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OVERVIEW

Federal archives

X RGASPI (up to 1953) with exceptions

X RGANI (1953-1980s) with exceptions

X GARF (Soviet & post-Soviet)

X Regional archives

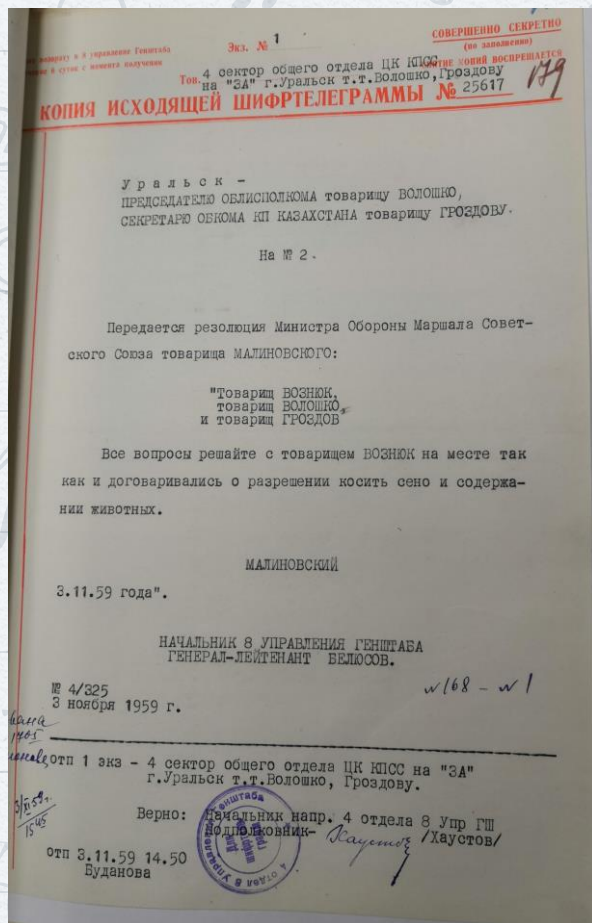
Agency archives

X TSAMO (Military)

X AVPRF (Foreign Ministry)

X SVR archives (Intelligence)

The key is to spread your activities widely because lack of access in one archive may be compensated by access elsewhere (e.g. cross-references between AVPRF & RGANI or RGANI and the regional archives)



BROADLY ABOUT ACCESS

Rules of research

- Not uniform (different archive = different rules)
- Make sure you have the right visa
- Be prepared to leave enough time (from a minimum of two weeks at RGANI/RGASPI/GARF to a month or more at AVPRF)

AVPRF
[ARKHIV VNESHNEI POLITIKI
ROSSIIKOI FEDERATSII]

THE KEY PLACE TO VISIT FOR RESEARCH ON RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY *BUT*

- TAKES A LOT OF TIME
- SUCCESS IS NOT GUARANTEED

SOME GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT AVPRF

- ✗ Located in Moscow, near the Foreign Ministry
- ✗ There's a Wikipedia page about it!
(https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Архив_внешней_политики_Российской_Федерации).
- ✗ The key take-away from the page: the name of the director, Zaleeva Anna Nikolaevna



HOW TO GET IN?

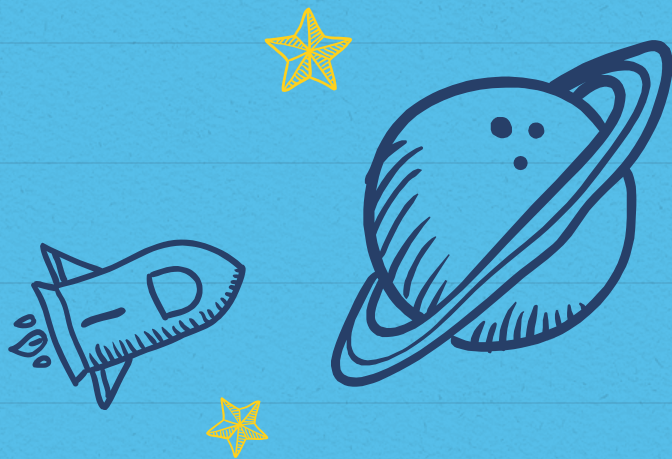
You'll need to write a letter

The letter should be addressed to Anna Nikolaevna Zaleeva. I recommend writing it in Russian. Send your letter to avprf@mid.ru.

Then wait.

How long? Well, remember that your letter will go to a special MFA department for clearance, and the MFA will consult with the fond-keepers and the FSB. So... give it a month before calling.





THE LETTER

What you put in the letter is very important,
as it will govern your rules of access.

X There is also a special referentura for the Minister of Foreign Affairs (06)

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PRACTICE

- X There is an online archive, run by the AVPRF, which hosts material for select referenturas for the 1941-45 period. The website is agk.mid.ru.
- X Check it out to get a sense of what these look like in practice.
- X Also, if your proposed topic is US-USSR relations in 1941-45 (or the Wartime Alliance or anything like this), you can just use the online archive, as if you request regular access, you won't be able to get in.
- X You are now ready to write your letter but before you do, remember:
 - X Access differs depending your chosen referentura. Some fond-keepers are nicer than others. Some will feed you rubbish; others will bring the real thing.



LETTER PROS AND CONS

Breadth

If your letter is too broad (e.g. Soviet foreign policy, 1917-1991), you'll be rejected. But if you are too narrow, you'll be face constraints when ordering stuff at AVPRF

Chronology

A sensible chronology is something that doesn't go beyond a couple of decades.

Be specific

Request access to specific referenturas
and be sure to include the Minister's referentura; you won't automatically get access otherwise.

EXAMPLE LETTER

Директору АВПРФ

А.Н. Залеевой

от Аспиранта Исландского Колледжа Песни и Пляски
Гуннара Йорна Сталлоне

1-го января 2021 года

Уважаемая Анна Николаевна,

В связи с подготовкой монографии по теме «Советский Союз и Исландия, 1945-1965 гг», прошу предоставить мне доступ к соответствующим фондам АВПРФ, в том числе: к референтуре по Исландии, референтурам по Норвегии, Швеции, и Финляндии, к референтуре по международным организациям, и к референтуре министра иностранных дел СССР.

С уважением,

Г.Й. Сталлоне



САМ СИНГС ТУ КИП ИН МАЙНД

You may not actually get all your preferred referenturas

For example, supposedly, they no longer give out the Minister's referentura. Doesn't hurt to ask!

Start calling after a month to agree on access

You'll want to call the reading room (+7 499 241-51-12), and ask whether your propusk (pass) is ready.

Once it's ready, you can come (bring your passport).

To save time, ask the reading room staff to order some documents for your in advance (will save you a week at least)



RULES IN THE READING ROOM

ORDERING

You have to fill out a slip of paper. Be specific: “diary of the Soviet Ambassador to Iceland, 1964-65”. They might bring you something else. Keep at it, request it again.

EQUIPMENT

Thankfully, you don’t have to type everything by hand. You can use your laptop (but not your camera). They are real difficult about people attempting to photograph stuff there, so I would not recommend you try. Learn how to type fast in Russian before heading there!

PHOTOCOPIES

You’re out of luck. You can have 15-20 pages photocopied for the entire “subject” of your research. It’s free but it takes weeks (months?) You have to fill out a slip of paper to request photocopies. Do it if there’s someone who can pick them up for you or you plan to stay in Moscow for months



MORE RULES IN THE READING ROOM

These are your key allies. If you have good relations with them (never quarrel please!), they'll accommodate you by arranging for more and better materials to be brought to you.

FOND-KEEPERS

You won't normally meet them but they are crucial to the success of your endeavour. It's a hit and miss. Some fond-keepers are more open, some won't give you anything.

THE PROCESS

The process of working at AVPRF is unlike that at any other archive. Here's an approximate description →

THE PROCESS

You fill out little slips to order your materials. Depending on whether they are held in the building or off-site, it may take a week to get them. Use the time to explore other archives or just chill out in Moscow.

READ YOUR ORDER

You'll get maybe 5-10 del.

Read them. Pay attention to the classification (zero or no zero in front of the bond number). If there's no zero, they're feeding you junk. Why?

WHY AM I GIVEN THIS?

1) It could be that the materials you want are still classified. Declassification is uneven. Some materials have been declassified through the 1980s, others – not yet. Or maybe it's the fond-keeper! Who knows!

THE PROCESS PART 2

PERSEVERE

Spend half a day reading your stuff even if you think it's useless. Return it. Politely ask for what you originally requested.

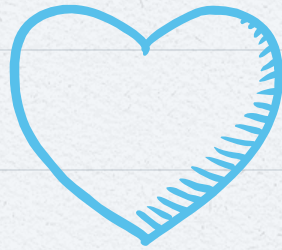
REPEAT

Repeat a few times.

IT'S GETTING BETTER

Joy! As you build trust with the reading room staff and the fond keeper (based on respect and tea – bring your own cookies), you'll get better stuff. Some of it *really* good. Or maybe not. It's just hit and miss. Don't blame the staff. They are underpaid.





THANKS!

Any questions?

You can find me at @DrRadchenko or just e-mail me at
RadchenkoS@Cardiff.ac.uk