

DOCUMENTARY II

From Babi Yar to Babi Yar:

Halkin, Weinberg and Shostakovich: Brothers in arms



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For Linda and Stanley[1]*

Introduction

This article presents a sketch of the artistic connections between works of the poet Shmuel Halkin and the two composers, Mieczyslaw Weinberg (Moisei Vainberg) and Dmitri Shostakovich, from the start of the Holocaust to Shostakovich's *Babi Yar* Symphony (1962). Central to this story are poetic texts dealing with the horrors of war (notably WWII) and the way in which they were expressed through music. In an age of anti-Semitism, of massacre and oppression, these artists were able to survive through their art. It appears Shostakovich must have been fully aware of the persecution of the Jews when he composed works with Jewish elements, including his *From Jewish Folk Poetry*.

In order to illustrate the many historical threads that link the three men, a portrait of Shmuel Halkin – a man unknown to many people living outside Russia – is indispensable.



Shmuel Halkin

Part one: Poet Shmuel Halkin (Samuel Galkin or Smuil Galkin): a short biography.

Youth

Born on 5 December 1897 in Rogachev (Belorussia), Halkin grew up as one of ten children in a Hassidic family[2]. Later, he fled to Kiev and moved to Moscow after the end of the First World War. His father, who had a strong love of nature, died early. Halkin was raised by one of his brothers and brought up amidst nature, literature, philosophy and poetry. He started to write poetry in Hebrew at an early age. The members of his family, like many, were badly affected during WWII. Four of the children did not survive the Holocaust.

In Rogachev, Shmuel Halkin had a young friend, Anatoli Lvovich Kaplan, born in 1902. Like Kaplan, Shmuel had ambitions to become a painter. The friends decided to design signboards featuring boots, for shoemakers in Rogachev. Ironically, Halkin was the artist and Kaplan the writer in this endeavour, although Kaplan was to become a painter, sculptor and lithographer, his works reflecting his Jewish origin. (Inspired by Shostakovich's *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, Kaplan later produced several works (lithographs and paintings *in tempera*) alluding to the songs.)

Poems in Hebrew and Yiddish

Halkin initially studied painting and found it particularly difficult to choose between becoming a painter or a poet. The young man received support in the early twenties from two prominent Yiddish Soviet writers, Peretz Markish and David Hofshsteyn: both were members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee – 'JAC' in 1942; they were sentenced to death in 1952. They encouraged Halkin to publish his poems. Little is known about the Zionist background of Halkin, except that he appeared to have been a member of the Zionist youth movement. The authorities accused him of being a 'petit Zionistic bourgeois' and a 'Yiddish Hebraist', accusations that inevitably restricted his freedom of expression. Nevertheless, after the use of the Hebrew language was 'forbidden' (1919), he wrote his poems and theatre works in a native Yiddish idiom. They are written in ancient, classical verse forms and contain biblical and historical themes. His first poems (1921) appeared in the literary journal *Shtern*. An example of Halkin's work (precise source unknown):

*My glass is transparent and clean
through it you see the whole world that weeps and laughs
but when one side is covered with silver paint,
worth of a penny or a little more –
the entire earth disappears from view,
and then the clean glass becomes a mirror; you see only yourself.*





GOSET

In the 1920s Halkin obtained an important position as poet and playwright in the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre (GOSET)[3]. Solomon Mikhoels, actor and theatre director of GOSET (1928/29–1948) was chairman of the JAC (see below) in 1942 and was also the father-in-law of composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg (Mosei Vainberg). Mikhoels played a significant role in Halkin's life and commissioned translations and new works from him.

A fine example of this work is Halkin's translation of *King Lear* from 1934. Mikhoels asked Halkin to translate *Lear* into Yiddish for the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre. The play was received with great enthusiasm in 1938, in particular as a result of the piece's allegories and double meanings. Was *Lear* a commentary on Stalin and his daughter? Both Mikhoels and film-director Grigori Kozintsev's remarks in Veidlinger's book suggest so. Halkin and Mikhoels worked together regularly after this production, and Halkin visited Mikhoels' home more than once.

Halkin adapted other famous plays for GOSET; *Shulamis* and *Bar Kokhba* were both productions by the founder and father of the Yiddish theatre, Goldfaden (arguably the founder of the first Yiddish language Theatre). It would however be a mistake to think of these plays as simple dramatic pieces. Traditionally, Goldfaden often added songs to his plays, and Mikhoels adopted this tradition. Indeed, the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre was not simply a dramatic, but was also a *musical* establishment. Composers such as Krein, Milner, Achron and Weprik (all from the National Jewish School 1908-1931)[4] were connected with the theatre and composed incidental music to the texts of various poets and writers. In addition, conductor and music dramatist Lev Pulver was GOSET's 'home' composer and was well-known for his music based on Jewish traditions.

As mentioned, Halkin prepared *Shulamis* (1940) and *Bar Kokhba* for the stage. Halkin's script included the use of characteristic Jewish symbols dealing with oppression; difficult to comprehend for outsiders such as Stalin and his consorts (after all it was in Yiddish and translated from the Bible, in Hebrew). In these plays the writers and directors developed a "secret" language. In my personal view it appears rather strange and in a sense hard to grasp that Yiddish continued to be allowed in the theatre - but nowhere else.

Halkin's version of *Shulamis* was set in Biblical Judea. In the first scene the poet suggests that the Jewish state had to protect itself from its enemies and their weapons. An obvious conclusion here is that he was probably referring to Stalin's weapons and to the KGB.

In the thirties Stalin wanted to banish the Jews to the frozen wastes of Birobidzhan, in Siberia, a place that few survived. Later Crimea was mentioned as a potential Jewish state, however it is doubtful Stalin ever took this seriously.

Jewish Anti-Fascistic Committee (JAC)

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was founded after Hitler's invasion and following the massacre of the Ukrainian Jews (1941). In 1942 Halkin joined the organisation; at this time he was also one of the editors of the newspaper *Eynikayt* (Unification), for which he began writing articles and poems against fascism.

Stalin gave his permission for JAC's foundation, notwithstanding the fact that a couple of years earlier (1940) he ordered the eradication of key artists such as the writer Isaac Babel and the theatre director Meyerhold, amongst many others, who were murdered shortly before the Nazi invasion of the USSR.

Members of the JAC were fully aware of the atrocities at *Babi Yar* and elsewhere at an early stage. They recognised the increasing anti-Semitism in Russia, based on Stalin's orders[5] and of course Hitler's plan[6] to destroy the Jewish race.



Poems about the Holocaust

Rogachev (Halkin's birthplace) was occupied by the Nazis in 1941: in March 1942 3,500 Jews perished there. In Babi Yar at least 33,771 Jews were executed on the instigation of Hitler. Many people like the Roma (*aka* gypsies), psychiatric patients, Russian prisoners and civilians followed to their death. After the war, official accounts omitted references to the numbers of Jews killed. Even in the late fifties under Khrushchev, when public discussion regarding the fate of Jews in 1940s Russia was finally taking place at the highest levels, this chapter in the country's history was totally ignored and labelled as unimportant[7]. There was in fact a deadly silence regarding the subject, a curious phenomenon given that everything else connected with Jews was being published or discussed openly.



As mentioned, it was at the hands of the Nazis that four of Halkin's brothers and sisters died. War and the loss within his family inspired him to write a cycle of six poems, in Yiddish. In 1943, after visiting his ruined native village, Shmuel began his poem *Tife Griber, royte leym*. While the content of the poem refers to Babi Yar, the Yiddish language refers to *all* victims.

Tife griber, royte leym (Weinberg's score)[8]

Tife griber, royte leym –
Kh'hob amol gehat a heym.

Friling – flegn seder blien,
Harbst-tsayt – flegn foyglen tsien,
Vinter – fleg dort faln shney,
Itster blit dort vind un vey.

S'hot mayn heym a brokh getrofn –
Tir un toyer zaynen ofn
Far di rotskhim, far di shinder
Di vos koyln kleyne kinder,
Di, vos hengen uf di zkeynim,
Di vos shaneven mit keynem:

Tife griber, royte leym –
Kh'hob amol gehat a heym.

Yor nokh yor zaynen ariber,
Fule zaynen yene griber,
Un nokh royter iz di leym,
Yener leym iz itst mayn heym.

Tife griber, royte leym,
Kh'hob amol gehat a heym.
Kumen veln gute tsaytn –
Vet dos mazl oykh zich baytn,
Veln veyen vern linder,

Veln veyen vern linder,
Veln vider vaksn kinder.
Veln kinder shpiln, royshn
Ba di Kvorim fun di Kadoyshim,
Ba di tife fule griber –
Az der vey zol nit ariber.

Az der vey zol nit ariber.

Tife griber, rojte leym –
Kh'hob amol gehat a heym.

Deep graves, red earth[8]

Deep graves, red earth,
Once I had a home.

In spring the orchards used to bloom,
In autumn the birds flew over.
In winter the snow fell,
Now wind and pain are blooming there.

My home was hit by a disaster,
The door and gate are open
To the murderers, the executioners,
Who strangle little children,
Who hang old people,
Who have compassion for no one.

Deep graves, red earth,
Once I had a home.

The years have passed,
The graves are full,
And the earth is even redder,
This earth is now my home.

Deep graves, red earth,
Once I had a home.

Good times will come,
Happiness will return
The pain will soften,
Children will grow again.

Children will play, make noise,
At the graves of the saints,
At the deep, full graves,
May the pain not emerge from them.

Deep graves, red earth,
Once I had a home.





Halkin's six poems and especially *Tife Griber* about the Holocaust were of great importance for composer M. Weinberg in his *Second Jewish Songs op. 17* and in his Sixth Symphony. The friendship between Shostakovich and Weinberg proved to be mutually inspiring and in addition, the 'spirit' of Halkin seems to seep through the works of both composers.

Stalin's Threats

In 1946, the tide turned for Halkin and the members of JAC. Andrei Zhdanov, one of Stalin's key henchmen, set up a smear campaign against foreign influences and 'bourgeois nationalism' or 'Jewish nationalism'. This was at the same time that Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak and Zoshchenko were expelled from the Writers' Union and their works banned, and that Halkin and other authors of the JAC were accused of behaving apolitically and of working in a nationalistic manner. Akhmatova translated some of the poems written by her friend Halkin to whom she also dedicated a poem that bears his name.

Stalin and Zhdanov attempted to dispose of all "cosmopolitans" as they were then called in unmistakably racist terms and in 1947 the campaign against Jewish nationalism intensified.

Members of the JAC executed

S. Mikhoels had been aware of the approaching danger and tragically his fears became reality. (Several of Mikhoels' remarks point to this fact, see Veidlinger.) The famous actor died in Minsk in 1948 in suspicious circumstances, as another poet, Peretz Markish, described in his poem "S. Mikhoels - *An eternal light at the Bier*" which was recited, although only partly, at his funeral.

Document 5 [7] Verse 3

....'Eternity, to your dishonoured door I come
With bruises, the marks of murder, on my face
Thus walks my people on five-sixth of the globe,
Scarred with marks of the axe and hatred....

....'You're not deadened by the murderer's hand,
The snow has not concealed the last sign;
Torment in your eyes, from beneath ravaged lids,
To the sky surges up, like a mountain to heaven....
Peretz Markish

During the next two years following Mikhoels' death, other members of JAC were arrested, among them Halkin, Peretz Markish, David Hofshateyn and Yekhezkel Dobrushin (poet and playwright of *Goset* and compiler of the Jewish folk songs that Shostakovich would use in his *From Jewish Folk Poetry*). Dobrushin later died in prison.

In 1952 Leib Kvitko, member of JAC and poet and writer for *Eynikayt* was shot, together with other members of JAC. Kvitko wrote one of the three poems used by Weinberg in his Sixth Symphony.

Survival?

Halkin was able to 'survive' through having suffered a heart attack before being sent to prison in Siberia (he was released after five years in 1955). In prison, he continued to compose his poems in spite of his acute heart condition. It should be noted that, due to the total absence of paper in his confinement, the poet was obliged to memorise his poems. When exhaustion prevented him from memorising more material, he had a fellow prisoner commit it to memory. Ultimately this was how he was able to publish a new volume of his works soon after his release.

In 1957 Halkin attended a memorial day given for the poet Peretz Markish.

In 1960 Shmuel Halkin died. He had been a truly brave poet, both in heart and mind. Posthumous rehabilitation resulted in several of his cycles being published in Russia. In the graveyard where he is buried (and where Yeltsin is also buried), can be found a bust made by his daughter: Michaela Halkin.



Part Two

Mieczyslaw (Moisei) Weinberg: born in Warsaw, 1919.

The beginning

In 1939, following the Nazi invasion, Weinberg fled from Poland to Minsk. Two years later, when the Germans besieged Minsk he was evacuated to Tashkent, where he met Solomon Mikhoels, whose daughter Natalya he would later marry. According to her[9], the poet Halkin regularly visited their home. It was around 1943 that Weinberg went to live in Moscow upon Shostakovich's request, and this is where the composers met[10].



Two Jewish Song Cycles and a Second Piano Trio

In 1943/44 Weinberg composed two Jewish song cycles.

In the light of increasing anti-Semitism, his *Jewish Song Cycle I*, to Yiddish lyrics by the Polish poet Y.L Perets, was premiered under a different title – *Children Songs* in 1943. It was published (under the original title) by the Moscow composers Union. Weinberg's *Jewish Song cycle II* op. 17 is based on the six poems by Halkin whose theme was the War, including his poem *Tife griber*. The cycle was first performed in 1999 on November 16, but the work has never been published. In an enlightening article on the piece Nelly Kravets[11] illustrates the similarity between the finale of Shostakovich's Second Piano Trio (composed 4–13 August 1944) and the fourth song from Weinberg's cycle (II).

Kravets also mentions that Weinberg's fifth song (composed 19–21 June 1944) is derived from the tradition of a lamentation, namely the *Kol Nidré* (meaning 'All Vows') by the composer A. Beer[12]. The lamentation employs a minor third that depicts a sense of tearfulness on the part of the chazan in Weinberg's song. It also features strongly in Shostakovich's 13th Symphony: *Babi Yar* [examples follow]. I believe Kravetz to be correct here except for one small detail. Weinberg may have chosen the *Kol Nidré* intuitively but what about Shostakovich? Compare the *Largo* from Shostakovich's Second Piano Trio, the *Kol Nidré* by Max Bruch (see below) and Weinberg's fifth song with the *Kol Nidré* by A. Beer. Shostakovich began to work on the Trio in 1943 and completed the final movements on 13 August 1944. Note the fact that Weinberg finished his song two months earlier.

In Shostakovich's Trio, the chord structure of the eight-bar introduction of the *Largo* is borrowed from an equivalent eight-bar structure by Max Bruch. The opening theme of the *Largo* is connected to the melody of a *Kol Nidré*[12] (not necessarily as depicted by Bruch). Throughout the movement Shostakovich uses these chords as accompaniment, as they might occur in a *Passacaglia* or a harmonic *basso ostinato*. At the conclusion to the *Finale* (the fourth movement) the same chords reappear. As has been well documented, there are two Jewish themes in this movement, clearly connected to the final eight chords. The Trio is dedicated to Shostakovich's friend Sollertinsky, who died on 11 February 1944. Sollertinsky came from Vitebsk, a town with a significant Jewish population (although it is now clear that Sollertinsky himself was not Jewish). Here, around 15,000 Jews were exterminated in 1941. There is a strong suggestion of a connection between *Babi Yar* and the grief following Sollertinsky's death.

Shostakovich and Weinberg exchanged their musical thoughts from the outset of their friendship. See below, bars 41-44 of *Tife Griber* and Beer's *Kol Nidré* as shown in the Kravets article as well as two examples by the current author.

Song No. 5

M. Weinberg



Kol Nidré

A. Beer



Trio No. 2 in E minor, III

D. Shostakovich

Largo

For violin, violoncello and piano, Opus 67



Kol Nidré

M. Bruch

Adagio ma non troppo

Opus 47



Bars 9-10 are removed.



Threatening situations

By 1946 anti-Semitism had steadily grown in Russia, and Weinberg received a warning from the Composers' Union. In 1948 Weinberg's father-in-law Solomon Mikhoels was murdered. The composer's opus 43 Cello Concerto disappeared "into the drawer"[13], the composer considering it too dangerous for performance or publication.



In March 1948 Weinberg composed his Sinfonietta No.1 for orchestra. In the printed edition the score contains a dedication "to the friendship of the peoples of the U.S.S.R." However in the original manuscript the quotation of a speech by Mikhoels is used:

Jewish songs begin to be heard in the kolkhoz fields, not the song of the old gloomy days but new happy songs of productivity and labour. [11]

This is Weinberg's way of protesting against the brutal murder of Mikhoels and the pursuance of anti-Semitism. Nelly Kravets also describes how Shostakovich later used Mikhoels' words in his *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, as illustrated below. The Sinfonietta No.1 contains many Jewish intonations [see 12]. The work was finally performed (and incidentally was even praised by Khrennikov): a fact that caused Weinberg a great deal of trouble in 1953:

Посвящается дружбе народов СССР 3

СИМФОНИЕТТА

М. ВАЙНБЕРГ. Соч. 41

Бодро и решительно ♩ : 108-112

In January 1953 Weinberg was arrested and accused of Jewish nationalism (for his plans to create a Conservatory in the Crimea) and condemned for having composed two cycles of Jewish songs and Sinfonietta No. 1: all of which demonstrates that the authorities were well aware of the activities of Jewish composers, whether their works had been published or not. This resulted from their obligations to the Composers' Union, for whom all new compositions were obliged to be auditioned. In addition, Weinberg's plight was undoubtedly linked to the case of his father in law, Solomon Mikhoels. Shostakovich wrote to Beria to request that his friend be released: in the end, following the sudden death of Stalin in March 1953, Weinberg was released in April of that year.

Memorial or not

In 1959 the question arose of the absence of a memorial for the fallen of Babi Yar. It was the writer Viktor Nekrasov who campaigned for the establishment of such a monument, and marked the beginning of a series of publications concerning Babi Yar. Meanwhile, the regime of Soviet anti-Semitism was continuing under Nikita Khrushchev. In the same year, the memory of Solomon Mikhoels was honoured by a memorial sculpted by Glikman.





Quotations

In 1959 Weinberg composed his Concerto for Violin & Orchestra op. 67 with a reference to and quotation from both Shostakovich's Concerto op. 77 (1948) and his own Cello Concerto op. 43 (also from 1948). Both works contain Jewish elements [12+14] in addition to which Shostakovich's *Nocturne* and Weinberg's Adagio (from his op. 43) have a similar motif in common (see fragments 1, 2 and 3).

Olga Weinberg (Weinberg's second wife)[15] explains in a short written interview that the use of a quotation from Shostakovich's work in Weinberg's own concerto was made quite consciously. She does not know for sure but she also thinks that there is a relationship between Weinberg's 'forbidden' op. 43 concerto and Shostakovich's. She adds that from the beginning of their friendship the composers knew each other's works well, and there was even a form of 'competition' between them[16]. She also mentions that Shostakovich was familiar with Weinberg's *Jewish Song cycle II* op. 17 and that there is a link between Shostakovich's *Babi Yar* Symphony and the songs although exactly where was not revealed by the composer. My findings serve to validate these claims, as per the arguments in this article.

Publications about Babi Yar

Revelatory publications concerning the genocide at Babi Yar, poems about the subject and a personal visit to Babi Yar form the inspirational force behind Yevtushenko's decision to write his poem *Babi Yar*. In this poem he describes the victims of anti-Semitism and this was the work that of course inspired Shostakovich to compose his Symphony No. 13.

In 1962/63 Weinberg composed his Symphony No. 6, op. 79, in five movements. The work features three songs, including *Tife griber*, the fifth song from his *Jewish Song cycle II* op. 17. Halkin's Yiddish text is translated in Russian and written for children's choir. This work is a memorial for the children who died in the Holocaust and is also a memorial for Halkin and for the poet Kvitko. Weinberg was moved by one of Kvitko's poems, which he used for another song in his Sixth Symphony.

In her article, Nelly Kravetz illustrates how Shostakovich's *Babi Yar* is connected with Weinberg's *Jewish Song No. 5* from the second cycle. A motivic similarity (based on a *Kol Nidré* in Weinberg's song) is to be found in the first movement of Shostakovich's symphony. But there is more.

Shostakovich's connections with Halkin, Weinberg and others.

Shostakovich was impressed by Weinberg's First Symphony (1942): the two composers met and a lifelong friendship ensued. They often played four-hand arrangements of symphonies together, both being excellent pianists. We have already established that Weinberg saw the poet Halkin at Mikhoels' home, but what about Shostakovich? Singer Nekhama Lifshitz [9], who was on friendly terms with Halkin, states that she is certain that Shostakovich knew Halkin; and that they probably met in the summer dachas frequented by writers and composers.

Exactly when Shostakovich met Solomon Mikhoels for the first time is difficult to know, although it may have been in the early days of Meyerhold's production *Inspector General* (Gogol). The Moscow State Yiddish Theatre was already renowned during Shostakovich's early years, when director Granovski was in charge. Mikhoels took over this position in 1928/29.

From his youth[17] Shostakovich had been familiar with certain members of the National Jewish school (NJS); for example the composers Krein, Achron and Wepruk. Noticeable is the fact that these men composed for Mikhoels' theatre.

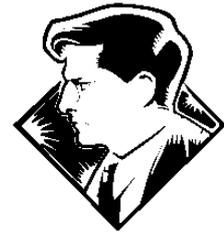
Lev Pulver was another composer permanently in the service of the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre. According to Aron Vergelis[18] Shostakovich knew Pulver and his works rather well.

Babi Yar and poems

In 1944 two other poets wrote a poem about Babi Yar: Ilya Ehrenberg and Lev Ozerov. They referred to the victims of the Holocaust without mentioning in a single word that the slaughter involved Jews. Increasing anti-Semitism made life very difficult and one could not speak openly.



Babi Yar - Ilya Ehrenberg 1944 [7 page 120]



*.....I lived in towns once
And the living were then dear to me
And now on the dull wastelands
It is graves I have to unearth
Every ravine is now known to me
And every ravine is now my home
The hands of this beloved woman
I had once kissed
Though when among the living
This woman I did not even know.....*

Babi Yar-Lev Ozerov

*.....I have come to you, Babi Yar
Sorrow's age can't be told
I must be unthinkably old
You'd lose count, even counting by the century.....*

In 1945 composer Dmitri Klebanov[19] composed his First Symphony with the subtitle: *Babi Yar*. The performance was forbidden and the work banned for 45 years. The piece was deemed by the authorities to contain an excess of Jewish intonations, moreover one song in the last movement showed strong resemblance with Kaddish (the prayer for the deceased) referring to Jewish victims only, according to the same authorities. An interesting fact is that Shostakovich knew Klebanov personally from Leningrad.

JAC

In 1946, Zhdanov launched an attack on writers and poets (among them many Jews) within and outside the JAC. Shostakovich tried to help his friend, the ethnomusicologist M. Beregovsky, who was attacked in 1948 and subsequently arrested in 1949. The influence of Beregovsky's collection of Jewish Folksongs on Shostakovich *From Jewish Folk Poetry* is already known.

Fired

In 1948 Shostakovich and other well-known composers were criticised and fired from the Leningrad Conservatory. Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto was confined to the drawer, as was Weinberg's opus 43 Cello Concerto.

From Jewish Folk Poetry (FJFP)

Shostakovich composed his *FJFP* in the summer of 1948 and dedicated it to Mikhoels, who had died in January of that year. There is a clear similarity between the words by Solomon Mikhoels that are quoted in the original score of Weinberg's Sinfonietta and those that form the text of two of the songs in *FJFP*. Nelly Kravets discusses this aspect extensively in her article on the subject.

The first quotation;

Jewish songs begin to be heard in the kolkhoz fields, not the song of the old gloomy days but new happy songs of productivity and labour.

Compared to Shostakovich's ninth song 'The good life':

The songs I sang in the old days, dear friends, weren't songs about the wide open field.... Tell them my home is now on the collective farms...Now my songs will be dedicated to the fields on the kolkhoz."

And the tenth song "I'm happy in my kolkhoz".





With the choice of these texts, Shostakovich like Weinberg makes a clear reference to Mikhoels' words. The composer Weprik from the NJS[20] warned Shostakovich to have *From Jewish Folk Poetry* neither performed nor published and so another work slipped quietly into the drawer. In 1949 Shostakovich witnessed the denunciation of Klebanov's *Babi Yar*, after which Klebanov's compositions would be banned for years to come, so much so that his *Babi Yar* was performed only in 1990, as mentioned previously.

Ten choruses on Text by Revolutionary Poets and other works

In 1951 Shostakovich composed *Ten Choruses on Texts by Revolutionary Poets* op. 88, commissioned by the Composers' Union. The poems' subjects concern war, prison, pain and oppression. The seventh song of the cycle refers to men killed in the revolutionary struggle. (See text below). It contains the words *Sleep, sleep (brother)* "Spee...tye, spee...tye" (phonetic transcription of Russian text). Weinberg refers to this passage in his Violin Concerto op. 67 (1959). In the Adagio he quotes the motif to which Shostakovich set the words "Spee..tye, spee...tye" in *sound and rhythm* (Fragment 4). This passage of op. 67 is played on wind instruments accompanying a violin solo (motif 1b) and the high, repeating, "Speetye" (sleep) at the end.

The use of the motif based around "Speetye" in Weinberg's Adagio also finds echoes in two 'banished' works from 1948: Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No.1 (motif 1) and Weinberg's Cello Concerto (motif 1a). Thus Weinberg's Adagio (motif 1b) combines quotations referring to the terrible year of denunciation, murder and persecution: 1948. Indeed, there was already a striking similarity between motif 1 and 1a in 1948.

Violin concerto No. 1 Opus 77 (1948)

D. Shostakovich



Cello concerto Opus 43 (1948)

M. Weinberg



Violin concerto No. 1 (1959)

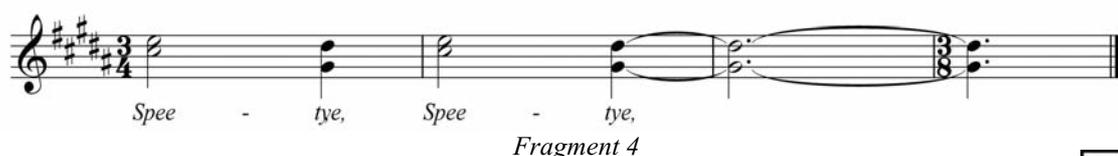
M. Weinberg



7. Smolklie zalpoei zapazdaliè

E. Tarasova

D. Shostakovich



7. The Last Salvos [21]



The last salvos are quiet
The thunder of arms is quiet
The glowing red puddles hardly smoke
Exhausted fighters sleep all around it
They rest with the sleep of the hereafter
The wind blows over the carcasses of broken barricades
Above the bodies deprived of their last rights
Echo hymns of afflicted greetings

Sleep, sleep brothers fallen in honour
Judgement day is near
Sleep, you who knew no indecision
We have all night for us
All that was destroyed during the day
We will rebuild in obscurity
The wounded eagle's thirst for combat wasn't satisfied

Sleep, sleep, brothers fallen in honour
Tonight we'll surround the city with barricades again
In the morning as renewed troops, we'll return to battle
Sleep, brothers and comrades!
Judgement day is near
on the spot of this incredible conflagration we'll mention you

Sleep, sleep the last salvos are quiet
the thunder of arms is quiet.
The glowing red puddles hardly smoke
exhausted fighters sleep all around it
they rest with the sleep of the hereafter

Shostakovich Symphony No 13: *Babi Yar*

1959: The subject of erecting a monument to *Babi Yar* appeared in various publications.

1960: Halkin died.

1961: Yevtushenko published his poem *Babi Yar* in September.

Inspired by Yevtushenko's poems, Shostakovich composed a symphonic cycle of five movements, for bass and men's chorus, based on his verses. The first song refers to Babi Yar (March 1962). Below are a couple of the original verses. Shostakovich never changed the text in the original score, and this version is still not published in Russia[22].

Babi Yar

First verse

No monument stands over Babi Yar.
A drop sheer as a crude gravestone.
I am afraid. Today I am as old in years
as all the Jewish people.
Now I seem to be a Jew.

Last verse

'There is no Jewish blood in my blood,
but I feel the loathsome hatred
of all anti-Semites as though I were a Jew
and that is why I am a true Russian!'





Yevtushenko was forced to change the following verses:

(original text)

*Now it seems I am an Israelite.
Through ancient Egypt I roam and wander
And perish, crucified, on the cross there yonder
The marks of nails still show my plight.*

(substitute)

*I stand here as though at a holy well,
Filling me with faith in our fraternity.
Here Russians and Ukrainians together fell,
And with Jews they lie in the same earth for
eternity.*

(original text)

*And I myself am like one incessant silent scream
Over thousands and thousands of those entombed,
I'm every old man shot down here, it seems,
I am every child who was once here doomed.*

(substitute)

*I think of Russia's deed of valour;
Bearing its chest to bar Fascism's way
Down to the smallest dewdrop and smaller,
Its whole essence and fate set my own heart a-sway*

In his Babi Yar Shostakovich, who was familiar with Weinberg's Songs op. 17, refers to Weinberg's song *Tife griber*. (Weinberg incorporates this song in his 6th Symphony [1962/63]) - they share a minor third as contained in the *Kol Nidré*. Nelly Kravets offers good examples, as in Fragments 5 and 6 below:

Tife Griber

S. Halkin M. Weinberg

Fragment 5



Y. Yevtushenko

Symphony No. 13 Babi Yar

D. Shostakovich

Bas solo 43-48

За - травленный, о - spat
I am persecuted

плеванный, он о - бопанный
slandered

Fragment 6

Knowing that Weinberg consciously incorporated the *Kol Nidre* in *Tife Griber* as did Shostakovich in the Largo of his Piano Trio begs the question as to whether Shostakovich incorporated a *Kol Nidre* into *Babi Yar*? Indeed he did! The introduction of *Babi Yar* in the basses begins with a passacaglia-like theme (repeated once more after the Anne Frank verse that refers to her diary) that again points strongly to a *Kol Nidre*. This is not necessarily the same form as that employed by Max Bruch: indeed there are many kinds of *Kol Nidre*: those by Lewandowski, Englander, Sulzer etc. They all have slight variations in rhythm and melody in the opening passage.

Babi Yar (I)

D. Shostakovich

10 Adagio

Opus 113

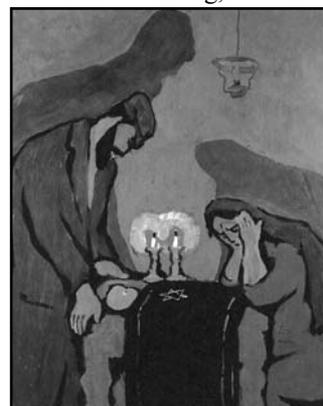
Kol Nidre - Odna

It should be borne in mind that this is a theme Shostakovich used earlier in his career, in the score to the film *Odna* (on the CD conducted by Mark Fitz-Gerald this occurs at track 23 (introduction), track 27 (where the mother sings her lullaby and track 43, where Kuzmina is close to death.)

Weinberg's 6th and Shostakovich's 13th Symphonies both include a movement where the composers depict the notion of the resilience of freedom of expression in music. A hilarious dance in the third movement of the Weinberg, bedecked with Mozartian rhythms, points to Gnesin's musical joke[23] before the song *Tife Griber* begins. Compare this with Shostakovich's Petrushka-like flute in his 'Macpherson's dance' (Song 2 from *Babi Yar* op. 113) and the ironic similitude is striking. Here the composers appear to be enjoying having the last laugh: one can't kill the spirit of an artist so easily, nor the memory of the atrocities of genocide.

A painter

Anatoli Kaplan[24], an admirer of Shostakovich's music, painted several pictures, *in tempera*, relating to Shostakovich's *FJFP*. Shostakovich saw the paintings in 1963 and invited Kaplan to a performance of *FJFP* where they met. Some of Kaplan's ceramics, lithographs and temperas are based on Shostakovich op. 79 (Kravets, page 292). Notice the peculiar lamp in the painting.





CODA

As we have seen Shostakovich and Weinberg were inspired by poetry. The two men and the poet Halkin were *brothers in arms*[25] against oppression and anti-Semitism. They could not speak out openly and so their art was their way of expression, in which they succeeded well. This was the only way of communication and that offered the possibility of a free exchange of thoughts. Summarising one might say: *Hear all, see all, speak nothing.*

An in-depth study of the imaginative and creative way these two composers exchanged musical ideas would require far more time and research than the author had at her disposal. Of interest would be to research the way in which the composers quote from each other's work. A good example is Weinberg's specific combination of text (eg. 'sleep, sleep brothers') and music and the way in which this forms a whole. Other such quotations are doubtless to be found, given enough insight, and time.

Shostakovich was acquainted with several members of the NJS, GOSET, JAC and Meyerhold's theatre. These Jewish connections remained with him from his youth onwards. In this sense the authorities were absolutely correct when they accused Shostakovich of being surrounded by Jews. Shostakovich was indeed constantly aware of the many threats made against Jews, whether before, during or after the war and especially in the years following 1948.

ENDNOTES

[1] Musicologist and singer Sofie van Lier brought the author into contact with the relatives of Halkin. Linda Goldsmith and Stanley Pomerantz (2006-2008) both helped me to collect rare information and photographs. They were in search of their roots. Halkin was perhaps known in the USSR, but not in the West. Hence the importance of having found more information about this poet in connection with Mikhoels, Weinberg and Shostakovich.

[2] A religious Jewish movement that emphasises an emotional relationship with God through joy and dance instead of studying the Torah.

[3] Veidlinger, Jeffrey. *The Moscow State Yiddish Theatre* Indiana University Press, 2000.

[4] Nemtsov, Jascha. *Jüdische Musik in Sowjetrussland*, ssm 15 Verlag Ernst Kuhn (VEK), 2002.

[5] Kostyrchenko, Gennadi. 1995 *Out of the red shadows: Anti-Semitism in Stalin's Russia* Prometheus Books, 1995.

[6] Rubenstein, Joshua. Naumov, Vladimir. *Stalin's secret pogrom* Preface and Introduction, Yale University Press, 2001

[7] Pinkus, Benjamin. *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948-1967* (page 91 + 297-302) Cambridge University Press, 1984

[8] Jewish Music Projects Team, editor of *Tife Griber*; Yiddish and English text. See: CD "Sun and Rain" – Jewish Songs and Chamber Music by Mieczyslaw Weinberg, Veniamin Basner and Dmitri Shostakovich, 2007

[9] Levin, Ruth: H. v.d Groep in contact with Natalya Vovsi-Mikhoels and Nekhama Lifshitz , 2007

[10] Skans, Per. *Mieczyslaw Weinberg-Ein jüdischer Immigrant*, in Dmitri Schostakowitsch und die Folgen 6, Studia Slavica Musicologica, ssm 32 Verlag Ernst Kuhn (VEK), 2001

[11] Kravets, Nelly. *From the Jewish Folk Poetry of Shostakovich and Jewish Songs Op. 17 of Weinberg: Music and Power in Dmitri Schostakowitsch und das jüdische musikalische Erbe*, Studia Slavica Musicologica, ssm 18 Verlag Ernst Kuhn (VEK), 2001

[12] Idelsohn, A. *Jewish Music. Its Historical development* Dover Publications, Inc New York, 1992

[13] Wilson, Elizabeth. *Mstislav Rostropovich Cellist, Teacher Legend* page 126/127 Faber and Faber, 2007



[14] Braun, Joachim. *Shostakovich's Jewish Songs. Introductory essay*

[15] Pertseva, Galina: H. van der Groep in contact with Olga Weinberg, 2007

[16] Glikman, Isaak. (translated A Philips) *Story of a Friendship*, Faber & Faber, 2001

[17] Groep v.d, Henny. *Invloed van de Nationale Joodse school in het werk van Sjostakovitsj* (not yet published), 2005

[18] Zemtsovsky, Izaly. *Schostakowitschs und der Jiddischismus in der Musik (page 155)* in Dmitri Schostakowitsch und das Jüdische musikalische Erbe, Studia Slavica Musicologica, ssm 18 Verlag Ernst Kuhn (VEK), 2001

[19] Zolotovitsky, Irma. *Zufälliges und Nicht-Zufälliges in Schostakowitschs "Jüdischen" Kompositionen:* in Dmitri Schostakowitsch und das Jüdische musikalische Erbe, Studia Slavica Musicologica, ssm 18 Verlag Ernst Kuhn (VEK), 2001

[20] Groep v.d, Henny. *The New Jewish School Jascha Nemtsov (Interview).* *DSCH Journal* Nos. 20/21 2004

[21] CD Booklet of *Ten choruses on Text by Revolutionary Poets* op. 88 by Dmitri Shostakovich (1999)

[22] DSCH publishers & Manashir Iabukov. 2006 *Introductory article. Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony*, 2006

[23] Gnessin, Mihael. "*O jumore v muzyke*" [an answer on a letter of Rene B Fisher 1944] 1961 page 196–207, 1961 Groep van der, Henny. *A musical Joke: DSCH Journal* No. 25, 2006

[24] Jahn-Zechendorf, Beate. Anatoli Kaplan, *Variationen zu jiddischen Volksliedern*, 1976

[25] Veidlinger, Jeffrey. *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater* Indiana University Press, 2000 page 219–220 study in this context Mikhoels words in the two rallies.

Further reading of importance.

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Internet: http://yiddishbookcenter.org/pdf/pt/44/PT44_goldfaden.pdf

