

Poetry, Civil Society and Dissent in the Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond

4 - 5 June, 2025, Uppsala

A symposium hosted by Zakhar Ishov and
IRES Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University

About the symposium:

Scholarly interest in dissent under communism has grown since the end of the Cold War, as evidenced by several recent monographs and anthologies on dissidence. Yet we still lack a theoretical framework for a full and precise understanding of the meeting ground between political and artistic dissent, and the special role played by poetry and independent thought in political resistance under communism.

The International Interdisciplinary Symposium will help to clarify this through its focus on the role of samizdat publications, artistic underground, and dissident networks, which emerged as a form of resistance to the Soviet dictatorship. An experience of resistance to totalitarianism has an added contemporary relevance today in the wake of the global rise of authoritarianism.

Several invited researchers have published widely in the field of artistic and political dissent, underground literature, samizdat, civil self-organization and political activism. Some of them have themselves participated in underground publications and dissident activities. Their first-hand testimonies will provide a vital real-life dimension to the scholarly discussions.

About the organizers:

Zakhar Ishov is a Research Fellow at Uppsala University. He has been awarded two doctoral degrees: FU Berlin (2008) & Yale University (2015). His monograph *Brodsky in English* appeared in 2023 with Northwestern University Press. His project "Dangerous Russian Poets: The Case of Natalya Gorbanevskaya and Joseph Brodsky - Poetry as Political Resistance" has been awarded a grant from the Swedish Research Council.

Schedule/Program: Day 1 | Wednesday 4 Jun, 2025

Day 1: Wednesday 4 June, 2025	
Symposium begins 10.00-10.15	Welcome Address Zakhar Ishov
10.15-12.00 Day 1/ Panel 1:	<i>Poetry and Resistance: The Parallel World: Cultural Underground in Lviv in the 1970-80s</i> Mykola Riabchuk, University of Warsaw
Ukrainian Poetic Resistance during Soviet period & today	<i>Negotiating the Non-Negotiable: Bypassing the Censorship in the Late Soviet Years</i> Natalka Bilotserkivets, Kyiv, Ukraine
	<i>Ukrainian poetry and translation in opposition to the Soviet regime. As it happened in Kiev in the 1970s.</i> Mark Belorusets & Alla Zamanskaia, Kyiv / Berlin
	Discussion / Q&A
12.00-13.00	Lunch
13.00-14.45 Day 1/ Panel 2:	<i>Emotional Judgment: Family Life in Soviet Journalism After Stalin</i> Rebecca Reich, Cambridge, UK
Post-Stalin Thaw: its cultural, private, juridical, & poetic discourses	<i>Literary Connotations of a Political Statement: Kuron' and Modzelewski in Dialogue with Bulat Okudzhava</i> Olga Rosenblum, ZfL, Berlin
	<i>When Dictators Die: The Origins of the Post-Stalin Thaw</i> Anatoly Pinsky, Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki
	Discussion / Q&A
14.45-15.00	Fika break
15.00-16.45 Day 1/ Panel 3:	<i>Red Ink on Snow: Nordic Children's Literature under Censorship in Communist Poland (1944–1990)</i> Anna Wiśniewska-Grabarczyk, University of Lodz
Polish People's Republic: poetry & politics, censorship & independent publishing	<i>Poetry & Politics during late socialism: a personal memoir</i> Irena Grudzinska Gross, writer and scholar (Zoom)
	<i>Russian-Polish Cross-border Solidarity on the pages of the Paris-based Quarterly "Zeszyty Literackie"</i> Zakhar Ishov, Uppsala University
	Discussion / Q&A

16.45-17.00	Fika break
17.00-18.30	<i>The reliable witness of Poetry</i>
Day 1/ Panel 4:	Ellen Hinsey, Universität Göttingen
	<i>Identity formation and aesthetic dissent in Natal'ia</i>
Poetic Protest in	<i>Gorbanevskaja's pre-emigration poetry</i>
the Soviet Union	Allan Reid, University of Alberta (Zoom)
& in the world	<i>Vladimir Mayakovsky, Yuri Galanskov, and Russian-</i>
today	<i>language protest poetry of the 2020s</i>
	Ilya Kukulín, Stanford University (Zoom)
	Discussion / Q&A
18.30-21.00	Dinner

Schedule/Program: Day 2 | Thursday 5 Jun, 2025

Day 2: Thursday 5 June, 2025	
10.00-11.45 Day 2/ Panel 1:	<p><i>From Poems in the Gulag to Official Soviet Poetry: How Viktor Fogelson Edited Varlam Shalamov</i></p> <p>Josefina Lundblad-Janjic, Uppsala University</p> <p><i>With Roots in the Wind. Poetic Voices from the Borderlands of Dictatorship and War: Daria Serenko, Zhenia Berezhna, Natalya Klyucharyova, and Zhenya Berkovich</i></p> <p>Olga Engfelt, Uppsala University</p> <p><i>Poets-essentialists in official and samizdat registers</i></p> <p>Stanislav Kunyaev, Yegor Isaev, Sergei Vasilyev</p> <p>Gasán Guseinov, Free University (Zoom)</p> <p>Discussion / Q&A</p>
11.45-12.00	Fika break
12.00-13.00 Day 2/ Panel 2:	<p><i>Poetry in Times of Trouble</i></p> <p>Poetry reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellen Hinsey • Natałka Bilotserkivets • Mark Belorusets <p>Discussion / Q&A</p>
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14.00-14.45	Final joint discussion and planning of thematic issues
14.45 Symposium ends	Departure

List of Participants/Speakers



Mark Belorusets
Kyiv / Berlin



Nataalka Bilocerkevich
Kyiv, Ukraine



Olga Engfelt
Uppsala University



Irena Grudzinska Gross
writer and scholar



Gasan Guseinov
Free University



Ellen Hinsey
Universität Göttingen



Zakhar Ishov
Uppsala University



Josefina Lundblad Janjic
Uppsala University



Ilya Kukulin
Stanford University

List of Participants/Speakers



Anatoly Pinsky
Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki



Rebecca Reich
Cambridge, UK



Allan Reid
University of Alberta



Mykola Riabchuk
University of Warsaw



Olga Rosenblum
ZfL, Berlin



Anna Wiśniewska-
Grabarczyk
University of Lodz
(The Eastern Bloc Censorship
Research Group)



Alla Zamanskaia
Kyiv / Berlin