

Cuvinte-cheie: drepturi, intelectualitate, politica de emigrare, cenzură politică.

Резюме

Данное исследование посвящено изучению того, как ущемлялись права представителей еврейской интеллигенции на эмиграцию из СССР. Исследование обращает внимание на положение в СССР еврейской этнической интеллигенции в целом и в частности в МССР. На основе архивного анализа рассматриваются контроль и цензура, применявшиеся на уровне государства и партии к людям, которые хотели эмигрировать из СССР.

Ключевые слова: права, интеллигенция, эмиграционная политика, политическая цензура.

Summary

This study is dedicated to examining how oppression intellectual rights Hebrew emigration from the USSR. The research focuses on the situation of ethnic Hebrew intellectuals in the USSR in general and in particular that of MССР. Under archival data analysis is looking to identify control and censorship tools that were applied by state and party organs towards people who wanted to emigrate from the USSR.

Key words: Rights, intellectuals, policy of emigrated.

Dymitry SHEVELIOV

THE JEWISH REVIVAL IN MOLDOVA (A SURVEY OF THE JEWISH LIFE IN MOLDOVA IN THE 1990–2000)¹

In the mid-1990s a number of foreign reporters stated that the Jewish community was “in the midst of a renaissance, even during emigration surges” (JTA eArchive, Sep. 19, 1994). Unfortunately, nobody could prove that. This issue is poorly studied so far. There are a few papers on the contemporary Jewish community in Moldova: several sociological studies – one co-authored by M. Korazim, E. Katz, and V. Bruter (Korazim, Katz, and Bruter, 2002), the others – by Vladimir Bruter (Брутер, 1998 [?]; Брутер, [S. a.]); one work is devoted to the charitable activity in Moldova in the 1990s (Копанский, Брутер [S. a.]); several authors also debate the history of Holocaust as a topic in Moldavian political discourse (Solonari, 2002; Думитру, 2008; Tartakovsky, 2008; Шевелёв, 2009).

I have recently presented the viewpoint on several aspects of Jewish life in Moldova in the 1990s–2000s and the prospects of Jewish revival (Шевелёв, 2009). In this article I would like to present a study of Jewish revival in a postSoviet state, based on the study of sources and personal observations made during several trips to Moldova. I assert that Moldova is a pattern of Jewish revival in the post-Soviet countries. The country witnessed the renaissance of the Jewish community.

Jewish population of Moldova

In 1989 before the fall of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the conflict in Transdnistria there were 65,800 Jews in the Moldavian SSR according to the official population census of the USSR.

Most of the Moldavian Jewish population immigrated to Israel in the early 1990s with its maximum amount of immigrants in 1991 (see table “*Aliya* from

Moldova in 1990–2012”). The peak of *aliya*² from the FSU was in 1990–1991. The number of immigrants has decreased since 1996. Immigrants from Moldova represent a high percentage of total immigrants from the FSU countries. They accounted for 10.5% in 1991. Since 1993 the number of immigrants from Moldova has been approximately 3% of all immigrants from the FSU. A large amount of immigrants from Moldova in 1990–1991 could be explained by the beginning of the interethnic conflict. In 1992 the *aliya* from Transdnistria was organized by the Jewish Agency, AJJDC and Israeli special services. More than 1,200 men from the conflicting zone on the river Dniester immigrated to Israel in 1992 (my personal calculations according to the data presented by JTA eArchive, Aug. 5, 1992 – D. S.).

The observers believed that there were 68,000 Jews in 1994 (JTA eArchive, Sep. 19, 1994) and 60,000 (1.5% of total populations) in 1997. 20,000 Jews stayed in Moldova in 2003, and there were between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews in the country in 2005. It is noticed that in Transdnistria there were 3,000–4,000 Jewish people in 2003.

According to Moldovan official census of 2004, 3,608 persons called themselves Jews (0.11% of total population, excluded Transdnistria). The official census of Transdnistrian Moldavian Republic was held in that very year. There is no access to the official data of the census, so the precise amount of Jewish population at that time is not known. The information which is given by the Jewish organizations differs from the official one. It is supposed that in 2008 15,000 Jews lived in Moldova and 2,000 in Transdnistria. Most of Jews live in Kishinev (about 7,000) and in Balti (about 1,000 people). I suppose that the

official data are considered to be more objective because this information is based on the principle of self-identification, i.e. a person identifies himself/herself as a Jew (see: Шевелёв, 2009). (The Jewish institutions working within the territories of the post-Soviet states give disproportionate numbers.) I would like to present details on some aspects of Jewish life in Moldova, which other researchers do not mention in their research.

State policy towards national minorities

I have not found any evidence on what was going on with the Moldavian establishment in the late Soviet period. I assume that starting from the late 1980s former Moldavian Communist leaders seemed to change their political orientation to the ultra-national one. In 1990 Mircea Snegur, a former secretary for agriculture of the Moldavian Commu-

nist Party and the head of the Supreme Council, was elected President. He supported the People's Front of Moldova, in their turn the frontists supported him. Front's representative Mircea Druk occupied the post of the Prime Minister. M. Druk initiated "*The March towards the South*" against Gagauzians in August 1990 as well as the clashes at the Dubossary bridge in October 1990. Later on President Snegur stated that he was not in Kishinev then and did not know what the Prime Minister and the others did (Снегур–Волков, 2007, 141, 153). It is worth noticing that when the ethnic clashes reached their climax, President Snegur stated he was on official trips to other countries.

Probably, President Snegur and PM Druk had conflicting opinions on the inter-ethnic policy in the country. M. Snegur had a moderate view, whereas

Table "Aliya from Moldova from 1990 to 2012"

| Year | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|--|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Amount of immigrants from Moldova | 11926 | 15452 | 4305 | 2173 | 1907 | 2407 | 1953 | 1413 | 1189 | 1360 | 1791 |
| Total amount of immigrants from the FSU | 185230 | 147839 | 65093 | 66145 | 68079 | 64847 | 59049 | 54623 | 46133 | 66907 | 51080 |
| Per cent of immigrants of Moldavian origin | 6,4 | 10,5 | 6,6 | 3,3 | 2,8 | 3,7 | 3,3 | 2,6 | 2,6 | 2,0 | 3,5 |

Table "Aliya from Moldova from 1990 to 2012" (continuation)

| Year | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Amount of immigrants from Moldova | 961 | 544 | 360 | 360 | 330 | 273 | 189 | 189 | 244 | 236 | 231 | 215 |
| Total amount of immigrants from the FSU | 33766 | 18878 | 12595 | 10403 | 9526 | 7574 | 6655 | 5745 | 7008 | 7261 | 7450 | 7310 |
| Per cent of immigrants of Moldavian origin | 2,8 | 2,9 | 2,9 | 3,5 | 3,5 | 3,6 | 2,8 | 3,3 | 3,5 | 3,3 | 3,1 | 2,9 |

Note. The table has been made up by the author of the article on the basis of the data presented by the Ministry of absorption of Israel and Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel.

Druk – the ultra-right one. There is evidence showing that Druk represented the interests of Romania in the early period of Moldavian independence. Bucharest might have inclined to re-unify Romania and Moldavia then.

Snegur endeavored to show a moderate policy. The advisor on inter-ethnic relations in Snegur's political party – Moldavian Party of Revival and Harmony (*Partiya vrozhdheniya i soglasiya Moldovy*) – Ye. Volkov listed the measures, made since 1989 (Снегур–Волков, 2007, 213). The Law on languages was adopted; it declared Russian the language of inter-ethnic communication (item 3), as well as the right to use and develop Yiddish and Hebrew (item 4). In 1991–1992 laws and decrees concerning the rights of national minorities were adopted. President Snegur signed the Decree “On the measures concerning the development of Jewish national culture and meeting the needs of the Jewish population of Moldova” (Decree 161 dated 12.08.1991). In December 1991 the Governmental act on these measures was adopted (Act 682 dated 09.12.1991). Two Jewish schools and institutions of traditional education were opened in 1991–1992, as well as a Jewish library in 1991 (on *Diordița* str., 4). In November 1990 the Department of InterEthnic Relations was established within the framework of the Government. It is supposed that the opening of the Departments for the study of the history and culture of the national minorities of Moldova within the Academy of Sciences was a part of state policy.

These rights of national minorities were also promoted in the Law on education of 21 July 1995 and in the Law on identity cards of 9 October 1994. The Constitution of 1994 also declared the right of national minorities and their languages.

As the frontists came to power, M. Snegur was just biding his time: whether the frontists would win or lose. As soon as the unionists lost, Snegur decided to continue his middle-of-the-road policy. It should be noticed that several observers argued that all the governmental measures towards national minorities aimed to gain western support and investments (JTA eArchive, Sep. 19, 1994).

This national policy was not changed after the Communists came to power in 2001, as well as after the revenge of the unionists in 2009.

In the mid-2000s M. Snegur declared:

“During my work I sought to ensure that the national revival of major ethnic group, the reform of society, and the democratization of political life was accompanied by the development of national minorities' cultures and languages, I always believed that moving this way, keeping balance of interests between majority and minorities, the accord and har-

mony in society could appear. This is my credo in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations” (Снегур–Волков, 2007, 204).

Thus, in the early 1990s, while frontists pursued the policy of reunification with Romania, Moldavian moderates proclaimed the rights for the development of all the nations within the country. The foundation of Jewish scholarship was an important part of this policy.

The Jewish community and Transnistrian conflict

There is little evidence on the community in the early 1990s. It can be said that for nationalists the Jews were a risk factor: they were speakers of Russian and did not support the idea of unification with Romania. They were assimilated by the Soviet power from the nationalists' point of view. Later on M. Snegur reproached the Jews that they refused to follow his national policy:

Once I was watching a TV programme “Today in Israel” (*Segodnya v Israile*). There was a fragment about Jews in Moldova. They showed a Jewish school. Children are trained in their native language. Everything was written in Russian on the blackboard, as well as in Hebrew. One could ask: why was in Russian, why was not in Romanian, or in Hebrew and Romanian, why only in Russian? Is it a step forward? (Снегур–Волков, 2007, 220).

One of the watchwords of that time reads: “Drive Russians beyond the Dniester, drown Jews in the Dniester” (*Russkikh – za Dniestr, evreev – v Dniestr*). Moreover, anti-Semitic sentiments spread among Moldavian nationalistic intelligentsia from Romania. One witness, who was living in Kishinev then, told me that there were no pogroms in Moldova then, although Jews were afraid of such actions. The activity of unionists forced some Jews to leave Moldova and move to Israel. *Aliya* of 1990–1992 data are presented here.

It is known that Jewish organizations evacuated Jewish refugees from the zone of conflict. Moldavian observers Yakov Kopansky and Vladimir Bruter wrote that 950 men were brought out to Israel in 1992 (Копанский, Брутер, [S. a.]). According to the information presented by JTA, it could be estimated that about 1200 persons were rescued and brought to Israel in 1992 (JTA eArchive, Aug. 5, 1992).

Political orientation of the Jewish community

It is worth presenting the classification of Moldavian political forces according to their approaches towards unification with Romania, although the factor became less important as Romania joined the European Union in 2007. The sociopolitical discussion of the nation's self-identification still continues in

Moldova. The right-wing representatives or unionists are in favor of unification with Romania, while the Moldavian communists are in the center of political spectrum. The communists tried to introduce the new ideology of *Moldovanism* against Romanization, presented by other political parties.

The communists won the election in 2001. Then the observers noticed that the Jews of Moldova supported the communists. The Jewish community is an elderly one. "All people including Jews", as stated by one of Kishinev Jews, "are sick and tired of the economic collapse and poverty, terrible unemployment". The observers claimed that elderly Jews, that is most of the community, "desired for increased social services, while young men voted for "pro-Western parties" (JTA eArchive, Feb. 28, 2001).

It could be traced that during the times when the communists were in power – from 2001 – 2009 – the amount of emigrants fell down from 961 in 2001 to 189 in 2008. The emigration to Israel also increased in 2009 after the unrest in Kishinev and political instability of 2009–2011 – 244 people in 2009, 236 in 2010 and 231 – in 2011.

According to international observers, the younger Jews voted for the right parties, while the majority of the community, which consists of middle-aged and elderly people, voted for the communists. It is not only voting against poverty, but also the support of the country's independence. During the communist rule of 2001–2009 mass emigration to Israel fell down and only increased after the unionists came to power in 2009. It is worth noticing that the Jewish community preferred a stable national regime to that of the unionists.

The Jewish scholarship

We assume that Jewish scholarship is considered to be an element of interethnic policy in Moldova. Several western observers have reported about that earlier (JTA eArchive, Sep. 19, 1994). The department for the study of Jewish history and culture of the Moldavian Academy of Sciences was established in July 1991 (Istoria succinta., 2009). The authorities paid much attention to the department's activity. It was an attempt to lessen the tension of inter-ethnic relations after the civil war and unrest of 1990–1992. International observers stated that there were several manifestations against Jews in the early 1990s.

The Jewish department of the Moldavian Academy of Sciences was headed by well-known Jewish–Moldavian scholars and community leaders – I. Levit, Y. Kopansky, and R. Kleyman³. The two main themes of the department's research were the history of Jews in Bessarabia and Russian Jewish contacts in the literature of Bessarabia and Moldavia.

The heads of the academic Jewish department were engaged in the formulation of the national policy. After the centre-leftists came to power in the mid-1990s (in 1996 Petru Luchinsky⁴ was elected President of Moldova), the Commission for Inter-Ethnic Affairs was established on December 16, 1997 (Decree No. 400). The Commission aimed "to provide assistance in fulfilling the policy in the field of interethnic relations and assuring the right of all citizens to have their own ethnic, cultural, language and religious identity". In such a way the authorities expressed their interests in the research conducted by the Jewish department. Y. Kopansky was a member of the Commission. Thus, academic institutions in Moldova have been involved in the dialogue between the authorities and the society.

The department has published several appreciated research works concerning the Jewish history of Bessarabia: e. g., archival records on Kishinev massacre of 1903, several works by Y. Kopansky, etc.

It is unique among the post-Soviet states that the Jewish scholarship is included into the state national policy.

There is a trend which characterizes the Jewish scholarship of the post-Soviet states in the 1990–2000s. It is the rise of independent, or better to say "virtual", academic centers. They are called "virtual" because they are non-academic institutions; they are not part of universities or academies. They aim at collecting financial support from the western sponsors for academic purposes. They might have no offices, telephones or other communication tools, but nevertheless they published books and journals and arranged conferences.

In 2011 a group of independent researchers founded the Institute for Jewish Studies in Moldova. The Institute issued the academic periodical *Sbornik nauchnykh trudov Instituta iudaiki* ("A collection of papers issued by the Institute for Jewish Studies")⁵.

So, after the disturbances of the early 1990s the authorities decided to pursue a tolerant policy towards the national minorities. The Jewish scholarship is an element of the state interethnic policy.

The Jewish education

In Kishinev there are two state establishments that provide secondary education: T. Herzl Technological Lyceum (school no. 22) and Rambam Lyceum (school no.15). The technological lyceum has about 400 pupils. It was established on 10 October 1991 and supported by *Lishkat ha-keshet*⁶. In 2000 ORT⁷ became a donor of the Lyceum no. 22 (according to the Agreement between Kishinev administration, the Consulate of the State of Israel and World ORT). The vocational training center was opened there in 2006.

Rambam Lyceum is a former Jewish secondary school which was established in 1992. The school is supported by CHABAD⁸. ORT is also actively engaged in the training program of Rambam Lyceum.

CHABAD also supports kindergarten, *kheder* and *yeshiva*, a seminary on teaching *shkhetim*⁹, and a teacher's seminary. In addition, there are eight Sunday extended-day programs across the country: three in Kishinev, and per one in Soroca, Balti, Rybnitsa, Bender, and Tiraspol (the last three are in Transdnistria). Thus, the system of Jewish education was created in the 1990–2000s.

The religious life

CHABAD has one active synagogue in Kishinev (*Chabad Lubavitch str.*, 8) and one in Tiraspol. Also, CHABAD has a *yeshiva* in Kishinev. According to various sources, another *yeshiva* there belongs to the Orthodox community “*Aggudat Yisrael*” (*Shchuseva str.*, 5), and it has been sponsored by the *Aggudat Yisrael* movement from the USA since 1991, although several sources inform that there is a synagogue there. Moreover, there are several synagogues across the country. Since 2012, a *beith-midrash* / synagogue of the community “*Khofetz Hayim*” has been operating (*București str.*, 31)¹⁰.

Observers recorded CHABAD contribution to the religious revival within the CIS countries, including Moldova. The movement has two synagogues, a kindergarten, a lyceum, a *yeshiva* and two seminaries. CHABAD community is led by Rav Zalman Abelski, who came to Kishinev in 1989¹¹. He has done the best he could for the Jewish religious revival. He organized *Lag baOmer* parades in Kishinev. He also initiated a campaign to rename one of the streets (the former Yakimovski lane to *Habad Lubavich street*).

An obvious tendency can be found in Moldavian Jewish life (this tendency cannot be observed in other post-Soviet states): local businessmen invest in the Jewish religious revival. One of these samples is *Beith-midrash* of “*Khofetz Hayim*” community mentioned above.

Small businessmen aged 35–40 actively participate in supporting the community and synagogues in the country. In December 2002 two Kishinev businessmen established the charitable foundation “*Dor le-Dor*”. The Foundation cleaned the Jewish cemetery in Kishinev, issued a regular newspaper “*Yevreyskoye mestechko*” (published from March 2003 till July 2012). The foundation continues to sponsor charitable projects all over the country.

This tendency started in the mid-2000s: in the early 2000s Moldavian expert V. Bruter noticed a low involvement of the local businesses in the Jewish life (Bruter, 2002).

During the expedition to North Moldova supported by Moscow Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization “*Sefer*” in summer 2012, in which I took part, it was found out that the involvement of small businesses in preserving the Jewish life is strong. We talked to the community leaders in Soroca. The synagogue there was built in 1989. There is a service on Saturday (*Shabbat*) in the synagogue, as well as on holidays. Soroca community leaders are about 40 years old. They have their own businesses. It is interesting that they did not take any part in any Jewish activities in the 1990s. It was their deliberate step towards Jewishness. Now they sponsor the Jewish community of Soroca and support the synagogue's service. These men speak Yiddish. They did not learn either Yiddish, or Hebrew before¹².

There are among 100 Jews (mostly from mixed Jewish families) living in Soroca now. These figures were provided by the community leaders, but according to the Moldovan population census of 2004, there are 64 Jews in Soroca.

The synagogue in Balti is a typical house rebuilt for a synagogue in 1989. The building was bought by a U.S. businessman from the Ukraine (Bel_012_030_Khodak; Bel_012_022_Grinberg). The Jewish leaders of Moldova said that the community there comprises 2600 Jews. According to the official census of 2004, there are 411 Jews in Balti municipality.

While interviewing the local people in Balti, the participants of the expedition to Moldova in 2011 found out that there is a Moldavian man, a physician, a respected person in Balti, who has been visiting Balti synagogue for a long time and intends to convert to Judaism. According to various evidences, rabbis neither in Kishinev nor in Odessa are satisfied with his decision. He continues to visit synagogue services, having no right to read the Torah (Bel_011_07_Khodak).

Big businesses are also involved in the life of Jewish community. In 2003 several businessmen established the Jewish Congress of Moldova. Since 2007 the leaders of the Congress have been controlling an older Jewish organization – Association of Jewish Communities and Organizations in the Republic of Moldova.

Thus, CHABAD made a great contribution to the religious revival in Kishinev, while in provinces the local businessmen support Jewish traditions. There is also a strong tendency in the modern Jewish community: local small businessmen are involved in various community projects, they support the Jewish religious life in the province, outside Kishinev. It can be stated that the local Moldavian population expresses interest in Judaism.

The Jewish cultural activity

Moldova seems to be the country where the Jewish community has chances of further development: local businessmen are interested in the involvement in the community life, whereas the state created conditions which could be characterized as a cultural autonomy. Moreover, small business is also involved in the community life, and even in its religious life. I can say that the Jewish life within Eastern European countries will be Jewish as long as the community supports Yiddish culture – the culture of this area (Шевелёв, 2009, 68).

In spite of a little amount of the Jewish population, there is evidence that the Jewish revival in Moldova will continue. The state and the community endeavor to support Yiddish. Books in Yiddish were published in Kishinev in the 2000s. They were the works by Yekhiel Shraybman. There are courses of Yiddish in Rambam Lyceum and in Kishinev Jewish Library. Also, the radio program in Yiddish *Yiddish lebn*¹³ is broadcast on Radio Moldova.

Several Jewish newspapers were issued in Moldova. Jewish Agency representative publishes the newspaper *Oliva*, more or less regularly. Since 1991 till probably 2004 the newspaper *Nash golos* was published rather irregularly. CHABAD had its own paper called *Istoki zhizni* (it was published until 2011). *Dor ledor* Foundation published the paper *Yevreyskoye mestechko* since 2003 till 2012, as was stated above. All the papers were closed because of lack of money.

In spite of the situation with the Jewish press, the Jewish cultural development is obvious, as long as the community supports Yiddish.

Contribution to the Jewish revival in Moldova, made by “Joint”

It is necessary to mention that the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) made a great contribution to the development of Jewish life in the CIS countries. “Joint” sponsored the biggest part of all the Jewish social and cultural activities there, or almost all of them, since 1989. On November 2, 1991, President Snegur agreed on opening AJJDC representative office in Moldova after his negotiation with AJJDC President Sylvia Hassenfeld. In 1992 “Joint” began to provide Moldova with humanitarian aid (Kopansky, Bruter [S. a.], Экономическое обозрение, 13.06.2008, no. 22; Еврейский новостной портал Молдовы..., 12.07.2007, 14.12.2007, 13.06.2008, 19.06.2008, 27.02.2009). In the early 1990s “Joint” assisted in evacuating refugees from the zone of conflict in Transnistria (see above). In 1993 AJJDC employee Amos Avgar suggested creating charitable centers.

Based on these community centers, which had been founded before, *Khesed*¹⁴ center was established in 1996. In 2003 the representative of AJJDC in Moldova initiated the program of food supply to children; the project was called “Let My Children Grow” (JTA eArchive, Apr. 22, 2003).

However, in the mid-2000s “Joint” activity in the CIS was criticized by the community leaders: several materials about it appeared in mass media (see, e. g.: Джойнт в СНГ..., 2008, Еврейский новостной портал Молдовы..., 12.07.2007). According to the information from various sources, the picture of events can be established. So, in the 1990s the Russian department of AJJDC was headed by two men – Asher Ostrin and Elli Malki. By 2000 those two persons took absolute power in their hands. They brought under their control “Joint” representatives across the FSU states, creating parallel Jewish organizations and dismissing unpopular community leaders in the early 2000s. In 2000 they paid their attention to the real estate in the FSU countries, buying it up. In this way the idea of big Community Houses appeared. Those who suggested the idea were going to combine all the Jewish institutions together. Building houses for Jewish organizations in the FSU, at the same time “Joint” became the owner of the new estate. “Joint” leased rooms to the Jewish organizations and received money from them. To carry out financial operations, the heads of the AJJDC CIS department established an offshore company called “AREC”. Three streams flowed via the company: firstly, money from sponsors and AJJDC; secondly, rent payments from Jewish organizations, and thirdly, profits from commercial firms that rented offices in the Community Houses”. As several observers believed, the US sponsors could not control that way of money circulation. Moreover, “Joint” staff could afford expensive things while working in the FSU.

In Kishinev the scheme looked like this, as we can understand from various sources. In 1999 President Luchinsky and mayor of Kishinev Serafim Urechean decided to give back the building of the former synagogue called “Wooden” (or “the Synagogue of Woodcutters”) at *Diordița str.*, 5. The building was bought at the price lower than the market price. “Joint” representatives negotiated with the community leaders who agreed to transfer the building of the old synagogue to “Joint”, supposedly to facilitate fundraising from western sponsors. In such a way “Joint” took a building in the center of the city. AJJDC reconstructed the building. Naturally, it increased the total cost of the building and area around it. The Community House was opened in 2005. “Joint” began to rent offices both to Jewish

organizations and commercial firms. Also, it was proposed to rent an office to the Moldavian Association of Jewish Communities, which was the owner of the old building. The community leaders insisted that "Joint" had promised to return the building to the community and rejected to pay the rent. At the same time, Moldavian businessmen established the Moldavian Jewish Congress, aiming to watch over the Jewish community. The case was brought to court. During the court trials in 2007–2009 "Joint" lost. It was forced to return a part of Kishinev Community House to the Association – a building of the old Wooden Synagogue.

Thus, there were two periods of the activities of AJJDC in the FSU states. The first one is from 1990 to 1998, when AJJDC was involved in building Jewish communities in the FSU, and the second one is from 1999, when the Russian department of AJJDC began its machinations with real estate and was involved in reshuffling Jewish organizations there. At the same time, in the late 2000s big Moldavian business returned control under the Jewish community.

The Messianic Jewish movement in Moldova

One interviewee in Balti in 2011 mentioned the activity of Messianic Jews there. He stated that he kicked a person who was visiting the meetings of the Messianic Jews in Balti out of the synagogue (the interviewee might mean "Jews for Jesus" mission) (Bel_011_07_Khodak). There is evidence of the Messianic movement activity. In 1997 the Government of Moldova approved the Regulations of the Union of Messianic Jews (The Governmental Act no. 822, dated Sep. 9, 1997). It is known that the Messianic Jewish movement was established by Joseph Rabinovitz in the early 1880s and was actively spread in Bessarabia¹⁵. In the early 1990s this movement appeared again.

There is no reference to the amount of followers of the Messianic Judaism in Moldova. The strongest community in the CIS is in Kiev (Ukraine), and it might reach approximately 1,000 members. It is known that there is also a big community in Moscow, which comprises 400 adherents (according to various data from the Internet, it seems that the figure is exaggerated). The Moldavian followers of Messianism do not form a strong community, since there are about 100 people there.

The Union of the Messianic Jews proclaims itself "the canonical successor of the Messianic community acted in Kishinev until 1940" (item 4 of the Regulations mentioned above). There is little information about the Union. It is not very active, contacted similar organizations in Romania. It is mentioned by UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion

or belief Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt in his Report of 27 January, 2012 (UN Document. A/HRC/19/60/Add.2, item 21). Probably, Kishinev Jewish Messianic Society "*Bnei Brit Khadasha*" is a part of the Union. The society in Kishinev has strong connections with the Ukrainian followers of the movement (Еврейский мессианский портал). The Union in Kishinev is not included into the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations and the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (see: <<http://umjc.org>> <<http://www.iamcs.org>>).

Conclusions

The article reveals the Jewish revival in the post-Soviet Moldova. It can be concluded that in spite of the decreasing Jewish population in Moldova in the early 1990s, the Jewish renaissance took place in the late 1990s and 2000s.

Moldavian elite proclaimed the rights for free development of all the nations, their languages and cultures starting from the mid-1990s. These rights were guaranteed by several legislative acts. The foundation of Jewish scholarship was an element of this state policy. A special department for the study of Jewish history and culture was opened within the Moldavian Academy of Sciences, as well as the Jewish state library and two Jewish schools were established. The foreign observers argue that all the governmental measures towards national minorities aimed to gain western support and investments. Nevertheless, it was a type of national cultural autonomy. This national policy was not changed after the Communists came to power in 2001, as well as after the victory of the unionists in the elections of 2009.

The state policy towards national minorities was adopted after the inter-ethnic clashes in the early 1990s. It is worth mentioning that Jews did not see themselves in new Greater Romania – some kind of a state-formation planned by ultra-nationalist forces. The conflict on the Dniester made Jews begin mass immigration to Israel. The peak of *aliya* was in 1991 – 15,452 people. The Jewish organizations helped evacuate Jewish refugees from the zone of conflict on the Dniester. It is estimated that about 1200 people from there were sent to Israel in 1992.

The article also studied political sentiments of the Jewish community. Moldovan Party of Communists presents centrism. The communists introduced a new ideology of *Moldovanism* in 2001–2009. It must be stated that there was a split inside the Jewish community: the younger Jews voted for the right parties, while the middle-aged and elderly people voted for the communists. It was not only the economic voting against poverty, as the foreign experts noted, but also the sup-

port of the country's independence. It has been found out that during the communist rule of 2001–2009 mass emigration to Israel fell down and increased after unionists came to power in 2009. It should be stated that Jewish community preferred a stable national policy rather than the rule of unionists.

It has been stated that CHABAD plays an important role in the Jewish life in the country, especially in its religious revival. CHABAD managed to establish a system of Jewish religious education, as well as to launch synagogues all across the country. CHABAD's significant role can also be explained by its charismatic leaders striving for the religious service.

There is a strong tendency in Moldavian Jewish religious life. No observer has paid attention to it. The fact is that the Jewish religious revival is supported by the local businessmen. Also, interest in Judaism is seen among the local Moldavian population.

Moldova seems to be the country, in which the Jewish community has possibilities of further development: local businessmen, either big or small, are interested in the involvement in the community's activity, while the state has created conditions that can be characterized as a cultural autonomy. The statement can also be proved by the Jewish cultural activity and community's support of Yiddish.

It has been stressed that AJJDC contributed significantly to the Jewish revival in Moldova in the 1990–2000s. There are two periods of "Joint" activity in the FSU states. The first one is from 1990 to 1998, while AJJDC was involved in building Jewish communities in the FSU, and the second period is the 2000s, when the Russian department of AJJDC came up with a number of real estate fraud schemes and was involved in shuffling Jewish organizations there.

The surprising evidence is the activity of Messianic Jews in Moldova. This movement began to spread in the country in the early 1990s. The Moldavian followers of Messianism are not a strong community, comprising about 100 people.

Thus, the contributing factors to the Jewish revival in Moldova can be listed here: they are the state policy that allowed creating cultural national autonomies, the activity of CHABAD, support of the community life provided by the local small businessmen, as well as the use of Yiddish.

Notes

¹ The lecture "The Jewish revival in Moldova in the 1990/2000s" was presented by the author for The Sixteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies on 31 July 2013 in Jerusalem. This article is a revised version of that presentation.

² *Aliya* is a Hebrew word meaning "immigration to Israel".

³ Levit Izyaslav Elikovich is a Moldavian Jewish his-

torian. He was born in 1922 in Kishinev. His academic interests include the history of the Holocaust and the history of the World War II. Professor Levit has been the deputy head of the Jewish Department in the Moldavian Academy of Sciences in the early 1990s. In 1994 he immigrated to the USA. Kopansky Yakov Mikhaylovich (1930–2006) was a Moldavian Jewish historian. His key papers were devoted to the history of Moldavia during the 1920s–1930s. Kleyman Rita Yakovlevna (1947–2008) was a Moldavian Jewish literary theorist and an activist of the Jewish movement. She headed the Jewish Department of the Moldavian Academy of Sciences in the 2000s.

⁴ Luchinsky Pyotr Kirillovich (Petru Lucinschi) was the second President of Moldova (1997–2001). He was born in 1940. Since early 1970s till 1991 occupied various posts in Moldavian Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He was a Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova in 1993–1997.

⁵ The review of the issues 1, 2, and 3 of the collection see: *Tsaytshrift*, Minsk-Vilnius, 2012, 7(2), *Tsaytshrift*, Minsk-Vilnius, 2013, 8(3).

⁶ *Lishkat ha-keshet* (The Liaison Bureau), also *Nativ* – the Israeli official organization founded in 1952 for maintaining contacts with Jews of the USSR and countries of the Soviet bloc. Today the organization holds the same functions, helped Jewish communities and encouraged emigration from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

⁷ ORT – Russian abbreviation of the words *Obshchestvo Remeslennogo Truda* (Association for the Promotion of Skilled Trades) – is a Jewish non-profitable organization for promoting education and training. ORT has its divisions all over the world.

⁸ CHABAD – a Hebrew abbreviation of three words – *khokhma* ('wisdom') *bina* ('understanding') *da'at* ('knowledge') is a Hasidic Jewish religious movement. Chabad-Lubavich actively entered in Jewish life in the CIS countries from 1991.

⁹ *Kheder* is a type of a Jewish religious elementary school. *Yeshiva* is a Jewish higher educational establishment. *Shkhetim* Hebrew word, plural of *shokhet*; *shokhet* is a man who practice a ritual slaughter.

¹⁰ A few evidences tell about the synagogue. Obviously, it was named in honor of Rabbi Chofetz Chayim (Yisroel Meir Ha-Koen), a leader of *Musar* movement. He was born in Grodno gubernia in 1838.

¹¹ Rav Zalman Abelski was born in 1927 in Moscow. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War his family escaped to Samarkand. Zalman Abelski was educated in underground yeshiva there. In 1946 yeshiva students escaped from the Soviet Union. In 1948 Rav Abelski was sent as CHABAD missionary to Romania. In the early 1950s to the 1980s he lived in Israel. He was sent to Moldavia in the late 1980s. Now he is a Chief Rabbi of Kishinev and Moldova (See: Карпенко, 2005).

¹² It is interesting to note that the house set up for spiritual service in Soroca is, probably, the only place across the former Soviet Union where there is a prayer for the USSR on the wall of the prayer room.

¹³ *Yiddish lebn* in Yiddish means "Jewish life".

¹⁴ *Khesed* in Hebrew means "benefaction", "mercy".

¹⁵ Joseph Rabinovitz's activity is studied in: KjaerHansen, 1994.

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Rezumat

În acest articol sunt analizate turnurile constituirii comunității evreiești din Moldova în anii 1990-2000. Bazându-se pe materialele de arhivă și observațiile personale, autorul articolului demonstrează ipoteza potrivit căreia, în această perioadă, în țară a luat avânt mișcarea de renaștere a evreilor. Autorul consideră că unii factori, printre care: politica statului de a crea autonomii culturale, dinamismul CHABAD-ului, participarea businessului mic și mijlociu în viața comunității din afara capitalei, dar însăși activitatea grupului – denotă perspective de existență durabilă a comunității evreiești în RM

Cuvinte-cheie: comunitatea evreiască din Moldova, autonomia culturală a evreilor, "Joint", CHABAD, viața religioasă, renaștere evreiască, iudaism mesianic.

Резюме

В статье рассмотрены некоторые аспекты строительства еврейской общины в Молдове в 1990–2000 гг. Исходя из архивных материалов и личных наблюдений, автор доказывает тезис о том, что в этот период в стране имело место еврейское возрождение. Автор считает, что некоторые факторы свидетельствуют о хороших перспективах дальнейшего существования еврейской общины в Молдове: политика центральной власти, создавшей национально-культурные автономии, активность ХАБАД, участие малого и среднего бизнеса в общественной жизни вне столицы, а также деятельность самой общины.

Ключевые слова: еврейская община Молдовы, еврейская национально-культурная автономия, «Джойнт», ХАБАД, религиозная жизнь, еврейское возрождение, мессианский иудаизм.

Summary

The article reveals several aspects, unknown before, of the Jewish life in Moldova in the 1990–2000s. Based on the records and personal observations, the author of the article proves that the Jewish renaissance took place in Moldova in the 1990–2000s. The author presents evidence in favor of good prospects of the Jewish community in Moldova: the state policy which allowed creating cultural national autonomies, the activity of CHABAD, support of the community life provided by the local small businessmen, as well as the use of Yiddish.

Key words: Jewish community of Moldova, Jewish national cultural autonomy, "Joint", CHABAD, religious life, Jewish renaissance, Messianic Jews.