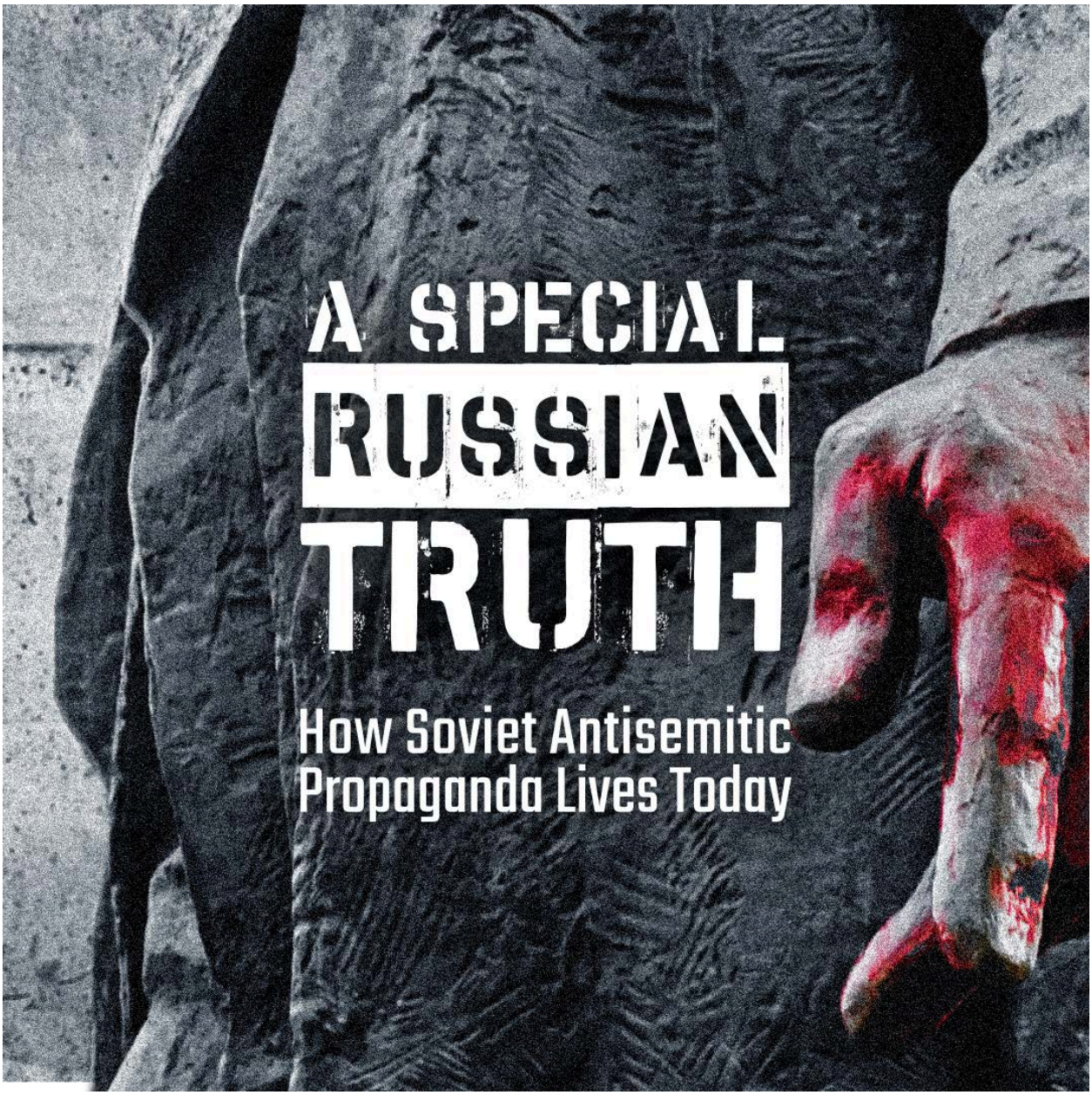


aSpecialRussianTruth.com

Viewing Guide

NoVaChai Foundation
Email: contact@novachai.org

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A SPECIAL RUSSIAN TRUTH

How Soviet Antisemitic Propaganda Lives Today

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Part 1: How to Use This Guide

This viewing guide provides a flexible framework for screening “A Special Russian Truth.” It includes discussion tools, reflection prompts, and exercises suitable for a wide range of audiences. Facilitators may adapt the materials as needed.

Note for Facilitators: This guide is intentionally comprehensive. Different groups need different tools, so please use what feels right for your community. You do not need to use every activity. Think of this guide as a flexible toolkit. Choose one or two exercises or explore more deeply depending on your time, goals, and group comfort level.

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Facilitator Guide

This guide includes a full suite of engagement tools to provide flexibility for instructors to meet different groups' needs and create customized pathways into conversation. Facilitators can pick and choose the exercises that best fit their community's needs, time, and emotional comfort level. The exercises are by no means prescriptive or assumptive to how an instructor would lead an exercise, and only intended to provide ready resources.

Items	**60 Minutes**	**90 Minutes**	**120 Minutes**
Welcome: Read Letter to Viewers and Community Agreement (5 minutes)	✔	✔	✔
Before Viewing Exercise (5 minutes) *	✔	✔	✔
Film (25 minutes)	✔	✔	✔
After Viewing Exercise (10 minutes each) *		✔ Pick 1	✔✔ Pick 2-3
Closing and Action Exercise (10 minutes each) *	✔ Pick 1	✔✔ Pick 2	✔✔ Pick 2-3
Audience Assessment (distribute and collect)	✔	✔	✔
* Included in separate document			

Viewing Guide

This guide provides a flexible, comprehensive set of materials to support meaningful engagement:

- Letter from the Producer
- Community Agreement – Establishes expectations for brave conversation.
- Exercises – A collection of activities that facilitators can tailor to their group:
- Assessment – A tool for gathering feedback to strengthen future screenings.

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- Press Release – Introduces the film's core ideas to promote a screening.

These elements are designed to help participants:

- Build a shared foundation of language before discussion
- Frame complex historical content with accuracy and care
- Encourage critical media literacy and emotional resilience
- Transform reflection into meaningful action

Tone and Approach

The goal of this film is to create dialogue. Some images and testimonies in the film reference violence, hate, and prejudice. While the content is delivered in an honest, objective way, please honor the needs of those who may have strong reactions to the content.

Facilitators are encouraged to:

- Use open-ended questions
- Make room for silence
- Acknowledge emotions without judgment

The exercises in this guide—vocabulary reflections, questions, and group conversations—are all designed to help participants engage meaningfully with the film's material. Choose the tools that will best serve participants. Trust your instincts.

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Part II: Viewing Guide for Participants

A Letter to Viewers

Dear Community,

Thank you for watching “A Special Russian Truth.”

I created this film for Jewish students who shared with me the pressures weighing on them in spaces that should be reserved for learning and community. Too many still feel overwhelmed by misinformation, hostility, and isolation. This movie is an earnest and heartfelt attempt to help all people, especially students, navigate a world where historical distortions spread faster than truth, and where antisemitism is often disguised as political critique.

To respond to this moment, I established NoVaChai Foundation, a community-rooted nonprofit initiative dedicated to strengthening Jewish identity, resilience, and critical thinking among young people and their families. “Chai” means “life” in Hebrew, and the organization’s mission reflects that belief: to help the next generation stand in the world with clarity, courage, and connection. First launched in northern Virginia, referencing the “No Va” in our name, NoVaChai Foundation now works to create learning programs and discussion spaces in educational communities.

This film is an invitation to dialogue, question, share stories, and build a community steeped in truth and empathy. Thank you for being part of this important work.

With gratitude and hope,



Jim Rose
“A Special Russian Truth,” Producer
NoVaChai Foundation, Executive Director

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Community Agreement

1. Listen to understand. Seek meaning before response.
2. Use “I” statements. Speak from personal experience, not assumption.
3. Respect complex identities. People may hold multiple truths at once.
4. Challenge ideas, not Individuals. Critique arguments, not motives.
5. Maintain confidentiality. Stories shared in trust stay in the room.
6. Assume good intent. Attend to impact. Intent may differ from effect; acknowledge both.
7. Make space. Take space. Balance speaking and listening.

Film Objectives

- Understand how Soviet antisemitic propaganda was developed, exported, and repurposed in modern discourse.
- Recognize the historical distinction between legitimate political critique and curated propaganda.
- Develop skills in media literacy, narrative analysis, and emotional resilience.
- Explore the human consequences of propaganda, both historically and today.
- Build practical skills to critically assess information, recognize manipulative narratives, and actively resist the spread of misinformation.

Film Synopsis

Directed by Jonathan Gruber and produced by Jim Rose, **“A Special Russian Truth: How Soviet Antisemitic Propaganda Lives Today”** exposes how a systematic Soviet disinformation campaign—engineered by the KGB and amplified through global political movements—laid the groundwork for many of today’s anti-Israel narratives, and how those narratives manifest as societal harm.

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The film blends first-person testimony, archival evidence, and analytic commentary to help viewers distinguish between legitimate political critique and state-manufactured antisemitism.

Drawing on historians, former dissidents, scholars, peace activists, and experts from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, the documentary equips viewers with concrete tools to recognize antisemitic tropes, understand their Cold War origins, and see how they have been repurposed for the digital age.

The documentary unfolds across **five central questions**:

What is Propaganda?
The film opens with a modern example of a propaganda cycle that starts with state sponsored messaging, activated through media channels, and manifests onto vulnerable social groups like Jews. The chosen example is the current Ukraine-Russia war, and depicts Russian politicians, modern influencers, scholars, social activists — as well as hate groups — as actors. Propaganda is shown as a powerful psychological tool that taps into people's fears, emotions, and sense of dislocation. Viewers learn that propaganda is not merely false information; it is a method of shaping a worldview and redirecting moral judgment.

What Was the Soviet Union?
The movie tells of the creation of the former Soviet Union (USSR) and its use of controlled information systems. The Soviet Communist Party fused Marxist ideology with older European antisemitic tropes as a critical tool for geopolitical influence. The state mobilized scholars, state media, and cultural institutions to portray Zionism as a global conspiracy threatening socialist survival. As Soviet Jews pressed to emigrate, the regime escalated anti-Zionist propaganda and exported it through aligned Arab states, decolonizing movements, and the United Nations—culminating in the 1975 "Zionism = Racism" resolution. This resolution remained in place for 16 years until its rejection in 1991.

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How Does Propaganda Spread?

This section shows how Soviet disinformation infiltrated institutions of knowledge production — academia, activist movements, liberation fronts, and global solidarity campaigns. The KGB-backed Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leveraged Soviet framing to embed anti-Zionist messaging in Western student groups. Soviet scholarship and caricatures paved the way for today's slogans equating Zionism with fascism, colonialism, or Nazism.

How Does Modern Propaganda Work?

The movie explores how Soviet propaganda remains culturally embedded to this day, and has germinated into new online forms. Social media accelerates disinformation, allowing unverified claims, Soviet-era tropes, and authoritarian narratives to spread virally. Interviews with students and faculty show how campuses, activist groups, and intellectual movements have revived Cold War propaganda under the banner of "social justice."

What Can We Do About Propaganda?

The final call to action from the movie is one that emphasizes critical thinking and honest exploration of the effects, intended and unintended, of social activism. Experts share lived experience describing how questioning dominant narratives can open paths out of ideological indoctrination. Experts emphasize media literacy, historical awareness, and the moral responsibility to recognize antisemitism early — before it metastasizes into physical danger.

Summary

"A Special Russian Truth" maps the evolution of antisemitic disinformation — from its Bolshevik and KGB foundations, through Cold War exportation, to its digital afterlife today — inviting viewers to confront how old lies survive in new forms and what it takes to interrupt them.

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Key Terms and Definitions

Key Terms

Apartheid

Capitalism

Colonialism

Communism

Fascism

Genocide

Islamic Revolution

Intifada

KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti or Committee for State Security)

Marxism

Palestine Liberation Organization

Refuseniks

Russian Revolution

Six Day War

Socialism

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, Soviet Union)

Zionism (definitions)

Zionism (History)

Key Figures

Ian Pacepa

Karl Marx

Mahmoud Abbas

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Vladimir Lenin

Yasser Arafat

Yuri Andropov

Yuri Bezmenov

Additional Resources

These resources are suggested to accompany a screening of A Special Russian Truth to provide definition and depth to critical segments.

- Be A Refusnik: A Jewish Student's Survival Guide (for bulk orders contact@novachai.org)
    - Be A Refusenik Appendix 1: A Brief History of Soviet Antizionism
    - Be A Refusenik Appendix 2: A Century of Soviet Campaign Against Jewish Identity: Partial Timeline
- Major events in the History of the Soviet Jewry Exodus
- Timelines of the American Soviet Jewry Movement
- Jewish Life in the USSR
- Refusenik (to view full movie contact@novachai.org)
- Cognitive & Behavioral Aspects of Modern Propaganda
- Digital Inquiry Group: Civic Online Reasoning Curriculum
- In Our Name: A Message from Jewish Students at Columbia University
- Student Congressional testimonies:
    - Kevin Feigelis (Stanford University)
    - Joseph Gindi (Rutgers University)
    - Shabbos Kestenbaum (Harvard University)
    - Jacob Khalili (Cooper Union)
    - Talia Khan (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
    - Yasmeen S. Ohebsion
    - Noah Rubin (University of Pennsylvania)
    - Hannah Schlacter (UC Berkeley)
    - Eden Yadegar (Columbia University)
    - Eyal Yakoby (University of Pennsylvania)

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About the Filmmakers

Jonathan Gruber – Director



Jonathan Gruber is an Emmy award-winning Director and filmmaker known for his ability to illuminate complex historical narratives through deeply human stories.

Over his more than 30-year career, Gruber has directed and produced films for PBS, National Geographic, The History Channel, Discovery, and a range of educational and nonprofit organizations. His work often explores themes of identity, memory, conflict, and resilience, with a particular focus on Jewish history and global human rights.

Gruber is the director of acclaimed documentaries including “Follow Me: The Yoni Netanyahu Story,” “Jewish Soldiers in Blue and Gray,” “Centered: Joe Lieberman,” and “Upheaval: The Journey of Menachem Begin,” each praised for combining rigorous research with emotionally powerful storytelling. His films have screened internationally at festivals, universities, museums, and policy forums, and are frequently used in classrooms to teach history, leadership, and civic engagement.

As founder of Black Eye Productions, Gruber has created media for leading institutions around the world, including the National Museum of American Jewish History, the U.N. Development Programme, and Maryland Public Television. His work is recognized for its clarity, accessibility, and narrative impact, making complex geopolitical issues understandable to diverse audiences.

Gruber graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in broadcast journalism and has served as a mentor to emerging filmmakers, helping shape the next generation of documentarians committed to truth and storytelling. **“A Special Russian Truth”** continues his lifelong work of bringing history to life in ways that inform, challenge, and inspire.

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Jim Rose – Producer



Jim Rose is a filmmaker, philanthropic leader, and community advocate whose work focuses on strengthening resilience, identity, and critical thinking among young people. As the producer of **"A Special Russian Truth,"** Rose brought together leading historians, social activists, and educators who all share the lived experience effects of divisive propaganda. Rose was moved to create **"A Special Russian Truth"** after hearing young Jewish adults describe feeling overwhelmed by hostility, confusion, and distortion in conversations about Israel and Jewish identity. Determined to provide clarity and historical grounding, he collaborated with leading scholars, journalists, and educators to produce a film that is accessible and intellectually rigorous.

Rose is the founder and executive director of **NoVaChai Foundation**, a community-rooted nonprofit created to help Jewish students and families navigate a rapidly changing information landscape. Through educational programming, media tools, and public dialogue, **NoVaChai Foundation** empowers young people to understand propaganda, recognize the narratives that fuel hate, and stand confidently in their identities. Rose volunteers his time with students at underserved public schools and refugee families.

Through **"A Special Russian Truth"** and the initiatives of NoVaChai Foundation, Rose continues to foster thoughtful engagement and strengthen the public's ability to confront misinformation with courage and integrity.

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Experts Biographies

Izabella Tabarovsky
Izabella Tabarovsky a Senior Fellow, Z3 Institute for Jewish Priorities. Her research and writing focus on Soviet antizionism and contemporary left antisemitism, Soviet Jewry, the Holocaust in the USSR and Stalin's repressions.

She has held prior positions as a Senior Advisor at the Kennan Institute (Wilson Center), a research fellow at the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism & Policy (ISGAP) and the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (LCSCA), and a contributing writer at Tablet. In addition to Tablet, Her writings have been published in Newsweek, The National Interest, Forward, Times of Israel, Fathom, Jewish Telegraphic Agency and others.

Izabella holds a Master of Arts degree in Russian History from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Vadislav Khaykin
Vlad Khaykin is the Executive Vice President of Social Impact and Partnerships, North America for the Simon Wiesenthal Center. In his role, Vlad spearheads policy changes that reduce acts of antisemitism and hatred, promote positive behavior toward Jews and other persecuted communities, and increase public support for the State of Israel. Previously, Vlad led advocacy efforts for ADL, AJC, and JCRC of Boston.

He is a former refugee from state-sponsored antisemitism in the Soviet Union and a grandson of Holocaust survivors.

Vlad holds dual Masters degrees in Near and Middle Eastern Studies and Nonprofit Management from Brandeis University, and a Bachelors in Business Management from University of California, Santa CruzUniversity of California, Santa Cruz.

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Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
Reverend Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., entrepreneur, global business leader, educator, chemist, civil rights leader, NAACP Life Member, syndicated columnist, theologian, and author is currently the President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA): The Black Press of America. Dr. Chavis serves on the Board of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO).

Dr. Chavis received the Bachelor of Arts, BA, in Chemistry from University of North Carolina. He earned a Masters of Divinity, M.Div., magna cum laude, from Duke University while serving an unjust 34-year prison sentence as a member of the Wilmington 10. He also received the Doctor of Ministry, from Howard University and Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D., in systematic theology, from Union Theological Seminary in New York.

From 1993 and 1994, Dr. Chavis served as the Executive Director and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and remains an active supporter of the NAACP. Dr. Chavis has authored books and publications including: An American Political Prisoner Appeals for Human Rights, Psalms from Prison. His areas of expertise include corporate diversity and inclusion, human rights, climate change, voting rights, bridging the gap between civil rights and hip-hop, and criminal justice reform.

Dalia Ziada
Dalia Ziada is an Egyptian award-winning writer and political analyst specializing in governance, geopolitics, and defense policy in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. She has been globally recognized for her leading role as a civil rights activist in the Arab Spring revolutions of 2010-2011 and for her uncommon stance as an Arab Muslim intellectual in support of Israel and against Hamas and Iran proxies in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks on Israel.

Dalia is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy. She also co-founded and chaired the Liberal Democracy Institute (LDI), directed research at the Center for Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean Studies (MEEM), and was the Regional Director in the Middle East and

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North Africa at the Washington-based American Islamic Congress (AIC). She has also served as a board member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Egypt's National Council for Women (NCW).
Dalia studied international relations at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, majoring in international security studies.

Marat Grinberg
Marat Grinberg is a scholar of Jewish and Russian literature and culture, and of cinema, he is a Professor of Russian, humanities, comparative literature and film at Reed College.

Marat Grinberg immigrated to the United States from Ukraine in 1993, graduated from the joint degree program between the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Columbia University in New York City in 1999, and received his PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago in 2006. Grinberg's latest book, published by Brandeis University Press's Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry, is the critically acclaimed The Soviet Jewish Bookshelf: Jewish Culture and Identity Between the Lines.

He is also the translator and editor of the recently published Mikhail Goldis, Memoirs of a Jewish District Attorney from Soviet Ukraine.

Marat Grinberg's essays have appeared in Tablet Magazine, Mosaic, Los Angeles Review of Books, and Jewish Journal.

He is currently writing a book about Jewishness and the Holocaust in Soviet and East European science fiction.

Lenny Fukshansky
Lenny Fukshansky is a Professor of Mathematics at Claremont McKenna College. He was born and raised in Leningrad, USSR, and came to the US with his family as a Jewish refugee in 1990. After a three-year visiting faculty position at Texas A&M University, he came to Claremont McKenna College in 2007.

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In addition to his professional activity, Fukshansky is deeply involved in the Claremont Colleges Jewish community and serves as a faculty mentor for Jewish students affiliated with Chabad and Hillel.

He received his B.S. from UCLA and Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, both in mathematics.

About NoVaChai Foundation

Established in 2024, NoVaChai Foundation is a grassroots, ground-up nonprofit dedicated to building and fostering a more positive and supportive learning environment for Jewish students.

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Credits and Acknowledgements



Film Details: Color, 24 minutes, 2026
Produced by NoVaChai Foundation
Director: Jonathan Gruber
Executive Producer: Jim Rose
Writers: Jonathan Gruber, Jim Rose
Viewer's Guide: Created by Asra Q. Nomani, former Georgetown University journalism professor and editor of the Pearl Project, dedicated to the memory of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl.

Special thanks to the educators, historians, journalists, and community leaders who contributed to the development of this film.

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Audience Assessment

Host Organization: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Facilitator: _____

Your name (optional): _____

Your Audience Profile (check all that apply):

☐ Student
☐ Educator
☐ Community Member
☐ Parent
☐ Business Owner
☐ Journalist
☐ Faith Leader
☐ Activist
☐ Policy Maker
☐ Other: _____

Your Age Group (check one):

☐ Under 18
☐ 18–24
☐ 25–34
☐ 35–44
☐ 45–54
☐ 55–64
☐ 65–80
☐ 80+

What actions do you plan to take after watching this documentary? (check all that apply)

☐ Talk to friends/family
☐ Share on social media
☐ Seek more information
☐ Attend a related event
☐ Connect with local organizations
☐ Advocate
☐ Other: _____

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Content Impact – 1 = Strongly Disagree; 10 = Strongly Agree (circle one number that applies)

1. The documentary captured my attention from beginning to end.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. The topic felt relevant to my life, community, or interests.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. I learned new information that I did not know before.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. The documentary increased my understanding of the issues presented.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. The film motivated me to think more critically about the subject.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. The documentary made me feel emotionally connected to the people featured.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. The film encouraged conversations or questions I had not considered before.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. I would recommend this documentary to others.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. I feel more prepared to take action, volunteer, or learn more after watching.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. The documentary made me more aware of resources or solutions related to the issue.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What part of the documentary impacted you the most?

What questions or concerns are you left wondering?

Additional Comments:

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How Soviet Antisemitic Propaganda Lives Today

Thank You and Contact

Film Credits

Director: Jonathan Gruber

Executive Producer: Jim Rose

NoVaChai Foundation

Email: contact@novachai.org

aSpecialRussianTruth.com

Contact us to share, promote, and host screenings of “A Special Russian Truth.”

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