

THE JEWISH FARMERS IN BELARUS DURING THE 1920s

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Revolution and civil war in Russia (1917-1921) precipitated far-reaching changes in the life of Belarus Jewry. The shtetls (settlements) were extremely overpopulated and Jews eventually sought and found an escape. In 1923, 18 percent of Soviet Jewry lived in Belarus. This essay describes the attitude of the authorities to the problem of Jewish land tenure regulation in the New Economic Policy, creation of individual farms, cooperatives and collective farms, and attitudes to that of the Belarussian peasantry. Despite the fact that the Jewish population in Belarus was mainly urban, beginning in the mid-1920s Jewish agriculture began to be taken seriously. The number of collective farms founded by Belarussians decreased from 287 to 235, while at the same time Jewish ones increased from 127 to 145, although the majority of Jews preferred to work in a private economy. The Jewish farmers were very enterprising and made use of various agronomical and technical innovations.

Zionist activists, not without reason, were strongly opposed to Jewish land tenure in Belarus, considering it to be a Bolshevik trick. At the beginning of the 1930s, Jewish farmers were forcibly absorbed by the Belarussian general collective farms during Stalin's collectivization policy. Its agricultural institutions gradually degenerated and by the end of the decade most were liquidated.

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Jews first entered Belarus in the late fourteenth century with the permission of Vitovt, Prince of the Great Kingdom of Lithuania. They immigrated there from the countries of Western Europe, mostly from Germany and Poland. For more than six centuries the symbiotic relations between Belarussians and Jews were, in the main, amicable. The Belarussian Jews led a characteristically collective lifestyle, a phenomenon amplified by processes of internal differentiation in all areas of life together with a predisposition toward collective integration into the surrounding environment, all against the background of modernization.

After Belarus became part of Russia in the late eighteenth century, Jews became an integral part of the Russian empire. In 1847, 225,725 Jews lived in three Belarus guberniyas (provinces) and in 1897, 724,548 or 13.6 percent were Jews.¹ There was no other state on the European continent which officially pursued such repressive anti-Jewish policies in the nineteenth century as the Tsarist Russian Empire. For as long as they could, the Russian Tsars had sought to keep Jews out of the land which they ruled. By 1897, the Jewish population had increased to 5,189,400 or 4.13 percent of the Empire's total population and by 1914, about half of world Jewry was concentrated in the gigantic, sprawling landmass controlled by the Tsars. Most of them were confined by law to the "Pale of Settlement." It was a territory of approximately a million square kilometers, which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, where the majority of them lived in poverty and deprivation. They were subjected to endless, humiliating decrees purportedly designed to "protect" the local population from the specter of "economic exploitation."²

The Jews in the cities and townships of Belarus had relationships with the village and rural economy in a variety of ways. Both wealthy and poor Jews engaged in development and trade in the forest industries, and established small or medium-sized timber enterprises. They also developed leather and allied industries on a similar scale. Another Belarussian Jewish occupation was peddling, combined with the buying up of village produce, such as flax, hemp and bristles. At the same time a number of Jews were involved in agriculture in all of the western provinces of the Russian Empire (five Belarussian provinces as well as those of Kovno, Kiev, Valyn and Padol), comprising 6.2 percent in 1897.³

The February 1917 revolution precipitated far-reaching changes in the internal life of the Jews of Belarus which contributed to the break up of the traditional Jewish social and spiritual patterns and loyalties. During World War I, a stream of Jewish refugees and emigrants from Poland and Lithuania passed through Belarus and were warmly received by the Jews there. With the coming to power

of the Bolshevik party in November 1917, and the ensuing civil war, an entirely new situation was created. The civil war and pogroms led many Jews to support their Bolshevik protectors.⁴

The Jewish shtetls or settlements were extremely overpopulated, and to find any work or to leave the country was difficult. The hopelessness of the situation led some Jews to despair, pushed others to active participation in the revolution and caused the emigration of some. The immeasurable energy of Jews sought and found an outlet. Within 25 years, 1897-1923, the Jewish population in Belarus decreased by 42,000 and those that remained, in general, dragged out a miserable existence. The civil war stopped emigration and the surplus Jewish population was partly absorbed by Red Army mobilizations or by migration to Central Russia and even to Siberia.⁵

During the first years of Soviet rule, the Jews of Belarus found themselves in an exceptional situation. Among the Belarussians, mainly poor and uneducated peasants, nationalist feelings were just beginning to crystallize. However, the anti-Jewish tradition which poisoned relations between Jews and non-Jews in Poland and Ukraine, was little felt among the peasants of Belarus.⁶ In 1923, 18 percent of Soviet Jewry lived in Belarus. They numbered 447,667 or 10.7 percent of the eastern Belarussian inhabitants (not taking into account the Jews of Gomel and some districts of Vitebsk provinces). According to the 1921 Peace Treaty the west part of the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), as it was known, became part of Poland. At the same time there were 187,623 Jews in the rural areas of Soviet Belarus.⁷

With the consolidation of the Soviet regime in Belarus, the economic structure of its Jews was overturned. In the years of the so-called New Economic Policy the situation of the Jews was more difficult than that of non-Jews. The number of non-independent residents who could not provide themselves with subsistence and earn a living was 12 percent higher for Jews than for other nationalities. They were not only former Jewish merchants, dealers, tradesmen, shopkeepers, mediators, and teachers, but also numerous craftsmen, handicraft workers and also persons of the free professions. The abolition of private trade and the restrictions on the small artisan created a large class of citizens "deprived of rights" (*lishentsy*). In the 1920s, official Soviet documents also called them, "persons without any definite kind of occupation." Such persons lived with the help of remittances from their relatives living abroad or support by some philanthropic organization, mainly from the United States. For example, within six months of 1925, through branches of the Belarus Bank system alone, \$500,000 went to inhabitants of the BSSR's Jewish communities.⁸

Soviet authorities considered *lishentsy* as “petit bourgeois parasites” and exposed them to all kinds of discrimination. Their children could not enter educational institutions or join Komzomol (the Young Communist League), which deprived them of any prospective outlook for the future. In fact, they lost their civil rights. In 1923, the Chief Bureau of Yevseksiya (the Jewish section of the Communist party) in Belarus stated in a report that the “Jewish community (shtetl) was rapidly becoming destitute.” The tactless conduct of the local Soviet staff only aggravated the situation. All the residents of the Jewish settlements, without distinction, were put on lists of bourgeoisie and “Jewish exploiters.” These lists included craftsmen, farmers and market-gardeners. In late 1923, the Yevseksiya’s annual report summarized that in the Jewish settlements there were greater violations of revolutionary law than in Belarussian villages.⁹

After the revolution most of the Jews in the settlements started to work at all kinds of crafts. Nevertheless, they could not extricate themselves from their difficulties and faced a permanent crisis. The basic reasons for this are as follows: their weak professional skills, large-scale unemployment, great competition and lack of ready capital. The percentage of wage labor was insignificant since nearly everyone was self-employed in the Jewish settlements. Some, such as blacksmiths, were better off, but others, such as tanners, dress-makers, tailors, shoemakers and others suffered from joblessness. Jewish farmers could not prosper because they never had enough land. On average, in Belarus, Jewish individual farmers had only 0.75 desyatin for each person of his family and 1.5 desyatin in the collective farms. One more problem was the question of pasture. Generally, it belonged to “sovkhozy” (state Soviet farms) and private Belarussian farmsteads demanding exorbitantly high payment for its use.¹⁰

In order to overcome the economic difficulties and overpopulation in the Jewish settlements, the Soviet authorities decided to allow the Jews to become farmers. To the majority of the people of Belarus this was very irregular. There were many skeptics who asserted that lack of free land in the republic would lead to friction and conflict between the Belarussian peasantry and Jewish farmers. Therefore, it was necessary to evict all the Jews who wanted to devote themselves to agriculture.¹¹

After all the disputes and doubts, the question of putting some of the inhabitants of the Jewish settlements into the agricultural sector was recognized as important to relieve overpopulation in their area, ensure security and to provide jobs and food.

It is important to emphasize that the creation of the first Jewish collective farms started naturally in 1918-1920. They were founded

by groups of workers, craftsmen, merchants, dealers and shopkeepers who saved themselves from famine in the rural areas. Reconstruction of industry in 1921 did not cause the disintegration of the Jewish farms, although the formation of new ones was limited and even stopped. In 1923, according to incomplete information, 30,000 Jews were engaged in the agricultural sector of the BSSR. They occupied 18,043 desyatins of land, while before the 1917 Revolution they had 10,263.¹² In December 1924, a special All-Belarussian Congress of Jewish Peasants was convoked. Its records noted that Jews were successful farmers — careful, thoughtful and skilful masters of the land entrusted to them. They adopted collective agricultural ideas more easily and they were not encumbered by past peasant traditional experience. On 24-25 July 1925, the Belarus Soviet authorities promulgated a special law about placing land at the disposal of Jews. For its fulfillment a number of branches of the Belarussian Association of Working Class Jews were created and land tenure regulations were passed (*Tovarishchestvo po zemleustroistvu trudiyashchikhsya evreev, OZET*).¹³

Meetings and gatherings devoted to this law were held everywhere in the republic. Jewish land use commissions started to work in all the regions and districts of Belarus. They registered everyone who was interested in land tenure. The registration spread to 201 localities, including 146 settlements, villages, and 8 towns and cities of Belarus. 6,836 Jewish families (34,036 people) received land. This represented 11.7 percent of the Jewish population in the registered areas. Between 1924-1925, 80 Jewish collective farms were created in the BSSR and at the beginning of 1927 they numbered more than one-third of all collective farms in Belarus. It is clear that only some of the Jewish farmers were involved in the collective farms' movements. During 1927, as a whole, 7,951 Jewish families worked in agriculture in Belarus and only 1,211 among them were collectivized.¹⁴

In previous years, Soviet historians, researching the state of the Belarussian agricultural sector, disregarded one of its unusual sides. The Jewish importance among the Belarussian rural population was insignificant in 1926. 83.6 percent of BSSR Jews were urban, but in the 1925/1926 economic year the number of collective farms founded by Belarussians decreased from 287 to 235. At the same time the Jewish collectives increased from 127 to 145.¹⁵

Starting in the mid-1920s, Jewish agriculture had to be taken seriously. Their success was considered by some as a Bolshevik trick, and even as underhanded politics. They asserted that there could not be any Jewish progress or achievements because Jews could not adapt to agriculture owing to the lack of land tenure. More than that,

skeptics spoke of lack of land in the BSSR as a reason for the national conflict with the indigenous inhabitants. Actually these claims were refuted. In the rural sphere the main difference between the Jewish farmers and cooperative association members was an immediate intensive concentration on production. The newspaper *Zvezda* (the Star), the semi-official organ of the Belarus Communist party, reported in 1926 that Jewish farmers were very enterprising and made use of various agronomical and technical innovations. In large part it was collective agriculture which demonstrated the advantages of large rural enterprises in comparison with small ones. The newspaper concluded that Jewish farms were the centers of intensive agriculture in Belarus.¹⁶

This appraisal by the official mass media in many respects reflected a desire to replace the Communists' conception of reality. The majority of Jewish farmers did not want to join a large rural enterprise. At the same time, before Stalin's collectivization, the Communists were not interested in having the whole population on an identical financial level nor in establishing *kolkhoz* (collective farms) everywhere. Moreover, the Belarus government underlined the necessity to attract the Jewish farmers to participate in the collective farms' movement, and simultaneously it demanded that opportunity be given to choose the most attractive form of agriculture. In addition, Jews were permitted to organize several farm produce enterprises. Thus, the Jewish cooperatives in the rural areas had many subsidiary trades: 15 cheese dairies, 39 creameries, 39 starch factories, mills and sawmills, etc.¹⁷

The Belarussian peasantry's attitude to Jews working the land was based on their economic success or failure. First of all, inhabitants of the Belarus villages considered Jewish cultivators with some mistrust, but soon began to come to them for advice. Comradeship between Belarussian and Jewish agrarians grew. For instance, in Mogilev oblast (province) Belarus-Jewish relations were strained at the beginning, but after some time, Jews earned respect and gained confidence in themselves. Not infrequently there were occasions of serious mutual aid, coordinated actions and cooperation in Chausy, Bykhov, Emes, Krivichi, and other places. A resolution to give Jews land tenure was adopted in the Bobruisk region at the Streshin non-party conference (1926). The conference documents showed a desire by the Belarus peasantry to apply this measure widely and as soon as possible. In Gorodok and Gluboki (Vitebsk province) the Soviet district peasants' conference urgently asked the local land administration to organize Jewish farms and other types of land cooperatives.¹⁸

Jewish agricultural activities, land tenure, collective farms, Jewish farmers' life and efforts to adapt themselves to a new occupation were elucidated by various central and local Belarus periodicals. Between 1923-1928, short articles as well as analytical surveys appeared in *Zvezda* (the Star), *Sovetskaya Belorussia* (the Soviet Belarussia), *Mogilevsky Selyanin* (the Mogilev Peasant), *Polesskaya Pravda* (the Polesye's Truth), *Polotski Pakhar* (the Polotsk Ploughman), *Novaya Derevnya* (the New Village), *Kommunist* (the Communist) and others.

In the main articles were objective, well disposed to the Jews and tactful. For example, in the summer of 1926, *Zvezda* published a series of articles informing its readers that Jewish collective farms in the BSSR had a number of important achievements in economy and agriculture, that Jewish farmers preserved and increased the state property they received. They repaired it and built many new farm buildings. In cultivated areas they used the greater part for growing potatoes, clover, vika, and also widely adopted the use of vegetables and mineral fertilizers. Only selected seeds were used. Many farms acquired livestock and dairy cattle. In the Polotsk region 300 Jewish families were engaged in field crop cultivation and 40 percent of them worked in different forms of cooperatives. All this activity revived the surrounding settlements. Four local councils began to function using Yiddish as well as Belarussian. In the Slutsk region 35 Jewish families united in order to drain 425 desyatin of swamp land.¹⁹ At the same time *Zvezda* stressed that in spite of the fact that some Jews cultivated their lands collectively, the majority of them preferred to work in the private economy and live in shtetls, not in villages or farmsteads.

Among the drawbacks was the diverse composition of the participants in the Jewish collective farms. They had different attitudes toward property, different kinds of work experience and their financial investments were not equal. They could not decide on how to divide the proceeds, the voting procedure at meetings, or how the work should be shared. There was a great shortage of experienced leaders, instructors, good managers, skilled agronomists, technicians and engineers. For the most part their equipment and technology was very primitive and thus there was much hard manual labor.

For those who moved from Jewish settlements to collective farms in rural areas there were, in addition to the economic difficulties, also the difficulties caused by the way of life. The OZET employees noted the bad sanitary conditions and the frequent lack of hygiene in the homes of the farmers. Many OZET officials noted the lack of schools, hospitals and medical assistance stations. They drew a gloomy picture: "There was no living space. They quite often lost

contact with their former occupation and the horrible winter threatened them."²⁰

It was just these circumstances which prevented many Jews from moving to a village to pursue agricultural activities. Nevertheless, some Belarus Jews made such a choice. They used state guardianship and government assistance, and in 1924-1927, in Soviet Belarus, 170 agricultural cooperatives and 20 settlements were created. The Jewish part of the Belarus agricultural sector had 49,477 desyatin of the land worked by 7,951 families (nearly 40,000 people). Through BELOZET, 1,300 Jewish families were moved from Belarus to Crimea at that time.²¹

In the period researched, 490,000 rubles were designated (230,000 from the Belarus Agricultural Bank, 220,000 from the USSR KOMZET, and 40,000 from the Central Soviet Agricultural Bank) for Jewish land arrangements. In addition, the state granted short-term loans for buying seeds, agricultural implements, machines and equipment. There were also measures taken to train skilled personnel for Jewish farms and cooperatives. This training took place at the Belarus Agricultural Academy in Gorky (Mogilev province), Belarus State University named after Lenin, Minsk Agricultural Institute and the Jewish Agricultural College in Kurasovshchina in Minsk region.²²

Considerable aid was received from the different Jewish international organizations such as the American-Jewish United Agricultural Corporation (Agrojoint), the Society for Spreading Farming and Handicraft among Jews (SFHJ), the Jewish Colonial Society and others. For example, in 1927, the SFHJ served 22 Jewish collectives (146 families) and 394 families of private farmers in an area of 4,536 desyatin. To resettle and organize the work and life of one Jewish family in agriculture cost between 1,800 and 2,200 rubles. The international financial support for the Jewish land tenure regulations in the USSR in 1925-1927 amounted to 8,560,000 rubles.²³

One more important circumstance which helps to explain the great attention paid by Soviet officials in Belarus to the Jewish land tenure regulation was the high number of Jews in the membership of the Belarus Communist party. In 1922, Jews numbered 21 percent of all CBP members, and in 1927 and 1941 (May) respectively, 23.7 and 21.6 percent. Taking into account that the Jewish population in the BSSR, between the two world wars, never exceeded some 10 percent, it is clear why all Belarus officials were forced to reckon with their local Jews.²⁴

Jewish farms were created on state land as well as on the territory of unprofitable and ruined Belarus *sovkhozy* (state Soviet farms), and *artels* (cooperatives), which had been abolished owing to their poor

results. In the economic year 1927/1928, a large landmass of about 50,000 desyatin was put at the disposal of Jewish agriculture in southeast Belarus (Zhlobin-Mozyr-Gomel). The Jewish farmers were assisted in conducting necessary land improvements here. Documents and archive materials indicate that there was a high level of nationalization of the means of production. Nevertheless, the majority of Jewish farms functioned as cooperatives, with the equalizing principles of the commune being strange to them. Members of Jewish cooperatives were engaged in working on the land and in stock breeding, and they profited from non-agricultural activities. This assisted them in maintaining land enterprises, feeding their members and thus surviving in the period of the New Economic Policy. Sometimes, farmers lived in settlements, moving to the rural areas only for seasonal work such as sowing and harvesting.²⁵

While conducting the policy of Jewish land tenure in Belarus, Bolshevism demanded that the Jews change their national traditions, their religion and give up the Yiddish language. It forced upon them a totally nihilistic attitude toward a Jewish future. The documents of the Ninth Belarus Communist Party Congress (December, 1925) stressed the following: "It is necessary to break categorically with old Jewish traditions and their settled communities; to leave that petit bourgeois swamp quickly and to immerse themselves in agriculture, work in a trade and become useful to society and the state."²⁶

Zionism was an opponent of this Bolshevik policy. According to Communist thinking, Zionism was not a Jewish national liberation movement. Rather it was an exceptionally reactionary nationalist one and an enemy of all working Jews. Zionists insisted and proved that the land was not private property and that Jewish farmers would not be permitted to become its real masters and be able to dispose of the fruits of their labor and that the veto of selling and buying of land prevented its owners from taking care of the land.²⁷ All the land in Soviet Belarus, as an integral part of the USSR, remained state property. Therefore, the authorities wanted to place the land at the disposal of the collective farms or with other cooperative forms of agricultural activities. At the same time, there were no guarantees that with changing circumstances the cooperatives' land would not once again be confiscated. That is why the underground Zionist organizations in Belarus opposed the holding of the first Belarus Jewish Peasants Congress. They accused the Yevseksiya of being connected to the NKVD (the security forces) and spoke about the temporary character of the land transfer to Jewish farmers and cooperatives.

The Yevseksiya actively opposed the violent propaganda campaign against the Jewish religion, way of life and national solidarity in Belarus. In the 1920s, the Zionist movement still retained influence and popularity, though it was exposed to repressive measures and systematic arrests of its members. Thus we can read in one of the Belarus Communist party reports of that time:

The Zionist movement is the only organized anti-Communist movement in the republic. Zionism has become a threatening factor in the last years. The circulation of its illegal literature is evident. Zionism strongly opposes the Jewish collective farms and cooperatives. The base of Zionism in Belarus is youth, children of well-to-do families, craftsmen and, sometimes, workers.²⁸

Yevseksiya officially recommended that the local party, state and Soviet activists struggle against Zionist "intrigues" which were attempting to further land tenure, create new Jewish cooperatives and collective farms, relax tax policy and conduct cultural and educational work, and that lectures be given on the damage caused by Zionist activists. At the same time the Soviet staff were urged to consider the needs of the Jewish settlement.

Soon the Zionists' fears and warnings were confirmed. The farms and cooperatives of Jews came under the influence of the local land authorities. At the beginning of the 1930s, Soviet collective farms (*kolkhozy*) lost features of the cooperatives. The policy of so-called *sploshnoi kollektivizatsyi* (total collectivization) overturned even compromise land decisions. The return to the ideals and norms of military Communism with its barracks' ideology had begun. Collectivization was accompanied by the policy of "internationalization," when individual Jewish farmers, and members of cooperatives were quickly and forcibly absorbed by the Belarussian general collective farms. From the mid-1930s, official state reports did not differentiate Jewish land activities. It should also be taken into account that the country was undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization, which demanded many new workers. Thousands of Jews, as well as their Belarussian neighbors and comrades, left the rural areas of the BSSR for urban centers. Internal migration of Jews from Belarus to the different districts and cities of Russia, especially Moscow and Leningrad, Crimea and Birobidjan, also continued.

The Soviet land tenure policy towards the Jews was not officially ended, but during the 1930s its agricultural institutions gradually degenerated and by the end of the decade most were liquidated. The systematic purge in the late 1930s brought the matter of Jewish land

use in Belarus to an end, even for its devotees and organizers. Thus, attempts of the Communist authorities in Belarus to integrate the local Jewish population into the agricultural sector failed to solve the problem. The traditions of the Jewish farmers had old roots, but they were not widely disseminated. The percentage of Belarussian Jews who lived in rural areas decreased from year to year.²⁹ The main reason for that phenomenon was not lack of Jewish ability to work the land, but the result of specific historic conditions and circumstances, which did not assist the development of the Jewish land tenure tradition.

On the eve of World War II, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia together had the second largest Jewish community in Europe. More than three million Jews dwelt in at least 1,300 towns and 1,200 rural districts, spread across the country. Nearly 300 Jewish settlements in Belarus were overrun by the Nazis in 1941-1942. Most of the Jews who did not manage to escape eastward were brutally slaughtered.³⁰ Until the beginning of the 1990s the Communist authorities in Belarus, following Moscow's directives, strove to implement the official overt and covert policies towards Jews. All information about the fate of the Jews in Belarus before and after World War II was strictly classified by the local authorities on orders from Moscow. Only after the disintegration of the USSR and the proclamation of the independence of Belarus was there an opportunity to access archival material, to study the problem and attempt to find the truth.

Notes

1. *The First All-Russian Empire Census in 1897*, N.A. Troinitsky, ed., vol. 2, (Saint Petersburg), p. 20; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 4, (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), p. 444.
2. Eli Weinerman, "Racism, Racial Prejudice and Jews in Late Imperial Russia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, 3 (July 1994):442-495.
3. N.A. Tizengauzen, *Nekotorye statisticheskie dannye o narodonaselenii Zapadnogo kraya* (Some Statistical Facts about the West Provinces' Population) (Minsk, 1910), p. 17.
4. During the civil war pogroms (1918-1921) the Jewish population in Belarus suffered greatly. Acts of barbarism took place in 177 localities — 1,748 Jewish families were attacked and among them 7,096 persons beaten, 1,100 killed, 150 wounded and 1,250 women raped. Belarus State Archive, fond (collection) 701, opis (inventory) 1, delo (file) 43, list (page) 20. Subsequently, BSA.
5. National Archive Republic of Belarus, f. 4, op. 7, d. 14, p. 134. Subsequently, NARB.

6. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 4, p. 445.
7. NARB, f. 4, op. 7, d. 14, p. 136.
8. BSA, f. 701, op. 1, d. 29, p. 3.
9. NARB, f. 4, op. 7, d. 14, p. 147.
10. NARB, f. 4, op. 10, d. 40, p. 85.
11. *Zvezda*, 24 July 1926 (Minsk).
12. Desyatina — land measure equivalent to 2.7 acres.
13. In the late 1920s, BELOZET consisted of 90 local branches and numbered 10,000 members — BSA, f. 11, op. 1, d. 29, p. 1.
14. *Itogi raboty po zemleustroistvu trudyashchegosya evreiskogo naseleniya v Belarusskoi SSR* (Results of the Work about the Organization of Jewish Land Tenure Regulation in Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (Minsk, 1927), p. 18.
15. BSA, f. 701, op. 1, d. 54, p. 31; f. 334, op. 1, d. 609, p. 31.
16. *Zvezda*, 27 July 1926.
17. BSA, f. 11, op. 1, d. 48, p. 25.
18. NARB, f. 4, op. 7, d. 14, pp. 148-150.
19. *Zvezda*, 11, 14, 21, 25, 27, 29, 6 July 1926.
20. BSA, f. 11, op. 1, d. 29, p. 47.
21. M. Kamenstein, *Sovetskaya vlast, evreiskoe zemleustroenie i OZET* (The Soviet Power, Jewish Land Tenure Regulation and OZET) (Moscow, 1928), pp. 18, 40.
22. NARB, f. 4, op. 7, d. 14, p. 155.
23. M. Kamenstein, pp. 22, 41-42, 45.
24. *Stranitsy istorii Kompartii Belorussii* (The Pages of the Belorussian Communist Party History) (Minsk, 1990), p. 285.
25. BSA, f. 11, op. 2, d. 8, pp. 1-6.
26. *Kommunisticheskaya partia Belorussii v rezolutsiyah i resheniyah s'ezdov i plenumov ZK* (The Communist Party of Belarussia in the Resolutions and Decisions of the Congresses and Plenary Sessions of the Central Committee), vol. 1 (Minsk, 1983), p. 294.
27. Itzhak Maor, *Zionist Movement in Russia* (Jerusalem: Society for Research on Jewish Communities, 1977) (Hebrew); *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and Soviet Union*, Yaacov Ro'i, ed. (London: Ilford, Frank Cass, 1995).
28. NARB, f. 4, op. 7, d. 14, p. 159.
29. According to the official data of the 1939 census, the rural Jewish population in the region and main villages in the USSR numbered 396,844 persons or 0.35 percent of the total inhabitants. It included 102,265 or 0.14 percent in the Russian Federation, 222,440 or 1.13 percent in Ukrainian SSR and 45,697 or 1.09 percent in Belarussian SSR. It stands to reason that they were not all involved in agricultural

activities. Mordechai Altshuler, ed., *Distribution of the Jewish Population of the USSR, 1939* (Jerusalem: Center for Research and Documentation of East European Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 45-46, 69.

30. Estimated in Garry Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack, eds., *Where Once We Walked, A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust* (New Jersey, 1991); *Blackbook of Localities Whose Jewish Population was Exterminated by the Nazis* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1965), pp. 424-435.