



# Press Release

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## Special Issue on the Khmelnytsky Uprising and the Jewish Massacres

A special issue of the University of Haifa-based journal *Jewish History* (vol. 17, no. 2 [2003]), entitled "Gezeirot Ta" h Jews, Cossacks, Poles and Peasants in 1648 Ukraine" has just been published. The seven articles in the volume were developed from the international conference on this topic held at Bar-Ilan University in 1998. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) research associates assisted in the planning of the conference, including inviting scholars from Ukraine. The papers selected for the special issue represent a major breakthrough in discussion and research on this topic. The editors of the volume, Kenneth Stow and Adam Teller of University of Haifa draw attention to the search for objectivity in the papers and to the importance of examining the events in comparative ways, taking into account the broader context and the varying Jewish, Ukrainian, and Polish perspectives. The special issue contains new maps of Jewish settlements in Ukraine by Shaul Stampfer of Hebrew University. It should be noted that Dr. Stampfer takes what he calls "the excellent *Map and Gazetteer of Ukraine* " from the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* as the source for the transliteration of Ukrainian place-names.

The first article in the collection is an account of the events of the Khmelnytsky Uprising and an examination of its typology and etiology by Frank Sysyn of CIUS, the University of Alberta. Dr. Sysyn also places the Jewish massacres in the context of the uprising. In his article, Dr. Zenon Kohut of CIUS examines the image of Jews in Ukrainian history writing and folklore down to the beginning of the nineteenth century. He posits new theories as to why the Jewish theme became so important in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The contributions by specialists in Ukrainian studies also include the noted Kyiv scholar Dr. Natalia Yakovenko's discussion of motifs such as "war of mercenaries" and topoi such as "the purification of the land" and the "syndrome of the overturned world" as shaping all accounts of the events of the time.

Dr. Gershon Bacon of Bar-Ilan University examines the depiction of the events in general histories of the Jews. He shows how fully one work, the seventeenth-century account *Abyss of Despair* by Nathan Hannover, shaped later writings. He sees this influence as having only been questioned in the most recent works. In his contribution, Dr. Stampfer tackles the difficult question of the Jewish population in Ukraine and the number of victims. His innovative methods even includes estimating the number of worshippers that could be accommodated in synagogues. His findings of about 18,000 to 20,000 victims are far smaller than those used in much of the scholarly literature. Dr. Judith Kalik of Hebrew University deals with the various Christian churches' complex relations with the Jews. She outlines the economic relations between Jewish leaseholders and

Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies  
Канадський Інститут Українських Студій  
Institut Canadien d'Etudes Ukrainiennes

the various churches and clergy that resulted in both conflict and cooperation. Dr. Moshe Rosman of Bar-Ilan University demonstrates the rapid revival of the Dubno Jewish community after 1648. His in-depth study of court cases that arose among the towns' inhabitants shows how quickly old patterns were restored in territories reconquered by the Poles and undermines the view that 1648 was a turning point in Jewish economic activities.

In general the volume breaks new ground and points to many new lines of research. It shows the fruitfulness of the co-operation between scholars in Ukrainian and Jewish studies that dates back to the CIUS-sponsored conference in 1983, published as Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj, *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective* (CIUS Press, 1988), with contributions on this topic by Drs. Shmuel Ettinger, Jaroslaw Pelenski and Frank Sysyn. The topic has also been treated recently by CIUS research associate Serhii Ploky in his monograph, *Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (Oxford University Press, 2001), in which he publishes his presentation from the conference. In addition, the publication of volume 8 of Mykhailo Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus': The Cossack Age, 1626-1650*, trans. Marta Daria Olynyk, ed. Frank E. Sysyn with the assistance of Myroslav Yurkevich ( CIUS Press, 2002) has made the writings on this topic of the major Ukrainian historian available, along with commentaries on his treatment of the Jewish question and bibliographic information on the subsequent literature. All this new literature portends new thinking that should eventually have an impact on general and popular writings on this subject.

Dr. Frank Sysyn