

EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

# Archives and Historical Memory

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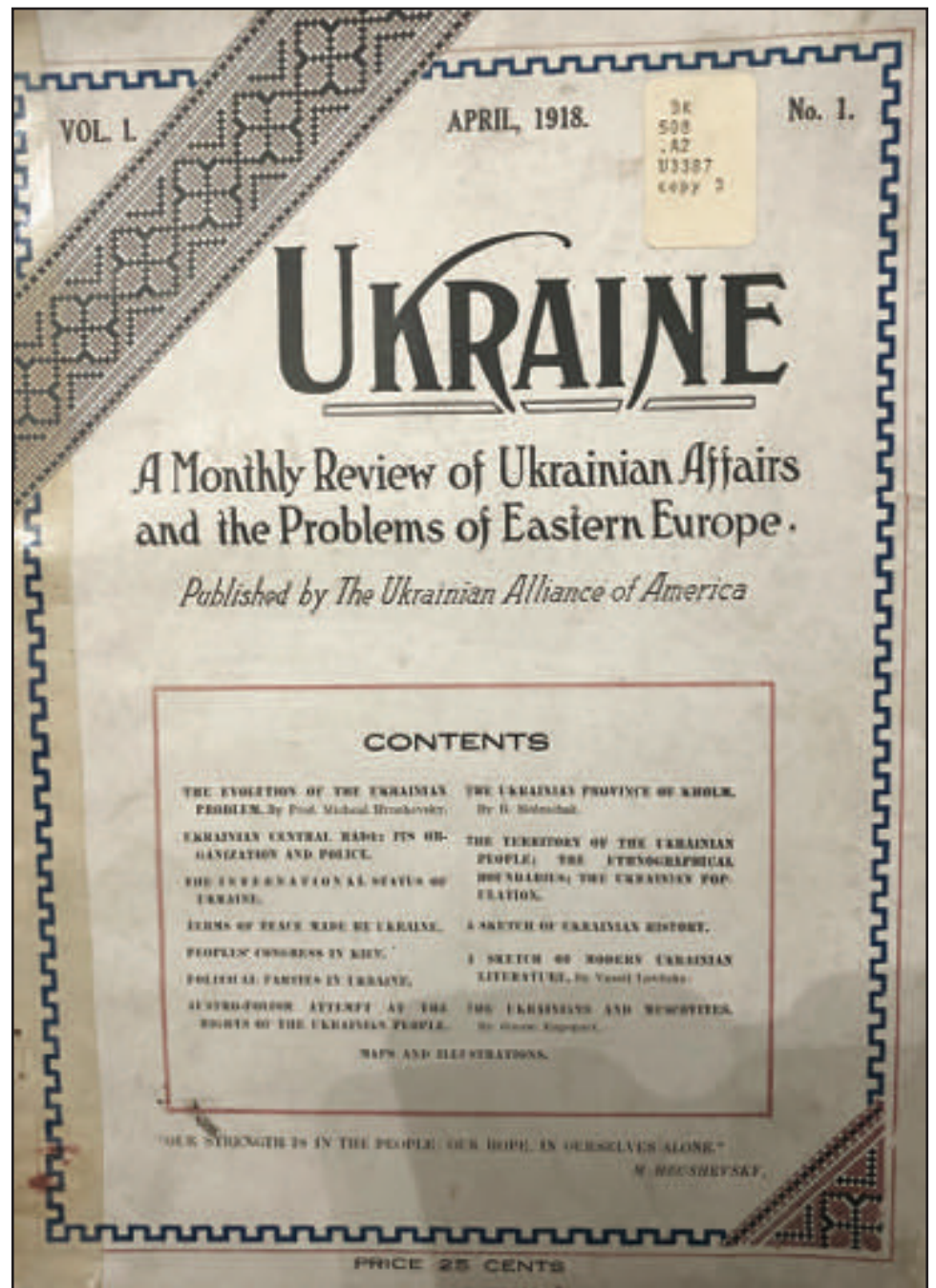
Our library holdings, aside from a plethora of books and journals also encompasses a large variety of archival materials. These archival records may be in different formats: printed information, photographic, audio, film, ephemera, etc., which document major and minor historical, social, cultural, and religious activities of Ukrainians in Ukraine and in the global diaspora. They are often an important primary source of information for scholars and researchers, uncovering new, little known and often hidden facts which were otherwise not available. They also may confirm or authenticate data which for years existed only anecdotally.

The importance of collecting, preserving and protecting archival collections cannot be underestimated. This is especially true for nations like Ukraine, which was under the domination of foreign and often hostile powers in whose interest it was to falsify, silence, hide or destroy truth in order to dominate and control “the minds of its members,” as George Orwell wrote in his seminal novel 1984. The population of free and independent nations learn to safeguard their national treasures and preserve them for posterity. National cultural institutions and the enlightened societies of such countries educate the public, make them aware of and cherish their national heritage in whatever form it may exist. Nations which are subjugated by foreign domination or by dictatorial rule are controlled by governmental decrees and abuses and are compelled to think only whatever the dictators want them to think and restrain them from free and independent thinking. Anyone deviating from these rules is punished and any free-

thinking writings or documented disclosures of truth are destroyed. But in many cases such as these there are always a few brave enough who risk all to protect and save prohibited writings which, in time, will be unearthed and circulated to reveal the objective truth.

The Ukrainian nation has suffered immensely from despotic, autocratic rule. Our name was denied to us, our history was falsified, our culture belittled, our national treasures destroyed. This tragic state of affairs prompted Ukrainian immigrants in the free world to do their utmost to counteract these destructive forces and to support their brethren in Ukraine in their attempts at achieving independence. The preservation of their heritage and the unveiling to the free world the truth of the politically devastating situation in Ukraine. The Ukrainians in the diaspora believed it was incumbent upon them to do everything possible in their cause. This prompted them to organize cultural institutions like our Ukrainian Museum and Library where Ukrainian cultural artifacts could be collected, exhibited and preserved and, most of all, it could stand as a repository of archival material dealing with Ukrainian history and the history of the Ukrainian immigration experience in all of its facets – cultural, social, political and religious. They published informative brochures in English, held political rallies, began fund-raising campaigns to help gain and retain Ukrainian independence, etc. Documents which serve as evidence of their work have been collected and are preserved in our library which we also refer to as our Research Center.

It has been said that the care with which a nation or a society nurtures the



Declaration of Independence of Ukraine from 1991 signed by Leonid Kravchuk, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford.

preservation of its past or, in this case the preservation of its archival materials, may show how profoundly they have achieved an understanding of their own value. Although much of the Ukrainian archival collections have been wantonly destroyed during the Soviet occupation, just as much have been lost through the negligence and indifference to the value such collections might have. Notwithstanding this tragic situation there have been miraculous discoveries of archives, destined to be lost, but found preserved

intact. An example of one about which I've recently written in the previous issue of the Sower.

This month we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the renewed Ukrainian Independence. Documentation of these celebrations should be collected and preserved for posterity. They are part of our historical memory. Support our Ukrainian Museum and Library in our endeavors to care for, cherish and preserve our historical memory. ♦

