

News Release

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Retrospective of works by long-lost Soviet Jewish Photojournalist at University of Denver

*Exhibition at Myhren Gallery captures emerging Socialist State, WWII, and
building of a Soviet Empire*

DENVER— About 50 percent of professional photojournalists during the Stalinist-era of the Soviet Union were Jewish. One of the central figures in this untold story is Semyon Fridlyand, whose work will be displayed in “*On the Road: Photography of the Soviet Empire*,” a retrospective, at the Victoria H. Myhren Gallery, University of Denver, opening March 6, 2008.

Born in Kiev, in the Russian empire, in 1906, Fridlyand moved to Moscow shortly after the Communist Revolution and became one of the key photographers of the new country. This idealistic young Jewish photographer was central in the emergence of a new cultural form known as Socialist Realism, which projected images of the way society should be, and at times glossed over the uglier realities of the Communist experiment.

In the emerging USSR, photographers were dispatched to document and glorify everyday life. During his 40-year career, Fridlyand photographed every major theme in official Soviet history, from industrialization and collectivization, to the building of a Soviet empire stretching from the Pacific to the Baltic, and from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

“*On the Road: Photography of the Soviet Empire*” is co-curated by Dan Jacobs, director of the Myhren Gallery, and professor David Shneer, director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. Exhibition dates are March 6, 2008–May 4, 2008. The exhibition opens with a public reception, Thursday, March 6, 5–8 p.m.

Professor Shneer, who is also associate professor in the history department, discovered the story of Stalin’s Jewish photographers about four years ago while conducting research in Moscow. These photographers, who helped build the field of photojournalism in the Soviet Union were attracted to this burgeoning profession and new technology. It was an art form with no juries or review committees to keep Jews out, and it was a craft from which a young Jew struggling to survive could make a decent living. These Soviet Jewish photographers captured both the building of Socialism under Stalin and its near destruction at the hands of the Nazis during World War II.

Fridlyand also covered the battlefields of WWII, the subject of Shneer’s forthcoming book *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust*, to be published in 2009. “*On the Road*” includes work from the 1930s and 1940s but also exposes people to the rich color photography of the 1950s that attempted to show a Soviet Union—that had been nearly destroyed during the war—being put back together again.

“*On the Road*” is a joint project of the Victoria H. Myhren Gallery and the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver and is generously underwritten by the Dalbey Education Institute.

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