

Nina Katerli

ported by the prosecutors. For a long time all this was a puzzle for me. Only recently did it become clear. In 1987 the prosecutor's office rejected the demand of an individual that Romanenko be put on trial for his antisemitic book *On the Class Essence of Zionism*. Two years later, in *January of this year*, the [Leningrad] city prosecutor, D. Verevkin, confirmed his previous view of this book when he wrote: "... the historical facts in the book ... are correctly set forth. ... This book does not contain propaganda aimed at inciting national enmity. ... " *After this* how could the prosecutor's office provide aid in the reaching of a decision wherein it would be recorded that in a book which it had taken under its protection there were Nazi ideas?!

In May 1990 the experts presented the latest brief to the court. This time, I thought, victory was certain. But ... that would have threatened too many people. ... I do not mean Romanenko. After all, his book was not *samizdat*: those who ordered it, its supervisors, reviewers, and censors, can be found and, if necessary, punished. But once again—what about the prosecutor's office?

A way out was found. The plaintiff declared that ... he was requesting that the case be dropped. [He said]: "One must help implement the call of the President of the USSR ... in regard to the necessity of consolidating our society." The court, which not so long ago had added to the case the plaintiff's political call for people to "prepare themselves" for the armed intervention of the Zionists and for the transfer of patriots to an illegal status, now responded positively to the request of this fervent proponent of consolidation. The case was dropped. No representative of the prosecutor's office was present at the session—what would there have been for him to do there?

The trial has ended. What was its outcome? From a retired instructor of scientific communism the plaintiff was transformed into the chairman of All-Union and Universal anti-Zionist fronts which he himself created and, simultaneously, while remaining in the ranks of the CPSU, [he became] chairman of a new party, *Vozrozhdenie Rossii* (the Resurrection of Russia). Until recently at the public meetings of *Pamiat'* one could still buy photocopies of his new work *Genocide* and also of the well-known Nazi tool *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* with a foreword by him. It is true that he was deprived of the right of refer to himself as a veteran [of the Great Patriotic War]. ... However during two long years he had the opportunity to spread his views without hindrance. And not merely in such places as outdoor meetings in the rain and snow, but in the warm, well-lit hall of our Soviet courtroom with its facilities for radio broadcasts. ...

I and other participants in the trial wasted two years on this affair. In addition I was honored to receive an anonymous letter which promised that my skin would be used to make a wonderful lampshade. But I did succeed in getting Romanenko to withdraw his suit and hence lose the right to turn to the court in the event that someone repeats my evaluation of his work.

Therefore, I wish to declare that in the book *On the Class Essence of Zionism* issued by the publishing house of the Leningrad *obkom* of the Communist

Party of the Soviet Union, a book which the Leningrad prosecutor's office does not consider to be criminal, in a book in regard to which the Leningrad court did not issue any decision, in this very book there are contained ideas and practically direct citations from works of theoreticians of Nazism.

Nina Katerli
Leningrad

The "Crimean Affair"*

Shimon Redlich

The "Crimean Affair" is regarded as one of the most dramatic events in the history of Soviet Jews during and after the Second World War.¹ Recently, it has also started to assume polemic overtones.² As far as direct documentation is concerned, most sources available up till now were of a secondary nature. A first possible direct source pertaining to the "Crimean Affair" surfaced in the Solomon Mikhoels Collection acquired by the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People a few years ago.³ This document, consisting of two typewritten pages, with neither beginning nor end, was rightfully described by Prof. M. Altshuler as part of a memorandum on Crimea, presented by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) to the Soviet authorities.⁴ It is only recently that the Archives of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR became accessible for research and it is now possible to publish the following two versions of the "Crimean Memorandum."

* I would like to thank Dr. Yisrael E. Cohen for translating the documents and Mr. Vadim B. Dubson and Mr. Alexander D. Vaysberg for their help in Moscow.

1. See: Yehoshua A. Gilboa, *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 162-166; Shimon Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia: The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR, 1941-1948* (Boulder, 1982), pp. 53-57; Benjamin Pinkus, *Russian and Soviet Jews: Annals of a National Minority* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem, 1986), pp. 298-99.
2. A recent article in a conservative-nationalistic Moscow journal hinted at the "ethical" aspect of the JAC proposal regarding the Crimea. Its author appears to accuse the Soviet-Jewish leaders of the time: "At the end of the war, after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars the Committee suggested the establishment of a Jewish Soviet republic on the 'liberated' territory of the Crimea. ... The Crimea, unlike Palestine, actually turned into 'a land without a people.'" Quoted from: Vadim Kozhinov, "Sionizm Mikhaila Agurskogo i mezhdunarodnyi sionizm" (The Zionism of Mikhail Agursky and international Zionism) *Nash Sovremennik* 6 (1990), p. 137.
3. For a description of this collection see: M. Altshuler, "The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR in Light of New Documentation," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 1 (1984), pp. 253-54. The translation (by Stefanie Hoffman) of the parallel document there was consulted by the translator of this document.
4. See *ibid.*, pp. 268-69, and note 19, p. 288.

What is the essence of the "Crimean Affair" and what evidence is now available?

The idea of establishing a Jewish territorial unit, possibly a Jewish republic, in the Crimean Peninsula in southern USSR, was symptomatic of the frustrations, expectations and hopes prevailing within the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee towards the end of the war. The JAC, although established originally for Soviet war aid and propaganda purposes, started in time to assume a semi-official role of an institution representing the problems and interests of the Jewish population in the USSR.⁵ Numerous difficulties faced by Jewish wartime refugees returning to their prewar homes in the Western parts of the country, as well as the fact that Soviet Jews served Soviet wartime causes loyally, led the JAC leadership to believe that Stalin would be willing to approve a massive settlement of Jews in the Crimea. Jewish settlement in the Crimea was supported by the Soviet government in the 1920s. On the eve of World War II some 60,000 Jews, constituting more than 7% of the local population, lived on the peninsula. A number of Jewish autonomous districts were established in the 1930s. The war and specific Nazi policies towards Jews seemed to have postponed whatever Jewish hopes and plans existed for that area. However, the Soviet offensive and liberation of Nazi-occupied territories in 1943 and early 1944, as well as the aforementioned difficulties of postwar resettlement, led to the revival and intensification of plans regarding the Crimea.

It has been assumed that the "Crimean" idea was broached in the spring of 1944, during a Plenary Session of the JAC and a mass Jewish rally in Moscow. As we know, the entire Tatar population of the peninsula was deported to Central Asia and Kazakhstan in mid-May 1944, under the pretext of treason and collaboration with the Germans.⁶ This was part of Stalin's policy of uprooting "collaborator nations." Alexander Nekrich, in his book on the "punished peoples," writes: "There is no doubt that reports from the Crimea denouncing the conduct of the Tatar population played a fatal role in Moscow in deciding their fate." Did some of the JAC leaders know in advance about Stalin's plans regarding the Crimean Tatars? Did they consider the sunny peninsula in the south a good place for the suffering Jewish refugees regardless of Stalin's punitive project? Whatever the answer, the fact emerging now from the JAC archives is that the "Crimean Memorandum" was forwarded to Stalin already in February 1944.⁷ According to Khrushchev's memoirs: "Once

the Ukraine had been liberated, a paper was drafted by members of the Lozovsky committee. It was addressed to Stalin and contained a proposal that the Crimea be made a Jewish Soviet Republic within the Soviet Union after the deportation from the Crimea of the Crimean Tartars."⁸ Since the original part of Soviet Ukraine (Eastern Ukraine) was recaptured from the Germans in the fall of 1943, Khrushchev's testimony fits the chronology of events: the idea of a Jewish republic in the Crimea must have been discussed by the JAC at the latest in early 1944 and a memorandum sent to Stalin in February.

As already mentioned, the issue of Crimea was in the air during events organized by the Committee in April 1944.⁹ Abraham Sutskever, the partisan-poet from Vilna brought to Moscow, jotted down in his diary in July that a JAC delegation visited Maxim Litvinov and discussed with him the possibility of establishing a Jewish center in the Crimea.¹⁰ Other highly-placed persons who were apparently consulted by JAC leaders were Kaganovich and Molotov.¹¹ According to Khrushchev and B. Z. Goldberg (the most important liaison of the JAC abroad and head of the pro-Soviet American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists), Molotov was approached via his wife, Paulina Zhemchuzhina.¹² Solomon Lozovskii, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Director of the Sovinformburo in charge of all anti-Fascist committees, was also consulted and approved the submission of the memo to Stalin. The rehabilitation commission of the Politburo in its conclusions on the case of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee mentioned explicitly that the "Crimea letter" was edited by S. A. Lozovskii.¹³

Although no answer had been received from Stalin, the Crimea continued to be of interest to the Jewish Antifascist Committee. Some of its members and correspondents visited the region and their impressions were published in *Eynikayt*.¹⁴ A non-Soviet Jewish refugee writer, who lived in Moscow at that time and often visited the Committee offices, described in his memoirs the

(hereafter TsGAOR), Inventory 1, Collection 8114, file 792, p. 32. This date is also quoted in the report of the Politburo rehabilitation committee on the case of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, published in *Izvestiia Ts.K. K.P.S.S.*, No. 12 [Dec.], 1989, p. 37. Although in the various versions of the "Crimean Memorandum" both terms, "Soviet Jewish Republic" and "Jewish Autonomous Republic," are mentioned, the final version sent to Stalin in February 1944 spoke of "a Jewish socialist republic in the Crimea." One of the two versions published here states clearly that a Government commission on the establishment of a Jewish republic in the Crimea should be appointed "before the liberation."

5. For the history of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR see Redlich, *Propaganda*.
6. Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers* (London, 1974), pp. 107-108; Aleksandr M. Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York, 1978), pp. 13-35; Helen Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York, 1980), p. 191. Additional information on the deportation of the Crimean Tatars has been published recently by Nikolai Bugai, "V bessrochnuiu ssylku" (Into exile for life), *Abkhazskoe obozrenie*, no. 41 (Oct. 14, 1990), p. 11.
7. The date February 15, 1944, appears on one of the memorandum versions at the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee Collection, Central State Archives of the October Revolution of the USSR

8. *Khrushchev Remembers* (London, 1971), p. 260.
9. Redlich, *Propaganda*, p. 54 and p. 196, nn. 41 and 42.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 196 note 44.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 55, and p. 196, nn. 45 and 47.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 55, and p. 196, n. 46.
13. *Izvestiia Ts.K. K.P.S.S.* 12 (1989), p. 37.
14. Redlich, *Propaganda*, p. 56, and p. 196, n. 51. Opinions against the Crimean idea were also voiced at the JAC, for example by Markish and Ehrenburg.

that no positive response to the Crimean hopes was to be expected.¹⁵

When Soviet security agencies started the buildup of a case against the JAC in the fall of 1946, the "Crimean Memo" must have been considered as a possible incriminating document. However, its first official use in this sense was made only in early 1949, after the liquidation of the JAC, during the intensive wave of arrests of its members. The Politburo rehabilitation committee report on the JAC states that in a meeting with Lozovskii, which took place in mid-January 1949, shortly before his arrest, Malenkov "urged S. A. Lozovskii to confess that he had committed criminal deeds. G. M. Malenkov used for this purpose a letter suggesting the establishment of a Jewish socialist republic in the Crimea, sent to Stalin . . . on February 15, 1944."¹⁶

The "Crimean Memorandum" apparently served as a major proof of guilt during the interrogations and trial against the leaders of the Jewish anti-Fascist Committee in July 1952. The anti-Soviet "plot" fabricated for this purpose used some half-truths from the wartime activities of the Committee. A major element in the "treason scenario" was the contact established with American Jewish organizations, particularly the Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee). The JDC was indeed active in assisting Jewish settlers in the Crimea in the 1920s and such assistance might have been discussed with Mikhoels and Fefer during their mission to the U.S. in 1943. The JDC also submitted a number of memos to Soviet diplomats in the U.S. concerning assistance to Jewish repatriates in the Crimea.¹⁷

As late as 1956, already after his famous 20th Party Congress speech, Khrushchev told a Canadian-Jewish communist during a two-hour conversation on the Jewish problem in the USSR that "He, Khrushchev, agreed with Stalin that the Crimea, which was depopulated at the end of the war against Hitler, should not be designated a center for Jewish colonization because in case of war it would be turned into a *place d'armes* (a base for attack) against the USSR."¹⁸ In his reminiscences, recorded after his forced retirement and published in the West in 1971, Khrushchev dwelt at some length on the "Crimean Affair":

. . . Was it necessary to create a Jewish Union or autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation or within the Ukraine? I don't think it was. . . . This question was never discussed in substance. We had been conditioned to accept Stalin's reasoning. . . . He contended that

if a Jewish Republic were created in the Crimea, then Zionism, which is rampant in America, would gain a foothold in our country. . . . He had made up his mind, and he had people arrested, arbitrarily and without any regard for legal norms, regardless of the important and positive role which the accused had played during the war in helping to bring to light the atrocities committed by the Germans. . . . They were deprived of their liberty and in many cases their lives. I consider the whole affair to have been a disgrace. Stalin could have simply rejected their suggestion and rebuked them. But no, he had to destroy all those who actively supported the proposal.¹⁹

It would be difficult to establish definitely, even with the new Soviet documentation at hand, the precise date of Stalin's decision to use the "Crimean Affair" as an element in his anti-Jewish campaign. Was this perhaps a premeditated provocation already in 1944? Such an assumption seems far-fetched in view of the prevailing circumstances and moods before the end of the war as opposed to those which started emerging in late 1946. What seems sufficiently clear is the central role played by the "Crimean plot" in Stalin's policies against the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in his final years.

Together with the partial text published earlier by Altshuler we have now at least three different versions of the "Crimean Memorandum." It is possible that additional versions may still be found in the JAC archives. The fact that several versions of this document were drafted proves that the issues raised were of high importance to the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and that their presentation to the top Soviet leadership, including Stalin, was an extremely sensitive matter. The establishment of a Jewish republic in the Crimea did not seem impossible in early 1944. Stalin's views of and policies toward Jews and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the late forties and early fifties turned this very idea into high treason.

* * * * *

To the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR Comrade Stalin, I. V.20

Dear Iosif Vissarionovich!

In the course of the Patriotic War there arose a number of issues connected with the life and organization of the Jewish masses of the Soviet Union.

19. *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 261.

20. This version is to be found in the TsGAOR, Collection 8114, Inventory 1, File 792, pp. 167-70. An almost identical version, dated February 15, 1944 is located in the same file, starting on p. 32. This version, has an additional addressee, besides Stalin: "Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, Comrade Molotov, V. M." We may assume therefore that a copy was sent to Molotov.

Before the war more than 5 million Jews, including approximately one and a half million Jews from the western territories of the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic area, Bessarabia and Bukovina, and also Poland, lived in the USSR. In the temporarily occupied regions no less than 1.5 million Jews were annihilated.²¹

With the exception of hundreds of thousands of soldiers self-sacrificingly fighting in the ranks of the Red Army,²² the Jewish population of the USSR is scattered throughout the Central Asian republics, Siberia, the banks of the Volga, and in certain central regions of the RSFSR.

First of all, naturally, the evacuated Jewish masses, along with others, face the question of returning to their native places. However, in the light of that tragedy which the Jewish people is suffering in the present war, this [step] would not solve fully the problem of the organization of the Jewish population of the USSR.

In the first place, due to the extreme Fascist bestiality in particular in relation to the Jewish population and its total annihilation in the temporarily occupied Soviet areas, for many of the evacuated Jews their places of origin lost their physical and psychological significance. What is meant here is not only that their homes were destroyed—that relates to all those who returned home. For a great part of the Jewish population what is meant is that their places of origin were turned by the Fascists into never to be brought to life mass cemeteries where their families and friends lie. As for the Jews from Poland and Rumania who became Soviet citizens,²³ their returning home is a moot question, all the more so since also in those places the whole Jewish population has been destroyed and all traces of Jewish culture have been wiped from the face of the earth.

In the second place, in view of the extraordinary growth among the fraternal peoples [of the USSR] of national cadres who are building their own cultures, a significant part of the intelligentsia of Jewish nationality, which previously worked in various fields of national culture of the fraternal peoples,

are increasingly finding less use for their energies. This leads to a lack of suitable employment for a large part of this intelligentsia.

The intelligentsia of Jewish nationality could utilize to the utmost the cultural energies which it has amassed over the ages to build a Jewish Soviet culture, which already has great achievements. However, the dispersion of the Jewish population, which amounts to an insignificant minority in all republics, does not permit the possibility of achieving this.

Basically political-educational and cultural-enlightenment work in their native language [Yiddish] has ceased among the Jewish masses. There exists a small number of Jewish cultural institutions (some theaters, one publishing house and a single weekly newspaper) which are not able to satisfy the cultural requirements and needs of the Jewish population of over 3 million.²⁴

Leaving the huge mass of this population in a dispersed state, without political and cultural education in its native language will create a free field for the intrigues of alien and hostile influences.

During the war certain capitalist vestiges became intensified in the psyche of certain strata of various nationalities, including their intelligentsia. One of the most striking expressions of these relics is new outbursts of anti-semitism.²⁵ These outbursts are in every possible way being incited by Fascist agents and covert hostile elements, with the aim of subverting a most important achievement of the Soviet regime—friendship of the peoples.

These unhealthy phenomena are extremely painful to all strata of the Jewish population which have proved themselves real patriots of our country with the heroism of their best sons and daughters on the fronts of the Patriotic War and in the rear. The appearance of antisemitism evokes a sharp reaction in the soul of every Soviet Jew without exception also because the entire Jewish people is experiencing the greatest tragedy in its history, having lost in Europe about 4 million of its number, i.e., more than a quarter of its total, at the hands of the Fascist barbarians. The Soviet Union is the sole country which has preserved the life of almost half of the Jewish population of Europe. On the other hand, incidents of antisemitism, combined with the Fascist bestiality, have encouraged the growth of nationalistic and chauvinistic feelings among some strata of the Jewish population.

With the aim of normalizing the economic situation of all strata of the Jewish population and the further growth and development of Soviet Jewish culture, with the aim of the maximum mobilization of all the forces of the Jewish population for the welfare of the Soviet homeland, with the aim of

21. For estimates of the size of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II, in the Soviet annexed territories and Jews annihilated by the Nazis in former Soviet territories see: Mordechai Altshuler, "The Soviet Union, Jews," in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York, 1990), vol. 4, pp. 1383-90.

22. For estimates of Jews fighting in the ranks of the Red Army during the Second World War and those awarded various distinctions for excelling in combat see: Y. Kantor, "Yidn oyf dem grestn un vikhtikstn front" (Jews on the largest and most important front), *Folksshtime*, April 18, 1963; Reuben Ainsztein, "Soviet Jewry in the Second World War," in Lionel Kochan, ed., *The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917* (London-New York-Toronto, 1970), pp. 269-87; Dov Levin, "Events and Evaluations of the Part of the Jews in the Red Army During World War II" (Hebrew), *Massuah* 10 (1982), pp. 79-108. See also: Aron Abramovich, *V reshavshchei voine* (In the decisive war), (Tel Aviv, 1981); Gershon Shapiro, *Eyrei geroi sovet'skogo soiuza* (Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union), (Tel Aviv, 1982) [English version: *Under Fire: The Stories of Jewish Heroes of the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem, 1988)].

On the citizenship issue of non-Soviet Jews see: Dov Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet-Annexed Territories, 1939-1941* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv, 1980); and Yosef Litvak, *Polish-Jewish Refugees in the USSR, 1939-1946* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv, 1988).

24. For details on Jewish culture in the USSR during and after the war see: Ch. Szmeruk, "Yiddish Publications in the USSR from the Late Thirties to 1948," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 4 (1960), pp. 5-39; Benjamin Pinkus, *the Soviet Government and the Jews, 1948-1967: A Documented History* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 259-307.

25. Antisemitism in wartime and postwar USSR is discussed in: Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Jews in the Soviet Union* (Syracuse, 1951); Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Jews in the Soviet Union Since the Beginning of World War II (1939-1965)* (Russian), (New York, 1966); William Korey, *The Soviet Cage: Anti-Semitism in Russia* (New York, 1973).

fully equalizing the situation of the Jewish masses among the fraternal peoples, we believe it timely and useful—in order to solve post-war problems—to pose the question of the establishment of a Jewish Soviet socialist republic.

In its time a Jewish autonomous region was created in Birobidzhan with the prospect of transforming it into a Jewish Soviet republic, thus resolving the state and legal problem also for the Jewish people. It must be acknowledged that the Birobidzhan experiment, for a variety of reasons, primarily due to the insufficient mobilization of its full potential, and also in view of its [Birobidzhan's] extreme distance from the primary locations of the Jewish working masses, did not produce the desired effect.²⁶ However, despite all difficulties, the Jewish autonomous region became one of the most advanced regions in the Far Eastern territory, which shows the ability of the Jewish masses to build their own Soviet governing structure. To an even greater degree this ability was demonstrated in the development of Jewish national regions established in the Crimea.²⁷

In view of the above, we consider expedient the creation of a Jewish Soviet republic in one of the regions where, subject to political considerations, this is possible. Thus it appears that one of the most suitable regions is the territory of the Crimea, which to a very great degree corresponds to requirements in relation to space necessary for resettlement and also to the experience in developing Jewish national regions there.

The creation of a Jewish Soviet republic would solve once and for all in a Bolshevik manner, in the spirit of the Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy, the problem of the state and legal position of the Jewish people and the further development of its long-lived culture. Such a problem which was impossible to solve for many centuries can be solved only in our Great Socialist country.

The idea of the creation of a Jewish Soviet republic enjoys tremendous popularity among very broad Jewish masses of the Soviet Union and among the best representatives of the fraternal peoples.

In the building of a Jewish Soviet republic we would receive essential help also from the Jewish masses of all countries of the world regardless of where they live.

On the basis of the above, we propose:

1. The creation of a Jewish Soviet socialist republic on the territory of the Crimea.
2. The timely appointment—before the liberation of the Crimea—of a government commission to work out this problem.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan see: Jacob Lvavi, *The Jewish Colonization in Birobidzhan* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem, 1964).

²⁷ On Jewish colonization in the Crimea see: Yehuda Shulsky, "Crimea," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, pp. 1103-1108.

We hope that you will give appropriate attention to our proposal on the implementation of which depends the fate of a whole people.

S. M. Mikhoels
Sh. Epshtein
I. Fefer

* * *

The Germans destroyed four million Jews in Europe. One fourth of the Jewish people perished at their hands. One out of every four Jews was killed by them.

Of the four million Jews who perished approximately two million were Soviet citizens.

In this catastrophe which befell us, unprecedented in our annals, the people find great consolation in the heroism of Jewish soldiers who are fighting for our homeland.

According to the 1939 census, the Jews were seventh among the peoples of the USSR. Among those who were honored for their deeds in battle the Jews are third.

The heroic behavior at the front of the best sons of the Jewish people and the high estimation of the Soviet government of their selfless loyalty to the homeland is the pride of the Jewish masses of the USSR and of the whole world.

In the USSR there now live, according to estimates, approximately two and a half million Jews. They comprise the sole nucleus of the Jewish people surviving in Europe. Their fate will essentially determine the future of the Jewish people. At present the Jews—of the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Crimea, the Smolensk region, Moldavia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland—are scattered, mainly in Central Asia, the Urals, Siberia, Bashkiria, and Tataria.

The approaching final victory over the enemy places on the agenda the issue of the forms of future life of these Jewish masses. Moreover, the very existence of the people depends on the way it is resolved.

For the first time since the Jewish people has been living among the peoples of Europe the Soviet government has posed the issue of the state-territorial resolution of the problems of the life and culture of the Jewish people by establishing a Jewish autonomous region in Birobidzhan.

The concentration of Jewish masses in a special territory, the creation of a Jewish Soviet republic would be worthy of the great Leninist-Stalinist principles of the brotherhood of nations—a resolution of the so-called Jewish question, which remained unresolved and unresolvable (even) for democratic bourgeois states.

Moreover, one should consider the Birobidzhan experiment, which basically did not succeed mainly for the following reasons:

- A. The great distance from the primary locations of Jews.
- B. For centuries the Jews lived in western and southern Russia and it was

ficant place among the basic cadres of pioneers of the Jewish Republic in the Crimea.

The whole complex of problems of the revival of the normal life of the Jewish masses raises the [issue of the] task of preparing appropriate cadres of cultural workers, teachers, newspaper workers, et al.

That is an immediate task. It is extremely desirable that by the beginning of the 1944-1945 academic year there be established a VUZ [institute of higher education] of Jewish culture where it would be possible to train appropriate cadres. It would be desirable to establish such a VUZ in Moscow, where the most qualified Jewish academic forces are concentrated and where it would be easiest to provide the required ideological leadership.

The creation of a Jewish autonomous republic in the Crimea, the restoration of the culture and the normal life of the Jewish masses in the Ukraine, in Belorussia, and in Lithuania in accordance with the whole system of the free national development of the peoples of the USSR would be a new moral and political blow to Fascism.

conditions of the East.

C. The creation of the autonomous region, which might have developed into an autonomous republic required broad, in accordance with the principles of Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy, constant propaganda among the Jewish masses. However, such propaganda was either entirely lacking or was distorted by the former heads of OZET and KOMZET.²⁸

D. A constant propaganda campaign would have to be combined with appropriate measures of state rational and broad mobilization of the masses.

In accordance with the age-long experience of our people, *the most desirable territory for the establishment of a Jewish Soviet Republic would be the Crimea*, all the more so since for the last fifteen years before the war Jewish collective farms developed successfully there and even Jewish national regions were established.

The creation of a Jewish autonomous republic in the Crimea would fulfill the most profound aspirations of the Jewish masses of the USSR and would also engender great sympathy on the part of Jews of the whole world toward the Soviet Union. Along with the problems of the creation of the Jewish Soviet Republic there also are being posed the problems of the return of the Jewish masses whom the war has scattered in the most distant regions of the Union.

The desire of the evacuated Jewish masses to return home to the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, where they lived for centuries, where they fought hand in hand with the fraternal peoples for the establishment of these socialist republics, where they established their national Soviet culture, is natural and correct.

During the war Jewish schools, libraries, newspapers, institutes of Jewish culture, and theaters were destroyed.

It is imperative that the Jewish masses returning to their native Ukraine, Belorussia, and Lithuania create there possibilities for the normal revival of their national Soviet culture.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the issue of those Jews who fled from Poland. There are more than half a million of them on the territory of the USSR.²⁹

Depending on how the issue of their welfare in the USSR is settled—with the end of the war the issue may be posed of their repatriation to Poland or their being granted permission to leave for Palestine. Meanwhile the establishment of a Jewish republic in the Crimea would completely resolve the problem of their repatriation from the USSR. Polish Jews could occupy a signi-

28. On OZET and KOMZET see Lvavi, *Jewish Colonization*.

29. On Jewish refugees and deportees from Poland in the USSR see Litvak, *Refugees*.