Country Name: **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looted Judaica and Judaica with Provenance Gaps in Country</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existing Projects</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The International Information-Documentation Center on Problems of Displaced Cultural Valuables of the Russian State Library of Foreign Literature is conducting provenance research. For more information, see: <a href="http://www.libfl.ru/">http://www.libfl.ru/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overview</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaced Cultural Valuables, Library of Foreign Literature: The database allows searching in 10 different categories regarding library collections relocated to Russia, but it is unclear whether the listings include Judaica, although separate catalogues prepared with the assistance of the Library of Foreign Literature certainly do (see information taken from publications below).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) <a href="http://www.lostart.ru">www.lostart.ru</a>, last accessed March 2014.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The website of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs of the Russian Federation entitled “Cultural Valuables – Victims of War” has a database detailing the cultural property from Russia missing as a result of the Second World War. Among the works missing from libraries, museums, and archives are some items of Judaica - for example, the archives of the Astrakhan Jewish Committee for Assistance to Refugee Jews (Астраханский еврейский комитет помощи беженцам-евреям).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publications</strong></td>
<td>Schneerson Library and Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a decade long fight over the request by Chabad, including a lawsuit against Russia (Agudas Chasidei Chabad of United States v. Russian Federation, the Russian Ministry of Culture and Mass Communication, Russian State Library and Russian State Military Archive), for the return of the Schneerson collection to the United States, in February 2013, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin proposed to keep the library collection in Russia’s new Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center. This, however, is not agreeable to the U.S. based Chabad community, though it appears to be to Russia’s Chabad community. In fact, in June 2013, while ceremoniously opening the Branch of the Russian State Library (RGB) in the newly established Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow, President Putin stated that 450 books allegedly from the Schneerson Collection had already been transferred to the Museum. These volumes were digitized by the RGB website and are now available online.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center (www.jewish-museum.ru) opened its doors in November 2012, and is thought to be the largest Jewish museum in the world. The museum’s exhibition encompasses 5,000 photographs, 200 artifacts, 34 films, 32 digital interactives, six listening stations, eight custom maps, and a 4D theater with an animated film. While most Jewish museums are “secular,” this one is different: Chabad was the driving force behind it.

The Schneerson Library is a collection of some 381 religious transcripts, 12,000 books and 50,000 rare documents maintained by the first five Lubavitcher Rebbes dating to 1772. After the October Revolution, the Bolshevik government seized the library and stored the texts in the Lenin Library, later known as the Russian State Library. The Russian State Military Archive (RGVA) holds the other half of the collection, the Schneerson Archive — an archive of the successive Lubavitcher Rebbes that the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, took from Moscow in 1917 to Rostov-on-the-Don and subsequently to Riga and Warsaw, where it was seized by the Nazis and then subsequently taken by the Soviet Army and shipped back to Moscow.

In 2004, the Lubavitch organization brought a lawsuit in California aimed at retrieving the collections.

**Book Restitutions from the OAD**

**Source:**


In the summer of 1946, OAD (Offenbach Archival Depot) representatives handed over some 1,055 boxes containing communist literature of various libraries as well as Jewish property stemming from Odessa, Minsk, and Kiev. More specifically a monthly report from August 1946 notes that these restituted objects originated from 310 libraries and institutions within the former Soviet Union, in addition to 36 objects from private households.

**A. Torahs and Religious Books and Manuscripts** (see also organizational archives)

**Source:**


This catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts and other items taken from the Breslau Archive held in the Russian State Library and other Russian repositories was produced with the assistance of Project “Heritage Revealed” of the Research Project on Art and Archives, Inc. (sponsored by Ronald S. Lauder and Edgar Bronfman).

**Special (Osoby) Archive**

**Sources:**

(1) Grimsted, Patricia Kennedy. Hoogewoud, F.G. Ketelaar, Eric. Returned from Russia. Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent


In the summer of 1946, 344 Torahs were turned over by the Special (Osoby) Archive (TsGOA, TsKhIDK 1982–1989), now part of the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA), to the State Historical Museum (GIM). So far as is known, no research has been conducted that would indicate their fate or present location. These Torah scrolls originated from foreign Jewish communities.

In addition, Russia holds Torahs in Nizhny Novgorod. Some scholars have suggested that the Torahs in Nizhny Novgorod originated from Hungary (see also section on Hungary). However, other researchers believe that they may have originated from local Russian synagogues.

In February 2014, the media reported that 103 Torah scrolls that were stolen from Hungarian Jews during World War II were found in a Russian library in Nizhny Novgorod. The scrolls are being claimed by the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation.

The newly established “Jewish Heritage Foundation” notes on its website that “the Foundation has successfully located, documented and started to restore 113 Torahs from the Regional Universal Scientific Library of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.” According to Agnes Peresztegi, the Torahs described on the Foundation’s website are referring to those scrolls that were transferred to Chabad in Nizhny Novgorod a decade ago.

Russia holds some rare books, possibly also religious texts, from Hungarian Jewish collectors, such as from Baron Kornfeld, in regional libraries, mostly in the regional library on the Volga. Additional books from the Kornfeld collection are located in the Nizhny Novgorod Art Museum.

**B. Archives of Jewish Organizations (see also Torahs and religious books and manuscripts)**

Sources:


[Please note that Patricia Kennedy Grimsted critiques the online listing]
prepared by Yoram Mayorek in her book *Returned from Russia* by stating that “although available on the Internet since 1999, it has not been updated subsequently, despite the changed name and disposition of the archive and the many fonds restituted to their countries of origin in Western Europe.” (p 109)

(2) *Manuscripts and Archival Documents of the Vienna Jewish Community Held in Russian Collections* (Moscow).” (http://www.libfl.ru/restitution/catalogs/index.html, last accessed June 2014.)


[Please note that Patricia Kennedy Grimsted critiques the publications by Project Judaica in her book *Returned from Russia* by stating that “a guide to the RGVA Jewish-related holdings appeared in 2005, sponsored by the Jewish studies programme at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU). After almost eight years in preparation (mostly by graduate students at RGGU) the guide is disappointing. Unfortunately, RGVA did not have the resources or appropriate specialists to correct the text before publication. The compilers did not have adequate migration details for many of the funds, and the survey annotations lack reference to pre-war descriptions available for some of the collections, such as published catalogues of Hebrew manuscripts. Although issued in 2005, the listings were not updated with respect to restitution transfers of original files to France, Belgium and the Netherlands in 2000-03. Nor do they include references to microfilms retained from some of those files now available at RGVA in Moscow. The guide, despite its limitations, nevertheless provides the most complete available coverage of many RGVA fonds of foreign Jewish provenance.” (p. 109)]


The Jewish holdings of the Special (Osoby) Archive (TsGOA, TsKhIDK 1982-1989), now part of the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA), Moscow, include looted material such as a collection of historical archives of Jewish international organizations, of Jewish political organizations and parties as well as papers of Jewish intellectuals: Holdings originally included part of the archive of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (series of records from the Paris headquarters, the Vienna Allianz and the Alliance from Brussels), of the B’nai Brith Order (archives of lodges from Germany, Austria, Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece and former Czechoslovakia), and of the Zionist organizations and parties (from

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France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland and Greece). Most material that was or is currently held in the Moscow archive was initially gathered by the National Socialist movement in their effort to create a Research Institute on the Jewish Question in Frankfurt and, to a lesser degree, for possible display in the projected *Führermuseum* in Linz.

Generally speaking, most Jewish holdings that were or are kept in the archive were looted by the Nazis in Germany, Austria, and France, but there were or are also smaller holdings from Holland, Belgium, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

See Grimsted, Patricia Kennedy. Hoogewoud, F.G. Ketelaar, Eric. *Return from Russia. Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues* (United Kingdom: Institute of Art and Law, 2007) and Afterword – 2013 (United Kingdom: Institute of Art and Law, 2013) for the current status of Jewish archives that have been returned to France, Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition, many of the Jewish archives still held in Moscow are under negotiations for return.

Grimsted lists the following Jewish-related fonds of French provenance and claimed by France which have not yet been returned and are currently held in the RGVA (p 184):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Moscow fond no.</th>
<th>Number of files</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Description/Finding Aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Joint Distribution Committee, Executive Office for Europe, Paris (1913-41), Includes correspondence with JOINT branches in 25 countries</td>
<td>722k</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>1922-1941</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 32-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Joint Reconstruction Foundation, Berlin-Paris (1922-40)</td>
<td>723k</td>
<td>1305</td>
<td>1922-1940</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 35-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association des juifs polonaise en France, Paris</td>
<td>45k</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1938-1940</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matériel documentaire de caractère politique, économique et militaire appartenant à des fonds divers (Collection of Documents on Political,</td>
<td>116k</td>
<td>2,081 (6 opisi)</td>
<td>1678-1940</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 134-38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military, and Economic Matters from records of Various Organizations (may relating to Jews) (includes one file of papers of Marc Bloch)</th>
<th>1226k</th>
<th>48</th>
<th>1924-1940</th>
<th><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exekutivkomitee des Jüdischen Weltkongresses, Paris</td>
<td>115k</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>1924-1940</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 103-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fonds de reconstruction de la Palestine Keren Haïsod de France</td>
<td>740k</td>
<td>2483</td>
<td>1906-1941</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 37-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIAS-ICA Emigration Association (HICEM, Paris)</td>
<td>674k</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>1918-1940</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 31-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jüdische Telegraphen Agentur (ITA), Paris</td>
<td>44k</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>1909-1940</td>
<td><em>Dok. Evreev.</em>, pp. 25-26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Art Objects

Sources:


This catalogue of artworks taken from Hungarian Jews that are currently in Russia is not of Judaica as such, although it includes some paintings by Jewish artists such as Max Liebermann. The catalogue was produced with the assistance of...
Project “Heritage Revealed” of the Research Project on Art and Archives, Inc. (sponsored by Ronald S. Lauder and Edgar Bronfman).

See also Germany and Hungary.

**Dispersal of Trophy Archives**

**Source:**

(1) Vermote, Michel. „Provenance Research and Perserverance: The Testimony of an Archivist.” „The West” Versus „The East” or the United Europe? The different conceptions of provenance research, documentation and indemnification of looted cultural assets and the possibilities of international cooperation in Europe and worldwide. Borak, Mecislav. Proceedings of an international academic conference held in Podebrady on 8-9 October 2013. Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WWII Victims, Prague 2014, p. 24-34.

After the war around 1,352 trophy archival fonds entered the Osobyi Archive alone. However, other trophy archival material that was not sent to the Osobyi Archive was placed into the collections of other Russian archival institutions. Since 1992, restitutions to specific countries has taken place already, such as in 1993 to France, in 1997 to Liechtenstein, in 2000 to the United Kingdom, in 2001 to the Netherlands, in 2002 to Belgium, in 2003 to Luxembourg and in 2009 to Austria. In addition, in 2004 the remainder of Austria’s Rothschild archive was found and subsequently transferred to the Rothschild Archive in London. Many many archival records and or other cultural property have not been returned.

**Jewish Museums: Museum of Jewish History in Russia & Jewish Collection in the Russian Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg**

**Source:**


The Museum of Jewish History in Russia (*Muzei istorii evreev v Rossii*) opened in Moscow in May 2011. It is a private museum based on the history of the Jewish people in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. At the moment, the collection of the Museum of Jewish History in Russia counts more than six thousand objects, but it continues to expand. Since November 2012, the museum has been a member of the Association of European Jewish Museums.

The permanent exhibition, “Jewish People on the Territory of Russia,” in the Russian Museum of Ethnography (RME) in St. Petersburg shows collections dedicated to Ashkenazi, Georgian, Mountain, and Bukharan Jewry. These collections date back to the early twentieth century. However, with the rise of...
Stalin’s anti-Semitism in the 1940s, the exhibition was closed down and was dormant until 2004 when the Russian Ministry of Culture initiated a new permanent exhibition. The permanent exhibition includes Hebrew manuscripts, prayer books, Torah crowns, Rimonin and many more objects collected by Soviet researchers until World War II.

### Information from Other Sources

#### Historical Commission

→ Please note that the general literature may also contain information on the specific country.

- “Mehr Transparenz bei Rückgabe von NS-Raubkunst gefordert“. *Der Spiegel*, 20 November 2006.


In addition, there is literature specifically on the holdings of the Special (Osoby) Archive (TsGOA, TsKhIDK (1982-1989), now part of the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA) in Moscow:


Browder, George C. “Captured German and Other Nations’ Documents in the Osoby (Special) Archive in Moscow”. Central European History 24 (1991), Nr. 4, pp 424-445.

Browder, George C. “Update on the Captured Documents in the Former Osoby (Special) Archive, Moscow”. Central European History 26 (1993), Nr. 3, pp 335-342.


Romeyk, Horst. “Das ehemalige sowjetische Sonderarchiv in Moskau“. Der Archivar, Jg. 45 (1992), Heft 1, p 118.


Trentmann, Frank. “New Sources on an Old Family. The Rothschild Papers at the Special

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**Notes**

**Source:**

On April 15, 1998, the Federal Law on Cultural Valuables Displaced to the U.S.S.R. as a Result of World War II and Located on the Territory of the Russian Federation (Federal Law N 64-FZ of) was passed. It was subsequently amended and signed by President Putin on May 25, 2000 (Federal Law N 70-FZ). The law basically nationalizes the cultural treasures brought to the USSR after the War but provides for the potential restitution of cultural treasures under specified conditions to governments of countries, primarily those that fought against the Nazi regime and those that were victimized by the Nazis.

Looting and “confiscation” of Jewish property took place well before the National-Socialist regime came into power. Numerous Judaica and Hebraica were confiscated, and Yiddish publishing houses etc. were closed by the Bolshevik regime.

Silver and gold taken from Jews by the Nazis and their allies was often melted down. Presumably some of the state collections returned to the Soviet Union or still remaining elsewhere contain items that had been in Russian Jewish private hands and not nationalized prior to the War, but the research on this question has not been done.

On November 30, 2010, President Medvedev signed the law “On the Transfer to Religious Organizations of Religious Property in State or Municipal Ownership.” The law covers religious property in the hands of the Russian Federation and its entities and municipalities. The law does not extend to movable property in museums, archives or libraries that is considered part of the official Cultural Fund. It only extends to immovable property built for religious services, the teaching of religion, professional religious education and other immovable property of religious significance.

(see: Kishkovsky, Sophia. “Russia to Return Church Property” New York Times. 23 November 2010)