

# Dissident Legacy

Newsletter no. 1, Jan. 2024

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, the Dissident Legacy is a five-year project devoted to the investigation and critical analysis of documents of Soviet dissidence. Our team is interested in the genre, format and content of testimony by well-known and less obvious figures. We ask about women and national movement activists, seeking to construct a fuller picture of how dissidents understood their roles, formed networks, and pursued nonviolent resistance and fact-based defence of rights. How did dissidence take shape in late socialist society? Whose testimony crossed borders at that time, and what does the dissident legacy mean for us today?



**Collaborators:** Principal Investigator Ann Komaromi (University of Toronto); Sophie Cœuré (Université Paris-Cité), Justinian Jampol (Wende Museum), Ksenya Kiebusinski (University of Toronto); Luba Jurgenson (Sorbonne Université); Benjamin Nathans (University of Pennsylvania); Susanne Schattenberg (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa); Elena Zhemkova (Memorial Society)

Peter Vins and his sister (not visible here), Sergei Khodorovich, Arina Ginzburg, Malva Landa, Petr Starchik, Avgusta Romanova. Photo: Archive of the Research Centre for East European Studies, FSO-Bremen

**Research Assistants (RAs):** Allison Graham, Natalia Koliagina, Philipp Lekmanov (Project manager), Anastasia Lachine, Iz Leitch, Alina Orlova, and Lenny Smirnova.

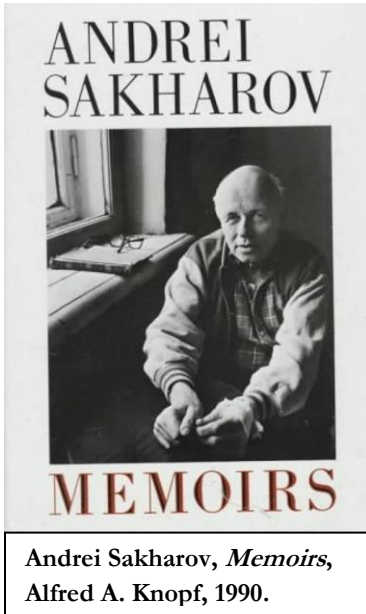
В ПИЩИ СВОЁ  
САМИЗДАТ

Project for the Study of  
Dissidence and Samizdat

## Soviet Dissident Memoirs Database

The “Dissident Legacy” Database features information about activists who published first-person, book-length memoirs about defending rights in the USSR after Stalin. This limited corpus provides a basis for investigating the genre of dissident memoirs and the politics of their publication and translation. We include data on editions in many countries and languages. The work builds on information collected by Benjamin Nathans and the historians working on the second volume of the *Encyclopedia of Dissidence* (*Entsiklopediia dissidentstva*). Our team is searching especially for data about the Jewish national and Ukrainian rights movements, with the aim of stimulating research into other groups, as well. Anticipated launch: Fall 2024. Inquiries:

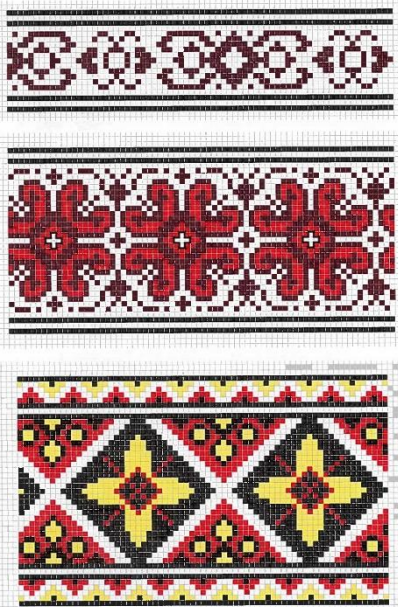
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Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

## Ukrainian Memoirs: Iryna Senyk

The Dissident Legacy project aims to find and publicize memoirs of Ukrainian activists. Project RA Allison Graham, working with Ksenya Kiebusinski at the Petro Jacyk Resource Centre (PJRC), University of Toronto, identified names. RA Alina Orlova investigated them, uncovering, for example, the unusual memoir of Iryna Senyk (1926–2009). Senyk’s bilingual book, *Метелики спогадів: спогади і взору до вишивання // Butterfly Memories: Memoirs and Embroidery Designs*, (L’viv, 2003), traces her journey from early years in L’viv to multiple terms in prison camps and exile. In 1968, in Ivano-Frankiv’sk, Senyk developed her ties with the Sixtiers (Шістдесятники), including Raisa Moroz, Viacheslav Chornovil, Valentyn Moroz, Oksana Meshko, and others. Senyk’s involvement with human rights groups and the protection of political prisoners led to her imprisonment in 1972 for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.” Even after Senyk’s poetry collections and

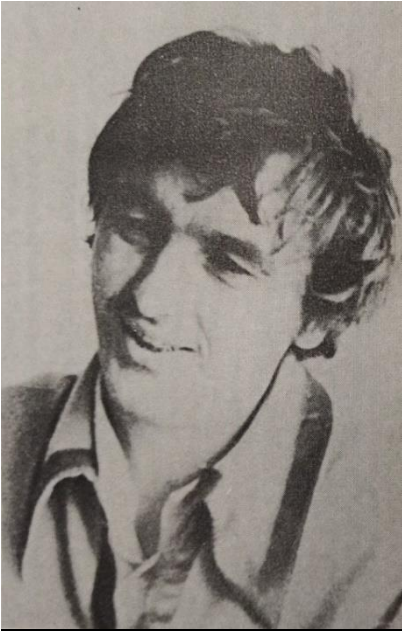


A sewing pattern from Iryna Senyk’s book.

writings were labeled anti-Soviet during the investigation process, she fought for the right to write and embroider with an eight-day-long hunger strike. The memoir concludes with her embroidery designs. Iryna taught fellow convicts the art of embroidery, which became a collective expression of the prisoners’ resilience and hope. The designs that accompanied Senyk throughout the 34 years of her imprisonment and later included in the last chapter of her memoir are a unifying motif of the book, expressing the author’s own fortitude.

## Sergei Khodorovich at La Contemporaine

Sergei Khodorovich coordinated Solzhenitsyn's Russian Public Fund to Aid Political Prisoners for several years (1977-1983). Arrested in 1983, Khodorovich was one of the last Soviet political prisoners. His interviews, essays and archived materials shed light on how this person of remarkable gentleness and conviction developed into a dissident and contributed to one of the most important mutual aid efforts of the period. The [La Contemporaine](#) archive in Nanterre, France, contains a collection ([Fonds Khodorovitch](#)) featuring materials related to the campaign in defence of Khodorovich in the west. For example, Project Manager Philipp Lekmanov found there a letter by Yves Jouffa, a lawyer and president of the Human Rights League, addressed to the Soviet ambassador in France, in which Jouffa demands to be Khodorovich's defence attorney and asks for a visa to visit his client. This collection is one of those identified by the [Dissinvent project](#), led by Sophie Cœuré and Valérie Tesnière from 2020-2022.



Sergei Khodorovich, La Contemporaine, F1919(1).

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## Collections at the FSO-Bremen



Natalia Gorbanevskaia and Veniamin Iofe. Photo: Archive of the Research Centre for East European Studies, FSO-Bremen

The archive of the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, FSO) at the University of Bremen is one of the leading institutions collecting documents of Soviet dissidents and their western supporters. Researchers will find personal papers of well-known protagonists such as Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova, Natalia Gorbanevskaia, Kronid Liubarskii, Semen Gluzman, Vladimir Bukovskii, as well as the documentation of emigré organizations and publishing houses. The archival materials are primarily indexed in Russian. A new [catalogue](#) with a multilingual interface was

launched recently: it provides an excellent overview of the holdings ordered by the name of the creator in the archival tree. Click on “+” to open the respective name and find a short description of the collection's content. Fully indexed holdings such as the Natalia Gorbanevskaia Papers are additionally described with the collection's structure, generally organized according to biographical materials, correspondence, writings, collected materials and photos. The presentation facilitates the targeted search for materials such as diaries, manuscripts or samizdat.

### “Parallels”: Roundtable Series

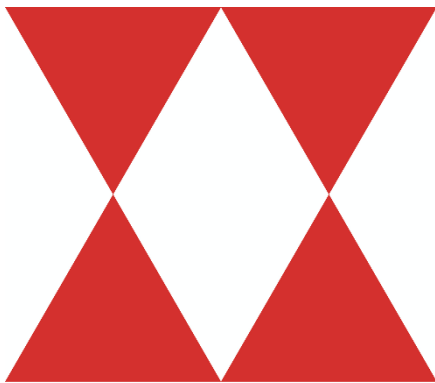


“Dissidents and the West” at Sorbonne Université

The Memorial Society is running a series of three roundtables devoted to the history of Soviet dissidence. The roundtable on “Dissidents and Empire,” took place in Warsaw on November 16, 2023: participants discussed resistance to empire and national and ethnic concepts in dissident discourse. The discussion was recorded and is available [online](#). The second roundtable, “Soviet Dissidents and the West,” organized in collaboration with

Sorbonne Université took December 13, 2023, in Paris. The panelists talked about the relations between Soviet dissidents and Western actors and institutions sympathetic to their cause, focusing on the example of France. The third roundtable that will take place online in February 2024, will explore the topic of Soviet dissidents and emigration.

### Soviet Jewry Materials at the Wende Museum



WENDE MUSEUM

Wende Museum, Los Angeles

The Wende Museum is an art museum, historical archive of the Cold War, and center for community engagement that balances international scholarship with cultural and educational programming for the community. Since its founding in 2002, the Wende has worked to acquire, preserve, and provide access to threatened cultural materials of Cold War Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, including both samizdat and artifacts related to Soviet Jewry.

In 2021, the founding of the Robin Center for Russian-Speaking Jewry and a significant donation of archival materials from Alexander Smukler brought these interests together, and the

Wende is now the home to one of the largest and most significant collections of Jewish Samizdat from the Soviet Union. The collection includes both individual works of samizdat and serial publications, as well as personal correspondences. These materials are being digitized for the forthcoming Wende Online Collections. Contact Christine Rank, Director of Collections, at [crank@wendemuseum.org](mailto:crank@wendemuseum.org).

For inquiries about the project and subscription to the newsletter: [dissidentlegacy@yahoo.com](mailto:dissidentlegacy@yahoo.com)