

**Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine, 1917 – 1918:
Institutional Organization, Self-Perception, Attitudes, and Historiographical
Interpretations**

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Submitted to
Central European University
History Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2007

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Abstract

In April 1917 the Ukrainian Central Rada, the local legislative assembly, was elected. From autumn 1917, when it was set up as a regional government with real power, and till April 1918 national Jewish parties showed active interest in it. Owing to their activity the Law about National-Personal Autonomy was adopted and Jewish autonomous institutions created.

Although it seems that the history of the Ukrainian Central Rada is widely depicted in Ukrainian and world historiography and the history of Jews in Ukraine in that period was also researched by such scientists as H. Abramson, V. Verstiuk, O. Naiman and others, the history of Jewish national autonomy, Ministry of Jewish affairs, national Jewish parties in the Ukrainian Central Rada is still not adequately researched. That is why this paper endeavors to outline the main tendencies in the history of Jewish autonomy in Ukraine in 1917 – 1918 in the light of on the general policy of the Central Rada towards national minorities and relations of Jewish and Ukrainian national movements.

Five Jewish parties were represented in the Rada: the Zionists, the Bund, the Fareinigte, the Poale-Zion and the Folkspartei. The relations between these Jewish parties in the Rada were quite tense because of socialist and Zionist parties' confrontation. As a matter of fact, socialist parties, which had less support among Ukrainian Jewry than Zionists, had more influence and power in the Ukrainian Central Rada. Such confrontation had its consequences for establishing and activity of Jewish institutions in the Rada and in the politics of the Rada concerning Jewish national autonomy in Ukraine. This thesis aims to outline the creation of Jewish national autonomy in 1917 – 1918 Ukraine, therefore it does not claim to be a complete research, but it rather gives questions for further researches.

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Introduction

The 1917 February revolution in Russia made way for the national movements of different nationalities. For the Jews of Russia the revolution also meant the abolition of various restrictions concerning Jews (in educational, cultural, economical, social, and legal spheres) which existed in former empire. It was only that time that gave the Jews a real opportunity to solve the ‘Jewish question’ at institutional level – Jews could now equally participate in the activity of Jewish parties, the elections to the state bodies of government, and in establishment of national self-governing bodies. In such a way Jews got the chance not only be equal citizens in all spheres of life, but also influence at the official policy towards national minorities, and thus gain various rights for specific collective needs of Jews as a nation (rights for the development of Jewish education, religion, and culture).

The concept of Autonomism was a kind of solution for national minority rights problems, in particular Jewish ones, in multi-national countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the World War I. There were attempts to establish and implement Jewish national autonomy in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania¹, Poland, and Ukraine. The case of Jewish national Autonomy in Ukrainian People’s Republic was somehow unique because of local historical peculiarities; nevertheless, it was similar to the principles of Autonomism in other Central and East European countries. So the issue should be viewed in broader context of Autonomism and policy of Ukrainian People’s Republic concerning other national minorities (Poles and Russians).

The main aim of the thesis will be to research the Jewish national autonomy in Ukraine in the period of the Ukrainian Central Rada with the main foci on institutional organization of the autonomy (Ministry of Jewish Affairs as its main institution), historiographical interpretations

¹ See Gringauz, Samuel. “The Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.” In *Russian Jewry: 1917 – 1967*, ed. G. Aronson et al., 58–71. NY, South Brunswick, London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969.

of the autonomy, and self-perception (identity) of Jews. The whole block of questions will be examined in the light of the Ukrainian-Jewish relations of the period.

The objectives of the present thesis are the following:

- to trace the development of Jewish Autonomism ideas
- to examine precisely the history of Jewish national autonomy and its institutions in Ukraine
- to reconstruct Jewish-Ukrainian intelligentsia relations
- to trace the position of Jews in the light of Ukrainian Central Rada's policy towards other national minorities in Ukraine
- to make a sketch of Jewish identity of the period

The present thesis consists of Introduction , Body with three chapters and Conclusion.

The main part consists of three chapters. The first chapter *Historical Background* examines Ukrainian-Jewish relations before 1917 and the policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada towards the national minorities in Ukraine. The second chapter evaluates the role and participation of the Jewish Parties in the establishment of Jewish autonomy; it is divided at sections *The Political Platforms of the Jewish Parties* and *The Activity of Jewish Parties in the Ukrainian Central Rada*. The third chapter outlines the activity of the Ministry of Jewish Affairs as the main institution in Jewish autonomy. The conclusion also includes a brief sketch of Jewish identity and Ukrainian-Jewish relations in 1917 – 1918.

It is important to outline the organizational structure of the Ukrainian Central Rada to clarify more specific matters then. The highest body of the Central Rada was considered its

general assembly (sessions) or so-called *Velyka Rada* [Big Council]. There were 9 such general sessions during the whole period of the existence of the Ukrainian Central Rada. *Mala Rada* [Small Council] was functioning as an executive body of the Central Rada and was entitled *Komitet Tsentral'noi Rady* [Committee of the Central Rada] at the beginning; then, in June 1917, it became a permanently functioning body of the Ukrainian Central Rada which worked even during the breaks between Central Rada sessions.²

To make this research the author worked with archival and published sources. The biggest publication of the documents is two volume *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada: Dokumenty i materialy u dvokh tomakh* (*Ukrainian Central Rada: Documents and Materials in Two Volumes*)³ contains various official documents, meetings' records, appeals, Universals, and declarations of the Ukrainian Central Rada. It may shed light at the various aspects of the Rada's policy towards national minorities and establishment of Jewish autonomous institutions. To reconstruct the Ukrainian-Jewish relations of 1917–1918 and the activity of the Jewish parties in the Central Rada the author also studied the memoirs of Ukrainian and Jewish political figures such as the Head of the General Secretariat Volodymyr Vynnychenko, the first Minister of Jewish Affairs Moses Silberfarb (Moshe Zilberfarb) and Jewish politicians A. Goldenveizer, Solomon Goldelman, and Arnold Margolin.

Although it seems that the history of the Ukrainian National Republic in 1917 – 1920 is widely depicted in Ukrainian and world historiography, and the history of Jews in Ukraine in that period was also researched by such scientists as H. Abramson, O. Naiman, V. Verstiuk and others, still the history of Jewish national autonomy and national Jewish parties in the Ukraine

² See “Materialy i dokumenty p'iatoi sesii Tsentral'noi rady pro orhanizatsiiu Heneral'noho Sekretariatu” (“Materials and Documents of the Fifth Session of the Central Rada about the Organization of the General Secretariat”) in *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada Dokumenty i materialy u dvokh tomakh* (*Ukrainian Central Rada: Documents and Materials in Two Volumes*), vol. 1 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1996), 116.

³ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada Dokumenty i materialy u dvokh tomakh* (*Ukrainian Central Rada: Documents and Materials in Two Volumes*), 2 vols. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1996.

in 1917 – 1918 needs to be reconstructed in means of current methodology. All of the mentioned researchers focused on some aspects of the topic: O. Naiman concentrated on the history of Jewish parties, V. Verstiuk on the history of the ‘Ukrainian Revolution’ and the role of the Ukrainian Central Rada in it.

The biggest and, in fact, the first attempt of comprehensive research of Ukrainian-Jewish relations in the revolutionary times was made by Henry Abramson in his two major works on the topic: an article *Jewish Representation in the Independent Ukrainian Governments of 1917–1920* and a book *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*⁴. With all respect to the scholar who was and still is the first to research such a topic in quite a comprehensive manner, it should be noted that he admitted a set of discrepancies in his interpretations.

Abramson looked at the whole 1917–1920 period as a ‘grand failure’ in Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement⁵. The scholar also considered Jewish Autonomism as an ‘ill-defined political theory’, a transitional model for solution of the Jewish national problem.⁶ Both arguments may be considered as right; however, such a rightness is written from the point of hindsight, knowing about such dark pages in Ukrainian-Jewish relations as Petliura’s assassination and Holocaust in Ukrainian territory. It is also the knowledge of establishment of state of Israel which gives Abramson power to judge Autonomism so unquestioningly. However, either for Jews or Ukrainians of the ‘revolutionary times’ all those future events and truths were unknown.

⁴ Abramson, Henry. “Jewish Representation in the Independent Ukrainian Governments of 1917–1920,” *Slavic Review* 50, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 542–550; Abramson, Henry. *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

⁵ Abramson, Henry. *A Prayer for the Government*, xv.

⁶ Abramson, Henry. “Jewish Representation in the Independent Ukrainian Governments...”, 542.

Chapter 1. Historical Background:

1.1 Ukrainian-Jewish Relations before 1917

This section of the chapter will outline the Ukrainian-Jewish relations before the revolution of 1917. However, the author of the present work do not consider it necessary to trace the whole ‘two millennia presence’ of Jews in Ukrainian territory⁷, but rather give a sketch of the legal status of Jews and the Jewish political thought and activity in late Russian Empire, and the development of Jewish Autonomism ideas. All the above-mentioned issues would be examined in the light of Ukrainian-Jewish relations.

In late Russia Empire Jews lived in the so-called Pale of settlement which included contemporary Ukrainian territory. The Russian government issued enormous legislation concerning the economical, political, civil and social status of Jews. Such legislation, according to the scholar Isaac Levitas could be characterized as “autocratic, intolerant, rapacious and chaotic”⁸. The legislation concerning the status of Jews changed through nineteenth century. The laws and administrative instructions of 1881–1917 were full of various restrictions concerning Jews: except residence restrictions of Pale of settlement, there were also prohibitions on residence in countryside, some professional occupations, quota for Jewish students in secular public educational institutions, restrictions in trade, lease and electoral rights.⁹ It is remarkable that all those restrictions were applied only to Jews by religious; individuals with Jewish origin who converted to Christianity were not treated as Jews in legal

⁷ For such a comprehensive introduction one can address to the passage in the Chapter “Ukrainians and Jews on the Eve of Revolutionary Times” in Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1–18.

⁸ Isaac Levitas, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844 – 1917* (Jerusalem: Posner and Sons LTD, 1981), 5.

⁹ Liubchenko, V. “Ievreï u skladi Rosiis'koï imperii.” (“Jews in Russian Empire”) In *Narysy z istorii ta kul'tury ievreiv Ukraïny (Sketch of History and Culture of Jews of Ukraine)*, 60–96. Kyiv: Dukh I Litera, 2005.

sphere. There were also some exceptions from those discriminatory laws for those Jews who belonged to some high rank traders, artisans, former soldiers or persons with high education.

If to speak about Jews of late Russian empire in connection to Ukrainian issues, one might use the phrase that Jews found themselves “between the hammer of the empire and the anvil of the indigenous nation’s aspirations for independence”¹⁰. This phrase was originally used to characterize Jewish-Polish relations of the second half of the nineteenth century, but it may also suit the situation in Ukrainian territory; however, at the first stages (in the late nineteenth – the beginning of the twentieth century) the Ukrainian movement did not strive to gain independence.

Jews mainly lived in the big cities and small towns (they were restricted from living in villages). The majority of Ukrainian population (around 87 %) belonged to peasantry¹¹ and by 1917 the majority of peasants lived even in worse legal and economic situation than many Jews did. The rate of literacy among population was twice higher among Jews (more than 50 %) than among Ukrainians (less than 20%).¹²

There were no mass brotherhood or even close friendship, but rather neighborhood relations between common Ukrainian and Jewish population; however, the Ukrainian-Jewish issues were a popular topic for discussion among intelligentsia and political figures of both nationalities. For instance, Ukrainian political theorist and historian of the late nineteenth century Mykhailo Drahomanov wrote a lot on ‘Jewish question’¹³. By some scholars he is also

¹⁰ Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood*. (Hanover, London: Brandeis University Press, 1992), 3.

¹¹ According to the All-Russian census of 1897, cited in Steven L. Guthrie, “The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917,” *Slavic Review* 38, No. 1 (Mar., 1979): 31.

¹² Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 15–16.

¹³ See in detail John Doyle Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question, 1855 – 1881*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 211–221; Moshe Mishkinsky, “The Attitudes of the Ukrainian Socialists to Jewish Problems in the 1870s.” in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, eds. Peter J. Potichnyj and Aster Howard, (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 61–65.

considered a founder of Jewish Autonomism ideas in Ukraine.¹⁴ Among other things the historian once mentioned that the Russian government was responsible for the unenviable condition of Ukrainian Jewry (meaning the legal status and economic situation) and the growth of Ukrainian-Jewish tensions. In particular, such a tension was brought by the restricting and rivalry conditions of Pale of settlement.¹⁵ Mykhailo Drahomanov also noted that long and systematic educational work should have been done before Jewish and Ukrainian, “the chief actors in the pogrom tragedy”, rapprochement became possible.¹⁶ He wrote it about the pogroms of 1880s.

From Jewish side, one may recall an example of Jewish Zionist leader who paid quite big attention to ‘Ukrainian question’ that is Vladimir Jabotinsky. Except his immense Zionist revisionist activity, Jabotinsky may also be remembered for his negotiations with Ukrainian editors about the appeal in the matters of Beilis affair and Jewish-Ukrainian co-operation in 1911; 1911 Vladimir Jabotinsky and Piotr Struve polemics on Taras Shevchenko’s anniversary, Ukrainian culture, language, and nation; Jabotinsky’s articles on Jewish-Ukrainian relations in Galicia; 1921 agreement of Vladimir Jabotinsky and Maksym (Maxim) Slavinsky, the representative of Petliura’s Ukrainian government in exile, etc.¹⁷

Both Drahomanov and Jabotinsky could be seen as those breaking the stereotype of Ukrainian-Jewish ‘failed brotherhood’ and constant unfriendliness of both peoples. They both contributed a lot to the ‘rapprochement of peoples’ if to treat the Ukrainian-Jewish relations as such that needed the rapprochement.

¹⁴ Isaac Levitas, *The Jewish Community in Russia*, 182; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 20.

¹⁵ Ivan L. Rudnytsky, “Ukrainian-Jewish relations in Nineteenth-Century Ukrainian Political Thought,” in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, eds. Peter J. Potichnyj and Aster Howard. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 74.

¹⁶ John Doyle Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, 214.

¹⁷ For detail of his activity concerning Ukrainian matters see Kleiner, Israel. *From Nationalism to Universalism: Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky and the Ukrainian Question*. Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2000.

In broader scope Ukrainian-Jewish issues were also from time to time raised in Ukrainian and Jewish press. The most famous of such discussions was between Jewish periodical *Sion* and Ukrainian *Osnova*.¹⁸ Ukrainian intellectuals were irritated by Jewish intellectuals being too close to Great Russian (Russian) nationality¹⁹ and culture instead of Ukrainian one, the culture of the indigenous and numerically dominant people.

The historiography on Jews of Russia gives one the impression that after the pogroms of 1881–1882, all Jews of the region became Zionists, socialists, or a combination of the above-mentioned (like Poalei-Tsion party members) or left the country entirely. However, it seems that the vast majority of Russian Jewry remained at home and many, if not most, remained committed to their traditional religious ways.²⁰ Some of Jews also have chosen a way out in integration and assimilation in great Russian culture, religion, people or political parties.²¹

Yet the main focus of this paper lies on Jewish autonomy the idea of which, it should be emphasized, was carried out and brought to life in 1917-1918 Ukraine by Jewish parties. Born as clandestine and practically forbidden organizations in late Russian Empire²² as general liberal trends in Russian politics at the turn of the century²³, the Jewish parties were different in ideological sense, but actually by 1917 all of them developed their stance on Jewish autonomy.

The main controversy lied on the question of autonomy: on one side were socialist and diaspora nationalist parties (Bund, Socialist Jewish Workers' Party, Folkspartei, etc.); on the

¹⁸ In detail see Roman Serbyn, "The Sion-Osnova Controversy of 1861–1862," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, eds. Peter J. Potichnyj and Aster Howard (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 85–110; Rudnytsky, Ivan L. "Ukrainian-Jewish relations in Nineteenth-Century Ukrainian Political Thought," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, 70–71.

¹⁹ John Doyle Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, 108.

²⁰ Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), 125.

²¹ Benjamin Nathans, "The Other Modern Jewish Politics: Integration and Modernity in Fin de Siècle Russia," in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 20–34,

²² Isaac Levitas, *The Jewish Community in Russia*, 179.

²³ For detail see Christoph Gassenschmidt. *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900–14: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1995), 1–13.

other side were Zionists and religious political groups.²⁴ The first would strive for the national-personal (or ‘national-cultural’ as another name for the same notion) autonomy of Jews in contemporary diaspora lands; the later would strive for Zion Jewish autonomy (as Zionists did; however, they later agreed for Jewish autonomy on diaspora as a temporary measure), or even object any autonomy and secularity of Jewish life.

Owing to the friendly long-term Jewish-Ukrainian political between Jewish and Ukrainian social democrats²⁵, later on in 1917–1918 Jewish socialist and nationalist parties could promote and fulfill their concept of Jewish autonomy.

It may seem that the attempt to establish Jewish autonomy in Ukraine is not unique. One may recall the Bukovina or Moravia compromises when Jews, living in multi-national environment and constituting a minority there, strived to gain political representation in local authorities by gaining special political and electoral rights²⁶. The study of the programs of the Jewish political parties in Ukraine and their activity show that they were influenced by the ideas of Autonomism of Austrian social-democrats Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, Ukrainian thinker Mykhailo Drahomanov, Jewish political figures Chaim Zhitlowsky and Simon Dubnow²⁷; however, the latter denied all the Austrian influence on him (Dubnow presented his concept of

²⁴ About the polarity and controversy of two biggest Jewish parties Bund and Zionists on the territory of Russian Empire see Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 – to the Present* (New York : Schocken Books, 1988), 19–47; Christoph Gassenschmidt. *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia*, 46–51.

²⁵ Analyzed in detail in Boshyk Yury. “Between Socialism and Nationalism: Jewish-Ukrainian Political Relations in Imperial Russia, 1900 – 1917,” in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, 173–202.

²⁶ For detail of Bukovina and Moravia cases see Rachamimov, Alon “Diaspora Nationalism’s Pyrrhic Victory: The Controversy Regarding the Electoral Reform of 1909 in Bukovina”, in *State and Nation Building in East Central Europe: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. J. S. Micgiel (New York: Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University, 1996), 1–16; Miller, Michael. “Reluctant Kingmakers. Moravian Jewish Politics in Late Imperial Austria,” in *Jewish Studies at the Central European University III*, ed. András Kovács and Eszter Andor. (Budapest: Central European University, 2004), 111–123.

²⁷ About the origins of Jewish Autonomism in Russia and revolutionary Ukraine see Simon Rabinovitch, *Alternative to Zion: The Jewish Autonomist Movement in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia*. A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. (Waltham: Brandeis University), 2007, 22–65.

Jewish autonomy in 1906). In comparison to Bukovina and Moravia cases, the case of Jews in 1917–1918 Ukraine has larger scope of effect. The Jewish Autonomy in Ukraine as it was seen and implemented was not mere political representation of Jews in local authorities (as it was in Moravia and Bukovina), but it also included the establishment of Jewish political, educational, cultural institutions; granting political, civil and collective (if it is possible to say so) national rights.

1.2 Policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada towards the National Minorities in Ukraine.

In March 1917 the Ukrainian Central Rada was established by Ukrainian intellectuals from various Ukrainian organizations aiming at unifying all the Ukrainian²⁸ organizations with the common demands of territorial autonomy for Ukraine with Ukrainian as the official language²⁹. However during its existence from March 1917 until April 1918, the Ukrainian Central Rada practically transformed itself from a municipal organization in Kyiv to a representative body of the whole population of Ukraine. As it was mentioned in the Declaration of the General Secretariat³⁰ from June 27, 1917³¹, “[f]rom executive board of united party and public groups, as it was [the Ukrainian Central Rada] at the beginning of the revolution, it became not only the supreme executive body but also the supreme legislative body of the whole

²⁸ In this context and the context of the 1917 Ukraine the term “Ukrainian” usually meant the ethnic or national membership but not the territorial one.

²⁹ V. F. Verstiuk and L. V. Yakovleva. “Peredmov,” (“Introduction”) in *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 5; V. Verstiuk and T. Ostashko. *Diiachi Ukraïns'koï Tsentral'noi Rady: Biohrafichnyi dovidnyk (Figures of the Ukrainian Central Rada: Biographical Reference Book)*, (Kyiv, 1998), 11.

³⁰ General Secretariat was the executive cabinet of the Ukrainian Central Rada.

³¹ In this paper all dates before February 15, 1918 are given according to the Julian calendar, and all the dates after February 16, 1918 – according to the Gregorian one.

³² *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 157. Herein and hereinafter the translation of the Ukrainian documents and works is mine.

organized Ukrainian people.”³² The present chapter examines the main features of the Ukrainian Central Rada policy towards national minorities during the whole period of the Central Rada’s activity.

In March-April 1917 Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, the head of the Ukrainian Central Rada, wrote an article *Narodnostiam Ukraïny* (To the Peoples of Ukraine) that may be considered a characteristic manifesto of the whole policy of the Central Rada towards the national minorities. Among other things, Hrushevs'kyi promised that the rights of the national minorities would be provided” and they would get “proportional representation in our [Ukrainian] autonomous bodies”³³. The national minorities were also guaranteed cultural, religious, and linguistic rights. In turn, the head of the Rada hoped “that the representatives of the national minorities would also understand their status accordingly, [and] meet the Ukrainian political demands and in such a way strengthen the position of the national minority rights protection.”³⁴ Thus the national minorities were expected to show national tolerance and active support ‘alongside the Ukrainians’ and not merely neutrality of disinterested witnesses. From that moment on the policy of the Central Rada towards the national minorities was based on the mutual concessions and expectations of the Ukrainians from the other peoples which resided side by side with them, and vice versa.

In fact, it happened as M. Hrushevs'kyi had foreseen: the Ukrainian National Congress³⁵, was convened on April 6-8, 1917 in order to enlarge the Central Rada with new members and

³³ M. Hrushevs'kyi “Narodnostiam Ukraïny,” (“To the Peoples of Ukraine”), in *Politolohiia. Kinets' XIX – persha polovyna XX stolittia: Khrestomatiia (Political Science. The End of the 19th – the Beginning of the 20th Century: Reader)*, ed. O. I. Semkiv (Lviv: Svit, 1996), 211.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 211 – 212.

³⁵ The Ukrainian National Congress is the own name which can be met in the documents of the Congress; however, the historians more often name it “the All-Ukrainian Congress”.

³⁶ Verstiuk and T. Ostashko. *Diiachi*, 12.

transform it into an all-Ukrainian representative civil and political body³⁶ by including representatives of all Ukrainian organizations. During its work the Congress adopted a resolution which proclaimed that, “one of the main principles of Ukrainian autonomy [is] securing full rights of the national minorities residing in Ukraine”³⁷. Another resolution, according to the will of the Provisional Government, also presupposed the establishment of “the Regional Rada [Council] from the representatives of the Ukrainian lands and cities, *peoples* and civil strata, to what the initiative should [be] taken by the Central Rada.”³⁸

The representatives of non-Ukrainian³⁹ organizations also came to the All-Ukrainian Congress in order to greet it and thus show their active support of the Ukrainian national aspirations. For instance, among the speakers one could notice the representatives of the Russian Society of Women’s Protection, Jewish Social Labor Party (SERP), Polish Socialist Circle in Kyiv, Kyiv Executive Committee of the Polish Organizations, the Council of the United Jewish Organizations of Kyiv⁴⁰, the Union of the Czech and Slovak Societies, Kyiv Georgian organizations, Democratic Society of Jewish Teachers, Baturyn Jewish Society, Latvian and Estonian organizations, and others.⁴¹

³⁷ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 55.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 58. (Emphasis mine)

³⁹ In this context and the context of events and documents of 1917-1918 Ukraine the term “non-Ukrainian” usually meant different ethnic or national; however, such connotation of difference usually did not have any negative or pejorative meaning. “Non-Ukrainian” would rather mean different membership in a larger ethnic (national) group which had its own national organizations, culture, and needs.

⁴⁰ This Council was set up of various Jewish cultural, civic, political, and religious organizations in the first weeks after the Russian February revolution and sent its representative to the Executive Committee, the revolutionary government in Kyiv supported by Provisional Government in Moscow.

⁴¹ For more detail see *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 57, 61 – 62; I. F. Kuras and others, eds., *Natsionalni menshyny Ukraïny u XX stolitti: polityko-pravovy aspekt (National Minorities of Ukraine in the 20th Century: Political and Legal Aspect)*, (Kyiv: IPIEND, 2000), 59.

In May 1917, the All-Ukrainian Soldiers' Congress, which also sent its representatives to the Ukrainian Central Rada, resolved "to reorganize immediately the whole administration of Ukraine in accordance with the principle of proportions between nations which reside in Ukraine."⁴² Actually, the main determinative step towards the inclusion of the national minorities in the legislative and executive power of Ukraine, that is to the Central Rada, was done only in July 1917.

Yet the First Universal (proclamation) of the Ukrainian Central Rada from June 10, 1917, contained the appeals to Ukrainians concerning "agreement and understanding with the democratic elements" of the non-Ukrainian peoples which were invited to join Ukrainians in "a united and friendly fashion to work for the organization of an autonomous Ukraine."⁴³ Further it was stated that "when we [Ukrainian Central Rada] complete this preparatory organizational work, we call together the representatives from all nations of Ukrainian Land and will establish laws for it [Ukrainian Land]."⁴⁴

The policy toward the national minorities was one of the most important issues at the establishment of General Secretariat (June 15, 1917). In particular, the General Secretariat, as one of its departments, also contained the Secretariat in International Affairs (Affairs between Nations) whose major aim was to "unite the work of all the peoples of Russia for the [sake of]

⁴² "Postanovy Pershoho Vseukraïns'koho viis'kovoho z'їzdu," ("Resolutions of the First All-Ukrainian Soldiers' Congress") in *Ukraïns'kyi natsional'no-vyzvolnyi rukh. Berezen'-lystopad 1917 roku: Dok. i materialy (Ukrainian National Liberation Movement. March-November, 1917: Documents and Materials)*, ed. V. Verstiuk (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo imeni Oleny Telihi, 2003), 284; *Natsionalni menshyny Ukraïny*, 61.

⁴³ Cited after the translation "First Universal of the Ukrainian Central Rada to all Ukrainian People whether residing in the Ukraine or beyond its borders", in *The Ukraine, 1917 – 1921: A Study in Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 382 – 383; For the original Ukrainian text see *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 104 – 105.

⁴⁴ "First Universal..." in *The Ukraine, 1917 – 1921*, 383; *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 105.

the struggle for the autonomous-federal state system of the Russian Republic and mutual understanding of Ukrainians with other nationalities on this basis.”⁴⁵

Yet it should be mentioned that, at that moment, agreement and consent with the other peoples of Ukraine were not mere manifestations of the tolerance of the Ukrainian people; they were a very important means to transform the Central Rada from a national representative agency into the representative body of the whole population of the anticipated autonomous Ukraine, and the transformation of the newly established General Secretariat into the government of Ukraine. Such an agreement would also create preconditions for gaining the authority and support among the multinational population of the cities and towns of Ukraine. Moreover, it would help with recognition and confirmation of the Central Rada and General Secretariat by the Provisional Government; thus, as the head of the General Secretariat of that time, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, noticed, it would allow the Central Rada to get and command the relevant financial means for the needs of government.⁴⁶ The lively discussions of those issues were conducted during the Fifth Session of the Central Rada (June 20 – July 1, 1917).⁴⁷

In order to legitimize itself, on June 23, 1917, the Central Rada adopted the decision to attract the representatives of the non-Ukrainian ethnic groups to its work and include them in the special commission in preparation of the statutes for an autonomous Ukraine. The commission should have been formed as a national proportional representation board: one representative per 1 % of every nation of Ukraine.⁴⁸ The Ukrainians correspondingly were to

⁴⁵ See “Deklaratsiia Heneral’noho Sekretariatu vid 27 chervnia 1917 r,” (“Declaration of the General Secretariat from June 27, 1917”) in *Ukrains’ka Tsentral’na Rada*, vol. 1, 159.

⁴⁶ Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Vidrozhennia natsii (Revival of the Nation)*, vol. 1 (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo politychnoi literatury, 1990) [f.p. 1920], 295.

⁴⁷ *Ukrains’ka Tsentral’na Rada*, vol. 1, 116 – 120.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

get 71 places, and national minorities – 29: Russians⁴⁹ should have got 11 places, Jews – 8, Germans and Poles – 2 each, Belorussians, Tatars, Moldavians, Czechs, Greeks, and Bulgarians – 1 each. The resolution also contained a request that the representatives should have been sent from the joint national organizations (if the peoples had such organizations); moreover, the preference would have been given to the representatives of the national socialist parties.⁵⁰

As already mentioned, the Provisional Government recognized the Ukrainian Central Rada under the conditions that the Rada would involve representatives from non-Ukrainian political parties and national minorities in drafting, legislative and executive processes. The negotiations of the Ukrainian Central Rada with the Provisional Government representatives from June 29–30 resulted in a *Resolution of the Provisional Government about the Confirmation of the General Secretariat* (from July 3, 1917). In the *Resolution* the Provisional Government, with the consent of the Ukrainian Central Rada, “supplemented on a fair basis with the representatives of other peoples” appointed the General Secretariat “as the highest body for government in regional affairs on⁵¹ Ukraine.”⁵²

After such an agreement the Rada announced and published its Second Universal on July 3, 1917, in four languages: Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and Yiddish; it also offered the nationalities’ representatives to join the Ukrainian Central Rada as permanent members. Actually, 30 % of the seats in the Central Rada were given to national minorities. They made up a total of 202 seats and were divided among the national minorities in such a way: 50 were given to the Jews, 30 to the Council of Workers’ Deputies (*Sovet Rabochikh Deputatov*), 20 to

⁴⁹ In the original of the document the name of the ethnic group is *moskali*, however, without any negative connotation in that context, contrary to the contemporary use of this word in Ukrainian.

⁵⁰ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 125.

⁵¹ The preposition “on” is used here to translate the Ukrainian and Russian “na” which was usually used with the proper name “Ukraine” in that times to mark that Ukraine was just a part (land) within the Russian state.

⁵² *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 163.

the Council of Soldiers' Deputies (*Sovet Voiennykh Deputatov*), 20 to the Poles, 20 to the Socialist-Democrats, 20 to Socialist Revolutionaries, 10 to the Council of the United Community Organizations (*Soiuz ob'iedinennykh obshchestviennykh organizatsii*), 10 to the Cadets, 4 to the Peoples' Socialists, 4 to the Moldavians, 4 to the Germans, 3 to the Tartars, 1 to the Greeks, 1 to the Czechs, 1 to the Belarusians, 1 to the Mennonites (*Menenity*), 1 to the Bulgarians, and 3 reserve places. The national minorities also got 51 candidate place. Nevertheless, the resolution confirmed such a system of joining Rada's ranks that the replenishment was made not with direct nationalities' representatives, but with the representatives of national revolutionary organizations, and in case of the absence of the latter, with the representatives of cultural and public organizations of the nationalities.⁵³

On July 11, 1917, the representatives of the national minorities (at that meeting only Russian and Jewish organizations' representatives came) participated in the work of the Mala Rada⁵⁴ (*Small Council*) for the first time and they spoke with words of greetings.⁵⁵ The Statute of the General Secretariat, unanimously adopted at the meeting of Mala Rada on July 16, 1917, also strengthened the positions of the most numerous national minorities. According to the Statute, under the guidance of the Secretary in National Affairs⁵⁶ three assistant secretaries (from Russians, Jews and Poles) were to be appointed; these assistant secretaries had the right for the competent speech and the deciding vote in the matters of their nations in the General Secretary. Moreover, all the laws, administrative decrees and resolutions which were published

⁵³ Ibid., 207 – 208.

⁵⁴ Mala Rada was a permanently functioning body of the Ukrainian Central Rada which worked even during the breaks between Central Rada sessions.

⁵⁵ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 175 – 176.

⁵⁶ The Statute of the General Secretariat renamed the Secretariat in International Affairs into the Secretariat in National Affairs.

⁵⁷ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 181 – 182.

in Ukrainian had to be published in the languages of the three biggest national minorities as well – Russian, Jewish (Yiddish) and Polish.⁵⁷

It is remarkable to note that the Ukrainian Central Rada not only conducted quite a progressive national policy, but it also strived to be at the forefront of all the national movements in revolutionary Russia. That is why, in June 1917, the Central Rada adopted a decision to convene a congress of the peoples which were supporters of autonomies and a federated republic in Russia. All the peoples should send the equal numbers of representatives.⁵⁸

The Congress of Peoples of Russia was held from September 8–15, 1917.⁵⁹ At the first day of the Congress, fifty delegates were present, among them representatives of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Crimean Tatars, Georgian, Jews, and Don Cossacks. Many other peoples sent telegrams that their representatives were on the route to the Congress.⁶⁰ At the last meeting, the Congress of the Peoples of Russia adopted resolutions about the federal system of the Russian state, about all-state official and regional languages, about the Council of Peoples, about the Constituent Assembly⁶¹, about national-personal autonomy, etc.⁶² Initiated by the Central Rada, the Congress of the Peoples of Russia not only outlined the main objectives and goals of the Ukrainian and other national movements within Russia, but it also defined the basis of the state system of Russia in correspondence with the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁹ Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh organiv derzhavnoyi vlady i organiv derzhavnogo upravlinnia Ukraïny (TsDAVO, Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Government and Administration of Ukraine), Kyiv, 1115.1.7.1–6.

⁶⁰ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 288.

⁶¹ The Constituent Assembly should have been the elected All-Russian representative body which should have adopt the constitution and define the federal system of the democratic Russian state.

⁶² About the resolutions of the Congress see in detail *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 307 – 312; *Natsinal'ni vidnosyny v Ukraïni u XX stolitti: Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv (National Relations in Ukraine in the 20th Century: Collection of Documents and Materials)* (Kyiv, 1994), 51 – 52.

aspirations of its multi-national population. In the Ukrainian context, the Congress also significantly contributed to the establishment of good relations of the Ukrainian Central Rada with the national minorities of Ukraine.

On the whole, the policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada towards the national minorities was consistently tolerant and aimed at agreement with non-Ukrainian peoples and development of their culture and education in Ukraine. The executive agencies of the Central Rada gave material assistance to the Russian, Jewish, Polish, German, Serbian, and Greek schools and gymnasiums.⁶³

The Law about National-Personal Autonomy from January 8, 1918, adopted by the Central Rada, may be considered one of the biggest achievements of the whole policy towards national minorities. This law granted every nationality residing in Ukraine the right for independent arrangement of its own national life through the agencies of its own National Union which consisted of all the members of the nation. The national autonomy was ex-territorial since the right to join the National Union and use national autonomy rights was received by every member of the nationality personally; each member just had to be listed in the relevant National cadastre (at his or her own will the member of the nationality could have been included in or struck off the cadastre, thus he or she would be included in the National Union or not). The law also presupposed to establish legislative and executive bodies of the National Union – the National Assembly and the National Council.⁶⁴

Although the concept of Autonomism and national-personal autonomy itself may be found much earlier (in the ideas of Austrians Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, Ukrainian Mykhailo

⁶³ *Natsinal'ni menshyny*, 67.

⁶⁴ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 99–101.

Drahomanov, Jews Chaim Zhitlowsky, and Simon Dubnow⁶⁵ and others), it was the Ukrainian Central Rada that was the first government to try to implement the Autonomism ideas in law and practice. The exclusive meaning of this law (by way of example of the Jewish people) will be analyzed in detail in the next chapters of the present work.

Yet, the struggle of nations with their needs and not the struggle of the parties with their programmes⁶⁶ quite often took place in the Central Rada. In order to settle this abnormal situation, Arnold Margolin proposed to Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi the idea of creating all-Ukrainian state-regional parties (multi-ethnic in their membership) instead of Ukrainian, Jewish, and the departments of Russian parties; however, this plan did not have time or conditions to be realized.⁶⁷

On the whole, the policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada may be considered as tolerant; nevertheless, it was marred by the revolutionary unrest and the war of newly proclaimed Ukrainian People's Republic (proclaimed in the Fourth Universal of the Central Rada from January 11, 1918) against Bolsheviks. On January 25, 1918, the Central Rada and its troops were forced to make a retreat from Kyiv and move to Zhytomyr, and came back to Kyiv only in a month with German allied troops. During this month-long exile, the Rada did not concern itself with national minorities' issues, which apparently were not on the urgent list at that time. In addition, none of the representatives of national minorities were present at the meetings of the Central Rada in exile. Although some Central Rada members accused national minorities' representatives, claiming that the latter did not wish to participate in the work of Rada in

⁶⁵ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 20–21.

⁶⁶ Arnold Margolin, *Ukraina i politika Antanty (Zapiski ievreia i grazhdanina) (Ukraine and the Policy of Antante (Notes of a Jew and a Citizen)*, (Berlin: Izdatel'stvo S. Efron, 1922), 52; about the discussions between the representatives of non-Ukrainian and Ukrainian parties in Ukrainian Central Rada see also *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, C.117.

⁶⁷ Arnold Margolin, *Ukraina i politika Antanty*, 52–54.

Zhytomyr, there is some evidence that making a hurried retreat, the Rada did not notify the non-Ukrainian representatives about moving out from Kyiv.⁶⁸

The policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada towards the national minorities made a comprehensive background in the development of relations between nations in revolutionary Ukraine; however, it was abruptly ceased by the coup d'état on April 29, 1918. In long-lasting consequences Ukrainian Central Rada left after itself, the establishment of national-personal autonomy and national self-government institutions are the most important ones. With some exceptions and modifications, the national minorities' institutions (educational, cultural, political, and public) and even some rights that were established during Central Rada rule continued to function during next governments – Hetmanate, Directory, and Soviet Union.

⁶⁸ S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs'ka natsional'na avtonomiia na Ukraïni (1917 – 1920 rr.)* (Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine (1917 – 1920)) (Munich: Instytut vyvchennia SSSR, 1963), 9, 104.

Chapter 2. The Participation of the Jewish Parties in the Establishment of the Autonomy.

2.1 *The Political Platforms of the Jewish Parties.*

In this section of the third chapter I will briefly analyze the history of formation and development of the five Jewish parties which participated in the Central Rada. These parties were the Bund, the Fareinigte (United Jewish Socialist Labor Party), the Poalei-Tsion (Poalei-Zion), the Folkspartei (Jewish People's Party), and the Zionists. I will focus on their political platforms and their stands at the moment of entrance into the Central Rada. In particular such key points will be the objects of the present examination as: general orientation of every party, its position concerning the Jewish autonomy, Jewish communities and Jewish language issue; those were the most important planks of the party programs around which the whole activity of the Jewish parties in the Central Rada was held. The question of the attitude of those Jewish parties towards the Ukrainian national movement will also be touched.

Jewish mass-based parties played a notable role in creation of Jewish autonomy and establishment of national minorities' rights and laws in 1917 – 1918 Ukraine. Owing to their active participation in legislative and administrative activity of local Ukrainian authorities, on July 13, 1917, for the first time in the history Vice Secretary of Jewish Affairs (later a minister and General Secretary of Jewish affairs) was appointed.

Unlike various Ukrainian parties which were in any case somehow united by the aspiration for the national-cultural and territorial autonomy for Ukraine, the Jewish parties were quite detached one from another; as it might even seem that the only unifying factor was their common understanding of their Jewishness.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ I. Kleiner. "Urok vtrachenykh mozhlyvostei," ("The Lesson of the Lost Opportunities") *Suchasnist'*, 8 (1992): 55.

Zionists' party and Bund were established one of the first among the above-mentioned five parties. The Zionists were under the part of World Zionist Organization which convened its congresses since 1897. The main aim of Zionists was to reestablish the Jewish settlement (in further aspirations, a Jewish state) in Zion (at that time the territory of Palestine), and all other program planks were subordinating to that aim. Only after 1906 after the World Zionist Organization Congress in Helsingfors the idea of desirability of Jewish autonomy in the countries of dispersion was supported. This concept included the establishment of autonomy on the basis of Jewish communities and its competence in the affairs of education, health care, public mutual aid and religion.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Zionists considered the national autonomy only as a means of development of national consciousness of Jews and their national unity⁷¹; it could be later used for the establishment of Jewish autonomy (and state in future) in Palestine.

General Jewish Workers' League in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (or the Bund) was established by Jewish socialist-democratic groups in 1897 Vilnius⁷². The Bund platform proclaimed that the party is a part of Russian social democracy and International⁷³, thus their aim was to be a liquidation of Jewish suppression and the protection of interests of Jewish workers⁷⁴; in addition to that, equality of Jewish language rights in all the state official institutions, and the establishment of Jewish schools educational system.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 25.

⁷¹ Mattiyahu Minc, "Kiev Zionists and the Ukrainian National Movement", in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, Peter J. Potichnyj and Aster Howard, eds. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 250.

⁷² Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh obyednan' Ukrayiny (TsDAHO, Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine), Kyiv. 41.1.1.4

⁷³ See *Izbiratel'naia platforma "Bunda"* (*Election Platform of the "Bund"*), ([place?]: Izdanie tsentralnogo Komiteta Bunda, [year?]), 8; TsDAHO, 41.1.4.16.

⁷⁴ O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny (1917–1925): Monohrafiia (Jewish Parties and Unions of Ukraine (1917–1925): Monograph)* (Kyiv, 1998), 26.

⁷⁵ *Izbiratel'naia platforma "Bunda"*, 10; TsDAHO, 41.1.4.17.

Soon the Bund became the most popular Jewish socialist Jewish party. In 1905 at the Sixth Congress of the Bund the concept of Austrian Socialist-Democratic Party about the cultural-national autonomy was adopted.⁷⁶ Bund also adhered to the position that, for the sake of normal economical development and the unity of class struggle, Russia should have remained united and indivisible; nevertheless, in the state every nationality should have got the rights for free national development. Such rights should have included full equality of languages and territorial autonomy for the lands which differed in their economical, national, and life style peculiarities (for instance of such lands, the program called Ukraine and Lithuania). The rights of national minorities inside such lands should have also been guaranteed by ‘personal national-cultural autonomy’.⁷⁷

Jewish Social-Democratic Workers’ Party “Poalei Tsion” (Workers of Zion) originated from the World Zionist Organization. From 1900 Poalei Tsion functioned as a public-political movement and only in 1906 at the congress in Poltava the party, which combined Zionism and socialism features, was founded. The Poalei Tsion’s concept of Jewish autonomy was similar to the Zionists’ concept, that is Poalei Tsion supported the territorial autonomy for Jewish people in Palestine (as the most important and final aim) and national-personal in the lands of dispersion.⁷⁸

In 1906 the prominent Jewish activist Simon Dubnow established the Folkspartei (Jewish People’s Party). Ideologically the party followed the ideas of Simon Dubnow uttered in his

⁷⁶ TsDAHO, 41.1.4.13; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 26–27.

⁷⁷ *Izbiratel'naia platforma “Bunda”*, 9–10; TsDAHO, 41.1.4.17.

⁷⁸ TsDAHO, 41.1.126.2, 12; *Programma Ievreiskoi Sotsial-Demokraticheskoi Rabochei Partii (“Poalei-Tsion”)* (*Program of Jewish Social-Democratic Workers Party (“Poalei Tsion”)*), ([place?]: Izdanie Petrogradskogo Komiteta, [year?]), 2, 21; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 27; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 24–26.

“Letters on Old and New Judaism”⁷⁹. From the very beginning Folkspartei adhered to the position of national-cultural autonomy establishment in the very same form which was later chosen by the Ukrainian Central Rada. According to Dubnow’s Autonomism concept, the Jewish national autonomy should have been secular and ex-territorial. Its structural elements would be local councils of Jewish communities (*kehilot*); Jewish parliament (assembly), the delegates to which would be the representatives of Jewish communities and parties; National Council as an executive organ of the Jewish parliament; and a Minister of Jewish Affairs in the government of the state.⁸⁰ However, as one of the party members A. Goldenveizer critically mentions: ““Folkspartei”, despite its name, was not the people’s party”, but rather a association of intellectuals which quite unsuccessfully strived o be close to people⁸¹, but not managed to gain the broad popularity.

United Jewish Socialist Labor Party (Fareinigte) was established the last one – in the May, 1917, after the merge of two parties: Zionist-Socialist party (which in essence was not Zionist at all as it supported the establishment of the Jewish state at any territory, not only in Zion) and Socialist Jewish Labor Party (SERP or “Seimists” – as the party strived to establish the national-cultural autonomy for Jews and Jewish representative body “seim”).⁸² For Fareinigte the main plank of the program was the establishment of the Jewish national-parsonal autonomy which would include the Jewish self-government in the matters of culture, education, social service, etc.⁸³ The party also communicated with World Zionist Organization.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 27; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 27 – 28.

⁸⁰ Simon Dubnow, “Letters on Old and New Judaism,” 131–142; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 23.

⁸¹ A. A. Goldenveizer, “Iz Kievskikh vospominanii: 1917–1921 gg.” (“From Kyiv’s Memoirs: 1917–1921”), in *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii (Archives of the Russian Revolution)*, vol. 6. (Berlin, 1922), 200.

⁸² Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 27–28; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 32.

⁸³ TsDAHO, 41.1.1.43; TsDAHO, 41.1.52.11.

In fact, when the Jewish parties entered the Rada they had already had their own views on such questions as orientation in political affairs, question of Jewish autonomy, the language of education in Jewish schooling (Yiddish or Hebrew) and so on. What concerns Jewish autonomy, there were three basic attitudes within the political Jewish public toward personal autonomy, according to the historian Mattityahu Minc. The first may be called the “historical” approach. It emerged from the teachings of Simon Dubnow, who viewed positively, even as a privilege, at the ex-territoriality of the Jewish nation, as a higher spiritual stage of development.⁸⁵ The second was instrumental-political approach. It was mainly represented by Jewish Socialist Labor party which thought that only personal autonomy based on the democratic constitution would give the Jews strong formal tools to carry out their territorialization within a specific area. However, the apologists of this approach did not claim that personal autonomy could replace territorial autonomy. The third approach, which may be called educational-instrumentalist one, was supported by Russian Zionist Organization. It was expressed by Ze’ev Jabotinsky. They believed that local autonomy for territorial minorities in Russia was about to be realized, that is why they wished to guarantee that Jewish self-government would not depend on local national institutions.⁸⁶

Actually, for the majority of parties the ideas of Autonomism were only a plank among other planks in their program, moreover, not the most important one. For example, Zionists and Poalei Tsion had their main aim to establish Jewish national territorial autonomy (or even a state) in Palestine; Bund aimed at the fulfillment of proletarian revolution and the ideas of

⁸⁴ V. Versiuk, ed. *Ukrains'kyi natsional'no-vyzvolnyi rukh. Berezen'-lystopad 1917 roku: Dok. i materialy*, 958.

⁸⁵ For Dubnow’s concept of Jewish autonomy see Simon Dubnow, “Letters on Old and New Judaism,” in *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism by Simon Dubnow*, Koppel S. Pinson, ed. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958), 73 – 241.

⁸⁶ Mattityahu Minc, “Kiev Zionists and the Ukrainian National Movement,” 249–251.

Marxism. Only Folkspartei and Fareinigte took the idea of Jewish national-personal (national-cultural) autonomy as a central one.⁸⁷

Basically, for Zionists and Poalei-Tsion the concept of autonomy was only a transitional stage in the process of uniting of the Jews and independence in their own country, in Palestine. That is why Hebrew usage in official, schooling, cultural, and other matters was of vital importance.⁸⁸ Zionists considered Yiddish a ‘*jargon*’, the language of exile, so they supported Hebrew as a vernacular and official language; it would also make it easier for them to implement Hebrew as official in future state in Palestine.⁸⁹ Owing to special Zionist and Poalei-Tsion interest, Palestine and Balfour declaration matters were in the agenda at the hearings of the Mala Rada on November 14, 1917;⁹⁰ it would be analyzed in detail in the next part of the chapter.

The Bund, Fareynigte and Folkspartei stood for Yiddish as a language of the Jewish mass usage, *mame loshn* (mother’s tongue, language), and they also advocated for stable life in the countries of dispersion.

What concerns the reorganization of the Jewish *kehilot* on the democratic and secular bases, practically all the parties⁹¹ were supporting the idea. Only the Zionists made a caution that the state should not interfere in the matters of the Jewish community.⁹²

⁸⁷ Jonathan Frankel, “The Dilemmas of Jewish Autonomism: the Case of Ukraine 1917 – 1920”, in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, Peter J. Potichnyj and Aster Howard, eds. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 268.

⁸⁸ S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs'ka natsional'na avtonomiia*, 50–51.

⁸⁹ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 76–78.

⁹⁰ See *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 441–442; See also O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partiï ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 56.

⁹¹ In particular see the resolution of the Bund About the Community, about the Struggle of the Bund against its religious character, about the Struggle against Clericalism in the files of TsDAHO, 41.1.1. 44–45.

⁹² V. Gvozdk, “Politicheskaia bor'ba na Iuge Ukrainy v 1917 g. i evreiskie obshchiny” (“Political Struggle in the South of Ukraine in 1917 and the Jewish Communities”), in *Evreiskoe naselenie Iuga Ukrainy. Ezhegodnik. Issledovaniia, vospominaniia, dokumenty. (Jewish Population of the South of Ukraine. Yearbook. Researches, Memoirs, Documents)*, (Kharkov, Zaporozhie, 1998), 245–247.

However, according to the opinion of Jewish People's Party (*Folkspartei*) member A. A. Gol'denveizer that for some reasons Russian and Jewish intelligentsia treated Ukrainian national movement with disdain⁹³, as quite an unexpected one, so it was a long period before the Jewish political parties shifted their attitude towards the Ukrainian Central Rada as a representative organ of the whole population of Ukraine and not only by Ukrainian origin⁹⁴.

Contrary to Goldenveizer, in 1917 Joseph Schechtman issued a brochure *Ievrei ta ukraïntsi* (*Jews and Ukrainians*), in which he wrote that

“[from] the Jewish side the Ukrainian national aspirations met innate sympathy... [and] Ukrainian leading circles, in their turn, reasonably and sympathetically treated the Jewish national movement... National claims of the Jewish people... without a doubt correspond to the national-political tendency concerning national minorities which is manifested by the reviving Ukrainians...”⁹⁵

Even before participation in the Ukrainian Central Rada, the Jewish parties uttered their support to its aspirations. For instance, in June 1917, Uman organization of the Socialist Jewish Labor Party (which later joined the Fareinigte) adopted a resolution with protest against the policy of the Provisional Government towards the Central Rada claims. The party also declared that they would go side by side with “democratic elements on Ukraine in their struggle for national-territorial autonomy.”⁹⁶ Moreover, a resolution of Bureau of Southern-Western District Committee of Poalei Tsion from the 29th of June 1917 claimed that The Provisional Government should recognize the Ukrainian Central Rada and the General Secretariat as “autonomous organs of the Ukrainian nation⁹⁷” and also that the Ukrainian Central Rada

⁹³ A. A. Goldenveizer “Iz Kievskikh vospominanii: 1917–1921 gg.” (“From Kyiv’s Memoirs: 1917–1921”) in *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii* (*Archives of the Russian Revolution*), vol. 6 (Berlin, 1922), 168.

⁹⁴ More elaborately on this issue see A. A. Goldenveizer, “Iz Kievskikh vospominanii...”, 168–177; See also Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 34–45.

⁹⁵ Quoted in I. Kleiner. “Urok vtrachenykh mozhlyvostei,” 61.

⁹⁶ See “Rezoliutsiia zahal’nykh zboriv Umans’koï orhanizatsii SERP z ukraïns’koho pytannia” (“Resolution of the General Assembly of the Uman’ SERP Organization in Ukrainian Question”), in V. Versiuk, ed. *Ukraïns’kyi natsional’no-vyzvolnyi rukh. Berezen’-lystopad 1917 roku: Dok. i materialy*, 422.

⁹⁷ In this case the word “nation” obviously did not mean a state but rather a national (ethnic) group.

“together with the representatives of the national minorities prepared work on the organization of territorial-autonomous system [government] of Ukraine.”⁹⁸

Volodymyr Vynnychenko, former General Secretary, also highly evaluated the attitude of Jewish parties towards the Ukrainian movement when he mentioned that the Jewish parties reasonably and favorably treated the idea of the Ukrainian statehood.⁹⁹ However, despite such favorable attitude, as a Jewish party leader noted, basically every Jewish party stood at the unity of Russia; the majority of Jews thought that Russia, being divided in separate states, would become a seat of civil war, the later would in its turn threaten the Jewry of Russia.¹⁰⁰

2.2 The Activity of Jewish Parties in the Ukrainian Central Rada.

From July 1917, when the Ukrainian Central Rada was recognized by the Provisional Government as the legitimate authority and the representative of the Provisional Government with real and till the end of April 1918, when the Ukrainian Central Rada fell, national Jewish parties showed active interest in it. At the moment the Rada invited the representatives of the national minorities' organizations to join it, it was itself dominated by socialist and left-wing parties. Moreover, the First Universal had contained a tacit invitation for non-Ukrainian socialists to join the Rada; it was implied by the phrase “democratic elements”, which in those revolutionary times meant “socialist parties”.¹⁰¹ It was not the least reason for Jewish socialist parties to be the first to accept the Ukrainian offer.

Shortly such zeal of Jewish socialists and initial indifference of Zionists to the affairs of the Rada played a bad trick on the latter. Although Zionists excelled the socialists in different

⁹⁸ Quoted after Vynnychenko, Volodymyr. *Vidrozhennia natsiï*, 289.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 286.

¹⁰⁰ S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs'ka natsional'na avtonomiia na Ukraïni*, 12.

¹⁰¹ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 46.

elections (to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, All-Russian Jewish Congress et al.¹⁰²), the Zionists constituted a moderate minority among the Jewish parties' representatives in the Ukrainian Central Rada.

As no democratic elections were held in the Rada, all the delegates, including the Vice Secretary of Jewish Affairs, were appointed as delegates from recognized political parties and organizations. Jewish parties were represented on all three levels of Ukrainian government. At the cabinet level they had a Vice Secretary of Jewish Affairs in the General Secretariat for Inter-nationality Affairs (later General Secretary of Jewish Affairs and finally Minister of Jewish Affairs), at the parliamentary level Jews amounted to 25 % (50 seats) of the Mala Rada and in Velyka Rada, which met infrequently, – 7 %.¹⁰³ In the Mala Rada the seats were divided in such a way: the Bund - 13, the Fareinigte - 13, the Poalei-Tsion - 9, the Folkspartei - 2, and the Zionists - 13.¹⁰⁴

The relations between these Jewish parties in the Rada were quite tense because of socialist and Zionist parties' confrontation. As a matter of fact, socialist parties, which had less support among Ukrainian Jewry than Zionists, had more influence and power in the Ukrainian Central Rada. Such confrontation had its consequences for establishing and activity of Jewish institutions in the Rada and in the politics of the Rada concerning Jewish national autonomy in Ukraine.

According to the Zionist Naum (Nakhman Moisha) Syrkin when the issue of entrance of the Jewish parties to the Central Rada arose, the Jewish socialist parties, mainly the Bund and Fareinigte, which were supported by the Ukrainian social-democrats, attempted to remove the Zionists from participation in the Rada as the latter did not belong to the 'revolutionary

¹⁰² Joseph Schechtman, "Jewish Community Life in the Ukraine (1917–1919)," 42.

¹⁰³ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 72–73.

¹⁰⁴ See *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 212; see also Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 52.

democracy'.¹⁰⁵ Not the least factor in preventing such a situation was the old friendly relationship of Zionists with Ukrainian socialist-revolutionaries.¹⁰⁶

Volodymyr Vynnychenko recollects the first meeting of the Mala Rada with the representatives of the national minorities, which took place on July 11, 1917:

This was the best moment in living together of different nationalities in Ukraine. There was to some extent sincerity in reconciliation, willingness of friendly cooperation and work on common affair, a wish to forget old misunderstandings... **in particular, this sincerity was apparent in the representatives of Jewish organizations.** They had already accepted the Central Rada in their consciousness as their agency and treated themselves in it as its equal members, with equal political and national rights: the representative of Zionists spoke in old Jewish language [Hebrew], in such a way regarding the Ukrainian statehood and equality of Jewry in it with favor.¹⁰⁷

The meeting on July 11 was full of friendly greeting words of Ukrainian and Jewish members. Taking into consideration the wish to solve 'the Jewish question' by creation of Jewish national-territorial autonomy in Palestine, the representatives of Poalei Tsion and Zionists were quite unanimous in promising "to support the revived Ukrainian people in their aspirations". Moses Silberfarb hoped optimistically that in Ukraine it will be possible to create the model for autonomous life not only for Russia, but also for the whole world.¹⁰⁸

From the first days of membership in the Central Rada the Jewish representatives were actively engaged in the whole work; so they participated not only in decision of 'Jewish questions' but also all governmental issues. During the negotiations of the Ukrainian Central Rada and the Provisional Government the Jewish parties took active part not only as a part of the Ukrainian delegation in Petrograd (Moshe Rafes, the Bund member took part in the negotiations at the end of July 1917¹⁰⁹), but also independently. For instance, On August 3,

¹⁰⁵ Mattiyahu Minc, "Kiev Zionists and the Ukrainian National Movement", 254.

¹⁰⁶ More elaborately about the relations of Jewish and Ukrainian parties see Yury Boshyk, "Between Socialism and Nationalism: Jewish-Ukrainian Political Relations in Imperial Russia, 1900 – 1917," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, Peter J. Potichnyj and Aster Howard, eds. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988), 173–202.

¹⁰⁷ Vynnychenko, Volodymyr. *Vidrozhennia natsii*, 297–298.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 175–176.

¹⁰⁹ Vynnychenko, Volodymyr. *Vidrozhennia natsii*, 195, 215–217.

1917 the Central Committee of the Fareinigte sent the telegram to the Provisional Government in which it emphasized the urgent necessity of agreement between the Provisional Government and the democracy of Ukraine concerning the autonomous rule in the region.¹¹⁰ In addition to that, at the meeting of the Mala Rada the Poalei Tsion representative S. Goldelman announced that, irrespective of recognition and confirmation of the General Secretariat by the Provisional Government, they will work there, where “the regional democracy agency for the establishment of autonomous Ukraine”, and in the conflict of the Provisional Government with the Central Rada they will support the latter.¹¹¹ On September 29 the Jewish factions unanimously supported the Declaration of the General Secretariat of Ukraine, however, regretting that the Declaration did not mention the principle of national-personal autonomy for the minorities of Ukraine.¹¹²

Nevertheless, often during Central Rada meetings sharp discussions concerning Jewish life matters arose between Jewish parties. The conflicting views were not always understandable to non-Jewish members of the Rada and touched upon such matters as choice between assimilation, nationalism and Zionism, Yiddish and Hebrew, secularity and religiousness of the Jewish community and individual lives. At the meeting of Mala Rada from October 19, 1917, the Zionists protested against the order of the Secretariat in Internal Affairs to the commissioners of Ukraine to be guided by Moses Silberfarb, the assistant of the General Secretary in National Affairs, in all the matters which concern the internal life of Jews such as, for example, the election of rabbis. The Zionists thought that such order treats Jews in some special way and thus returns to the imperial practice; they also strongly objected the secular

¹¹⁰ See “The Telegram of the Central Committee of the United Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party about the Necessity of Conclusion of Agreement with the Ukrainian Democracy” in V. Versiuk, ed., *Ukraïns'kyi natsional'no-vyzvolnyi rukh. Berezen'-lystopad 1917 roku: Dok. i materialy*, 602.

¹¹¹ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 211.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 329.

elections of rabbis as they considered it essentially religious matter. On the contrary, the Jewish socialists and Silberfarb himself criticized the Zionists' position firmly.¹¹³

On November 14, 1917 the Zionists initiated a discussion of Balfour Declaration which stated that the British government supported the establishment of national home for Jewish people in Palestine. Zionists proposed to adopt a resolution "About Palestine" which would have declared that the Ukrainian Central Rada "utters confidence that this historical act... will arise the feeling of great content among the democratic circles of Ukraine, where a lot of Jewish people are concentrated"; and also will allow the Jewish people together with national-personal autonomy declared in the Third Universal to establish a national-territorial autonomy (in Palestine).¹¹⁴ So such resolution could have become not only the manifestation of friendliness of Ukraine towards the aspirations of Jewish people, it, as a decision of the highest authority in Ukraine, would have been known to every Jew of Ukraine. Here again the controversy between the Jewish parties showed itself. The representative of the socialist *Fareinigte* objected against such a resolution as the one which violated the rights of Palestinian Arabs. Observing the lack of unity among the Jewish parties, the Ukrainian social-democrats, socialist-revolutionaries and Polish representatives condemned the resolution as one that could be understood as a call to "imperial occupation of lands, and a wish to evict Jews from Ukraine."¹¹⁵

On the 28th of November 1917 at the meeting of the Mala Rada Zionist Joseph Schechtman made an official inquiry to the secretaries of Internal Affairs and Military Affairs in the matter of pogroms, wishing to know what arrangements the General Secretariat made for the immediate cessation of pogroms; and whether General Secretariat allows Jews-soldiers to

¹¹³ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 351–352.

¹¹⁴ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 441, 570; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 56–57.

¹¹⁵ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 441–442.

create separate fighting squads for safe-guarding the Jews from pogroms.¹¹⁶ Answering the questions, the General Secretary in Military Affairs S. Petliura noted the very notorious fact of pogroms which, as he stated, in the majority of cases “were committed by the soldiers of reserve units which stand in front-line areas”¹¹⁷; he also reported on the arrangements which were made and were planned to make to prevent the pogroms. Petliura remarked that in the matter of Jewish military squads he did not see any obstacles.¹¹⁸

However, against the formation of separate Jewish military squads other Jewish parties objected, in particular, Folkspartei and the Bund. The representatives of Bund argued that the general official authorities of Ukraine had to secure Jews from pogroms, and they would be amenable for it; also the army in Ukraine should have been based on the territorial basis because the formation of separate national military units would only favor the national hostility and pogroms.¹¹⁹ The representative of the Fareinigte Maks Shats-Anin also claimed that some Ukrainian military units understand the Ukrainization of the army too literally: not as a territorial formation of the army but as an essentially Ukrainian matter which excluded non-Ukrainians from it.¹²⁰

The problem of pogroms was raised by the Zionist faction at the meeting of Mala Rada even later, on December 19, 1917. The Secretary responded basically with the same answers as

¹¹⁶ See *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 483; Joseph Schechtman, “Jewish Community Life in the Ukraine”, 47; Serhii Iekel'chyk, “Trahichna storinka Ukraïns'koï revoliutsii. Symon Petliura ta ievreis'ki pohromy v Ukraïni (1917–1920)” (“Tragic Page in Ukrainian Revolution. Symon Petliura and Jewish pogroms in Ukraine (1917–1920)”), in V. Mykhal'chuk, ed., *Symon Petliura ta ukraïns'ka natsional'na revoliutsiia: Zbirnyk prats' Druhoho konkursu petliuroznavtsiv Ukraïny (Symon Petliura and The Ukrainian National Revolution: The Collected Works of the Second Competition of Petliura scholars of Ukraine)* (Kyiv: Rada, 1995), 169; V. Hrynevych and Hrynevych L., *Natsional'ne viis'kove pytannia v diial'nosti Soiuzu ievreïv-voïniv Kyïvs'koï viis'kovoï okruhy (lypen' 1917 - sichen' 1918 rr.) (National Military Question in the Activity of Jews-Soldiers Union of the Kyiv Military District)*. (Kyiv, 2001), 24.

¹¹⁷ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 483.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 484; Serhii Iekel'chyk, “Trahichna storinka Ukraïns'koï revoliutsii. Symon Petliura...”, 169; V. Hrynevych and Hrynevych L., *Natsional'ne viis'kove pytannia v diial'nosti Soiuzu ievreïv-voïniv*, 24.

¹²⁰ V. Hrynevych and Hrynevych L., *Natsional'ne viis'kove pytannia v diial'nosti Soiuzu ievreïv-voïniv*, 25.

the previous time that the preventive arrangements were made, but because of unstable situation they could not be entirely effective.¹²¹

On December 2, 1917, Mala Rada held a very interesting meeting at which after vivacious discussions of Jewish representatives it adopted the Law about the Establishment of Community Councils and Elections of Members of These Councils.¹²² The bill included the amendments of the Bund representative Moshe Rafes that “the elections are to be held in public and non-governmental institutions, in rooms that are of exclusively secular (and not religious) character”¹²³, and from Poalei Tsion representative S. Goldelman that “the general guidance of the elections is held by the Secretary of Jewish Affairs in consent with special administrative commission.”¹²⁴

There were several lively discussions of the draft of the Law about National-Personal Autonomy on December 19 and 30, 1917 and January 2, 1918. During the discussions the Bund representative Oleksandr Zolotariov objected against the 8th Article which, according to his words, gave too big sovereignty to the National Constituent Assembly in the right to determine the constitution of the National Union. Zolotariov also argued that such constitution had to be agreed with the Law about the National-Personal Autonomy adopted by the all bodies of all Ukrainian democracy.¹²⁵ The Bund representative among other things enthusiastically mentioned that such law by its shape “had never been implemented in any country of the

¹²¹ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 50.

¹²² *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 494, 496, 578; “Law of the Ukrainian People’s Republic about the Establishment of Community Councils and Elections of Members of These Councils,” in *Natsinal'ni vidnosyny v Ukraïni u XX stolitti*, 57–61.

¹²³ Quoted after *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 578.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 47.

world.”¹²⁶ The representatives of Poalei Tsion and Folkspartei also greeted sincerely this “the most democratic in the whole world law of great importance”.¹²⁷

When finally on January 8, 1918 the Law about National-Personal Autonomy was adopted, M. Litvakov (from the Fareinigte) solemnly noted that “from now on the minorities cease being minorities and become equal citizens of the Ukrainian People’s Republic.”¹²⁸ However, later in March 1918, the same Litvakov desperately claimed that Ukrainians eventually turned the institute of Jewish national autonomy into a kind of “state-political pale of settlement” where they left to Jews the specific Jewish matters, but the decisions of all the Ukrainian state matters belonged only to Ukrainians. He also admitted that all the state acts, beginning from the Third Universal, were resolved without the knowledge and will of national minorities; although the minorities were then allowed to read their declarations on the matter, in fact these declarations became a kind of exams in loyalty to the Ukrainian state.¹²⁹

At the next meeting of Mala Rada on January 11, 1918, the Fourth Universal of the Central Rada, which proclaimed full sovereignty and independence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, was voted and proclaimed. Jewish parties did not support the Universal: Bund voted against it, the rest of the present parties’ representatives (Poalei Tsion, Fareinigte, and Folkspartei) abstained from voting, and Zionists did not even come at the meeting.¹³⁰ Why it happened that way one might think of many reasons and assumptions. Some would say that it happened because of alleged disloyalty of the Jewish parties to the Ukrainian Central Rada

¹²⁶ Quoted in *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 82.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 87–88.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 99.

¹²⁹ Cited in I. Cherikover, “Antisemitizm i pogromy na Ukraine v period Tsentral'noi rady i getmana,” (“Antisemitism and Pogroms on Ukraine in the Period of the Central Rada and Hetman”) in N. N. Popov and Alekseev S.A., eds., *Revoliutsiia na Ukraine po memuaram Belykh* (Moskva, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo, 1990), 255.

¹³⁰ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 102; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 61; S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs'ka natsional'na avtonomiia*, 35.

(however, such a popular among Ukrainian scholars assumption and accusation does not have confirmation in the further deeds of Jewish parties, when they, for example, unanimously and publicly declared their support to the Central Rada in the struggle with Bolsheviks). Partially it could be also explained by the wish of Jewish parties to preserve the ‘Russian Jewry’ united (as S. Goldelman spoke in his work¹³¹) or by the orientation of Jewish parties at Moscow as their party center (for instance, it could be said about the Bund in Ukraine which considered itself a part of the International and Russian social-democracy; Bund often took the same position with Russian Mensheviks in the questions decided in the Central Rada).

In January 1918 during the Bolsheviks’ revolt at Arsenal Kyiv factory and the offensive of Bolshevik army at Kyiv, the tension and anti-Jewish attitudes towards population increased. Thus the Jewish parties showed previously unseen unanimity (the declarations of Bund were practically identical with the Zionist ones), and on January 19 and 20, 1918 they made statements at the Ninth Session of the Central Rada in which they proclaimed that the whole Jewish nation could not be responsible for the deeds of individual Jews who joined Bolsheviks’ ranks.¹³² In addition to that, the Zionist J. Schechtman insisted that the Central Rada should have issued an appeal to the citizens with a call not to commit Jewish pogroms. However, some Ukrainian representatives declined such a proposition as they claimed, on the contrary, the appeal could have increased the pogrom atmosphere; B. Martos, a representative of the Ukrainian Workers’ Social-Democratic Party, proposed that Bund issued an appeal to the residents of Kyiv with support of the Central Rada in the struggle with Bolsheviks. Bund representatives assured the latter that such an appeal had already been ready to be issued.¹³³

¹³¹ S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs'ka natsional'na avtonomiia na Ukraïni*, 12.

¹³² *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 116–117.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 117–118.

At the end of the meeting almost all the factions agreed that the common appeal should be issued; in short, on January 24, such an appeal was issued in the newspaper *Nova Rada* (the organ of the Central Rada). *The Appeal of Peoples' Ministers Council to the Citizens of Kyiv* from 19th of January contained slogans to preserve tranquility and trust to the Central Rada. In any way the appeal did not even mention pogroms.¹³⁴ The Jewish parties in their periodicals also published their appeals to the population in which they uttered their support to the Central Rada in the struggle with Bolsheviks.¹³⁵

On January 25, 1918 the Central Rada under pressure from Bolsheviks left Kyiv and later on during a month was meeting in towns of Volyn region without national minorities' representatives. On January 27, 1918 in Brest-Litovsk the delegation of the Ukrainian People's Republic signed the separate peace treaty with the representatives of Central Powers. The majority of the Jewish parties which participated in the Central Rada (except the Bund) supported such a step.¹³⁶

After the return of the Central Rada to Kyiv at the festive meeting of the Mala Rada on the occasion of Rada's establishment anniversary, the representatives of Jewish parties ardently greeted it. Among others Zionist N. Syrkin showed his hope that Kyiv would be an example of friendly relations between nations, and the member of Bund said that he is proud of his participation in the Central Rada.¹³⁷ However, these speeches were made in the period after Ukrainian-Jewish popular relations worsened a lot; many pogroms provoked and often

¹³⁴ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 119, 131–132.

¹³⁵ TsDAHO, 41.1.7.5–10; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partiï ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 65–66; Joseph Schechtman, "Jewish Community Life in the Ukraine (1917–1919)," 50–51.

¹³⁶ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 466–468; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 88.

¹³⁷ Cited after O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partiï ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 65–66; Joseph Schechtman, "Jewish Community Life in the Ukraine (1917–1919)," 69–70; *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 218–219.

voluntarily committed by the soldiers of Ukrainian troops occurred in the period of unrest and struggle with Bolsheviks from January till April 1918.¹³⁸

On April 20, 1918 the representatives of Jewish parties brought in the discussion issues of anti-Jewish signs in German at railway stations, wrong national policy of the Central Rada, and violations. Ukrainian representatives considered such reprimands only as unfair reproaches from non-Ukrainians to Ukrainians that is why the constructive discussion did not take place.¹³⁹

The permanent controversy between Zionists and other four Jewish parties showed itself in various issues. For instance, on April 8, 1918, when the Minister of Jewish Affairs Wolf Latskyi (Lutskyi, pseudonym Bertoldi) was to be appointed and confirmed by the Council of Ministers, the Zionists were the only party against the appointment.¹⁴⁰ When on April 11, 1918 the Bill about the Jewish Teachers' Seminary was discussed, the Zionists proposed that the Jewish National Council choose what the language of teaching in the seminary should be (hoping that it would become Hebrew and not Yiddish)¹⁴¹. However, the representatives of other parties did not support such a claim and the law stated only Yiddish as a language of teaching.¹⁴²

At the same time, as mentioned above, the Jewish parties' representatives actively participated not only in the discussion and decision of Jewish matters, but also in general state, legal, economical and other questions. For instance, at the meeting of the Mala Rada from April 23, the Zionists representative Hindes owing to his persistent activity and Central Rada

¹³⁸ For detail see I. Cherikover, "Antisemitizm i pogromy na Ukraine...", 239–257.

¹³⁹ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 294–297.

¹⁴⁰ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 259; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 70.

¹⁴¹ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 264.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 264–265.

membership could avert 12 death sentences passed by the German military authorities in Kherson.¹⁴³

At the last meeting of the Mala Rada on April 29, 1918 the Constitution of the Ukrainian People's Republic was adopted. The eighth chapter of the Constitution, called *National Unions* included the Law about the National-Personal Autonomy. The Constitution was adopted unanimously except for the first paragraph which proclaimed independence of the Ukrainian state; Bund abstained from voting in order not to contradict the party position, uttered during the voting of the Fourth Universal.¹⁴⁴

Right after the coup d'etat on April 29, 1918, when the Ukrainian Central Rada was overthrown by Hetman Pavlo Skoropads'kyi and German troops, the Jewish parties Fareinigte and Poalei Tsion issued appeals to the population with calls to support the Central Rada¹⁴⁵, but it was too late and such calls could not be heard at that moment.

So this chapter shortly outlined the main aspects of the activity of Jewish parties in the Ukrainian Central Rada as a part of Jewish autonomy issue. The next chapter will concentrate on the Ministry of Jewish Affairs as the main institution in Jewish autonomy matters.

In fact, when the Jewish parties entered the Rada they had already had their own views on such questions as orientation in political affairs, question of Jewish autonomy, the language of education in Jewish schooling (Yiddish or Hebrew) and so on. Nevertheless, the Jewish parties' attitude towards the whole politics of the Rada was quite similar. On the one hand, they did not support the Fourth Universal (state declaration that proclaimed Ukraine's independence and complete separation from Russia) because the Jewish parties stood for preserving the Russian state as an entity, which would be democratic and would give all the Russian Jews liberal rights

¹⁴³ Ibid, 300.

¹⁴⁴ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 327–328, 330–335.

¹⁴⁵ TsDAHO, 41.1.86. 2; TsDAHO, 41.1.128,19–21.

and autonomy in the boundaries of one “state of nations”; and because they wanted the ‘Russian’ Jews (Jews of former Russian empire) to be united. On the other hand, socialists and Zionists as well supported the Rada’s struggle against the Bolshevik invasion in January 1918, because they did not assume the power of Bolsheviks to be legitimate and democratic.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Schechtman “Jewish Community Life...”, 50–51.

Chapter 3. The activity of the Ministry of Jewish Affairs.

Owing to the active participation of Jewish parties in Ukrainian Central Rada, on July 13, 1917, for the first time in the history Vice Secretary of Jewish Affairs (later a minister and General Secretary of Jewish affairs) was appointed. It was actually the first step to Jewish national autonomy in Ukraine. Moshe Zilberfarb (in some other English transliterations *Moyshe* or *Moses Silberfarb*), the first person on this post recalled the event in his memoirs in such a way:

Yet, the Minister for the Jewish Affairs, as far as we know, has no equal in Jewish history. The Minister for Jewish Affairs was no Jewish high official who was to carry out the policies of the government in the Jewish life (as, for example, was the Jewish chief rabbi in Poland in the sixteenth century), nor was he a shtadlan [intercessor] or delegate on behalf of the Jewish people (like for example, the parnas ha-va'ad (marshalok) and the general syndics (shhtadlanim) in Poland). Rather he was the highest and, to a certain degree an autonomous governmental organ who was to guard, secure and strengthen the national rights of the individual and of the national community.¹⁴⁷

On July 14, 1917 at the meeting of the Mala Rada, when the question of appointment of Vice-Secretaries (assistants) of General Secretary in National Affairs was in agenda, the Bund wanted Moshe Rafes, their representative, to be appointed. However, the rest of the Jewish parties strongly disagreed with such a decision since they did not considered the latter to be a representative of Jewish organizations in General Secretariat; as he entered the Rada through Mensheviks quota.¹⁴⁸ Because of lack of sources, the decision of this question in the discussion between the Jewish parties is still not comprehensive. On July 15 the Mala Rada adopted a decision to appoint Moses Silberfarb from Fareinigte Мала призначити as assistant of the Secretary.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ See Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine. Kiev, 1918/19*, translated by David H. Lincoln (New York: Aleph Press, 1993), 5. At the time these words were written the establishing of Minister and Ministry of Jewish Affairs was absolutely a unique experience.

¹⁴⁸ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 178.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 179.

The competence of Vice-Secretaries was not clearly defined in any document, so at the first meetings of the General Secretariat in National Affairs, the instruction concerning this matter was drafted by Silberfarb and then adopted. The instruction among other things defined that the work of the Vice Secretary should be directed at the protection of the rights of national minorities of Ukraine, as well as the support of development of internal national life.

The Vice Secretary had to draft and submit the bills and official administrative decisions to the General Secretary of National Affairs. Without the knowledge of the Vice-Secretary no decision or order concerning the national minority life could be issued. Vice-Secretary had to address the institute of the national minority in the language of that minority, and the office work had to be hold in the same language. It was also envisioned that a national council alongside of every Vice-Secretary would be established in order to decide the most important questions of internal national life.¹⁵⁰ So it can be concluded that, according to the instruction the Vice-secretariat was not a mere committee for preservation of peace and tranquility between nations, but it was a governmental body with its functions, rights and duties.¹⁵¹

All the competence and work of the Vice-Secretariat of Jewish Affairs was divided in 3 departments:

- 1) Education Department – the head of the department was Abram Strashun (from the Bund);
- 2) Department in the Affairs of Communities and National Self-Government – head Abram Revuts'kyi (Poalei Tsion) – this department had to occupy with communal matters, except educational ones;

¹⁵⁰ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 12–14.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 14.

3) Department of General Matters – the head Isaiah Khurhin (Fareinigte) – had to occupy with protection of rights of Jews and all other matters, which were not included in the first two departments.¹⁵²

Practically, the real full work of the Vice-Secretariat of Jewish Affairs started only from October 1917¹⁵³, when the Declaration of the General Secretariat was adopted and when the Jewish National Council was gathered for the first time on October 1, 1917. The Jewish National Council should have represented all five Jewish parties which participated in the Central Rada and consisted at first 25 (5 from each party) and then 50 members (10 from each party). Yet the Zionists refused from such an equal footing division of places since they considered themselves the most influential Jewish party. So at the very first meeting of the council the Zionists walked out on the council and only from time to time sent their representative there only in information matters. The party *Akhdes Isroel* (The Unity of Israel) also requested to be represented in the National Council; however, the latter one did not satisfied the claims. At first the Jewish National Council fulfilled deliberative functions in the framework of the Secretariat of Jewish Affairs, but soon it became an authoritative and indicating body for the Secretariat.¹⁵⁴

The Vice-Secretariat submitted for consideration its declaration with program of work to the National Council. The concrete objectives and tasks of the Vice-Secretariat were: development of the Jewish autonomy, which would be based at democratic reformed *kehilot*; establishment of modern Jewish public compulsory state education; implementation of equal

¹⁵² Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 33; V. Hrynevych and Hrynevych L., “Ievreï Ukraïny v roky revoliutsii ta hromadians'koï viiny” (“Jews of Ukraine in the Years of Revolution and Civil War”), in *Narysy z istorii ta kul'tury ievreiv Ukraïny (Sketch of History and Culture of Jews of Ukraine)* (Kyiv: Dukh I Litera, 2005), 120.

¹⁵³ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 33; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 67.

¹⁵⁴ *Ukraïns'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 576; Joseph Schechtman “Jewish Community Life...”, 43; Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 34.

rights of Yiddish in public and political life. One of the first and the most important objectives of the Vice-Secretary of National affairs was with the assistance of the national Council to draft a Statute of the Jewish national autonomy, which should have been submitted to the Jewish national Assembly convened on the democratic basis.¹⁵⁵ The main points of the declaration were approved by all the Jewish parties, except Zionists which claimed that they did not consider either Vice-secretary or the National Council empowered to draft and issue laws concerning Jewish life.¹⁵⁶ Because of the above-mentioned reasons the Zionists left the Council.

In whole, it should be noted that the Jewish population understood the main objectives and tasks of the Vice-Secretary of Jewish Affairs in different way. So a lot of personal claims and requests of Jewish citizens show that the many Jews did not consider the Vice-Secretary as an official with certain lawmaking, legal and executive rights and functions, but as a simple *shtadlan* (intercessor) in the matters of Jews within the state authorities; they could always address him with their problems and disembody in native language.¹⁵⁷

As Silberfarb himself recalled, the majority of the citizens' requests concerned their individual or private property rights; the majority of offences or thefts about concerning which he got letters did not have any national character in them. However, the pogrom issue was completely different case. It was the problem to which Vice-Secretariat, and other Secretariats (of Justice, Internal Affairs, Trade, etc.) paid a lot of attention. For instance, in some cases the General Secretariat, according to the request of the Vice-Secretary of Jewish Affairs, sent special governmental commissions with Jewish Vice-Secretariat representatives to the pogrom

¹⁵⁵ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 34–37, 106–112.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 37.

¹⁵⁷ See in detail Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 38–39; Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 70 – 72.

places.¹⁵⁸ On October 18, 1917 with the assistance of Silberfarb the General Secretariat considered and adopted the appeal *To the Conscious Citizenry of Ukraine* with a call against Jewish pogroms.¹⁵⁹

Nevertheless, in some case the Vice-Secretary had to protect the individual civil rights of Jews. For example, when in connection with state of martial law, applied in Kyiv during the Bolsheviks' offensive, an order was issued which prescribed all Kyiv residents who had not been registered in the city before January 1, 1915 to leave the city. In the first place this order concerned the rights of Jews of Kyiv the majority of whom was not registered in the city by that date because of Russian empire's restrictions. Only owing to Silberfarb's activity, the implementation of the order could be stopped.¹⁶⁰

In order to protect the rights of Jews-soldiers, the Vice-Secretary of Jewish Affairs with consent of the General Secretary of Military Affairs had his commissars in military districts.¹⁶¹ On December 22, 1917 at the meeting of the General Secretariat M. Silberfarb announced about the request of Jews to allow them to establish separate military units. Although the General Secretariat confirmed the territorial principle of recruitment for the army, but, according to Silberfarb's words, there was still quite marked Antisemitism; thus the territorial principle was barely fulfilled: the Jews were not admitted to the Ukrainian military units. The General Secretary decide to give this case to the consideration of special commission within the General Secretariat of Military Affairs with participation of the representative of Silberfarb's office.¹⁶²

The work of the Department in the Affairs of Communities and National Self-Government permanently met comprehensive obstacles. Firstly, during war and revolutionary

¹⁵⁸ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 38–39.

¹⁵⁹ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 1, 354–355.

¹⁶⁰ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 71; Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 41.

¹⁶¹ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 41.

¹⁶² *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 61.

times the structure which was traditionally called *kehile* (community) decayed; at the same time, new structures which were founded (for example, different Jewish public self-help organizations), were quite far from contemporary reality of Jewish life. Secondly, the activity of the Vice-Secretariat of Jewish Affairs constantly faced the opposition of Zionists which in one way or another objected the reformation of Jewish communities on secular bases. Nevertheless, owing to the law-making activity of the Vice-Secretariat, on December 2, 1917 the Law about the Establishment of Community Councils and Elections of Members of These Councils.

The question of the use of Jewish language was also quite touchy. Despite legally defined the official status of Yiddish (side by side with Ukrainian, Russia, and Polish, at which the laws and official acts of the Central Rada had to be published), the use of Yiddish met with technical and moral hardships. Firstly, there were problems with establishment and full-fledged functioning of the state publishing house, which would issue laws in all four languages (practically only the Third Universal and only those laws which were directly connected to the Jewish minority's affairs were published not only in Ukrainian, but also in Yiddish).¹⁶³ Another technical problem was in usage of Yiddish in official communication with local officials as well as in recruitment of telephone operators who would know and speak Yiddish.¹⁶⁴

Secondly, among moral problems one may mention the reluctance of some Jews to use and implement Yiddish in official life. For instance, some bankers strived to annul the decision of General Secretariat about the issue of the Ukrainian banknotes in four languages (Ukrainian,

¹⁶³ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 45.

¹⁶⁴ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 70–71.

Russian, Polish, and Yiddish) because, according to Silberfarb's memoirs, the usage of *jargon* (as they called Yiddish) near 'decent languages' was intolerable.¹⁶⁵

Another important section in the Vice-Secretariat of Jewish Affairs was Education Department, which was then transformed into the Department of Popular Schooling; it included such sections as: administrative, secondary schools' and statistical-economical.¹⁶⁶ The urgent problems which should have been solved by the department were the publication of textbooks and training and preparation of teachers for work in Jewish schools.

Thus on request of the Vice-Secretary in Jewish Affairs the Democratic Circle of Jewish Teachers got a loan of 50,000 Karbovanets from the state treasury for the publication of textbooks in Yiddish. Later on in April 1918 the Central Rada should have granted 500,000 Karbovanets more, out of which 370,000 should have gone for the publication of textbooks and the rest 130,000 for the establishment of the state Jewish publishing house.¹⁶⁷ It was also planned to open ten Jewish teachers' seminaries and institutes in Ukraine¹⁶⁸; nevertheless, the Central Rada had time to adopt only one law about the establishment of one Jewish teachers' seminary in Kyiv.¹⁶⁹

The biggest achievement of the General Secretariat of Jewish Affairs might be considered its direct participation in the drafting and adoption of the Law about National-Personal Autonomy. Actually, it was Silberfarb and his two assistants I. Khurhin and M. Shats (Anin) who were the creators of the law.¹⁷⁰ After the unanimous voting for the law M. Silberfarb gave

¹⁶⁵ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 45 – 46.

¹⁶⁶ V. Hrynevych and Hrynevych L., "Ievreï Ukraïny v roky revoliutsii ta hromadians'koï viiny", 121.

¹⁶⁷ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 48 – 49; TsDAVO, 1748.1.97.27; V. Hrynevych and Hrynevych L., "Ievreï Ukraïny v roky revoliutsii ta hromadians'koï viiny", 120 – 121.

¹⁶⁸ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 49.

¹⁶⁹ For detail see TsDAVO, 1115.1.29.97–105.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 71.

a greeting speech in which he compared this law to the Declaration of Human Rights and called the law “the declaration of the nation’s rights”¹⁷¹.

Nevertheless, the high and joyful mood did not last for a long time. With Bolsheviks’ offensive to Ukraine, and Kyiv in particular, the pogrom public moods were increasing, and the Central Rada’s power was too weak to prevent it. On January 16, 1918 Moses Silberfarb resigned from the newly established post of People’s Minister of Jewish Affairs.¹⁷² Although the Ministry of Jewish Affairs was not forbidden, its activity was under the threat: the property was ransacked, the archive annihilated; and the Bolsheviks’ People’s Commissars’ Council proclaimed that the national autonomy was a mere deed of the bourgeoisie. Yet, according to Silberfarb’s memoirs, despite his resignation, the Jewish National Council continued its activity even during the five-week Bolsheviks’ occupation of Kyiv; it was in that time that the composition of the council was increased to 50 members, and its influence among the Jewish population was growing.¹⁷³

For some time the post of the Minister of Jewish Affairs was vacant; it could be explained by the revolutionary unfavorable situation, pogrom moods among the population, and also with unwillingness of Jewish socialist parties to be responsible for the whole activity of that quite unpopular and not pro-socialist Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers under the Prime-Minister V. Holubovych.¹⁷⁴ That is why only at the meeting of the Mala Rada from April 8, 1918 the neutral candidate from non-socialist Folkspartei was found; the Minister of Jewish Affairs became Wolf Latskyi.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 98.

¹⁷² Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 78.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 81–82.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 84–85.

¹⁷⁵ *Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 259; O. Ya. Naiman, *Ievreis'ki partii ta ob'iednannia Ukraïny*, 61; S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs'ka natsional'na avtonomiia*, 70.

The Ministry of Jewish Affairs also took part in international affairs which concerned Jews. For instance, on April 23 1918, at the meeting of the Mala Rada it was decided to send a representative of the Ministry to Romania together with the Ukrainian delegation. According to the report of the Ukrainian Ministry of International Affairs, in Bessarabia, where the referendum about the unification with Romania had been recently held, the fierce violations of rights of Ukrainian and Jewish peoples were occurring.¹⁷⁶

During its activity from July 1917 to April 1918 the Vice-Secretariat of Jewish affairs was transformed into the Ministry of Jewish Affairs, and its staff at the end of April consisted of approximately a hundred of persons and included several departments.¹⁷⁷ The Ministry was mainly guided by the interests proclaimed in the programs of the Jewish socialist parties. That is why the most important points in ministerial activity were the reformation of the Jewish communities, usage of Yiddish (and not Hebrew) in official and educational spheres.

Nevertheless, the whole activity of the Ministry was the main display of implementation and development of the idea of Jewish national-personal autonomy in Ukraine. By all the achievements and failures of the Ministry one can judge about the whole concept of Jewish Autonomism in Ukraine.

¹⁷⁶ *Ukraińs'ka Tsentral'na Rada*, vol. 2, 302–303.

¹⁷⁷ Moses Silberfarb, *The Jewish Ministry and Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine*, 98.

Conclusion. Sketch of Jewish Identity and Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in 1917 – 1918.

“[I]t is not only that minority peoples have become problems within our modern nation-states, they have become problems which appear to be unresolvable,”¹⁷⁸ this quotation could be characteristic to Ukraine in whole and Ukrainian-Jewish relations in 1917 – 1918 in particular. A government of Ukraine and a state itself that were being established in Ukraine in 1917 – 1918 found a kind of solution for its multinational structure of population in Autonomism. The concept of Autonomism was a kind of solution for national minority rights problems, in particular Jewish ones, in multi-national countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the World War I. There were attempts to establish and implement Jewish national autonomy in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. The case of Jewish national Autonomy in Ukrainian People’s Republic was somehow unique because of local historical peculiarities.

For a very long period Jews have been a migrating people which, as Leo Pinsker in his famous *Autoemancipation* noted, “are everywhere as guests and are nowhere at home”.¹⁷⁹ That is why stateless Jews, constituting a minority in a modern nation state, would usually identify¹⁸⁰ themselves in a kind of ambiguous way; for instance, a Jew could call himself ‘French of Mosaic Law’.

As A. Malkki stated: “Identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of

¹⁷⁸ Gérard Chaliand, “Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States,” in *Minority Peoples in the Age of the Nation-States*, ed. Gérard Chaliand, (London: Pluto Press), 1989, 1.

¹⁷⁹ Cited in Zvi. Gitelman, “Native Land, Promised Land, Golden Land: Jewish Emigration from Russia and Ukraine” in *Cultures and Nations of central and Eastern Europe. Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, ed. Zvi Gitelman and others (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 137.

¹⁸⁰ Despite all the ambiguity of the usage of the notion ‘identity’ which was comprehensively showed in Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper. “Beyond ‘Identity’,” *Theory and Society* 29 No.1 (Feb., 2000): 1–47, the author of the present paper will use this term in ‘weak understanding’, as Brubaker calls it, and will strive to give the explanation of Jewish identity (or identities).

memories.”¹⁸¹ That is identity includes as self-perception as attitudes of others; it could be used in different ways, depending on the situation to protect oneself or to attack. Moreover, the political identity might be changed also by the change of political frontiers¹⁸² as such geopolitical change could bring some changes in mental mapping (however, not very fast changes).

Concerning the identity of Jews in Ukraine, Henry Abramson notes that: “[A] specifically Ukrainian Jewish identity... failed to develop in Ukraine, even though the history of the Jews in the region sketches back some two millennia [*sic*] and the population reached roughly two million at the beginning of this [twentieth] century.”¹⁸³ However, it may be argued that the Ukrainian Jewish political identity (Ukrainian of Mosaic Law, Ukrainian by Jewish origin) could not be formed as there was no Ukrainian independent state with stable boundaries unlike Russia and even Poland which ceased to be independent, yet in mental mapping had its concrete boundaries for many ‘Polish Jews’.

Zvi Gitelman also noted that “Jews who lived in Ukraine called themselves, and were called by others, “*Rusishe Yidn*,” not “*Ukrainishe Yidn*.” Consciously or unconsciously adopting the view of imperial Russian officialdom, Jews and others thought of Ukraine as “Little Russia”. Since Ukraine was never independent, but was part of different other states, “Jews treated Ukraine as a vague entity with no defined borders.”¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, one may also find other identifications by Jews as “*Ruslandishe Yidn*” – Jews of Russian State (not literally ‘Russian’ in cultural or linguistic meaning) in the Jewish periodicals of 1917 – 1918¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸¹ Cited in Umut Özkırımlı, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 55.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 53.

¹⁸³ Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government*, 40.

¹⁸⁴ Zvi. Gitelman, “Native Land, Promised Land, Golden Land...”, 147.

¹⁸⁵ *Tishrey: literarishe gezelshaflikhe bleter (Tishrey: Literary-Public Leaflet)* [1918] No. 1, 5.

In case of Ukraine of 1917 – 1918, according to the scheme of Rogers Brubaker, two forms of nationalisms clashed: that of the ‘nationalizing’ nationalism and the nationalism of national minorities.¹⁸⁶ The first one, as scholar described, is a nationalism of a ‘core nation’ in a newly independent state. However, because of the discriminatory policy towards the nation before the gained independence, the ‘core nation’ is still being in a weak cultural, economic, demographic, etc. position in a new state. So in its policy such newly established state holds to the interests of the core nation. The second nationalism that of national minorities brings “a demand for state recognition of their distinct ethnocultural nationality and the assertion of certain collective, nationality-based cultural or political rights.”¹⁸⁷

It was the Ukrainian Central Rada which gave the Jews a real opportunity to solve the ‘Jewish question’ at institutional level – Jews could now equally participate in the activity of Jewish parties, the elections to the state bodies of government, and in establishment of national self-governing bodies. At the same time, one may find many confirmations of common Ukrainian opinion in the Ukrainian press that Jews were expected to show loyalty and even a kind of patriotism to the nascent Ukrainian government and state.¹⁸⁸ When two nationalisms’ interests (Ukrainian and Jewish) clashed, common Ukrainians (not officials) would unofficially oppose, sabotage and ruin the conscription of Jews in the Ukrainian army (although it should have been formed on the territorial basis). They would even claim that Jews are not loyal to Ukraine even when there was no independent Ukrainian state.

So one may wonder what a period of 1917–1918 in the Ukrainian-Jewish relations was. If to use analogy to the Opalski’s and Bartal’s description of Polish-Jewish relations in the 1860s,

¹⁸⁶ Rogers Brubaker. “Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism,” in *The State of the Nation*, ed. John A. Hall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 277.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ I. Cherikover, “Antisemitizm i pogromy na Ukraine...”, 252–253.

was it a ‘failed brotherhood’? Or was it in Henry Abramson’s terms a ‘grand failure’ of Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement? The author of the present paper would claim that it was something else. It was an attempt of two neighboring nascent modern nations living side-by-side to fulfill their national demands and needs. Because of the clash between such national demands and because of revolutionary and wartime unrest, the relations were far from being calm and good.

On the whole, the policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada may be considered as tolerant; nevertheless, it was marred by the revolutionary unrest and the war of newly proclaimed Ukrainian People’s Republic (proclaimed in the Fourth Universal of the Central Rada from January 11, 1918) against Bolsheviks. On January 25, 1918, the Central Rada and its troops were forced to make a retreat from Kyiv and move to Zhytomyr, and came back to Kyiv only in a month with German allied troops. During this month-long exile, the Rada did not concern itself with national minorities’ issues, which apparently were not on the urgent list at that time. In addition, none of the representatives of national minorities were present at the meetings of the Central Rada in exile. Although some Central Rada members accused national minorities’ representatives, claiming that the latter did not wish to participate in the work of Rada in Zhytomyr, there is some evidence that making a hurried retreat, the Rada did not notify the non-Ukrainian representatives about moving out from Kyiv.¹⁸⁹

The policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada towards the national minorities made a comprehensive background in the development of relations between nations in revolutionary Ukraine; however, it was abruptly ceased by the coup d’état on April 29, 1918. In long-lasting consequences Ukrainian Central Rada left after itself, the establishment of national-personal

¹⁸⁹ S. I. Goldelman, *Zhydivs’ka natsional’na avtonomiia na Ukraïni (1917 – 1920 rr.)* (Jewish National Autonomy in Ukraine (1917 – 1920)) (Munich: Instytut vyvchennia SSSR, 1963), 9, 104.

autonomy and national self-government institutions are the most important ones. With some exceptions and modifications, the national minorities' institutions (educational, cultural, political, and public) and even some rights that were established during Central Rada rule continued to function during next governments – Hetmanate, Directory, and Soviet Union.

Jewish mass-based parties played a notable role in creation of Jewish autonomy and establishment of national minorities' rights and laws in 1917 – 1918 Ukraine. Owing to their active participation in legislative and administrative activity of local Ukrainian authorities, on July 13, 1917, for the first time in the history Vice Secretary of Jewish Affairs (later a minister and General Secretary of Jewish affairs) was appointed.

Five Jewish parties were represented in the Rada: the Bund, the Fareinigte (United Jewish Socialist Labor Party), the Poalei-Tsion (Poalei-Zion), the Folkspartei (Jewish People's Party), and the Zionists. The relations between these Jewish parties in the Rada were quite tense because of socialist and Zionist parties' confrontation. As a matter of fact, socialist parties, which had less support among Ukrainian Jewry than Zionists, had more influence and power in the Ukrainian Central Rada. Such confrontation had its consequences for establishing and activity of Jewish institutions in the Rada and in the politics of the Rada concerning Jewish national autonomy in Ukraine.

This thesis-paper aims to give the outline of main tendencies in the policy of the Ukrainian Central Rada towards Jewish people as a minority, therefore it does not claim to be a complete research, but it rather gives questions for further researches. In conclusion, it may be said that the experience of such a national minority's policy and the participation of the minorities in the creation of such a policy is really unique and progressive.

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