



Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

Research Report

The opinions, recommendations, and conclusions of the grantee are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IREX or the US Department of State.

Please respond to the following questions, using the form below as a template. Research Report, along with your Final Report, is due within 30 days of the end of your grant. Please e-mail your Final and Research reports to iaro@irex.org.

ANDREW PAUL JANCO

1. Title of Research Proposal:

“The Soviet Refugee in Postwar Europe and the Cold War, 1945-1957”

At the end of World War II, there were more than 5 million “displaced persons” from the Soviet Union in Western Europe. On the road and in DP camps, they told unique stories about their lives during the war. Nearly two million had been forced laborers (Ostarbeiter) in Germany and the occupied territories. Others traveled voluntarily or fled with the retreating German army. Whatever their story, be it a tale of collaboration, resistance or simple survival, all “Soviet citizens” were required to return to the USSR after the war given existing agreements between the Allied and Soviet governments. By September 1945, 5 million had returned, while an unknown number of “non-returners” (nevozvrashchentsy) remained in Europe. These individuals and their experiences are the focus of my research.

2. Relevance and contribution to field:

The majority of works on the history of international human rights protection have been written using primary materials from state organizations and the United Nations. On a practical level, state archives offer easily accessible materials and a logical starting point for research. What frequently remains unclear, however, is how these policies took shape on the ground and the effectiveness of measures to protect and provide for

refugees. What is the history of human rights protection from the refugee's point of view? With historical perspective, we are able to compare and balance information that was not available to contemporaries. I see my work as part of an ongoing evaluation of how policies were formulated and their effectiveness in real world situations. Policy makers will never face the same situation twice, but they can benefit from knowledge of past refugee crises and the effectiveness of past resolutions.

My work is also relevant to the interests of two groups of scholars. For historians of the Russian emigration, my dissertation will be the first study of the postwar "second wave" or "new" emigration. I am also the first to stress that conceptions of the "Russian emigration" change over time and are formulated in the context of other national groups. I explore the relations between various nationalities and émigré communities in the "displaced persons" camps. The second group of scholars works on topics associated with forced labor during the Second World War and postwar "displaced persons." My work is significant to this historiography, because I detail how individuals altered their identities in order to receive refugee status and protections. Soviet refugees had to create false identities in order to stay in the West. Given the large number of impostors, the Soviets became convinced that hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens were being "held captive" in Allied "labor concentration camps." I detail the interactions of Allied and Soviet officials and the political implications of the "DP problem" in the early years of the Cold War. Finally, the majority of Soviet refugees were "free living" DPs. They lived in rented apartments or in cottages in the German countryside. As such, my work sheds light on the many "displaced persons" who lived outside of the DP camps.

3. A concise summary of your approach and research methodology including a list of research sites.

My research in Russia was conducted at the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the Library of the "Russian Abroad." During my first week in Russia, I compiled a database using finding aides (opisi) of 170 folders (delo) in GARF and 23 memoirs in the Library of the Russian Abroad. I studied the provenance and character of the materials in the archives. Then I determined which materials were potentially useful for my project and put them in the database. For example, in the Library of the Russian Abroad I located memoirs from anyone who had lived in postwar Europe. This does not mean that they wrote about their experiences, but they could have done so. Of the 23 memoirs that I read, twelve of them had useful information and will be critical sources for my dissertation. In the State Archive, the diversity of types of materials and their utility was greater and is difficult to summarize.

Research Sites: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), Biblioteka-fond "Russkoe zarubezh'e"

4. A summary of research findings and preliminary conclusions.

One of the most notable findings is a letter to Stalin regarding Soviet clandestine activities in the "displaced persons" camps. This report confirms that agents were regularly sent to the DP camps and that Soviet authorities were aware that the Allies were actively helping people to escape repatriation. In this instance, a Canadian soldier told two NKVD agents how to register as Poles (and thus become ineligible for repatriation to the USSR). In the records of the Soviet Military Administration, I found transcripts of discussions between Soviet, American, British and French generals and

military officials in the field. As such, I can document their interactions and how the Allies and Soviets negotiated their competing claims to the legal rights of Soviet citizens in Europe. I was also able to read reports from “discussions” (besedy) with returning Soviet citizens. These people had lived in the DP camps in Europe and reported on their experiences to Soviet authorities. The utility of these materials is limited by the fact that the Soviets sought particular information from these individuals for use in propaganda. Returners’ testimony was used to demonstrate that the Allies were keeping DPs “captive” in “labor concentration camps” throughout Europe. While I worked with many Soviet government documents, I always found the same understanding of the “DP problem.” Allied intentions were described in terms of their interests at capitalist powers. Despite prolonged efforts to explain their positions to each other, there was an inherent conflict between the Soviet and Allied perspectives that centered on the individual’s right to determine their own best interests.

5. Suggestions for future research agendas in your field for the scholarly community.

I see my research as part of an ongoing effort to understand Russian conceptions of national space. In particular, I think there is much to be said about how Russian nationals relate to Russians who live abroad or share ties with other countries. Like Klaus Bade, I see a need for a history of Europe that details population movement across state borders as a normal process and essential component of modern societies. I sympathize with much of the literature on “transnationalism,” which seeks to show that individuals do not simply assimilate into others nations, but share ties to both their origins and places of resettlement. Russia exists far beyond its political borders. Nonetheless, the legacy of the Revolution and Civil War continue to frame how Russians relate to those who live in the “Russian abroad.” Fostering dialogue and understanding between these groups, in my opinion, is an essential step to normalizing Russian perceptions of the world “beyond the borders.”

6. Any recommendations for the US policy community.

While I cannot offer specific policy recommendations, I would like to note that the history of American initiatives to protect refugees exemplifies some of our best qualities as a nation. In 1945, U.S. policies called for the forced repatriation of all Soviet citizens. Thousands of refugees were forcibly taken from “displace persons” camps and transferred to Soviet authorities. However, many GIs refused to take part. Military officials accepted fake documents or knowingly misidentified individuals who would have been forcibly repatriated. Over time policies changed. In 1946, the International Refugee Organization extended protection to Soviet citizens. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 allowed 200,000 refugees to resettle in the United States. Having read thousands of pages of memoirs and having talked personally with refugees, I can recall scores of stories in which the kindness of an American GI or the financial assistance of humanitarian organizations made a critical difference in their lives. While policies did not initially protect Soviet refugees, common Americans disobeyed orders and provided them with sanctuary. More importantly, policy makers were quick to recognize the plight of Soviet refugees. They sponsored the creation of the IRO and pressed for the adoption of the modern definition of “refugee.” The Soviet Union rejected this definition and refused to join the IRO.

Each Department of State-funded scholar will be required to submit a short summary (one page or less) of the assistance provided and the time spent on these activities. This summary is due at the same time the final and research reports are due, no later than one month after the end of the grant.