

**“We are Jews Again”: Jewish Activism in the Soviet Union.** By Yuli Kosharovskiy. Trans. Stefani Hoffman. Ed. Ann Komaromi. Modern Jewish History. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2017, xxvi, 420 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$39.95, paper.  
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No Jewish political and cultural effort, except Zionism, succeeded as did the effort to allow Soviet Jews to emigrate. From over five million Jews in the Russian Empire in 1900, no more than 400,000 are left on its territories. Most of the decline is due to revolution, civil war, pogroms, two world wars, and the murder of over 2.5 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. But between 1971 and 2007, some 1.6 million Jews and their non-Jewish close relatives left the USSR and its successor states of their own free will.

Few had predicted such a mass emigration, nor did they anticipate the emergence of a grass roots “movement” in a state that actively suppressed any spontaneous political, social, or cultural expression. Yet, the Jewish effort succeeded for several reasons: 1) in the 1970s, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Crimean Tatar, and Russian activists asserted themselves, demonstrating the possibilities (and risks) of such activity; 2) the USSR signed the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which included the right to free emigration; 3) spurred by feelings of guilt for not having saved more European Jews from the Holocaust, western Jews were easily mobilized on behalf of Soviet Jews, and urged their publics and governments to act; 4) most important and surprising of all, Soviet Jews, many of whom had no Jewish education, knowledge and commitment, retained a Jewish identity imposed by the state. They were galvanized by the USSR’s active military, political, and economic support of Arab states committed to the destruction of Israel in the 1967 Middle East war. As the author wrote, “For the first time I began to feel that the country in which I was living was my enemy” (31).

This book, superbly translated by Stefani Hoffman, describes the Soviet Jewish effort by a major participant, Yuli Kosharovskiy, who was refused emigration for 18 years. It is based on thorough documentation and on interviews with many well-known former “refuseniks.” Kosharovskiy uses an unusual and very effective format. Each topic is introduced by a brief excursus into the general history and politics of a period, followed by his dispassionate, comprehensive and vivid description of internal developments in the struggle for emigration. Kosharovskiy then presents an interview with a leading figure in the events described. Thus, subjective feelings and opinions of “insiders” are revealed.

Kosharovskiy starts his story in the late 1950s when a few Jewish individuals began to publicly demand access to the Hebrew language and Jewish culture. As their numbers grew and spread to several cities, an “All-Union Coordinating Committee” was created in 1969 but was deliberately not transformed into a formal organization. This made it more difficult for Soviet authorities to control. Its “most important achievement consisted of making the transition to open forms of struggle, to public protests, and to the mobilization of international society” (64).

The movement grappled with several choices: public protests or “quiet diplomacy;” whether to cooperate with other ethnic movements and the “democrats;” whether to try and change the Soviet system or just to leave it. It was divided at times between “*politiki*” and “*kulturniki*,” but Kosharovskiy leaves the impression that they mostly complemented each other. When in the 1980s the great majority of those who left the USSR went to the US rather than Israel—until US policy changed in late 1989—some were caught up in the Israeli-American Jewish debate about coercing emigres to go to Israel.

Ethnically assertive Jews studied Hebrew and Judaism. They organized unofficial scientific seminars for those dismissed from their jobs because they had applied to emigrate. They produced local and national samizdat, and maintained contact with western sympathizers and Israel. Many were arrested in the late 1970s and early 1980s for these activities, and sentenced to prison or exile. About 11,000 people were “in refusal” at the peak of the Soviet campaign against emigration, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979) and the collapse of détente. Clearly, the volume of emigration was a function of the Soviet-American relationship.

By 1988–89, as a result of perestroika, the limitations on emigration disappeared, the revival of Jewish culture was permitted, and about 500 local “Jewish cultural associations” sprung up all over the USSR, culminating in the establishment of a roof organization, the “Va’ad,” in December 1989. The breakup of the USSR led to the breakup of the Va’ad and a new era began for Russian-speaking Jews.

ZVI GITELMAN  
University of Michigan

***Editing Turgenev, Dostoevsky & Tolstoy: Mikhail Katkov and the Great Russian Novel.*** By Susanne Fusso. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2017. xi, 309 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00, hard bound.  
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Susanne Fusso’s ground-breaking re-evaluation of Mikhail Katkov “as a literary figure” who “enabled the creation of the great Russian novel” (20) reads in places like a Russian novel. Fusso’s study has a solid structural arc; starting with Katkov’s work as a literary critic who tied Russia’s national status to the development of its literature, examining famous quarrels about Katkov’s editorial interference, and ending with an appraisal of Katkov: “not as the murderer but as the inciter and inspirer of Russian literature” (242), the editor of a journal that “could not be equaled in stability and prestige” (243), and a patron of Russian literature, which he considered a vital component of Russia’s political and historical importance (245). Finally, Fusso’s beautifully written study offers a behind-the-scenes account of a man who not only “inspired vehement passions, both positive and negative,” but also published many of Russia’s greatest nineteenth-century novels.

Initially an adjunct professor of philosophy at Moscow State University, Katkov turned to journalism after 1848. In 1856, he founded the *Russian Herald* (*Russkii vestnik*), a monthly journal Fedor Dostoevskii considered the major intellectual and artistic center of Russian public life (144) and the only one Lev Tolstoi subscribed to (163). In 1863, Katkov also became editor of the *Moscow News* (*Moskovskie vedomosti*).

Fusso begins her reappraisal of Katkov by examining his work as a literary critic and demonstrates that the conservative political views for which Katkov was known (and reviled) had deep roots in his study of the Russian language and his aspirations for Russia (6). Fusso traces Katkov’s ideas about art and his sense “that he had superior knowledge of what belonged and did not belong in an artistic work” (37) to his translation/commentary of Heinrich Rötcher’s *Abhandlungen zur Philosophie der Kunst* (Berlin, 1837), which respects the wholeness of artistic works but denies the artist any privilege as an interpreter.

Fusso’s discussion of Katkov’s polemic with Evgeniia Tur offers a foretaste of future conflicts with Ivan Turgenev, Dostoevskii, and Tolstoi (later chapters). When Katkov appended a disclaimer to Tur’s article on Mme Svechina’s writing without warning Tur, a member of his editorial board who oversaw the literature section, he