

HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this article is to consider the dynamics and features of Jewish communities and organisations in Ukraine in the context of current socio-cultural and socio-political processes. This involves the following tasks: to reveal the principles and nature of the so-called "umbrella" Jewish organisations that unite local communities and to reconstruct the dynamics of the Jewish segment in Ukrainian society. The analysis is based on a systematic reconstruction of theoretical models of religious phenomena and their connection with modern research subjects in the field of practical religious studies. The author argues that the activities of Jewish religious organisations and communities are manifested in various spheres of life, particularly education, charity, and social work. At the same time, the article identifies challenges that remain relevant for religious communities and organisations, such as financing initiatives, the assistance in reducing the level of anti-Semitism in the country, and raising the level of Jewish education. The study of the functioning of Jewish religious communities in Ukraine in connection with the development of civic institutions allows to investigate the actualisation of this type of activities, as well as their impact on public life. That is why, in the context of the analysis and the goals formulated in this work, specific examples of the dynamic functioning of Jewish religious communities have been considered.*

Keywords: *Religious communities, Jews, Organisations, anti-Semitism, Ukraine, Religious education, Social work.*

Rezumat: *Istoricul și starea actuală a comunităților și organizațiilor evreiești din Ucraina. Scopul principal al articolului îl constituie examinarea dinamicii și a caracteristicilor comunităților și organizațiilor evreiești din Ucraina, în contextul proceselor socio-culturale și socio-politice actuale. Aceasta implică următoarele obiective: prezentarea principiilor și a naturii așa-numitelor organizații „umbrelă” evreiești, care unesc comunitățile locale, și reconstruirea dinamicii segmentului evreiesc în societatea ucraineană. Analiza se bazează pe o reconstrucție*

sistematică a modelelor teoretice ale fenomenelor religioase și pe legătura acestora cu subiectele moderne de cercetare în domeniul studiilor practicilor religioase. Autoarea susține că activitățile organizațiilor și comunităților religioase evreiești se manifestă în diferite sfere ale vieții, în special în educație, acțiuni caritabile și asistență socială. În egală măsură, articolul identifică provocările care rămân relevante pentru comunitățile și organizațiile religioase, precum inițiativele de finanțare, de asistență în vederea reducerii gradului de antisemitism din țară și de creștere a nivelului de educație în spirit evreiesc. Studiarea funcționării comunităților religioase evreiești din Ucraina, în legătură cu dezvoltarea instituțiilor civice, permite investigarea actualizării acestui tip de activități, ca și impactul lor asupra vieții publice. Iată de ce, în contextul analizei și al obiectivelor formulate în lucrare, au fost luate în considerare exemple specifice de funcționare dinamică a comunităților religioase evreiești.

INTRODUCTION

Religion, as a significant element of culture, plays an important role in preserving national identity and is a factor, asserting the value of one's uniqueness in a pluralistic world. The unity of culture largely depends on the definition of its physical borders. In this regard, of particular importance are practices aimed at "preserving and renewing" the unique features of national culture, with religious identity linked in as part of the corresponding "cultural types" (Sergey Averintsev) or "local civilizations" (Arnold J. Toynbee). Focusing on the importance of taking into account the historical formation of national and religious communities and the current state of society, one should pay attention to the fact that the Ukrainian experience in this aspect is extremely instructive. The specificity of religious life in Ukraine proves that the previous history of the state laid the foundations for an integrated, multinational, multi-religious society, in which the issues of preventing the extremisation of religion were of great importance and attracted the attention of public and political figures.

As is known, the religious map of Ukraine is very rich. It represents more than 37,000 communities of various denominations, including Jewish organisations and communities that take an active part in the hectic social life of Ukraine. The official data on the representation of Jewish religious institutions in Ukraine show a 1% increase in their composition and actual activity since 2015.¹ The re-

¹ Larysa Vladichenko, Sergiy Lysenko, Ivan Papayani, *25-richchia Ukrainskoi nezalezhnosti yak istoriia relihiinykh svobod i svitohliadnoho pliuralizmu: derzhavni instytutsii ta relihiini orhanizatsii u poshuku modelei partnerstva* [25th anniversary of Ukrainian independence as a history of religious freedoms and ideological pluralism: state

port of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine "on the network of religious organizations in Ukraine" specifies the following Jewish organisations and communities in Ukraine present as of January 1, 2017: "Association of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine" (including 83 organisations, 17 schools, 5 periodicals); "All-Ukrainian Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations" (6 organisations, 2 schools, 1 periodical); "Religious Organizations of Progressive Judaism" (42 organisations, 7 Sunday schools, 1 periodical); "Association of the Chabad Hasidim of Jewish Religious Organizations of Ukraine" (125 organisations, 29 schools, 17 periodicals); and other Jewish religious organisations (48 in total, 8 Sunday schools, no periodicals). The total number of Jewish religious organisations in Ukraine is 304, of which 276 are communities representing 63 schools and 28 periodicals.²

The present article is aimed at presenting an analysis of the history and current state of Jewish communities and organisations in independent Ukraine (1991-2019). The study does not focus on the distinction between community and organisation but rather uses these terms as the self-names of relevant structures. These formal associations can be divided into several groups. The first group comprises communities and organisations created to meet religious needs. The second group includes communities and organisations representing the Ukrainian Jewish community as a national and religious minority. A number of organisations (foundations) can also be identified, whose activities are aimed at supporting, developing and studying Jewish life in Ukraine.

The study of Jewish life in modern Ukraine and Europe, in general, has long been of interest to domestic and foreign researchers. It should be noted that the history and modernity of European Jewry are actively studied by young scholars.

For example, with the assistance of the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center, a number of scientific papers were published on the art of Ukrainian Jews,³ their

institutions and religious organisations in search of partnership models: coll. Science. materials], Collection of scientific materials, Kyiv, Dukh i Litera, 2017, p. 255-257.

² *Zaiavlenye OEOU po sytuatsyy s evreiskoi relyhyoznoi obshchynoi yudeiskoho ortodoksalnogo veroyspovedaniya h. Kolomyi* [The statement of the UJCU on the situation with the Orthodox Jewish religious community in Kolomyia], in <https://jewishnews.com.ua/society/zayavlenie-oeou-po-situaczii-s-evrejskoj-religioznoj-obshhinoj-iudejskogo-ortodoksalnogo-veroispovedaniya-g-kolomyii> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

³ Sergiy Kravtsov, Illya Rodov, Małgorzata Stolarska-Fronia, *From Ausgleich to the Holocaust: Ukrainian and Jewish Artists of Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv*, Weimer and Rostock, Grünberg Verlag, 2019.

participation in revolutions during the existence of tsarist Russia,⁴ and life during the Soviet era.⁵ Over the past ten years, with the assistance of the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center, a number of in-depth studies have been published on various aspects of Jewish life in various regions of Eastern Europe, including those that are now part of Ukraine. Among them are Ilia Lurie's *Hasidic Courtyard in Lubavichi and the Chabad Movement*,⁶ Benjamin Nathans's *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*.⁷

In addition to Israeli studies, of particular interest are the works of researchers from the University of Michigan, namely Deborah Dash Moore, Zvi Gitelman, and Frederick G.L. Huetwell, who study the issues of the Holocaust and the history of European Jewry in the 20th century. This topic is also covered in the works of Jennifer Evans and Noah Shenker. Various European research institutes study Jewish culture and religion in the context of history, political science, and sociology. Of note is the research of the Central European University in Hungary. The researchers of this centre focus on the study of "Jewish civilization", including philosophy, Yiddish culture, and the analysis of the relationship between the Jewish and Christian populations. As is known, the territory of modern Ukraine, which includes Galicia (a region with a large Jewish population before World War II), was at different times part of Poland, the Russian Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Within its current borders, Ukraine gained independence only in 1991. That is why when studying the relationship of the Jews with a non-national environment, one often talks about Eastern European Jewry in general. Ashkenazi communities are becoming the subject of study as independent cultural phenomena. At the same time, addressing the problem of recognition of the confessional uniqueness of Jewish communities by political structures and analysing religious policy are carried out taking into account the political and legal context in which these communities existed. A valuable source for learning about the history of the Jewish community in Poland, tsarist Russia, and modern Eastern Europe, is contained in the collective monograph *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in*

⁴ Vladimir Levin, *From Revolution to War: Jewish Politics in Russia, 1907-1914*, Jerusalem, The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2016.

⁵ Zvi Gitelman, Yaakov Ro'I, *Revolution, Repression, and Revival: The Soviet-Jewish Experience*, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

⁶ Yllya Lure, *Khasidskyi dvor i dvizhenye Khabad* [Hasidic court and the Chabad movement], Tsentru nauchnykh rabotnikov i prepodavatelei iudayki v vuzakh «Sefer», Moskva, Institut slavianovedeniya Rossiskoy akademii nauk, 2018.

⁷ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Jerusalem, The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2013.

Modern Russian History,⁸ the joint work *Ukrainian – Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*,⁹ the articles of John-Paul Himka “A Blank Spot in the Collective Memory of the Ukrainian Diaspora”,¹⁰ Zvi Gitelman “The Jews of Ukraine and Moldova”,¹¹ and others.

This brief overview of case studies shows that the historical experience of interethnic and interreligious relations in Ukraine cannot be comprehended without considering regional differences and the peculiarities of government policy on the "Jewish question." By characterising the general attitude of scholars to this issue, one must be aware that that Ukrainian scholars are not as active as their foreign, in particular, to Jewish pogroms or collaboration during World War II. The reason for this is seen in the need to raise the question, in such studies, of who the perpetrators of such a genocide might have been. Kateryna Bartoshevskya drew attention to this circumstance in her article “Lviv. 1918. The Jewish Pogrom”.¹² She noted that the topic of genocide in Jewish pogroms at the time remains insufficiently studied among Ukrainian historians because, in Ukrainian society, there is no request to overcome mutual accusations in connection with the Holodomor and the participation of representatives of various ethnic communities in the establishment of the Bolshevik regime on the territory of Ukraine.

SHORT HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINIAN LANDS

The history of the Jews on the territory of modern Ukraine is quite long. During its course, the Jewish diaspora had different relations with the inhabitants of the region, sometimes dramatic but more often friendly and even partnering.

⁸ John Doyle Klier, Shlomo Lambroza, *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

⁹ Peter J. Potichnyi, Howard Aster, *Ukrainian – Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990.

¹⁰ John-Paul Himka, *War Criminality: A Blank Spot in the Collective Memory of the Ukrainian Diaspora*, in “Spaces of Identity”, Vol. 5, Special Issue: War Crimes, pp. 9-24. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1496-6778.7999> (Accessed on 19.02.2021).

¹¹ Zvi Gitelman, *The Jews of Ukraine and Moldova*, in Miriam Weiner, *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova: Pages from the Past and Archival Inventories* (The Jewish Genealogy Series), New York – New Jersey, Routes to Roots, 1999.

¹² Katerina Bartoshevs'ka, *L'viv. 1918. Yevrejs'kij pogrom* [Lviv. 1918. The Jewish pogrom] in <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2019/12/4/156657/> (Accessed on 19.02.2021).

Certain milestones in this history were the subject of independent academic research in Ukraine and abroad. For further presentation, it seems appropriate to briefly describe the peculiarities of the formation of Jewish life in Ukraine and give some interesting examples. Traditionally, the first Jewish settlements on the territory of modern Ukraine are considered to be originated in the 1st century AD (in the Greek colony of Pontus on the Black Sea), as evidenced by a letter sent to Emperor Gaius Caligula by the Jewish king Agrippa I.¹³ A more detailed description of the Jewish presence is associated with the history of the Khazar Khaganate (7-10 centuries AD), whose ruler Obadiah (780-800) made Judaism the state religion.¹⁴ It is interesting to mention that after the first Khazar-Jewish community appeared in Kyiv in the 10th century, there was at the same time one of the first mentions of the city of Kyiv itself, which is contained in the so-called "Kyiv Letter" from Cairo Geniza, which was signed by the head of the Khazar-Jewish community.¹⁵ As a result of political transformations, Turkic-speaking peoples began to settle in Kyivan Rus. They are often associated with the emergence of Karaite communities in Ukraine, which together with the inhabitants of Crimea and the Crimean Tatars are now recognised as the indigenous people of Crimea.

During the historical period from the 14th to the 17th century, when the lands of Western Ukraine were part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Jews were actively resettled to this region¹⁶ from Western Europe. The main activities of the Jewish community included education, charity, "Hebrew Kaddish" activities, establishing offices to interact with the authorities and the government, providing support to the economic activities of community members, who began to develop in the 16th century and flourished in the 17th century, which became the "golden age" for the Jews in this region.¹⁷ No less significant events of that time

¹³ Anatoliy Kolodniy, *Istoriya religiyi v Ukrayini* [The History of religion in Ukraine], Kyiv, Ukrayinskiy Tsentri duhovnoyi kulturi, 1996.

¹⁴ Oleg Bubenok, *Hozari v Istoriyi Shidnoyi Evropi* [Khazars in the history of Eastern Europe], Kyiv, Institut shodoznavstva im. A. Yu. Krimskogo NAN Ukrayini, 2019.

¹⁵ *Scanned copy of the original "Kyiv letter" to the digital library of the University of Cambridge*, in <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-00012-00122/1> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

¹⁶ Lyudmyla Grinevich, Vladyslav Grinevich, *Evreyi v Ukrayini, Entsiklopediya Istoriyi Ukrayini* [Jews in Ukraine, Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine], Tom 3, Kyiv, Naukova dumka, 2005.

¹⁷ Oleg Rafalskiy, *Dzherela z Istoriyi ta kulturi evreyskogo narodu Pravoberezhnoyi Ukrayini u fondah Derzhavnogo arhivu Zhitomirskoyi oblasti* [Sources on the history and culture of the Jewish people of the Right Bank of Ukraine in the funds of the State Archives of Zhytomyr

were socio-political transformations that partly led to the emergence of Hasidism. This movement was initiated by Israel ben Eliezer (the Baal Shem Tov) and continued by his disciple Dov Ber of Mezeritch, whose teachings were based on the idea of Kabbalah.¹⁸ It is in the territory of Ukraine that the most famous "Hasidic dynasties" arose and developed. However, due to the events of World War II, the members of these communities left Europe and settled around the world. The main centres of these Hasidic movements today are Borough Park in New York-USA, and the cities of Ashdod, Bnei Brak, and Jerusalem in Israel. However, the connection of these communities with Ukraine was not completely interrupted; for example, the city of Uman, where Rabbi Nachman of Breslov was buried, is visited annually by thousands of pilgrims from around the world.

The history of the Jews of Ukraine within the Russian Empire also had important milestones. After the annexation of part of the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to Russia, a new stage began in the political process, which determined the attitude towards the Jews in this region.¹⁹ In the Russian Empire, the Jews continued to live mostly in small towns (shtetls), maintaining their own cultural autonomy and religion. In the 19th century, "anti-Jewish myths" became popular in Russia, which eventually led to serious consequences, such as bloody raids and pogroms in more than 150 settlements. A striking example of such a policy was the Bailis case, in which Menahem Mendel Beilis was accused of ritual murder. Due to the public outcry and protest appeals by international and Ukrainian elites (Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Volodymyr Vernadsky, and others), the case became widely known, and as a result of the trial (1913), Bailis was acquitted.

The history of the Jewish community in Soviet Ukraine also had its bright and sorrowful moments. During World War II, virtually all of the Jewish population remaining in the occupied territories in Ukraine were annihilated. The two places that gained notoriety are Babyn Yar, in which 35,000 Jews were killed in 1941,²⁰ and the Lviv ghetto, which in early 1942 numbered more than 150,000

region], in *Materlali mizhnarodnoyi naukovo-praktichnoyi konferentsiyi "Evreyi v Ukrayini: istoriya i suchasnist"* [Materials of International scientific practical conference "Jews in Ukraine: History and Present"], Zhitomir, Vidavnistvo ZhDU im. I. Franka, 2009.

¹⁸ Zoya Shwed, *Hasidizm* [Hasidism], *Filosofskiy entsiklopedichniy slovník*, Kyiv, Institut filosofiyi imeni Grigoriya Skovorody NAN Ukrayini, Abris, 2002, p. 697.

¹⁹ Adel Kernes, *Evreyskaya rota batki Mahno* [The Jewish unit of Bat'ko Makhno], U-Jew. Project of the United Jewish Community of Ukraine, in <https://ujew.com.ua/history/evrejskaya-rota-batki-maxno> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

²⁰ *Istorichniy narativ Memorialnogo tsentru Golokostu "Babin Yar"* [Historical Narrative of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center], in <https://babynyar.org/storage/>

Jews and after the liberation of Lviv in 1944 no more than 2000.²¹ At the same time, many Ukrainians helped the Jewish population, as evidenced by the recognition of 1,755 Ukrainians as the Righteous Among the Nations by the Jewish organisation "Yad Vashem". In the postwar period, religious life in the USSR was under the strict supervision of the police and the Committee for State Security. Some facts of this history are highlighted in the memoirs of Jewish dissidents and Jewish refuseniks such as Natan Sharansky,²² Yosyf Zisels,²³ and others.

THE POSITION OF JEWS IN UKRAINE IN THE ERA OF INDEPENDENCE

As a result of World War II, through persecution and migration, Jews in Ukraine lost almost four-fifths of their membership. Because of this, they moved from the third-largest ethnic group in Ukraine to the tenth (as of 2001).²⁴ However, the presence of the Jewish community in the country has remained considerable due to active involvement in public socio-political processes. This is evidenced by the activity of some of its representatives in the authorities and the political life of Ukraine. They also take an active part in international philanthropic activities. In addition, there are several nationwide religious associations in Ukraine, which include both Orthodox and reformist communities. As of 2014, there were 220 communities in various orthodox associations, 51 in reformist associations, and 26 communities who were independent.²⁵ In recent years, this fig-

main/a7/9f/a79f5d1b95d299fa377952d1c4b88297081d938c50781072bb3f8cb3f381dbc2.pdf (Accessed on 23.02.2021).

²¹ Anatoliy Podolskiy, *Uroki minulogo: Istoriya Golokostu v Ukrayini* [Lessons from the past: The history of the Holocaust in Ukraine], Kyiv, TOV «Sprint-Servis», 2016, p. 32

²² Natan Sharansky, *Fear No Evil: The Classic Memoir of One Man's Triumph over a Police State*, Public Affairs, 1998.

²³ Yosyp Zisels, *Esli ne seychas... Stati, intervyyu, vyistupleniya. 1989–2006 gg.* [If not now ... Articles, interviews, speeches. 1989-2006], Kyiv, Duh i Litera, 2006.

²⁴ *Informatslyno-analltichni materialy do parlamentskih sluhan na temu: "Rol, znachennya ta vpliv gromadyanskogo suspilstva na formuvannya etnonatsionalnoyi polityki ednosti v Ukrayini"* [Information and analytical materials for the parliamentary hearings on the topic: "The role, significance and influence of civil society on the formation of ethno-national unity policy in Ukraine"], in <http://kompravlud.rada.gov.ua/uploads/documents/32953.pdf> (Accessed on 23.02.2021).

²⁵ Daryna Privalko, *Evreyskaya zhizn v Ukraine: Dostizheniya, trudnosti i prioritety ot padeniya kommunisticheskogo rezhima do 2013 goda* [Jewish life in Ukraine: Achievements, challenges and priorities from the collapse of communism to 2013], in https://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR_Ukraine_report_final_Russian_version.pdf

ure has changed significantly. For example, the United Jewish Community of Ukraine has already 140 members (Chabad charitable foundations, Orthodox and reformist communities, etc.), and the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine (VAAD) has 266 (religious communities, Jewish schools, cultural organisations, etc.).²⁶ As shown by the literature review, the same associations are part of different "umbrella" organisations. Such organisations are effective, since they bring together different purposes and different financing sources.

According to the 2015 official report of the VAAD of Ukraine, there are about 600 Jewish communities and organisations in the country, which are united in 15 "umbrella" structures. At the same time, "more than 200 religious communities are divided into five associations of different sub-confessional denominations. The rest of the communities are secular, universal-public, in particular, urban and regional Jewish communities, as well as charitable, youth, Zionist, veteran, sports, scientific, educational and so on".²⁷

The first and main reason for the change in the number of communities and organisations in Ukraine is that the associations functioning in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (in the cities of Evpatoria, Sevastopol, Simferopol, Yalta) and in some eastern regions of the country (Donetsk, Luhansk) lost or significantly reduced contact with their partners in Ukraine. At the same time, of particular interest is the transfer of Jewish communities from the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to the Kyiv region. These refer to the town of Anatevka, which was founded in 2015 as a "social adaptation project" for refugees from eastern Ukraine. The city began to be constructed in May 2015 and was inhabited by 20 families of displaced persons by September 1.²⁸ Since then, a polyclinic, a school, and a rehabilitation centre have been built in the town, and small charitable enterprises have been set up (for example, to make protective

(Accessed on 6.08.2020).

²⁶ *Obschinnyiy otchet "Deyatelnost Assotsiatsii evreyskikh organizatsiy i obschin Ukrainyi v 2010 godu"* [Community report "Activities of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine in 2010"], in <http://vaadua.org/otchety> (Accessed 23.02.2021).

²⁷ *Evreyskaya obschina Ukrainyi na fone rossiyskoy agressii i svyazannogo s voynoy ekonomicheskogo krizisa* [The Jewish community of Ukraine against the background of Russian aggression and the war-related economic crisis], in <http://vaadua.org/evreyskaya-obshchina-ukrainyi-na-fone-rossiyskoy-agressii-i-svyazannogo-s-voynoy-ekonomicheskogo> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

²⁸ *Anatevka: poslednie prigotovleniya k otkryitiyu* [Anatevka: Last preparations for the opening], in <http://sinagoga.kiev.ua/node/7465> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

clothing for medical staff during the coronavirus pandemic). Residents are engaged in agriculture organised by the Kibbutz principle, and the plan is to build houses for 1,000 people.²⁹ A new synagogue was built in the town for the first time in the history of Ukraine's independence.

Concerning the organisational structure of the Ukrainian Jewish community, the latest report "The Jewish community of Ukraine against the background of Russian aggression and the war-related economic crisis" states that in 2015 in Ukraine there were more than 300,000 people who had the right to repatriation under the Israeli Law of Return.³⁰ Eight out of thirty thousand Jews in Donbas have moved to Israel since 2014,³¹ which is estimated as a reaction to the political and economic situation in the region. About 2-3% of Jews moved to Russia.³²

THE POSITION AND STATUS OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA

An interesting phenomenon in Ukraine is also the so-called "Israeli diaspora".³³ It was first studied in 2009, which resulted in the publication of an analytical report that provided generalisations on the motives for leaving for Israel and the reasons for coming back to Ukraine. Unfortunately, this report does not provide statistics on the number of Israelis living in Ukraine. Representatives of various Jewish organisations put the figure at between 9,000 and 20,000. This discrepancy is explained by the different "demographic tools" used by experts in their estimates.³⁴ This community of Israeli citizens living in Ukraine is not homo-

²⁹ *Anatevka: ubezhische dlya evreev s vostoka Ukrainyi* [Anatevka: A refuge for Jews from eastern Ukraine], in <https://www.bbc.com/russian/av/media-44524083> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

³⁰ *Evreyskaya obshchina Ukrainyi na fone rossiyskoy agressii i svyazannogo s voynoy ekonomicheskogo krizisa* [The Jewish community of Ukraine against the background of Russian aggression and the war-related economic crisis], in <http://vaadua.org/evreyskaya-obshchina-ukrainyi-na-fone-rossiyskoy-agressii-i-svyazannogo-s-voynoy-ekonomicheskogo> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

³¹ Rabin Vishedski, *Mayzhe tretina Evreyiv Donbasu pereyihala v Izrayil vid 2014 roku* [Almost a third of Donbas Jews have moved to Israel since 2014], in <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news/28367185.html> (Accessed on 23.02.2021).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ O. Stegniy, A. Vasilchenko, *Izrayiltyani v Ukrayini* [Israelis in Ukraine], in <https://www.ukma.edu.ua/index.php/science/tsentri-ta-laboratoriji/ndc-shidnogo-evrejstva/doslidzhennia> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

³⁴ V. Khanin (Zeev), *The Israeli diaspora in Ukraine: Structure, dynamics and identity (material)*, in "Judaica Ukrainica", 2014, No. 3, pp. 81-104.

geneous. First, it can be conditionally divided into three groups: Jews by Halakha, Jews who have the right to repatriation, and relatives of those who have the right to repatriation but are not Jews. Representatives of the latter two groups make up no more than 30% of the total number of those who returned to Ukraine, and this affects the parameters of religious identity, which determines the level of participation in the activities of religious organisations and communities. According to the report, about 57% of respondents recognised Judaism as "their" religion, which suggests the inclusion of several Jews who are not citizens of Ukraine in Jewish life.

Some of those who re-emigrated and members of their families work in the administration of Jewish organisations and religious communities in Ukraine. The total number of such persons is estimated at no more than 10% of the total number of Israelis permanently residing in Ukraine. According to surveys, this segment of the "Israeli diaspora" includes those who plan to return to Israel and those who plan to stay. Each group has representatives who take an active part in the religious community, engage in "Jewish" educational projects, and represent a small part of the religious community. At the same time, as noted by Z. Khanin, belonging to the Jewish community – for instance, visiting a synagogue, communicating with representative offices of the Jewish Agency for Israel, and participating in the activities of local Jewish organisations – "plays the role of a means of self-exclusion from the surrounding social environment".³⁵

As noted earlier, the complex constitution of the Jewish community is multifaceted. The many elements include religious life, educational issues, cultural development, heritage preservation, resistance to anti-Semitism, youth outreach, entrepreneurship, philanthropy, charity, Aliyah (repatriation), and many others. These topics were covered in the report of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. The report also noted that the main achievements that can be identified in the formation of religious life in Jewish communities during Ukraine's independence were the development of the infrastructure of the religious community and Jewish education, and the establishment of links with international Jewish organisations.³⁶ During this time, wide horizons were opened up for the Jewish community

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Daryna Privalko, *Evreyskaya zhizn v Ukraine: Dostizheniya, trudnosti i prioritety ot padeniya kommunisticheskogo rezhima do 2013 goda* [Jewish life in Ukraine: Achievements, challenges and priorities from the collapse of communism to 2013], in https://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR_Ukraine_report_final_Russian_version.pdf (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

to meet their religious needs in the implementation of religious practices. This refers to such movements as Orthodox Judaism (various Hasidic movements, Chabad), as well as conservative and progressive movements.

Education is known to be an important condition for the Jewish community to preserve its identity. For this reason, various foundations and organisations (such as Or Avner, VAAD) not only support classical Jewish education but also assist in implementing research projects on Jewish studies. The National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy has an interesting experience in this regard. In 2012, an interdisciplinary certified Master's Program in Jewish Studies was launched at the Faculty of Humanities with the help of the Pincus Fund for Jewish Education.³⁷ Currently, this program, together with the Ukrainian Association for Jewish Studies, specialises in the history of the Ukrainian population, as well as archaeology and includes the following: language training (Hebrew, Yiddish, Aramaic), a series of historical disciplines, such as "History of the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism", "History of the Jews of the Muslim East", "History of Zionism", as well as archival-museum-library practice. An internship is also held annually at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In our opinion, the activities of such programs contribute to the tolerance of interfaith relations.

The activities of various public organisations, including the International Renaissance Foundation, and the Institute of Human Rights and Prevention of Extremism and Xenophobia, also contributed to this goal and promoted the deepening of international dialogue and the spread of tolerance in society.³⁸ The expert analysis of the level of anti-Semitism in the country in recent years shows positive dynamics, which was reflected, in particular, during the 2019 elections. It is interesting to note the role played by Jewish organisations in developing a strategy to prevent anti-Semitism and xenophobia and wrongful accusations of these crimes.³⁹ The condition for fruitful work in this direction is seen in the conduct of sufficient outreach and awareness-raising work, which should be aimed at disseminating information about the history of Jews in Ukraine and the history of the Shoah. However, overcoming anti-Semitism should also include other forms of ac-

³⁷ *The Pincus Fund for Jewish Education*, in <https://www.pincusfund.org/> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

³⁸ *The Institute of Human Rights and Prevention of Extremism and Xenophobia*, in <https://feldman.ua/ua/ihp/ex/> (Accessed on 5.08.2020).

³⁹ Daniel Eisenbud, *Ukrainian Jewish Committee: Russian claims of anti-Semitism in Crimea are lies, propaganda*, in "The Jerusalem Post", 2014, in <https://www.jpost.com/International/Ukrainian-Jewish-Committee-Russian-claims-of-anti-Semitism-in-Crimea-are-lies-propaganda-344828> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

tivity, such as close cooperation with local authorities and the establishment of monitoring centres.

As this cultural shift was underway, the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine in 2018 solicited data concerning cultural integration of minorities in different regions. The data indicated that regional administrations, subordinated to the Department of Religious and Ethnic Affairs, do not always make a satisfactory assessment of their cooperation with minorities. Representatives of the authorities complain about the low social activity of minorities and their inability to "articulate their needs".⁴⁰ In our opinion, this may be associated with the fact that representatives of these minorities do not quite understand what the tasks of these executive bodies are and how they can help meet the needs of the minority, such as the restitution of Jewish property or the return of tangible assets. At the same time, it should be emphasised that the disclaimer of the above-mentioned collection states that the terminology used by the authors of the given materials should not be interpreted as an official, that is, "The opinions expressed in the collection belong solely to the authors".⁴¹ Obviously, there is a cooperation between Jewish organisations and public authorities.

THE PROBLEM OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN MODERN UKRAINIAN REALITIES

The preparation and publication of reports on the level of anti-Semitism in Ukraine is a very positive experience in this regard. This practice contributes to the coordination of national policies in terms of guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of citizens. In addition, the availability of such information allows us to get an idea of the dynamics of interethnic relations, public sentiment, and the results of state policy aimed at establishing social harmony. According to a 2019 report by the United Jewish Community of Ukraine,⁴² the level of anti-Semitism has decreased by 27%. If in 2018 there were 90 cases of direct anti-Semitism, in 2019 there were 66 cases, which allowed the Co-President of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine Josef Zissels to assess the level of anti-

⁴⁰ *Ukrayina – suzir'ya kultur. Zbirnyk* [Ukraine – a constellation of cultures. Collection], Kyiv, Noviy druk, 2018.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Otchet po antisemitizmu v Ukraine za 2019 god* [Report on anti-Semitism in Ukraine for 2019], in <https://jewishnews.com.ua/society/otchet-po-antisemitizmu-v-ukraine-za-2019-god> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

Semitism in Ukraine as the lowest in Europe.⁴³ The level of so-called "domestic anti-Semitism" has also decreased, as mentioned in connection with the rather ambiguous report of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 2019.⁴⁴ These changes are also recorded in the reports of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and other organisations.⁴⁵

It should be noted that those responsible for compiling the national report take into account the fact that reports of anti-Semitic incidents require fact-checking. Thanks to such work, it is possible to establish cases when in the media or on social networks, anti-Semitic are called those phenomena that, as a matter of fact, do not correspond to this definition.⁴⁶ An example of this is the case in the city of Kolomyia, in February 2020.⁴⁷ The head of the Orthodox Jewish religious community received an official request from the Strategic Investigations Department (SID) of the National Police of Ukraine to provide personal information (home addresses, telephone numbers) about community members and the lists of students of Jewish origin, in higher educational institutions of the Ivano-Frankivsk region, with their personal information, including places of residence. The United Jewish Community of Ukraine (UJCU) conducted a legal analysis of the SID's request and concluded that it "does not violate the current legislation of Ukraine. Besides, such a request *is not anti-Semitism* [emphasis added], according to the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance".⁴⁸ At the same time, the United Jewish

⁴³ *My maemo odin z naymenshih rivniv antisemitizmu v Evropi* [We have one of the lowest levels of anti-Semitism in Europe], in https://zaxid.net/mi_mayemo_odin_z_naymenshih_rivniv_antisemitizmu_v_yevropi_n1508494 (Accessed on 23.02.2021).

⁴⁴ *Chy zrostaє v Ukraïni riven antisemitizmu?* [Is the level of anti-Semitism growing in Ukraine?], in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4LYEPGmqkE> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

⁴⁵ *Hate Crime Report*, in <https://hatecrime.osce.org/ukraine> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

⁴⁶ Kateryna Sergatskova, *In one town in Ukraine, police demanded a list of Jews from the head of the Jewish community. We tell you about the history of antisemitism there*, in <https://zaborona.com/en/in-one-town-in-ukraine-police-demanded-a-list-of-jews-from-the-head-of-the-jewish-community-we-tell-you-about-the-history-of-antisemitism-there/> (Accessed 23.02.2021).

⁴⁷ *Zaiavlenye OEOU po situatsiyi s evreiskoi relyhyznoi obshchynoi yudeiskoho ortodoksalnogo veroispovedaniya h. Kolomyi* [The statement of the UJCU on the situation with the Orthodox Jewish religious community in Kolomyia], in <https://jewishnews.com.ua/society/zayavlenie-oeou-po-situaczii-s-evrejskoj-religioznoj-obshhinoj-iudejskogo-ortodoksalnogo-veroispovedaniya-g-kolomyii> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Community of Ukraine said that such an incident could still be considered anti-Semitic if the investigation established that the purpose of gathering information was to harm the Jewish community in the future. The conclusion on this incident can be drawn after the official investigation, which began on May 11, 2020.

Manifestations of intolerance or aggression towards the Jewish community and its representatives, including attacks on Israeli policy are recorded, and such narratives are transmitted to law enforcement agencies.⁴⁹ The policy of preventing anti-Semitism was continued after the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections (which were won by Volodymyr Zelensky and the Sluga Narodu/Servant of the People Party). Close cooperation was established between the authorities and Jewish communities in preventing anti-Semitism, as confirmed by the UJCU report, which recorded a decline in anti-Semitism.⁵⁰ Back in 2007, there were a large number of such events that aroused the concern of the Jewish community, for example, acts of vandalism, outright anti-Semitic insults, etc.⁵¹ It should be noted that the topic of anti-Semitism is closely linked to the influence of far-right political forces,⁵² whose activities take place in modern Ukraine. At the same time, public support for such parties is extremely low, as evidenced by the latest parliamentary elections in 2019, in which the Svoboda party gained 2.15% and did not enter parliament.⁵³ The topic of anti-Semitism in the media sometimes becomes strange. For example, Michael Goldborn in one of his publications speaks of his concern about the fate of the Jewish minority in Ukraine due to the intolerant at-

⁴⁹ "Narkotiki zloy umyisel sionistov" — v parke Kieva nashli antisemitskiy plakat ["Drugs are the evil intent of the Zionists" - an anti-Semitic poster was found in the park of Kiev], in <https://jewishnews.com.ua/society/narkotiki-zloy-umyisel-sionistov-v-parke-kieva-nashli-antisemitskij-plakat> (Accessed 23.02.2021).

⁵⁰ *Antisemitizm v Ukraine. Otchet za 2019 god* [Anti-Semitism in Ukraine. 2019 Annual Report], in <https://jew.org.ua/images/pdf/AntisemitismRUS2019.pdf> (Accessed 25.02.2021).

⁵¹ *Golovniy rabin Ukrayini sturbovaniy zagostrennyam antisemitizmu v Zhitomiri* [Ukraine's chief rabbi is concerned about the escalation of anti-Semitism in Zhytomyr], in <http://khpg.org/1187791599> (Accessed 25.02.2021).

⁵² Adrian Karatnycky, *Ukraine, Anti-Semitism, Racism, and the Far Right*, in <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraine-anti-semitism-racism-and-the-far-right/> (Accessed 25.02.2021).

⁵³ *Pozachergovi vybory narodnyh deputativ Ukrayini 21 lipnya 2019 roku* [Extraordinary elections of people's deputies of Ukraine on July 21, 2019], in https://cvk.gov.ua/vibory_category/vibori-narodnih-deputativ-ukraini/pozachergovi-vibori-narodnih-deputativ-ukraini-21-lipnya-2019-roku.html (Accessed 25.02.2021).

titude of Ukrainians to gay parades.⁵⁴ The comparison of national and religious minorities with sexual minorities is unjustified, and therefore the accusations of the Groysman government's support of anti-Semitism are unfounded. In addition, one should say a few words about the specifics of religious tourism in Ukraine. As known, Ukraine occupies a special place in the spiritual history of Judaism because Hasidism emerged on its territory, and the spiritual leader of Bratslav Hasidim is buried in the city of Uman. Over the past year, there have been numerous conflicts, in which the confrontation between Hasidic pilgrims and the local population was distinctly antagonistic. See for example:

1. Hasidim made a riot in Uman: The opposing Jewish factions did not like the quarantine fence.⁵⁵

2. In Uman, an internet agitator inciting ethnic hatred was exposed.⁵⁶

3. Another conflict arose between locals and Hasidim over the construction of a synagogue in Uman.⁵⁷

4. Criminal proceedings opened in Uman in connection with the appearance of a sign prohibiting the entry of Hasidim in a local café.⁵⁸

However, thanks to the cooperation of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies with local public organisations, and, when necessary, Israeli law

⁵⁴ Michael Colborne, *Ukraine's Far Right Is Growing Increasingly Violent - Why Aren't Local Jews Concerned?*, in <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/.premium-ukraine-s-far-right-is-increasingly-violent-why-aren-t-local-jews-concerned-1.6852878> (Accessed 18.06.2021).

⁵⁵ *Hasidy ustroili debosh v Umani: ne ponravilsya karantinnyy zabor* [Hasidim made a riot in Uman: They did not like the quarantine fence], in <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2020/09/10/7265968/> (Accessed 18.06.2021).

⁵⁶ *V Umani razoblachili internet-agitatora, kotoryy prizyval k mezhnatsionalnoy vrazhde* [In Uman, an internet agitator inciting ethnic hatred was exposed], in <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-regions/3102954-v-umani-razoblacili-internetagitatora-kotoryj-prizyval-k-mezhnatsionalnoj-vrazhde.html> (Accessed 18.06.2021).

⁵⁷ *V Umani snova konflikt mezhdru mestnyimi zhitelyami i hasidami iz-za stroitelstva sinagogi* [Another conflict between locals and Hasidim over the construction of a synagogue in Uman], in <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-regions/3099403-v-umani-snova-konflikt-mezhdru-mestnymi-zitelami-i-hasidami-izza-stroitelstva-sinagogi.html> (Accessed 18.06.2021).

⁵⁸ *V Umani militsiya vobudila delo iz-za tablichki o zaprete vhoda hasidam* [Criminal proceedings opened in Uman in connection with the appearance of a sign prohibiting the entry of Hasidim in a local cafe], in <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-regions/3098097-v-umani-milicia-vozbudila-delo-izza-tablicki-o-zaprete-vhoda-hasidam.html> (Accessed 18.06.2021).

enforcement agencies, it is usually possible to resolve conflicts and, if required, apply coercive measures.

In considering the role of government protection within the Jewish community of Ukraine, one of the largest "umbrella" organisations in Ukraine is the VAAD, established in 1991, whose activities are aimed at the national revival and strengthening of ties between various Jewish organisations. This institution co-founded the Zionist Federation of Ukraine, the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine, charitable foundations, etc. The nationwide nature of the VAAD's activities is evidenced by its goals and tasks. These are: "implementation of organizational, financial and professional measures to create a system of social protection for the Jewish communities of Ukraine; cultural and enlightening activities (organization of educational institutions of all levels, lectures, seminars, scientific conferences on Jewish languages, history, culture and traditions); assistance in the revival of religious Jewish communities and the restitution of their religious facilities; assistance in the protection of the honour and ethnic dignity of Jews in Ukraine, resistance to anti-Semitism; support and development of relations with public, cultural, political, religious, youth, sports and other organizations of Israel; coordination and information functions, as well as representative functions of the Association members at the state and international levels".⁵⁹ One of the VAAD's latest activities, together with the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences, was participation in the discussion of a project to create a memorial complex at Babyn Yar.

Another important representative and coordinating function of Jewish organisations is that they assist in expanding the scope of social programs aimed at supporting vulnerable groups. The commandment to care is very important in Judaism, which is why Jewish organisations pay much attention to this issue. In Ukraine, there is a "Hesed" project, which provides social security and is considered the most successful in this area. However, not only this international system but also local communities, based on self-financing, organise a number of charitable activities aimed at supporting socially vulnerable groups. The coordination of such activities requires a certain infrastructure. One of the successful examples of meeting social needs is the implementation of projects with the assistance of Hasidic communities

⁵⁹ *Istoriya Assotsiatsii evreyskikh organizatsiy i obschin Ukrainyi* [History of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine], in <http://vaadua.org/istoriya-associacii-evreyskikh-organizaciy-i-obshchin-ukrainy> (Accessed on 6.08.2020).

in Kyiv. This includes the organisation and maintenance of a home for the elderly, the provision of food kits to people in need, free legal advice, etc.

Even these small examples show that the development of religious centres in Ukraine differs from what they were during the Soviet history of Ukraine. This is not surprising, since the total policy of the USSR government on the de-religionisation of society put an end to the traditional form of religious communities as common spiritual centres. After the fall of the USSR, Ukraine acquired years of independence and created new conditions for ensuring the forms of manifestation of Jewish identity. The mechanisms developed by the state to ensure the rights and freedoms of citizens made it possible to launch the revival of Jewish life. Jewish communities and organisations currently enjoy a sufficient level of autonomy, as each such association is independently registered with the judiciary, which allows them to independently shape the goals and objectives of activities and forms of their implementation. If conflicts arise within the community, they remain at the level of the community's internal affairs and do not become the subject of public discussion, while property disputes related to restitution are resolved in court.

It should also be noted that state-confessional relations in Ukraine are regulated by the Constitution of Ukraine and other legal measures. Following these documents, none of the confessions in Ukraine receives specific preferences or state funding; they rely on voluntary donations and sale of religious paraphernalia. At the same time, Ukraine is interested in the preservation and development of ethnonational diversity: actively supporting the activities of national minorities, including Jews, their education system, and promoting the organisation of exhibitions, national, and cultural festivals. This is provided by the Law of Ukraine "On National Minorities in Ukraine", which in Article 16 states that the state budget of Ukraine makes special allocations for the development of national minorities.⁶⁰ For example, in Kyiv, there is a Jewish state educational complex, "Simha". The project of the Babyn Yar Holocaust memorial centre is also supported by the state. In cooperation with the Council of Europe Office, a communication platform has been set up in Ukraine, which has become a milestone in the Council of Europe's project "Protecting National Minorities, including Roma, and Minority Languages in Ukraine".⁶¹ Such platforms facilitate the exchange of infor-

⁶⁰ *Zakon Ukrayini «Pro natsionalni menshini v Ukrayini»* [Law of Ukraine "On National Minorities in Ukraine"], in <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2494-12#Text> (Accessed 25.02.2021).

⁶¹ *Zahyst natsionalnyh menshyn, v tomu chisli Romiv, ta mov menshyn v Ukrayini* [Protecting

mation and consultations of national minorities, politics, and possible funding of further outreach efforts. As can be seen, Ukraine has created an appropriate legal framework for the protection of the interests of national minorities. Action is also being taken towards implementing humanitarian policy in support of national minorities, including the Jewish community.

One can identify several major issues and challenges facing Jewish communities and organisations. They include the need to create a single "umbrella" centre that would coordinate work within the Jewish community and represent it among other ethnic minorities in their relations with the state, to maintain and preserve financial stability, to strengthen formal and informal Jewish education, to provide an opportunity to study Jewish history in Ukraine, as well as to prevent anti-Semitism. The successful implementation of these tasks depends on two components. Firstly, these are actions to be taken by the Jewish community members themselves, for example, the "goodwill" of the community members to create a single organisation that can represent the Jewish community as a whole. Furthermore, such a community would work to increase the level of teaching staff involved in teaching Jewish subjects to improve the level of Jewish education. Secondly, such a committee would operate with the authorities (for example, in combating xenophobia and anti-Semitism) and other religious organisations in lobbying for the adoption of such rules of law to promote the financial independence of communities based on domestic resources. Such an effort would seek to impose the rules of law to fairly regulate the sphere of philanthropy within and without the Jewish community. It is clear that the dynamics of the religious life of the Jewish community has both its own peculiarities and common features that are inherent in most religious communities of Ukraine. This gives hope that there will be positive changes in the future, because Ukraine's policy in this area is aimed to provide a practical guarantee under which citizens will be able to exercise their rights to freedom of religion, and religious communities can fully enjoy it.

National Minorities, including Roma, and Minority Languages in Ukraine], in https://www.coe.int/uk/web/kyiv/national-minorities/-/asset_publisher/i6ydYw6ljGNc/content/communication-platform-for-national-minorities-presented-in-zaporizhia-region?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2F (Accessed 25.02.2021).

CONCLUSIONS

Relations between the Jewish population and other nations on the territory of modern Ukraine were not always simple and peaceful. Particularly dramatic was the period during World War II, when large numbers of the Jewish population living in Ukraine were brutally exterminated. The post-war period was no less difficult when the Jewish population came under close Soviet surveillance. Of course, all these circumstances directly affected the number of Jews living on Ukrainian soil. A significant number of Jews emigrated. One of the reasons for the mass departure from the country was the anti-terrorist operation in the east of the country. Therefore, statistics confidently show that the number of Jews in Ukraine tends to decrease.

However, the presence of the Jewish community in the country is palpable today, thanks to active involvement in public socio-political processes. This is confirmed by the activities of some of its representatives in the authorities. In the political life of Ukraine, they take an active part in international philanthropic activities. In addition, there are several national religious associations in Ukraine, which include both Orthodox and reformist communities.

It is worth noting that the Jewish community is making significant efforts to preserve and maintain its own culture and identity in Ukraine.

On the part of Ukraine, considerable attention is paid to the security of national minorities in the country. One of the directions that is actively implemented in domestic politics is the fight against anti-Semitism. In addition, Ukraine is interested in the preservation and development of ethnonational diversity and actively supports the activities of national minorities. These include the Jewish educational system, and the promotion of organisation of exhibitions, festivals of national and cultural societies and more.

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