

Josef Zisels (Ukraine, Euro-Asian Jewish Congress)

Pain of Every Nation Must Be the Pain of All Humankind
(Report at the Education Section of the OSCE Conference for Anti-
Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance)

The main striving and purpose of all countries and nations in the new century should become the victory of charity, law, and justice over hatred and enmity, terrorism and war. The 90th anniversary of the tragedy of the Armenians in the Osman Empire made obvious the most important lesson of history: should the world then, 90 years ago, have paid attention to this tragedy and shown no indifference to the fate of the Armenians, many other genocides and tragedies of other nations would have been prevented. There would have been no terrible Famine in the 1930s in Ukraine, no Holocaust in the Second World War, because the world would have already begun to respond to such crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, it did not happen.

It is immoral to compare tragedies. They cannot be measured; they have no superiority. It is incorrect, in regards to oneself, to one's own and other nations. Every tragedy is a non-healing wound, and we must not compare our wounds. We must fight together in order to prevent the repetition of such tragedies. Impunity inspires more impunity. And then the scoundrel in power or striving for power begin to speculate in xenophobia, kindling ethnic enmity, clashing nations and leading them away from the solution of the burning economic and political problems.

The international public should monitor at different levels and strictly warn the government that such actions will lead the country and its authorities outside the civilized world. The events in Yugoslavia, maybe not very simple to understand, showed that the world can sometimes take sanctions against the governments that are carrying out genocide against their own people.

Work at the human level is of extreme importance and highest priority for public organizations. In implementing the programs aimed at the training of ethnic and religious tolerance, we in Ukraine teach the young people to take a person of a different nationality or religion as a morally equal one. This forms the most important spiritual and behavioral values now, preventing the authorities to manipulate the minds of their citizens or incite ethnic aggressions in the future.

On January 27, 2005, events took place in Europe devoted to the 60th anniversary of liberation of the prisoners of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp and timed to the European Memory of the Holocaust Day. The main events took place in Krakow and Auschwitz, Poland. President Victor Yuschenko, son of that camp's prisoner №11 367, who led the Ukrainian delegation, spoke of the terrible crime against humankind, "when hundreds of thousands of people died only for being Jewish or, like the blood brothers of my father, for defending people from Nazism". He stressed that some terrible tragedies of the 20th century took place in the land of Ukraine: Famine and Holocaust claimed the lives of millions. Therefore, "Ukraine remembers what threat intolerance, violence, and aggression pose" to us, he added. He also promised to "always defend the highest human values: respect to other men, freedom, and democracy. There will be no xenophobia or anti-Semitism in any form in Ukraine", he said.

On April 7, within the framework of his visit to the United States, Yushchenko visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington. After the visit, the president of Ukraine noted that "credit must be give to this Museum for preserving unique memory, great philosophical moral, and a warning to our descendants". "I often think of the similarities between the dramatic and tragic fates of the Ukrainian and Jewish nations. We have a very close historical parallel - the Famine of 1932-1933, which claimed the lives of 10 million Ukrainians (I use this term to describe all the residents of Ukraine at that time), and the Holocaust which led to the extermination of one third of the nation. Therefore, it is extremely important both for the Jewish and Ukrainian peoples to preserve their historical memory. We speak not so much of common tragedies, but of common values", said Yushchenko.

These words showed that the new Ukrainian leadership attach great meaning to the preservation of historical memory and fighting xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

Teaching and Study of the History of the Holocaust and Problems of Tolerance in Modern Ukraine

In January 2000, Ukraine signed the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on assisting in the study and teaching of the history of the Holocaust, formation of the atmosphere of tolerance in the society. Over the years that passed after the war, the Jewish community of Ukraine and Ukraine as a sovereign state on the whole pay a lot of attention to the study of the problems of the Holocaust, its historical, sociological, psychological, philosophical, and religious aspects.

In the past 15 years, Ukrainian historiography on the Holocaust problems has formed. It includes hundreds of publications, articles, dozens of monographs, collections of archive documents, testimonies of eyewitnesses, and translations. Scientists - historians, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, culturologists of the History Institute of Ukraine, the Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, and the Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine - are involved in serious *academic research of the history of the Holocaust* in the Ukrainian lands today. In a whole number of universities that have newest history departments, students and professors research this topic, write diploma projects on the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine (for example, the National and Pedagogical Universities in Kiev, Lviv, Chernovtsy, Dnepropetrovsk, Volyn, and Odessa).

In Kharkov and Lviv, there are *Centers for the Study of the Holocaust* that are sponsored by the Jewish communal and public structures and organizations. Since 2002, research and teaching activities on this topic in Ukraine are coordinated by the Ukrainian *Center for the Study of the History of the Holocaust* that was set up under the Insititute of Political and Ethnic Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. The Center publishes a scientific journal on the history of the Holocaust - «Holocaust: Contemporary Research. Studies in Ukraine and the World» and places materials on the problems in the study of the Holocaust in today's Ukraine on its official website (www.holocaust.kiev.ua).

Since 2000, the *Central Ukrainian Fund for the History of the Holocaust "Tkumah"* ("Revival") has been working in Dnepropetrovsk. It does a lot of productive work in this area.

Teaching of the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine. On December 29, 2000, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine published an instructive letter "On the Teaching of the Problem of the Holocaust and Forming of the Feeling of Ethnic and National Accord with Students". The document recommended the teaching of the history of the Holocaust, study

courses aimed at the formation of tolerance for upperclassmen of history and other humanities departments, including such subjects as «Holocaust» and «Tolerance» as part of the social subjects and humanities, assistance in creation of centers for the study and teaching of the Holocaust in Ukraine and holding of seminars and conferences on the subject of the Holocaust and tolerance for university students and teachers.

Today, the "Holocaust" course is taught in 20 universities of the country, including the Kiev-based International Solomon University and its Kharkov branch. Among non-Jewish universities, it is taught at the history department of the Zaporozhye State University, the Kiev National Dragomanov Pedagogical University, the Kiev Medical University, the Lviv National University "Lviv Polytechnic", the Kiev Grinchenko Pedagogical University (at the extension courses), at the Dnepropetrovsk Institute of Education (at the extension courses) *for all groups of teachers* throughout the school year. Periodically, lectures on this subject are taught at several dozens universities in Rovno, Vinnitsa, Chernovtsy, Zaporozhye, and other cities.

Since 2003, *the Ukrainian Center for the Study of the History of the Holocaust* has been involved in work with students, organizing scientific student schools, seminars for university lecturers and students, student competitions and conferences.

Teaching in secondary schools. Seven years ago, in 1998, the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine introduced the subject of the Holocaust into the course of world history and the history of Ukraine.

The current government-approved curricula on history for secondary schools of Ukraine envisages the study of the subject of the "Holocaust" as part of the study of the history of Ukraine and the world history (in the "Second World War" section). In keeping with this document, the subject of the "Holocaust" can be taught in a special lesson or just mentioned in the study of other materials; the question on the "Holocaust" should be put on the list of examination questions for high school graduates; study materials on the history of the Holocaust can be included into textbooks and study manuals on the history of Ukraine and world history; the topic of "Holocaust" should be made part of the teachers' extension course programs.

The question of the "Holocaust" is mandatory for the study of history, therefore it is going to be introduced in 100% of schools. Nevertheless, the nature and the time allocated for its study are not regulated, so teachers can determine them on their own.

With the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Scientific-Methodical Center of the Ministry, teachers widely discuss the question of introduction of a separate study course on the problems of tolerance into the school curricula.

In the middle of the 1990s (1996-1997), Jewish public educational organizations of Ukraine (*the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities (Vaad) of Ukraine, the Center of Jewish Education of Ukraine*, with the support of "Joint" and others) began to hold all-Ukrainian study-and-methodological seminars on the history of the Holocaust for history teachers of non-Jewish schools of the regional centers and small towns of Ukraine. In 2000, the Center of Jewish Education launched a large project on the "*Lessons of the Holocaust*", including methodological seminars for teachers (around 80-100 participants in every seminar) and creative competitions for schoolchildren. Dozens of seminars and five children's competitions have take place up to this point. Since 2002, this work (as well as student and scientific direction) has been coordinated by the Ukrainian Center for the Study of the History of the Holocaust.

The "Tkumah" Center, jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and regional institutes of post-graduate pedagogical studies organized a system of seminars in every region of Ukraine and joint international events in Belarus, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Russia, and other countries.

Workers of the "Tkumah" Center created study programs and films that help towards the spreading of knowledge of the history, traditions of the Jewish people, and similarities of the historical destinies of the nations of Ukraine.

Holocaust and problems of tolerance. After the resolutions of the Council of Europe in 1995 and the first Stockholm conference in 2000, many European countries changed the concept of their approach to the Holocaust. They began to study and teach this topic not only as a tragedy of the European Jews but also as an example of the terrible ethnic intolerance that has led to the total genocide of a whole nation for its ethnic origin. They began to see the Holocaust as an example of intolerance that has led to the genocide which is never to repeat itself not only towards the Jewish people but also to other nations. Thus, from a tragic page in the history of the Jewish people, the history of the Holocaust has grown into a tragedy and problem common to all mankind.

This has been the context of many seminars and trainings related to the topic of the "Holocaust" that have taken place in the past five years, for instance, "Tolerance - Lessons of the Holocaust" or "Study of the Problem of Intolerance on the Example of the History of the Holocaust".

Project "Lessons of the Holocaust" in non-Jewish schools of Ukraine is being carried out by the Center of Jewish Education of Ukraine since 2000 with the support of the Claims Conference. In 2000-2003, seven study-and-methodological seminars were organized within its framework for schoolteachers of the city of Kiev, as well as the Kiev, Kharkov, Sumy, and Nikolayev regions and the Republic of Crimea. Around 300 teachers attended these seminars. At the same time, seminars were also organized for upperclassmen of historical departments of the universities of Kiev. Around 100 students attended these seminars. What's more important, is the parallel comparison of the tragedy of the Jewish nation with the tragedies of those nations among which the Jews are dwelling, for example, the Famine in Ukraine, the Armenian tragedy, the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, etc.

In 2001, teachers of the Center of Jewish Education of Ukraine organized a course of lectures on the Jewish history and the history of the Holocaust for students of non-Jewish schools. Students could listen to the lectures at the Israeli Cultural Center in Kiev. In three years, around 200 students listened to these lectures.

Around 300 high school students took part in the annual all-Ukraine competitions of creative and research works on the Holocaust. Their winners get the right to take part in international youth conferences on the history of the Holocaust.

In the process of preparation of their research works, the participants in these competitions have round-table discussions, conferences, open lessons on the Holocaust, and tours; they look for eyewitnesses of the crimes during the Second World War and the Righteous Gentiles; they interview the witnesses, find the sites of massacres and burials, and erect memorial signs there. Children's reflections are expressed in the form of poems, stories, pictures, and slogans.

In June 2002, the *International School of Teachers of the History of the Holocaust* took place. More than 70 teachers from the CIS countries took part in it. The School was organized by the *Euro-Asian Jewish Congress*, the *Center of Jewish Education of Ukraine*, the *Russian*

"Holocaust" Foundation, and the Yad VaShem Institute with the support of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine.

An important event in the development of ethnic dialogue, mutual understanding and exchange of experience in the training of tolerance among the youth was the International Pedagogical Conference organized by the "Tkumah" Center in Kiev on February 14-16, 2005, with the support of the "Task Force". Teachers from every region of Ukraine as well as Great Britain, Israel, and Lithuania highly appreciated the meaning of the Conference for the further implementation of the ideas of humanism and tolerance in the teaching process.

The logical follow-up and the deepening of the "Lessons of the Holocaust for Non-Jewish Schools of Ukraine" became the program of the *Euro-Asian Jewish Congress "Tolerance - Lessons of the Holocaust"*, which was directed at the bringing up tolerance through the prism of history and the lessons of the Holocaust. Since 2002, study-and-methodological seminars were organized for teachers of non-Jewish schools and university students in Armenia (50 participants), Belarus (50), Georgia (30), Kazakhstan (two seminars: 140), Kyrgyzstan (30), Moldova (50), and Uzbekistan (70). More than 500 people from the above mentioned seven countries were involved in the seminars. Competitions of student's creative and research works on the Holocaust became annual in Belarus and Georgia. More than 200 students have already participated in them. Teachers in these countries receive help from the methodologists of Ukraine in organization of such seminars, especially in teaching the participants of seminars on the history and the tragedies of people in the countries where the seminars are organized.

One of the striking instances of bringing up tolerance on the example of the Jewish tragedy was the international project «*Anna Frank - History Lesson*», which has been carried out in Ukraine for the third time now. It was initiated and financed by the government of the Netherlands and sponsored by the well-known Museum "House of Anna Frank" in Amsterdam and the Anna Frank Center in Germany. On the part of Ukraine, the following organizations became partners in this project: *the Center of Jewish Education of Ukraine (Kiev), the Association of Teachers of Humanities "Nova Doba" (Lviv), the Ukrainian Center for the Study of the History of the Holocaust (Kiev), the Jewish Studies Institute (Kiev), and the Jewish Fund of Ukraine (Kiev)*. The project is part of the mobile exhibition "Dairy of Anna Frank" organized in 13 cities of the country, teachers' training seminars, training of children as guides, a competition of students' creative works on the subject of "Ethnic Minorities in the Modern Ukrainian Society", school competitions, publication of literature on Holocaust and tolerance.

More than 400 teachers have already taken part in the project, and more than 400 students have taken part in the competitions.

The "Tkumah" Center has developed the program «*Tolerance and Accord: Lessons of the Holocaust and Famine - Memory of History for the Sake of the Future*». The objective of the program is to form an atmosphere of ethnic accord and tolerance in the Ukrainian society, to preserve historical memory and realization of the need to strengthen democracy, independence, and unity of Ukraine on its basis.

Implementation of the declared goals and tasks is implemented through the system of interconnected programs and projects. In particular, we should note the successful work of the "*School of International Communication*", which includes meetings of leaders and members of national societies, seminars on the history, culture, and traditions of different nations.

On the whole, in today's Ukraine the topic of the Holocaust is studied (literature publication, scientific, research, teaching, and

memorial work) by the Ukrainian Center for the Study of the History of the Holocaust, the Vaad of Ukraine, the Jewish Studies Institute, the "Tkumah" Center, and other non-governmental organizations. Lately, they've received support from the government-run structures and independent charity funds of Holland, Austria, Germany, Israel, Sweden, and the USA. With the support of these organizations, tours and expeditions are organized, as well as youth camps, whose participants visit those places in Ukraine that are related to the Jewish history and culture, as well as with the history of the Holocaust.

Pilot Project - international children's camp "Sources of Tolerance". An effective means of bringing up international tolerance and opposition to xenophobia and anti-Semitism is the *international children's camp "Sources of Tolerance"* that was first organized in 2002 by the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine with the support of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, the Vaad of Ukraine, the State Committee of Ukraine for Nationalities and Migration, and the Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs of Ukraine, as well as some political blocs and parties (in 2004 - Victor Yushenko's bloc "Our Ukraine").

Children represent 16-17 national communities of Ukraine (Armenians, Crimean Tatars, Romanians, Jews, Hungarians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Poles, Lithuanians, Tatars, Russians, Germans, Moldovans, Belarussians, and a group of Ukrainian kids) plunge into the atmosphere of ethnic life, customs, language, music, and dances, study national handicraft, and eat national foods. Personal familiarization with representatives of other nationalities help them identify themselves, personalize their feelings, overcome the existing stereotypes towards other nations, lower the level of indifference, aggression, and even fear, and establish friendly relations with representatives of different ethnic groups.

Since 2002, there have been three camps like that (two in Trans-Carpathians and one last year, at the seaside, in Odessa). More than 420 children from Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus have so far been to the camps.

Leaders/teachers of national groups can attend seminars with the participation of psychologists, historians, leading specialists in international issues. Over the past three years, six seminars like that have been organized for teachers; more than 60 teachers have been trained to work according to a special program of international camps of tolerance.

The concept of the camp and its practical results have been highly appreciated by public organizations of ethnic minorities, ethnic political scientists, ethnic psychologists, and foreign experts; they received wide coverage in the Ukrainian mass media and in the press of ethnic minorities.

A network of such camps will be created in different regions of Ukraine.

As the logical continuation of the summer camps, the "Club of Tolerance" was opened in Kiev on November 26, 2004. Its objective is a long-term program of forming national self-identification and an active position of teenagers, bringing up national youth leaders, formation of the skills of a civic society and first of all - tolerance. Among the working topics of the club are: "History of Countries, Nations, and Religions", "Ethnic Culture and Folk Traditions", "School of Young Counselors for "Sources of Tolerance" Camp", "Psychology and Ethnic Psychology of Teenagers", debates, and training sessions.

The club works in the form of Saturday meetings within the framework of the program. On top of that, children meet with people whose life and civil positions are of public interest; they work in groups.

The long-term program of the club is to create similar clubs in Odessa, Lviv, Simferopol, Kharkov, and Mariupol.

Our task is to form the realization of the fact that the Holocaust is not a Jewish problem but a terrible example of genocide, of what intolerance can lead to. We want to bring up tolerance and preserve the variety of this world.

God created all of us to be different by character, temperament, and nationality. The fact that God created us to be different does not mean that some of us are better than others. In reality, God is very wise. God created a beautiful various world. And our task is to preserve this variety. To convince our children that every person is equal to them; that none has superiority over them or they - over anybody else.

Receive others as they are, with their traditions, customs, temperaments, moods, and characters. Receive the pain of every nation as the pain of the whole humankind. Actually these are the principles of any democratic future.