

The Ford Foundation, the Cultural Cold War, and the Russian Diaspora in the USA: A Case Study of the Free Russia Fund / East European Fund (1951–1961)

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A bit of personal story

Free Russia Fund / East European Fund came to my attention in 2004–2005 for the first time. I worked at that time at Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture (Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Butler Library, Columbia University in the City of New York) studying materials of Pavel Miliukov (1859-1943), a famous Russian historian and politician. Although Miliukov died in 1943, his memoirs were published in 1955 in New York by Chekhov Publishing House with an impressive run. I tried to answer the question: how Russian-speaking diaspora, numerically diminished around the world by the end of World War II and out of money, could manage to organize a publishing house, the activities of which struck the imagination of both contemporaries and descendants. Chekhov Publishing House's materials, which were in the same archive, as well as printed material of the time led to the American charity organization, Free Russia Fund / East European Fund, affiliated with the Ford Foundation. Free Russia Fund / East European Fund also financed some other projects in addition to the publishing house. My attempt to visit the archive of the Ford Foundation in 2005 was unsuccessful, and materials were not available to me. The situation moved forward in April 2010, when after a month of phone negotiations and exchange of letters, I was scheduled for two days for the archive of the Ford Foundation. The visit allowed me to identify necessary documents and understand the mechanism of functioning of Chekhov Publishing House, its goals and methods. I was impressed with the range of materials dealing with a history of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund, which was stored in the archive of the Ford Foundation. The year of 2012, when I was back to New York, was full of disappointments and hopes at the same time. The staff of the Ford Foundation refused me to visit the archive. At the same time, I was informed that the archive materials will soon be transferred to world-renowned Rockefeller Archive Center, with excellent working facilities. It was impossible to say about the reading room of the archive of the Ford Foundation, where there were only two working seats! My trip to New York in 2014 was full of

hopes and disappointments one more time. I miraculously managed to get into the crowded schedule of visits to Rockefeller Archive Center, and get acquainted with the Ford Foundation's grant documents. But materials of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund, for which I have tried to get to Rockefeller Archive Center, had not been transferred yet. The archivist, Nancy Adgent, now retired, acted as my wise adviser: she encouraged me to apply for a grant-in-aid of Rockefeller Archive Center, in anticipation of a quick transfer of materials of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund. In 2015 I was awarded with a grant-in-aid of Rockefeller Archive Center, as well as materials of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund were transferred to the above mentioned archive. On March 1, 2016, I crossed the threshold of Rockefeller Archive Center to spend there a month.

Background

When I formulated the topic of my research, I was about to stay solely to a history of Chekhov Publishing House. By 2015, I had already studied a few publications on history of the publishing house¹, some general works on Russian-language publishing houses abroad², and collected materials in several US, British, Israel and Russian depositories³, as well as in several private archives (Germany, USA). As a result, I published two articles on the establishment and the liquidation of Chekhov Publishing House⁴.

But as the study progressed it became clear that Chekhov Publishing House was just an episode of a broader picture of relations between Russian-speaking diaspora outside the Soviet Union and the US charity. What's more the background was the latent Cold War. I decided to change a focus of my study, which, I suppose, will benefit my research. As a result, the theme was formulated as "The Ford Foundation, the Cultural Cold War, and the Russian Diaspora in the USA: A Case Study of the Free Russia Fund / East European Fund (1951-1961)". The same topic has been filed as an application for a grant-in-aid of Rockefeller

Archive Center. The change of the subject required me to study two more important aspects of the question: American traditions of charity in the XXth century, and the Ford Foundation⁵ in particular, and purposeful process of countering communism in the field of culture, the struggle for hearts and minds waged at the expense of the US and the UK public and private organizations, the phenomenon, which is called Cultural Cold War⁶.

A number of works on all aspects of the topic could not embarrass my statement: actually only one article was dedicated to Free Russia Fund / East European Fund and it remained unpublished⁷. As for works on the Ford Foundation, Chekhov Publishing House and its role in Cultural Cold War they are based on limited sources and could not be viewed as thorough and objective.

Aims

I formulated the aims of my research as the following:

- to discover specific ties between charitable organizations such as the Ford Foundation, government, and society in the USA during the Cold War era, using a case study of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund;
- to study an institutional history of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund, its organization, financing, functioning, and liquidation;
- to clarify the role of Russian émigrés in establishing and maintaining different enterprises, supported by Free Russia Fund / East European Fund;
- to study general tendencies of the development of Russian-language community in the USA in the 1950s and the impact of American philanthropy on it.

Expectations

What did I expect to find in Rockefeller Archive Center? First of all, I supposed to make a thorough investigation of all the materials of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund (FA747). According to the finding aid of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund's collection it contains administrative materials of the Fund, including documents on early plans of supporting Soviet refugees, by-laws of the Fund, minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees, reports, memoranda, legal files, financial statements, personal files of employees. What's more the collection contains subject files, grant payment cards, grant summaries, personal files of participants of scholarship program, as well as community files. Due to my previous study, I knew that the collection of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund at Rockefeller Archive Center is incomplete: materials of Chekhov Publishing House are divided between Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture and University of Minnesota Libraries. The Kautz Family YMCA Archives, as well as materials of Research Program on the USSR could be found at Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture and at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

In addition to the materials of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund I planned to study the following collections at Rockefeller Archive Center: Ford Foundation records. Grant files; Ford Foundation records, Photographs (FA738); Ford Foundation records, Central Index (FA736); Ford Foundation records, Education and Culture Program, Office Files of Nancy McCarthy (FA530); Ford Foundation records, Office of the President, Office Files of H. Rowan Gaither (FA621); Ford Foundation records, Oral History Project (FA618); Ford Foundation records, Associate Director, Office Files of Robert M. Hutchins (FA 703); Ford Foundation records, International Division, Office of the Vice President, Office Files of Francis X. Sutton (FA568); Ford Foundation records, General Correspondence (FA735).

Proposed outcome

I propose to produce a monograph entitled *The Ford Foundation, the Cultural Cold War, and the Russian Diaspora in the USA: A Case Study of the Free Russia Fund / East European Fund (1951–1961)*, as well as a series of articles in Russian and English dealing with a history of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund. Materials from Rockefeller Archive Center will be used to compile a volume of documents entitled *The Chekhov Publishing House and the Russian Diaspora in the US*.

Some of findings at RAC

Before the publication of the above-mentioned works, I would like to share a history of the emergence of Free Russia Fund with academic community. As far as I can judge it has not been the subject of any research yet. This essay is based on the materials from Rockefeller Archive Center, as well as documents from other archives.

To begin with, there is a brief introduction to a history of the Ford Foundation. The latter was registered on January 15, 1936 in Detroit, Michigan. The emergence of the foundation was directly related to the introduction of Revenue Act of August 30, 1935, which raised estate tax rate to 70%, on net estates over \$ 50,000,000, except for the money donated to charitable, religious and educational organizations. Trying to escape from taxes Henry Ford and his elder son, Edsel, bequeathed to a newly organized fund all non-voting shares (95% of the total number of shares of Ford Motor Company). As for voting shares (5% of total shares) they were transferred to family members. I should note that the previous experience of charity of the Fords was very modest⁸.

After the death of Edsel Ford in 1943 and Henry Ford in 1947 US government charged the Ford Foundation and Ford Motor Company with tax avoidance. After

the payment of all taxes and fines the Ford Foundation got 417 million dollars. This astronomical amount made the Ford Foundation the largest charitable organization in the world. Henry Ford II, president of the Ford Foundation, considered the latter as a real charitable organization, which could carry out national and international projects. A specially created committee under the guidance of a lawyer H.R. Gaither Jr. prepared a report (November 1949), which proposed new global directions of the foundation. New global activities of the foundation included strengthening peace in the world, promoting democracy, economic development, education in a democratic society, individual behavior, and human relations. The committee's proposals were approved by the Trustees on September 6, 1950⁹. Henry Ford II would like to grant independence to the foundation from Ford Motor Company, and resigned from the post of president of the foundation. A new president was elected on November 6, 1950. It was Paul G. Hoffman, a former Administrator of Economic Cooperation Administration, which coordinated the implementation of Marshall Plan in Europe.

A man of great scale, Hoffman, initially paid great attention to the first aim of the foundation, international relations. At the end of 1950, Hoffman secretly drew to cooperate a recognized expert in this field, George F. Kennan, and asked him to prepare a list of possible measures in "Russian direction". Kennan asked George Fischer for assistance, without revealing the final customer. In a letter dated December 21, 1950 Fischer mentioned Kennan as an originator of the project¹⁰.

I can say with certainty that a right man was chosen to conduct a study of possible support to "Russians". George Fischer was young, ambitious, with perfect Russian. He served in the military counterintelligence in Germany after World War II. When dismissed he got a government interest-free loan to demobilized soldiers and enrolled in graduate school at Harvard University. He studied collaboration of Soviet citizens with Nazi during World War II, and actively participated in Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, as well as in establishing Institute for the study of history and culture of the USSR in Munich.

Fischer frequently visited displaced persons' camps in Germany, communicating with different groups of Russian-speaking expatriates and interviewing refugees.

Fischer suggested refugees from the Soviet Union as a source of important information about Soviet realities for American scholars and politicians, who did not have an extensive knowledge of the alleged enemy¹¹. In 1950 it was he, who was asked to articulate needs of refugees from the Soviet Union, as well as methods of utilization of their knowledge.

George Fisher prepared two draft projects dated December 20, 1950 and January 4, 1951, as well as a number of supplements, drawn up in the beginning of 1951. Fischer insisted on organizing a special Russian-American Foundation, which should be engaged in procuring and distribution of money and control over spending. He mentioned three main objectives of the foundation: a) to help refugees to integrate into American society, b) to support political refugees in the case of changes of Soviet system, c) to fund researches of the USSR carried out by emigrants. To carry out the first task, Fischer recommended the promotion of both existing organizations and creating new ones, which could be possible if there would be large-scale financial assistance. Fischer thought it would be necessary to create an affiliated structure, Free Russia Fund, whose team would be elected from the most respected Soviet political exiles with the addition of some post-revolutionary émigrés with democratic views and unblemished reputations. Free Russia Fund was supposed to provide leadership in three projects: a) émigré intellectual and social center, House of Free Russia, b) publishing house, c) an agency, which could help newcomers to get loans, grants, temporary accommodation, legal advice, etc. The third project – the study of Soviet system with the help of its former citizens – could be carried out under the guidance of Russian Institute at Columbia University. Fischer supposed to organize a specially created English-language journal for publication of researchers, as well as an archive of Russian / Soviet documents¹².

An application to the first draft project, dated January 2, 1951, was devoted to the detailed arrangements and the budget. Members of the Board of Trustees of Russian-American Foundation should be exclusively Americans. Fischer suggested that the head of Free Russia Fund would be a historian, professor at Harvard University, an editor of leading Russian-language *Novyi Zhurnal* (“New magazine”) M. Karpovich, Russian by origin. Due to his universal acceptance, genuine libertarianism and tact Karpovich’s figure was the most suitable to Fischer. The latter knew Karpovich very well as his university mentor. Fischer defined a preliminary budget of Russian-American Foundation as \$ 1 million, of which Free Russia Fund accounted \$ 300,000¹³.

The second project of January 4, 1951 repeated the first one with a few exceptions¹⁴. The project of January 4, 1951 was sent to Hoffman by Kennan. Kennan expressed confidence that the Ford Foundation would be able to carry out this large-scale and a much-needed non-political project. Kennan insisted on the anti-militarist position, which was clarified in his article “America and the Russian Future”. If the Ford Foundation decided to create Russian-American Foundation, Kennan agreed to lead it, with Fischer as a director¹⁵.

Hoffman was impressed by Kennan’s suggestions and his letter, and made a proposal at the meeting of the Board of Trustees on January 29, 1951 to pay a grant to Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University under the guidance of Kennan. Hoffman would like to allocate from 500,000 to \$ 1 million to the program for the study of US-Soviet relations, which in the light of confrontation between the USA and the USSR was more than actual. What’s more Kennan was officially announced as a consultant of the Ford Foundation (press release of February 19, 1951). The first version of the press release, which was never published, was more impressive: it was reported that Kennan was adopted a head of program for the development of international relations of the Ford Foundation¹⁶.

Gaither Committee's report recommended the Ford Foundation not to start their own programs, but to act as a distributor of funds between existing institutions. It helps to understand the reasons of a creation of separate Free Russia Fund. On March 2, 1951 a group of five persons gathered together by the invitation of Kennan. They were George F. Kennan, financier F. Altshul, historian, head of Russian Institute at Columbia University P.E. Mosely, attorney E. Ruth Jr. and vice-president of "J.P. Morgan & Co., Inc.", mycologist R. Gordon Wasson. At the meeting Kennan advocated a creation of a small organization, based in New York, whose members could help adaptation of refugees from the Soviet Union in the USA, to support them morally, to give them the opportunity of becoming useful new citizens. Kennan called to continue the same activity as that of the American Society of Friends of Russian Freedom. The latter included the public and politicians of liberal and radical orientation, advocated for reforms in Russia and provided material and moral support to the fighters against the autocracy (1891-1919). After the discussion, a resolution was adopted and the committee established. The latter was going to support all groups of immigrants, except those who advocated a totalitarian form of government in Russia, approved the "Iron Curtain", all forms of human oppression. Kennan showed the audience the project prepared by Fischer for the Ford Foundation, dated January 4, 1951, and expressed confidence that the work of the committee would be supported by Ford. The meeting decided to invite Fischer to the post of Secretary of the Executive Committee, which was supposed to register as soon as possible. Of all the participants only E. Ruth Jr. refused to join the committee¹⁷.

I should mention a radical refinement of February 7, 1951 sent by Fischer from Munich. He came to a disappointing conclusion concerning Soviet refugees' inexperience in organization, lack of vitality, as well as the inability to think outside the framework of totalitarian schemes. Fischer advised to cut the participation of post-World War II refugees in everything¹⁸.

The creation a Russian-American organization was not a kind of project-mongering by Kennan. I can assume that Hoffman discussed with Kennan the possibility of creating some kind of organization through which the Ford Foundation could fund “Russian program”. Right after the meeting of March 2 Kennan wrote Hoffman about the establishment of Russian-American organization, suggesting to appeal to the Ford Foundation for financial support after the official registration. Hoffman’s response was very encouraging: he invited Kennan to send recommendations to him and his staff, noting that the Ford Foundation would go in accordance with his recommendations¹⁹.

On March 15, 1951 George F. Kennan, F. Altschul, P.E. Mosely, R. Gordon Wasson, and attorney J.E.F. Wood compiled a certificate of incorporation of Free Russia Fund, which was registered by the State Department of the State of New York on March 20. On March 23 the above mentioned persons issued regulations of the fund, and on the same day there was the first meeting of the Board of Trustees. The officially proclaimed objectives of the Fund were to make Soviet refugee useful members of free world, to support them morally and financially, to help them to share their knowledge about Russia and the Soviet Union with Americans. A private-organized fund was decided by Hoffman and Kennan to announce as organized by the Ford Foundation. It was reported in the official press release issued on May 17. Free Russia Fund existed until September 21, 1951, when it was renamed into East European Fund²⁰.

That was the beginning of Free Russia Fund / East European Fund, whose activities became one of the important points in the history of relations between the US charity, and wider, American society, and refugees from Russia and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Why was Free Russia Fund renamed? What societies, individuals and activities did it support? What were the results of these activities as well as controversies they produced? When and why was the Fund eliminated? I'm going to answer these questions in my forthcoming works, which could not be fulfilled without generous support of Rockefeller Archive Center.

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¹ Chekhov Completes a Year of Publishing Russian Books, *Publishers' Weekly*, 62 (1952): 21; G. Struve, The Chekhov Publishing House, *Books Abroad*, 27 (1953): 3; O. A. Maslenikov Publications of the Chekhov Publishing House, New York, *American Slavic and East European Review*, 13 (1954): 2; N. Wreden, Books in Russian, *Library Journal*, 80 (1955): 5; M. Karpovich, The Chekhov Publishing House, *The Russian Review*, 16 (1957): 1, etc.

² P. N. Bazanov, I. A. Shomrakova, *Kniga Russkogo Zarubezhya: iz istorii knizhnoi kultury XX veka* (Saint Petersburg, 2003); P. N. Bazanov, ed., *Izdatelstva i izdatelskie organizatsii russkoi emigratsii, 1917–2003: Entsiklopedicheskii spravochnik* (Saint Petersburg, 2005).

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Archives for the History of Jewish People; House of Russian Diaspora Abroad named after A. Solzhenitsyn.

⁴ P. A. Tribunskiy, Ford Foundation, Free Russia Fund / East European Fund i sozdanie Izdatelstva imeni Chekhova, *Ezhegodnik Doma russkogo zarubezhya imeni A. Solzhenitsyna*, 2013 (Moscow, 2014), p. 577-600; idem, Likvidatsiya Izdatelstva imeni Chekhova, Young Men's Christian Association i Tovarishestvo Obedinennih izdateley, *Ezhegodnik Doma russkogo zarubezhya imeni A. Solzhenitsyna*, 2014 (Moscow, 2015), p. 447-504.

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¹⁰ G. Fischer – G.F. Kennan. December 21, 1950, Ford Foundation records. East European Fund (FA747). Rockefeller Archive Center. Box 1, folder «Plans 1950-1951».

¹¹ G. Fischer, The New Soviet Emigration, *The Russian Review*, 8 (1949): 1, p. 6–19.

¹² G. Fischer, Draft No. 1 «Major Projects for Soviet Refugees in the United States». December 20, 1950, Ford Foundation records. East European Fund (FA747). Rockefeller Archive Center. Box 1, folder «Plans 1950-1951».

¹³ G. Fischer, Activities of the Russian-American Foundation: Budget and Organization. Third Supplement to the First Draft of «Major Projects for Soviet Refugees in the United States». January 2, 1951, *Ibid*; G. Fischer – G.F. Kennan. December 21, 1950, *Ibid*

¹⁴ G. Fischer Project «Aid to Russian Fugitives from Soviet Power and to Russian Cultural Activities in the United States». January 4, 1951, *Ibid*.

¹⁵ G. Kennan – P. Hoffman. January 8, January 9, 1951, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library. Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library. G.F. Kennan papers. Series 1: Correspondence. Subseries 1A: Permanent. Box 13, folder 18 «The Ford Foundation, 1951–1952, 1972–1974». See: G.F. Kennan, America and the Russian Future, *Foreign Affairs*, 29 (1951): 3, p. 351–370.

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