with at-home work and then selling their produce through artel channels, which could include bazaar trade: *"This was 1944, 45, when it was so hard to live, and everybody was doing whatever came their way. My mother, for instance, knitted socks, and I remember a person, a Jew, would come, and she would give the socks to him. This was official, related to artels, and things would become a little better"* (JEES_069_GK). Women who could sew and had sewing machines would usually produce clothes of various kinds, and either turn them in to the artels, or sold among close friends or "trusted people"; those who knew how to sew women's bras were in particularly high demand (e.g. JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_068_SG, JEES_086_AR, JEES_096_EB, JEES_115_DA).

The first person a passenger arriving to post-war Malakhovka would perhaps encounter already at the platform would be a seller of carbonated water – a specific Jewish profession that dates back to the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth century, and which emerged as a response to the "gentrifying" demand on the part of the shtetl inhabitants, local commercial visitors, as well as some richer non-Jewish peasants who strived to emulate "urban habits." Production and selling of carbonated, or "mineral" water was a new economic niche that Jews carved for themselves at the time: by 1920s "producer of mineral water" becomes a recognizable character in the shtetl economy (e.g. Kichaev 1929: 20, 29-31, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61-63, 66-67; Libes 1926: 66; Veitzblit 1929: 92-93, Shkol'nikova 1996, Hakkarainen 2013b: 198-199). Memoirs of the interwar shtetl abound with descriptions of this character as well (e.g. Bäl_011_041_MM, Ber_08_050_MK, Tul_05_102_MG_LG, Tul_06_23_VS, Bal_06_030_DL, Bal_06_059_1_FM, MP_07_029_IL, MP_08_012_T,

Chern_08_29_MA, Chern_08_55_SU, JEES_133_DS). The early Soviet policy of cooperation of independent artisans and craftsmen affected producers of mineral water as well:



III. 32: Membership card of Veniamin Zalmanovich Dvorkin.

The card indicates that on December 30, 1925, V. Z. Dvorkin became a member of Gomel (Belorussia) Society of self-employed craftsmen as a producer of mineral water.

Courtesy of V. Z. Dvorkin’s son.

V. Z. Dvorkin was already the second generation of water-producers in the family: the business was launched by his father-in-law, Leizer Mnushkin, who eventually had to officially pass it to his son-in-law so that his own children could escape the libel of “deprivees” and become students in Moscow, where they had moved by that time. At late as the 1970s, when Dvorkin’s son visited their home place of Gomel, a non-Jewish woman much older than him remembered the famous “Mnushkin’s water” once sold in the city. While in the past it was a fully honorable occupation, younger Dvorkin saw this rather as a social, and most importantly, ethnic stigma. When in 1950s during the official procedure of “distribution” (Russ. *raspredelenie*) of the newly graduated students he was offered a job in a town he did not like, the dean asked him: “What do you want? You want to sell water, or what?” – which he

interpreted as a commentary of his Jewishness: *“He said it only because I was Jewish”*

(JEES_111_RD).

Post-war suburban sellers of mineral water were a part of the Jewish trade “landscape”: *“Father traded in carbonated water, although he didn’t produce it himself – he got it from somewhere and sold it. It was terrible, hellish labor! The gadgets for carbonation were heavy: cylinders with syrup beneath, and an additional cylinder for charging... People said about him: ‘This Jews always has good water’”*

(JEES_101_ArV_AnV); *“Aunt Rosa Kiderman,²³¹ she was sitting in the market [in Malakhovka, – A. K.] and sold carbonated water. There was a special dispenser for the syrup there, too”* (JEES_121_FZ).

It looks like the rationale standing behind the water business was largely nourished by a certain paradox that one earn money on something as common as water, even though somewhat “modified,” but also tied up with a fine economic mechanism when a nearly infinitesimal gain on each glass – and carbonated water was cheap by any standards of any economic period – could bring a cumulative gain in the end. Manipulating the amount of syrup added to each portion could increase the profit margin.

It also seems that by the post-war time an important transformation occurred to the profession: it re-oriented from water to *kvass*, a traditional Slavic bread beverage, that was in higher demand, especially in summer time.²³² My field materials contain several indications that kvass-selling was an important trade pursuit, either as the main, or “on-the-side” occupation, for Jews in suburban settlements: *“her mother was selling kvass in summer, this was very profitable, perhaps she was adding something in there, I don’t know, what the business hinged on”* (JEES_108_AP); *“Ilya Markovich, he was a household shop manager in Ramenskoe,²³³ but in summer he was selling kvass, he had kvass barrels that he placed all around the district, and this was also his small piece of bread”*

²³¹A sister-in-law of a Soviet store manager in the settlement.

²³²This is what Elye and his younger brother Motl from Sholem Aleichem’s *Motl, Peysi the Cantor’s Son*, concoct at home and peddle for quick enrichment, diluting the drink with water to get more of it. In the English translation the drink is called “barley beer” (Sholem Aleichem 2002: 146-150), in Russian – kvass. Kvass may be consumed simply as a drink, but also serves as the essential element of the cold summer soup called *okroshka*.

²³³A town situated on the east of Moscow, beyond Kratovo (№1 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements).

(JEES_097_AS); “The wife of my father’s brother, she was called “Galya-the-kvoss”²³⁴ – she was selling kvass” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV).²³⁵



Ill. 33: Moisei and Maria Bolotin, selling kvass at Malakhovka train station, 1950s. The train can be seen on the background. Courtesy of Moisei and Maria’s granddaughter.

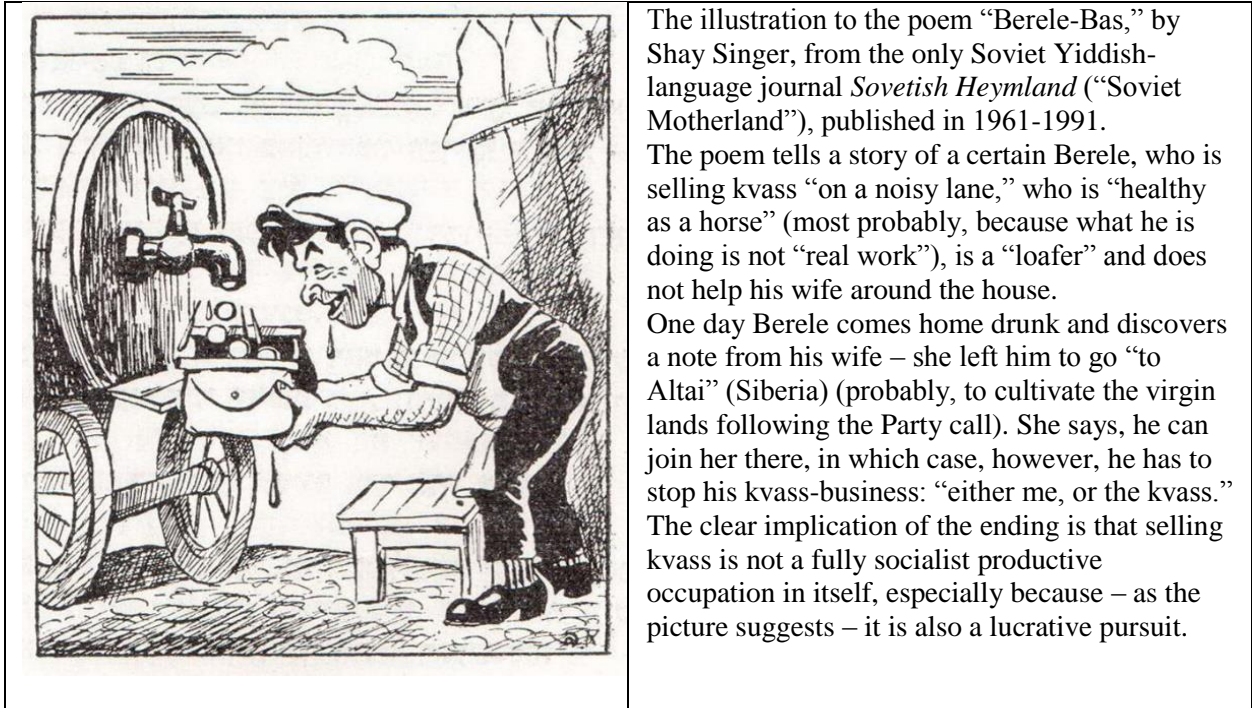
Moisei and Maria’s barrel was a store outlet, and functioned only during summer time. Moisei was an observant Jew, and pursued his shoemaker profession during all of his life, working at home, most probably without the “patent” (i.e. permission). After all, it was “*our own, the Jews, who’d come [for shoe repair]. And then he earned a little bit on kvass, too*” (JEES_121_FZ).²³⁶

²³⁴ *Kvoss*: Yiddish pronunciation of “kvass.”

²³⁵On the significance of nicknames for local identity see footnote 130 above.

²³⁶In his novel *Wisdom Tooth* Efraim Sevela fully captures common views of how selling drinks on the premises generates money: “Grandfather Sioma believed in money. And made large quantities of it. How? Very easily. In the whole family, he was the only one who never studied and did not get a higher education. Those with higher education lived on their meager, or ‘dry’ salaries and grandfather Sioma used to repeat. And he had more money than he could count. Because he was the head of the beer kiosk on Tishinsky market <...> A small kiosk, nailed together of plywood and quickly applied paint that kept leaving stains. In the kiosk there is a large wooden barrel with a pump, and grandfather Sioma pumps it, and the stream of beer runs from the tap into thick glass mugs, filling them to the top with fluffy foam. Everything is about this foam, as grandfather Sioma explained it. Half a mug of beer, half a mug of foam. The foam is grandfather Sioma’s net profit. Buyers are impatient folks, they don’t wait till the foam goes down, but fall greedily to the beer like hungry pigs to fresh excrement <...> His second item of income is a bucket or two of tap water poured into the barrel. Those craving for beer do not distinguish diluted beer from non-diluted. And the money pours into the seller’s pocket” (Sevela 2002: 633-634).

While it would not be accurate to say that all who sold beverages and alcoholic drinks such as beer on the premises would necessarily deceive their customers and become rich, this occupation was invariably seen as an opportunity to generate some private profit on the top of what was to be returned to the store where the product and the equipment belonged – either by not pouring the full amount in each glass, or diluting it with water in advance.



Ill. 34: Berele-Bas, the seller of kvass. Source: *Sovetish Heymland*, № 1, 1963, P. 92.

Kvass barrels that could be placed in any public place (railway station, park, busy street intersection, etc.) are an example of the “intermediary” type of trade facility – neither fully mobile such as peddling, nor fully attached to a particular place.

The next trade facility that post-war suburban trade network heavily relied on were little shops, or rather kiosks, or even “tents,” affiliated to larger stores. Such kiosks were scattered around the settlements, especially in the center – probably because the space occupied by the store was not enough to cater for all customers, but also to speed up the sales of certain products. In Malakhovka, for instance, people remember that many such small shops stood “*along the perimeter of the farmers’ market*” (JEES_097_AS), that they usually had one counter only, about two meters long (JEES_121_FZ), and

that often there was enough space inside for only two people, the shop-assistant and a buyer (JEES_097_AS) (also: JEES_107_NL, JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_108_AP).

Such “jumble shops” were a constitutive element of the post-war landscape in both Malakhovka and Saltykovka. My older informants not only agreed that it was “*mostly Jews who worked there*” (JEES_078_VM) (also: JEES_093_MZ, JEES_110_AK, JEES_075_AS, JEES_073_IV), but could even remember many local Jewish inhabitants who worked in such shops: “*These were people smarter and more sly than others, and perhaps more risky. There was a certain Margulis, an observant Jew, he was sitting in a ‘tent’ at the market, trading clothes and all kinds of small items*” (JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_124_MK); “*There was a ‘tent’ here, near the pond, and it was owned by Yakov Solomonovich, and he sold everything – bread, macaroni, matches, tobacco, alcohol, everything. He would sell on credit, too – he had a notepad, and people would come to him for a drink. There was a bakery here in Saltykovka, and a guy with a horse carriage would deliver bread to places like his. This tent was there till I was 15-17 years old*” [i.e. till mid-1960s, – A. K.] (JEES_075_AS). Several people recalled that their parents, even though not working in trade themselves, closely knew those who worked in such little shops, “*always found a common language*” with them (JEES_077_VC, JEES_121_FZ, JEES_123_EO) and could enjoy preferential treatment along the ethnic lines: “*Uncle Leo, who introduced mom and dad to each other, worked in Saltykovka, he had a little shop there. And they would go there, and he’d give them a lot of butter, almost half a pail of it*” (JEES_058_DG); “*Everywhere in Malakhovka it was Jews who worked in the stores. Once I was startled – mom approached the saleswoman and started speaking to her quietly in Yiddish... I can’t reproduce this right now, but something like ‘makh mir...’ – ‘do this for me...’ – and the saleswoman responded in the same quiet manner, and gave her these small spoons – from under the counter*” (JEES_107_NL).

By 1960s such little shops were gone, but their topography lingered in the local language for a while – for instance, as late as 1970s, when the little shop in the center of Malakhovka where Jews traditionally sold kerosene (JEES_101_ArV_AnV) was pulled down, people still used to say: “*Let’s go to the kerosene shop*” (JEES_121_FZ).



III. 35: Kiosks near the market.

I was unable to find any pictures of such little stores in Moscow suburbs; however, this picture taken in 2007 in the Ukrainian town of Mogilev-Podol'sky shows establishments perhaps very similar to those in post-war Malakhovka or Saltykovka, or the one where Bronia Zaretskaya worked. The right kiosk on the photo, with the pictures of sewing machines, is a repair shop; the purpose of the left one is unknown.

The market, which in both Malakhovka and Saltykovka combined the farmers' market and the flea-market, was the center of the settlements' commercial and public life – not unlike in the former shtetls that were “all built around a central market square,” and as such created a “socio-economic microsphere that brought together nobles, Jews, and the surrounding peasantry” (Kassow 2007: 3). In the words of one informant, “*the only place where one could work in Saltykovka, was the market*” (JEES_073_IV). Indeed, each of the two settlements under discussion boasts its flea-market of the past; Saltykovka informants proudly maintain that “*hucksters and speculators started coming here already during the war, in [19]43-44, from all over the Union, bringing furs, gold, diamonds, shoes,*” while the bazaar in Malakhovka was more “*modest,*” and attracted mostly sellers and buyers who lived along the local railway branch (JEES_074_GR). Some believe that the importance of the Saltykovka market

results, among other things, from the fact that when the famous Perovsky market in Novogireevo,²³⁷ “*the main country’s flea market,*” was closed in the middle of the 1950s, it partially migrated to Saltykovka, which was on the same railroad line (JEES_090_IA). On the bazaar days the flea market would “*expand and fill all the neighboring streets*” (JEES_077_VC) and stretch along the railroad – people would “*lay out their goods, and the militia men would idly stroll around because their palms would be greased*” (JEES_093_MZ). At times people use known historical comparisons to stress the significance of their market: “*Malakhovka market was like Podol in Odessa [laughs]. Second Odessa Podol. A large selection of good products*” (JEES_115_DA);²³⁸ or: “*Our market in Malakhovka was as famous as Khitrovka.*²³⁹ *One could only walk and wonder – one could get everything there, you name it!*” (JEES_108_AP), and rhetorically describe it as a place where “*One could buy anything there, from matches to tanks*” (JEES_100_MZ). It seems that the distinction between second-hand and new goods in such a flea-market was blurred since clandestine private producers could also bring their production here (e.g. JEES_102_YK). The Jewish ones, as one informant maintained, could be recognized by “*muskrat hats, golden crowns and stitched navy jackets*” (JEES_100_MZ). Artels likewise could sell their plan-oriented or “surplus” production outside of the formal space designed for the state market.

Commodification of used household objects, clothes, footwear, etc., barter types of exchange, especially of clothes or manufactured objects for food, so widely spread during the war years but continuing in the post-war time (e.g. JEES_074_GR, JEES_077_VC, JEES_129_AS, JEES_015_RK_SK, JEES_045_TD_AL), selling of home-grown produce to supplement one’s salary so as to reach the subsistence level – all these strategies of economically marginal existence may be observed nowadays as well – not so much, it seems, because of the “*historical attraction to the market*”

²³⁷Novogireevo is № 11 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

²³⁸The informant clearly wants to compare the local market with Podol in Kiev, not Odessa (see footnote 118), but the confusion is probably not accidental, since Odessa evokes an image of a large commercial hub and the high diversity of various people and merchandise.

²³⁹A famous square and a flea market in the center of Moscow (see: Giliarovsky 1983: 18-38).

(JEES_077_VC) characteristic of the local population, but because the economic crisis makes people rely on their own already existing resources, negotiate their value during face-to-face interactions, and abstain from mediation by the state commercial structures. While in the post-war time “*The only place where one could work in Saltykovka was the market*” (JEES_073_IV), for many people today this is the place that allows them to survive through the alternative economic exchange of their own.



Ill. 36: Saltykovka flea market, next to the railroad station. 2014, photo by the author.

Soviet posters in the background, including war-time posters, seem to symbolize the return of olden times, while the old suitcases do not seem to be much in demand: those who could leave, already left.

The market itself, or the official state *rynok* (№ 5 on the map of Malakhovka, P. 142), was an enclosed space, with some trading arrangements (stalls and “tents,” “*wooden and primitive*” (JEES_093_MZ)) in the open air, others, “pavilions,” inside the roofed space. Usually food was sold inside, and non-alimentary goods – outside, yet it looks like this was not a strict rule. However, what seems to be certain, is the heavy Jewish presence in each of these divisions – not private traders like

outside of the market, but rather, legal representatives of state and cooperative trade organizations: “*In the past, Malakhovka market was swarming with Jews*” (JEES_093_MZ); “*By what I heard, there were more Jews in Malakhovka, than Russians. And the market was broadly represented precisely by Jewish traders... small state stores could be standing there, and Jews would be working in them*” (JEES_110_AK); “*So, the market... There were lots of small shops, and a lot of Jews there... These were small kiosks, with entrances, and wooden stalls, with no roof... I forgot the name of this Jew – he was sitting right opposite the market entrance – he always had ‘scarce’ goods, like, if you remember, those synthetic fur coats that looked like they were made of real fur?*” (JEES_075_AS), etc. Similar to many former shtetls that retained a sizable Jewish population in the post-war time, one could invariably find a *shoykhet*, ritual slaughterer, more often than not an official representative of a Soviet meat store, sitting in the market and performing his ritual functions: “*There was a shoykhet in Malakhovka – he was sitting somewhere in the corner, and people would bring chickens to him, like, before Passover. This was certainly a non-official position. Q.: Was he sitting in the market itself? A.: In the market, yes*” (JEES_099_IK).²⁴⁰ Meat, the top food scarcity, and thus the most desired product at all times, was likewise a Jewish specialization in Malakhovka: “*There was a meat pavilion in the market, where Friedman worked. [He used to say:] ‘As long as there is Friedman, there will be chicken!’*” (JEES_057_MA_DG_IV); “*There was a man who sold meat [in the market], although I don’t think it was kosher – his name was Boris Khazanov, this was in 50-60s. All the Jews were buying his meat*” (JEES_099_IK).

To sum it up, one can say that the post-war suburban trade has a ramified and “dispersed” structure, not unlike that of artels with their multiple little affiliated workshops scattered around the territory. Blurred lines between used and new goods, the legal and not-fully-legal means of their production, the low degree of specialization of particular bottom-level agents in the trade structure, various degrees of affiliation with the state trade infrastructure, more fixed or more arbitrary prices

²⁴⁰Many people also told about a shoykhet who slaughtered chicken right on the premises of his house near the synagogue, yet I was unable to find out whether this was the same person.

charged for the merchandise – these were salient features of the structure that warrants the designation of the local “bazaar.”

Large state stores were likewise a part of this structure – not only and not so much because of the common “commercial space” they were sharing (most stores were likewise situated in the center of the settlements, in proximity to the railway station and the market), and not only because they were represented by the affiliate kiosks, or “tents” scattered all around this space, but most importantly, though various trade-related practices that bound them together.

Soviet trade and the second economy

“I learned the word ‘parnuse’²⁴¹ at the same time as the word ‘mama’” (JEES_029_AL)

While for some, involvement in bottom-level commercial operations could be caused by the dire economic circumstances and the necessity to survive, for others trade turned into a profit-generating occupation, which also required operations “on the margins” – in this case, primarily those of legal and illegal economies as this division was understood by the Soviet regime.

Among other things, low prestige of trade in the Soviet Union was nourished by the pervasive notions that trade is an inherently dishonest occupation, inevitably involving monetary fraud, cheating in weight, selling low-quality goods at the price of high-quality goods, etc. – and thus also a dangerous sphere to be in. Describing the persistence of such notions as late as the early post-Soviet time, when the country was transitioning to a market economy, C. Humphrey stressed that they elude analysis due to their “inarticulacy and emotion-driven character,” since “present trading activities developed from an illegal pursuit, without a vocabulary of its own legitimacy, and that Russian precedents for “normal” trade lie in generations that precede the longest memories” (Humphrey 1999: 21).²⁴² S. Fitzpatrick likewise observes that the “prevalence,” during 1930s, of practices such as “holding back consignments

²⁴¹‘Livelihood, earnings’ (Yiddish).

²⁴²This would certainly be true for the beginning of the 1990s, yet, as I noted above, in the post-war time the older generation could have alternative, more positive memory “scripts” related to trade.

of scarce goods” and reselling them to “professional speculators” for additional profit, hiding of scarce goods from the customers, etc. “probably had negative consequences for the social status” of “employment in the trade and supply network” (Fitzpatrick 1986: 228). It seems that the general low status of trade in the Soviet production-oriented economic ethos, the idea that interaction of the Soviet subjects with the state is by definition based on mutual deception, as well as, possibly, cultural stereotypes fostering ethnically specific images of trade significantly added to its general negative perception.

Indeed, the “impossibility to be honest” is a recurrent motif in my interviews. In the USSR “*everything was very dishonest*” (JEES_022_LG), the system was “*constructed so that money was stolen from bottom to top*” (JEES_073_IV), and Soviet trade in particular fundamentally “*presupposed stealing*” (JEES_067_LT). Further on, extralegal manipulations in this sphere were required not only for the sake of additional (illegal) profit, but for the purposes of meeting state targets to begin with. This included, on the level of a store manager, paying for information about where necessary/ scarce goods may be obtained (because, again, there was not enough quality goods for every store) – and to issue bribes for them to be delivered into his particular store (JEES_019_OZ, JEES_032_AB, JEES_058_DG, JEES_078_VM, JEES_101_ArV_AnV). One person somewhat jokingly suggested that by doing this managers could be involved in a “socialist competition” of a sort, vying with each other about who pays more for the opportunity to get better wares and thus a higher chance to fulfill official sales obligations (JEES_012_KK_RK).²⁴³ Relations with the chief provider, which in the planned economy was a permanently established entity, bore so to speak a patrimonial character: even rhetorically one may describe them in the language of family relations: “*Once they delivered herring that was already ‘touched,’ well, not edible any more* (Russ. *rzhavaya seledka*), *to the store, and my father-in-law* [the

²⁴³Some, obviously, were more successful than others; one local store manager was, for instance, described as a person who “*never let the ‘Red Banner of Achievement’ leave his store*” (JEES_097_Sagalov). “Red Banner of Achievement” (Russ. *perekhodiashchee krasnoe znamia*) was a symbolic distinction, awarded on a competitive basis to enterprises or organizations that showed the best production results or else distinguished themselves in some other state-promoted activities.

store manager, – A. K.] *couldn't refuse taking it, since that would have meant quarreling with the central trade administration, so Kraskovo²⁴⁴ could be left with no food stuffs for the future*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). However, suburban store managers also had to face the local community, of which they themselves were part, and this in-the-middle positioning required that they both abide by the existing conventions of interaction with the superiors and to meet people's consumer expectations. This not only required flexibility and inventiveness, but implied a high degree of personal involvement, although different in each case. In the story of the inedible herring, for instance, the manager, unable to refuse taking it, had to take two steps: first, in order to sell it to begin with, he had to combine it in a package with “*some Indian coffee stashed away for some VIP-persons,*” obviously a highly desired product,²⁴⁵ and at the same time to mitigate the obvious disadvantage he created for the customers by serving them with a particular attitude: “*A local newspaper published an article soon after – that M. M. sells 'touched' herrings as an additional 'load' to the jar of coffee – and alongside that, his heavenly smile*” (Ibid.). This, in the words of his family, was his usual way of treating his customers, yet this particular herring got better remembered in the local community due to the newspaper publication.

Apart from the providers, a store manager had to pay all officials who due to their position could either facilitate or impede the delivery of goods in his particular store: “*DAMPS people were coming – one had to pay them and to provide a treat for them, to drink with them, so that they'd be 'your own' people.*²⁴⁶ *Militia men would stop for a beer all the time – their department was right next to the [father's] beerhouse, and this was a good 'cover,' too [chuckles]*” (JEES_121_FZ); “*there were lots of Russian superior managers who were getting the money – everything was delivered upwards*” (Russ.

²⁴⁴Kraskovo is № 5 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

²⁴⁵The practice of “combining” highly desired goods with goods in low demand (usually because of their quality, or else due to their prohibitive price or overproduction) was widely spread under socialism as a way of balancing the general flow of product marketing, i.e. slowing it down for some groups of products, and speeding it up for others. The second component would usually be called “additional load” (Russ. *nagruzka*). More on this practice see in: Kushkova 2012.

²⁴⁶Here the informant again uses the word “svoi,” “one's own,” or “like-minded” people (see above, p. 219-220).

vsio otrosilos' naverkh), like, bribes” (JEES_096_EB) (also: JEES_097_AS). These officials, be they state or party administrators, were themselves very much invested in keeping good “connections” in the trade network – after all, they also had their consumer demands, and were facing empty shelves in the stores. Trade workers were “useful” in the Soviet economy of shortages, they were people who could “get” things, and who could “do business.” Therefore, top officials were offering their protection to select trade workers – not only creating general priority conditions for their business but, for instance, warning them about the unexpected raids of the financial police, so that everything could be put in order before their coming (JEES_073_IV, JEES_086_AR). This protection, however, did not come free. Returning once more to the phrase that the only racket of the Soviet time was the “*state racket*” (JEES_119_MS_SS), embodied in various “donations” that both producers and distributors had to “commission” to diverse state representatives “feeding” at various levels of the socialist economic system, it becomes clear that making money on the top of the planned trade profit was almost inevitably necessary to keep the trade establishment afloat. Importantly enough, trade was the major sphere of the socialist economy where “live money,” i.e. cash (JEES_042_LG) was circulating – as opposed to the first or the second sphere of the socialist economy, or even the cooperative sphere.

Store managers certainly did not make all such payments out of their own pocket – among other things, official salaries of trade employees were very low. As a matter of fact, low salaries in the trade sphere are singled out as a separate argument to explain the inevitability of breaching the law on the part of trade employees: “*It was impossible to work honestly there. Salespeople were getting 45 rubles a month – can one live on this? These are mere pennies! Why so little? Ask Stalin about this*” (JEES_114_FK); “*one couldn't live on what they paid there – the salary was simply risible. The system of payment foresaw that one has to earn something on the top*” (JEES_046_EP); “*his salary was 80 rubles. Can one live on this? A person who already has a family, children, even grandchildren – can he? So, he has to dodge and contrive. The state itself pushed him towards wheeling-dealing, see?*” (JEES_127_EF). Justification “out of necessity” is one of the most recurrent motifs related to various survival strategies, whether individual, or collective, implemented by average socialist citizens vis-à-vis

the system of the socialist economy. Clandestine practices of production and distribution are certainly not an exception.

Another pervasive belief about Soviet trade, largely resulting from the previous considerations, is that it “ousted” individuals who tried to be completely honest in monetary matters – or else “mold” them to comply with its own internal rules: “*If we don’t give customers short weight or pour them the full amount of kvass, we’ll be paying out of our own pockets. The system was such that it would throw away the unnecessary honest people: they would be told the very first month that they fall short of the necessary sum of the sales money, and they would start working according to the common system*” (JEES_067_LT); “*the young people who first come into trade, they are all honest at first, but then soon they’ll stop being that because otherwise all the shortfalls (Russ. *nedostacha*) of the store will be ascribed to them. That’s how trade cadres were formed*” (JEES_110_AK). Again, the implication here is that the system itself dictated the rules of the game, and one either had to accept them, or to leave the system, and, importantly enough, participation in trade strategies of all kinds would not necessarily question one’s personal integrity: one could get illegal profits and stay “*a decent person*” (JEES_114_FK). In the Soviet socio-political context these things were not necessarily contradictory – even though in accordance with another stereotype, all those working in the trade were invariably “rich” (JEES_088_EK, JEES_086_AR, JEES_058_DG, JEES_107_NL, JEES_127_EF, JEES_114_FK, JEES_128_SP, JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

The types of “adjustment” to the system included, but were not limited to a) “fiddling with the grade” (Russ. *peresortitsa*), when products of lower quality (“sort”) were sold together with or instead of the products of higher quality, and consequently, at a higher price (JEES_046_EP, JEES_071_OZ_MK, JEES_086_AR, JEES_114_FK, JEES_127_EF, JEES_067_LT, JEES_128_SP); b) playing on the natural attrition of food stuffs and permitted shipment losses (Russ. *usushka, utruska*) that would be subtracted from the amount of merchandise received, yet actually sold alongside with the

rest of the products, thus generating additional non-reported income²⁴⁷ (JEES_127_EF, JEES_067_LT, JEES_096_EB); c) giving short weight to customers (Russ. *obves*), for which purpose the store scales could be specially calibrated in advance (JEES_114_FK, JEES_086_AR, JEES_067_LT); d) dispatching goods received through state channels for distribution in one's store, to private dealers, usually at a higher price (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_097_AS, JEES_082_LV, JEES_086_AR); e) selling the clandestinely produced merchandise, including the "surplus" goods produced in artels or else at larger state enterprises such as textile factories (JEES_078_VM). The necessity of such "adjustments" was determined by the very structure of Soviet trade; "without swindling and circumventing these laws, it would be impossible to maintain the whole Soviet system of "income padding." This system ties the seller to the store manager to the director of the supply base and onward to the head of the division, and to the bosses in the ministry, and party leadership on local, district, urban, republic, and national levels. Trade employees in the Soviet Union are linchpins within the chain of such mutual interdependence and exchange of mutual favors. Otherwise they could not make up for numerous shortages or receive (even if in insufficient quantities) goods they require to meet the turnover targets set for them by the state plan" (Zemtsov 1991: 30). Needless to say, all these strategies involved forging of financial documents – or else operating without any documents as such (e.g. JEES_094_MG_RG, JEES_102_YK, JEES_105_VG, JEES_123_EO, JEES_113_IB).²⁴⁸ The latter was possible only when the degree of trust between the contracting agents was high enough for them to bypass the formalities, or the mediation on the part of the state agencies that stood behind the official documents – which in a document-centered

²⁴⁷A "self-paid trade premium" as an unknown contributor of the Soviet satirical magazine *Krokodil* defined it (*Krokodil'skaya satiricheskaya entsyklopedia* 1972: 35).

²⁴⁸On the "adventures of financial reports" and the understanding of economic crime as "mediated activity that detaches value from a commodity and then uses this commodity to invest in new value" see: Oushakine 2003: 438.

economic environment such as the socialist sphere of trade was a socio-culturally significant phenomenon.²⁴⁹

Most of those informants, even if they themselves were those average consumers who had to put up with the consequences of the strategies mentioned above, still invariably stressed that it was the socialist economic system as a whole that engendered them (cf.: “*who is the progenitor of all this? The state. Note this, please. The state engendered the adventurism on the part of the trade workers*” (JEES_127_EF)). Moreover, most people agree that eventually it was about filling the market with the necessary foods and consumer goods that were either missing or insufficient under the socialist planned distribution system.

Jewish stores in Malakhovka and Saltykovka

Jews who are generally credited with more “*flexible brains*” to grasp all the “*ins and outs*” of the complex interactions within the Soviet trade system, as well as with the ability “*to get things settled*” (JEES_073_IV, JEES_128_SP), represented the absolute majority among suburban state store managers (e.g. JEES_119_MS_SS, JEES_128_SP, JEES_121_FZ, JEES_130_DT, JEES_097_AS, JEES_100_MZ). All the stores reported to the Settlement Consumer Cooperation Union, and the heads of these Unions in each settlement were also Jewish; the only two non-Jews remembered were both Tatars (JEES_097_AS) – another ethnic minority associated with trade operations. Most of the Jewish store managers I was able to learn about belonged to the generation born in the 1910s – 1920s, most of them were war veterans, and none of them had received any substantial education. The stores they supervised were selling construction materials, food stuffs, fabric, ready-made clothes, shoes, hardware, household objects, etc.

²⁴⁹Soviet manuals for lawyers would present comprehensive descriptions of possible trade-related crime, including a detailed description of particular mechanisms of how they are committed – including those described here (e.g. Tikhenko 1959: 289-297).



III. 37: Malakhovka store managers I. Kozhushnik, S. Skliar, I. Fel'dman (born 1919, 1924 and 1926). Jewish cemetery of Malakhovka. 2014, photos by the author.

All the stores certainly belonged to the state, yet they are inevitably referred to as stores “kept by” or even “belonging to” their managers: *“in the time of shortages this was considered as if theirs. I can’t explain this in better words”* (JEES_123_EO). The explanation, it seems, lies in two major factors. One was the specific relations that were formed with the local community that considerably, if not exclusively, depended on what the local stores were providing, so that these places turned into the everyday embodiment of the trade system as such. Secondly, since foods or goods were usually never sufficient to satisfy the general demand, they were often distributed by the store managers through preferential channels, which could take place inside or outside of the store facility. This, one might guess, only strengthened the connection between these products and the ones who procured them. With a sizable, yet not extremely large Jewish settlement population and the dense texture of kinship and friendship that emerged as a result, such non-official “clientilization” for scarce products tended to develop along ethnic lines: *“In a coupon-based distribution system, who becomes the main person? A store director. He always has a chance to stash some stuff away, and then get them to those close to him”* (JEES_028_NG_ES); *“One couldn’t buy anything in the stores, everything was procured from under the counter. When uncle Mitia brought things like fabric, bathing suits, blouses, dresses – he’d*

run to us: 'Come, quickly' – and we'd enter his store through the back door and take what we wanted. He was as if a family member, like a brother. We always had a bottle of vodka for him in our refrigerator – he'd stop by, pour a shot-glass, and go back to work" (JEES_121_FZ). The “family spirit” could perhaps be augmented in cases when the managers, people with not too much education, would be helped by their wives in the accounting matters (JEES_121_FZ) or else substitute for them on Saturdays (JEES_101_ArV_AnV) – in this case it could indeed feel like a family enterprise.

By contrast with the present-day impersonalized commercial world, to a significant degree represented by large chain-stores, Jewish store managers of the past were perceived as “*very close*,” or one’s “*own*” people (Russ. *svoi ljudi*), who would know about one’s personal life, let one borrow things if he or she did not have enough money, “procure” things that were hard to get, etc. (JEES_119_MS_SS).

Those who themselves worked in the Soviet trade system, and thus were bound by multiple exchange and personal ties with each other, could get what they wanted even bypassing money: “*For us, the privileged... My father worked in the Central Consumer Union in Malakhovka, so we could enter any store and take products that had never been and will never be sold openly. As one store director – and these were all Jews! – said: 'I'll give as much as you can carry away. Not how much you can pay, but how much you can carry' ... from the backdoor, of course... These were all Jews!'"* (JEES_127_EF).

The role personal relationships played in what was supposed to be a purely monetary exchange suggests that the socialist planned economy inherently created a higher degree of economic embeddedness through its persistent production of shortages of all levels of the economic system. In this system, factors such as kinship would assume an economic nature by being involved in construction of the alternative mechanisms of production and distribution, compensating for the deficiencies of the formal ones.²⁵⁰ Although in this work I look primarily at consumer goods, the situation was similar in

²⁵⁰Speaking about the difference between official and unofficial sides of the socialist economy (the first being “clean” and “easily amenable to technical analysis in mathematical form,” the second – “messy” due to its “dense personal networks” and “embedded[ness] in complex social structures,” S. Hedlund observes that the features of this

the sphere of producer materials and equipment: there, too, personal “connections” often played a crucial role for obtaining of what the state would for various reasons fail to deliver to the enterprise. In this sense, economic embeddedness is as systemic in the socialist economy as the shortages it produced.

Besides, the relatively small settlement around Moscow discussed here may exemplify the process of selective clientilization that the situation of shortages inevitably produced. The fact that in this case this process was more often than not based on ethnic considerations does not make it more or less representative of the system’s workings.

The very fact of high Jewish representation in the sphere of trade may likewise be seen as the expression of this selective clientilization: while on the one hand, according to the popular joke of the time “*Jews were working in cold stores. Because working in a store means being close to prison*” (JEES_127_EF),²⁵¹ on the other, trade employees were certainly standing closer to the “trough,” or “gravy train” (Russ. *kormushka*), so that employment even on the lower levels of the trade system would ensure access to food – an essential factor in the socialist system. As a result, there are multiple stories about how Jews already established in the trade system provide employment for other Jews, whether relatives, or not: “*If one is already there, he’d pull another one, and then more and more*” (JEES_114_FK, JEES_111_RD). However, formation of ethnic niches such as the ones described in this work, i.e. domains that harbored both legal and illegal activities, first and foremost implied the principle of trust, which is often construed as a consequence of the common ethnic background. Especially, it would seem, this happens among the ethnic minorities that suffer discrimination, of which my material provide ample evidence: “*They were taking their own, of course... it was something akin to mutual responsibility*” (Russ. *krugovaya poruka*)²⁵² (JEES_065_VT_GK); “*They trusted each other: no deceit [among themselves]. They tried to be honest to each other and were sticking to each other*”

unofficial side are so “idiosyncratic” that they should best be “identified by anthropological studies” (Hedlund 2011: 102).

²⁵¹ The joke hinges on a cultural stereotype of prison as a cold and generally uncomfortable place.

²⁵² In more detail on this principle and its political dimensions in Russian history see: Hedlund 2011: 119-120.

(JEES_115_DA); *“In the past everything was different. People trusted each other’s word. Nobody ever deceived anybody... they loaned money, they helped – among the Jews”* (JEES_119_MS_SS); *“It was a little world of its own – you see? Their own world, their own connections”* (JEES_123_EO).

Idealized and/or nostalgic images such as these should certainly be approached critically, first, against the evidence, however limited, that top Jewish traders, too, were competing with each other for merchandise illegally diverted from the state system, and at times bitterly so (JEES_097_AS),²⁵³ and secondly, since trade was a highly labor-intensive sphere, there were certainly non-Jews working in it as well. Not unlike the already discussed small-scale artisanal production, these people were more often than not common salespeople (JEES_129_AS) or drivers affiliated with the stores (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV), and as a part of the team, could have also been initiated into clandestine operations conducted at the store. Some, at least, were – and could even warn the management in Yiddish about the suspicious strangers, possibly representatives of the state controlling organs, approaching the store (JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

That said, Jewish store managers nevertheless clearly represented the key social figures in the Moscow suburban settlements. Apart from the fact that they “personified” the state provisioning system, their personal relations with the local authorities, economic ties that stretched beyond the settlements proper, as well as the “shadowy” side of their occupation, which people were certainly aware of – all these factors distinguished them from the rest of the local population.

Some perceived the Jewish trade managerial cohort nearly as local heroes, invested with power and control, privileged to have a way of life distinct from that of the rest of the community, and enjoying material possibilities inaccessible to others. The following excerpt refers to the end of 1950s – beginning of 1960s, and describes the perceptions of the informant, then a teenaged boy, of these people’s daily “ritual”:

²⁵³As one interview suggests, once it came to the physical elimination of one top trader by the others – because of the fears that his excessive predilection to alcohol might make him divulge certain economic secrets of the clan (JEES_100_MZ, JEES_121_FZ), i.e. betray the trust – yet the reliability of this information is questionable.

“Old wooden market – that’s where all the stores were, that’s where all these hucksters are. All Jewish men. They would usually meet there in the morning – they are all managers, they don’t have to stand behind the counter: it’s the slaves who are working, earning money for them... The stores would open at 9, and they’d usually gather at about 11, after they’d given instructions to all their saleswomen. They would gather in the middle of the market, talk, then select fruit from the stalls, all for free, and a couple of good chickens. They’d bring all this to the restaurant, which also stood right there. Borya, the restaurant chef, would cook those chickens, bake potatoes in sour cream, bring vodka. <...> Then they’d go to the taxi stands, where taxi drivers are already waiting for them – they had permanent drivers, whom they paid some money. So, one is going to Kuz’minki, the other one – to Ramenskoe,²⁵⁴ and they work the whole day. During the day they drink more, because now it’s DAMPS people coming, now it’s somebody else – everybody has to be treated, one can’t do without this – and by 6 o’clock in the evening they come back and drink again. This was their daily ritual” (JEES_097_AS).

While this description allows a glimpse into the visible aspect of store managers’ daily life, it certainly says nothing about the covert part of it, of the actual “work” they were doing during the day time, including its “clandestine” component. While this is typical of the present-day oral texts, usually produced by people who did not immediately participate in such activities, information on such practices would probably be even less accessible, either through interviews or immediate observation, at the time when they were actually taking place. More often than not, what one has to work with, are texts referring to less covert practices that indicate the profit made on the side of the state trade system.

One such practice or, rather set of practices, deserves special consideration since it directly relates to our understanding of the nature of Jewish entrepreneurship in the post-war Soviet Union in relation to the more traditional Jewish socio-economic ethos. This set of practices is usually referred to as Jewish communal charity, and implies social responsibilities on the part of the more affluent members of a given community towards its less fortunate members – and/or the community as a whole.

My materials suggest that although not many of the Soviet Jewish traders and producers would initiate such acts of charity on their own, they would generally agree to participate in them when prompted to do so. The most vivid case of the Jewish communal charity is a manager of a food store in Kraskovo,²⁵⁵ near Malakhovka, Motl Moiseevich (Matvei Matveevich) Vilk. Born in 1913 in the town

²⁵⁴Moscow’s suburban regions.

²⁵⁵Kraskovo is № 5 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

of Letychiv (Khmelnyskyi province, Ukraine),²⁵⁶ he moved with his mother and brother to the Moscow suburbs in 1932. Soon after, his fiancée Osna (Sonia) joined him, although her family was against the marriage: they were “*by one inch richer,*” and wanted their daughter to marry a man her equal in Odessa. Osna, however, ran away to Motl, they sold her possessions consisting of 4 dollars and 4 golden coins in Torgsin,²⁵⁷ which money was enough for them to rent a room. At first Molt was earning their family’s living by selling carbonated water, travelling each day to a major railroad station in Moscow. During the war, since he was not fit for military service, he worked in the local hospital – until in 1943, “*with the help of some Jews,*” he “*managed to find a place in a store selling household objects in Ukhtomskaya.*”²⁵⁸ After a short period of time, however, Motl moved on and was appointed manager of Kraskovo food store, where he worked till the end of his life in 1976. Being very communicative and outgoing (this is the person with the “heavenly smile” who sold herrings and coffee), he “*established strong relations*” with the central provider organization, so his store always had a broad array of goods to sell: “*they always had stuff put aside specifically for him at those food distribution facilities... he had to pay extra to get these products since there was not enough of them for all [stores].*” The store was extremely popular with the local population, Jews and non-Jews alike, and was always referred to as “Motl’s store”; among other things, one could get foods in Motl’s store on credit – especially for major family occasions such as marriages and the like. Both Jews and non-Jews were among Motl’s employees.

²⁵⁶Letychiv is approximately 20 miles away from Derazhnia, mentioned earlier in the discussion of the economic situation of the former shtetls in 1920s. About the history of Letychiv Jews see: Chapin 2000.

²⁵⁷About Torgsin, see footnote 71.

²⁵⁸Railroad station preceding Ljubertsy, which is № 7 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.



Ill. 38: Motl Vilk with the employees of his store (1950s).

Motl Vilk (in the center, with the major Soviet newspaper “*Pravda*” (Russ. “Truth”) conducting a mandatory “political information session” (Russ. *politinformatsija*)²⁵⁹ to his store employees; the woman in the checkered kerchief is his wife Sonia who was helping him with the book-keeping. 1950s.

Courtesy of M. Vilk’s son and daughter-in-law.

The high esteem Motl enjoyed in the local community was demonstrated on the day of his death.

He happened to die on a Friday, so his family were in a hurry to bury the body before Saturday comes, but local people, both Jewish and not, “*blocked the road and demanded that the car with the coffin be stopped, and the coffin taken out*” – to bid their farewell to Motl. To which his widow said: “*If people want this, we should do this.*” And then people “*would come to his grave for a long time,*” leaving “*eggs or candies*” on it – a popular Russian Orthodox custom (JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV).

Motl’s children remember him as a “*very religious*” man, who would get up early in the morning, put on his *tallis* (prayer shawl) and pray, who always observed *yortsayts* (death anniversaries) for

²⁵⁹See: Zemtsov 1991: 244-246.

deceased relatives, who kept two refrigerators at home, one for dairy, and one for meat products, and who “*knew all these [religious, – A. K.] issues on the level of a rabbi*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV).

In the early 1950s, when the official synagogue in Malakhovka was temporarily closed, Motl Vilk rented a wooden house in the settlement of Tomilino nearby,²⁶⁰ where he organized a clandestine synagogue. He paid the rent, brought fuel necessary for heating of the wooden construction, as well as the Torahs and the prayer books, and often invited cantors from the main synagogue in Moscow to sing in their small house of prayer; when necessary, one of them would bring a *mohel* to perform the ritual circumcision. Besides, Motl hired a cleaning woman and a woman who cooked kosher food for the minyan members. On big religious holidays Jews came to this synagogue from a number of other places as well. This was a highly dangerous enterprise; Motl lived in constant fear that somebody might denounce them to the authorities – especially because it was obvious where “*men in their hats were going to on a Sabbath*” (Ibid.).



Ill. 39: The house in Tomilino turned into a clandestine synagogue. 2014, photo by the author.

²⁶⁰Tomilino is № 6 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements.

The most important feature of Motl's activity, which did not limit itself to the organization of the clandestine synagogue, was that it was not an individual pursuit (although on his own he also rendered help in the form of food stuffs to several particularly poor local dwellers – or else asked his wife to cook something nice for them on various festive occasions (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_099_IK)). Rather, Motl tried to involve in it as many people with means as he could – who, in this case, were primarily local Jews working in trade, Motl's immediate circle of acquaintances and “business partners”: “*My father-in-law, he knew all these people. At some point he was paying a salary to the [Jewish] cemetery caretaker... And so, he'd come to store managers, for instance, to Perepletchik, who considered himself secular, and would say: 'Misha, I won't leave before you give the money. I need to pay people. They should not work for free. This is more important than the diamonds you won't buy this month' [chuckles]*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). Some managers were not particularly willing to part with the money – those Motl could describe as a “*grober goy*,” i.e. an “uncouth gentile,” thus stressing their non-Jewish behavior. Motl also collected money to purchase sand and additional soil for the cemetery, as well as special fabric for the funeral shrouds (*takhrihim*) – something that managers of textile stores could “procure,” and stash away for this particular purpose (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, JEES_130_DT). He was “*trusted unconditionally. Everybody knew that he can only add money of his own*” (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). What emerged as a result, was a network of charity provided by a specific professional group – although not as formal and as broad as the communal welfare system characteristic of a more traditional Jewish community in the former shtetl, and largely maintained by the indefatigable efforts of one person.

We do not know whether Motl Vilk himself regarded his activity in religious terms, although we may surmise that he did, but in any case what he was doing falls very much in line with the patterns of traditional Jewish charity: those who had more were supposed to give to those who had less, which justified their being rich to begin with. As a matter of fact, wealth itself was not yet enough for high social prestige (*yiches*) – it was how one disposed of these means for the benefit of the community that mattered.

Apart from the responsibility of an entrepreneur with regards to the local Jewish community, Motl Vilk also served the head of Malakhovka Jewish arbitration (Russ. *treteiskiy sud*), although again, this was not a formal position of any kind. According to his children's recollections, his major concern was not to let "Jewish quarrels" outside of the Jewish community, he was completely impartial and he always tried to reconcile the litigants (JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV). A similar informal Jewish court existed in Saltykovka as well, and apart from other things, this testifies to the fact that local Jews did think of themselves as a distinct community which could resolve some of its problems on its own.

Motl Vilk clearly stands out both as an effective Soviet trade entrepreneur and as a Jewish community leader. Paradoxically enough, these two hypostases seem to be tightly interwoven – and not just because he and other store managers obviously utilized financial means made on the side of the formal Soviet system to take care of the illegitimate (from the point of view of the Soviet authorities) religious necessities. What is more significant is that these necessities themselves testify to the very existence of the local Jewish community in the proper sense of the word, community with a sense of specific local identity – as opposed to a group of people with the same ethnic background who happened to end up in the same place. Moreover, as I tried to show earlier, the world of clandestine enterprise that took place within the formal structures of the socialist trade network heavily depended on various ties that bound people both in everyday life and in the commercial activity of various levels, or, to put it differently, was rooted in the *habitus* of suburban settlements. Traditional economic occupations, although in their modified "Soviet" forms, seem to be yet an aspect of a larger complex of more traditional way of life as a whole, where religious observance, language, economic pursuits, etc. were all linked together. A "*semi-patriarchal*" milieu, to quote this phrase again, "*with very few representatives of intelligentsia*" in it (JEES_020_LL), where people tried to reproduce, to the extent possible under the new socio-economic and ideological circumstances, the known patterns of the Jewish way of life from the past.²⁶¹

²⁶¹The situation was similar already in the shtetl, especially when modernization brought about new types of the internal social differentiation: "it was precisely the lower ranks of Jews who, as consumers, paid the lion's share of

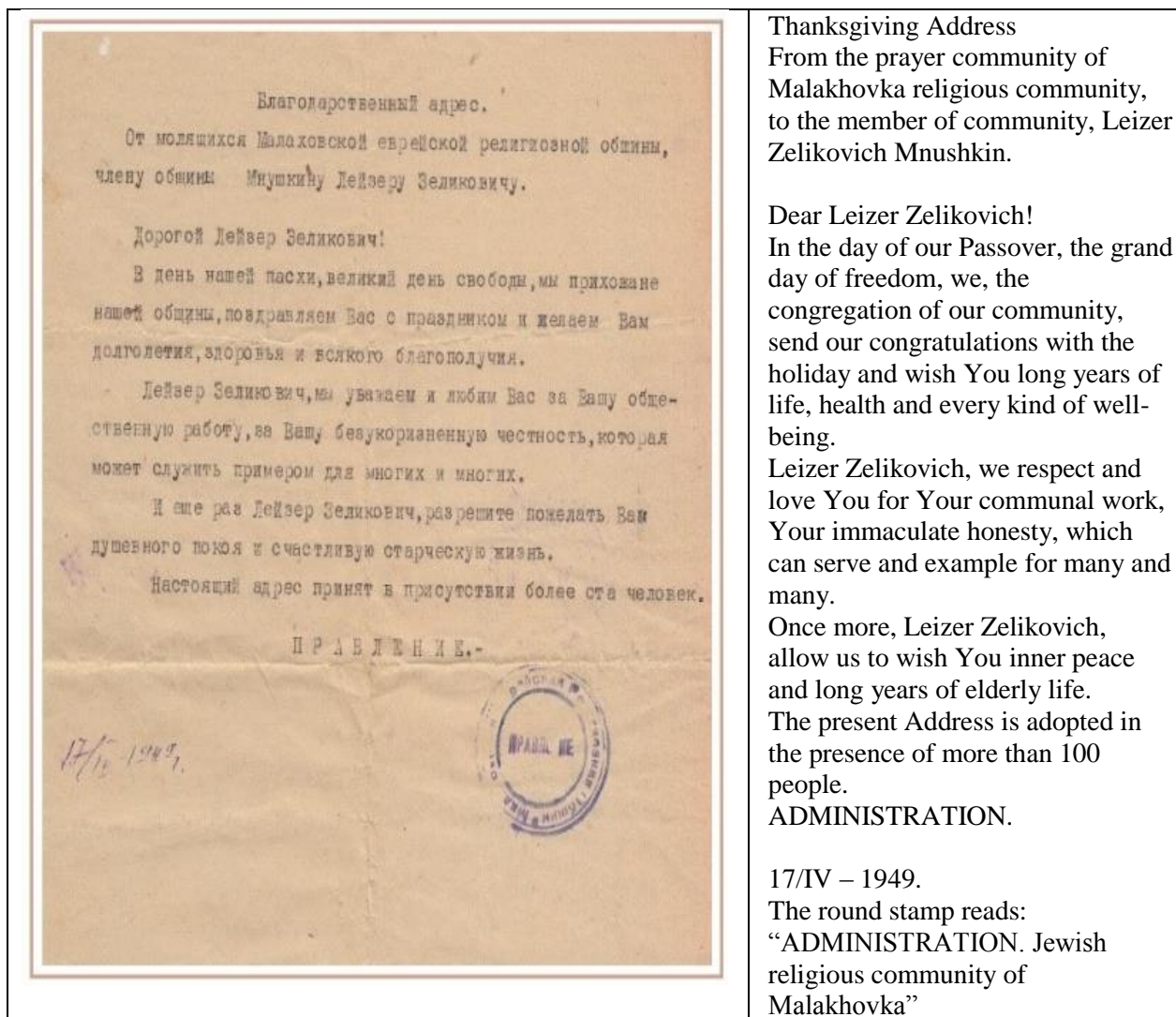
The famous Yiddish poet Perets Markish wrote in 1927, in a letter to his friend in Warsaw, "...the bit of Yiddishkayt [Jewishness] that we have depends only on backwardness" (Estraiikh 2004: 209) – and Jewish suburban settlements seem to wonderfully illustrate this idea. "Convergence" of traditional patterns and practices of the Jewish way of life was predictably more pronounced in 1920s, immediately after the migration from the shtetls: "Out of all groups of population, artisans and traders were mostly prone to keeping the traditional way of life <...> Certainly, not all the Jewish population of Moscow's periphery and suburbs was oriented towards preserving tradition, yet by and large the proportion of such people in these areas was higher than in Moscow" (Snopov 2002: 78, 80).²⁶² However, even by the post-war time, due to a complex of socio-economic and political reasons this tendency seems to have been still in place.

Motl Vilk is not the only example here; another store manager, a Georgian Jew Baratashvili, "*very religious, observing all the rites*" (JEES_128_SP), held an underground minyan at home (JEES_097_AS). Some suggest that apart from the store he also organized a small clandestine knitwear production in his basement, and sold the goods in his store (JEES_119_MS_SS). Naum Davydovich, head of a successful Saltykovka artel that traded its clandestine production across large territories, would go to the main Moscow synagogue every Saturdays, leaving non-observant employees to take care of the production process (JEES_078_VM). Moisei Bolotin (the kvass seller, at-home shoemaker and a very observant person) "*took upon himself the responsibilities of shadkhn*" (Yiddish for 'marriage broker, matchmaker') – his family lived not far from the railway station, so he could observe everybody who was passing by, and people started dropping at his house and speaking about their marriage

the tax on the slaughter and sale of kosher meat (the korobka) and thereby financed the community's budget: Communal revenues come primarily from artisans... who observe the rituals of their faith. With very few exceptions, the merchants and the educated – bowing to the progress of the times – reject such rituals, and differ from Christians neither in their diet nor in any other way" (Nathans 1999: 124).

²⁶²A famous Moscow synagogue in Marjina Rosha was built during the time NEP by shopkeepers working on the Minaevsky market nearby; the same is true about the synagogue in Cherkizovo (JEES_060_TZ). When Malakhovka Jews decided to acquire a place for their synagogue, which by that time (1932) was no longer legally possible, they bought an old shed and registered it as an artisan workshop (Glimcher 2003: 3; Lebedev 2009).

preferences. Soon he started looking for good matches – for observant and non-observant Jews alike (JEES_121_FZ, JEES_100_MZ). One person distinguished one of his two sons to follow his steps in the junk business, and accustomed him to going to the synagogue, while the second son was explicitly exempt from both: he was supposed to get a good secular education and become a professional (JEES_090_IA). A very telling document was preserved in the family of Leizer Mnushkin, producers of carbonated water from Gomel. He joined his children in the Moscow suburbs, and after the war worked as a guard in a storage facility within the system of producer cooperation. For a short period of time in 1945 he served as a rabbi in the Malakhovka synagogue: nobody wanted to take up this position since the previous rabbi was simply shot down in 1936. By the end of the war Mnushkin was in his late 70s, and at first he agreed to be a rabbi, but then his family insisted that he resign – it was simply too dangerous. Unable to work in his old age and being financially supported by his children, he would nevertheless give away most of his income to the synagogue (JEES_111_RD) and participate in the life of the religious community in other ways. Below is a “Thanksgiving Address” presented to him on the occasion of the Passover in 1949:



Ill. 40: “Thanksgiving Address” from Malakhovka religious community (1949).
Courtesy of R. V. Dvorkin, grandson of L. Z. Mnushkin.

“One-generation” occupation

The practices Soviet traders had to be involved in leave no doubt that this was a highly dangerous sphere, where one was always walking a thin line between freedom and imprisonment; *“It was very dangerous [to work in trade]. Because you don’t sleep at night, you never know whether they’ll come for you, or not”* (i.e. to arrest) (JEES_127_EF); *“Father was offered a place at a storage unit, and, wishing to provide for his family... But aunt Lisa said: ‘Only over my dead body! You’re not going to work there. To sleep tight at night...’ Q: Was this a lucrative place? A: Of course it was! They [private producers] were keeping their merchandise there! Both legal and illegal. They can’t keep it under their*

beds, can they?" (JEES_083_DT_MK). In fact, a large number of store managers did have a confinement experience or else successfully “paid off” from the legal persecution. One food store manager was particularly proud of the fact that he had “*worked in trade his whole life and was never put away*” – and even cited this to the local authorities as an additional argument justifying his right to receive a bigger apartment (JEES_021_NS).

Alongside the low prestige considerations, it is no wonder, then, that as with the small-scale artel-like production business, traders wanted their children to stay away from their occupation: “*Many of my classmates had parents who worked in trade. They would usually spare no efforts to give their children a good education and not let them go into trade*” (JEES_094_MG_RG); “*Father used to say: ‘None of the children or grandchildren should be connected with trade. This is an occupation for crooks.’ And indeed, nobody in the family ever worked in trade except him*” (JEES_114_FK); “*Margulis was trading in a tent at the market, an old Jew... his older son, however, received a prestigious education, he became a lawyer*” (JEES_124_MK). Bronya Zaretskaya, for one, told her daughter that she would go to the trade college “*only over her dead body*” (JEES_019_OZ) (also: JEES_127_EF, JEES_128_SP, JEES_129_AS, JEES_096_EB, JEES_043_GL).

Indeed, by the beginning of 1970s “the figure of a Jew employed in the sphere of trade or services, typical for 1950-60s, was preserved mostly among the people of the older generation” (Kupovetsky 1987: 67). However, old stereotypes that I started this chapter with, proved to be resilient to social changes: “*All trade in Malakhovka was Jewish. Well, maybe there was one Russian store manager somewhere... but, generally, Jews only. In the stores... Many years passed, and Jews left trade. And still it was going on: ‘Jews in trade’*” (JEES_111_RD); “*About two years ago I saw an old woman on the market, and she called Azerbaijanis ‘Jews,’ like ‘Jews came in large numbers (Russ. ponaekhali), and rip us off. Jews are trading, they bought everything up, they inundated everything...’ For her Azerbaijanis are Jews... This is hatred towards the rich, towards traders*” (JEES_092_NB).

“Jewish trader” then, still remains a socio-cultural “subject position” in the realm of collective imagination,²⁶³ even though the realities that once supported it are no longer there.

²⁶³The stereotype of a Jew as a middleman may emerge in the most unexpected socio-cultural contexts; for instance, Finns called Izhma Komi, an ethnographic group of Komi people residing primarily in the north of the Komi Republic, “Jews of the tundra” for their entrepreneurial spirit and successes in trade” (Terjukov 2007: 5).

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUBURBAN MOSCOW “JUNK-YARD JEWS”

“Procuring” activity (Russ. *zagotovka*) was as familiar to the Jewish population of the shtetl as was trade. Often it was difficult to draw a borderline between the two. In both cases Jews would travel from the shtetl to local villages and engage in exchanges with the local peasants, selling manufactured items to them but perhaps also buying their agricultural produce, or what was left of their processing on the premises (hides, bones, wax, old rags, etc.). Especially during economic crises, this mutual exchange probably increased the likelihood of economic survival for both parties.

A very detailed description of the procurer trade in the shtetl is given by Rokhlin (1908). He asserts that it is a fairly complex type of trade activity. First, the “scrap collector” buys (usually on credit) a range of petty merchandise such as matches, tobacco, threads and needles, smoked fish, cheap chintz and the like – everything that the local peasants desire, but do not have easy access to. With all this he travels to the surrounding villages where he exchanges it for scrap; the largest part of scrap, however, is bought for cash. Apart from this, scrap collectors also buy small quantities of agricultural produce in the villages for their own use. Over a week of travelling such people usually make a meager profit of just a couple of rubles. Upon return, scrap collectors sort out their catch. Rags that may still be used are turned into beds for the family members (thus creating a host of health-related problems), while the rest goes to the local wholesale dealers in rags, who credit collectors for their village trips. Even though the Jewish population holds scrap collectors in very low esteem, each year petty traders who go broke join their cohort (Rokhlin 1908: 64-66).²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴Other references to the shtetl scrap collectors may be found in: Tan 1926: 15, Libes 1926: 56, Sirotiner 1926: 89-91, Sliozberg 1907: 109, Nemanov 190[5]: 29, Veitzblit 1929: 17, Singer 1987: 206, Singer 2011: 7, 50, etc.



Ill. 41: Tatiana Baranovskaya. Junk man (2011).²⁶⁵

Characteristically, the, reinforces the association of their business with trade: “There were always several Jews in drastic limitation of private trade in the early years of the Soviet rule could extend to such ‘procurers’ as well Derazhnia who would buy old rags in the villages. Over the last years the number of such people grew to 20 families.” Upon the introduction of the centralized collection of junk by the state cooperatives, their situation worsened precipitously: “One rag-person complained to me: ‘A Jew is now prohibited even from buying rags’” (Veitzblit 1929: 39).

Exchange operations with the local producers were certainly in demand under the Soviet rule, especially given the poor rural infrastructure and the lack of adequate transportation. The difference was that such “procurers” (Russ. *zagotoviteli*) became state employees, usually working under the “District Consumer Union” (Russ. *Raipotrebsouyz*), a cooperative organization that purchased raw materials, agricultural produce, wild mushrooms and the like from rural dwellers and simultaneously carried out retail trade in manufactured goods in the villages: “*My father was constantly travelling around. He*

²⁶⁵Source: <http://www.palitra.name> (last accessed April 3, 2017).

worked... he was the head of a fruit processing unit. They were making dried fruits, juices...

(Bäl_011_021_EV); *“they were selling hair dyes, powder, hooks... everything that was missing in the stores. Procurers were re-selling goods”* (Ber_08_023_AV). The laundry soap, one of the top scarce products of the post-war time, or kerosene were often among such goods (Bäl_011_021_EV).

While procuring, similarly to trade, could be seen not as a “profession” in the proper sense of the word (Tul_05_018_RSh_ISh), cooperative membership offered special advantages: most importantly, procurers would get the right to buy goods in short supply, such as good quality clothes and footwear, based on the special receipts they would get for their work (MP_07_029_IL) – in fact this was yet another example of a “special distribution” channel, of which there were so many in the economy of shortage.

Often procurers themselves would form a trade artel to coordinate their activities; as a cooperative organization they would then get some limited freedom in establishing prices for the production they sold: *“You add one more kopeck on the top of the price. Like, a price markup. People would buy things anyway. Where does the profit go? He [the artel employee, – A. K.] would not put it in his pocket – it’s dangerous. He would return it back to the state, to his artel. So, the profit grows larger <...> and for this he gets his bonus – a part of the profit that he returned to the artel. Is this profitable? Yes, it is. Is it a deception? No, it is not. Consumer Unions had the right to vary [prices]... But they were instructed: ‘Don’t set prices too high lest the people should grumble.’ One or two kopecks didn’t mean much, though”* (Bäl_011_021_EV). Depending on their specialization, some procurers are reported to have been very rich, particularly when they were dealing with meat and hides – the products that were always insufficient and expensive: *“There were rich Jews... they’d have the nicest and the biggest tombstones at the cemetery. There was one Vitia, with not much education, he was a procurer, buying cattle [from the peasants] and delivering it to the meat factory. He had gold, he had money, so when he died, they erected the most expensive monument for him. People say, 15 or 17 thousand [rubles] worth”* (Tul_05_001_VK); *“30-40 years ago there were billionaire Jews – procurers. They’d buy sheep skins and send them to Moscow, to St. Petersburg, to the Far East...”* (MP_07_056_K).

The nearly exclusive Jewish character of the procurer profession may be found in all interviews recorded in the former shtetls, as well as in the stories about those who still lived there (e.g. Bäl_011_032, MP_08_026_RV, Bäl_011_021_EV, Ber_08_023_AV, MP_07_010_EM_RM, MP_07_010_EM_RM, MP_08_039_SK_LB, MP_08_049_T, JEES_020_LL, JEES_071_OZ_MK, JEES_078_VM, JEES_088_EK, JEES_096_EB, JEES_112_FK). As late as the 1980s, the main subsistence activity in some former shtetls in Ukraine consisted precisely in commercial trips undertaken by Jews around the area for the purposes of buying up peasant raw produce and delivering it to the cooperative enterprises – or else to the special state service centers (Russ. *bytkombinaty*), which consolidated producer artels after they were formally abolished. Again, as in the case of artels, a certain leeway existed in such enterprises in terms of the work schedule, which allowed those who preferred not to work on Sabbaths to do so (e.g. MP_04_01_SK).

Jewish procuring activity in the (former) shtetls is the primary economic background relevant for our further discussion of the socialist junk-yards in the large Soviet cities and their vicinities.

Scrap collection in the USSR

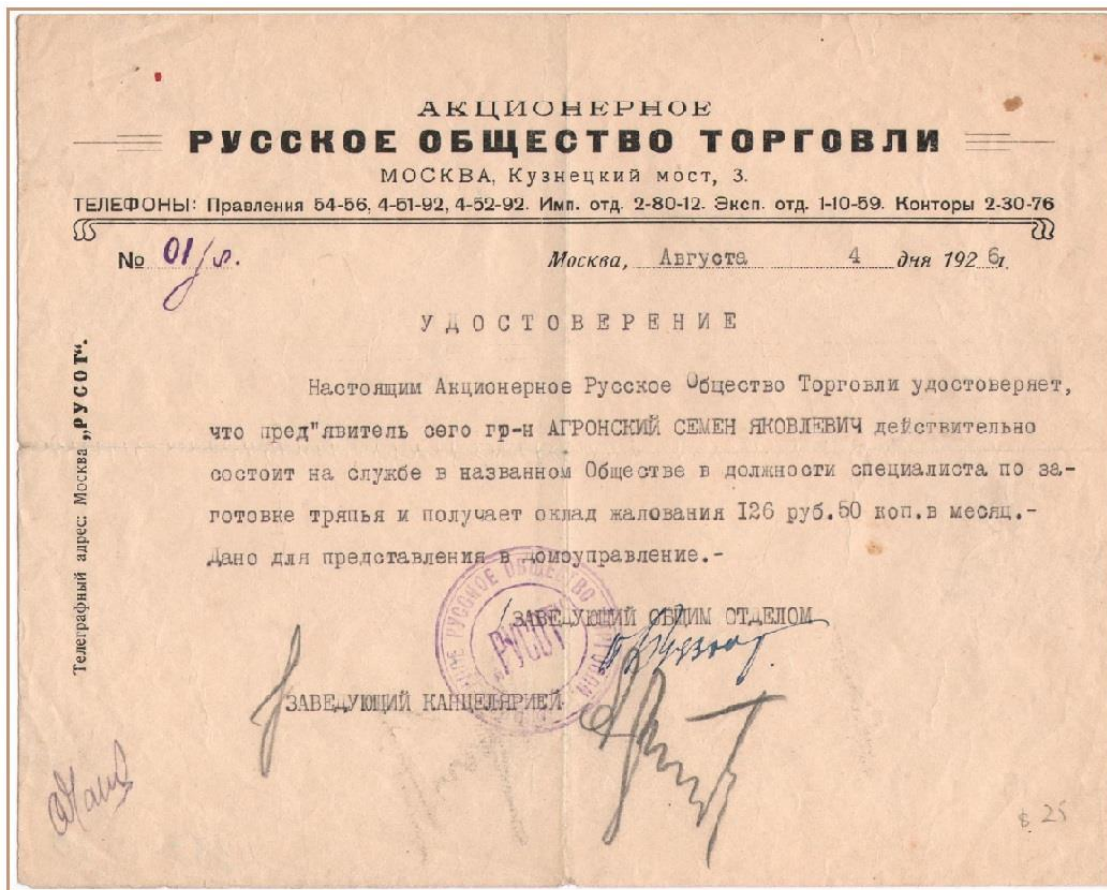
Throughout the existence of the Soviet regime, scrap of all kinds (or, as it was called, “secondary raw materials,” Russ. *vtorsyrje*) was endowed with particular value. Constant shortages in the socialist economy created a particular “regime of value” (Appadurai 1986: 4), in which scrap turned into a commodity in its own right. Although “secondary,” it was, after all, something that could be processed and supplement for the always insufficient and/or maldistributed state production resources. As such, scrap was also heavily politicized: scrap collection reflected the measure to which common citizens and enterprises followed the party’s call for parsimonious use of socialist resources, thus eventually contributing to the advance of the national economy.

Various understandings of “junk” under the early Bolshevik rule illustrate the clash between the old and the new “epistemological assumptions, moral norms, or social conventions” (Oushakine 2014: 202) related to the understanding of what is “useful,” and what is not. The radical change of the social, political, ideological and economic contexts where the notion of “value” is embedded, created a

situation when objects of unconditional value for some, turned out to be “junk” for others. For instance, it is only within the new socialist anti-religious productivist ethos that objects of religious cult could acquire the status of “waste” to be repurposed for the aims of the socialist construction. Thus, the state campaign of “church property confiscation,” which included the synagogues as well (see, for instance, Vitrinskaya 2014), presented a particular type of “secondary materials collection.” Initiated in 1921, the campaign allegedly provoked “enthusiastic response” among the people; in some “districts with a compact Jewish population a spontaneous movement started... to donate all the “sacred” religious junk that had been accumulating in the shtetls for centuries, to the fund of industrialization and collectivization” (Kirzhnits 1931: 31-33, 40, 42).²⁶⁶

Demand for the “secondary” materials could certainly exist only when the system of state production as such was sufficiently developed. While this could hardly be the case during the period of “war communism,” the New Economic Policy of 1920s revitalized the industrial production. The following “Certificate,” issued in Moscow on August 4, 1926, reads: “Russian Trade Joint-Stock Society herewith certifies that the presenter of this citizen AGRONSKY SEMION YAKOVLEVICH indeed serves in the aforementioned Society in the capacity of the specialist for rag procuring (Russ. *spetsialist po zagotovke triapja*) and receives a salary of 126 rubles 50 kopeks a month.”

²⁶⁶A Soviet ditty (Russ. *chastushka*) of the early 1930s goes like this: “Mother, stop making bows // In front of the priest’s old junk. // For the priest, they are icons, // For us – it’s useful waste” (Russ. *Bros’, mamasha, bit’ poklony // na popovskoe starje. // Dlia popa oni ikony, // A dlia nas – util’ surje*) (Bezbozhnye *chastushki* 1934: 16). Many religious objects, whether willingly on the part of their former owners, or not, followed a particular “diversion” (Appadurai 1986: 17), whereby they were removed from their original context and “commodified,” yet not in the previous capacity as the objects of the cult, but rather for the substance they were made of (gold, silver, copper). Some such objects could have been preserved in their intact form (e.g. be sold to museums or religious institutions in the West – a broadly used practice of the early Soviet years – which, however, would still signify a “commodity phase” (Ibid., 15) they would undergo.



III. 42: Certificate of the Russian Trade Joint-Stock Society (1926).
 Courtesy of the Museum of Jewish History in Russia (Moscow).

We do not know much about the previous life-course of S. Ya. Agronsky, except that in 1918-19 he was employed in the People’s Commissariat of Food in Moscow, where he was responsible for conducting negotiations related to the purchase of fishing tackle such as fishing nets (there are two additional documents in the Museum’s archive confirm this), and that by 1925 he was already working in rag procuring for a company that obviously was one of those that had emerged under the new economic regime during NEP. In other words, he continued in the sphere of middlemen operations, having switched from the state to a cooperative organization. This Certificate was issued “for presentation at the housing management office” (Russ. *domoupravlenie*), which indicates that S. Ya. Agronsky was most probably trying to get official registration in Moscow, which, according of the Decree of the RSFSR Council of People’s Commissars “On the registration of citizens in urban

settlements,” issued on April 28, 1925, among other things required a certificate from one’s work place.²⁶⁷

State campaigns for scrap collection started already in the late 1920s – early 1930s, the initial stage of industrialization, when the need for production resources became particularly urgent. Multiple mass media publications encouraged the population to collect “rags, old felt boots, old pieces of fur, old ropes, worn galoshes,” etc. – since “there is no junk any more, there is salvage (Russ. *util'*) – a valuable resource for our industry and for shipping abroad.” Many journals and newspapers reiterated slogans such as “A rag + a bone = a tractor,” or “Thousands of tractors made of junk” (Duzhina 2010: 83-84).



Ill. 43: Screenshots from the film “Twelve Chairs” based on the novel by I. Ilf and E. Petrov (producer L. Gaidai, 1971).

The sign on the first screenshot reads: “By turning in non-ferrous metals to junk-yards, you are helping the society!”; the second one relates to the scene where the head of the old people’s home is illegally selling perfectly good musical instruments to the junk-yard and pocketing the money. The action of the book is set in the 1920s.

“False/ fictitious cooperatives” or artels, mentioned earlier, could be created at this time precisely under the pretext of collecting “secondary raw materials” from the population; more often than not, such cooperatives served as “a cover for the old types of gainful engagements related to middlemen exchange

²⁶⁷The text of the Decree see at: <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=ESU;n=19042#0> (last accessed April 3, 2017). (in Russian).

operations,” whereby artel members would “secretly trade on the side, in the villages rather than on the [shtetl] market” (Shkol’nikova 1996).²⁶⁸

Throughout the period of the Soviet rule, various decisions and regulations concerning scrap collection were taken at the top level of the state political power. For instance, the Resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers “On the measures for increasing procurement and utilization of the secondary raw materials in the national economy” (June 9, 1970) stressed that these materials are not used to the full capacity, and called to increase their procurement by 1,5 – 2 times. These targets were supposed to be developed by the USSR Council of Ministries, separately for waste paper, rags, old tires and broken glass. According to the Resolution, the State Planning Committee, the agency responsible for the central economic planning in the Soviet Union, had to take secondary raw materials in consideration when determining the resource distribution for the primary socialist production. The USSR State Supplies Committee had to develop plans for secondary materials procurement both from the population, and from enterprises and organizations. Besides, purchasing prices for secondary raw materials were supposed to be reviewed and set at such a level that the common people would get more interested in waste collection. The best procurers have to be material offered incentives; the campaign has to be popularized through radio, TV and cinema, etc. (*Reshenija...* 1972: 142-144). The calls to use secondary materials were also voiced at the highest Soviet forums, such as the Party Congresses (Tikhonov 1981: 18-19).

Based on governmental instructions, multiple posters and brochures were distributed among enterprises and organizations, calling their employees to “improve procurement” of various types of

²⁶⁸The most famous of such false procurer cooperatives is the “Horns and Hoofs” from the novel by I. Ilf and E. Petrov *The Little Golden Calf*, cf.: “‘The investigation in the case of Koreiko may take a lot of time,’ Ostap said. ‘How long it will last, only God knows. And since there is no God, nobody knows. A horrible situation! Perhaps a year, and perhaps a month. At any rate, we need legal status. We must become a part of the great mass of office employees. The office will give us that status. Administrative activity has attracted me for a long time. At heart I am a bureaucrat and a blockhead. We will collect something very funny; for example, tea spoons, dog plates, or any kind of gadgets, or – horns and hoofs! Excellent! Horns and hoofs are needed for the comb and mouthpiece industry. Why can’t it be an institution? In my little bag I have excellent blanks for all occasions, and a round rubber stamp’” (Ilf & Petrov 1961: 171-172).

waste and to strive for economic “frugality.” For instance, one such brochure, focusing on “ferrous and non-ferrous metal waste,” invites people to carefully inspect all places where such waste can be accumulated to make sure that “not a single kilogram of waste metal is thrown away.” It also engages the readers in a “numbers game” usual for such publications, describing how many useful objects can be produced on the basis of so much waste – e.g. “1 million tons of metal waste” is enough to produce “900 thousand tons of steel for the national economy,” which in turn equals “100,000 tractors, half a million of ‘Moskvich’ cars, 6,500 diesel locomotives, or 46,000 railroad wagons” (*Komitet narodnogo kontroli*... 1967: 4-5). The other brochure, opening with the quote from the Party Congress materials, stresses the importance of the “secondary materials” as “resources for the national economy of our country” (again, with many numbers), gives their detailed classification based on their type and quality, lists procurers’ salaries based on the types of waste they collect, and even announces the All-Union competition for cooperative procuring organizations, with the monetary awards for different types of junk (Eremin 1981).

The system of waste collection was pervasive by the late decades of the Soviet regime, when even schoolchildren were included through regular “waste paper raids” (Russ. *sbor makulatury*) at their schools; for this, they did not get any material benefits.²⁶⁹ For stimulation purposes, children were usually exposed to a specific “ecological narrative”: how many trees can be saved if waste paper gets collected and re-processed.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹This, as I remember, could create conflicts in the families, since adults could exchange waste paper for special coupons – an entitlement to buy fiction books not available in the stores otherwise.

²⁷⁰Socialist preoccupation with the “secondary product” and its very materiality reaches its most grotesque form in Vladimir Voinovich’s anti-utopia *Moscow, 2042*, where the borderline between the “secondary” product (people’s body waste) and the “primary” one (food allocated by the state in exchange for it) gets completely effaced. Written in 1986, the novel exposes “a historically situated attempt to take rationality (and rationalization) to its limits in the fight against alienation” (Oushakine 2014: 202), coming to its logical conclusion when human specimens who failed to meet the requirements of the “new socialist man” are processed into “secondary product” for further exchange, as well as the use of “secondary product” as a substitute for oil in foreign exchange after the country ran out of this main natural treasure. Some public slogans, laying out the essential ideology of the exchange between the state and its citizens in *Moscow, 2042*, read: “Everyone who hands in secondary matter, will feast on primary, served on a platter,” “Hand in secondary matter first, then go quench that primal thirst” (Voinovich 1987: 175, 189). One of the denizens of the city tells the protagonist who arrived from the capitalist world: “I don’t know what Marx said, but

Obviously, in the post-war time, with the general decline of production of both consumer and producer goods, scrap was seen as an important economic resource. The already mentioned “Producer cooperation” journal is full of invocations to collect “secondary raw materials” and use them for the production of various kinds.²⁷¹ As was already mentioned, a certain type of artels had as their main activity the collection of secondary materials. For instance, Vol. XI of Moscow Regional Artel Reports (1950) contains the descriptions of 22 artels of this kind functioning under the Moscow Regional Secondary Materials Union (*Mosoblutil’promsoyouz*). Taken together, they employed 2,705 people (GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1228. Pp. 88-226). Many of such procuring artels were also engaged in production on the basis of the secondary materials they collected, which, among other things, was stipulated in the first post-war five-year plan (*Zakon o piatiletnem plane...* 1949: 41). For instance, artel “Pobeda” (Russ. “Victory”), organized in 1945 and situated in Karacharovo,²⁷² collected “rags, industrial waste, old rubber shoes, waste paper, bones of all kinds, ferrous and non-ferrous metal scrap, bottles and glass, various waste.” Out of this, 81 people in 6 separate workshops produced needles, paper clips, construction and furniture nails (“Metallic workshop”), oilcloth, rubber capes, children’s rubber balls, rubber shoes (“Rubber-processing workshop”), tar, axle-grease, and oil for sewing machines (“Chemical workshop”), ropes, cords, canvass sacks, worker’s mittens, as well as various underwear for men, women and children (“Rope workshop,” “Sewing workshop,” and “Haberdashery workshop”) (Ibid., Pp. 112-115). The combination of procuring and production in artels like “Pobeda” again illustrates the “full” cycle of production, and perhaps, also the distribution of things produced within the cooperative sector. In these years this sector is described as “a valuable source of consumers’

the Genialissimo says – and this is the keystone of his teachings – that primary matter is secondary matter and secondary is primary” (Voinovich 1987: 240).

²⁷¹E.g. Gavrikov 1955: 18-20, Voldai 1955: 25, Sumreli 1955: 31-33, Zikherman & Friedland 1955: 29-30, Ushatkin 1955: 25-26, Bliakher 1955: 54-56, Neishtadt 1956: 34, Shvansky & Potievskaya 1956: 15-16, Nikolaev 1956: 35-36, El’man 1956: 22-23, Baskin 1957: 28, Pevzner 1957: 32, Weinberg & Guliaev 1958: 33, Maksimov 1960: 8-9, Boitsov 1960: 21, etc.

²⁷²Karacharovo is a settlement on the Kazan’ railroad, between Moscow and Saltykovka.

goods, [that] produced an important part of the total output of many products,” while “utiliz[ing] local resources and materials including scrap and waste from State industry almost exclusively” (Leedy 1957: 1064).

What was the technical side of the scrap collection business? How was it actually done?

In the first post-war decades artels such as described above or special waste procuring stations (Russ. *zagohtontory*) hired individuals who would go around city or settlement yards, usually on a horse-drawn cart, and collect unnecessary household waste – old rags, old clothes and torn shoes, broken dishes, old buckets, etc. The exchange would usually assume a non-monetary character, a barter of sorts, especially if the junk was brought by children: the latter would get whistles, dolls, balloons, toy pistols, ribbons, hair clips, cheap jewelry, Russian type yo-yos and the like from the junk man (e.g. JEES_099_IK, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_102_YK, JEES_103_LM, JEES_108_AP, JEES_114_FK, JEES_121_FZ, JEES_129_AS). Given the general absence of toys at the time, as well as the lack of family resources for their purchase even if some were available, such things acquired value. This could be seen as an expression of the particular power relations between the state, the principle owner of production resources (which, however, was failing in its production responsibilities) and the consumers who were not only lacking any purchasing power, but also did not realize the real value (or the absence thereof) of the objects they were receiving. One person aptly compared junk vs. toys transactions to the colonial exchange: “*He was giving... all kinds of trinkets, well, like it was in Africa, you know*” (JEES_118_MR_OR), thus stressing the unequal nature of such relations. However, this exchange is not remembered as “unjust” – after all, both parties were receiving precisely what they desired. Getting rid of the unnecessary junk was also a clear advantage for the households (JEES_129_AS). Adults, however, could sell household junk for money, specifically allocated to junk men for such purposes (JEES_071_OZ_MK, JEES_097_AS, JEES_119_MS_SS, JEES_121_FZ). In other words, junk collectors disposed of a certain amount of cash for their operations, which fact will be significant in our

further discussion of the clandestine side of the junk economy.²⁷³ Further on, junk men would bring collected junk “to artels or factories of some sort, where all this would be re-ground, re-cut... and woven anew” (JEES_114_FK) (also: JEES_108_AP, JEES_099_IK) – and get paid for the amount of the junk collected (JEES_115_DA).

I was unable to find any pictures of such horse-drawn procurers’ carts in Moscow suburbs, yet they most probably looked similar everywhere:



Ill. 44: Junk collection by a drayman.

“A drayman with his horse came to the yard to collect old junk” (from the Remembrances of Inna Lesovaya about post-war Kievan Podol. May 25, 2016.²⁷⁴

Procurers on horse-drawn carts disappeared by the late 1950s or early 1960s due to the development of transportation, but perhaps also as a result of the mass closure of artels, where many of

²⁷³It is hard to find exact figures to document the scale of monetary exchange. In 1959, a procurer of non-ferrous metals would get from 15 to 20 thousand rubles towards the purchases during the coming month (GARF-2. Fund A-506. Inv. 2. File 1194. P. 59). Much later, in 1988, “a specialized network of production-and-procuring enterprises that procure secondary raw materials from industry, agriculture, trade and population, received over 40 billion rubles a year” (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 107) in the country as a whole. In other words, although prices were certainly changing over time, one can assume that sizable sums of cash were concentrated in the sphere of procurement throughout its existence.

²⁷⁴URL: <http://www.svoboda.org/a/27756354.html> (last accessed April 3, 2017). (in Russian).

these people were employed (and where the “trinkets” for children were perhaps produced), and the subsequent “centralization” of junk collection. Yet even before that a large number of state procuring stations were already functioning in large cities and their vicinities. Such stations could be placed in the permanent buildings, usually in the basements (JEES_076_MA, JEES_121_FZ), but could also be set in the moveable “tents” (Russ. *palatki*) containing the necessary scales to weigh the junk (JEES_073_IV). People employed there were responsible for “sorting” the junk into various groups (bones, paper, glass, etc.), after which specialized cars came to collect it and paid the station managers fixed prices for each group of junk (JEES_129_AS, JEES_073_IV). While many stations would accept any waste, some of them specialized in particular types of junk. The father-in-law of one of my informants worked in the basement of the building “right next to FSB,”²⁷⁵ where he collected solely old glass containers such as vials and small flasks, as well as broken glass (JEES_076_MA).

Materials of the Central Archive of the City of Moscow (TsAGM), Moscow State Bureau Chief Office of Secondary Raw Materials, All-Union Bureau “*Soyuzutil’*,” the USSR Ministry of Light Industry, 1937-1949, in 1949 renamed *Glavutil’syrje* (Fund R-795. Inv. 1), can afford a better understanding of the internal workings of such procuring stations, both in Moscow and its suburbs. These stations collected various substances – different types of rags and tatters, felt, old furs and cottons, fabric trimmings and “tailings,” old tarp, old paper, bones, ferrous and nonferrous metal scrap, old rubber footwear, old tires, broken glass, metal shavings, fruit pits, eiderdown and feathers, empty perfume bottles and various vials, etc. (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 61. Pp. 15, 24). They were opened on a permanent basis, yet from time to time they organized scrap-collection raids, encouraging the local population to collect waste and “sell it for the prices according to the current tariff” (Ibid., P. 63 rev.). In April of 1946, the monthly junk-collection target for one “tent procurer” (Russ. *palatochnik*) consisted of 450 kg of woolen rags, 250 kg of cotton rags, 1,000 kg of waste paper, 500 kg of bones, 100 kg of old rubber shoes, 400 kg of non-ferrous metals, etc. Altogether, this amounted to 3,600 kg of waste, the

²⁷⁵Formerly, NKVD and then KGB, Soviet secret police, situated in the center of Moscow.

total cost of which was estimated as 500 rubles (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 24. P. 20). By 1953, these targets were raised almost by two times, and amounted to 7,150 kg total (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 136).

Essentially, the “agents” working at procuring stations were involved in a networking activity: they were supposed to go around to local municipal housing offices, to conclude agreements for certain amounts of junk that could be collected from each of them, and to inform their dwellers about the purchasing prices for junk as well as the technical side of the process (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27. P. 52). The latter, at least in the first post-war decade, included information on the “stimulation goods” (Russ. *stimtovary*) that individuals got in exchange for the junk, whether on top of the purchase prices, or as the main remuneration. For instance, Moscow City Office “Souzutil” received 427,000 rubles to purchase these “stimulation goods,” which consisted mainly of soap, stationaries and “goods produced in the station’s own workshops.” This sum, however, was reported as severely “insufficient” (Ibid., P. 58), and the much-desired soap did not become available until the second part of the month (Ibid., P. 21).²⁷⁶ It is noteworthy that such “stimulation goods” signify the element of barter – not unlike the toys given to the children in exchange for household scraps, which in itself is a consistent indicator of the severe shortages in the national economy.

As the example of “stimulation goods” suggests, the junk-procuring stations were involved in the production of mass-consumptions goods on the basis of what they collected, forming artels of their own. For instance, in 1946, a number of production workshops were functioning under the Moscow State Procuring Office, focusing on glove-sewing, haberdashery production, metal-processing, tar-paper production, and the like. Altogether 704 people involved in production, 390 of whom were at-home workers; 507 of all employees were women (Ibid., P. 88). This production pursued two major purposes: first, things produced here, such as fountain pens or clothes were used to “stimulate” people to collect

²⁷⁶Soap was a symbolic good of the early post-war years, a commodity always in high demand and always insufficient: “Factory after factory reported serious and protracted shortages of soap... Throughout 1946, 1947 and 1948 heavy engineering factories complained about their inability to obtain soap, the production of which had fallen catastrophically during the war and immediate postwar period” (Filtzer 1999: 1028).

junk, and secondly, for sale (Ibid., Pp. 90, 92). Besides, procurement stations were responsible for “servicing the landfills,” most probably scavenging for useable materials there (Ibid., P. 57). Given what was noted earlier about producer artels that were likewise involved in the “on-the-side” activity of procuring secondary materials, one can visualize this level of economic activity as the sphere where anything had production value, and anything was in consumer demand.

How much did these people officially earn for their work? According to the archival data, the average monthly salary of a procuring agent in 1946 was 675 rubles (Ibid., P. 66), while an average workshop employee would get about 472 rubles, an engineer – 854 rubles, and a technician responsible for the sanitary maintenance of procuring stations, 248 rubles (Ibid., P. 95). Another document, also dated by 1946, gives an expanded list of monthly salaries, which includes: procuring station manager – 1,100 rubles per month, his deputy – 1,000 rubles, chief accountant – 980 rubles, commodity specialist – 640 rubles, legal consultant – 600 rubles, auditor – 525 rubles, planning manager – 500 rubles, secretary – 415 rubles, courier and janitor – 210 rubles (Ibid., P. 17). What do these figures signify? In 1946 the bread-rationing system was still in effect; on January 16, 1946, in relation to the increase of the rationing prices, workers whose salary varied within the range between 200 and 500 rubles a month (i.e. those with the lowest salaries) were officially entitled to the so-called “bread allowance/ supplement” (Russ. *khlebnaya nadbavka*), or the additional payment of 80 to 100 rubles, equal to roughly “20% of basic wage rate” (Filtzer 1999: 1020, Kalinkina 2012: 77). In other words, some employees of procuring stations would be entitled to an additional payment on the basis of their meager salaries, whereas others would barely make it above the officially recognized subsistence level. With all that, all employees were involved in the socialist competition, and according to the official reports, the number of “Stakhanovites” among them was steadily growing (from 254 to 445 over the period between 1946 and 1947 in the Moscow State Procuring Office “*Sojuzutil*”) (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27. P. 67).



Ill. 45: Inside a Soviet junk-yard (1957).

Workers of workshop № 1, Tbilisi (Georgia) artel “Ulil’promkombinat,” sorting waste.

Source: *Producer cooperation* № 8, Aug. 1957, P. 31.

This is the only illustration of a junk yard I was able to find, and although it comes from a different geographical region, it still renders the typical atmosphere of such places: primitive shed-like constructions, water barrels, heaps of waste (hides or rags), indispensable scales, special gowns worn by employees, etc.

Junk-collection as Jewish business in Moscow and its suburbs

Many of my informants could not tell whether junk collectors in horse-drawn carts were Jewish, or not – perhaps because their child imagination was preoccupied with the exchange objects junk men brought rather than with the junk men themselves (JEES_114_FK, JEES_115_DA). Others stressed that Tatars, who often came to the large cities to work as janitors were involved in yard-to-yard scrap collection (JEES_020_LL, JEES_097_AS, JEES_114_FK, JEES_121_FZ, JEES_073_IV). Yet a number of people maintained that it was elderly Jews who needed “*to work no matter where,*” and often became junk men: “*It was precisely old Jews who were involved in this small-scale business – completely illiterate ones, for what kind of education would one think about after the war? They would*

become junk men, would go around in their carts...” (JEES_097_AS) (also: JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_097_AS, JEES_131_AR).

As explanations of why junk was a Jewish niche, interviewees argued that “Jews knew how to run this business” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_088_EK, JEES_086_AR, JEES_091_IZ_BB, JEES_099_IK). Even if, like in one case, the head of the station was a Russian party member, “*there were a whole bunch of Jews working under him*” as rank-and-file procurers (JEES_073_IV); “*in [the sphere of] salvage, it was solely Yiddish one could hear*” (JEES_086_AR).

The internal explanations of why junk was a Jewish niche, people usually argued that “*Jews knew how to do this commerce*” (JEES_088_EK), that “*trade is a Jewish field*” in general (JEES_091_IZ_BB), that Jews “*invited their own*” into the business (JEES_099_IK). Others maintained that while Jews “*had good heads on their shoulders, it was difficult to find a job elsewhere*” (JEES_093_MZ), and that “*one had to earn one’s living somehow*” (JEES_086_AR), while nobody wanted to “*sweat one’s guts out*” at a state factory, which was the only other option (JEES_097_AS). One informant’s father, who was collecting scrap for a procuring station, was a World War I invalid (JEES_086_AR), which most probably excluded even the factory option for him. Another stressed that with a “*flexible schedule*” one could “*abstain from working on Saturdays,*” which could still be important for some (JEES_060_TZ).

Jewish names abound in archival materials on junk-yards, indicating that Jews occupied all possible positions there, from top managers to rank-and-file procurers. For instance, “Order № 113,” issued on April 28, 1953, gives a list of employees of Moscow City Waste Procuring Administration (Russ. *Glavvtorsyrje*) who had fulfilled the state production plans for the month of April, thus distinguishing themselves on the eve of May Day. The document mentions several dozens of distinctly Jewish names.²⁷⁷ The Order opens with a ritual introduction about the importance of “Comrade Stalin’s

²⁷⁷E.g. procuring station managers S. Ya. Bukhbinder, M. I. Balaz, N. A. Granat, N. A. Agranovich, B. I. Landsman, R. I. Svidler, G. Z. Lerman, S. B. Stoliarsky, A. A. Kaminsky; procurers M. M. Rotsheyn, Ya. I. Shapiro, Ya. L. Royter, M. P. Nesvizhsky, N. D. Shwarzman, M. A. Lev, A. Sh. Smiler, S. L. Lisansky, N. M. Bukhman, L. N. Roganskaya, A. B. Gul’man, Z. M. Kaplan, L. Ya. Reinfeld, M. S. Lifshits, S. D. Shnaidman, R. Sh. Spivak, I. P.

work of genius “Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR,”” which “illuminates” the “ways towards the construction of communism,” in which procurers have their own honorable share. The monetary awards for those mentioned in the document range between 200 and 500 rubles. Later that year, on the eve of the Great October Socialist Revolution, another Order was issued (№ 42, November 3, 1953), which adds more names of people working in the same administration: procuring station manager Yu. L. Farfel, station manager deputy E. S. Levitsky, senior accountant A. I. Eidel, procurers D. M. Zaltzberg, F. B. Miloratskaya, P. Kh. Eyshbacher, B. D. Khavkin; tent-managers (Russ. *palatochniki*) Makhover (no initials), Kh. Sh. Gluzker, D. A. Kissin, I. L. Frumkin, A. G. Sliozberg, and 1 press-operator M. F. Terletsky (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 51. Pp. 43-47). This time, however, there is no monetary award attached – the distinguished workers’ names are just entered into the “Book of Honor” (Russ. *kniga pocheta*) of their administration.²⁷⁸

Here is one account of a Jew who became associated with a procuring station. The father of one of my informants, a Romanian Jew named Moses²⁷⁹ V., born in 1910, had received a university diploma in Prague at the end of 1930s, and was looking for a job when his uncle from Chernowitz (then Romania) sent him a letter saying there was work in the city – and Moses came to Chernowitz. Soon the territory was annexed by the Soviet Union. Moses was drafted, fought in the Soviet army during the war, was wounded and sent to the hospital in Sverdlovsk in the Urals, where he was officially recognized as a “war invalid.” Once, being at a railway station, he saw a beautiful young woman standing on the platform. The older woman who accompanied her spotted Moses and told the younger one, her daughter, in Yiddish to watch over their suitcase lest it should be stolen by a suspicious guy

Reznik, S. P. Fayn, V. N. Shagranovich, S. K. Sigal, B. V. Lashchiver, B. F. Stolshteyn; senior accountants A. O. Eidel, Aizen (no initials); 1 storage manager: Furer (no initials) and 1 head of the local trade union committee G. N. Treisman (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. Pp. 110-116). This is not the full list, for some names do not allow to judge with certainty, whether they are Jewish, or not.

²⁷⁸On a similar socialist symbolic award, “the board of honor” (Russ. *doska pocheta*), when the photographs of the best workers would be placed “in the most conspicuous places” together with various Soviet paraphernalia, see: Zemtsov 1991: 32-33.

²⁷⁹Not the real name.

who was hanging around. Moses then approached, introduced himself in Yiddish, and soon after the young woman became his wife.

Years earlier, in the 1920s, Moses' wife's father had been working in the sphere of cooperation. Since it was nearly impossible to obtain the official registration (*propiska*) in Moscow, he received a room in a wooden house in the settlement of Saltykovka. In 1929 he was arrested and executed a year after, although the family only learned this in 1946. It was to this wooden house in Saltykovka that the young couple and her mother moved at the end of the war. While Moses had the legal right to leave USSR for Romania, his by that time pregnant wife was against it, and so they stayed.

At first, the family lived extremely poorly. Neither Moses nor his wife were “*well adapted*”; Moses' diploma had to be re-validated, which was either too expensive or somehow not possible, so he never did it. He would grab any job coming his way – a manual worker unloading goods in a store, a sanitary inspector, an auditor in a trolleybus depot. Elderly Jews in the settlement helped the family with staple foods. Once a neighbor lent them several potatoes, yet counted the “eyes” on each potato and required that they return as many potatoes the following summer (JEES_073_IV). And then, through a Jewish in-law, a veteran “*with an iconostasis of medals*,” Moses got a place in the waste procuring system. Very soon the family had butter on their table, and the money to buy food with.

Moses' trajectory is representative of other junk men in many ways. He was a newcomer to the region – perhaps, even more so compared to other Jews who had migrated from the Pale, since he had come from a capitalist country and spoke Russian with a heavy accent till the end of his life. Like many in his generation, he was a war invalid, whose professional choices were foreclosed because of that. Since he never validated his foreign diploma, he was in substantially the same category as thousands of other Jews of his age and younger who did not have any substantial education from the point of view of the Soviet regime. He had his wife and two children to provide for, so schooling of any kind was not a feasible option for him. He tried several low-scale Soviet jobs that did not require any education, yet what he earned there was barely enough for his family to make ends meet. It is through the Jewish family connections that he eventually got a job in the junk-collection system. This was also a place

where Moses found his Jewish milieu – if not in terms of culture that he had been used to before he became a Soviet subject, but at least in terms of his native language, which he could practice in this milieu.

This trajectory is very similar to that of many immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe who came to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth century and were starting from scratch in various small towns of the country. The majority of these people did not have any initial capital for any business, however small; many did not speak the new language; a considerable number were religious and did not want to work on the Sabbath. As a result of all these factors taken together, “a remarkable number of Jewish men in small-town America, especially among the East Europeans, got their start as junk collectors, buying up cast-off scrap metal, household goods, paper, rags, animal fur, and other waste, and then preparing it either for sale as used merchandise or as cleaned and sorted raw material to be marketed to large reprocessors in commercially viable lots” (Weissbach 2005: 109).²⁸⁰ An interesting coincidence may be observed between the two traditions, namely the fact that junk-collecting could be combined “with related activities,” such as, for instance, “poultry sales and repair [of] farm machinery” (Ibid., 110). Likewise, some Soviet procurement stations, especially those situated on the city margins or in the suburbs, were responsible for logging and haymaking in the nearby forests (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27. P. 101), traditionally the work of peasants.

However, while in the United States junk-collection developed into a private ethnic business, to the point that Jews “essentially cornered the market on scrap in a great many small towns” (Weissbach 2005: 109),²⁸¹ in the Soviet Union it was part of the centralized state system of procurement, so there are

²⁸⁰ About rag-collection, this “marginal profession” passed down to new immigrants in Palestine, whether Jewish or not, and the “classic nostalgia” of immigrant Jewish life it evokes see: Boyarin 1996: 1-3.

²⁸¹ About “junk-yard Jews” in America see: Fauman 1941, Warner & Srole 1945: 200-203, Rosenbaum 2009: 206, 208, 223; Sandler 2000: 76-83; Rogoff 2001: 64, 76, 93, 123, 156; Rogoff 2010: 130, 137, 140, 197, 226, 229; Foner 2000: 54; Shevitz 2007: 140, 143, 144, 147, 153, 174-175; Ehrlich 2002: 102, 176; Abrams 2006: 125, 130; Turitz & Turitz 1995: 104; Marschall 2008: 152, 154, 159; Cohen & Soyer 2006: 121.

no official figures on the ethnicity of procurers, even though the authorities could be well aware of Jewish over-representation in the sphere. Moreover, whereas junk collection often started as a family business in America, family relations seem to have been explicitly or implicitly prohibited in the Soviet case. At least one document at my disposal refers to an order issued in November of 1952, where the head of one producing station in Moscow was strongly urged not to allow two tent-procurers, a wife and a husband, to work together. The fact that “husband and wife, Babinok and Mitiullin” were working in “tents № 186 and № 188” is seen as an example of “drawbacks in the work with cadres” (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 18). Another important difference is that although many American junk men at least initially lived on the economic margins, collecting anything that would come their way (or, again, “*vos es lozt zikh*”²⁸²), the very range of waste available for collecting in America must have been wider than in the post-war Soviet Union. There are several important reasons for that: first, no “Auto wrecking” or “Auto Repairing, Pumps, Motors” and the like (Weissbach 2005: 110) would be available in the Soviet society where cars were rare and where, as the popular joke goes, a used car was more expensive than the new one, since the latter was simply not available for purchase. This must have reduced the volume of potential junk quite considerably. Secondly, and most importantly, the very attitude to what is “junk,” and hence should be thrown away, was very different in the Soviet Union with the people’s specific cultural practices of endless repair and repurposing of old (as well as, often, new) things. As K. Gerasimova and S. Tchuikina argue, it was not only the situation of pervasive consumer shortages, but the whole set of ideological practices around material objects that turned the Soviet society into the “society of repair” (Gerasimova & Tchuikina 2004). As a result, one can assume that in the Soviet case the “life-cycle” of household objects, clothes, footwear etc. was much longer, which must have slowed down the process of their turning to the junk-collectors or junk-procuring

²⁸²Hence, the motto on a junk-yard in Asheville, North Carolina: “We buy anything, and we sell everything” (Rogoff 2010: 130).

stations. In other words, Soviet people were turning less and less readily – especially in the first post-war decades.²⁸³

The major differences, however, lie in the overall organizational structure of American and Soviet junk-collecting enterprises. American junk-yards were private businesses, capable of controlling economic activities they were engaged in, including the considerations which junk and where to buy, at what price, which industrial enterprise to sell it to, which other economic activities to add to the junk-collection, how to dispose of the profit, and eventually, whether to keep the business or sell it to somebody else. They were also competing with other junk-yards on the market. Soviet junk-men were all state employees, entitled to a fixed and very low salary, and although they could be subordinated to different Ministries depending on the type of junk they were collecting (in case these were specialized producing stations), as well as on the specific period of time (either the Ministry of Light Industry, Ministry of Industrial Goods of Mass Consumption, or the Ministry of Food Industry), their scope was in turn dependent on these various centralized agencies. Most importantly, Soviet junk-procurers were not free to set their own prices for different types of waste, and had other constraints related to the very nature of the planned socialist economy, which will be discussed below.

“From rags to riches”

*“Waste means huge money.
Waste means Klondike”
(JEES_082_LV)*

With all the differences mentioned above, there was one somewhat unexpected similarity between American and Soviet junk-men. This was the chance to get rich on “old rags and rotten bones,” although

²⁸³Indeed, my interviews contain multiple examples of how old coats, worn out and faded on the outside, were “turned inside out” (Russ. *perelitsovyvali*) (JEES_012_KK_RK), how a fur coat was bought “*for the rest of one’s life*” and continuously mended since “*there were no perspectives for the new one*” (JEES_040_NZ), how “*all things were gotten through a fight*” in a store to begin with, and thus not only particularly treasured for their functional qualities, but also acquired symbolic dimensions, creating special bonds with their owners and benchmarking important stages of their life (JEES_099_IK, JEES_081_VV), how shoes for children were bought several sizes larger because their feet were growing fast (JEES_061_LS), how several siblings had to share one pair of shoes (JEES_111_RD), how non-matching shoes received through American post-war aid were dyed to look similar (JEES_077_VC), etc. While the material situation certainly changed, the practices of treating the material universe exhibited much steadier patterns.

the very meaning of “wealth,” as well as the ways of its accumulation were certainly different in these two cultural settings. Henceforth I will concentrate on the Soviet case.²⁸⁴

To begin with, my informants whose families were not in any way related to junk-collecting, maintained that this was a lucrative occupation, and that people working there were “rich,” whatever the term might have meant to them (e.g. JEES_088_EK, JEES_096_EB, JEES_115_DA, JEES_076_MA, JEES_082_LV, JEES_015_RK_SK, JEES_127_EF). Some informants thought that the wealth of junk men came from the fact that instead of paying for junk with money they bartered it for insignificant objects, cheap yet indispensable in the household, and hard to get in regular state stores – or else paid much less than they should have, getting advantage of the average people’s ignorance about the prices for junk (JEES_106_EU, JEES_088_EK, JEES_115_DA). Others thought that since common people were often unaware of the value of things they disposed of, junk men could rescue such objects and resell them for good money. This could concern antiques (e.g. JEES_118_MR_OR, JEES_091_IZ_BB, JEES_102_YK, JEES_109_SG_GG) or precious metals such as copper (JEES_088_EK, JEES_093_MZ), but also old torn clothes that could be sold to tailors for resewing: in the post-war situation of the general abject poverty even these items would find their customer (JEES_129_AS). In other words, my informants argued that the junk men’s professional knowledge of the market value of certain things, as well as their connections with the right people, whether in the sphere of trade or production,²⁸⁵ allowed them to change the “trajectory” of some junk, turning it back to the sphere of marketable commodities – either straight away, or after some modifications.

²⁸⁴Cf.: on the economic success of some American junk-yard owners: “The Hungarian-born Louis Glick, who arrived in Jackson, Michigan, by way of Saginaw with little more than ‘a sledgehammer and a chisel,’ began a scrap iron business in 1916 that had sales of \$131,000 as early as 1923 <...> In the 1920s upward mobility was rapid. Newly arrived immigrant Ike Ornoff started as a peddler of fur pelts but soon opened a scrap iron and metal yard. The Hayti storekeeper Michael Margolis extended his wholesale grocery business to a half-dozen retail outlets. The baker Louis Jaffe sold his horse and wagon and bought a Chevrolet truck to deliver his bread. Some peddlers and shop owners who had arrived prior to World War I now owned real estate worth tens of thousands of dollars. Sam and Clara Swartz, nominally junk dealers, amassed fourteen lots. When Daniel Freedman died in 1926, the former peddler’s holdings were valued at \$46,500” (Rogoff 2001: 110, 123).

²⁸⁵Cf.: Q.: *So, the junk men then re-sold such things at normal prices?* A.: *Certainly! They had a circle of their own...* (JEES_091_IZ_BB).

However, it seems that in general junk-collection was a very specific occupation, and that those who were not involved in it had very fuzzy ideas how it worked; to a significant extent, this had to do with the “lowly” nature of the occupation, and some people presented their lack of knowledge on junk-collection with pride.²⁸⁶

Let us look more precisely at the mechanics of how Soviet junk-men maximized their economic performance, benefiting from particular specificities of the socialist planning system. Here I present consistent patterns that emerge from the juxtaposition of archival sources and oral interviews.

Each Soviet enterprise, however small, had its own state production targets, or “plan” as it was called, which was the sacrosanct concept that determined the activities of all socialist producers.²⁸⁷ Each enterprise head tried to “bargain” the plan, naturally “seeking lower targets and higher quantities of inputs” (Verdery 2003: 60). While the ideal production target was also the lowest one possible, as time went by, targets inevitably grew – either as a result of obligatory participation in the “socialist competition,” or in view of some politically important anniversary, or simply as the country moved into a new five-year plan. Consequently, it was in the best interests of the enterprises to fulfill the current plan with only the minimal positive margin, since the new target would be set up on the basis of the previous performance.²⁸⁸ This is what is known as the “ratchet effect,” when “any increase in production

²⁸⁶Cf.: “I came across a Jewish junk collector only in literature, nowhere else. Those Jews whom I knew, were all of intellectual professions” <...> “We do not belong to those who were engaged in junk collection. We were surrounded by those who would go further, further, and further in the educational field... This is our sample, so to speak... we can tell very little about junk men” (JEES_089_AS_NB).

²⁸⁷Some people maintained that at certain periods, for instance, during the war, the non-fulfillment of the state production plan could cost the manager not only his position, but even his life: “you can’t fulfill the plan – here is a gun, shoot yourself down” (JEES_008_SS); “planned economy is a way of holding people in chains. Here, you strayed away from the plan – you can be shot down [shows]” (JEES_015_RK_SK). Even if this might be somewhat of an exaggeration, it still stressed the utter importance of the economic performance determined by the state.

²⁸⁸As one former Soviet Jewish manager in Moldova told me, “We produced 8 thousand hats daily... it was a target set by the military. If you’d produce one hat less, you will be summoned to the [Party] City Committee, or discharged and put on trial <...> [We] organized the process so that we fulfilled the plan by 100.3 % <...> You know, there was this... Stakhanovite movement: 110%, 120, 150... almost 200%... But I tell you, we fulfilled the plan by 100.3 %... if the plan was already fulfilled, and there is one more working day left, or even half of the day – everybody was released, everybody went home, and the plant didn’t work. Q: In other words, not more than these 100.3 %? A.: God forbid! God forbid! God forbid! If we were to fulfill 105 or 110%... nobody would give us a single sheep pelt on the top! We were given 2 million pelts per year, precisely to fulfill the plan by 100 %. Were we to

confers only a temporary increase in incentive while requiring a permanently greater expenditure of work. [Producers] therefore decide not to reveal hidden production capacity unless forced to do so.”²⁸⁹ The “planning authorities,” on the other hand, “strove to ratchet targets upward and to extract greater productive capacity by various means” (Verdery 2003: 60).

It is not well known that apart from production targets Soviet enterprises also had targets for waste generated in the course of their production process. The logic of this “junk-plan” was the same: each enterprise manager strived to meet the state target, yet made sure not to overfull it too much, lest in the future the target should be readjusted on the basis of the previous performance. Certainly, this “plan” was not as significant as the production one, and perhaps was treated with more negligence on the part of the planning organs: “[enterprises’] plans are not verified and bear a completely arbitrary character <...> some enterprises are not included in the procuring plan” (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 111), and yet managers obviously did not want to spoil relations with superordinate organs over “junk.”

Thus an enterprise manager who would realize that he does not have the required amount of junk to report, let us say, metal waste, could go to a procuring station manager whom he knew well and offer to buy it from him. This implied, first of all, that a procurer had to have some “surplus” waste to perform the deal, which he had to accumulate and withhold from the previous reporting. Secondly, there was an important difference between collecting junk from private persons and from organizations: in the first case, procuring stations or agents were supposed to pay cash, whereas in the second, they had to use the non-cash payment (Russ. *nalichnyi* vs. *beznalichnyi raschet*) (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. P. 171). The price for waste could be different depending whether it was collected from the populace, or

fulfill it by 110-120%, five thousand people would have to stay at home for a month, and with no salary at that (Băl_011_045). I myself clearly remember a phrase pronounced by one of the adults in my family when I was about 5-6 years old. This person said, “Stakhanovites should be shot down on the spot for what they are doing.” Everybody immediately hushed him up lest the child (me) should repeat the phrase outside of home. With all its importance as a means of “exhortations to greater effort” (Verdery 1996: 25), the Stakhanovite movement would have most probably ruined the planned economy very quickly had it been possible to implement it on a truly mass scale.

²⁸⁹See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratchet_effect (last accessed April 3, 2017).

from organizations (larger in the first case). In the situation described above, the enterprise manager naturally paid in cash, for a procuring manager could make no use of a stamped piece of paper, or else organized some kind of barter exchange with the manager. The latter pocketed the money or the goods-in-kind, while simultaneously issuing an official document on behalf of his procuring station that enterprise X had indeed delivered a certain amount of waste. If asked, he could always present his “surplus” as something he had received from this enterprise.

Two of my informants, who used to occupy managerial positions in a large construction firm, describe their experience of exchange with the procuring station in the following way:

Inf.1: There was a procuring station for ferrous metal scrap right opposite my workshop. And they would sign any consignment note (Russ. nakladnaya) about how many tons [of metal] we allegedly brought them, although we certainly never did this in our life.

Q.: Did you have the plan for scrap metal to fulfil?

Inf.2: Yes.

Inf.1: See, everybody had a plan. For instance, a large factory was supposed to turn in so much metal scrap – but it didn't have that much. So, the acceptor [at the procuring station] would put in the required figure, and get money for this. But, well, I knew that he [manager of the procuring station] would sometimes need paint to refresh his fence for May 1st, or boards, and he would come to me... So, I knew he would sign any paper for me... Besides, I myself would sometimes come to him – Victor, I need some reinforcement bars – not, like tons of it, but a hundred kilos for a small platform – and he would say – ‘Sure, dig in there’. And I could find what I needed [in the heap of metal]. Because people brought anything there as scrap, a clever acceptor could put these things aside, and then perhaps sell them to somebody, and get some money (JEES_109_SG_GG).

Another enterprise manager – or, maybe, the same one, but at a different time – might realize that too much metal junk had accumulated on his premises. If he officially declared this amount (which he certainly was expected to do, since junk was the state property), he might be praised by his superiors or even get a monetary bonus, but in the future, fully in accordance with the “ratchet effect,” he would be harnessed to turn in as much waste on a regular basis. Consequently, he wanted to get rid of excessive waste. In this case, he would again go to a procuring manager and negotiate the deal with him: maybe he would sell the excessive junk to the procuring station and get some minimal payment for it, definitely

below the actual state costs.²⁹⁰ Maybe he would simply deliver it there for free, having in mind possible economic exchanges in the future. This is one way the procurer could receive a “surplus” of waste to be used in other business operations.

Yet another possibility was that enterprise employees would simply steal metal or other resources from their work premises and bring it to the procuring stations for money: “In July of 1953, the storage accepted over one ton of non-ferrous metal stolen from factory PO Box 901,²⁹¹ and in January, the pressed and cast details made of non-ferrous metals, stolen from factory PO Box 299, with the total weight of 555 kilograms, intended for the fulfillment of special production orders” (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 3. File 833. P. 189). Sometimes in cases like this procuring stations had to turn such stolen things into waste first, or in other words, destroy their value as production materials belonging to a certain enterprise, thus creating their new value as “junk,” with the simultaneous change of ownership: “*My father worked at some point as a waste acceptor. So, somebody would bring the metal cable. He would say: “Hey, go ahead, cut it into small pieces, each piece not more than half a meter” – because small cuts are already scrap. Q.: So, one can’t use them any more as a cable? A.: Right. It’s just scrap*” (JEES_086_AR).

Most likely, precisely to preclude such exchanges from happening, procuring stations were forbidden to collect “scrap metal of industrial provenance” (Russ. *metallolom promyshlennogo proiskhozhdenija*). The corresponding decision of the USSR Council of Ministers was taken on July 8, 1950, and immediately followed by the order of the USSR Minister of Light Industry (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 84). However, this order seems to have been regularly ignored both by the Moscow procuring stations as a whole as well as by individual tent-workers affiliated to them: “On Feb.

²⁹⁰Some enterprise managers seem to have resorted to this strategy in cases when their “junk-plan” was either not strictly enforced, or did not exist at all. In such cases selling the waste to a procuring station was a chance for them to earn some extra money, however little. One financial police report, issued in 1958, specifically singles out this type of economic crime: “Procurers would enter into conspiracy with... a number of state enterprises to buy the stolen production waste at lower prices...” (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. P. 172).

²⁹¹This designation signifies that it was a secret (e.g. military) enterprise.

20, 1953, Dzerzhinskaya station turned in 28 kg of brass of undoubtedly industrial provenance” (Ibid.); [on Aug. 14, 1953] “Around 35 kg of non-ferrous metal scrap was discovered in Tent № 16 (manager Spivak), including 22 kg of new aluminum plates, cut into pieces, and 10.2 kg of copper wire – the latter was brought in by an unknown citizen during the inspection”; “Molten zinc scrap, in pieces between 10 and 30 kg was discovered in Tent № 17 (manager Shpielfer); “A piece of aluminum of about 3-4 kg was discovered in Tent № 210 (manager Eidlin),” etc. (Ibid., 200). In the procurers’ terminology, enterprises and organizations were called “compact sources” (Russ. *kompaktnye istochniki*) – as opposed to individual contributors of waste (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 108-109). Employees of procuring stations who worked in affiliated “tents” were basically supposed to scavenge in their area for waste, as well as to knock on apartment doors and ask people for things not useable in their household anymore. Obviously, this was a very time-consuming job, and did not offer any guarantee that the procurement targets would be fulfilled.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that archival materials abound with examples of how procurers collected waste from “compact sources” and pass it for waste collected from the population or in the streets: “In May of 1953... tent manager Bliakhman purchased 6,219 kg of rags from Kurianstroi [a construction organization in Moscow region, – A. K.], having paid 2,389 rubles and 36 kopeks in cash. As a result of this operation, she was intending to receive salary of 1,553 rubles for 6,219 kg of rags as if collected from the population” (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 144)²⁹² (also: GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 3. File 828. P. 77; GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 3. File 833. P. 189). At the same time, continuous exhortations “not to allow tent procurers to service compact sources” (e.g. TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27. P. 24) were problematic since average citizens do not seem to be particularly enthusiastic about junk collection to begin with. Although the following figures refer to a later period, one may assume that the situation was not much different in the 1950-60s, especially against the harder material situation of the period: “The population virtually ignores participation in collecting such secondary resources as

²⁹² In other words, she was entitled to less than 1553 rubles had it been known that she collected it from people rather than buying wholesale.

bones, metals, wood waste <...> 65% do not collect anything at all, 32% collect paper waste in exchange for books that cannot be purchased in the stores, 2% – in exchange for “stimulating goods,”²⁹³ and only 1% – for money, but these people are mostly truck drivers who themselves transport waste, or else employers of food stores and dining halls” (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 109). Governmental attempts to increase the sheer number of junk-collecting stations – in 1972 it was ruled that there should be at least one station per 5-6 thousand of people (*Reshenija...* 1972: 143) – would have most probably not changed this general attitude, even if implemented in full.

In this situation, passing of waste collected from enterprises and organizations for that received from the population must have been an obvious and perhaps an indispensable solution for the fulfilment of the state procuring plans. Procurers themselves would not be particularly choosy about the origin of waste brought to them: “*Where they got the cable – he couldn’t care less*” (JEES_086_AR). Moreover, this substitution could bring additional non-reported money, since purchasing from “compact sources” was done at lower prices or conducted on a non-monetary basis. This substitution was one of the strategies used by the Moscow Chief Waste Procuring Station (*Glavvtorsyrje*) and its 13 subordinate district stations in 1958. By creating a large “surplus” of waste in their stations, presented as purchased by cash from the population, procurers not only over-fulfilled the state plans, but managed to raise the official salaries of their employees to 5,000 rubles a month.²⁹⁴ Altogether 78 people were called to account both by the militia and the financial police (DAMPS), including six chief managers of district procuring offices, at least three of whom had distinctly Jewish names (N. I. Gromovsky, A. F. Khankin, K. A. Golubev, V. I. Landman, S. Ya. Buchbinder and S. I. Grigorjev) (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. P. 172). What facilitated this substitution in the case mentioned above, as well as in all other cases, was the fact that waste of both origins was temporarily stored together, either on the premises of the

²⁹³Such as soap in the immediate post-war time, mentioned above. In the later period people were “stimulated” mostly by the possibility to purchase goods of mass consumption such as clothes, footwear, household objects, etc. as a reward of their participation in waste collection.

²⁹⁴Compare this to their official salaries given earlier in the chapter.

procuring station itself, or at its storage facility, and the goal of separating them into different facilities was never fulfilled till the end of the Soviet regime (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 108-109, 112). Apart from the lack of physical space, one may assume that the rigidly centralized socialist system resisted ramification of its own agencies, especially of the small-scale ones, for fear that controlling them would become more difficult, if not impossible. The story of artel workshops, scattered around across the territory, their “enlargement” and eventual merger into larger state production units might be an argument in favor for this suggestion.

Be that as it may, the accumulation of waste of two distinct origins, received through different exchange practices, in the same facility, opened a wide field for economic manipulations. Continuous orders “to prohibit the accumulation of large amounts of waste in the storage facilities” (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27. P. 24) were clearly related to the “substitution” practice described above.

What inspection or court documents usually label “theft” (Russ. *khishchenija*) of money on the part of procurers of various levels, from the heads of procuring stations to the tent-workers (e.g. GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 3. File 833. P. 189) is a term referring to a range of different practices related to acquiring, storage or shipment of waste. Procurers were not just “appropriating” money allocated for their activity, but made it circulate in specific ways, not envisaged and possibly directly prohibited by the state. This was facilitated by their receipt of a certain amount of money in advance, a sort of “startup capital” that allowed them to design certain economic strategies: “*Father would get cash, and he had to collect enough waste to match this sum. Let’s say, he is given 1,000 rubles for metal, 200 for rags, 500 for bones: figure out how much needs to be collected*” (JEES_086_AR); “*100, 200, 300 rubles in cash – this was a lot of money then. Everything had its price, and he paid [for waste], and he reported both for what he collected, and for the money received*” (JEES_097_AS).

Importantly, procurers were intermediary agents between those who generated waste and those who collected it for re-processing, while also dealing with storage and transportation organizations. Each of the multiple interactions that procurers were thus involved in required a considerable amount of calculation and logistics, since all participants had their own targets to meet, and all wanted to maximize

their economic performance. A strategy that was used pervasively both at the “purchasing” and at the “dispatching” stages of the procuring activity had to do with falsification of reporting documents.

The Soviet Union was a document-centered environment, where paper-based bureaucracy was as cumbersome as the whole planned economy of which it was a part. The sphere of procurement, for one, operated on the basis of a large number of documentary protocols, guidelines, rules and requirements. As the following observation suggests, some of them could have been largely divorced from reality: “the figures which serve as the basis for the state procurement targets, are much higher than the actual ones” (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 110). While a document presents the “instrumentalization of the trust regime” that exists between or among the participants of a certain formal interaction, it also “appears to be open to all kinds of falsification attempts” (Kaspe 2013: 8). Judging by the data at my disposal, the most common violation in the sphere of procurement was diminishing the amount of waste received and augmenting the amount of waste dispatched in the so-called consignment notes (Russ. *nakladnye*), as well as other types of documents that might be involved.

The archival documents and oral testimonies produce the impression that those who brought their waste to procuring stations, whether these were individuals or organizations, were not inclined to bargain too much over its weight: perhaps, because of the general cultural attitude to waste as something not worthy of splitting hairs over, or because waste collection was a marginal occupation diverting time and efforts from the main ones and everybody wanted to “*get rid*” of their waste as soon as possible (JEES_086_AR). Another reason was, most probably, that few believed in the joyful party reports about the “millions of tractors” produced on the basis of waste, especially since the main socialist production could provide only marginal survival for the majority. As a result, the “fluctuation” between the actual weight of waste and the one estimated by the procurers could be 2-3 kilograms with individual deliverers (JEES_097_AS), and amounted to tons in case of “compact sources”: “*A car [with waste] would come. The scales would be adjusted, and he [the station manager] would say, for instance: “10 tons.” The driver would respond: “How come, it should be 12!” – “Look, here are the scales, see? 10 tons. Go ahead and unload it” – this way the manager would get 2 extra tons*” (JEES_109_SG_GG). I

have not come across a single instance when those delivering the waste would protest or complain against the downward distortion of the waste they brought.

These manipulations were facilitated by the practice of simply adding newly delivered waste to that collected earlier. This made control very problematic: “*Let’s say, they bring you a carload of old metal, throw it in your yard, and you’ll write one figure instead of the other – who will check?*” (JEES_111_RD); “*Let’s say, there were three tons [of waste] there, right? So, he [the manager] would say: ‘Masha, write 5 tons to Semion’s name!’ Everything is being dumped in the same pile, no way to check [which waste is where] <...> Or: ‘Yakov Mikhailovich, Semion brought metal, or rags... – On the scales! How much?’ – ‘Well, approximately... 200... 300... 400 kilograms’ – ‘Write down half a ton.’ And then he gives him the consignment note, and that’s it*” (JEES_086_AR). The same could be done at the final stage as well, when waste was to be shipped away, usually by railroad: “*There is a huge pile there, tons of waste... Who can find fault...? It’s being loaded in a railroad wagon. Let’s say, the wagon fits 15 tons – but they write 17*” (JEES_086_AR). The ultimate case of misrepresentation consisted in reporting figures for waste that was not collected at all – in other words, there was no actual referent standing behind the numerical representation. Such documents are usually referred to as fictitious consignment notes (Russ. *fiktivnye naklanye*). For instance, in September of 1952 one district procuring office in Moscow (manager Khankin) added 6.1 tons of broken glass to their monthly report since this was how much they lacked to be entitled to the bonus payment (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 20). In 1953, another district procuring station (chief manager N. A. Granat and his deputy K. A. Lobanov) added 30 tons of supposedly procured waste paper to their plan-fulfilment report, which included 8 tons of paper that had never been taken away from the sources – 5 tons by procurer Margolin, and 3 tons by procurer Mikhienko (Ibid., 144) (also: TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 51. P. 4; TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 123; GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 3. File 833. P. 188; GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. P. 172).

Parallel to falsification of the documents, a most widely used strategy at the stage when procurers were dispatching waste to re-processing organizations was the intentional lowering of the quality of

waste, with the simultaneous increase of its weight. Rags, for instance, could be filled with water or frozen, or else “non-textile objects” could be put inside for more weight (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. Pp. 2, 141a; TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 51. P. 13; GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. P. 172; JEES_119_MS_SS). A variety of objects such as wire, bones or oily rags could be discovered in waste paper (TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50. P. 55, 141a). While procurers would sometimes discover bricks in the piles of waste paper received from organizations (JEES_073_IV), they could use the same trick while shipping it away (JEES_097_AS). The scales in the procuring stations could be “adjusted” to show different weight. One way to do this was to attach a magnet from beneath (JEES_078_VM, JEES_073_IV). Since procurement of waste was supposed to happen according to scientific protocols, a lab worker would perform the moisture analysis of rags or paper, which was later used to calculate the gross weight of the waste shipped to a particular re-processing facility. Such lab worker could be “greased,” i.e. bribed, to come up with a higher number for moisture content, which would allow further “regulation” of weight with water at a much lower risk (JEES_073_IV).

The partial list of tricks described above show that the two essential skills they required were networking and calculation. We will also never know how much of the total volume of fake reports is represented by the discovered cases of weight misrepresentation. Baranov and Sidoruk estimated that by the early 1980s “the volume of upward distortion constituted 10-20% of the total mass of the secondary raw materials” delivered by procuring stations to the state factories for re-processing, which means that about one fifth of the state money allocated for procurement gets ‘stolen’” (Baranov & Sidoruk 1988: 108). In other words, let us say, 100 kilograms of waste paper or metal obtained from an enterprise, possibly in a non-cash way, could have “transformed” into 120 or more kilograms of waste purchased from people for cash, while the money “received” through a number of successive substitutions would be distributed along the line of transactions’ participants. In effect, the official figures were often “losing any referential function... performing their own crimes” (Oushakine 2003: 438). Financial documents which “under normal conditions” are supposed to “function as a wholesome signification complex, connecting the signifier and the signified,” in this case would represent a “simulacrum” of

reality, “a signifier lacking its signified” (Vasil’eva 2013: 104). But then – wasn’t much of the Soviet planned economy precisely that? And in that sense, wasn’t falsification of documents in the sphere of waste procurement just a particular example of how the whole socialist planned economy functioned?²⁹⁵

The Magic Box of Moses

How did Moses V., with his European education and “Western habits,” a person “*of a different formation, urbane and mannerly*” (JEES_073_IV), little knowledge of the Russian language and the Soviet culture, fare in this complex Soviet procurement system? It seems that he eventually adapted. At first, his family connections secured to him a place in the storage facility at the outskirts of Moscow, near the railroad depot, where procuring stations brought their waste collected over a week’s period. However, Moses did not work there for a long time – through a felicitous event, he became promoted and his life drastically changed.

To understand the logic of this event, one has to realize that the extra money made at procuring stations had to be distributed “in a fair way.” This meant that everybody involved had to get his or her share according to the internal hierarchy of the enterprise. The largest sum would go to the manager: “*All procurers were collecting money and turning it over to the ‘master’ – whether the manager, or the chief accountant. The money was delivered from bottom to top, till it reached Dymshits, the head of the USSR State Supplies Committee*” (JEES_073_IV). There would be a specific drawer in the manager’s

²⁹⁵One of the texts that prepared the advance of perestroika at the end of the 1980s was the article by V. Seljunin and G. Khanin “Sly Figure” (Russ. *Lukavaya tsifra*), published in the “thick journal” *Novyi Mir* in 1987 (№ 2, Pp. 181-201). It argued that had the official figures on the country’s economic development been correct, the USSR would have long enjoyed the world’s highest standard of living. It also traced distortions, whether intentional, or not, in the very system of calculation of the GNP in various sectors of the national economy, and discussed misrepresentation of financial information as a something that was often necessitated by the logic of the Soviet planned economy at large.

An episode from a family story of one of my informants seems to fully capture this logic. The person’s great-grandmother Chaya, who was around 90 years old in the 1960s, came to attend a political lecture in a local House of Culture in a Southern resort town near Sochi. The lecturer expanded about how very soon the Soviet Union will “catch up with and overtake America” (Russ. *dognat’ i peregnat’ Ameriku* – a popular Soviet economic slogan) in milk production. Upon hearing which, Chaya, with her thick Jewish accent, loudly announced from the first row: “*And if we won’t be able to catch up, we’ll pour in water*” (that is, into the milk) (Russ.: “*a ne dogonim, tak vodichki podol’em*”) (JEES_033_VD). It seems, in other words, that under the Soviet planned economy figures not only created a parallel economic reality of their own, but also that the production of such “sly figures” was a “condition of felicity” for one’s performance in the system at large.

room, where every procurer would bring a certain amount of money when the manager was out. This way nobody would bear any responsibility for anything: *“I enter, put the envelope in the drawer and leave. So, if somebody asks: ‘Who put it in there?’ – the manager would respond: ‘How do I know?’ The manager was not there, so even if somebody reports to the authorities, he would say: ‘I was not there. I don’t know who brought it’”* (JEES_086_AR). The top bosses were “entitled” to the largest share, for not only could they safeguard the whole structure of activities from being over much disturbed by the (financial) police, but also “officially” reduce the state targets for particular procurement stations in exchange for a certain amount of monetary remuneration on their part (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. Pp. 172-173).

At some point in the early 1960s, the Moscow militia received an order to conduct a series of “unexpected inspections” at a number of the city’s procuring stations and storage facilities. Many colleagues of Moses were arrested, but he himself was lucky: all the time the inspection was going on, he was in the hospital, and with a real health problem, too. When he came out of the hospital, he realized that he was the only one who was not imprisoned and who knew where the shoe box with seven thousand “new” rubles²⁹⁶ was hidden. This was a huge amount of money at the time – for instance, one could buy a whole wooden house in Saltykovka for just three thousand. The money was originally intended for the former manager, who was arrested among others. So, what was Moses to do in this situation? He made a step most logical from the point of the view of the existing system. He gave the box to the newly appointed manager: *“He brought the box and said: ‘Here we have such a custom: we collect money for a present to the manager.’”* The money was accepted with no questions or comments (JEES_059_IV).

What was the logic behind this step, and what consequences did it bring about? Having taking the box to the new manager, Moses killed three birds with one stone. First, he “cleared” himself of all possible suspicions on the part of his former colleagues who might have remembered about the money

²⁹⁶“New” here refers to the value of the national currency after the monetary reform of 1961, when it was revaluated at the rate of 10 to 1. So 7,000 “new” rubles would have been equal to 70,000 “old” ones.

either still in prison, or upon release. In other words, possession of the money was dangerous in itself because strictly speaking, it was not his money, even though he must have contributed to its accrual. Secondly, it would have been nearly impossible for Moses to spend this sum without laying himself open to suspicions, ranging from those of the neighbors to those of financial organs. Additionally, against the fact that everybody else was imprisoned, his conspicuous consumption, had it followed, could have probably implicated his involvement with the state controlling organs: it would have looked as if he had been rewarded for a certain service rendered to them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by bringing the box to the new manager, Moses “verified” that he was well familiar with and abided by the rules of the game, that he was ready to take part in this game in the future, and was completely reliable as an accomplice. In other words, Moses acquired the most precious thing – the full trust of the new manager, for whom he now became a “*svoi*.” As Moses’ son implied in our conversation, this step was also highly dangerous since there were suspicions that the new manager was from the KGB, and that this was the primary reason why he had been placed into this position (JEES_073_IV). Yet Moses took the risk – and it proved to be justified. The new manager was appreciative and understanding. Soon, elections were held at the procuring station, where among other things the new chief of the local trade union organization was to be elected – since the old one was under arrest. The new manager got up and said: *“I am a new person here, and don’t yet know everybody, but I got a strong impression that Moses V. is a very honest person, with high moral principles. I suggest Moses for this position.”* And while everybody was astounded at such words, *“certainly there were no other suggestions”* (JEES_059_IV, JEES_073_IV).

After this decisive point, Moses’ career went upwards. He was moved from the storage facility on the outskirts of the city to work as a “tent manager” in the center of Moscow, on Trubnaya street, where he collected different types of paper, rags, old vinyl records, etc. He developed multiple connections; nearby store managers were buying his old paper to meet their waste paper plane – or else he would issue documents that they have done so already. Some managers would pay money for that, others, like a nearby bakery, could bring “non-conditional” goods instead – eggs, butter, nuts – and Moses bought

them for half the state price. He started making expensive presents to his family, such as a “*luxurious golden watch*” for his son, which he was allowed to put on only for holidays, or else expensive Czech Bata shoes made of real leather. Besides, Moses now benefited from the special trade union distribution channels that provided food packages for holidays, vouchers for summer camp for children, and the like. In other words, eventually the benefits indeed “materialized,” but only as a result of strategic thinking, risk taking, navigating through short-term and long-term possibilities, proving loyalty, gaining trust, establishing connections. It is noteworthy that Moses’ wife was not very happy with the immediate results of the meeting when he was elected trade union chief – certainly, not because she expected him to appropriate the money – after all, she was a Soviet person, too, and realized the danger that this would have incurred. Rather, she thought that the new manager “*could have been more generous and given an order*” to her husband (JEES_073_IV) – in other words, could have increased the symbolic value of his recognition: something not the less, if not more important in the situation. The box indeed proved to be magical. Had Moses, many years earlier, verified his diploma and become a state employee, he probably would not have been able to afford all these things.

With all that, the issue of prestige haunted Moses as well as other people of his occupation: it was both figuratively and literally “the dirty one” (JEES_091_IZ_BB, JEES_115_DA, etc.). Moses’ son, for instance, “*was very ashamed to tell where [his] father worked,*” and invented various alternative occupations for him, especially for the girls he was dating (JEES_073_IV). Most procurers wanted their children to get an education and to stay away from their business (JEES_082_LV, JEES_086_AR, JEES_099_IK) – even though Moses in particular was ready take his son in when by the end of the 1970s it was already hard for him to work due to age. Yet his son’s wife was strongly opposed to the idea. Characteristically, what happened instead, was that Moses found the son of another procurer, who did express the desire to step into his shoes, and “*handed him over his catalogue*” [of informal connections, – A. K.], receiving “*five thousand rubles for this information*” (JEES_073_IV). We do not know exactly, who the “buyer” was, although Moses’ son admitted of only two possibilities – probably a Jew, but possibly, a Tatar – the only two ethnic groups engaged in waste procurement in Moscow

suburbs. Another informant, himself the son of a procurer, upon hearing the story immediately commented it in the following way: “*He gave it to his own, and got money for that – everything is correct*” (JEES_097_AS).

Certainly, these five thousand were not the same in terms of value as the seven thousand in a shoe box several decades prior. However, apart from the fact that it still was a large sum of money, what is most striking here is that a position within the state economic structure, created and maintained by the state, received the status of a commodity, and as such was sold by somebody appointed by the state to work in it, without any property rights. What got commodified here was certainly not the nominal appointment of a “procurer” that was entered into one’s labor book. What got commodified was the invisible part of the iceberg, the part that lay in the sphere of the second economy. This was a sphere where very different money was circulating, a sphere which thoroughly depended on the dense network of relations of trust, since as a clandestine enterprise it was also dangerous. It was a position within this network that had the commodity value – but only for a narrow circle of potential buyers.

While American junk-yard owners would more often than not see their business as the first step in their further business career in the new country, and their descendants would move into higher education, law, real estate, etc. (e.g. Weissbach 2005: 97, 114, 115, 302; Marschall 2008: 154), there was no real possibility for “upward mobility” for Soviet waste procurers. In my materials I have one story of a nearly unbelievable social elevation, which is, however, is hardly representative in its uniqueness. It is the life trajectory of S. L. Agronsky, the “specialist for rag procuring” mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Judging by one archival document at my disposal, by 1935 he had left procuring business and worked in the USSR Bolshoy Theater (USSR Trade Union of the Art Workers, according to the stamp) “in the capacity of the orchestra artist,” was a “shock worker” (whatever this means in this context), and served as a “party organizer” (Russ. *partorg*), or activist, of the “orchestra collective.” By this time he certainly had permanent Moscow registration, and since this “Personal profile” was required for the “secondary school,” one can assume that he was married and had children.



III. 46: Personal profile of S. L. Agronsky from Bolshoy Theater, Moscow (1935).
 Courtesy of the Museum of Jewish History in Russia (Moscow).

While we do not know exactly what he was doing as an “orchestra artist,” so it is difficult to measure the degree of his advancement. From other documents available in his personal file we can judge, however, that even during his life as a procurer he most probably was a privileged Soviet official from: in 1919, for example, he was sent to the city of Chernigov on procurement business with the right to travel in the “delegates’ wagon,”²⁹⁷ and then was steadily promoted within his cooperative union. Besides, Agronsky became a member of the Communist Party as early as 1917, which means that he belonged to that generation of Jews who readily accepted the values of the revolution and were ready to serve it. In this sense, his promotion would not be a surprise in itself, except that in the context of the discussion on the “varieties of Soviet Jewishness” Agronsky went from one typical category to another,

²⁹⁷A better type wagon usually offered to the delegates of multiple congresses and meetings of new Soviet organizations (Polivanov 2015: 248, fn 6).

from a niche in the sphere of distribution usually occupied by those who for various reasons did not or could not climb the Soviet educational and professional and had to do non-prestigious job – to the group of Soviet Jewish intelligentsia, which his work in the major theater of the country would at least technically entitle him to. In some sense, he changed one Jewish “skin” for another, but in both was easily recognizable as a Jewish social actor.

One would also think that a transformation like the one that happened to Agronsky was more feasible before the war when the Jewish upward mobility was not yet impeded by the state anti-Semitic campaigns.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOVIET STATE ECONOMIC ANTI-SEMITISM

“My grandfather was very lucky, he died in 1956 – because other artel members were put away soon after”
(JEES_030_GN_MN)

“Oh, my god – year 1965...! Father was almost certain to get a large prison term...” (JEES_023_AL_ET)

It would be impossible in this work not to touch upon the issue of economic anti-Semitism – namely, whether it existed as a distinct state policy in the post-war Soviet Union, what it precisely implied, and what its aims were. My focus here, however, is on select economic niches in a circumscribed territory. Therefore, below I will briefly lay out the key points of the debate on Soviet economic anti-Semitism and distinguish the junctures where my own research intersects with it. This will constitute a commentary, however partial, to the three preceding chapters of my work, all of which touched upon the extra-legal Jewish engagements in the three economic niches discussed.

Most works engaged in the debate on Soviet economic anti-Semitism focus on the Khrushchev era, particularly, on the trials following the decrees of 1961-1962 that introduced death penalty for economic crimes²⁹⁸ (e.g. Decter 1963, Shapiro 1968, Andreevich 1968, Redlich 1972, Baron 1975, Vaksberg 1994, Gitelman 1998, Ro’i 2008). These works are different in genre (ranging from press reports to memoirs of trial participants and analytic discussions). They analyze varying numbers of cases (from a selected group of trials to hundreds and thousands). Some of these works were written during the Soviet era, others later, which among other things implies different access to source

²⁹⁸In particular, the death sentence was imposed for “large-scale theft” (Russ. *khishchenie v osobo krupnykh razmerakh*), which was determined as 10 thousand rubles (Evelson 1986: 58). The sum in Moses’ shoe box was thus only 3 thousand less than that.

materials, the geography of cases they discuss, etc. However, there are a number of common themes characteristic to all of these works.

The first one is the disproportionate number of Jews accused of and convicted for economic crimes (e.g. Shapiro 1968: 370, Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 204, Gitelman 1998: 168). While at the time of their writing many authors did not have figures at hand, and stress the incomplete nature of their data, most of them provide some preliminary figures: “To date, 36 such trials have been reported in 26 different cities. In these trials, death sentences have been meted out to 70 individuals – of whom 42 (and possibly 45) are Jews” (Decter 1963: 430); “Partial data published in the West testifies that from July 1, 1961 to July 1, 1963, 140 accused were given the death sentence, among whom there were 80 Jews” (Shapiro 1968: 371); “According to a contemporary, if incomplete, computation, of the one hundred and sixty-three ‘economic criminals’ condemned to death in eighty-one trials in forty-eight different cities between July, 1961, and August, 1963, no less than eighty-eight (and possibly ninety-six) – that is, 55 to 60 percent – were easily identified as Jews. (Baron 1975: 285). While to date no comprehensive study based on archival materials has been written on the topic, the most recent publications provide the following information: “The annual number of trials involving Jews jumped from 38 in 1961 to 112 in 1962, peaking at 145 in 1963 <...> Of 84 persons sentenced to death for economic crimes in 1962, 54 percent were Jews (in the 1959 census, 1.08% of the population was reported as Jewish); between 1960 and 1963, 90 percent of individuals sentenced to death in Ukraine were Jews, and in the RSFSR – 64 percent” (Ro’i 2008: 454). While there certainly were “many non-Jewish economic criminals” (Baron 1975: 285), even legal professionals did not have the opportunity to collect data on “crime committed by non-Jews,” since the Soviet mass media did its best to foreground the Jewish aspect of the campaign (Evelson 1986: 320). Evgenija Evelson, a Soviet lawyer who personally participated in many of these trials as a lawyer, argues that they bore a pronouncedly “anti-Jewish character” (Ibid., 332) and often assumed a form of legal lynching: “with the similar amount of guilt... Jews were judged much harsher

than the Russians” (Ibid., 170); “high officials who happened to be Russian were freed from responsibility even in cases when they were direct instigators of the criminal activity” (Ibid., 125).²⁹⁹

The second feature that all works have in common, is the recognition of the anti-Semitic atmosphere created during these trials. Jewish names of the accused were stressed – or, in case people used more Russified names, cited them “in parentheses, so that no reader or broadcast listener could mistake their ethnic identity” (Baron 1975: 285). In case “where the surname did not sound Jewish, both the first name and patronymic” were published (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 207). As opposed to the Stalin-era political trials of Jews occupying significant positions in the Soviet cultural and professional elite, those who were accused for economic crimes did not have pseudonyms, so “paid journalists” were “accurately copying the names on the defendants’ passports” to stress the Jewish origin – “Borukh, not Boris, Srul, not Sergei” – which served a “red flags for Russian bulls” (Vaksberg 1994: 285-286). This atmosphere was augmented by a highly offensive anti-Jewish rhetoric in the Soviet press and in the courtroom itself. This included anti-Semitic slurs pronounced during the sessions and mocking of provincial Jewish intonation by some judges (Evelson 1986: 326, 172, Andreevich 1968: 7).

The third feature singled out in the works under discussion is the connection, intentionally created by the Soviet authorities, between economic crimes and Jewish religious practice. Various aspects of Judaism were often emphasized during the trials: “In a number of cases, the Jewish religious affiliation of some of the culprits was made explicit: the synagogue was portrayed as the locus of illegal transactions, religious Jews were mockingly described as money worshippers, the rabbi was shown as their accomplice, their family connections in Israel and the United States were pointed up” (Decter 1963: 430). Trial proceedings “implicated either the Jewish religion (most of the dark dealings were conducted in synagogue with the knowledge of the rabbi and other synagogue officials) or Zionism (Israeli tourists or the personnel of the Israeli Embassy were involved)” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 207).

²⁹⁹E. Evelson’s well-known book, which is always referred to by all who write about economic trials in the Soviet Union, in English is titled *Second Economy in the USSR (Trials of the 1960s)*. The original Russian title sounds slightly different: *Court Trials for Economic Cases in the USSR (1960s)*.

The accused were presented as “dirty slovenly old men who, accompanied by the plaintive words of prayers read by the rabbi, conducted their speculation deals” (Evelson 1986: 272) (also: Death Sentences 1964: 56-58, Shapiro 1968: 351, 365-366, Baron 1975: 285, Ro’i 2008: 454).³⁰⁰ One work also argues that Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign launched against all religions practiced in the Soviet Union, including Judaism, particularly spurred the anti-Jewish character of the economic trials: “when the struggle against the Jewish religion was reactivated in 1958, the anti-Jewish content of the publicity given these trials in the Soviet press also increased” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 201-202).

Alongside religious connections, “crude” popular stereotypes were likewise employed in the trial rhetoric “to portray Jews as money grubbers who held nothing sacred, whose only god was gold, and who were antisocial and cunningly manipulative at the expense of Soviet citizenry” (Ro’i 2008: 454). Jews were “presented as people ‘whose only God is Gold,’ who flit through the interstices of the economy, cunningly manipulate naive non-Jewish officials, prey upon honest Soviet workers and cheat them of their patrimony. They are portrayed as the initiators and masterminds of the criminal plots; the non-Jews are depicted primarily as the recipients of bribes and as accomplices” (Decter 1963: 430). In other words, certain strands of the popular “figured world” of Jewish economic behavior, of deeply ingrained popular stereotypes, were put to the service of the Soviet repressive machine.

Popular anti-Semitic response immediately followed, probably spurred by the fresh memories of the “Doctors’ plot” of 1952-53. The open character of these trials – as opposed to earlier secret trials of the Stalin era – provided “significant political and psychological advantages” for presenting Jews as “the enemy, who was ready to use any means to destroy the homeland” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 199), not unlike the internal enemies of the 1930s. In particular, Jews were “scapegoated” for the country’s economic failures of the time: “When agriculture was almost destroyed and the only solution was to move up all the prices of food by 30-40 percent overnight, Khrushchev remembered his Jews. He launched a series of trials of ‘economic criminals’ – and some people believed that those damned Jews

³⁰⁰On the use of allegations of speculation and profiteering used by the authorities for the purposes of closure of the Lviv synagogue in 1962, when the campaign against the second economy was in full swing, see: Amar 2005.

were responsible for hunger and rising prices” (Andreevich 1968: 8-9); “Anti-Semitic feelings are exacerbated. From many cities come reports of grumbling on the food queues: ‘The Jews are responsible for the shortages’” (Decter 1963: 430) (also: Ben-Shlomo 1971: 67, Orbach 1982: 57, Vaksberg 1994: 283-4, Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 207).³⁰¹ Another related reason was to curb the spread of economic crime in the country, “to reduce the corruption, private commerce and thefts of state property which had apparently reached intolerable levels in this period” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 202) (also: Shapiro 1968: 370).

Summarizing her testimony, E. Evelson concludes that during the economic trials of 1960s “the sharp edge of repressions... was targeted not so much against the crime as such, but against Jews who committed it” (Evelson 1986: 10). Characteristically, one of the characters in her account explicitly compared his case with “the Beilis trial” (Ibid., 198).³⁰² While other authors agree with E. Evelson on the general “anti-Jewish bias” of these economic trials (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 207), or the fact that they had “anti-Jewish implications and consequences” (Decter 1963: 429), this still does not yet provide an answer whether the economic campaign of the early 1960s warrants the designation of “economic anti-Semitism.” In his recent book *Khrushchev’s Secret Policy: Power, Intelligentsia and the Jewish Question*, particularly in the chapter “Were ‘economic trials’ anti-Jewish?” Russian historian G. Kostyrchenko questions the accepted anti-Semitic template with regards to these trials and argues that “the version that the ethnic or, more precisely, the anti-Semitic factor was the main impetus for these repressions, does not have any substantial foundation.” What most works on the topic inevitably lack is

³⁰¹Making Jews scapegoats for economic failures of the government is a recurrent motif in the history of Russian Jews. Consider, for instance A. Glaser’s discussion of how Jews were “established” as “economic and spiritual aggressors toward Russian Orthodox peasants” in the governmental attempt to ban Jewish trade on Sundays (i.e. Russian Orthodox church holidays) and the role this claim – accompanied by the accusations of Jewish economic exploitation of the non-Jews and Jewish responsibility for taxes imposed on peasants – played for the Christian redemption narrative (Glaser 2007). Top Russian officials would provoke popular anti-Semitic attitudes and actions in Moscow in 1916, “to suggest the idea that Jews are responsible for high prices” (Vermel’ 2003: 119). During the economic crisis of the early years of the Bolshevik rule, the state “publicly attributed that breakdown to the malfeasance of mostly Jewish agents” rather than “confront[ing] the structural factors” that had brought it about (Sloin 2010: 118). One can certainly find more examples of how grass-root anti-Semitic sensibilities were more or less effectively deployed to re-channel collective discontent with the existing economic situation.

³⁰² On Beilis trial see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menahem_Mendel_Beilis (last accessed April 3, 2017).

the “objective analysis of statistics on the aggregate number of people charged under the same article of the Criminal Code,” which in turn requires thorough data on the “number of Jews engaged in the cooperative sphere in the 1940-50, as well as similar data for bookkeepers, supply agents and other professions who at the time were potential targets of the economic trials.” Even though, contends G. Kostyrchenko, “the anti-Semitic motivation could have been present” in these repressions, “first and foremost in Ukraine,” “the general social incentives such as the desire to curb the ever growing corruption in the nomenclature apparatus or the struggle with the ‘survivals of the private-property psychology in people’s minds’, induced by Khrushchev’s ‘communist project,’ played the primary role” (Kostyrchenko 2012: 436-437).

While, again, I do not intend to resolve this discussion, I suggest that a look at an earlier period, namely, between Stalin’s death in 1953 and the launch of economic trials in the early 1960s, may provide some insights into the way we look at the Jewish aspect of the latter. What were the developments in the sphere of Soviet legislation during these roughly seven years, and how was this related to Jews?

In their thorough documentary study *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948-1967*, Pinkus & Frankel argue that the “unrelenting war against economic crime” was always a priority of the Soviet regime, that after Stalin’s death such trials “were no longer exploited for the purpose of anti-Jewish propaganda on as massive a scale as they had been,” and finally, that between 1953 and 1956 the “economic trials were generally given less coverage than before in the Soviet press and, although reports stressing the defendants’ Jewishness did not disappear completely, the anti-Jewish orientation of these reports was reduced” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 201). Perhaps by comparison with the Stalin period, one could indeed get an impression that the anti-Jewish politics of the state had somewhat lost their force after 1953 – primarily due to the reduction of “coverage” mentioned above, as well as to the inaccessibility of the original court documents. However, as I will try to show below on the basis of limited evidence I was able to find in the archives, in the period between 1953 and 1961 Jews were still

accused in large numbers of economic crimes, and the economic repressions in the country perhaps even intensified.

Economic trials of Jews started already under Stalin's rule; the most well-known of those is the Ukrainian trial of 1952, when the economic offence was categorized as the "economic counter-revolution." The defendants, A. A. Khait, Ya. K. Yaroshetskiy, D. I. Gerzon, M. S. Grushko, K. Sh. Teplitsky were all employed in the system of trade-and-distribution facilities of the Republic's Light Industry (Russ. *Glavlegsbyt*). They were accused of theft of socialist property and disruption of the Soviet trade and "merchandise circulation" (Russ. *tovaroborot*). In particular, they were indicted on charges of "leaching off" materials from the Soviet enterprises, diverting the best fabrics and manufactured goods, selling them on the side, and appropriating the money. They were also involved in prohibited hard currency operations and the purchasing of large amounts of gold that they were subsequently hiding. Three defendants were given the death penalty, while two were sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment (Evelson 1986: 49-50). Apart from the unusually harsh sentences, a new feature of this trial was that it was handled not "by the regular People's or District Court, but a military court, as in the secret trial of the Jewish writers" (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 197).

In the chapter with a characteristic title "Swindlers and Embezzlers" of his book *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry, 1939-1953*, Jehoshua Gilboa also mentions the trial of 1952, particularly stressing the fact that "an economic offense was symbolically identified with high treason" and that the trial "served to inaugurate a flood of reports in the Soviet press concerning various kinds of "parasitic" libels, the leading figures of which were persons with Jewish names" (Gilboa 1971: 283-284). Discussing the post-trial newspaper reports on economic crimes published between December 1952 and March 1953, the author emphasizes that they aimed at reaching the broadest and the most diverse scope of readership, thus creating clear predispositions in the perception of economic crime in the society at large: "These accounts and stories appeared in a wide range of publications and included national, district, and local newspapers, papers for young people, labor unions, the army, and the navy, philosophical, literary, professional, and humoristic periodicals, and others" (Ibid., 284).

The trial of 1952, which bore a pronouncedly Jewish character, was not the only “prelude” to the economic trials of 1960s. The other was the so-called “dupes” campaign (Russ. *rotozeistvo*) of 1953, which likewise contained a pronounced Jewish component. “Dupes” was the term applied to the Soviet officials of various levels, “generally Russian or unidentified nationality,” who were consistently deceived by various “operators” and lost considerable sums of state money to them. The “operators” were “overwhelmingly Jewish.” Although the ethnic aspect of such cases was very clear, the “dupes” campaign “has not been noted... in the extensive literature on postwar anti-Semitism.” However, it still constituted a stage, however brief, in the “Jewishing of tricksters” in Soviet history (in more detail see: Fitzpatrick 2002: 552-553). The author also observes, in passing, that this campaign might have been “a significant precursor of Nikita Khrushchev’s campaign against economic crime later in the decade, which was widely perceived as anti-Semitic and certainly numbered many Jews among its victims” (Ibid., 556).

Economic repressions in the period between Stalin’s death and the trials of the early 1960s continued involving large numbers of Jews. Below I will present several typical court cases of the middle and the second part of the 1950s that are consistent with this idea and illustrate some of the features of the second economy described in earlier chapters.

The Moscow case of 1956 concerned employees of cooperative production units and trade, involving altogether 147 stores and “tents” of state and cooperative trade, store directors and sales personnel. Defendants were illegally selling merchandise, mostly knit-ware, shoes, and haberdashery that they were receiving from artels, and produced goods “on the side.” They also received additional production materials through bribing officials of the large industrial enterprises. While altogether 133 people were indicted, only 36 names are mentioned in the file. 13 out of them are non-Jewish, while 23 are clearly Jewish. The first group includes, for instance, “the head of the Moscow City Leather Production Union Zaitsev, his deputy Nefelov and the chief engineer Egorov.” The second group consists of “chief technologists (Russ. *tekhnoruk*) of artels Braginsky and Lioznov, heads of the procurement-and-distribution departments of artels and factories Duner, Nudel and Finel’d,” as well as a

long list of workshop and warehouse managers: “London, Zilberman, Berman-Shur, Fel’man, Reimer, Aizenstadt, Kamorsky, Leger, Rudoy, Yavich and Katz <...> Lipovetsky, Gromadsky, Ryklin, Berchansky, Tolmach, Kaminsky, Kalinsky.” The text of the document stresses that selling of “non-reported” (Russ. *neuchtennaya*) production is “characteristic first and foremost for the small-scale enterprises and workshops in the cooperative sphere.” However, the profits they generated were by far not “small”: in this particular case, the amount of money and valuables confiscated from the accused comprised 3 million rubles. The document particularly emphasizes that the positions such as artel workshop managers were seen as “lucrative,” and would be sold and bought for considerable sums of money. For instance, “Yavich and Rudoy testified that they paid to their predecessors 30 and 25 thousand rubles respectively; when moved to a different workshop at the same factory, Rudoy received the 25 thousand he had previously paid from his new manager, and then himself paid 10 thousand to the workshop foreman Ryklin.” The document opens with a reference to the Decree of the CPSU Central Committee adopted on September 8, 1956 “On the strengthening of the struggle against embezzlement and theft in trade organizations, producer cooperation and local industry” (GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 135. Pp. 136-139). It also describes a large-scale network of clandestine production and distribution, involving a large number of participants, both Jewish and not, and obviously very successful in terms of the profit it generated. The document also suggests the alternative set of values and prices associated with them: everybody knew that they had to pay for the right to occupy certain positions, and everybody knew, how much exactly. The attitude to one’s work as “business,” something that should be completely alien to the Soviet citizens, is also clearly felt as one reads the document. While this network functioned in Moscow, further on the file describes similar cases throughout the country, particularly in Leningrad, Chardzhou (now – Türkmenabat, Turkmenistan), Riga and Tukums District (Latvia), Odessa, Tbilisi (Georgia), Chişinău and Tiraspol (Moldavia), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Kuibyshev (Russia) (Ibid., 139-144). The number of Jewish names in all these cases is again very high.

This list of places is worth noticing because it largely represents the geography of Jewish residence in the post-war Soviet Union – and simultaneously the territories associated with the heavy

presence of the “second” economy. This association emerges even in cases when documents do not mention defendants’ names, thus giving no clue as to their ethnicity. One economic court case of 1958, for instance, simply lists the cities where clandestine economic networks had functioned: Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk (Byelorussia), Kiev, Khar’kov, Stalino (now Donetsk), L’vov, Odessa, Chernivtsi (Ukraine), Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Sukhumi (Georgia), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Kaunas (Lithuania), Riga (Latvia) (GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 165. Pp. 280-281).

Among the lawyers practicing in Moscow in the 1950s, the next case was known as “The case of Ramenskoe³⁰³ elastic waistband.” Again, it concerned illicit production and distribution in the cooperative sphere (textile factories, warehouses, and stores), where a group of 44 people “organized what was in effect private production under the guise of local industry, for the purposes of profiteering.” The document mentions 8 non-Jewish and 12 Jewish names; the latter are: Gol’din, Akselrod, Shapiro, Lembersky, Makarovsky, Libin, Ketzler, Shteyngardt, Yampol’sky, Entis, Yukilevich and Leibman. By “creating surplus of raw materials” in their production units, as well as by getting additional resources from those responsible for their centralized distribution, these people produced elastic waistband, which was “in particularly high demand with the population”; to put it differently, people simply could not find it in stores (GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 3. File 833. Pp. 234-236). The surplus waistband, namely, 6,000 meters daily, is designated as “stolen” (Russ. *pokhishchennaya*) in the document – on the grounds that it did not reach customers through the official Soviet trade network. At the same time, E. Evelson, who also mentioned this case, observes that “business-minded people would privately deliver this waistband by airplanes to all districts of the Soviet Union” (Evelson 1986: 26). In other words, the product did find its buyer, and very quickly at that. A part of the profits generated this way went for bribing those who could officially raise the state allocations of raw materials, as a result of which, Ramenskoe factory received twice as much of these materials as compared to other similar factories. The size of the bribe was determined according to an established tariff: 3,000 rubles for each ton of

³⁰³Ramenskoe is a town situated to the east of Moscow, beyond Kratovo (№1 on the map of the Circle of Jewish settlements).

“extra” yarn used for waistband production. The network seems to have been particularly active in the years of 1952-53, yet the trial did not take place until 1954. During the arrests the Soviet organs confiscated over 5 million ruble-worth of the defendants’ property, which included cash and state bonds, gold, diamonds, 14 summer houses, etc. (GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 3. File 833. Pp. 234-236).

The document, similar to the others in my collection, does not provide any details about the investigation process, yet again from E. Evelson’s book we learn that the defendants were convicted to lengthy prison terms, while one person who “admitted the guilt and restored the material detriment incurred” was sentenced to 25 years of prison (Evelson 1986: 26-27). The document on Ramenskoe elastic waistband is signed by the “Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs” and is marked as “secret.” One can assume that had it taken place 7-8 years later, after the decrees of the early 1060s, some of the defendants could have easily gotten death penalties.

However short, this document permits us to discern a ramified network of people involved in the scheme, some of whom formed its nucleus, or rather, nuclei, with others positioned on the periphery. It is possible that some of the latter (common salespeople, transportation personnel, etc.) were not even initiated into the nature of the transaction they were taking part in. Even in the “center” of the scheme we see a number of non-Jews, occupying key positions in the “logistics” of the transactions. This essentially raises the most important question related to our discussion: whether economic repressions were targeted against Jews who by organizing private production went against the key dogma of the Soviet “planned economy,” or “against Jews as Soviet citizens (all of whom are liable to official persecution)” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 193).

The broader context of the persecutions for economic crimes in this period may provide some insights into this issue. Archival materials at my disposal contain truly staggering figures on the solved economic crime cases in the second half of the 1950s. For instance, in 1956, “57,020 people were accused on theft of the state and public property, including 9,972 people in the sphere of trade and consumer cooperation,” with the state organs “confiscating 327,002,877 rubles of valuables and other property from the accused” (GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 139. Pp. 18-19). In the last quarter of

1956 only, 4,750 employees of the trade network, producer cooperation and local industry were indicted for theft of state property, most of whom (3,098) had a similar previous conviction record (GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 135. P. 136). An important political development that explains these large numbers is the two decrees adopted on July 4, 1947 that introduced “astronomical punishments for theft” – up to 10 years for the first-time theft of state property, and from 10 to 25 – for “qualified cases’ (group thefts, second offences and largescale thefts)” (Gorlizki 1999: 1250).³⁰⁴ Moreover, these decrees “elevated theft into a political offence,” which was yet another expression of Stalin’s general tendency of “extend[ing] the concept of political crime to embrace offenses normally understood as nonpolitical” (Solomon 1996: 405, 426). The implementation of the new laws immediately led to the growth of court cases: “From 44,552 subjected to such harsh measures for theft of public property in 1946 the figure skyrocketed to 252,398 in 1947 and 311,514 in 1948, and was not to fall below 200,000 for the duration of Stalin’s reign” (Gorlizki 1999: 1253-1254). The new punishments were so “draconian” that sometimes “officials refused to apply the decrees to many offenders” (Solomon 1996: 408, 405). The implementation of these decrees manifested a drastic increase of the overall repressive nature of the Soviet legislation: “by the end of Stalin’s reign upwards of a quarter of a million people a year were convicted on theft charges, the vast majority of whom would have received considerably lighter terms had it not been for Stalin’s 1947 decrees” (Gorlizki 1999: 1262).³⁰⁵

Thus archival documents of the second part of the 1950s show that even after Stalin’s death large-scale repressions against economic crime continued. The language of official documents produced in the wake of these decrees resembled that of the military campaigns or else of the intelligence service: Soviet organs were supposed “to strike a concentrated blow” (Russ. *nanesenie kontsentririvannogo udara*) against “speculators operating in various cities” (1957) (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 165. P. 282), “to accumulate intelligence data” and establish surveillance over such people and their suspicious activities

³⁰⁴The full text of the decrees see in: *Sbornik zakonov...* 1956: 398-399.

³⁰⁵On the figures concerning accusations for bribery see: Heinzen 2006: 127-128.

(Russ. *brat' v agenturnuju razrabotku*" (1957)) (GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 127. P. 135) (also: GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 165. Pp. 324, 334 (1957)), "to find agents capable of gaining confidence (Russ. *sposobnykh voiti v doverie*) of the persons monitored" (1957) GARF-1. F. 9415. Inv. 5. File 165. P. 282), "to commission DAMPS employees to Ukraine, Georgia, Latvian and Lithuanian Republics to render practical help in revealing criminal networks," as well as to conduct secret surveys of the suspects' workplaces, to get compromising documents from the agents planted in their milieu, to organize both official and secret inventories for the purposes of revealing the non-reported goods in trade organizations, etc. Similar to detective stories, agents planted in various cities across the country are referred to by their special secret monikers: agent "Maliavsky," agent "Nevsky," agent "Sibiriak" (1957-58) (Ibid., 282-284; 325-326).

To sum up, we have clear evidence of an all-out attack on economic crime in the country. While "the phenomenon of economic trials in the USSR dates from the very inception of the Soviet regime" (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 197), in the post-war period the situation was aggravated by the introduction of the new repressive legislation of 1947. Cumulative figures on the crime committed, as well as the organizational scope of the campaign and the expenses that the government must have allocated for it, make it completely unrealistic to think that *on the level of its original intent* this was a specifically anti-Jewish campaign. However, *on the level of its implementation*, and particularly in those geographical settings where Jews for various social, political and demographic reasons occupied specific niches in the overall structure of the country's economy, this campaign did have visible anti-Semitic effects. To some extent such effects could have been premediated, especially by the late 1950s – early 1960s, when the country started developing major economic difficulties, and it became necessary to find a specific "culprit" group. Besides, the anti-Semitic effect was further exacerbated by the fact that the economic trials of the early 1960s were staged as show trials,³⁰⁶ attended, as I noted earlier, by the intensive press

³⁰⁶In a testimony from Moldova, one person described a trauma he had received after attending a similar show trial as a child: "*I remember – I was a kid then... the trial of the Hard Liquor factory management was taking place in the Palace of Culture. And I recall this horror, this dread, when they announced the death penalty. The military convoy, the screams of the relatives... this all got imprinted in my head forever*" (Băl_011_047).

coverage that indulged in stressing their Jewish aspect. Taken together, these arguments most probably do judge the *documented* economic trials of the early 1960s as “anti-Jewish” trials, with the caveats mentioned above.

What can the oral interviews contribute to the picture of economic trials described above?

First of all, many memoirs about clandestine producers present imprisonment, or a series of those, almost as a “natural” episode in their life course: “*all kinds of artels were created... and stealing was going on in the most refined ways. And half of Saltykovka, those who were engaged in this production, they all served their prison terms*” (JEES_073_IV); [about the store managers:] “*All Jewish, all spent time in prison [laughs]*” (JEES_058_DG); “*Everybody was arrested then. Cheerful time it was <...> After the war they would put away everybody – all those who worked in trade...*” (JEES_058_DG); “*My father-in-law was taken away... Q.: You mean... – where? A.: To the place everybody was taken away [i.e. to the prison]. In [19]47*” (JEES_083_DT_MK), etc.

While the economic trials of the early 1960s were cases on a larger scale than those that involved clandestine economic activities in the suburban communities (after all, artels largely ceased to exist as such by that time), people were usually aware of the anti-Semitic implications embedded in the public perception of economic crime: “*Everybody stole – such was the time. But the tendency was that only a Jew can steal. ‘A Russian man, he is honest, he is just, he is spiritual...’*” (JEES_073_IV); “*They could close their eyes if something was happening somewhere [illegal economic activity, – A. K.], but if there was a Jew there – they’d find something, even if there would be nothing to find*” (JEES_123_EO). Yet in most cases people were unable to draw distinctions between the “political” and the “economic” components of anti-Semitism, especially with regards to different historical periods: they would agree that the state anti-Semitism existed as such, and saw Jewish economic cases as a part of the larger economic campaigns against clandestine production and related activities (e.g. JEES_011_AN, JEES_131_AR, JEES_007_RL, JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB). However, at the time when the repressions were actually taking place, people were certainly trying to divine specific intentions on the part of political organs. As the following story shows, they were not always successful in doing so.

Isaac F., born around 1908 in Dnipro (then Ekaterinoslav) (Ukraine) became a professional confectioner – largely at the incentive of his father, a baker. During the Soviet regime his father, who worked “*in the sphere of cooperation*,” had been promoted, and in 1927 came to Moscow to become a student at the so-called “Red Directors” courses, so as to be able to occupy a prominent position in the sphere of Soviet industry. In 1929, however, he was arrested and soon after executed during the “Industrial Party” trial.³⁰⁷ During the war Isaac fought at the front and ended the war in the rank of a lieutenant colonel; in the words of his nephew, he was even nominated for the top title of the Hero of the Soviet Union, but his pronouncedly Jewish name did not “*match*” the title well. After the war Isaac was sent to Klaipeda (Lithuania) to suppress the so-called “Forest Brothers,” the local partisans who were trying to resist the Soviet occupation.³⁰⁸ There he got to know local Jews, and they started a clandestine business of cake production: as a person occupying a rather prominent position in the military, Isaac had access to military warehouses, where he could get sugar, flour and butter. Their business was completely illegal and lasted for about three years, during which Isaac and his companions became “*millionaires*” selling their cakes all over the Baltic republics. Money generated through the business was converted into high-yield state bonds (Russ. *obligatsii*), which Isaac kept in tin boxes, buried in the ground in the basement of his house, with a large wooden barrel of sauerkraut on the top.

Everything went well until the end of 1952, when Isaac had a big quarrel with Riva, the sister of one of his companions, and also his girl-friend – and she promised that she would go to the militia, tell everything about their business, and make sure they all go to prison. So, when after a short period of time he was indeed arrested, he figured out that the woman had made good on her threat, and decided to confess to everything. The search was subsequently conducted, the tin jars were unearthed – and then a major blow came: he learned that he had indeed been denounced – but not by Riva, and most importantly *not* for his cakes. What happened was that Isaac’s military commandment considered

³⁰⁷See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Party_Trial (last accessed April 3, 2017).

³⁰⁸See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Brothers (last accessed April 3, 2017).

transferring him from Lithuania to the Far East, to fulfill a different job – in response to which Isaac, during an informal conversation, commented in the following way: “*Only idiots would go to the Far East.*” Obviously, a “rat” was present at the conversation, and reported Isaac’s words to the authorities. The words were judged as “anti-Soviet remarks” (Russ. *antisovetskie vyskazyvaniya*), and served as grounds for his arrest on purely political allegations. One can guess that the associations with the unsuccessful Soviet campaign of resettling Jews to the Jewish Autonomous Area created in 1928-34 in the Far East, as well as rumors about the impending deportation of Jews to the Far East³⁰⁹ could have “aggravated” the anti-Soviet aspect of Isaac’s phrase. Isaac was tried and convicted to 25 years of prison, although amnestied in 1967 in connection with the 50th anniversary of the revolution –largely due to the efforts of his former military colleague, a top-rank officer, who interceded on his behalf (JEES_059_IV, JEES_073_IV).

It is not clear until now whether Isaac was accused on political or economic charges, or on some combination of both. His nephew was denied access to his archival file. However, Isaac’s misinterpretation of the official intentions is very telling in itself. He was a war veteran, who occupied a politically and socially visible position, and was himself part of the Soviet repressive apparatus – and he also was a Jew, and these were the last years of the Stalin rule. Had Isaac lost his “political vigilance” as to what was going on in the country, or were these developments felt less strongly in Lithuania, far from Moscow? Did he think that his position in the organs and his war achievements gave him some kind of immunity? Did he take Riva’s threats too seriously? Did they evoke memories of his own father’s arrest and execution on the economic charges in 1929? Be it as it may, Isaac’s story should probably alert us to two things: first, that any finite judgement as to the “political” or “economic” nature of a given trial is largely conventional, since “economic trials often had a clear political orientation, and political trials often contained articles of indictment unquestionably belonging to the economic sphere” (Pinkus & Frankel 1984: 201). The second thing this story should caution against, is attribution of “anti-Semitic”

³⁰⁹On the rumors about deportation, even though the actual plans for it might have never existed, see: Rubenstein 2016: 80-88.

character to any trial where Jews were the accused. In Isaac's case, his Jewishness is significant on a number of counts: the "hereditary" profession he received, which made him a specialist in food production; the fact that he was commissioned to suppress insurgence in the "newly annexed" regions of the Soviet Union, which was a recognizable trajectory of many Jews in the post-war period; the network of trust he was able to create with the local Jewish residents – and probably also in other places beyond Klaipeda, where his cakes were sold. All these factors certainly gave Isaac's case a distinct "Jewish" form. However, was there any prejudice against him as a Jew during the trial? Were his comments on the Far East and the "idiots" who go there indeed interpreted with an anti-Jewish bias? Would he have been sentenced to a different, shorter term of imprisonment had he been a Russian or a Lithuanian? Or did he receive his 25 years as anybody else would, in full accordance with the law of 1947 that foresaw precisely this term for the "large-scale theft of socialist property"?

Particular ethnicity-related underpinnings of the economic trials, whether they took place late in Stalin's regime or under Khrushchev, return us to the main question of this chapter, namely, whether the post-war economic campaign in the Soviet Union present yet another distinct strand in state anti-Jewish politics. A number of authors who wrote about the economic trials of the 1960s viewed this question from the structural perspective: for various social, political, demographic and other reasons Jews at the time occupied certain positions "where hanky-panky was especially likely to occur," such as "bookkeeping, retail trade, and the service sector" (Gitelman 1998: 168), "some form or other of merchandising" (Baron 1975: 284-285), "supply and domestic retail trade" (Gilboa 1971: 289). This would certainly be true for the Moscow Jewish suburbs, where, as I argued in this work, certain niches such as small-scale artel production, trade and junk-yards could be seen as distinctly "Jewish."

It would then probably be more accurate to say that post-war economic campaigns were targeted not so much directly against Jews, but rather against economic actors who found themselves in such "Jewish positions" of the Soviet economic structure. And, as the evidence suggests, where these "Jewish positions" happened to be occupied by Jews, the consequences may well often have been much harsher than otherwise.

CONCLUSION

This work presents a case study of Jewish engagement in the Soviet “planned economy,” or the “economy of shortage,” in a specific geographic setting of Moscow Jewish suburbs in the first decades after World War II.

As cultural anthropology, it examines the complex relationships between social tradition, belief and accommodation in the urban-rural nexus of the country’s capital. By focusing on an ethnic group who were subject to open and covert discrimination by the state that curbed its members’ professional choices and at times subjected them to severe social marginalization, my work involves an historically grounded sociocultural analysis of inequality and socio-political adaptation. As economic anthropology, it makes the first systematic attempt at narrating Soviet Jewish economic history after World War II. Largely against the accepted convention that Soviet Russia’s “second,” or “shadow” economy was concentrated mainly on the periphery of the Soviet Union (primarily in the Caucasian and Asian republics), it also shows that areas such as Moscow’s suburbs, despite their proximity to the supposedly all-powerful center, were another fertile ground of clandestine entrepreneurship.

My principal questions here thus concern the ethnic character of Jewish socio-economic practices and their historical underpinnings; the nature of Jewish adaptation and integration into a new socialist state order; complex cultural and economic transfers this adaptation required; and more specifically, the reconfiguration of traditional Jewish economic practices (first and foremost, small-scale production and middleman activities) in the new political, ideological and economic circumstances.

I have argued in this work that due to a range of socio-political, economic and demographic developments, suburban settlements around the country’s capital became a destination place for several successive flows of Jewish migrants from the former Pale of Settlement, and that a dense pattern of Jewish residence in these settlements, unparalleled in Soviet history, produced a special configuration of

Soviet Jewishness – certainly not fully coinciding with that of the shtetl, yet still different from that characteristic of large urban settings. Descriptions of these settlements in terms of the “Soviet Jewish Pale,” however metaphorical, nevertheless indicate awareness on the part of both urban and suburban Jewish dwellers of the distinctive socio-cultural Jewish environment that had been formed here. In this work I explored one particular aspect of this distinctiveness, namely, the specific occupational practices that suburban Jews were involved in, and the “Jewish economic niches” that were formed here as a result.

I argued that a number of factors, such as the tacit discriminatory barriers blocking Jewish upward mobility in the Soviet Union, especially after the war; solidarity and trust among those who were subjected to these limitations; and the existence of pre-Soviet ethnic economic traditions and skills that the suburban migrants brought with them from the Pale, contributed to the emergence of economic practices, both aboveboard and underground, licit and illicit (or, rather, a combination of those) that bore a distinct ethnic (Jewish) character. These were economic practices, where Jewishness played an important role in creating channels for obtaining production resources, organizing production and devising distribution strategies. I have emphasized the embedded nature of these economic pursuits, thus aligning with the scholars who maintain that ongoing social relations produce a substantial impact on economic institutions and practices (e.g. Hedlund 2011: 102, 110, 160; Verdery & Humphrey 2004: 16-17; Granovetter 1985).

While “ethnic occupational specialization” (Verdery 2005: 173) was common within the traditional, pre-modern division of labor,³¹⁰ in the Soviet context this specialization could have been preserved and/or created either due to specific geographical circumstances (e.g. growing southern fruits in the Soviet Caucasian republics, or cotton cultivation in Uzbekistan), or as a result of the “conservation” of the traditional businesses, prohibited as private economy, along the ethnic lines. This

³¹⁰See, for instance, Kushkova 2013 on the Jewish traditional sheep-skin business in Moldova.

can probably be seen as an example of how the Soviet modernization project, with its ban on private economic agency, contributed to the preservation of quite “backward” modes of economic organization.

As I have continuously stressed throughout the work, these economic niches (small-scale production, trade and the Soviet version of junk-yards) enjoyed extremely low esteem in the socialist “world outlook” due to the specific state production ideology that foregrounded heavy industry and overall technological “progress.” Additionally, traditional Jewish views of artisanal and middleman occupations have probably added to the largely disparaging attitude to Soviet Jewish *artel* workers, traders and junk-yard employees.

However, do these economic pursuits neatly fit into a classical interpretational framework within which the in-coming minority “naturally” comes to occupy the least prestigious economic niches that allow them to survive in the new place, with the inevitable “status gap” (Zenner 1996: 184) that this process entails? And that in particular Russian Jews “historically... have long come to deal with the fact that they must settle for activities several steps below what was socially desirable or even acceptable” (Goldman 2003: 83)? My study shows that the Soviet case was more complex. After all, there was a large Soviet Jewish educated and professional elite, which serves an important foil for the discussion of any particular version of the Soviet Jewish experience. In the words of T. Friedgut, Soviet Jewish “success story... rivals, and perhaps overshadows, the economic and social achievements of North American Jewry” in terms of the socio-cultural trajectory Russian Jews made from a marginalized “*shtetl*” community to become the “cultural, technical and scientific elite” of the country (Friedgut 1980: 6). Even though the Soviet promise of equality and upward mobility did not always hold true, especially in case of the Jews, it would be too simplistic to say that a part of the Soviet Jewish population was simply “ousted” into non-prestigious economic niches usually occupied by an alien minority.

Concentration of the Jewish actors in particular economic sectors of the Soviet planned economy in a particular geographical region was an unintended consequence of various socio-political factors described in my work. Intentionally the Soviet government would have never allowed this, especially in

the general anti-Semitic atmosphere of the post-war period. The Soviet economy was an example of the ultimate “opportunity hoarding” (Tilly 1987: 9) by the state to the exclusion of all other alternative actors – at least, as far as the ideal model was concerned. It was a system that sought to “maximize redistributive capacity,” whereby “power at the centre would be enhanced to the extent that the resources of other actors could be disabled” (Verdery 2005: 181). The “patrimonial” nature of the state, where “the line between power and property is erased” (Hedlund 2011: 122) was to ensure the lack of independent economic agency on the part of any social, religious or ethnic group within it. To use Charles Tilly’s expression, this was the most “durable” of all inequalities (Tilly 1987), intentionally created and ideologically “sanctified” by the Soviet regime.

Within this general framework, however, certain sectors of the Soviet economy enjoyed greater leeway with regards to the conditions of production and/or distribution. First and foremost, this was true for the cooperative sector that was granted more economic freedom to procure their own production materials and to sell their merchandise in their own trade network, bypassing the corresponding central state-planned institutions and organizations. In a comparative perspective, priority conditions created for the cooperative sector in the mid-1940s may be seen as an alternative response to the introduction of the New Economic Policy in the early 1920s, when the country likewise found itself in a profound economic crisis. Yet even if this tentative comparison requires more research, it is clear that the socialist cooperative sector turned into a particularly opportune site for illegal economic practices of production and distribution of various consumer goods and food.

With regards to the illicit side of the economic pursuits discussed in this work, my major argument was that the prohibition of private entrepreneurship on the part of the socialist state, largely ideological rather than economic in nature, called forth a likewise not purely economic response from below – ethnic mobilization for the sake of on-the-side private production and distribution. Essentially, then, I develop the idea that “scarcity produces private-property regimes, which enable more efficient uses of resources and thus the creation of wealth” (Verdery & Humphrey 2004: 19). In my case, it is the dearth, or the near-lack of private entrepreneurial possibilities, as well as their criminalization in the

Soviet legal code, that brought about the emergence of ethnicity-based economic niches where these possibilities could be exercised with a higher, although certainly not absolute, guarantee of safety.

Even though this may sound like a paradox, but in a certain sense the socialist regime was enabling private economic initiative, whether willingly (in cases when political officials of various levels offered protection to clandestine producers who in turn supplied them with missing goods as well as monetary donations), or unwillingly, through the very inability of the state economy to satisfy consumer demand. This may be seen as yet another aspect of the “symbiosis” between the first and the second economies that existed throughout the socialist regime, even though the particular configurations of this symbiosis may have differed at different periods. Alternatively, one can probably recall the metaphor of the “Little Deal,” usually applied to Brezhnev’s rule to describe the tacit consent on the part of political power for a certain degree of “economic freedom within close kinship and friendship networks,” as well as “greater tolerance of petty private enterprise and trade” (Millar 1985: 695). Perhaps one can say that the attitude to the cooperative sphere of the Soviet economy was similar to that, especially in the first post-war decades.

On the part of those engaged in clandestine production and distribution, this activity required profound knowledge of and extreme sensitivity to the “rules of the game.” One had to know whom to compensate for the permission to produce and how much profit to share with them, how to communicate with third parties such as independent controlling organs, how to dispose of the profit in such a way as not to arouse suspicion about its origin, etc. This knowledge, as well as various skills related to the organizational aspects of illicit economic practices, was intellectual property in its own right, and more often than not, in the economic spheres discussed in this work, it was Jewish intellectual property. In this sense it can perhaps be seen as a case of “opportunity hoarding” – a concept describing how “members of a categorically bounded network acquire access to a resource that is valuable, renewable, subject to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network’s modus operandi” (Tilly 1987: 10). Although, as I stressed on a number of occasions, none of the economic practices discussed in this work excluded non-Jewish participants, especially in labor-intensive spheres

such as trade and even artel-type production, the Jews usually stood at the head of such enterprises – as well as the clandestine economic schemes if those developed inside them.

Orientation towards actual consumer demand, flexibility in determining which goods to produce, extensive “horizontal” networking with other producers and sellers, high mobility in delivering goods to the potential consumers, calculation of the optimal prices that the market can bear and that at the same time would be beneficial for the producer – all these characteristic features of the Soviet clandestine economic practices represent essential elements of a market economy. It comes to no surprise, then, that many present-day informants stress that the Soviet underground economic practices can be seen as the “sprouts” of the market system that was to come in 1990s: “*All these DAMPS clients – this was a step towards market economy <...> They tried to live by the market laws*” (JEES_023_AL_ET); “*in fact, the cooperative sphere was... they caught all the market [tendencies] ... they certainly never produced goods that would not enjoy demand... these were crops of the market economy in the Soviet Union*” (JEES_028_NG_ES); clandestine entrepreneurs were “*harbingers of new economic relations*” (JEES_043_GL) (also: JEES_036_AL, JEES_051_PZ, JEES_101_ArV_AnV, JEES_131_AR). Such responses unambiguously show my respondents’ preference for the market as opposed to non-market socialist (re)distributive economy and entitlement system (e.g. JEES_043_GL, JEES_028_NG_ES). Although this clearly goes beyond my present research, this is not as unquestionable as it might seem in terms of post-socialist popular sensibilities. Such responses may be also viewed as attempts to create a “usable past” on the part of people whose family members were involved in the Soviet clandestine economy and thus reclaim the value of their input into the advanced economic order – as well as perhaps to redeem the trauma that many of these families could develop in relation to the state repressions of the clandestine economic pursuits.

The connection between the Soviet clandestine economy, particularly in its Jewish version, and the market economy, contains a certain paradoxical twist. On the one hand, the role of Jews in modern European history has always been viewed through the lens of the advancement of the most modern economic practices in finance, technology and industrial development (e.g. Teller 2008a: 444, Attali

2010: 305, Schorsch 1994: 123-124, 130-131). The “bourgeois” identity ascribed to the Soviet Jews through the real or ideologically constructed connection with Jews living abroad (especially after 1948, the creation of the State of Israel) agreed very well with the habitual Soviet legal interpretations of the pursuit of private gain as “capitalist survivals” (Russ. *perezhitki*) in the mentality of the Soviet people. Yet on the other hand, in the Soviet case we see that Jews (and other clandestine entrepreneurs) were putting advanced (market) principles into practice in the spheres that were the least “modern” within the Soviet economic structure, such as small-scale production and distribution. This incongruence may be explained only through the specific situation created within the Soviet planned economy, where “strengthening of the industrial sphere and the growth of cities [was] taking place alongside the shift to traditional and even archaic forms in the political sphere and monetary relations,” and where “spaces of backwardness, sometimes spatially non-distinguishable from the “advanced” sectors” did not disappear (Kimerling 2011: 125). The Soviet economic organization thus inadvertently supported the continuity of traditional Jewish production and distribution practices, even though in modified forms, in as much as it heavily relied on such “spaces of backwardness” to meet the basic consumer needs of the population (see: Sloin 2010, Ball 1987: 85-190; Besançon 280-281, Dalton 1969: 67, Estraiikh 2009).

Yet another paradox is related to the popular idea that those who were “schooled” in the socialist planned economy, particularly in its clandestine sphere, will necessarily be successful in the Western-type market economy: “Despite – or maybe because of – the state monopoly and its central planning format, the Soviet economy provided an unintended training ground for many of those who ultimately emerged as the country’s leading business oligarchs <...> [in the absence of information, Soviet wheeler-dealers] had to operate with a level of ingenuity that was at least on a par with, if not superior to, that of dealmakers in the West... Their secret operations would be perfect preparation for a transition to the market economy” (Goldman 2003: 81-82).³¹¹ Several of my informants, especially those who

³¹¹The idea that the present-day Russian oligarchs are predominantly Jewish, and that at least to some degree their money was made in the socialist clandestine economy, is rather popular today. A number of people stressed the fact that popular imagination labels oligarchs as “Jewish” on the basis of the perpetuating myths of the “Jewish riches” and the “Jewish predilection towards business” – or else suggested that the higher “visibility” of Jews at the top

indeed continued business pursuits in the post-socialist period, supported this idea: *“I will tell you: this was a school in its own right. Unfortunately, not many lived till this capitalism, many simply died in the 1990s, when it was very difficult to survive. But having gone through this school, one could go anywhere with no problems – America, Canada – and get on their feet. It was a strong school, see?”* (JEES_109_SG_GG). However – and the experience of such people also proves it – this was not necessarily so, especially if they moved to other, capitalist countries: *“P. came to Israel, and immediately opened a store there. And then he said, the whole street was filled with stores selling exactly the same goods. And people would go to the stores they were already used to, and, – he says, – ‘I took a bank loan against my house [to open the store], and it all proved to be worthless”* (JEES_121_FZ). This example in particular emphasizes the obvious fact that in the socialist economy, as well as in a particular geographic location, such people’s clandestine business was successful precisely because it was embedded in the context of local networks. The very possibility of making clandestine profits was derivative of the “connections” they were able to establish in this context due to a number of factors, of which ethnicity was one. True, they could have been using a number of the free market principles in their operations – yet these principles, too, hinged upon the existence of not purely economic ethnicity-based channels with a higher degree of in-built trust. Besides, the official prohibition of private entrepreneurship reduced much of the competition in the market for everyday consumer goods, thus creating a context very different from the usual liberal market. In other words, the skills of survival and success in the socialist planned economy, however ingenuous and creative they might have been, and to whatever degree they might have been based on certain market principles, are not automatically transferable into a different economic context precisely because they were the product

levels of the market economy makes people collapse Jewishness and “big money” (e.g. JEES_032_AB, JEES_024_IB, JEES_028_NG_ES, JEES_075_AS, JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB, etc.). Ressentiment and the ever-worsening state of the present-day country’s economy may stir habitual anti-Semitic feelings as well: *“Yids appropriated all Russian oil, all natural resources, I don’t know what else... all oligarchs, they are all Jews”* (JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB); *“No other ethnic group enjoys such [an attitude]... as soon they hear the last name Abramovich, they immediately start: ‘Aha! He stole this, he stole that...!’”* (JEES_017_MB). In other words, the image of Jews “profiteering” on national resources, usually at the expense of the non-Jews, seems to be still deeply entrenched in popular imagination.

of specific socio-cultural context that included both economic and non-economic components. It would probably be wrong to assume an unmediated progression between the socialist clandestine economy and post-socialist business activities. This issue, however, warrants a separate analysis.

These two paradoxes seem to be part and parcel of a fairly common fallacy inherent in the comparisons of socialism and capitalism: while the socialist economy is often seen as hinging primarily on the personal connections to the exclusion of any market-resembling principles, the capitalist one might be perceived as an ideal model where the “human factor” is neutralized: “*When everything is determined either by money, or by competition... by supply and demand – all these human relations are redundant*” (JEES_043_GL). This “either-or” perspective essentially implies that once the rigorous rules of the market, unadulterated by the human relations, are installed, the economy will immediately resume the “normal” (capitalist) course and inevitably thrive. Anthropologies of socialism and post-socialism offered a critical intervention into this perspective, particularly, through the analysis of “socialist subjectivity.” E. Dunn, for instance, argues that under socialism people’s perception of themselves vis-à-vis their labor was radically different from the worker subjectivity formed in the neo-liberal Western society. The socialist context produced subjects “embedded” in the network of social relations, personally identifying with the products of their labor and thus feeling entitled to ownership of the production facilities – which created major obstacles for the “smooth transition” to the capitalist regime based primarily on efficiency and de-individuation of the workers (Dunn 2004). One can assume that on the part of clandestine entrepreneurs such embeddedness would be only stronger since various extra-economic (in the formal sense of the word) factors were constitutive of their pursuits.

This brings us to the last, but not least important topic discussed in this work. I argued that the Soviet modernization project allowed different paths of Jewish integration into the socialist society, including the one that preserved continuity with the pre-socialist traditional economic ethos. As a result, several varieties of Soviet Jews emerged – particularly, largely assimilated urban intelligentsia and those who for various reasons did not become part of the Soviet professional and intellectual elite. As I discussed in the first chapter of my work, people were very conscious of the differences between the

two groups – educational, occupational, geographical, linguistic – to the point that communication between members of these groups was often seen as problematic. Besides, as some of my examples demonstrate, the very Jewishness of the intelligentsia could be put under question – precisely for the lack of recognizable components of the “traditional” Jewish way of life (and probably, of the unwillingness to preserve those).

The occupational factor played an important role in this internal division of the Soviet Jewish population.³¹² Moscow’s suburban Jews engaged in trade or artisanal-like production and distribution were clearly different both from the Jewish professionals in the nearby city and in the settlements themselves. My materials allow us to speak about a distinctive type of subjectivity shared by this cohort, expressed in a specific attitude to their individual and collective economic agency and a particular sensitivity as to where it may be exercised. Often, especially in the post-war period, they were destined to eke out a scanty existence, since more often than not they had low-paid non-professional jobs, and for a variety of reasons could not consider getting the new or additional specializations or moving to a different place, including Moscow itself. However, some of those people were not ready “*to live by alms handed out by the state,*” and were well aware of the fact that “*if one doesn’t provide for himself, nobody else would*” (JEES_096_EB). This stance largely contradicted the attempts of the state to shape people’s subjectivity in the format of “feeding,” or distributive allocation of goods and foods from the center. The refusal to be relegated to passive subjects of state patrimonial control was something that, in the words of one informant (himself a clandestine Soviet entrepreneur), contrasted this cohort with the Jewish professional and cultural elite: “*Intelligentsia was strongly suppressed in the times of Stalin’s personality cult, and it didn’t go into any schemes whatsoever. Intelligentsia led a calm, impoverished way of life*” (JEES_128_SP). Even though this juxtaposition must contain a certain exaggeration, one

³¹²According to P. Vail’ and A. Genis, the “art of being a Soviet Jew” was about expertise in using various social situations to one’s benefit, “playing on various sides of the ‘Semitic myth.’” In particular, this could mean that a Jew who in everyday life would try to disguise his Jewishness, would “recall” it, for instance, “every time he had to buy scarce goods from a Jewish store manager” (Vail’ & Genis 1996: 299). Among other things, this example importantly casts a trader as a typical Soviet Jewish position.

would have to admit that those who were ready to manufacture non-reported goods, or to bribe the officials for the sake of getting better goods to sell in their stores, or to misrepresent accounting documents, did have a different perceptions of who they were individually and as a group, and positioned themselves in a different way vis-à-vis the socialist state. If for analytical purposes we regard these people as a distinct “group,” we might say that their specific type of collective subjectivity involved precisely the readiness to take risks and deal with their possible consequences, whatever those might have been.

The highly precarious nature of the mere involvement in certain economic pursuits (first and foremost, trade), as well as the clandestine economic activities was recalled throughout my interviews (JEES_001_ER, JEES_014_EB, JEES_015_RK_SK, JEES_028_NG_ES, JEES_032_AB, JEES_040_NZ, JEES_071_OZ_MK, JEES_073_IV, JEES_083_DT_MK, JEES_086_AR, JEES_096_EB, JEES_121_FZ, JEES_130_DT). And again, as with a number of other business-related qualities discussed in this work, entrepreneurial risk-taking could be seen as a particularly Jewish feature: *“He [a local store manager, – A. K.] was just a risky person by nature. He was not afraid of the prison, of the criminals – he was not afraid of anything. He would enter the prison and come out of it, as if it were his home. There was a certain cohort of people who were in principle ready to take risks <...> I myself was rounded up many times, and put away – for three months, for five months, for seven months, even for a whole year... I was not afraid – I knew, I would spend so much time there, and then get out and start again. This is a Jewish quality”* (JEES_128_SP). As my last chapter shows, the stakes of risk-taking were certainly changing under different Soviet leaderships with their respective politico-economic policies: from Stalin with his draconian anti-Semitic measures – through Khrushchev with his “bottom up” economic campaigns that probably re-channeled anti-Semitism along economic lines – and later to Brezhnev with his “little deal” that among other things implied economic relaxation along with the stagnant growth.

With regard to varying political regimes and their impact on clandestine entrepreneurship, some observations should be made in the way of questioning the widespread template of “resistance” in the

interpretation of various socialist practices that did not fully correspond to the official expectations. Essentially, the question is whether clandestine production and distribution can be seen as attempts to resist ideologies and practices of the socialist planned economy and the Soviet regime at large.

For a fairly long time “resistance” was the most “natural” way of looking at various things Soviet – particularly so, in the West. This phenomenon is ultimately rooted in the generic Cold War perceptions of the Soviet Union as “an oppressive order of dubious legitimacy” (Werth 2000: 21), as well as in applications of Western paradigms of relations between the political power and the average citizens to a very different, and at that time little known Soviet context. In recent years this perspective, as well as the “totalitarian” model of the Soviet regime of which it was a part, gave way to more nuanced interpretations. These stress that that by far not everything that did not neatly fall into the official ideological paradigms and practices was necessarily “running counter” to the regime.

For instance, writing about private economic activity in the immediate post-war period, J. Hessler argues that certain “illegal market practices,” especially those of small scale and/or those formed during the wartime, may be seen through the prism of “survivalist ethic”: “Preoccupied with rudimentary survival, Soviet citizens rarely went beyond trade at the market, petty workplace theft, or occasional trips to the countryside for food in their private economic activities during the war. These practices both reflected and fostered a survivalist ethic, according to which theft (particularly from the state), speculation, and other crimes lost much of their moral stigma in light of the fundamental imperative to stay alive” (Hessler 1998: 524). K. Dawisha describes informal practices of “access to goods, travel opportunities, better apartments, and prestige” as “largely apolitical” (Dawisha 2005: 478-479). A. Barker, speaking about the “flourishing ‘second economy’” and various unofficial forms of art and entertainment in the Soviet Union, stresses that their existence was “not necessarily tantamount to dissent. Between the party line and dissent lay a vast arena where the infamous Soviet anecdote proliferated, where people purchased and sold on the black market, where Soviet citizens lived in cities where they were not registered... where they procured what they needed through blat and did what they did not so much as a measure of dissent but as a survival strategy in a system whose economic and

social realities fell far short of the promises it made on paper” (Barker 1999: 21-22). “Homo Sovieticus,” concluded S. Fitzpatrick, “was a string-puller, an operator, a time-server, a freeloader, a mouther of slogans, and much more. But above all, he was a survivor” (Fitzpatrick 1999: 227).

A number of anthropologists who themselves have a first-hand experience of living under socialism, likewise argue against the application of the “resistance” paradigm. For instance, O. Shevchenko, speaking about post-socialist consumption practices in view of the continuous “pillaging” of common people by the state power, observes:

“while it is fairly common to interpret indigenous tactics in the face of power as a manifestation of resistance, I would suggest that, at least in the case of consumption, the opposition between us and them bears a somewhat different character. It is not so much an act of resistance... as one of self-protection. Acts of self-protection differ from acts of resistance in that they are less targeted at restoring a balance of power through some form of retaliation (often symbolic) and more focused on minimizing the vulnerability of individuals’ immediate lifeworlds to acts of disruption – sometimes before the danger even arises” (Shevchenko 2002: 162-163).

Here one should also recall a major contribution of A. Yurchak, particularly, his concept of “being *vnye*” (lit. outside, beyond), implying neither support, nor opposition to the state ideology (Yurchak 1997: 126-158). Depending on resources available, he argues, Soviet citizens carved out various “niches,” whether artistic, or scholarly, or even religious, where they nevertheless stayed simultaneously “within” and “beyond” the “reach of the state.” This “deterritorialized relationship” model cancels a number of “totalitarian” dichotomies, of which “oppression vs. resistance” is one. As E. Osokina, following the argument of S. Kotkin on the socialist black market in Magnitogorsk, quite sharply observes, “it was precisely the political power, with its hostility to the market that saw such activities as resistance,” since it implied “the very existence of the economic sphere outside of the control of the regime, where people could take decisions and conclude agreements at their own discretion” (Osokina 1999: 348). Perhaps, the author says in a different work, private entrepreneurship can be seen as a lack of willingness to comply with the official economic policy (Russ. *nepodchinenie* or *nepovinoventie*), while its primary aim was nevertheless to “survive and improve one’s material conditions” (Osokina 2000: 240).

No doubt, clandestine production was a much more politicized activity than other informal practices, since it went against the very grain of the socialist production ideology. Yet what should be taken in consideration is that all forms of on-the-side production and distribution discussed in this work were taking place within the frames of official economic structures, be it artels, or shops, or scrap-collecting stations. Hence, as I tried to emphasize, first and foremost those working in these structures were trying to ensure that their organizations met the state production targets, thus making up for the failures of the state economy. Since this could have required illegal on-the-side dealings, clandestine operations in fact contributed to the success of the state socialist economy. Besides, the economic sustainability of their enterprises meant that they could continue earning on the side “under their roof.” Secondly, these activities are hard to classify as “resistance” because they contained an important component of self-interestedness, even though not every clandestine producer, trader or junk man would become “rich,” and even though “riches” in the Soviet period was, as I tried to show, a highly contingent concept itself. And after all, the desire to be better off materially may be seen as yet another expression of the “survivalist ethic” discussed above. In any case, my informants unanimously saw engagement in clandestine production and distribution exclusively through the prism of “survival”: “*it was a small place, with wooden houses... it was necessary to survive*” (JEES_053_LT); “*Jews were ‘spinning around’ throughout their life – to survive*” (JEES_101_ArV_AnV), “*this was not a form of resistance – they did not resist, it’s just that their brains worked differently*” (JEES_044_LG_IA) (also: JEES_025_IB; JEES_028_NG_ES; JEES_029_AL; JEES_039_IZ; JEES_045_TD_AL; JEES_078_VM; JEES_083_DT_MK; JEES_108_AP; JEES_114_FK; JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB; JEES_128_SP). By and large then, I think it would be accurate to say that survival was the primary motif characteristic of the very nature of the small-scale clandestine economic pursuits.

Further, I argued that the analysis conducted in this work allows us to say that clandestine economic practices, particularly in the geographically circumscribed area of the Moscow suburbs, produced a specific type of Jewish collective identity. Engagement in artel production, trade and junkyard business may be seen as performative production of ethnicity, where Jewishness was maintained

through economic activities culturally embedded in the Jewish economic tradition as well as shaped by various social, political and ideological circumstances of the post-war Soviet Union. This may also be seen as a case of “assertive Jewishness” (Dominguez 1993: 618), where ethnicity was literally “produced” – as opposed to the perception of Soviet Jewishness exclusively through anti-Semitism, when the larger society would in various forms “remind” Jews of their ethnic origin. My perspective also differs from the one that approaches Soviet Jewish identity solely through the prism of religious observance, suggesting that the lack thereof essentially deprives Jews of their “Jewishness” – “a monolithic conception of ritual-based Jewish tradition” (Feldman 2004: 112). In my view, post-Holocaust diasporic Jewish experience, and particularly that in the Soviet Union, requires more subtle interpretation. Anthropology grounded in the concept of “the local” allows us to see Jewishness as “a project situated in time and space” (Charmé 2000: 143) rather than a set of pre-defined characteristics.

Among other things, this work is an attempt to produce a “thick description” of Moscow’s suburban Jewish experience, particularly of its economic aspect. As a local ethnography, it also presents a number of individual “portraits,” or glimpses into the career histories of people involved in various spheres of the Soviet economy, whether clandestine, or not – Y. Rafalovich, M. Vilk, B. Zaretskaya, Moses V., Isaac F., and others. I would hope that this makes a modest contribution towards the description of what S. Fitzpatrick called “less familiar social types” such as “shop-assistants, store managers, commercial directors of factories, industrial *tolkachi*,³¹³ hairdressers, private tailors, members of artisan cooperatives” that usually get “overlooked” in historical discussions (Fitzpatrick 1986: 232).

As a part of a wider debate on the nature of socialist production, I also hope that my work provided a more nuanced and locally-informed understanding of the role that ethnic actors played in production and distribution in the nexus between the “first” and the “second” economies. My discussion of some specific mechanisms of the “second” economy likewise aimed to contribute additional insights into the workings of the socialist economy at large, as well as the symbiotic relations between its “first”

³¹³Literally, a “pusher,” i.e. a person who uses personal connections to provide the necessary production materials for their enterprise [the footnote is mine, – A. K.].

and “second” parts. The very fact that private economic initiative was kept alive in spite of the official prohibitions and severe persecutions proves its “irrepressible” nature. In one of her works J. Hessler observed that the lack of scholarly attention to post-war private economy in the USSR resulted in the fact that “when commentators discussed perestroika in the late 1980s, the only historical precedent they could identify was Lenin’s New Economic Policy six decades before” (Hessler 1998: 516). No matter how we regard the issue of succession between the Soviet and post-Soviet private enterprise in Russia, I think that economic pursuits discussed in my work may be seen as good candidates to fill in this void.

A more comprehensive view of the Jewish role in the Soviet planned economy would require a discussion of the Jewish technocratic elite in the managerial hierarchy of Soviet industrial enterprises, along with Jewish actors in the sphere of material supply (Russ. *snabzhenie*) and large-scale Jewish clandestine producers (Russ. *tsekhoviki*). This future study would complement the present discussion of the “bottom” Jewish economic engagements through the analysis of the top-level Jewish agency in the socialist economy.



Ill. 47: Gates on the factory premises of a former Soviet Jewish clandestine entrepreneur, now a Russian-Israeli businessman. Near Malakhovka, July 2014. Photo by the author.

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ARCHIVAL SOURCES

CENTRAL ARCHIVE OF THE CITY OF MOSCOW (TsAGM)

Fund R-795. Inv. 1. 1937-1949. Moscow State Bureau, Chief Office of Secondary Raw Materials," All-Union Bureau "Soyuzutil'," USSR Ministry of Light Industry, 1937-1949.

- 1) TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 24: Orders of the Bureau Administration concerning the main activity for the year of 1946. Begun: January 5, 1946. Concluded: December 3, 1946. 106 p.
- 2) TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 27: Consolidated annual bookkeeper report of the bureau concerning the main activity and capital investment for the year of 1946. Begun: January 2, 1947. Concluded: June 13, 1947. 188 p.
- 3) TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 50: Orders of the Bureau Administration concerning the main activity for the year of 1953, Vol. 1. 240 p.
- 4) TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 51: Orders of the Bureau Administration concerning the main activity for the year of 1953. Vol. 2. Begun: September 26, 1953. Concluded: December 31, 1953. 102 p.
- 5) TsAGM F. R-795. Inv. 1. File 61: Targets for procurement and shipment of the secondary raw materials by the offices in 1954. Begun: January 18, 1950. Concluded: September 4, 1954. 61 p.

STATE ARCHIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (GARF)

(According to the division of the archive into two building, subdivided into GARF-1 and GARF-2).

GARF-1

- 1) GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 3. File 828: Top secret. USSR, Ministry of State Security. Secretariat of the Administration Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property, Chief Militia Administration, USSR Ministry of State Security. With special reports and letters to the general instances,

- leadership of USSR Ministry of State Security, USSR Chief Militia Administration, and to other Ministries concerning the cases of theft of social property and speculation. Begun: July 2, 1952. Concluded: Dec. 26, 1952. 355 p.
- 2) GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 3. File 833: Begun: Jan. 4, 1954. Concluded: December 29, 1954. 606 p. Special reports, letters to the general instances, to the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and others. Moscow.
 - 3) GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 127: OBKhSS (Department Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property), Chief Militia Administration, 1953, 1954, 1955. Orientations, reviews of the Chief Militia Department of the USSR, Moscow Military District, of the struggle against theft of social property, speculation, money counterfeiting. Begun: Feb. 11, 1953. Concluded: Dec. 28, 1955. 330 p.
 - 4) GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 135: Begun: Jan. 2, 1956. Concluded: December 28, 1956. 280 p. Reports, special information to the governmental bodies, leadership of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs and other Ministries and offices over the year of 1956 about the issues related to struggle with theft of the socialist property and speculation over the year of 1956.
 - 5) GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 139: Begun: Jan. 9, 1957. Concluded: December 10, 1958. 235 p. Special reports and information for the Central Committee of the CPSU, USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, and other Ministries about the struggle against theft in various branches of economy.
 - 6) GARF-1. Fund 9415. Inv. 5. File 165: Short reports, reference letters on the results of work by the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs in the sphere of struggle against Misappropriation of Socialist Property and suggestions for organizational issues related to the struggle with theft of socialist property, bribery and speculation. Begun: June 14, 1958. Concluded: July 20, 1958. 334 p.
 - 7) GARF-1. Fund A 259. Inv. 6. File 201: Council of Ministers of the RSFSR. On the improvement of quality of mass consumption goods produced by local industry, producer cooperation and cooperation of invalids. Dec. 28, 1944 – April 2, 1945.

GARF-2

GARF-2. Fund 73. Inv. 1. Repository 2. Chief Administration of Material and Technical Procurement, 1938-1957, 1950, 1957.

- 1) GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 79. Personal files of the employees of the Chief Procurement Administration, RSFSR Commissariat of Light Industry (*Rosglavlegsna*), letters “A” to “Ya,” over the period from 1948 to 1953. 364 p.
- 2) GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 81. Personal files of the employees of the Chief Procurement Administration, RSFSR Commissariat of Light Industry (*Rosglavlegsna*), letters “E” to “O,” over the period from 1950 to 1951. Part IV. 338 p.
- 3) GARF-2. F. A 73. Inv. 1. File 82. Personal files of the employees of the Chief Procurement Administration, RSFSR Commissariat of Light Industry (*Rosglavlegsna*), letters “P” to “U” over the period of 1950 to 1951. Part IV. 432 p.

GARF-2. Fund 395. Inv. 1. Repository 2. Management of Producer Cooperation, RSFSR Council of Ministers (1941-1950). 2032 units.

- 1) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 802. Administration of Producer Cooperation under RSFSR Council of Ministers. Planning and Economy Department. Production activity reports of producer artels. Moscow region. 1946. Vol. 1-5.
- 2) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 895. Planning and economy department. Statistical reports on the producing activity of artels. The city of Leningrad, over the year of 1947. 171 p.
- 3) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1219. Council of Producer Cooperation of RSFSR. Department of accounting and reporting. Reports for the artels of the Moscow region for the year of 1950. Vol. II. 209 p.
- 4) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1222. Council of Producer Cooperation of RSFSR. Department of accounting and reporting. Reports for the artels of the Moscow region for the year of 1950. Vol. V. 142 p.
- 5) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1228. Council of Producer Cooperation of RSFSR. Department of accounting and reporting. Reports for the artels of the Moscow region for the year of 1950. Vol. XI. 228 p.
- 6) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1412: Report of the Head of the Department “On the marketing of generated production through the internal trade network,” with addenda. Begun: Feb. 20, 1950. Concluded: Feb. 21, 1950. 221 p.
- 7) GARF-2. F. 395. Inv. 1. File 1942: Annual reports of the Regional Council of Producer Cooperation on the work with cadres for the year of 1950. 257 p.

GARF-2. Fund 396. Inv. 1, 2. Repository 2. Council of Producer cooperation (1950-1960).

- 1) GARF-2. Fund 396. Inv. 2. File 93. Orders and decrees of the Administration Collegium of Producer Cooperation under the RSFSR Council of Ministers (originals and copies). 1948. 197 p.
- 2) GARF-2. Fund 396. Inv. 2. File 95. Begun: June 17, 1948. Concluded: December 1, 1948. Decrees, protocols and transcripts of meetings of collegium for the issues of cadres and special activities over the year of 1948 (originals). Administration of Producer Cooperation under the RSFSR Council of Ministers. Secret department. [stamp: Declassified]. 65+2 p.

GARF-2. Fund A-506. Inv. 2. File 134. Letters to the Council of Ministers of USSR and RSFSR on the current situation with struggle for the safety of cooperative property (Oct. 12, 1954 – Oct. 8, 1955). 30 p.

GARF-2. Fund A-506. Inv. 2. File 1194. Letter exchange with the Commission of the Soviet control on violations of the rules of the Soviet trade, embezzlement and theft (Jan. 19, 1959 – August 31, 1959). 80 p.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS (JEES):

JEES_001_ER, b. 1937, M. Jan. 9, 2013, Grahamsville, NY.

JEES_002_LL, b. 1934, F. Jan. 11, 2013, New York, NY.

JEES_003_MM, b. 1942, F. May 22, 2013, Worcester, MA.

JEES_004_GS, b. 1937, F. May 22, 2013, Worcester, MA.

JEES_005_MB_SS, b. 1932, 1926. F, F. May 23, 2013, Worcester, MA.

JEES_007_RL, b. 1936, F. May 23, 2013, Worcester, MA.

JEES_008_SS, b. 1926, F. May 25, 2013, Worcester, MA.

JEES_009_TP, b. 1939, F. May 23, 2013, Worcester, MA.

JEES_010_AN, b. 1967, F. May 26, 2013, Manchester, CT.

JEES_011_AN, b. 1937, M. May 27, 2013, Hartford, CT.

JEES_012_KK_RK, b. 1937, 1938. M, F. May 28, 2013, New York, NY.

JEES_013_IS_AH, b. 1945, 1940. F, M. May 29, 2013, New York, NY.

JEES_014_EB, b. 1933, M. May 30, 2013, New York, NY.

JEES_015_RK_SK, b. 1938, 1934. F, M. May 30, 2013, Babylon, NY.

JEES_016_VK_LK_LL_EB, b. b. 1934, 1937, 1934, 1933. M, F, F. M. May 31, 2013, New York, NY.

JEES_017_MB, b. 1923, M. June 4, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_018_MK, b. 1950, M. June 5, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_019_OZ, b. 1950, F. June 6, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_020_LL, b. 1944, M. June 6, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_021_NS, b. 1945, F. June 13, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_022_LG, b. 1947, M. June 15, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_023_AL_ET, b. 1953, 1937, F, F. June 26, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_024_IB, b. 1938, F. June 26, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_025_AL_OM, b. 1953, 1954, F, F. June 28, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_026_IH, b. 1939, M. June 29, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_028_NG_ES, b. 1951, 1954, M, F. July 4, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_029_AL, b. 1953, F. July 7, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_030_GN_MN, b. 1941, 1948, M, F. July 11, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_032_AB, b. 1932, M. July 17, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_033_VD, b. 1959, M. July 19, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_034_EK_AB, 1940, 1932, F, M. July 24, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_035_IB, b. 1938, F. July 25, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_036_AL, b. 1953, F. July 26, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_039_IZ, b. 1947, F. July 30, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_040_NZ, b. 1946, F. July 30, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_041_MR_LD_LR, b. 1935, 1928, 1940, M, F, F. Aug. 6, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_042_LG_IB, b. 1929, 1938, M, F. Aug. 8, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_043_GL, b. 1938, M. Aug. 15, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_044_LG_IA, b. 1929, 1941, M, M. Aug. 16, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_045_TD_AL, 1969, 1953, F, F. Aug. 19, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_046_EP, b. 1945, F. Aug. 23, 2013, St. Petersburg.

JEES_050_LL, b. 1944, M. Oct. 3, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_051_PZ, b. 1948, M. Oct. 3, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_052_SU_GK_LL, b. 1953, 1956, 1944, M, M, M. Oct. 6, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_053_LT, b. 1963, M. Oct. 7, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_057_MA_DG_IV, b. 1944, 1948, 1946, M, M, M. Oct. 12, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_058_DG, 1948, M. Oct. 12, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_059_IV, b. 1946, M. Oct. 13, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_060_TZ, b. 1939, M. Oct. 15, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_061_LS_VN, b. 1950, 1943, F, M. Oct. 16, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_062_AG_IT, b. 1935, 1941, F, F. Oct. 20, 2013, Balashikha.

JEES_063_KR, b. 1945, M. Oct. 22, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_064_GK, b. 1956, M. Oct. 23, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_065_VT_GK, b. 1944, 1942, M, M. Oct. 25, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_067_LT, b. 1963, M. Oct. 27, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_068_GG, b. 1945, M. Oct. 29, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_069_GK, b. 1942, M. Oct. 30, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_071_OZ_MK, b. 1950, 1950, F, M. Nov. 4, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_072_LB, b. 1934, F. Nov. 6, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_073_IV, b. 1946, M. Nov. 7, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_074_GR, b, 1936, F. Nov. 9, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_075_AS, b. 1948, M. Nov. 10, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_076_MA, b. 1944, M. Nov. 11, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_077_VC, b, 1930, F. Nov. 13, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_078_VM, b. 1946, M. Nov. 11, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_079_YS, b. 1934, M. Nov. 15, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_080_EZ_AS_DS, b. 1961, 1961, 1962, F, F, M. Nov. 15, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_081_VV, b. 1937, F. Nov. 11, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_082_LV, b. 1954, M. Nov. 16, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_083_DT_MK, 1943, 1934, F, F. Nov. 17, 2013, Balashikha.

JEES_084_LL, 1930, M. Nov. 19, 2013, Balashikha.

JEES_085_NB_TT, b. 1955, 1954, F, F. Nov. 19, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_086_AR, 1939, M. Nov. 21, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_087_LG, b, 1934, M. Nov. 23, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_088_EK, b, 1924, M. Nov. 28, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_089_AS_NB, b. 1955, 1950, F, F. Nov. 29, 2013, Moscow.

JEES_090_IA, b. 1926, M. Nov. 30, 2013, Saltykovka.

JEES_091_IZ_BB, b. 1952, 1942, F, M. Feb. 16, 2014, St. Petersburg.

JEES_092_NB, b. 1955, F. March 30, 2014, Moscow.

JEES_093_MZ, b, 1948, F. April 13, 2014, Kraskovo.

JEES_094_MG_RG, b. 1924, 1939, M, F. April 16, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_095_AV_AL_II_MS, b. 1937, ca. 1949, ca. 1949, 1933, M, F, F, M. April 18, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_096_EB, b. 1950, M. April 19, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_097_AS, b. 1942, M. April 20, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_098_IF, b. 1939, F. April 20, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_099_IK, b. 1931, F. April 23, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_100_MZ, b. 1973, M. April 23, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_101_ArV_AnV, b. 1943, 1937, F, M. April 25, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_102_YK, b. 1940, M. April 26, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_103_LM, b. 1947, F. April 27, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_104_VV, b. 1963, M. April 27, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_105_VG, b. 1923, M. April 29, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_106_EU, b. 1924, F. April 30, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_107_NL, 1939, F. April 30, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_108_AP, b. ca. 1940, F. May 1, 2014, Zhukovsky.

JEES_109_SG_IG, b. 1934, 1960, M, M. May 2, 2014, Bronnitsy.

JEES_110_AK, b. 1940, M. May 3, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_111_RD, b, 1934, M. May 9, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_112_FK, b. 1926, M. May 10, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_113_IB, b. 1928, F. May 14, 2014, Moscow.

JEES_114_FK, b. 1937, F. May 15, 2014, Kraskovo.

JEES_115_DA, b. 1934, M. May 26, 2014, Bykovo.

JEES_116_ArV_AnV_IV, b. 1937, 1943, 1948, M, F, F. May 26, 2014, Malakhovka.

JEES_117_YT_IT, b. 1932, 1931, M, F. May 30, 2014, Il'yinka.
JEES_118_MR_OR, b. 1933, ca. 1957, M, F. June 1, 2014, 47th km.
JEES_119_MS_SS, b. 1943, 1943, M, F. June 2, 2014, Malakhovka.
JEES_120_GZ, b. 1924, F. June 6, 2014, Udel'naya.
JEES_121_FZ, b. 1952, F. June 7, 2014, Moscow.
JEES_122_MR, b. 1947, F. July 5, 2014, Malakhovka.
JEES_123_EO, b. 1951, F. July 8, 2014, Malakhovka.
JEES_124_MK, b. 1934, F. July 9, 2014, Saltykovka.
JEES_126_VS, b. 1929, M. July 9, 2014, Saltykovka.
JEES_127_EF, b. 1946, M. July 11, 2014, Saltykovka.
JEES_128_SP, b. 1952, M. July 13, 2014, Malakhovka.
JEES_129_AS, b. 1937, F. July 14, 2014, Malakhovka.
JEES_130_DT, b. 1941, M. July 15-16, 2014, Malakhovka.
JEES_131_AR, b. 1964, F. July 16, 2014, Saltykovka.
JEES_132_MK, b. 1957, M. July 22, 2014, St. Petersburg.
JEES_133_DS, b. 1962, M. July 23, 2014, St. Petersburg.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS OTHER THAN JEES:

Balta (Ukraine, Odessa region):

Bal_06_030_DL. Inf.: DL, b. 1922, M. Balta, June 30, 2006. Int.: S. Egorova, Yu. Miagkova.

Bal_06_059_1_FM. Inf.: FM, b. 1942, M. Balta, July 3, 2006. Int.: M. Bendet, O. Gabe.

Bălți (Moldova):

Băl_011_007_LKh. Inf.: LKh, b. 1953, M. Bălți, Aug. 2, 2011. Int.: O. Belova.

Băl_011_021_EV. Inf.: EV, b. 1942, M. Bălți, Aug. 3, 2011. Int.: T. Levin, M. Vasiljev, A. Kushkova.

Băl_011_041_MM. Inf.: MM, b. 1955, M. Bălți, Aug. 6, 2011. Int.: A. Kushkova.

Băl_011_047_LB. Inf.: LB, b. 1948, M. Bălți, Aug. 9, 2011. Int.: A. Kushkova.

Bershad (Ukraine, Vinnytsia region):

Ber_08_023_AV. Inf.: AV, b. 1927, M. Bershad, July 22, 2008. Int.: V. Fedchenko, A. Hofman.

Ber_08_050_MK. Inf.: MK, b. 1955, M. Bershad, July 24, 2008. Int.: A. Kushkova, A. Lvov, A. Sokolova, V. Fedchenko.

Chernivtsi (Ukraine, Chernivtsi region):

Chern_08_29_MA. Inf.: MA, b. 1927, F. Chernivtsi, Aug. 13, 2008. Int.: M. Kulik, V. Ruvinska.

Chern_08_55_SU. Inf.: SU, b. 1926, F. Chernivtsi, Aug. 16, 2008. Int.: D. Daimand, V. Ruvinska.

Mohyliv-Podilskyi (Ukraine, Vinnytsia region):

MP_04_01_SK. Inf.: SK, b. 1946, M. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 3, 2004. Int.: V. Dymshits.

MP_07_010_EM_RM. Inf.1: EM, b. 1926, M.; Inf.2: RM, b. 1921, F. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 19, 2007. Int.: A. Emirova, V. Fedchenko.

MP_07_029_IL. Inf.: IL, b. 1960, F. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 21, 2007. Int.: M. Marshak, M. Hakkarainen, S. Isard, A. Hofman.

MP_07_056_K. Inf.: K, b. 1942, M. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 23, 2007. Int.: M. Hakkarainen, A. Kushkova.

MP_08_012_T. Inf.: T, b. ca. 1954, F. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 16, 2008. Int.: M. Akhmetova, M. Lurje, A. Sen'kina.

MP_08_026_RV. Inf.: RV, b. ca. 1958, F. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 18, 2008. Int.: N. Evseenko, A. L'vov.

MP_08_039_SK_LB. Inf.1: SK, b. 1950, M.; Inf.2: LB, b. 1955, M. Mohyliv-Podilskyi, July 19, 2008. Int.: V. Fedchenko, D. Gidon, M. Krutikov, Y. Voitenko.

Tulchyn (Ukraine, Vinnytsia region):

Tul_05_001_VK. Inf.: VK, b. 1939, M. Tulchyn, July 14, 2005. Int.: V. Chaplin, S. Stepanishchev.

Tul_05_006_FP. Inf.: FP, b. 1927, F. Tulchyn, July 17, 2007. Int.: A. Kushkova, M. Treskunov, V. Fedchenko.

Tul_05_018_RSh_ISh. Inf.1: RSh, b. 1937, F.; Inf.2: ISh, b. 1937, M. Tulchyn, July 21, 2005. Int.: S. Amosova, V. Dymshits.

Tul_05_102_MG_LG. Inf.1: MG, b. 1939, M.; Inf.2: LG, b. 1947, F. Tulchyn, July 22, 2005. Int.: A. Sokolova, V. Chaplin.

Tul_06_23_VS. Inf.: VS, b. 1947, M. Tulchyn, July 12, 2006. Int.: N. Evseenko, A. Kushkova, A. Sokolova, M. Hakkarainen.

St. Petersburg:

Ox-AHRC-SPb-10_Pf13_AK_BB. Inf.: BB, b. 1954, M. St. Petersburg, May 29, 2010. Int.: A.
Kushkova, N. Evseenko.

SPb-010_AM. Inf: AM, b. 1961, M. St. Petersburg, May 25-30, 2006. Int.: O. Gabe.