

Jewish political parties in the focus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine during the second bolshevik occupation of Ukraine (january–august 1919): an analysis of Politburo minutes

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine the policy of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine toward Jewish political forces during the second Bolshevik occupation of Ukrainian territory (January–August 1919). **The methodology** is based on a comprehensive analysis of primary archival sources – the minutes of the Politburo of the CC CP(b)U meetings from April to August 1919. The chronological approach to the presentation of the material allows for a reconstruction of the evolution of the party leadership's policy toward Jewish parties and organisations. **The scientific novelty** of the work lies in the systematic introduction into scholarly circulation of previously little-known Politburo minutes of the CC CP(b)U, which enable the tracing of the internal dynamics of policy toward Jewish political forces. For the first time, the study comprehensively reveals the specific features of the Bolshevik version of internationalism in Ukraine under the conditions of War Communism in 1919. **The conclusions** establish that the policy of the CC CP(b)U toward Jewish political parties in 1919 aimed at their complete organizational integration into the CP(b)U without preserving autonomous national structures. The «Jewish vector» of Bolshevik policy in Ukraine in 1919 became not only a test of the strength of their internationalism but also a vivid example of how declared «ideological purity» came into conflict with the realities of armed struggle for power and mass violence. This policy initiated the process of dissolving left-wing Jewish parties (in particular, the Kombund and the left wing of Poalei Zion) into the CP(b)U, creating prerequisites for their full absorption in subsequent years and laying the groundwork for the «korenizatsiia» practice of the 1920s, when cultural autonomy was possible only under full political subordination to the party. At the same time, its rigidity complicated the legitimation of Soviet power among parts of the Jewish political forces, which, amid pogroms and instability, were forced to choose between dissolution, emigration, or underground activity.

Keywords: Jewish political parties, CC CP(b)U, Politburo, Kombund, Poalei Zion, internationalism, assimilation, second Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine, 1919.

Єврейські політичні партії у фокусі ЦК КП(б)У в період другої більшовицької окупації України (січень-серпень 1919 р.): аналіз протоколів Політбюро

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Анотація.

Мета роботи полягає в дослідженні політики Центрального комітету Комуністичної партії (більшовиків) України щодо єврейських політичних сил у період другої більшовицької окупації території України (січень-серпень 1919 р.). **Методологія дослідження** базується на комплексному аналізі первинних архівних джерел – протоколів засідань Політбюро ЦК КП(б)У за квітень-серпень 1919 р. Завдяки хронологічному методу у висвітленні теми, вдалося реконструювати еволюцію політики партійного керівництва у відношенні єврейських партій і організацій. **Наукова новизна** роботи полягає в системному введенні до наукового обігу маловідомих протоколів Політбюро ЦК КП(б)У, які дозволяють простежити внутрішню динаміку політики щодо єврейських політичних сил. Дослідження вперше комплексно показує специфіку більшовицької версії інтернаціоналізму в Україні в умовах воєнного комунізму в 1919 р. У **висновках** встановлено, що політика ЦК КП(б)У щодо єврейських політичних партій у 1919 р. була спрямована на їх повну організаційну інтеграцію в КП(б)У без збереження автономних національних структур. Єврейський вектор політики більшовиків в Україні 1919 р. став не лише тестом на міцність їхнього інтернаціоналізму, а й яскравим прикладом того, як задекларована «ідеологічна чистота» вступала в суперечність із реаліями збройної боротьби за владу. Ця політика започаткувала процес розчинення лівих єврейських партій (зокрема, Комфарбанду та лівого крила Поалей-Ціон) у КП(б)У, створивши передумови для їх поглинання в наступні роки та заклавши основу для практики «коренізації» 1920-х років, коли культурна автономія була можливою лише за умов повної політичної підпорядкованості партії. Водночас її жорсткість ускладнила легітимізацію радянської влади серед частини єврейських політичних сил, які в умовах погромів та нестабільності змушені були обирати між розчиненням, еміграцією чи підпіллям.

Ключові слова: єврейські політичні партії, ЦК КП(б)У, Політбюро, Комфарбанд, Поалей-Ціон, інтернаціоналізм, асиміляція, друга більшовицька окупація України, 1919 рік.

Statement of the Problem. The period of the second Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine (January-August 1919) ranks among the most dramatic yet insufficiently studied phases in the history of Soviet nationality policy on Ukrainian territory. It was precisely during these months – when the Bolsheviks were striving to consolidate control over lands previously held by the Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), only to face the subsequent advance of Denikin's forces – that the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (CC CP(b)U) found itself compelled to define its attitude toward the influential Jewish political forces operating in the region.

At that time, Jewish political organisations constituted a significant force within the urban environment of Ukraine. They maintained a well-developed network of cultural and educational institutions, a vibrant press, youth and labour organisations, and exercised considerable influence over the Jewish minority. Amid the revolution and widespread pogroms, this minority was desperately seeking protection and political representation at various levels.

The Analysis of Sources and Recent Research. To date, no independent study has been devoted specifically to Bolshevik policy toward Jewish political parties during the second Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine, a period when the communists managed to establish a foothold for a brief time and were not limited solely to terror, as had been the case in the winter of 1917–1918. Most existing works focus primarily on pogroms, certain aspects of the activities of Jewish parties and organisations, and the policy of the Ukrainian authorities toward Jews. Consequently, Bolshevik policy toward Jewish parties from January to August 1919 has been addressed only superficially in general studies and has not been fully elucidated.

The source base of this study consists primarily of materials from the Central State Archive of Public Associations and Ukrainika (TsDAHOU), in particular the minutes of Politburo meetings of the CC CP(b)U for April-August 1919 (fond 1, inventory «Special Sector», file «Minutes of Politburo Meetings of the CC CP(b)U»). These minutes enable a direct reconstruction of the internal discussions

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within the Bolshevik leadership concerning policy toward Jewish parties in Ukraine. Their value lies in their authenticity and the detailed recording of decisions, making them the foundation for a chronological analysis of the evolution of the «Jewish vector» in CP(b)U policy. Materials from the fond of Jewish political parties and organisations (TsDAHOU, f. 41, op. 1, d. 259 and 266) illustrate the activities of Zionist organisations in 1917–1920. Files held in the State Archive of Kyiv Oblast (DAKO, f. R-4241, op. 1, d. 1 and 2) shed light on the formation of cultural-historical societies and the intentions of Poalei Zion to adapt to Soviet power. Reports from the fonds of the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Administration of Ukraine (TsDAVO, f. 5, op. 1) document manifestations of antisemitism even within the ranks of the Red Army and local soviets. The 1919 Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR serves as an important legal source demonstrating the nature of Bolshevik nationality policy (Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR).

For many years, the Jewish social movement in Ukraine has been and remains the subject of research by both domestic and foreign historians. V. Ustymenko, who has long studied the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, demonstrates the declarative nature of the Bolshevik normative base, particularly in the early stages of establishing their power (Ustymenko, 2011). V. Husiev's monograph «Bund, Kombund, Evseksii KP(b)U: Their Place in the Political Life of Ukraine (1917–1921)» analyses the activities of the Evseksii and compares the activity of Jewish parties during the periods of the Ukrainian Central Rada, Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi's regime, the Directory, and the Bolshevik occupation government (Husiev, 1996). S. Hirik's article reveals the national-communist essence of the Jewish Party Poalei Zion following its split in August 1919 (Hirik, 2018). Repressions by the Bolsheviks against Zionists and relations with the Bund party were examined by V. Dotsenko (Dotsenko, 2018). The scholarly contribution of O. Naiman is arguably one of the most substantial in the historiography of Ukraine's Jewish minority. His candidate dissertation explores the activities of Jewish parties and associations in building national life in Ukraine during 1917–1925 (Naiman, 2000); however, Bolshevik policy in January-August 1919 is presented there only in general terms. Bolshevik ideology and Jewish political parties in Volhynia during 1918–1921 became the object of study by N. Rudnytska. The researcher addresses the split within the Bund and Poalei Zion in a regional dimension (Rudnytska, 2016). O. Shyshko illustrates the reaction of Soviet authorities in Odesa to Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms (Shyshko, 2019). V. Hrynevych and L. Hrynevych demonstrate that the mass emigration of Jews after 1920 was a direct consequence of War Communism policies in 1919 (Hrynevych, 2005). B. McGeever has analysed the role of international regiments of the Red Army in combating pogroms (McGeever, 2019).

The Purpose of the Research is to analyze the policy of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine toward Jewish political parties and organisations during the second Bolshevik occupation of Ukrainian territory from January to August 1919, as well as to identify the specific features of the Bolshevik strategy in addressing the «Jewish question» amid revolutionary events and widespread antisemitic sentiments.

The Results of the Research. During the second period of Bolshevik occupation of Ukraine (January-August 1919), as Soviet power sought to consolidate its hold over the territory of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the «Jewish question» emerged as one of the key elements of the internal policy pursued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (CC CP(b)U). This period was marked by intensive discussions within the Politburo of the CC CP(b)U, as recorded in the minutes of its meetings from April to August 1919.

Although antisemitism in the form of pogroms provided the backdrop to these discussions, the Politburo's focus lay not so much on the direct suppression of violence as on the integration of Jewish communists into the general structures of power and the dissolution of separate Jewish political organisations into the Bolshevik party. Analysis of the minutes reveals a consistent line adopted by the leadership of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (Ukrainian SSR), which acknowledged antisemitism as a counter-revolutionary phenomenon yet categorically rejected any special «national» measures that might be interpreted as a retreat from the class-based approach.

The façade of Soviet nationality policy in Ukraine at the beginning of 1919 is vividly illustrated by the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR, adopted at the Third All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in March 1919. Article 32 contains the provision: «The Ukrainian SSR, recognizing equal rights for the working people irrespective of their race and nationality, declares contrary to the fundamental laws of the Republic the establishment or perpetuation of any privileges on such grounds, as well as any oppression of national minorities or restriction of their equality of rights» (Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR). As V. Ustymenko notes, however, this provision remained purely declarative. At the congress, issues concerning national minorities were scarcely discussed, and the sole proposal by Novakivskiyi, a representative of the United Jewish Socialist Workers' Party, to establish a Commissariat for National Affairs was ignored by Christian Rakovsky, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the Ukrainian SSR, who declared: «We have done away with national distinctions; we have brought to the forefront of world history the great class distinction» (Ustymenko, 2011, p. 291). Within

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the CC CP(b)U, the dominant position was that of class internationalism, under which national questions were deemed secondary to the «global revolution».

Jewish political parties came under the attention of Soviet authorities at an early stage of their return to Ukraine. The Politburo minutes of 28 April 1919 record the first key decision: a categorical refusal to establish a People's Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (Evkom). Point 12 of the minutes states: «deem its establishment superfluous». This decision demonstrates that the Bolshevik leadership in Ukraine – unlike the Moscow center, where the Jewish Sections (Evseksii) of the CC RCP(b) had been created as early as 1918 – rejected any specialized national bodies for Jews, justifying this on the grounds of internationalist principles and the avoidance of «national deviation» (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, pp. 10–11).

This stance acquires additional context against the backdrop of Zionist organisations' activities in the preceding period. For instance, materials in the fond of Jewish political parties and organisations at TsDAHOU document the Zionists' negative attitude toward Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi's regime (TsDAHOU, f. 41, op. 1, d. 259, p. 8), while documents from the Uman Jewish Club attest to the unimpeded cultural and educational activities of Zionists throughout nearly the entire revolutionary period of 1917–1920 (TsDAHOU, f. 41, op. 1, d. 266, p. 22).

The mass antisemitic pogroms that accompanied the revolutionary events of 1919, claiming tens of thousands of Jewish lives, created a complex backdrop for Bolshevik policy toward Jewish political parties and organisations. In the minutes of 7 May, the Jewish question was discussed in the context of personnel purges within the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission (VUNK), where one of the points concerned a conflict between Martyn Latsis (head of the VUK, appointed by the Moscow leadership) and local members of the collegium, among whom were Jews. The Politburo, composed of A. Bubnov, V. Zatonsky, V. Meshcheryakov, G. Pyatakov and C. Rakovsky, emphasized that «the political line is determined by the Central Committee, not by separate national groups», in order to counter the notion of «Jewish dominance» in repressive organs – a trope frequently exploited by antisemitic propaganda (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, pp. 13–14).

Decisions on further steps to combat antisemitism are illustrated by the minutes of 30 May, particularly points 4–5. The Politburo approved a subsidy of 130,000 rubles to the All-Ukrainian Jewish Communist Union for agitation and propaganda needs. The meeting also adopted Andrei Bubnov's proposal for urgent measures: recruiting Ukrainians into leadership positions to break the stereotype of «Jewish power», dispatching Jewish communists to rank-and-file work in rural areas, and partially replacing Jews in senior positions with non-Jews. However, Georgy Pyatakov (at that time a member of the Politburo, not its head) dissented, submitting a written minority opinion on the same day. He argued that such measures constituted a «national deviation and tactical error that could intensify hostility rather than class solidarity». He insisted on the need for general systemic work without emphasis on ethnicity, proposing to dispel stereotypes through practical integration (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, pp. 21–22, 26–27).

Meanwhile, the radicalization of Jewish political parties was eroding their unity. In February 1919, the left wing of the Bund formed the Kombund, and in May a significant portion of the United Jewish Socialists joined the Kombund with the aim of «communizing the Jewish worker». Negotiations began on merging with the CP(b)U, and Jewish sections became the organizational form of work within Bolshevik committees. A part of the Bundists remained committed to social-democratic positions and continued to support the Directory (Rudnytska, 2016, p. 362).

In the summer of 1919, as the front line approached Kharkiv, the Soviet press reported on the arrival of refugees in Odesa. Assistance was provided through general state bodies without the creation of special Jewish structures. As of 5 June, more than 840 individuals had been accommodated in hotels and were being supplied by the social welfare department of the gubernia executive committee (Shyshko, 2019). Under such conditions, the Bolsheviks were compelled to rely on multinational «international» units (which included Jewish self-defense detachments and, at times, Chinese, Hungarian, and German fighters). These units often proved to be the only force capable of suppressing pogroms perpetrated by regular Soviet formations themselves (McGeever, 2019, pp. 176, 188).

On 6 June, the Politburo of the CC CP(b)U – consisting of C. Rakovsky (chairman), G. Petrovsky, E. Quiring, S. Kosior and Yu. Kotsiubynsky – firmly rejected the proposal to establish a «Jewish department within the People's Commissariat of Social Welfare», a special commission to aid pogrom victims. Instead, the People's Commissar of Social Welfare was merely instructed to report on the department's activities concerning victims of antisemitic violence (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 29).

Despite attempts by Jewish communist parties to draw closer to Bolshevik occupying authorities in Ukraine in 1919, CC CP(b)U leaders repeatedly rejected their initiatives. On 12 June, the Politburo decisively refused political cooperation with the Bund, prohibited the formation of separate Jewish military units, and stipulated that the mobilization of Jews should occur exclusively through the Jewish

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Section at the People's Commissariat of Military Affairs under Bolshevik control. At the same time, individual admission of members of the Communist Faction of the Bund (Kombund) into the CP(b)U was permitted through mixed commissions – i.e., on the condition of their complete dissolution into the party. This represented the most pragmatic approach: attracting left-wing Jewish elements while denying them any autonomy that might be interpreted as a «national deviation» (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 32).

In July, the topic receded into the background due to the military crisis on the front. The leadership of the Ukrainian SSR abandoned Kharkiv, which was occupied by White forces. During Politburo meetings of the CC CP(b)U, the Jewish question was largely ignored, with the main focus shifting to inspections of local authorities and financial matters (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 88).

Throughout 1919, the practice of establishing national sections at city and gubernia committees of the CP(b)U became widespread in party-building efforts – approximately thirty such sections, predominantly Jewish, Latvian and Polish (Ustymenko, 2011, p. 292). On occasion, the Bolsheviks permitted compromise solutions in the form of financial support, but without granting political autonomy. On 8 August the Politburo allocated 250,000 rubles to the Kombund at their request, yet deferred the question of forming Jewish sections to the center in Moscow for consideration (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 98 verso).

On 15 August, members of the Politburo approved the Orgburo's proposal for the merger of the Kombund with the CP(b)U. Regarding the absorption of Poalei Zion, a query was also sent to Moscow, while in the meantime the party was granted permission to conduct unrestricted cultural and educational work (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 110). Some members of Poalei Zion attempted to adapt to Bolshevik occupation at an early stage. In Poalei Zion periodicals, slogans such as «it is not the time to criticize Soviet power» appeared, along with calls to establish «Jewish soviets» (late May 1919), but the Politburo rejected such demands, perceiving them as nationalist emphases (DAKO, f. R-4241, op. 1, d. 2, p. 3 verso).

On 24 August (minutes No. 45), the Politburo of the CC CP(b)U instructed Stanislav Kosior and Abram Kheifets (a Bund member who later joined the RCP(b)) to urgently draft a plan for the merger of the Kombund (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 122). Naturally, the process of liquidating the Kombund's autonomy formed part of the broader Bolshevik monopolization of power within the Jewish political environment. In parallel, the Bolsheviks launched a systematic offensive against Zionist parties. In June, the CC CP(b)U petitioned for a complete ban on Zionist activities; in July, mass arrests took place in Kyiv, and the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) of the Ukrainian SSR issued a circular ordering the closure of Zionist organisations and Tarbut schools. Hebrew was treated as a «reactionary» language in contrast to Yiddish, while cultural institutions (such as the Kultur-Liga) were nationalized under communist control. It is also worth highlighting the role of former Jewish socialists in these repressions: having switched to the Bolsheviks, they employed their knowledge and experience against their own community (Dotsenko, 2018, pp. 3–4).

The Politburo's final decision on Poalei Zion was taken on 25 August (minutes No. 47). Financial support was denied, and the decision was made to liquidate its accounting department. Political contact was to be maintained only underground, while some cadres were to be seconded to the Bolshevik press. This occurred amid the split within Poalei Zion in August 1919, which led to the formation of the Jewish Communist Party (Poalei Zion) – JCP(PZ) (TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 6, d. 1, p. 128).

This split was formalized at the Gomel Conference of the radical left wing of Poalei Zion, which retreated northward with the Red Army. The conference (August 1919) outlined the ideological positions of the new party. Leaders of the JCP(PZ) proposed «personal» national autonomy as the primary form in a socialist society (in opposition to territorial autonomy). They advocated decentralization of cultural creativity alongside centralization of the economy. Even the Zionist idea was reinterpreted in the form of agrarianization of Jews in the diaspora as preparation for relocation to Palestine, with the possibility of forming «Jewish red legions» there. It was precisely such proposals (Jewish sections, soviets, autonomous bodies) that the Politburo of the CC CP(b)U consistently rejected throughout the period as a threat to internationalism (Hirik, 2018, p. 61).

The Evseksii, which were ultimately established at party committees of the CP(b)U, aimed at active propaganda of communist ideology among the Jewish population but were later dissolved due to their detachment from general party life. By the beginning of 1921, under Bolshevik pressure, the left-wing Jewish political parties were compelled to join the CP(b)U and the Evseksii (Husiev, 1996, p. 83).

Conclusions. The policy of the CC CP(b)U in 1919 toward Jewish political parties was directed toward their complete organizational integration into the CP(b)U without the preservation of autonomous national structures. This approach reflected not only the ideological stance of the Bolshevik leadership but also a pragmatic response to the realities of revolution, military conflict, and the imperative to avoid any steps that might be interpreted as «Jewish protectionism» or a national deviation. In this sense, the position of Georgy Pyatakov – who insisted on rejecting any national

emphases – became dominant in the practical policy of the Politburo and defined the specific character of the Bolshevik approach to the national question under the conditions of 1919.

This policy had fundamentally important long-term consequences. It initiated the process of organizational dissolution of left-wing Jewish parties (in particular, the Kombund and the left wing of Poalei Zion) into the CP(b)U, creating the preconditions for their full absorption in the following years and laying the groundwork for the «korenizatsiia» (indigenization) practices of the 1920s, when any form of cultural autonomy was possible only under conditions of complete political subordination to the party. At the same time, the rigidity of the internationalist approach in 1919 became one of the factors that complicated the legitimation of Soviet power among a significant portion of Jewish political forces. Amid pogroms and political instability, these forces were compelled to choose between dissolution, emigration, or underground activity.

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Rural medicine in the Podillia governorate under the conditions of the new economic policy (1921–1925)

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Abstract.

The aim of the article is to reconstruct, based on archival materials, a holistic picture of the functioning of the medical sector in a Podillia village in the 1920s, to identify the specifics of regional challenges and the effectiveness of the Soviet health care model in overcoming the consequences of the humanitarian crisis in the Podillia region. **Research methodology.** The research was based on the principles of historicism and objectivity, as well as general scientific (analysis, synthesis, logical, generalization), special methods of historical science (historical-comparative, problem-chronological, historical-systemic, historical-legal, historical-genetic). The objective and comprehensive coverage of the problem was facilitated by a historical-anthropological approach based on the study of medicine not simply as a system of institutions, but as the experience of survival of a particular person in conditions of socio-political changes. **The scientific novelty** of the study lies in the use of archival materials that allowed us to recreate the real state of rural medicine in Podillya against the background of the formation of a new structure of medical care in the countryside, as well as in carrying out a holistic analysis of the functioning of the medical sector of the region in close connection with the socio-economic processes of that time. **Conclusions.** The beginning of the 1920s was a time of contradictory restoration of medicine in the Podillya countryside from complete decline after the First World War and the Civil War to attempts to build a system of “socialist health care”. It can be stated that this period was characterized by a paradoxical combination: on the one hand, the ideologisation of medicine and a chronic shortage of resources, on the other, the laying of the foundation for systematic methods of combating epidemics and the formation of preventive medicine, which saved thousands of lives. However, success was achieved not so much due to new treatment methods, but rather due to strict administrative measures: mandatory vaccination, the deployment of isolation wards and mass sanitary propaganda. Carrying out sanitary and educational work allowed to stabilize the epidemiological situation, but at the same time turned medicine into an instrument of ideological control over the Podillia village. The modernization of rural medicine in the region took place in conditions of an acute shortage of personnel, medicines and equipment and was based on the enthusiasm of doctors, the remnants of the old material base and partly the assistance of international organizations. Despite the declarative freeness, in the early 1920s. there was a transition from state maintenance of medical institutions to strict self-financing and decentralization of financing. The transition to the local budget allowed to improve the situation of medical and pharmacy business, but it hit the village hard, since the peasants did not have the funds to maintain hospitals. In general, there was a gap between the propaganda slogans about the “best Soviet healthcare” and the real state of rural medicine.

Keywords: epidemiological situation, medical network, medical staff, sanitary condition, rural medicine, healthcare, Podillia.