



Reflections through a Soviet Window

Rural Governance and Colonization¹

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Abstract

This paper probes the crossroads between the realities of life and the ambitions of the early Soviet regime in one corner of its vast countryside. As a test case, I explore the meeting of organized agrarianization of Jews from the former Pale of Settlement with the mechanisms of Soviet power in the geographical and national peripheries of what was seen until recently as a monolithic, centralized state. Barring the last four years before Operation Barbarossa, a non-governmental, non-denominational American-Jewish philanthropy (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee [Joint or Agro-Joint]) funded and administered much of this resettlement project in southern Ukraine and Crimea. As shall be seen, the arrival of an effective foreign organization not only shaped the lives of its client-colonists, but the very character of Soviet rural authority through the emergence of hybrid models of governance in the countryside.

Keywords: agrarianization, centre-periphery relations, colonization, Crimea, Jewish, Joint Distribution Committee, Soviet Union, Ukraine

Introduction

This article proposes what might at first seem improbable: the history of organized Jewish agricultural colonization in interwar Soviet Russia offers an outline for a general model of change in the practice of rural governance wrought by organized colonization projects among ethnic minorities.

This model for rural governance and colonization exhibits consistency across time and space, regardless of the differences in the regimes under which it occurs. In the Jewish case, one could achieve similar results by inserting into this model the events in rural Mandatory Palestine (1917–1947) instead of interwar Soviet Russia. The former site was in the Near East under a relatively liberal regime while the latter colonization project transpired in European Russia/Ukraine, under an increasingly repressive Bolshevik state. Likewise, the official style of rural governance under the British Mandate in Palestine versus Soviet rural policy – particularly starting with ‘total collectivization’ (*sploshnoi kollektivizatsiia*) during the winter of 1929–1930 – could hardly have been more dissimilar. That being said, the process and outcomes of Zionist agrarian colonization during these decades evokes similar tones to those raised in almost all studies of rural governance in Europe, the Near East and the Americas in terms of nationalist pressures, demographic shifts and the importance of technological inputs. As we shall see shortly, there are also conspicuous similarities between these cases and the interwar episode in the Soviet Union. And perhaps most striking in all of these episodes is the recurring involvement of Jewish philanthropic organizations, some of them nationalist in character, others transnational in structure. These organizations initiated and/or supported large agrarianization projects; the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of specific philanthropies in great part determined the success or failure of each attempt at colonization.

Rural Governance through Jewish Agrarianization

Jewish agricultural resettlement constituted a global phenomenon from the 1880s until the 1940s. At the height of this activity, 8 to 9% of the total Jewish population in Europe and the Americas made their livelihood in agriculture, almost all of them in some sort of organized agrarian colonization through which they physically resettled from their original homes in Eastern Europe at a distance of hundreds, or even many thousands, of kilometers; a short list includes agricultural colonies in Imperial Russia, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Birobidzhan, the Dominican Republic and, of

course, Mandatory Palestine.² While not all of these experiments fulfilled the hopes of their visionaries or settlers, the fact remains that during these decades Jews from Eastern Europe played a role, albeit statistically small, in a global trend of organized agrarian resettlement that altered the calculus of rural governance wherever they resettled.

Much like internal colonization episodes during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Jewish experiments cut against seemingly universal patterns of urbanization and industrialization. Indeed, Jewish colonists joined a fundamentally backwards-looking movement that idealized a distant (or imagined) past – in their case, the biblical Jew. This is particularly notable given that it coincided in its first decades with the proliferation of the Jewish enlightenment movement (*Haskalah*) in Eastern Europe, precisely the point of departure for most of the colonists. The *Haskalah* encouraged young Jews to leave the traditional insularity of small towns (*shtetls*) through secular education, professional training, and exposure to the culture and languages of their countrymen. Hence in the Jewish case, and I suspect in the non-Jewish case as well, agricultural colonization brought together what otherwise might be considered separate, conflicting ideological trends of ‘backward’ and ‘forward’ thinking.

For newfound settlers (Jews and non-Jews), ‘going to the land’ was more often than not seen as a step up toward economic stabilization, perhaps even social respectability. Consequently, even if Jews had for generations grown accustomed to looking down upon farming, specific conditions from the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries created an environment in which organized agrarianization offered not just a pathway to physical survival and economic wellbeing but also a kind of moral, national redemption. Among Jews, all of the agrarianization projects at this time promised the rebirth of a strong, self-sufficient and proud Jew (and Jewess), who jettisoned the deprivation and shame of *shtetl* life in favour of productivization.

A transnational movement of agricultural knowledge and personnel suggests another feature of global Jewish agrarianization shared with the non-Jewish world. In short, a generation of agricultural experts grew in the Jewish world starting in the late nineteenth century. Many of them journeyed between continents to explore or strengthen sites of Jewish agricultural resettlement.³ Akiva Ettinger was among the

more notable. Impressed from young adulthood with the modernizing role of the Russian *zemstvo*, he served as an agronomist for the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in Eastern Europe starting in 1898, directing its operations in Bessarabia until the First World War;⁴ the Association began support of existing Jewish colonies in Eastern Europe during the 1890s.⁵ The JCA also sent him on a number of site visits to Jewish agricultural settlement elsewhere in Europe, Palestine and South America. Etinger emigrated to Palestine in 1915, and eventually became director of the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency (the primary settlement and governing body among Jews in pre-state Palestine), thereby bringing the spirit and practice of rural modernization from Europe to the Land of Israel.⁶ Most of this generation or two of Jewish agricultural professionals intersected with equally transnational non-Jewish peers. Many of these Jewish rural planners and experts in pre-state Israel and throughout the Diaspora had acquired their expertise and came of age in Europe or in North America, studying and working at state or private (not Jewish) institutions.

Intersections of Policies, Ideas and Practice

The frequency of colonization projects – those that were implemented and those that were not – accelerated policy discussions throughout Europe and the Americas concerning state intervention in agricultural policy, particularly starting in the late 1920s with the Soviet collectivization of agriculture. Whatever its horrendous byproducts, Stalin's widely-publicized collectivization raised questions about rural economies of scale that could be achieved only by intervention 'from above'. The high incidence of colonization projects at this time (internal and external) only made these discussions more urgent for governments.

The appeal of colonization before and after the 1920s cut two ways. For some regimes, it was a means by which to rid one's region or country of problematic populations. For other regimes, funneling refugee populations toward colonization projects could serve other rural policy goals, ranging from economic growth to demographic change. Impoverished Jews from Eastern or Central Europe were often seen by regimes (ranging from enlightened to autocratic) as a rural policy tool;

for the British Empire in the early twentieth century, this meant railroad-borne economic development of the Kenyan highlands (widely known as the ‘Uganda Plan’); for the interwar Bolsheviks, it meant bringing agricultural progress to the Black Sea littoral while inserting a loyal ethnic group among suspect minorities: and, for a despot in the Dominican Republic during the late 1930s, this meant ‘whitening’ the local population.⁷ The meeting ground between policy and practice in rural governance took a horrifying turn in the wake of interwar Jewish agrarianization in Soviet Russia: the Kremlin seems to have learned much of the ‘nuts and bolts’ of collectivization – particularly the mechanization of agriculture and the potential of cooperative training, purchasing and marketing bodies – through close observation of the Jewish colonies, who had themselves imported many of these ideas from abroad.⁸ Tragically for tens of millions, the Soviets brutally implemented these ‘lessons’ in villages throughout the USSR with complete disregard for local sentiments, conditions, traditions and issues of scale.

The discourse and practice of organized colonization ‘from above’ circulated with frequency and strength near the centers of intellectual and public space throughout Europe and the Americas during these decades. Myriad individuals, governments, philanthropic organizations, religious denominations and other actors thought seriously about it; colonization was a kind of household commodity, visualized or undertaken by a dizzying array of parties for remarkably similar reasons. So in this sense, the ‘rural’ of the interwar era existed much closer to the ‘centre’ than is usually assumed.

Regimes of all colours made use of Jewish and non-Jewish colonists from the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries in five distinct ways. Their goals were similar whether one examines colonization in liberal democracies, states spiraling toward authoritarianism, or in extremities of colonial empires. The first of these deployed colonization as a non-military, or paramilitary, means to establish or safeguard strategic borders. In such cases, governments established new colonies in areas where regional or international boundaries remained fluid due to ongoing conflict or ethnic tensions, in the absence of sufficient military strength or the national economic wherewithal to sustain a significant military presence. The second goal overlapped with the first: populating the countryside with purportedly ‘loyal’ peoples in areas traditionally

inhabited by other ethnic, religious or national groups. In both of the above cases, the regime sought to solve political challenges (or stabilize problematic situations) with relatively low-cost settlers who could, within a short time, support themselves. The settlers themselves, of course, bore most of the risks if the political tensions in these regions turned violent. Advancing regional economic development constituted a third, no less frequent, goal of colonization for regimes. In this case, regimes identified specific economic traits or advantages among prospective settlers; these relocated colonists would then, it was hoped, benefit the state in locations that it aimed to exploit because of economic value or availability of resources.

The last two common features of colonization focus more on peculiarities of the target groups than on meeting the needs of the state. First, the growing popularity among intellectuals and activists in the West of ideas of social engineering intersected with proposals for agrarianization projects. During the early to mid-interwar period, social engineering had not yet taken on the monstrous tone of eugenics issuing forth from fascist movements. Rather, architects of social engineering as applied to agrarianization hoped to repair the image of a specific ethnic group from within, as well as its perception among the majority population. For the most part, colonists belonged to minority groups that for one reason or another had been maligned in the past. By putting these groups 'on the land' regimes not only intended to improve the physical wellbeing of the newfound colonists but also the image of the regime as a facilitator of 'rebirth'; as discussed above, a desire for such a 'rebirth' formed a core motivation for Jewish agrarianization. Finally, capitalizing on one group's misfortune to advance a national agenda (like population management) constituted a leitmotif of nearly all colonization schemes from the late nineteenth into the mid-twentieth centuries, whatever the particular goal of the project.

At times colonization resulted from one of the above motivations, at other times states had multiple reasons to establish or support colonization. In the Jewish case, all of these factors came into play in some combination. To save or reconstruct the lives of their target communities, the Jewish philanthropic organizations that initiated or otherwise sustained agrarian colonization had to work in unison with states, even when rulers adopted colonization projects for unsavoury reasons.

Wider Lessons from the Early Soviet Countryside

We will now consider these general reflections against the case of early Bolshevik rural governance along the Black Sea littoral. This episode transpired at the crossroads of the organized agrarianization of Jews with the mechanisms of Soviet power in the geographic and national peripheries. Until quite recently both historiography and popular memory perceived the Soviet state as highly centralized, nearly monolithic. This case study involves a privately funded philanthropic organization (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee [JDC]), which created and supervised a large interwar resettlement project in southern Ukraine and Crimea. Established and funded at the start of the First World War by many of the most prominent Jewish leaders in the United States, the JDC initially intended to provide humanitarian relief to the Jews of Eastern Europe suffering from the effects of the global conflict. Once the Great War ended, the JDC continued its operations in Eastern Europe to provide aid to Jews impoverished and brutalized by the pogroms ignited during the Russian Civil War and the Russo-Polish War from 1919–1921. In the aggregate, the JDC had aided millions of East European Jews by the time these nearly seven years of continuous conflict ended.⁹ And as shall be seen, starting in 1923 this foreign organization then gravitated toward an unprecedented agrarianization project in the Soviet countryside, thereby not only shaping the lives of its client-colonists, but the very character of rural authority.

During the next year (1923–1924), the JDC, together with local Jewish activists in the Soviet Union, formulated a bold plan to rescue masses of Jews from the overcrowded, poverty-stricken former Pale of Settlement, where physical and legal conditions made recovery difficult, if not impossible. To do so, during the next decade the JDC raised huge sums from its wealthier supporters and from smaller donors throughout the United States. To operationalize this plan, in 1924 the JDC formed a dedicated subsidiary (the Agro-Joint) and signed a series of contracts with the Kremlin to facilitate mass Jewish resettlement from the traditional areas of the Pale to the Black Sea littoral. At its peak employing more than one thousand workers, Agro-Joint constructed approximately two hundred state-of-the-art colonies on hundreds of thousands of acres, assisted another forty colonies

established before its arrival, operated several tractor teams, and provided technical guidance, modern machines, and low-interest loans.¹⁰ By the late 1920s, these colonies reached – and usually surpassed – the productivity of their non-Jewish neighbours. In total the JDC and other privately funded Jewish philanthropies resettled or assisted approximately 200,000 farmers by the time they left Soviet Russia in the late 1930s. Soviet input to the resettlement project included land grants, transportation, fuel and tax exemptions.

Cooperation with western philanthropies served four functions for the Kremlin, none of which it could perform on its own. First, the philanthropies brought western models of rural administration. Second, they injected, at almost no cost to the state, agricultural expertise into this corner of Russia's rural economy. Third, propaganda about this project brought international prestige to a diplomatically isolated regime. Fourth, and discussed further below: the arrival of Agro-Joint and its purportedly loyal settlers helped to break resistance of local elites to Bolshevik rule. For the Kremlin, there was a seemingly simple political calculation at work: Jews had disproportionate membership in the Communist Party during the first years of the regime and were widely believed to be more loyal than other national minorities, including those inhabiting the proposed regions of agrarianization.¹¹

In accordance with its new nationalities policy – and in response to the large influx of colonists – Moscow created five national Jewish autonomous districts (*raiony*) around the Black Sea.¹² These districts subdivided into 126 Jewish village councils (soviets), all of which contained Jewish majorities.¹³ Groups of settlements crystallized informally into identifiable blocs in and across the formal districts, ranging in size from hundreds to thousands of colonists.¹⁴ Under this partnership of Soviet and foreign benefactors – institutionalized by the state through local administrative autonomy – within a few years the colonies thrived until the Wehrmacht overran them in 1941.

How did the conduct of daily life in and around these colonies compare to the intentions of Moscow? While Lenin and his heirs manufactured a monolithic image in the center, their voice became progressively fainter as one traveled further afield. In the new Jewish colonies, this was often barely a whisper. The Soviet state inherited from the Romanovs neither the resources nor an effective model to administer or

modernize its multi-ethnic, mostly rural empire. For most of the 1920s the agro-technological gap had widened between Soviet Russia and the West owing to nearly no investment.¹⁵ In terms of control, the rural commune (*mir*) remained a world unto itself; the regime made only intermittent, largely ineffectual, attempts to regulate it through a thin network of state organs.¹⁶

In any discussion of Crimea (then as today), one must first remember that it ignited repeated political storms. Associated for generations with leisure and aristocratic privilege, it carried a special significance for Russians, though few ever partook of those rare treats. No matter who ruled, Crimea did not easily lend itself to control at least until the 1930s. Moreover, low literacy rates in rural Crimea, like elsewhere in the country, impeded socialist indoctrination. Indeed, the peninsula fit the mold of under-governance in the Soviet periphery, where even among the Tatars – the nominal rulers anointed by the early Bolsheviks – old tensions fueled fragmentation.¹⁷ The real power of these nationalist Tatars evaporated a few kilometers outside of Simferopol.¹⁸ Jewish colonization proved a decisive political tool for the Soviet regime, who with help from local loyalists, destroyed the Tatar communist leadership in the late 1920s; colonization had similar, if lesser, effect in Soviet efforts to subdue the nationalist leadership in Kiev.¹⁹

Rural Governance within a Weak State

A vacuum of state administration created challenges for the new settlers and Agro-Joint agronomists. Central authorities usually reacted in the countryside only when incited or energized from below, usually intervening aggressively in the settlers' lives only in the wake of direct appeals (for, among other things, a better cow) or in response to spasmodic pressures 'from above'.²⁰ The key variable in rural survival was the relative weakness of the state. Agro-Joint agronomists were, in fact, the only authority figure and service provider new colonists saw during their first three years of settlement.²¹ Far from perfect, they nevertheless bestowed the colonies with more guidance than that of other farming sectors in the USSR.²² These agronomists obscured colonists' improprieties from an increasingly intrusive state, shielded them from the

risks of rural disorder and helped to discipline particularly troublesome colonists.²³

The state tolerated this arrangement for more than a decade because, above all, it needed order in the countryside. Persistent failure by organizations more closely identified with the regime had shown that not everyone could deliver rural development or even gather reliable data.²⁴ Gradual supersession of Agro-Joint in some administrative roles and the transfer of equipment to state-operated Machine Tractor Stations (MTS) during 'total' collectivization in the winter of 1929–1930 did not instantly solidify state power.²⁵ Why? Administrative chaos in the Soviet countryside throughout the 1930s allowed the Agro-Joint to still leverage its control over human and material resources.²⁶ The distance from Moscow, even after the brutal collectivization campaign, manifested itself in other ways. For one, the central authorities could not unilaterally set grain procurement quotas in the Jewish collective farms. Instead, it negotiated with kolkhoz chairmen. Although such discussions were never among equals, higher officials had to strike a compromise with rural realities and sensitivities.²⁷

Hybrid models of governance, education, culture and religion evolved on these cooperative farms from the mid-1920s. During the late 1930s, much of the virulent anti-religious mood dissipated en route from Moscow to the countryside, where the authorities monitored but did not halt private piety. To be sure, religious freedom existed for no one under Stalin. But among the colonists who sought it, the practice of religion was feasible, albeit with certain adaptations. Among these hybrid practices were greater emphasis on agricultural aspects of holidays as well as the retreat of rituals from public to private spaces.²⁸

During the late 1930s, Agro-Joint wound down its support for what it saw as self-sufficient colonies, just as the state imposed terror on much of Soviet society. The result was a purge of much of Agro-Joint's staff, and personnel in Soviet agencies that had worked with it.²⁹ Yet, even as the Jewish districts lost their administrative authority, the settlement blocs within them maintained a relatively high degree of autonomous cultural life. How did this happen while the state attacked autonomous units of other national minorities in the region? First, Jews were not suspected of alternative loyalties and did little to provoke repression. Second, a major Soviet propaganda

campaign had already trumpeted the cultural autonomy, modernity, and collectivity in the Jewish colonies, making a reversal of policy politically costly.³⁰

The four years between the departure of the Agro-Joint and the destruction of the colonies by the Wehrmacht (1937–1941) are particularly enlightening. During this time, Soviet agencies, including the Secret Police, assumed responsibility for the project. It turns out that the state viewed the colonies as, first and foremost, valuable agricultural assets and, therefore, did not change their economic or leadership structures. On the contrary, the archives show that they reacted to the needs of colonists, recruited new settlers, faithfully distributed the funds left from the liquidation of Agro-Joint, and followed existing investment patterns.³¹ Perhaps less surprising, the state agencies often proved to be poor administrators.³²

A sharp divide emerges here between the fate of suspect institutions and the behaviour of the Soviet state toward individuals in the countryside. Near the top, Agro-Joint had stirred envy and anger in the regional capitals.³³ Yet its departure, together with the arrest and execution of top officials from late 1937 through early 1938, had nearly no ripple effect in the colonies. Remarkably, in contrast to economic slowdowns elsewhere in the country following Stalin's purges, living standards in the colonies *rose steadily* from 1938 to 1941.³⁴

Conclusion: Some Generalizations about Rural Governance

When exploring the maneuvering room available in this corner of the interwar Soviet countryside, it may be helpful to envision a 'governance trapezoid' (Figure 1): settlers and their non-Jewish neighbouring villages at the bottom with government structures *and* the foreign settlement organizations above. During the first decade of the project, Agro-Joint personnel wielded significant power, seemingly invested with the authority of the state *and* resources from foreign sponsors. The archives show, however, that just as Agro-Joint personnel leveraged Soviet authorities, colonists manipulated them by applying pressure on earnest, but inexperienced, agronomists.³⁵



Figure 1: Governance Trapezoid.

Most importantly for survival, the colonists evidently understood the boundaries of permissible resistance. They never openly resisted village soviets or regional agencies, even if fellow Jews manned them.³⁶ The spread of central power to the countryside during the late 1930s necessitated even greater caution. Prudence did not, however, rule out circumvention. The state generally recognized these practices for what they were: evasion, not opposition.³⁷ It therefore responded with administrative penalties not brute force.³⁸ How did the Jewish colonists stay under the regime’s political radar during Stalin’s murderous purges? For one, they lacked a precondition for mass terror: severe social stratification that sparked denunciations of ‘class enemies’. Secondly, the colonists had a layer of protection from intrusion ‘from above’ because the regime valued these hyper-productive units in an otherwise backward rural economy preparing for war. Before this, Agro-Joint had taught the settlers how to avoid – not confront – the state.³⁹

We shall now briefly survey relations between Jews and non-Jews and how these interacted with governance. The state leveraged Jewish settlement in the region to overcome local resistance among Tatars and

Ukrainians. Analysis of the crossroads between ethnic conflicts, rural governance and resources must be recalibrated, however, regarding relations between neighbours. True, Jewish settlers were quite alien to the southern steppes: they usually knew little about farming, looked odd, and spoke a ‘foreign’ language (Yiddish). Added to that, their arrival meant less available land for indigenous populations. Yet compared to the struggles against the centre and other peoples in the region, Jewish colonists were a minor annoyance for most ethnic minorities. Therefore, when the leaders of other national groups pondered their Jewish neighbours, it was in a broader context of ethnic relations and power politics vis-à-vis the government.⁴⁰ Added to that, Agro-Joint consciously cultivated good relations with the indigenous populations.⁴¹

The history of these colonies suggests that mass resettlement can create completely unintended realities on the ground, even under illiberal regimes. Compact Jewish settlement blocs – *not* the official districts – emerged as the paramount political result of colonization for the settlers and the areas that they inhabited. No one imposed these blocs from above. Rather, they emerged as the government allocated, and Agro-Joint developed, new lands. The strength of these blocs sprang from the opportunities made available by physical transplantation to an underpopulated, underserved, relatively ungoverned region, coupled with the Joint’s implantation of effective administrative cadres. Within the blocs, colonists remained relatively impervious to Soviet indoctrination and took on many local party and government posts: these included kolkhoz and village soviet chairmanships, as well as government jobs.⁴² From 1929–1941, one could travel dozens of miles inside of such blocs, even if they did not necessarily conform to the borders of the districts. From the ‘ground-up’, these tight clusters of settlements defined the contours and routines of daily life no less than the official districts.

Moscow’s behaviour toward Jewish colonists reflected a dominant feature of its rural governance – neglect. In the cities, the state indeed acted lethally toward anyone it perceived as a potential threat. Nonetheless, there were rural islands of relative safety and prosperity. In keeping with this model, the colonies experienced a more benign side of Soviet rule than most Jewish communities closer to the centre. Overall, the experience in the colonies – with some numerically insignificant exceptions – suggests that aggressive rhetoric in Moscow did not always translate into ground-level implementation in the countryside.

Even at their most vulnerable – after the withdrawal of Agro-Joint from the USSR – the colonists prospered and very few of them fell victim to purges. This suggests a simple formula of rural survival, even under an increasingly dictatorial regime. In this case, there seems to be substantial added value when a foreign administrative agency (Agro-Joint) proved to be at its strongest where the state was weakest – technological progress in the countryside. The impact of foreign philanthropies should not be overstated, however. They became invested with local surrogacy because of a power vacuum from the early 1920s; until the early 1930s they did not need to displace the state, rather substituted for it while the regime consolidated control in the centre. The Soviet assault on the countryside waited several more years. This delay – coupled with the turmoil released by the Second World War – meant that the Soviet Union never effectively ruled its countryside, regardless of the regime's ambitions or its pronouncements to the contrary.

Notes

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- 2 For overviews, see Eliahu Benjamini, *Medinot le-yehudim: Uganda, Birobidzhan ve-od 34 tokhnioi* (Tel Aviv, 1990); and the special issue on Jewish agrarianization of *Jewish History* 21: 3–4 (2007).
- 3 For an overview and examples, see Jonathan Dekel-Chen, 'A Durable Harvest: Reevaluating the Russia-Israel Axis in the Jewish World' in Brian Horowitz and Shai Ginsburg (eds), *Bounded Mind and Spirit: Russia and Israel, 1880–2010* (Bloomington, 2013) 109–129.
- 4 The semi-autonomous system of rural governance put into effect in much of the European parts of the empire by Tsar Alexander II in 1864 following his emancipation of Russia's serfs; see Terrence Emmons and Wayne S.

- Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-government* (Cambridge, 1982).
- 5 For more on Bessarabia, see Yosef Mazur, *Haklaim yehudim ba-golah: ha-hityashvut ha-haklait ha-yehudit be-Besarabia (1837–1941) ve-hishtakfutam be-kitvei Sh.L. Blank* (Jerusalem, 2006).
 - 6 Akiva Etinger, *Im haklaim yehudim be-tefutsot* (Merhaviah, 1942) 16–17, 242, 244–245; Zvi Livne-Liberman (et al. eds), *Haklaim yehudim b'aravot Rusyah* (Merhaviah, 1965) 385–386; Hezi Amiur, 'Shorashav v'itsuvo shel 'meshek meurav' b'hityashvut ha-haklait b'Eretz Yisrael', unpublished PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010, 43–67.
 - 7 Marion A. Kaplan, *Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement in Sosúa, 1940–1945* (New York, 2008); Eliahu Benjamini, 'Uganda: hizdamnut she-huhmetsah?' *He-umah* 123 (1996) 279–287.
 - 8 For details, see Jonathan Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1923–1941* (New Haven, 2005) 140–144.
 - 9 The JDC was, and remains, the largest Jewish philanthropic organization in the world. For a history of the JDC, see Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the AJJDC, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia, 1974).
 - 10 For more on this period of the Joint's activity, see Michael Beizer and Mikhail Mitsel (eds), *The American Brother: The Joint in Russia, the USSR and the CIS* (Jerusalem, 2004).
 - 11 According to the 1927 Soviet census, Jews constituted 5.2% of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union while composing only 2% of the total national population. For more details, see Jonathan Dekel-Chen, 'Farmers, Philanthropists, and Soviet Authority: Rural Crimea and Southern Ukraine, 1923–1941', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4: 4 (2003) 849–885.
 - 12 Kalinindorf (1927), Novo Zlatopol' (1929), and Stalindorf (1930) in Ukraine; Fraidorf (1931) and Larindorf (1935) in Crimea. For demographic details, see Yaacov Levavi, 'Haklaim yehudim b'aravot Krim: perek be-toldot ha-yehadut ha-sovietit, 1918–1948', unpublished manuscript, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984, chapter 20, 1 and table 30. I thank Prof. Mordechai Altshuler of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for permission to examine this manuscript. See also Aryeh Munitz, 'Ha-napot ha-leumiut shel ha-yehudim be-Ukraina', *Shvut* 12 (1987) 47–50; Gosudarstvennyi arkhivi Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter 'GARF'), f. r- 7541, op. l., d. 626 (Shapiro's report on Fraidorf region, May 2, 1934); Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi

- arkhiv Kryma (hereafter 'TsGAK'), f. p-140, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 2–5 (report on Larindorf region, August 1, 1939); Vladimir Broshevan, 'Natsional'nye raiony v Krymu v 20–30 gg. XX v.', *Evreiskoe naselenie Iuga Ukrainy: ezhegodnik* (1998) 121, 127.
- 13 Benjamin Pinkus, 'The Development of the Idea of Jewish National Autonomy and its Application in the Soviet Union from Lenin to Gorbachev', *Shvut* 17–18 (1995) 104.
- 14 For example, such blocs rose around the towns of Kolai (today named Azovskoe), Kurman-Kemel'chi (Krasnogvardeiskoe), and Biiuk-Onlar (Oktiabr'skoe).
- 15 G.I. Shmelev, *Agrarnaia politika i agrarnye otnosheniia v Rossii v XX v.* (Moscow, 2000) 117–129; Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (Evanston, 1968) 25, 98–101; R.W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929–1930* (Cambridge, MA., 1980) 5, 9, 13.
- 16 Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR, 1917–1991* (England, 1992) 102, 106–108; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 4–31, 53–55; H. Altrichter, 'Insoluble Conflicts: Village Life between Revolution and Collectivization', in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Russia in the Era of NEP* (Bloomington, 1991) 192–210; Vladen S. Izmozik, 'Politicheskii kontrol' v Sovetskoi Rossii, 1918–1928 gg.', *Voprosy istorii* 7 (1997) 32–53.
- 17 I thank Roza Ayrichinskaia, from the State Archive of Crimea, for this information. See also, Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society* (Boulder, 1991) 79. Nellie H. Ohr, 'Collective Farms and Russian Peasant Society, 1933–1937', unpublished PhD diss., Stanford University, 1990, 4; James R. Harris, 'The Purging of Local Cliques in the Urals, 1936–1937', in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000) 262–264; and, Andrea Graziosi, *The Great Soviet Peasant War: Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1917–1923* (Cambridge, MA., 1996) 58.
- 18 Brian G. Williams, 'A Homeland Lost. Migration, the Diaspora Experience and the Forging of Crimean Tatar Identity', unpublished PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999, 4, 547, 554.
- 19 Dekel-Chen, 'Farmers, Philanthropists, and Soviet Authority'.
- 20 The fate of the *Hehalutz* Zionist pioneer movement and its three small – but highly publicized – agricultural communes in Crimea illustrates this point. For details, see Jonathan Dekel-Chen, *Mahane meshutaf? Kooperatsiia*

b'hityashvut ha-yehudit ha-haklait be-Rusya u-beolam, 1890–1941 (Jerusalem, 2008) 131–148.

- 21 Each agronomist dealt with housing, credit, supply, cultural and transportation issues for six to eight new colonies, while they cleared fields for future tracts. See Archive of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (hereafter, 'YIVO') 358/151, p. 1 (Surdutovich's account, October 30, 1926); YIVO, RG 358/151, p. 1 (Dashkovskii to Crimean Agro-Joint, December 1, 1926).
- 22 GARF, f. r-7746, op. 1, d. 278, l. 19 (visit of Timiriazev Academy, 1929); YIVO, RG 358/158, p. 34 (meeting of Agro-Joint staff).
- 23 YIVO, RG 358/227, pp. 92–96 (conference at Sde Menucha); YIVO, RG 358/119, p. 7 (Raskin's report); GARF, f. r-7541, op. 1, d. 211, l. 39 (Fridman to Komzet Moscow, April 4, 1928); JDC 530, pp. 7, 12 (Hyman's impressions, December 8, 1928); TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1, d. 78, l. 254 (Malkov to Kalinin, February 20, 1928); TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1 d. 123, ll. 158–159 (Novyi Byt' to Komzet, August 1929), ll. 146–147 (report on Novyi Byt', autumn 1929), l. 153 (Sevastopol city council resolutions, October 12, 1929), ll. 150–151 (Novyi Byt' to Komzet, October 18, 1929), ll. 137–138 (Turkov to Komzet, November 8, 1929).
- 24 Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi archiv sotsial'noi-politicheskoi istorii, f. f-78, op. 1, d. 217 (Belov-Shcheglov's report, September 4, 1926); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 990, ll. 7–8, 24 (material for Obkom, late 1930); GARF, f. r-7746, op. 1, d. 256, ll. 1–8 (instructions for checking the status of settlers, 1929); TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1, d. 121, ll. 8–9 (Temkin to Komzet, September 5, 1929), d. 133, ll. 41–42 (protocol of Evpatoria Komzet, September 12–22, 1929); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 1034, ll. 5–7 (protocol of the Evseksiia Obkom bureau, January 18, 1930); TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1, d. 108, l. 20 (Dashkovskii to Agro-Joint, September 3, 1929), l. 19 (Aizenberg to Komzet, September 5, 1929), l. 18 (Temkin to Komzet, October 5, 1929).
- 25 TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1, d. 414, l. 68 (Mandel'shtam to Zaichik, May 16, 1934), l. 67 (Zaichik to Mandel'shtam, May 22, 1934); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 1208, l. 203 (Levin's report, late 1933); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 1397, l. 229 (protocol no. 62 of the Obkom bureau, August 5, 1935); JDC 531, p. 1 (Smolar's report); American Jewish Archive (hereafter 'AJA'), Felix Warburg Papers (hereafter 'WP'), Box 265/1 (Rosen to Agro-Joint, May 27, 1930); 'Kotvetu: vinovnikov sryva seva v Kalinindorfskom raione', *Tribuna*, no. 12 (1932): 14; Reitanovskii, *Na kolkhoznoi zemle*, 54–59.

- 26 TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1, d. 123, l. 15 (Reznichenko and Tyshkovokii to Komzet chairman, March 31, 1929), d. 133, l. 41 (protocol of Evpatoria Komzet, September 21–22, 1929), d. 990, l. 148 (GPU report, December 27, 1930), d. 414, l. 67 (Zaichik to Mandel'shtam, May 22, 1934); GARF, f. r-7541, op. 1, d. 331, ll. 11–12 (Komzet Evpatoria to Komzet Moscow, January 4, 1930); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 1034, ll. 5–7 (protocol of the Evseksiia Obkom, January 18, 1930); TsGAK, f. r-515, op. 1, d. 414, l. 23 (Redkin to Komzet, October 9, 1934); Merezhin, *Pervaia vesna*, 5. See also Z. Malchov and Meizlin interviews (Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Oral History Department [ICJ], 58/42), pp. 30, 23; GARF, f. r-7746, op. 2, d. 77, ll. 98–121 (Grower, 1923–1937), d. 157, ll. 93–137 (Lubarsky, 1927–1938); JDC 516, p. 4 (verbatim minutes, January 25, 1937); TsGAK, f. r-2094, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 4–5 (ORT to Komzet, December 27, 1936), ll. 178–182 (results and future plans of ORT); GARF, f. r-7746, op. 4, d. 29, l. 8 (short report on Agro-Joint activity in Ukraine, 1935); AJA, WP, Box 342/8 (Agro-Joint, January 19, 1937); Aryeh Munitz, 'A Letter Concerning the ORT in Soviet Russia Before its Liquidation', *Michael*, 6 (1980) 209.
- 27 TsGAK, f. r-1520, op. 1, d. 27, l. 237 (Raitsin-Romanovskii to kolkhoz chairmen, October 1937).
- 28 Dekel-Chen, 'Shopkeepers and Peddlers', 300–302, 367–369.
- 29 YIVO, RG 358/97, pp. 2–3 (Rosen to Molotov, mid-1938); GARF, f. r-5446, op. 22a, d. 1491, l. 99 (Chutskaev to Molotov, April 3, 1938); GARF, f. r-7541, op. 1, d. 972, ll. 2–5, 25.
- 30 For more on this campaign, see Jonathan Dekel-Chen, "'New" Jews of the Agricultural Kind: A Case of Soviet Interwar Propaganda', *Russian Review* 66 (2007) 424–450.
- 31 TsGAK, f. r-2094, op. 1, d. 24, ll. 27–30 (decision no. 328 of the Sovnarkom economic council, May 17, 1938), l. 7 (TsIK and Sovnarkom decision, June 1, 1938); TsGAK, f. r-30, op. 6, d. 8, l. 32 (Rabinovich to Orlovoi, July 10, 1938), l. 12 (Klempert to Rabinovich, December 19, 1938), d. 16, ll. 40, 44 (Rabinovich and Klempert report, December 31, 1938); TsGAK, f. r-2094, op. 1, d. 24, l. 28 (decision no. 328, Sovnarkom economic council, May 17, 1938); GARF, f. r-5446, op. 22a, d. 1491, l. 99 (Chutskaev to Molotov, April 3, 1938); GARF, f. r-5446, op. 22a, d. 1491, ll. 81–82 (Chubar' and Belen'kii to Molotov, May 23, 1938).
- 32 TsGAK, f. r-2094, op. 1, d. 18, l. 37 (Redkin to Narkomzem, October 19, 1937); GARF, f. r-9498, op. 1, d. 497, ll. 15–16 (Agro-Joint to Dzhankoi

- Shop, March 26, 1938); GARF, f. r-7541, op. 1, d. 931, l. 43 (Khoine to Ozet, December 1937); TsGAK, f. r-30, op. 6, d. 16, l. 28 (Klempert's report, April 22, 1939).
- 33 GARF, f. r-5446, op. 22a, d. 1491, l. 81 (Chubar' and Belen'kii to Molotov, May 23, 1938).
- 34 Dekel-Chen, 'Shopkeepers and Peddlers', 337–338, 361–363.
- 35 Colonists most often sought enlarged credits. See GARF, f. r-7541, op. 1, d. 211, ll. 93–94 (Fridman to Komzet, May 26, 1928); YIVO, RG 358/151, p. 3 (Dashkovskii to Agro-Joint, December 1, 1926).
- 36 JDC 528, p. 2 (notes by Frank Horowitz, 1928); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 990, l. 21 (material for the Crimean Obkom, late 1930).
- 37 TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 1397, l. 229 (protocol no. 62 of the Obkom bureau, August 5, 1935).
- 38 TsGAK, f. r-30, op. 6, d. 3, l. 96 (Rabinovich and Klempert to Raispolkom, May 31, 1938), l. 5 (Rabinovich to Raispolkom, April 1939).
- 39 GARF, f. r-7746, op. 1, d. 248, ll. 7–14 (Crimean Agro-Joint to Moscow Agro-Joint, December 27, 1929); GARF, f. r-7541, op. 1, d. 411, ll. 1–6 (plan of collectivization, January 15, 1930); TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 1034, l. 9 (Redkin to Evpatoria Credit Association, January 10, 1930), l. 8 (Temkin's report, January 31, 1930), d. 990, l. 118 (Sologub to Obkom, December 20, 1930); Merezhin, *O sploshnoi kollektivizatsii*, 43.
- 40 TsGAK, f. p-1, op. 1, d. 830, l. 7 (Gurevich to Takser, January 1, 1928).
- 41 Jonathan Dekel-Chen, 'Defusing the Ethnic Bomb: Resolving Local Conflict through Philanthropy in the Interwar USSR', in Jonathan Dekel-Chen et al. (eds), *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* (Bloomington, 2010) 186–203.
- 42 *Sovetskomu Krymu dvadtsat' let, 1920–1940* (Simferopol, 1940) 279–283; Broshevan, 'Natsional'nye raiony', 123; A.G. Gertsen, *Evrei v Krymu* (Simferopol, 1999) 38.

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