

Faruh

Kuziev Visegrad fellowship report (21/10/2022 – 16/12/2022)

In this report I will summarize my research experience at OSA, reflect on the archival collections that I have used during my fellowship, and share how I will use these materials in my future work.

My research was spurred by the widespread use of Soviet legacies in justifying the Russian invasion of Ukraine and otherwise entrenching the “Russian World” across Eurasia. The exploitation of the Soviet legacies has created both theoretical and political challenges: are the Cold War ways of understanding the world politics still useful? Given that the Eastern Block has been fragmented and disavowed, whom does the West confront these days?

I came to the OSA with an agenda to investigate the history of the present revival of the Soviet past. I had an idea that the end of the Soviet Union was incomplete because out of the three pillars of soviet state ideology: socialism, secularism, and internationalism, the latter has remained a hegemonic common place across the various societies of the post-Soviet space. Using the Red Archive and Subject files, and Soviet/Russian television monitoring from the 1980s and 1990s I have established the meaning internationalism for late and post-soviet media space – ethnic non-belonging, legal ambiguity regarding the status and hierarchies among various nationalities and non-acceptance of divisive and exclusionist expressions of ethno-nationalism. I noted that in the 1990s, after the New Russian democratic movement fought off two pro-communist upheavals in Russia in 1991 and 1993, ideas and world views branded as “communist” had been discredited and marginalized by the new Russian democratic elites and opinion leaders. As Otahon Latifi, a renowned Tajik journalist and opposition member proclaimed in 1994, We are shivering in fever because the empire has collapsed. “What we see in Russia now is the national liberation movement.” Russia had liberated itself from the communist rule and from those Union Republics that insisted on the preservation of the USSR.

Yet through consistent coverage of the interethnic conflicts and violence in the peripheries, the Russian press and television developed resentful overtones about the loss of transnationalism, economic ties and the “common cultural space” of the Russian-speaking

people in the post-Soviet space. It is this resentment permeating archival sources that has been in my focus these two months.

I took full advantage of the fact that OSA is a 'transgenerational' archive meaning that it contains materials from both Soviet and post-Soviet periods which allowed me to trace both continuities and discontinuities, innovations and legacies between the two eras. In other archives they are artificially separated which creates an illusion that the end of the USSR opened space for a qualitatively new life. Furthermore, I benefitted from OSA as a 'transnational' archive which represents voices from all corners of Eurasia. It allows a comparative analysis of textual, visual, oral and audio past statements from and about all the hot spots of the Soviet Union, which were believed to have brought the Red Empire down – the Baltic states, Ukraine, Moldova, the Caucasus, Central Asia. The diversity of sources also allows to reproduce the totality of information consumption which was rampant in the late 1980s and 1990s. For these and many other reasons, I have rediscovered OSA as the most useful archive to study representations of transnationalism, interethnic conflicts, integration and disintegrating tendencies in Eurasia.

As for my overall research experience, I conclude that it was very productive mainly thanks to my supervisor Anastasia Felcher who helped me with her guidance and knowledge of the location and content of the files relevant for my study, as well as her overall awareness about the existing literature and published sources on similar topics. Her involvement kept my study relevant and topical for the wider and professional audience alike. Reference Archivist Robert Parnica was extremely resourceful in delivering boxes and navigating the OSA catalogue. I owe greatly to Oksana Sarkisova and Ioana Macrea-Toma for their insistence that I pay more attention to methodology in my work with the sources. Their feedback and questions at my final presentation will guide my further work. I am extremely grateful to all OSA staff, and especially Katalin Godoros, Bianka Horvath, Nora Ungar and Nora Bertalan for their help and support I have enjoyed during the 6 months of my work at OSA.

Finally, as for my further plans, I am working on transforming my research notes into a conference paper to be presented in April 2023 at a GRACEH conference in Vienna and a Soviet history conference at Davis Center of Harvard University. I have discovered more sources than I needed to address my research question for the Visegrad Fellowship and will use OSA materials

further for my dissertation. Last but not least, I want to edit and publish some of the video files for expert views and the general public to start discussions on potential use and interpretation of the OSA digital repository in future academic and artistic projects.

I have worked with the following collections:

HU OSA 300-80 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Soviet Red Archives

And random boxes:

300-5-180:67/4
300-120-5:178/5
300-80-1:1007/6
300-80-1:1007/7
300-80-1:1007/8
300-80-1:1008/1
300-80-1:1008/2
300-85-12:51/9
300-85-35:7/6
300-80-6:62/7
300-80-11:1/2
300-85-12:222/2

And Soviet/Russian television monitoring files:

https://catalog.osaarchivum.org/?f%5Bdigital_collection%5D%5B%5D=Soviet+and+Russian+Television+Monitoring&f%5Brecord_origin_facet%5D%5B%5D=Digital+Repository