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THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF ARCHIVES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF MODERN UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the role that archives played in the process of state and national building in Ukraine at the end of 20th – at the beginning of the 21st centuries. The crucial moment in the modern history of our country – proclamation of the Ukrainian independence in 1991 – was closely connected with democratization of society and liberalization of memory policy as well as access to archives. New democratic organization of the Ukrainian nation guarantees the right to information. Thousands of archival files were declassified and became available not only for scientific research but also for wider use. There is an accent on the importance of free access and openness of archives of totalitarian regimes' repressive institutions. In this respect particular attention is paid to the analysis of the Law of Ukraine "On Access to the Archives of Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917–1991" (2015).

Archives are the essential sources of collective memory which represent a multifaced nature of the historical development of the state, nation, and society. Furthermore, they give an opportunity to preserve and reproduce the images of different epochs, trace peoples' fates.

The transformation of society set new challenges for the Ukrainian archival community. The role of archivists evolved from the custodians of the records to mediators between their institutions and society. It has been pointed out that modern technology in archiving open up new possibilities for democratization in communication and free dissemination of information. Nowadays, the establishment of the databases for archival documents, preparation of on-line documentary exhibitions as well as support of public relations is among the main activities of archivists. Ukrainian archivists made significant contribution to the collection and preservation of documentary evidence of the Orange Revolution (2004–2005) and Revolution of Dignity (2014). It should be emphasized that social responsibility of archivists is growing, particularly in open democratic society, because they have to satisfy the right to know, to access to information as well as to protect state security and personal rights of citizens.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that archivist is an extremely important, noble and always relevant profession, designed to keep and update the documentary evidence of the past in the modern world for the sake of the future, for historical development continuity, genetic links of generations.

Key words: *archives, society, democratic transformation, memory, Ukraine, state and national building, access to information.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Traditionally archives have been and still remain very important from historical and cultural point of view. They are integral components of public administration and governance providing accountability of the authorities and protection of human rights. During the 20th century we were witnesses of the great evolution and changes of the images of archives and the role of archivists around the world and in every country.

For centuries archivists have been considered as invisible keepers of official documents, later – as silent servants of historians. Subsequently they were called "ghosts" of remembrance. All these definitions were stereotypes which reflected the perception of archivists by society. But during the recent decades the role of archivists in society has changed dramatically. They began communicate with institutions and citizens more actively, presenting the val-

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ues of archival documents and supporting social projects. As Terry Cook stressed, "archivists shape the future of our documentary heritage", they are deciding "what is remembered and what is forgotten, who in society is visible and who remains invisible, who has a voice and who does not" (Cook, p. 171).

Post-modern historiography treats archives as "lieu de mémoire" / "houses of memory" (Nora, p. 7) as well as a metaphoric "time-machine" (Ketelaar, p. 233). A concept of archives as a precious gift for the future generations was proposed by Canadian archivist Arthur Doughty. In particular, he noted that "all of national assets archives are the most precious. They are the gift from one generation to another, and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization" (Cook, p. 171). More archival "images" were analyzed earlier in my article "The Image of Archive in the Modern Scientific Discourse: Multiplicity of Interpretations", published in the journal "Archives of Ukraine" in 2016 (Палиєнко, p. 143)

2 ARCHIVES IN NATIONAL AND STATE BUILDING PROCESSES IN UKRAINE

If we consider the history of Ukraine, it should be noted that archives have come a long way from the "d'arsenal de l'autorité" with very limited access under the Soviet totalitarian regime, through the process of massive declassification of archival documents and their opening to public use in late 1980s – at the beginning of 1990s. Crucial political, social and historical changes that have taken place in Ukraine over the last decades influenced the evolution of perception of archives and their role in society. It should be emphasized that the influence of archives on the development of modern democratic society in Ukraine is extremely meaningful. They have become important not only as "le laboratoire d'histoire", but also as crucial sources for transformational changes in people's mentality, their consciousness. The declassification of archival documents initiated the process of returning Ukrainians their own history, their national memory and historical roots.

The crucial moment in the modern history of Ukraine was a proclamation of the Ukrainian independence in 1991. It was closely connected with the process of democratization of society and liberalization of memory policy as well as access to archives. During the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s thousands of archival files were declassified and became available not only for a scientific research but also for the wider use. New democratic organization of the Ukrainian nation guarantees the right to information.

In the 1990s a system of state archival institutions of Ukraine was created. Today it represents by the State Archival Service of Ukraine, which implements state policy in the field of archives, 9 central state archives, 12 branch archives 24 regional state archives, other local archives and archival divisions. The legal basis for the activities of the archives is the Law of Ukraine "On the National Archival Fond and Archival Institutions" (2001) as well as other Ukrainian and international legal acts devoted to archives.

Among the basic principles of the development of archival affairs in a democratic society should be highlighted the rule of law, national security, transparency and openness of power, protection of the citizens' rights and interests, devotion to the ideals of freedom and democracy, education and professionalism. The transformation of society set new challenges for the Ukrainian archival community. The role of archivists evolved from the custodians of the records to mediators between public institutions, archives and society.

Ukrainian archives are doing a great work of promoting documentary heritage, organizing on-line exhibitions of documents and implementing numerous presentation projects. Among the main online projects it should be mentioned "ArchiVazlyva sprava" ("Archives Important Affair") – a project of the Central State Archives-Museum of Literature and Arts of Ukraine, "Turning History Pages" – a project of the Central State Archives of Supreme Bod-

ies of Power and Government of Ukraine, "Archives Alive" – a project of the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv.

Among the interesting archival exhibition projects of recent years it should be mentioned "De-communization: archival chronicles", "100 years of the Ukrainian Revolution. Revival of the State", "Ukrainian Diplomacy 1917–1924: The Birth of National Traditions". In general, the number of exhibitions prepared by the archival institutions of Ukraine is impressive. In particular, 1865 expositions were opened in 2018 (106 exhibitions were prepared by central archives, 359 – by regional archives, and all of the rest – by small local archives and archival subdivisions) (*Публічний звіт Голови Укрдержархіву Баранової Т.І., р. 22*).

In recent years, the number of users who work with documents in the reading rooms of archives has increased significantly. So in 2017, the reading rooms of Ukrainian archives were visited by 26,811 people (and among them there were 1669 foreign researchers). The main topics of research and reader queries included property rights, genealogy research, history and activities of enterprises and institutions, church temples and religious denominations, the history of the Second World War, Nazi occupation, national liberation movement of the 20th century, and victims of a totalitarian regime and repressions.

Today, the work of Ukrainian archival institutions is based on the principles of transparency and openness, which involves the availability of information about their work. At the State Archives Service of Ukraine there are public and scientific-expert councils, which include well-known scholars, journalists, and public figures. They take an active part in public discussions, round tables, press conferences, scientific seminars, opening of exhibitions of archival documents. During recent years, archivists have begun to work more actively with the media, taking part in the preparation of interesting TV and radio stories, programs, historical documentaries, etc.

Declassification of documents of the former state security services of the Soviet totalitarian regime (NKVD-KGB) had a great impact on the political transition process. Meanwhile this process began in the 1990s, it gained the real consequences only after the Orange Revolution and especially in the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity.

On April 9, 2015 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a law "On Access to Archives of Repressive Bodies of Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917–1991" (№ 316-VIII). The adoption of this law was due to understanding that archives guarantee the preservation of human memory as well as they are an integral and indispensable part of the historical heritage of the Ukrainian people. It was also taken into account, *the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States on the European Policy of Access to Archives No R (2000) 13*, concerning fundamental right of everyone to receive objective information about the history of the country which is one of the basic principles of a democratic state.

The initiator of the adoption and implementation of de-communization legislation in Ukraine was the Institute of National Remembrance. An important precondition for the adoption of this law was preventing the repetition of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in any forms; any discrimination based on national, social, class, ethnic, racial or other grounds in the future. The main reason was restoration of historical and social justice, elimination threats to independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security of Ukraine.

In the law there were formulated the main principles of state policy on providing access to archival information of repressive bodies. Among them, the following should be pointed out: 1) the state guarantees the right of everyone to access to the archival information of the repressive bodies; 2) free access to archival information of repressive bodies; 3) conditions for

the proper storage, gain and use of archival information of repressive bodies as well as digitization of their information (*Law of Ukraine "On Access to Archives of Repressive Agencies of Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917–1991"*).

In accordance with this law, Ukrainian state archives provide maximum simplification of the procedure for obtaining information. It is prohibited to classify archival information of repressive bodies as well as attribute it to confidential information, except as provided in this Law.

It is very important that archival information of repressive bodies on their staff or non-staff employees shall be open and access to such information cannot be restricted for any reason. From the other hand, a person, who is a victim of repressive agencies, has the right to restrict access to archival information about himself, but having noted, which information is limited (type of information, pages, paragraphs, etc.) and the period for which limitations are set up. It should be noted that mentioned persons have the right to restrict access to archival information of repressive bodies about themselves for a period not exceeding 25 years.

Everyone has the right of access to archival information of repressive bodies which are provided by their administrators by all available means. A person's self-supporting production of a copy of archival information of repressive bodies is free of charge. It is forbidden to demand direct or indirect payment for making copies of such information.

It is worth noting that similar laws on archives have been adopted in several post-communist Eastern European countries and are recommended by European institutions. Adoption of de-communisation laws in Ukraine reflects general tendency of the Ukrainian policy-makers towards the recognition of European democratic values and distraction from Russia's integration projects (*Law and Memory. Towards Legal Governance of History, p.313*)

Consequently, the de-communization processes in Ukraine created favourable conditions for work in the archives for Ukrainian and foreign researchers. One of them, director of the Freedom of Information Act Project for the National Security Archive at George Washington University Nate Jones, stressed that "anyone conducting research on the Soviet Union, nuclear history, or the Cold War should visit Ukraine as soon as possible" (*Jones, 2017*). He also pointed out that now the Ukrainian archives are open (including to foreigners) and filled with historically important, previously secret documents. Describing his work at the Central State Archives of the Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, he underlined that researchers can access the archives without an appointment simply by showing a passport. But the most valuable gem for him was the Archives of the Security Services of Ukraine (former the KGB Archives). According to him, the Ukrainian KGB archives are "demonstrating a path of openness that the archives of other formerly communist countries would be wise to follow". Investigating these documents, researchers have a unique opportunity for an inside view of how the Soviet organs of state operated. N. Jones's conclusion sounds really inspired for researchers: "There are countless gems now available to researchers in the Ukrainian archives and waiting to be discovered. While the Ukrainian geopolitical situation remains fraught, its historical archives have never been more accessible. Another window into the history of the Soviet Union has been opened". (*Jones, 2017*)

According to experts' conclusion based on the analytical report "European legislative practices on decommunization issues: implications for Ukraine", modern Ukraine is one of the post-Soviet countries with the easiest access to KGB archives. It is interesting to know that this conclusion was based on analysis the practices of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the Baltic countries, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Georgia and Romania (*Blood-stained Papers: Decommunization and Opening KGB Archives in Ukraine, 2017*). There are minimum requirements for accessing to the KGB archives in Ukraine. It is enough to provide all available information about a person to facilitate searching, and a passport of researcher (user of information). No access fee required as well as making copies with researcher's own technical devices is free of charge.

The importance of this law lies in using of archival records for rehabilitation people who were the victims of totalitarian regime. But its value is not limited to this. It is also a valuable instrument in the process of formation the new social relationships, reconciliation, and creation a consensus between different groups of people and state.

Ukrainian archivists made significant contribution to the collection and preservation of documentary evidence of the Orange Revolution (2004–2005) and Revolution of Dignity (2014). But nowadays we have great problems with the documents in occupied territories. Ukrainian archival authorities don't have an access to the vast collections of official documents and other documentary fonds that remains in the occupied territories (in Donetsk and Luhansk regions). This creates great problems for the functioning of state institutions and lives of individuals.

3 NEW OPPORTUNITIES VIA NEW TECHNOLOGIES

New technologies in archiving open new possibilities for democratization of archival usage and free dissemination of information. Nowadays the establishment of databases for archival documents, preparation of on-line documentary exhibitions as well as support of public relations is among the main activities of archivists. In general, "digital documents and electronic records have destabilized the concept of records and challenged the ability of archives to capture, represent, and preserve digital records" (*Hedstrom, p. 22*).

For the purpose of proper storage of electronic documents of the National Archival Fond, the Central State Electronic Archives of Ukraine was founded in Kyiv in 2007. Archives' main tasks include: keeping electronic records and information resources, ensuring their integrity, creating conditions for their use.

One of the strategic directions of organizing access to archival information is the digitization of documents and providing access to them via the Internet. The target audience of the official web-portal "Archives of Ukraine" is Ukrainian citizens as well as users from more than 125 countries of the world. The Ukrainian archival web portal most frequently visited by the users from USA, Russia, Poland, Germany, Canada, the Great Britain, the Netherlands, Israel, Belarus. The level of information openness of public archives websites increases each year. In particular, the availability of information for users with visual and hearing impairments is ensured.

A significant number of the Ukrainian state archives have their own pages in social networks (mainly Facebook) which they use for interactive communication with users, representatives of the public, mass media. Meanwhile, modernization of sites remains relevant, especially with regard to the development of on-line services (e-services). Due to the active communication and presentation of documentary databases in the Internet, Ukrainian archives are becoming more open, they begin to implement the concept "archives without borders".

But unfortunately due to instability of economic development and military actions in the east of Ukraine, our archival affairs have insufficient funding for realization of a number of the important technological reforms.

4 CONCLUSION

Nowadays the role of archivists in society is multifaceted and extremely important. They not only preserve the documentary, historical and cultural heritage, but take an active part in state-building processes, promote the consolidation and development of civil society, the values of public accountability, open government, and social justice. Archives help to produce a new collective memory, to provide a proper framework for the emergence of a new political system.

On the whole, the social responsibility of archivists is growing, because they have to satisfy the right to know, the right to access to information as well as to protect state security and personal rights of citizens.

But in the new political and socio-cultural environment archivists need greater financial support and recognition of their work by society. In this connection, changes in the profession itself are extremely important. We need to be confident professionals, with deep theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Consequently, the urgent requirements of the present are to promote profession, to elaborate new educational programs, and to develop international links between archivists and educators. Only under such conditions archivists will be able to respond to modern challenges of informational era, providing the needs and values of democratic society.

Traditionally archives have been and still remain very important from historical and cultural point of view. They are integral components of public administration and governance providing accountability of the authorities and protection of human rights. During the recent decades the role of archivists in society has changed dramatically. They began communicate with institutions and citizens more actively, presenting the values of archival documents and supporting social projects.

Crucial political, social and historical changes that have taken place in Ukraine over the last decades influenced the evolution of perception of archives and their role in society. It should be emphasized that the influence of archives on the development of modern democratic society in Ukraine is extremely meaningful. They have become important not only as "le laboratoire d'histoire", but also as crucial sources for transformational changes in people's mentality, their consciousness. The declassification of archival documents initiated the process of returning Ukrainians their own history, their national memory and historical roots.

Among the basic principles of the development of archival affairs in a modern Ukrainian society should be highlighted the rule of law, national security, transparency and openness of power, protection of the citizens' rights and interests, devotion to the ideals freedom and democracy, education and professionalism. Ukrainian archives are doing a great work of promoting documentary heritage, organizing on-line exhibitions of documents and implementing numerous presentation projects.

Declassification of documents of the former state security services of the Soviet totalitarian regime had a great impact on the political transition process. The Law of Ukraine "On Access to Archives of Repressive Bodies of Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917–1991", that was adopted by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2015, formulated the main principles of state policy on providing access to archival information of repressive bodies. The de-communication processes in Ukraine created favourable conditions for work in the Ukrainian archives for native citizens and foreigners.

New technologies in archiving open new possibilities for democratization of archival usage and free dissemination of information. Nowadays the establishment of databases for archival documents, preparation of on-line documentary exhibitions as well as support of public relations is among the main activities of archivists. But unfortunately due to instability of economic development and military actions in the east of Ukraine, our archival affairs have insufficient funding for realization of a number of the important technological reforms.

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