Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this chapter. The title has changed, since I signed up for the workshop and so has the chapter. I am still wrestling with Soviet anti-Semitism (and how to describe and distinguish anti-Semitism generally as a force) and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to have your counsel. Here I have presented the first two sections of the second chapter of my dissertation, which explores how Moscow and Kyiv conducted the case against my subjects. I am hoping that for the first section, you’ll have suggestions on method, any sources or approaches I might consider, and whether or not I have understated or overstated my case based on the evidence I present. For the second section, I realize that I need to strengthen my source based beyond the set of meetings that I discuss – I have others. Is there a clear argument here and are you convinced? Also, I’m trying to make this more readable for a non-specialist: what can I do to make the institutions more familiar? Anything you need for me to define here? I am hoping that your insights will help me to spot gaps in my thinking and moments that I need to further explain or give further examples for the reader’s sake. I have focused, heretofore, on cultural and intellectual history and have branched out partly for the sake of necessity and because these aspects of the case are fresh, interesting, and speak directly to the Soviet state’s goals regarding Yiddish and Jews (among minority groups more broadly). Many of my notes are incomplete – I have broader notes for the theory in other chapters and have to decide whether to “see note # in chapter #” or to discuss here. Thank you for your time and insight!

Regards,

Charles Bonds
The Local Beat and the Looming State: The Ukrainian MGB and the Investigation and Repression of Ukraine’s Yiddish Writers

The purge of the Jewish Anti-Fascist committee was not an affair limited to Moscow. The same group of functionaries and secret police behind the Doctor’s Plot, men who were part of the director of the MGB Viktor Abakumov’s circle, initiated a conspiracy by fabricating a Jewish nationalist “organization” from the supposed testimony of two leading figures in Ukraine’s Jewish scholarly and cultural community. ¹ This conspiracy spurred further arrests and made it impossible to publish Yiddish literature until the end of the 1950’s, eroding Yiddish as a site of memory for assimilated Jews. I argue that the center aimed at undermining Jewish cultural identity in the long term by destroying the recently built foundation of Jewish public culture and memory of the not-yet-named Holocaust in Ukraine. For all of the accusations, the case hinged on two critical arrests. I show how Moscow controlled the narrative but left the vast majority of the matter to agents in Ukraine. While the ignorance of interrogators to Jewish themes and history is sometimes staggering, I argue that anti-Semitism was not a legible and clear motive for local agents – it is easy to suppose it from ignorance and difficult to show what it actually meant for the process and defendants. Moscow guarded discourses jealously, especially ones that might threaten order. ² The purge of Yiddish was the height of Soviet anti-Semitism, but it was a carefully controlled anti-Semitism: its public face representing a gesture and not a command or warrant. As I’ve shown in the previous chapter, my subjects, guilty of no crime, endeavored to build Soviet Jewish civil society after their community faced near complete destruction in the Holocaust. This chapter shows how the center stoked a purge of peripheral Soviet Jewish

¹ For more on the rise and dissolution of this group, see: Yoram Gorlicki and Khlevniuk, Oleg. Cold Peace; Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 113-120. Add Dobson, K's Cold Summer, on Riumin; and examples from Gutianskii, Lur’e, Pinchevskii and other cases...

² see chapter 1, note 12.
intellectuals in order to permanently hinder the development of Yiddish and, therefore Jewish identity, in the Soviet Union. Stalin and his lieutenants, informed by anti-Semitic suspicions, decided to destroy the basis of Soviet Jewish culture, but they did not wish to unleash anti-Semitism as a productive force in Soviet society.

In this chapter, I show how local MGB agents in Ukraine conducted investigations into Yiddish writers that Ukrainian authorities arrested in waves shortly after the murder of Solomon Mikhoels. Unsurprisingly, local investigators in Ukraine preferred interrogation to research. Moscow was aware of this, and that the center’s encouragement of “chekists” to rely on agent-gathered materials (fresh and archived) reflects a desire to broaden the sphere of investigation, and therefore, repression, while maintaining a semblance of “socialist legality” (*sotsialisticheskaia zakonnost’*). Generally, the culture of the organs, along with their task of fabricating evidence and adjudicating cases, led both central and local chekists to rely on the interrogatory method rather than other types of police-work. It seems that the center, after concocting a critical case in Moscow, employed a light touch, understanding that its small bit of input would suffice to broaden the scale of the purges in a seemingly organic manner. Although it is possible that the center had a larger, more managerial role in the local cases, no one else from the core group of Ukrainian Yiddish intellectuals would be sent to Moscow. From the view afforded by the personal case files, the most accessible record of these investigations, one might mistake any individual case as being largely unrelated to all but a few other cases, which might lead a researcher to conclude that opportunism (considering the cultural climate) and surveillance had initiated the process rather than a more specific push from Moscow.

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3 Upheaval and reorganization were constant features of the Stalin-era security organs. I refer to NKVD, MGB, MVD, and KGB officers as “chekists,” a widely familiar term that compares to the FBI usage of the word “agent.” I use “agent” here to denote witnesses who cooperated with investigations, referring to officers as either “Chekists” or “interrogators.”
The Soviet policing system has generally been understood as a surveillance and terror apparatus. Yet these two central methodological pillars of the Soviet organs—listen and punish—are not always inextricably linked. Surveillance is necessary for the internalization of terror, but it can be somewhat ancillary to the actual process of repression that punctuates fear and keeps it current. This is especially true when the truth content of the surveillance (or at the very least its applicable meaning) does not suggest what the listener wants to hear or when one simply needs to make information rather than relying on information that already exists.

Episodes or waves of purges, assaults against new categories of enemies (actual categories or “objective” ones), after all, are not directed at those accused, so much as they represent a threat and admonition to the public at large and to members of the category such purges target. It is also justifiable to characterize Soviet policing as “prophylactic:” purges are efforts to quash a not-yet-nascent disloyalty. Surveillance serves terror and terror, likewise, surveillance, but also in the sense that they reify each other for the object: they are not sufficient to each other and they depend less on their processual relationship than on the yield they create together.

The first section of the chapter demonstrates how investigators in Moscow fabricated a useful narrative from the arrests of Eli Spivak and Chaim Loitsker, the directors of the Jewish Office of the Ukrainian Academy of Science (UK NAN) and key intermediaries between the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the Ukrainian Jewish intelligentsia, in order to stoke a broader inquiry in Ukraine. The second section turns to analyzing the priorities of the Ukrainian...

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4 See the introduction for my discussion of Foucault’s application to Soviet questions. I prefer Kharkhordin, The Collective and the Individual, 6-8. Introduction on how the lack of confession changes the relationship to the collective, but this shoe fits: Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 201 “To induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.” [intro puts this into the context of Stalinism – qualifying that “automatic” here should be replaced with “carefully regulated,” (via Khlevniuk, Master; Viola Perpetrators; Kotkin –II Waiting.


MGB in context of the cases against renowned Yiddish writers and intellectuals and exploring what might be gathered about the sphere of agency of chekists.

The “prophylactic model” of policing, introduced generally in previous studies of “Totalitarian” systems and recently explored in the Soviet context by a number of scholars, can explain actions against religious Jews or other categories that one may label as classical Soviet categories of inquiry. However, it has less utility, pointing as it does at local actors, in explaining how orders and signals allowed the center to provoke wider actions within categories or to bring persons or groups under the lens of local chekists. Social and cultural prophylaxis, though it was the desired “end” of the system cannot be treated as a unilateral means to that end. The method of prophylaxis must be distinguished from the principle. Using evidence that shows that the bulk of my cases stem from the arrest and conveyance of two Kyivan academics to Moscow because of the supposedly sensitive nature of their case, the purge of Yiddish writers, concomitant and contemporaneous with ongoing prophylactic efforts, reflects the center’s desire to destroy the burgeoning civil society created under the aegis of the JAFC and, more broadly as a general project, to erase Jewish identity by undermining Yiddish culture. Rather than pinning Soviet Yiddish writers to a legible category of inquiry, such as the Jehovah’s Witness or Jews forming a minyan for prayer, the regime targeted the Ukrainian community of writers by initiating a case against the men, women, and institutions that held this diverse array of, oftentimes acrimonious and superficial, relationships together. The JAFC had, as a de facto

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7 While in some sense all policing is prophylactic, this term refers to a certain type of envisioning and categorization of groups for purposes of weeding out undesirable persons. Despite its general fit for the overall Soviet policing project, focusing specifically on the role of social prophylaxis or the spreadsheets it produces can occlude the role that the center played in initiating particular repressions or arrests. For studies of Stalinist policing utilizing such a lens, see: Paul Hagenloh. Stalin’s Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009) David Shearer. Policing Stalin's State: Repression and Social Order in The Soviet Union, 1924-1953 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

8 For a contemporary perspective on the acrimonious climate of Soviet Yiddish writers, see: Yanasowicz, Itzhak. Mit Yidishe Shrayber in Rusland [With Yiddish Writers in Russia] (Buenos Aires: Kiyem, 1959).
result of the breadth of its work, drawn a disparate and contentious community of prestige-seeking writers into a loose institution, a kernel of civil society.

Ochnaia Stavka: Confrontation or Fabrication?

The authorities painted Soviet Yiddish efforts with the brush of nationalism. Nationalism, as discussed in the introduction, has many definitions. The Soviet conception of nationalism seized on the civic connotations of the word to tar Jewish cultural preservation with chauvinistic ones. Eli Spivak’s case was the linchpin in a set of accusations, fabrications, and sloppily interwoven facts that felled Ukrainian Jewish public culture. In the vaguest sense, Eli Spivak and Chaim Loitsker were guilty of spreading a nationalist message by Soviet standards. They undoubtedly held sympathy for Zionism and welcomed the creation of the State of Israel. Nonetheless, Soviet commissions would be forced to admit that there was no basis for charging these men with a crime. Spivak and Loitsker’s cases, though, illustrate how the center disposed of the lexicon and investigative techniques of the chekist in order to create a basis for further repressions in Ukraine. Both arrestees were sent to Moscow, defining a broader target for local authorities who might find an opportunity to advance themselves by initiating a legal process against a marked target. Indeed, by the summer of 1949, Moscow could indicate to Kyiv that

9 For example, Ernest Gellner, in Ernst Gellner. Nations and Nationalism 2nd Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 1; argues that the various “sentiments” toward nationalism serve the “political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.” This serviceable definition, however, does not define the historical, but the political, structure of nationalism. Miroslav Hroch seeks to define the dynamics that lead to this supposition by comparing national movements in East Europe. He defines a series of phases that show continuity between the work of individual patriotic or sentimental scholars and poets crafting works based on the nation’s folk heritage, toward creating institutions and “agitation” for propagating these ideas, which yield mass public interest in the political project of creating a culture and state that fulfills Gellner’s definition as a political reality, see: Miroslav Hroch. Socialism Preconditions of Nationalism in Eastern Europe: A Comparative Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 23 and passim, “Introduction.”

10 The two were arrested on 1/8/1949 and 3/5/1949, respectively. [cite files in draft]
Ukraine was infiltrated with not only nationalist agitators, but a network of them who served, wittingly or not, at the behest of foreign intelligence agencies.

One must ask why it was necessary to send Spivak’s deputy, Loitsker, to Moscow. Records from Spivak’s interrogations appear in many other cases, but Loitsker’s appear less frequently. A great majority of the time, interrogations were conducted with one defendant. However, an ochnaia stavka (confrontational or face-to-face interrogation), confronts two defendants (or a defendant and a witness) for questioning. Defendants do not question one another, but are asked to confirm or reject the other’s testimony. By analyzing the protokol (the stenographic or copied records from an interrogation) from this particular ochnaia stavka with Loitsker and Spivak, I aim to show how the center crafted a narrative that Ukrainian officers could act upon locally. In this case, the interrogation and the face-to-face interrogation represent the mechanism that allowed Moscow’s to construct a conspiracy on the Ukrainian periphery. Rather than depending on local actors to perceive signals from newspapers, previous arrests, or other signs of Moscow’s new bent, Moscow preferred to guide the process, albeit loosely, via an establishing a criminal conspiracy. Whereas the protokol is a form of dialogic confession, the ochnaia stavka adds more players in order to twist the plot or move it forward. This particular ochnaia stavka ostensibly served the purpose of conveying to Loitsker the necessity of admitting his guilt. Yet ultimately the investigators, Major Riumin and Captain Merkulov, would use this meeting to establish the existence of a Jewish nationalist conspiracy serving foreign governments. The Moscow detectives, closely connected to Stalin, would use this case to demonstrate that the JAFC had brought all of Kyiv’s Yiddish writers, amidst a larger swath of the Jewish intelligentsia, together in a Zionist project. This particular case put the Ukrainian Jewish intelligentsia into the crosshairs of the MGB.
Loitkser was reticent to inculpate others or admit any illegal action, but there was no need to coerce him. His story could be used to establish conspiracy as long as he admitted his association and activity with Spivak. His presence in Moscow was key to establishing a theory for this alleged crime. The charge of conspiracy could be directed by the center toward peripheral climes and toward various spheres of Soviet life, as well as toward the capital of Ukraine and its Jewish intelligentsia. Playing on the suspicious attitudes of local authorities toward the intelligentsia, non-governmental social work, and Jews, the center endeavored to tie the periphery, via Spivak, to his peers on the JAFC. The order sending Loitsker to Moscow added another link in this chain. He oversaw the literary and memory evenings and spoke at many of them, which implicated him in the supposed crime of spreading nationalist propaganda. Even though he was a junior colleague to Spivak, he fulfilled a critical mission of the Jewish cultural office, and according to the protokol, he did this on behalf of the JAFC. Alleging a conspiracy meant that the gravity of the charges of a conspiracy made it easier to implicate local figures as well. By playing Loitsker and Spivak against each other, investigators could establish a plot and signal to the periphery that “policework,” or the process of implicating innocent individuals in this alleged conspiracy, should commence.

11 After an initial interrogation on March 18 of the same year in Moscow, no interrogations followed until Loitsker’s confrontational interrogation (ochnaia stavka) with Eli Spivak on June 1, 1949. This two-and-a-half month suspension of interrogation is extraordinary. Given what I discuss in this chapter, one can only conclude that Loitsker, while admitting his guilt, was reluctant, or even refused, to testify against people who had not been arrested. His case file makes no mention of the reasoning behind the absence of interrogations. [This may be due to Spivak’s illness, but the dates make this seem unlikely, see note 33 below.]
12 See chapter 1 for detailed discussion of how this order might have come about. I do not have the actual order, which seems based on my consultations with archivists to no longer exist in Ukraine, but a response confirming it and confirming the arrest of Eli Spivak and Chaim Loitsker, see: HDA SBU 16.1.869, 5.
13 See chapter 2 for my discussion of wartime and postwar Yiddish memorial and literary evenings becoming a reason for extending the purge to the periphery and how they represent the kernel of Soviet Yiddish civil society, Jewish public culture.
Being called “stenographs,” the records of the ochnaia stavka suggest greater transparency in the interrogation process. Yet they cannot be stenographs. For a careful reading of these records betray falsification and fabrication of evidence more clearly than typical protokoly. The wording of the ochnaia stavka is oftentimes directly copied from previous protokoly. Entire paragraphs, with the exception of the occasional use of synonyms, are identical.

It is clear both in secondary sources and in my cases that interrogations are formulaic and shape predetermined outcomes. Yet the extent to which language is directly copied is surprising. Usually, a researchers depends on an accrued hermeneutic in order to suss out fabrications, but the work here, although critical to Moscow’s project, was quite sloppy. Indeed, these fabrications represent more than the disposal of a special Soviet and MGB lexicon and mindset, but leave little doubt that the phrases belong entirely to the investigators. For example, compare the interrogation of Spivak (his purported words from the protokol) on May 31st, 1949 to the testimony of Loitsker at the June 1st, 1949 ochnaia stavka:

At the request of Goldberg, Spivak informed (him) in detail of the activity of the Jewish Office of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. He told (soobshchil) Golberg of the particular work that was assigned to each section (otdel’) of the office, about the restoration and work of Jewish organizations in Ukraine, and what opportunities [existed] for deploying (razvertivanie) of nationalistic activity among Jews and the development of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.

Goldberg requested [that we] inform him about the activity of the Jewish Office in Ukraine. I informed him in detail of the work assigned to each section (otdel’) of the office; [I] told him about the restoration and work of Jewish organizations in Ukraine, and what opportunities [existed] for developing Jewish culture and nationalist work among Jews.

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14 See for example, Conquest, Kuromiya, Solzhenitsyn and [add primary source examples].
15 See appendix 2.1 for further examples of language used in earlier interrogations and also in the ochnaia stavka. [check other Stavki and protokoly – See the appendix and the first chapter for comparisons to other stavki].
16 Loitsker, T1, 72
17 Loitsker, T1, 316-317. For a full comparative list of the instances where language is copied between these texts, among others, see Appendix 2.2 “Fabrications: Spivak and Loitsker”
This is merely one example of verbatim copying between two cases. As it is highly unlikely that almost identical testimony sprung from the mouths of both defendants, what this language suggest is rather the degree to which the lexicon and formulations of the interrogators dominate the record, calling into question whether any of the testimony in these cases can be attributed to either Loitsker or Spivak. Indeed, the written record is not based on their words, and at best, one can speculate that it is, somehow or occasionally, derived from them. Ultimately, though, this fabricated text shows that the true purpose of the stavka was not to intimidate Loitsker into cooperating, but for the purpose of establishing a conspiracy.

The work of the investigators was cursory and haphazard. But indeed, there was no need to artfully craft the text in order to establish corroboration. It was sufficient to apply the MGB lexicon and demand the signature of both defendants. Why bother to falsify records carefully when the entire process, from arrest to sentencing, would be handled internally? Regardless of what Spivak and Loitsker may have uttered in their testimony, the official record exists only for the purposes of convicting them and implicating their associates. Cutting and pasting was more than adequate for this hollow “process” because only the procedure, or appearance, of investigation (the only legal notion of process in these cases) was compulsory, though in any legitimate investigation a codified process is necessary for fairly demonstrating that a crime happened (corpus delicti) and that a person acted in bad faith (mens rea). This type of plagiarism in these records is so widespread that it casts doubt on whether ochnaia stavka

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18 In most countries, whether governed by civil law or common law systems, discussing criminal cases would naturally involve words like “prosecution,” and “adjudication,” but the Soviet prosecutor (prokuror) or judge had no role in these and many other cases, so instead, the word “process” is used here to reflect the manner of investigation and sentencing.

19 mens rea in civil systems vs. common law – basically interchangeable, the latter being a bit more cognizant of modern notions of self and mind. [I have not completed the section on Soviet legal practices – I have about 10 pages that explain the process and what it means but they are still in between chapters and need to find a home. Would it be too much to work them in before beginning this section?]
actually occurred. I conclude that it most likely did, but this is based on intuition rather than firm textual evidence from the protokoly.

In many inmates’ petitions (zaïavleniia) there are complaints about falsification, duress, and coercion.\textsuperscript{20} One can verify this not only from the sheer volume of claims, but also from the repetition of language, along with huge amounts of time yielding little information, from protokol to protokol. Yet one must also question the process of legal review of criminal cases by courts before Stalin’s death. There was no oversight or accountability within the MGB and oversight itself was a tool of purges, not of legality.\textsuperscript{21} Also, the record of a case, if reviewed at all, would be accompanied by a summary of the charges and “evidence” that was provided by the selfsame MGB. It would not be unreasonable to assume that a panel of justices, being the first eyes trained in jurisprudence (as opposed to police, who had little training in legal matters) to view a case, would fail to focus on the words of the protokoly when a summary of the case and charges spoke to the political expedience of certifying a conviction and sentence. After all, justices were part of the overarching system, their training and fealty (or lack thereof) to the law notwithstanding. They did not have the luxury of legal independence. Furthermore, they too had a distinct Bolshevik or Stalinist lexicon that was either ingrained or internalized or, at the very least, mandated by their role and position.

Despite the obvious falsification, certain elements of the defendants’ testimony can be gleaned from these records. On June 1\textsuperscript{st} 1949, Loitsker and Spivak were presented to each other for an ochnaia stavka. Recall that Spivak had been a mentor to Loitsker, not only a boss. Loitsker came from a similar, yet humbler, class background, and had worked as an accountant

\textsuperscript{20} See specifically, Zabara, Maidanskii, Bukhbinder, Kipnis, Druker, Lur’e, Falikman, Talalaevskii and others… [fully noted in production draft]

\textsuperscript{21} See for example, Lynne Viola’s recent account of terror in the place of oversight: Lynne Viola, Stalinist Perpetrators on Trial: Scenes from the Great Terror in Soviet Ukraine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
and as a teacher in his home town, near Bila Tserkva, before moving to Kyiv. The Soviet system provided him an opportunity to study at university as what would today be called a “continuing student,” at a later stage in life, when such an option would have expired for most people. Only in a contemporary democracy could the opportunities for a “continuing education” present themselves more widely to a segment of the population that did not enjoy special privilege. He had prospects and was well read, but was not necessarily destined for a career as an academic. After putting him through the rigors of graduate student life, Spivak and Dovid Hofshteyn, the larger-than-life Yiddish poet and Loitsker’s second academic committee member, passed Loitsker and shepherded him into a career as an academician.

Spivak and Loitsker enjoyed a friendship and worked closely together for almost twenty years before their arrest.

On the face of it, the interrogation record suggests that Spivak sets out to inculpate Loitsker. He does not refuse to answer questions about his student. Loitsker fully confirms Spivak’s incrimination: He admits to being a nationalist and to conducting anti-Soviet activism. In the beginning of the interrogation, Loitsker answers that he knows the man in front of him. Before him sits “Spivak Eli Gershovich. From 1932 we worked together at the Jewish institute, and afterwards, at the Jewish Cultural Office in Kyiv. We were friends and we had no personal grudges between us (nikakikh lichnikh shetov).” Spivak, after hearing Loitsker’s admission is asked by the investigator if the latter spoke truthfully. He answers affirmatively, but then adds detail. They indeed were friends, “but I should add that I had not only a friendly relationship

\[22\] Loitsker, T1, 36.
\[23\] Discuss RABFAK among a general drive toward higher education among my subjects. See my discussion of class in chapter 1: “Remshlenniky, Kustary, of ’Kulaks’ and Orphans.”
\[24\] Loitsker, T1, 42-43.
\[25\] Loitsker, T1, 302. This language “no personal grudges (accounts)” was common to these types of interrogations. See chapter 3 “Face-to-face interrogation” for more details.
with Loitsker. Over a period of many years he was united with me in anti-Soviet nationalist activity.” One might well assume that Loitsker felt destroyed. It appears as nothing short of a betrayal not only of the code of friendship, but also of the code of honor later described by Aleksandr Esenin-Vol’pin: not to harm one’s loved ones and friends in interrogation. It looks as if Spivak had broken an even more sacred bond between a student and a mentor.

It also appears that the men not only spoke of each other, but also gave names. Naming one’s associates in crime was a prerequisite for quickly ending an interrogation and for avoiding any consequences that might come with a perceived failure to offer substantial information. As the interrogation continued, Spivak gives details about their joint activity and indicates that they also worked with Itsik Feffer and Dovid Hofshteyn, mentioning also Abraham Kagan. Spivak outlined their relationship as a story of continuous subversion of “the nationality policies of the Soviet Government.” Loitsker, having been asked if this was correct, proceeds with his testimony, adding the names of Solomon Mikhoels and Dovid Bergelson. These men knew of Mikhoels’ death and also understood that all of the figures that they had mentioned had been arrested. Spivak and Loitsker foresaw the purge and these men were more prominent as Soviet Jewish personages. One might wonder why a confrontational interrogation had been ordered if routine ones could have sufficed. Merkulov and Riumin, as established by the protokol in both cases understood that their arrestees’ relationship went back decades and that Spivak was a mentor and friend to Loitsker. Showing the latter that the former was cooperating seems designed to weaken Loitsker’s resolve.

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26 Loitsker, T1, 303.
28 Loitsker, T1, 303.
29 See chapter one, section “Tonight Only: Literature and Memory” for more on their activity and sponsorship of Ukraine Jewish cultural activities.
The interrogation, lasting a mere two hours, continued as described above. The record, seventeen archival pages, marked as a stenograph, is tailored to fit the appearance of verbatim conversation. This is in stark contrast to the typical protokol, in which interrogations can last anywhere from 5-11 hours, or longer, and produce sometimes a scant few pages of purported testimony. In totality, as evidenced above, that conversation could not have been recorded verbatim, yet it is likely enough that some of the conversation actually took place. If Loitsker admitted only that events had taken place, but had not conceded that this inculpated him in a crime, it is conceivable that he was willing to sign (not that he had terribly much choice) and that he entirely misunderstood the purpose of the meeting as being directed toward compromising his faith in Spivak. This would represent an ultimately hopeless, but noble, tactic.

According to the protokol, Loitsker freely admitted to Spivak’s supposed qualifications and each time he was met with more detail added by his mentor. The detective (because the record does not indicate which one was speaking, I assume it was the junior detective Merkulov) asked, “Did Loitsker say everything about your anti-Soviet activity in Ufa?” Spivak answered, “Loitsker spoke truly, but omitted a number of moments.” Spivak supposedly then detailed Loitsker’s excitement after a trip to Moscow from Ufa and how the latter was thrilled with the idea of creating a Jewish State in Crimea. He also spoke about how actively Loitsker had thrown himself into their local work toward a larger goal. Loitsker admitted this was true, only qualifying that since Spivak was the superior, he knew a great deal more about the Crimea plan. More names came to the surface, and yet only the names of those who had already been arrested. It is impossible to tell if the men knew of these arrests, but they could also have acted simply to

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30 Loitsker, T1, 306
31 Loitsker, T1, 306.
32 Loitsker, T1, 307
protect those who had not been arrested – their junior colleagues in the office and the Yiddish writers that participated in their cultural work.

The interrogation proceeded to the subject of the postwar era and the continuation of literary evenings in Kyiv, most of which Loitsker directed. Spivak and Loitsker added details and were questioned regarding IKUF (the World Yiddish Cultural Association). The IKUF had, via Mikhoels and Feffer, made contact with Spivak and Loitsker.33 There was discussion of the American “spy,” Ben Zion Goldberg, a representative of IKUF and editor of the Yiddish socialist daily “Der Tog,” who visited Kyiv on behalf of IKUF. The pair of “nationalists” had warmly welcomed Goldberg into the Office. Loitsker admitted to “opening the doors” (raspakhnuli…dvery) for Goldberg and “giving detailed information about our work.”34 The interrogation ended shortly thereafter.

This particular record fascinates not only because it represents an important interrogation record – so many of them become mundane in context – but because it reveals possible tactics for the defendants and a global strategy for the interrogators. In light of his tutelage and patronage, Spivak’s seeming betrayal of Loitsker was, perhaps, used by the interrogators to elicit detail from a reticent Loitsker. Considering the direct copying of information from other protokoly, this would seem to be the only remaining reason to hold an ochnaia stavka. Loitsker had undergone only one interrogation previously, on the 18th of March of 1949, and the rest of his interrogations occurred after his June 1st, 1949, encounter with Spivak.35 His record contains no mention of why his case was interrupted. Although not evident in the protokol, it seems he was unwilling to cooperate further. Indeed, he offers no admission of guilt in the original

33 Regarding Feffer’s work as a Soviet agent, see: Vaksberg, 286-91, [and agent files from Ukraine trip in 6/18!]
34 Loitsker, T1, 72. Here is another case of the language being copied from other protokoly.
35 Eight interrogations followed, beginning on June 10 and culminating on December 6, 1949.
interrogation, and one can imagine that he might have indicated he would sign nothing further. Arranging Loitsker’s meeting with his ailing mentor might alone be a powerful coercive device. Yet one cannot be certain whether or not both men deployed an unspoken strategy to admit only what was necessary. The two may well have foreseen their arrest and planned how they might comport themselves in various circumstances. If there were conflict between their individual testimonies, an interrogation could produce results. However, given the harmony between their supposed answers, one could easily assume that the ochnaia stavka was a vehicle to create both psychological and material leverage against Loitsker.

But, again, why bring Loitsker all the way to Moscow? Spivak allegedly remarks that “the Americans demanded” further efforts in spreading the national message among Kyiv and Ukrainian Jews. Although the word “demand” (trebovat’) is semantically related to the verb “request,” it more closely conveys the relationship between a superior and a subordinate. This language suggests the existence of an “organization.” Organizations are predicated on hierarchies between superiors and underlings. It matters little if Spivak actually spoke any of these words. After all, he signed them. The interrogators’ intent was not to establish the facts of his and Loitsker’s activity, but to demonstrate that Spivak and Loitsker consciously worked in service of American intelligence agents. Spivak and Loitsker claim that they entertained Goldberg at the behest of the JAFC. Yet the use of the word “demand,” in this context suggests that Spivak and Loitsker served under a hostile agent of a foreign government, and did not

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36 Spivak was later diagnosed with advanced arteriosclerosis in February of 1950, and according to the record, he died on April 4, 1950 of a cerebral hemorrhage. I have heard contacts speculate that he was murdered in detention, but he was examined by doctors and it is just as plausible that the stress of imprisonment and interrogation had aggravated his condition. See: Spivak, T2, 524-530b for the history of his illness and certification of his passing.
37 Loitsker, T1, 315
38 Loitsker, T1, 310. This “Jewish Nationalist Organization” was supposedly grafted onto the institution of the Jewish Office of the Ukrainian Academy of Science, for more on their activity, see Chapter 1, Section “A Library and Corner office.”
merely receive a guest at Mikhoels’ request. They could not easily claim to be unwitting tools of 
the JAFC agenda either. Spivak was a member of the JAFC (but did not sit on the presidium). 
Here, one can see that the ochnaia stavka fulfilled the purpose of linking Yiddish cultural 
agitation (Loitsker) to a concocted espionage network that Spivak commanded locally (the 
JAFC). This also testified to the presence of the network in Kyiv (and its agitation throughout 
Ukraine), which, quite probably, amplified the pressure on MGB investigators in Ukraine to seek 
more local links in the chain. Whatever words belong to Loitsker and Spivak they were not 
words that inculpated anyone directly, save for those central JAFC figures who had already been 
imprisoned. They were words, cut and pasted and rife with chekist-speak that inculpated 
everyone in general. Despite the fabrication being bold, the insinuation of a conspiracy was 
common enough to have purchase within the MGB. 

Other potential defendants who had worked with Spivak and Loitsker, either in the office 
or in the sphere of Yiddish cultural outreach, would not need to be closely associated with such a 
vaguely defined structure as an “organization.” A threat of espionage, external and internal, 
could have implicated anyone in the orbit of Spivak and Loitsker. Even if they were not directly 
charged with espionage, “spies” would loom over their cases. They could also be cast as fodder 
for further recruitment, which would make their nationalist agitation seem much more 
consequential. Stalin never required anything but the mere notion that a group might be a threat 
before initiating brutal repressions. Both the maintenance of a prophylactic component and the 
ability to direct the organs toward a specific line of inquiry originated in Stalin’s office, and not 
in the office of any given local authority. The logic of the system followed the logic of its 

39 See the Odessa cases against, Falikman, Druker, L’ure. See the discussion of the broadening of the purge toward 
Stalin’s death below. I can state this more firmly, but I must bring up further evidence. 
40 Cite Khlevniuk, Master, Tucker and bring up cf.
leader and the center was able, in this case, to effect a nearly complete purge of Yiddish writers in Ukraine along with the sole institutional vehicle for Soviet Jewish cultural activity, the Jewish Office at the UK NAN, with a single direct order. At first glance, it might appear that these arrests resulted from information gathered from earlier arrests in Moscow alongside the public assault of Zhdanovism and anti-cosmopolitanism rather than being based on direct orders from Moscow. Yet Abakumov’s order and the facts of these cases, especially the appearance of Riumin who later concocted the case against the Jewish doctors, suggest that the careful broadening of these cases was a project of Abakumov’s design, possibly directly on Stalin’s behalf.

From the case against the two men, one gains a sense of the urgency imparted to local authorities. If ultimately the pettiest efforts of a supposed nationalist such as Itsik Kipnis, Natan Zabara, or countless other men and women served the purposes of a spy network, their arrest becomes a necessity. Here one considers the relationship between the idea of a “State of Emergency,” and the purchase of anti-Semitic conspiracy in the minds of the state, in the very raison d’état. The conclusion that allowing Soviet Yiddish writers to remain free would present opportunities for continuing espionage was obvious to investigators. The cases against writers

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41 See note 10.
42 I am cautious here because I have no direct evidence that Stalin intervened here, although he is suspected to have directly initiated some of the early actions against the JAFC. See: Gennadii Kostyrchenko. V Plenu Krasnogo Pharaona, politicheskie presledovaniia evreev v SSSR v poslednee stalinskoe desiatilecie, dokumentalnoe issledovanie (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnoe Otnosheniia, 1994). Compare to: Joshua Rubenstein, and Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov. Stalin’s Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
43 Schmitt, Agamben discussion for theoretical, see epilogue, also Dewey vs Niebuhr for practical reason. [I’m hinting at a global, but ancillary, argument from my dissertation. Basically it argues via a stream of pure reason that the European state has the DNA of a racial predator, the Soviets were the apotheosis of a Modern European State, “burn all flags,” and then turns to the practical side of it - but wait a second, institutions, civil society, the higher, but pragmatic, “spirit of the law” (maybe Leo Strauss) against the strident, but humane, “spirit of utopia” (Ernst Bloch). The state, therefore, as BOTH dialectical synthetic and social aggregate of pure and practical motives.]
such as Kipnis, Rive Baliasne, and Zabara depend on entirely different fabrications, machinations, and selective interpretations of facts. The MGB needed only to demonstrate that these intellectuals were peripherally connected to a conspiracy. They would not necessarily be charged as part of the conspiracy, but even the slightest hint at spy connections would be damning. It would not only serve the investigator, but also would guarantee that a court would be reluctant to satisfy an inmate’s appeal. Even if an inmate’s petition (заявление) to a court made convincing claims of procedural abuses by the investigator, the idea of a conspiracy still presented, in the mind of the judges, an imminent threat to the Soviet Union. The judges would not be willing to risk their careers. The signal, travelling on an accusation of conspiracy, not only penetrated the local MGB offices, but reverberated through the entire system. Indeed, the ochnaia stavka was not simply an exercise in breaking Loitsker, as it appears on the surface. It cast the sphere of espionage beyond Moscow, to the second cultural capital of Soviet Jewry. Riumin and Merkulov, the investigators in Spivak and Loitsker’s cases, orchestrated this expansion of the conspiracy’s scope under the guidance of Abakumov.

Stalin used the loosely webbed but omnipresent structure of Soviet institutions to extend his power into the farthest peripheries. Similarly, detectives in Moscow used the vaguest notion of an organization of Jewish spies to spur peripheral organs into action. It may well be that the center monitored the other cases in Kyiv closely. The record shows that Abakumov initiated the case against Spivak, but does not make it obvious to what extent he followed it or what he reported to Stalin about it. Regardless of the center’s involvement in Kyiv’s investigations, Spivak and Loitsker’s cases served as a critical signal for the overburdened MGB satellites in

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44 See chapter three….
45 Doctors plot – Riumin – in footnote or main?
46 J Arch Getty, revisionist line. See note 4.
The Investigative File, the Interrogative Method and how the State loomed over the Local Beat

A dragnet, mass repression, or constellation of incrimination need only be constructed well-enough to inculpate and terrify. Dragnets are rarely, even in the most democratic society, sewn together with the stuff of facts, procedures, and documents. Investigators (sledovately), usually junior ranking chekists, had a much more reliable tool for quickly expanding the scope of their investigations via coercion and fabrication. Physical violence (or the threat of physical violence), sleep deprivation, exceedingly cramped spaces, and their attending incriminations and confessions simply generate cases as well as, if not more than, studying an archive of informant and agent reports or of consulting with agents. A student of Soviet history will not find it hard to entertain the idea that a chekist would prefer to endure many early morning sessions of intimidating and threatening an arrestee, rather than sit in a reading room, poring over mundane agent reports. Interrogations are productive: One might get names out of a defendant. He (rarely if ever she during this period) might in the course of all of a defendant’s interrogations, gather not only a detailed confession, but also the opportunity to inculpate acquaintances, colleagues, and family members of the accused. The metaphor of “sewing” is commonly used to describe the method that chekists used to clear cases or make new ones. Continuing the metaphor: the sewing was crude, but so long as the garment fit.... One must also look at the surveillance and

47 [I have MGB internal reports that can substantiate that they turned more attention to Jews because of a flood of info from Moscow – I have to find and index these files, and will cite in the final draft along with an inclusion of a quote.]
48 Especially during my period, scant evidence exists in the record of coercion. However, memoirs have given a window into the physical duress that arrestees faced. For example, see: Ephraim Wolf, Unwilling Encounters published online. http://berkovich-zametki.com/Avtory/EWolf.htm (last accessed 4/3/2018).
49 [Can anyone recommend a thorough discussion of this metaphor?]
investigative files (*agenturnye dela*, or, *delo-formliar*), rather than individual case (*lichnye dela*), to understand further why a detective would prefer the interrogatory method of investigation over a more research-oriented method of information gathering.

Surveillance activity relating to the group of cases this dissertation considers began in the mid-1930’s. The investigation, however, produced no cases until almost a decade later. One can argue that any police agency undertakes such surveillance. Indeed, what is striking about Soviet practices is that they surveilled, either directly via agents or via solicited (and unsolicited) denunciations on virtually every conceivable category of social group, from urchins to entire ethnic groups. For the 15 tomes representing the case against Ukrainian Jewish intellectuals (each roughly around 300 pages) of investigative material (addressing only some of the cases that metastasized from a few key arrests), there exist no indices or tables of contents. The organization and volume of material would present a seasoned analyst with a difficult task; given the training and education level of a typical chekist, the task of even a cursory inquiry into these files becomes daunting. Despite some chronological organization, the files are as the director of the UMGB in 1949, Leuitenant General Savchenko put it, “a garbage heap.”

Simply, my findings indicate that the main method of investigation was the “interrogatory” method. Bosses and senior investigators steeped junior colleagues in a culture and methodology

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50 Yiddishists were among those repressed during the Great Terror but the surveillance files begin during the era of these arrests. Generally they were arrested as Trotskyists or Zionists, but this purge left most of Kyiv and the Soviet Union’s Yiddish writers and intellectuals untouched. See: Zvi Gitelman. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), chapter 3 “Building Socialism and a New Jewish Culture.”

51 I realize that I may not have warrant to speak about the “typical chekist” in regard to education. Yet the frequency of simple grammatical mistakes, along with a demonstrated lack of adaptivity in response to inmates like Kipnis and Pinchevskii, who showed savvy and considerable knowledge of their rights, I feel that it is fair to remark that their lack of education and insulated reading experience made the task of research especially daunting.

52 16.654.165---. I cannot be sure that he was addressing this particular set of files, but given other remarks and the cases being discussed from the record, along with the state of the files I gathered, the statement certainly applies.
that relied upon a confrontation with the “enemy,” a reckoning beginning at arrest rather than upon conviction of a substantiated crime.

While during the period Abakumov and Stalin were sending signals that socialist legality needed to be maintained, a program leftover from the war perhaps, the culture of the local MGB still depended on coercion more than it did information gathering, at least when it came to the cases discussed here. These tensions are revealed during a December 14-16, 1949 conference (zasedanie) of the division and operational bosses of the Ukrainian MGB. The stenographic record of this meeting gives a snapshot of the politics and working environment of the local MGB during the period as bosses gathered to report their progress in certain matters and to address criticisms and deficiencies that had come up at the recent Fourth Party Conference of the Ukrainian MGB in Moscow. Lieutenant General Savchenko, the head of the Ukrainian MGB mentioned that certain questions about the work and procedures of the Ukrainian MGB “arose in Moscow with the summons of a group of Ukrainian chekists.” After discussing some of the foci of the MGB, Jews or “Zionists” not among them, Minister Savchenko stresses the importance of the chekist working with agents: “Minister Abakumov said, that it is necessary to convince people (liudi), so that people once and for all understood that the chekist is the one who works with agents. As soon as he is not working with agents, he is not a chekist.” Savchenko uses the formula “Abakumov said” multiple times in a typically Soviet appeal to higher authority. Yet perhaps he was setting some distance between Abakumov and himself, for he certainly understood the limitations of his agency when it came to faithfully working through

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53 See HDA SBU 16.654 for the main meeting notes and 16.655 for notes on the follow-up evening session of the 16th of December.

54 16.654.1
55 16.654.11
thousands of archived records amid the constant flow of new material. The purchase here was that further action was necessary. The tension between working with agent-gathered material and using other means to produce cases seems to be the main focus of the document, but the obvious goal was to generate more arrests and to decorate the records of them with a patina of seeming diligence.

The meeting reveals that the persecution of writers was not itself a central motive yet for the Ukrainian MGB – the UMGB pursued these cases just as it had surveilled the Ukrainian intelligentsia (Jewish and non-Jewish). Yet from the meeting itself, and as based on a review of inventories (opisy) from the collections of the Main Branch Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (HDA SBU) and the Central State Archive of Public Organizations (TsDAHOU), it becomes apparent that the local authorities viewed actions against supposed and real Ukrainian nationalists in the western part of the country as a critical facet of their mission. Remarkably, “cosmopolitan” and similar terminology does not appear in the stenograph, though the term had already circulated in Zhandovite attacks. This file shows that as late as December, 1949 the gaze of local authorities monitoring the activities of supposed Jewish nationalists fell on the “Jewish Clerics.” These “clerics,” were mentioned in the context of other anti-religious and anti-nationalist actions, so the relationship between self-identifying Ukrainian religious organizations and Ukrainian nationalism was presumed to also exist between religious Jews and the sometimes distant, sometimes close Soviet Yiddish writers. This crudely egalitarian elision

56 Indeed, the literal periphery of the Soviet Union was carefully monitored. The border troops played also a significant role in operations in Western Ukraine, see, for example: [talk with Erik Scott about his forthcoming work] and see also: HDA SBU, Fund 1, Opis’ 20 (among many others) for details on specific cases related to smuggling and espionage at the border.
58 HDA SBU 16.654.168……….. This term was used as it must have, for the organs, encompassed more than Rabbis so as to address private worship of Minyans, cantors, and anyone practicing Judaism in one the periphery between the public and private.
was as typical of Soviet mentalities as it was of anti-Semitic ones. The vice-director of
department “O,” identified as Comrade Sukhonin, remarks that “The Jewish clerics are working
actively in creating a nationalist underground.” Indeed, the fact that Jews were conveniently
enough lumped in with others, belies the special intention of the particular purge.

After explaining that the Moscow MGB Party Conference did not allow for raising
certain questions, Savchenko seems to admit he’d been intentionally vague: “regarding a few
questions at the Party Conference, as it was plain to you, I addressed in an allegorical form.”
He then continued that he had spoken at the conference over “serious deficiencies” that the “the
Minister of State Security…called to general attention.” Continuing on, Savchenko never
directly addressed operational and procedural issues, but framed questions within the realm of
specific investigations. His deputies and regional departmental bosses did the same in their
reports. The supposed “O.U.N. Underground,” and the work of “American and British spy
networks (razvedki) in Ukraine.” While these statements reveal some of the central anxieties of
the local and central MGB at the moment about the presence and spread of civil society in some
Soviet climes after the war, the vagueness underscores the chief problem the MGB boss: the
most efficient way to work based on the function of processes and desired effect of those
processes was to let suspect interrogation inform the development of cases.

Whether by interrogation or research, Savchenko (though seemingly discussing the
matter generally) possibly indicates that cases against the intelligentsia, particularly the Jewish
intelligentsia should be ramped up. He remarks that: “It seems to me that the most congested
(zasoreonnaia) network of provocateurs and spreaders of disinformation (dezinformatory) is the

59 16.654.168
60 16.654.1
61 16.654.1
62 16.654.8
He mentions an agent that informed on the Jewish intelligentsia, codenamed “Sarafimov,” who along with another agent, “Hunter,” \textit{(okhotnik)} should be “chased off” and “excluded.” Responding to Savchenko’s remarks on the deficiencies of the agents and the lack of progress on the cases against the intelligentsia, the Director of the 5th directorate Sekarev gave an account of his recent schedule, defending his directorate as overburdened: “In connection with [our burden] I’ll tell you personally about what I’ve been up to \textit{(zanimat’sia)} on over the past 10 days…there was a congress of the Writer’s Union, I was busy there. Right after the congress I had to write an inquiry \textit{(spravka)} on a writer and finish two on another two writers, and also write a report on \textit{(napisat’)} information in connection with the congress.” Savchenko found this a frail excuse, highlighting again the lack of meaningful work with archival materials: “The reports should have been made long ago, only the very latest agent material should have been added – and how many files were neglected - take the surveillance file – it isn’t a file, it’s a trash heap, only such because it is sewn together.” Given that the conversation mentioned two agents specializing in surveillance of Jewish targets, this discussion likely refers to the 15 volumes of agent materials, mentioned above, (along with others that were destroyed in the 1950’s and early 1990s) that relate directly to the cases herein. Even if the remarks focus on another case, they apply to surveillance files. On the surface, the discussion is part of a wider injunction to deeper and more productive work with agents. Since Savchenko picked these examples, he may have wished to convey to Sekarev 

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63 16.654.164
64 16.654.164 For reports from “Sarafimov” and “Okhotnik” on Jewish intelligentsia, see: Kipnis T1.282, Agdelo 3-5 [update these citations, explore agdelo and how Sarafimov reported on Kipnis from 1936].
65 16.654.165 – Sekarev was almost certainly speaking about these cases – why?
66 16.654.165
that these particular cases were not merely an example, but represented a new priority for that
directorate.

Yiddish writers were like all elite groups – significant despite their small number. It was
more important that they were counted and watched than that counting and watching them
produced spontaneous cases. It was the center that kept them counted on the periphery, awaiting
a perceived necessity or opportunity. Given that the repression of religious Judaism that resumed
almost immediately after the war ended, a wholesale purge of Jewish identity (in the long term)
could be initiated by destroying Yiddish literature and limiting the advancement of assimilated
Jews. These were projects that Stalin saw realized before his death and that continued in some
measure until the end of the Soviet Union. Remarkably, the effort at ethnic cleansing was so
organic to Soviet structures, that it need not be orchestrated but through a few arrests. The
compartmentalization of the programs against Jews, all being in line with other Soviet aims,
served to occult the whole picture of longue durée ethnic cleansing even as the cultural push
against “rootless cosmopolitans” betrayed it. In regards to the police, this compartmentalization
shows the adaptability of Stalinist power, a cumulative and savvy power that designed and
worked institutions rather than administrated their independent function. Although my
dissertation cannot conclusively demonstrate this, it seems the cumbersome nature of the MGB,
counterintuitively enough, made it possible to push for a desired effect with a rather light touch.
Such a dynamic, so clearly evident in the case of the Kyivan and Odessan groups of Yiddish

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67 See generally: Gennadii Kostyrchenko. Tainaia Politika Khrusheva: Vlast’, Intelligentsiia, Evreiskii Vopros
(Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otosheniiia, 2012) and Zvi Gitelman. A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia
and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present. - I treat these issues in the epilogue, showing how a variant of the organs
with fewer teeth coped with the dissident movement and relied on the trauma of past incarceration in ignoring my
subjects’ activity.
personages, combined with the history of restructuring and purging of the organs, raises compelling questions for further inquiry.

Considering the cases that the MGB initiated from May, 1950 onwards, there is some evidence that investigators made efforts at making better use of the agent-gathered materials after this meeting.\(^{68}\) A collection of reports from 1950-1952 show that local bosses clearly understood the imperative to build more cases from agent-gathered material. A report on the Odessa group of Yiddish writers makes the fact of the case’s investigative provenance explicit: “The Odessa Oblast’ UMGB from March-May, 1950 arrested (the following) having examined (razrabatyvavshiesia) the surveillance files (delo-formuliar) of Jewish writers.”\(^{69}\) Interestingly there is evidence that suggests that it was an agent who provided key testimony against the three defendants mentioned in the report.\(^{70}\) During review of the case in 1955, prompted by petition from the defendants, a jurist re-interviewed a witness by the name of Malka Mordkovna Vaisberg. Vaisberg refused to answer the jurist’s questions, maintaining that she “does not have the right” or simply “cannot” answer his specific inquiries. She relents when questioned about a possible intimate affair with Note Lur’e, one of the defendants, categorically denying such an occurrence.\(^{71}\) The defendants of the Odessa writers were prosecuted under one case, the accusations revolving around several meetings with newspaper editor Paul Novick, who had

\(^{68}\) See the cases of Bukhbinder, Baliasne, Talalaevskii and Polianker. In these cases one also sees more discussion of incriminating literary works, see the final section of this chapter.

\(^{69}\) HDA SBU 1.94.30.67

\(^{70}\) See section 3 “Odessa” – [not included], notes … I believe that a young woman acted as a “honey-pot” for some of these writers, becoming close to their circle through flirtation and adulation of the group of Odessa writers, serving as a witness against them and then refusing to answer questions when the case under review in 1955. I cannot confirm that she was an agent, but cannot imagine a Soviet citizen refusing the questions of an MGB officer if she had no guarantee that this would not earn her a sentence of her own.

\(^{71}\) Lur’e and co., 306-307.
travelled to the Soviet Union in order to solicit submissions for his pro-Soviet publication *Morgn Frayhayt* (Morning Freedom) and to get a sense of the country.\textsuperscript{72}

It seems as if the general directive to pay more attention to archives and agents led to the development of an important case. The case against the Odessa group of Yiddish writers features many witness interviews dating back to 1936, along with materials from investigative files and other indications that the local authorities wanted to present a tighter case to both their bosses and to the Special Commission (*Osoboe Soveshchanie*), the five-member body that would sentence the men and who represented the highest authorities of the MGB.\textsuperscript{73} Additionally, since the prosecutor levelled accusations against more than one defendant, it seems that the appearance of rigor and order had to be more convincing than in a case against a single defendant, especially with Abakumov pushing for tighter, more “evidence” oriented cases.\textsuperscript{74}

The obvious differences between the 1938 cases and those that came a decade later (fewer defendants per case, less obvious violence, a different but still effectively arbitrary structure for sentencing) do not forfend the possibility of renewed large-scale terror. The system, despite procedural reforms, was in many ways as arbitrary as it was in 1938. Of course it could not, as it was, sustain such a purge (because praxis limited the reach of the local institution), but it certainly sufficed, as my cases show, in making more tactical-level purges toward a broader strategic goal. Here, this means destroying Jewish culture in the periphery toward the strategic goal of erasing Jewish identity. Indeed, more than anything, modifications in the structural and procedural apparatus of the MGB (from the NKVD, CHEKA and many other incarnations)

\textsuperscript{72} Novik visited Kyiv and Odessa in 1946. The agents who initiated the purge of Ukraine’s Yiddishists in Moscow cast his meeting with Eli Spivak and the appearance at the Jewish Office of the Academy of Sciences as proof of an espionage organization tied to the JAFC and foreign spy agencies.

\textsuperscript{73} See especially volume four of the investigative case files - agdelo 4.

\textsuperscript{74} See note 52.
mainly serve to create a semblance of change. Degrees of brutality and scale are at issue, but not a fundamental change in the manner of the system.

A fundamentally prophylactic system of policing was at once a vehicle for targeted and widespread systemic repression. Most critically, I believe I have shown, that targeted fabrication was not simply about expanding inculpation among suspects locally (which might suggests a run-away machine or local initiative) but could serve as a control by which the center governed the scope of broader repressions. The very compartmentalization of such a system made it an ideal vehicle for exacting sweeping purges whose motivation might well be occulted between the category-driven “local beat” of prophylactic police-work and the looming center that sent orders and signals in order to, seemingly naturally, steer the police to their other task: discovering crimes through investigation. Abakumov’s orders to arrest Spivak and Loitsker, and especially the narrative of an “organization,” indicating conspiracy, simply draw a red line under a minor category in the purview of the everyday MGB Lieutenant, “Jewish writers,” signaling both a necessity for action and an opportunity for advancement. Viewed from the spreadsheets of the MGB, chekists appear to simply be conducting the mundane work of secret policing. Any overzealousness could be explained precisely as such – if there is any truth left to the long discussed idea of the atomization of the Soviet individual, one should take caution when looking at these purges, for it is the appearance of the atomization or sui generis nature of these cases that might be employed to buttress arguments of Stalin as a weak dictator and the Terror as a result of peripheral hysteria. Indeed, the focus of recent authors on prophylactic policing from the ground up may neglect the second purpose, off-specification though it may be, of having a

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75 See note 41, Chapter 1.
76 I discuss these arguments during the literature review in my introduction [reference or add a historiographic note here].
secret police force, and with it, Moscow’s role and method in exacting specific actions in Ukraine and other Soviet republics.