



Ukrainian Jewish Encounter Українсько Єврейська Зустріч

December 31, 2014

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To members of UJE's Advisory Board:

This is to update you on UJE projects and activities, and to invite your comments and advice. The report is longer than I would have liked, but as it is a first update, future reports will be shorter.

Developments since the establishment of the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter (UJE) six years ago have made ever more salient our mission, which is to enable Ukrainian-Jewish mutual respect and solidarity by advancing greater understanding of their joint and each other's historical experience in all its complexity. Russian leaders have brought Jewish tropes to the fore in their information and hybrid war campaigns, misusing Holocaust themes and instigating debates on the politics of history to deflect challenge of the attack on Ukraine and the European order. To a significant extent, since independence and especially since the revolutionary events at Maidan, Jews of Ukraine have become Ukrainian Jews. In Israel, necessarily mindful of Russia's strategic importance, there has nevertheless been growing identification with Ukraine, not least among many with FSU roots. Jewish and Ukrainian communities in North America are more in touch with and increasingly support each other, even as they are clear about the steps that remain to be taken to enable closer mutual links.

UJE has been very active, on a variety of fronts. A centrepiece is the 'Shared Historical Narrative' project, to enable the development of an account and understanding of the Ukrainian-Jewish experience over the centuries, based on a historically accurate and empathetic examination of the past. This would result from the series of moderated discussions organized by UJE, involving authoritative scholars of diverse nationalities and perspectives, covering topics key to understanding the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter considered over a long historical period – in particular, from the sixteenth century through the World War II period. Consolidation of the findings of the discussions and related research to date is underway, in a transparent and structured participatory process. Further such sessions are planned to address issues relating to the post-war Soviet and contemporary periods, and in principle, a concluding, broader conference on the societal uses of history and memory.

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At the same time UJE has generated public and community events in North America, Ukraine, and Israel; launched a website featuring original content developed by UJE; designed travelling exhibits; commissioned publications; and nurtured partnerships with a number of institutions.

One train has been to make better known the story of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, the spiritual leader of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church for the first half of the twentieth century, who helped save more than 150 Jewish children during World War II, sheltering them in Greek Catholic monasteries and convents and his own residence. He protested against Germany's murderous policies towards Jews, alerted Pope Pius XII in personal reports about the mass murders taking place, issued a pastoral letter on the theme of *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, and urged his parishioners not to participate in Nazi atrocities. In April 2012 UJE sponsored a visit to North America of Ukraine's principal religious leaders, to honour Sheptytsky's legacy and model. The visit brought Jewish and Ukrainian communities together in Toronto, Ottawa, Washington, and New York. In Ottawa, the Parliament of Canada unanimously adopted a motion to honour the actions and example of Metropolitan Sheptytsky – the first such recognition of Sheptytsky anywhere. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) presented the Jan Karski Courage To Care Award to Sheptytsky in New York in October 2013, in another first. A further step in advancing recognition of the Sheptytsky legacy as one worthy of celebration and emulation, and as providing a basis for building trust and bridges between communities, was the creation of the Andrei Sheptytsky Medal by the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine. The Medal was awarded for the first time to UJE Chair James Temerty in Kyiv in June 2013, in recognition of his dedication to fostering Ukrainian-Jewish understanding. The Sheptytsky Medal has now become a joint project of UJE and the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine. The plan is to make its award an annual event of note. On November 18 in Kyiv, this year's award was given to Ukrainian-Jewish business leader and philanthropist Victor Pinchuk, in the presence of Ukraine's Prime Minister and former Presidents, other prominent Ukrainian and Jewish religious, civic and business leaders, intellectuals, writers, artists, and educators, as well as dozens of leading media figures. Members of the Advisory Board will be kept apprised of future plans regarding the Award.

Attached to the hard copy of this report is what I hope you will agree is a fine commemorative booklet relating to Sheptytsky and the recent events acknowledging him.

Website

The website (www.ukrainianjewishencounter.org), now launched in both English and Ukrainian, but still a work in progress, features a wide range of audio-visual content, including *inter alia* such features as an interactive illustrated Historical Timeline on the history of Jews and of Ukrainian-Jewish interaction on Ukrainian lands from earliest times to the present; a "Virtual Tour" of centres of Jewish life in Ukraine, past and present (enabling visitors when the work is completed to choose a town or region and call up visuals depicting the art, architecture, landscape, and community histories); Hasidism on the territory of Ukraine (presented through maps, images, music, and text – a feature also still 'under construction'); and a series of multi-media presentations on cross-cultural influences and interaction in the realms of music, art, architecture, literature, theatre, film,

folklore, and cuisine. UJE is making increasing use of other social media as well, including Facebook and Twitter.

Exhibits

Travelling exhibits (working title: "Side by Side: the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter over the Centuries in Old and New Homelands") will be mounted in 2015 in four Canadian cities initially – Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Montreal. The core content for the exhibits will consist of adaptations to exhibit format of some of the material developed for the website – in particular, the Historical Timeline and the multi-media presentations on cultural aspects of the Ukrainian-Jewish encounter. In each city, a core exhibit will be supplemented by material (including photographs, film footage, and artefacts) reflecting the local history of the communities. In conjunction with the exhibits, there would also be public lectures, panel discussions, and evening performances (music, film, theatre). In a second phase, exhibits will be adapted for cities in Ukraine, Israel, and the U.S. (New York and Chicago). Components of the travelling exhibit – Hasidism on the territory of Ukraine and the influence of Ukrainian folk songs on Hasidic melodies – were shown and warmly received at an international festival of Klezmer music and culture in Canada last year. Another component, the works of the Canadian-Ukrainian painter William Kurelek, which depict Jewish life in Canada from Vancouver to Halifax, was exhibited at this year's Ashkenaz Festival in Toronto, alongside an exhibit of photographs, "Eyes of Maidan", by the Israeli-Ukrainian photojournalist, Alexander Sherbakov.

It is the intention that these traveling exhibits will serve in the development of a fully-featured Museum exhibit.

Publications

UJE is currently engaged in two publication projects:

- a popular illustrated history of Jews and ethnic Ukrainians and their encounter over the centuries on the territory of Ukraine and elsewhere (provisional title, *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-Existence*), co-authored by Professor Paul Robert Magocsi (University of Toronto, author of *A History of Ukraine*) and Professor Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern (Northwestern University, author of *The Golden Age Shtetl: A New History of Jewish Life in East Europe*); and
- a collection of essays on Ukrainian-Jewish interaction in various cultural domains (treating cross-cultural influences in music, art, architecture, language, customs, as well as mutual stereotypes that have become embedded in the respective cultures, as expressed in folklore, literature, and film). This volume is largely based on presentations given at a conference on these themes organized by UJE in Jerusalem in October 2010, in partnership with the Israel Museum and the Hebrew University, and will include an appended DVD of images and music.

Partnerships

To help advance our goals and expand our reach, UJE has welcomed opportunities to work in partnership with prominent organizations and institutions. Co-operative

arrangements were implemented with the Chais Center of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, whereby UJE sponsored short-term courses at Ukrainian universities, delivered by lecturers from Israeli universities; with the Center for Urban History in Lviv, whereby UJE facilitated the delivery of components of their Summer Program in Jewish Studies; with the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, in the launch of an M.A. program in Jewish Studies; and with the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, where UJE's Chair funded the establishment of three chairs in Jewish studies and Ukrainian-Jewish relations.

UJE is partnering with the Government of Canada in co-funding several UJE projects. UJE has also established cooperative arrangements with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in NYC; the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute; and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and Yahad-in-Unum in Paris. UJE is providing major funding to the latter two institutions to foster research and train experts to enable Ukrainians and others to gain a fuller understanding of the experience of the German occupation/World War II and the Shoah in Ukraine, and its broader societal impacts, still not fully known and appreciated.

UJE partnered with the leadership of *The New Republic* and Timothy Snyder/Yale and *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen* (IWM, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna) in mounting a significant gathering (*Thinking Together*) in Kyiv in May, which brought together prominent Western public intellectuals (from the US and Canada, France, Germany, Poland – and Russia) with their Ukrainian counterparts to demonstrate solidarity with pluralist Ukraine, foster public discussion, and attract international media coverage. Themes included history as a specter and inspiration, the politics of nationhood, the roles of language and religion, and implications for European institutions, among other topics.

UJE is also developing projects to engage youth, in cooperation with other organizations in North America, Ukraine, and Israel. Among other initiatives, UJE launched earlier this year the first in a series of youth seminars which will focus on themes central to UJE's work.

Academic Conferences and Cultural Festivals

UJE will continue with both the academic and non-academic activities undertaken in previous years, including participation in Jewish and Ukrainian cultural festivals, and at academic conferences, including for example the Quadrennial World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. At the August 2013 Congress, UJE mounted a booth and exhibit, and a well-received and well-attended panel, *Perspectives on the Ukrainian-Jewish Relationship: What is Changing?*

UJE is now a regular presence at Ukrainian and Jewish community festivals in Canada. At this year's major Ashkenaz Festival in Toronto, UJE, a sponsoring partner, presented the popular Klezmer-style band Lemon Bucket on the main stage, sponsored a panel discussion on the experience and implication of the Maidan events, and mounted an art exhibit, *Seeing Ourselves and each Other*. UJE is actively considering participation in

and supporting festivals, as well as international book fairs, in the US, Israel, and Ukraine in future.

This update comes at an important and difficult juncture in and for Ukraine, struggling to realize an independent future as a pluralist democracy oriented to European societal and governance values. UJE has very good relations with the new President, with the Prime Minister, and many of those who form the core of Ukraine's government, and hopes to contribute advice and other assistance to advance this evolution, in relation to UJE's particular mission.

The UJE Team

The Team and Board have grown. The Board was expanded by two new Directors, and now is made up of

James Temerty, *Founding Chair*

Adrian Karatnycky, *co-founder*

Paul Robert Magocsi, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto

Wolf Moskovich, Professor Emeritus, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Berel Rodal, *co-founder*

Co-Directors

Adrian Karatnycky, *co-founder*

Alti Rodal, *co-founder*

Director of Operations

Raya Shadursky

Director of Communications

Natalia Feduschak

Kyiv-based liaison

Myroslava Luzina

Israel-based liaison

Shimon Briman

Miriam Feyga Buminovich

UJE is incorporated in Canada as a Canada Revenue Agency-registered Charitable Corporation.

UJE has committed to date more than C\$7M in direct funding of its activities and grants. An additional \$2M+ have been committed by the Chair to UJE-related purposes to fund the establishment and maintenance of an MA program in Jewish Studies at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and to establish three Chairs in Jewish Studies and Ukrainian-Jewish Relations at the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv; and a further \$5M for the establishment of the Andrei Sheptytsky Library at UCU, which will include a Jewish Studies dimension.

With very best wishes for the new year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Berel Rodal', written in a cursive style.

Berel Rodal
Chair