

Foreign Citizens of Jewish Origin in the USSR, according to the 1937 Census

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The second national census of the population of the USSR was conducted in January 1937. However, in September of the same year a resolution of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the USSR declared the process of the census-taking unsatisfactory and its results deficient.¹ The reason for such an evaluation was that the statistics on the size of the Soviet population indicated much fewer people than had been expected. The consequence was that the organizers of the census were repressed and its results partially destroyed. The remaining statistics were then made confidential by placing them in the special closed departments of the central archives.

In recent years some materials from the census have been discovered and published. They include instructions on how the census was to be carried out, correspondence regarding its results, statistics on the total size of the population, and data on the ethnic composition, level of literacy and education, religious affiliation of the population, etc.² These materials basically contain information about the country as a whole, the extent of materials relating to separate regions being quite small.

In addition to recording the population of the USSR, the 1937 census recorded foreign citizens who were in the Soviet Union at the time of the census. The data on their number, distribution, citizenship, sex and age were kept separately from other materials of the census and had an even higher degree of secrecy. No information about the existence of these materials was published by the above-mentioned authors or in the published results of the census themselves.³ Below data are pre-

1. *Pravda*, Sept. 26, 1937.
2. On the 1937 census, see: A. G. Volkov, "Iz istorii perepisi naseleniia 1937 goda" (From the history of the population census of 1937), *Vestnik statistiki* 8 (1990), pp. 45–56; V. B. Zhiromskaia, "Vsesoiuznye perepisi naseleniia 1926, 1937, 1939 godov: istoriia podgotovki i provedeniia" (All-Union population censuses of 1926, 1937, 1939: the history of their preparation and conduct), *Istoriia SSSR* 3 (1990), pp. 84–104; F. D. Livshits, "Perepis' naseleniia 1937g." (The population census of 1937), *Demograficheskie protsessy v SSSR* (Demographic processes in the USSR), (Moscow, 1990); Iu. A. Poliakov, V. B. Zhiromskaia, I. N. Kisilev, "Polveka molchaniia: Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1937g." (Half a century of silence: The All-Union population census of 1937), *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 6 (1990), pp. 3–25; 7, pp. 50–70; 8, pp. 30–52; M. Tolts, "Perepis' prigovorennaiia k zabveniiu" (The census condemned to obscurity), in A. G. Vishnevskii (ed.), *Semiia i semeinaia politika* (Family and family policy), (Moscow, 1991), pp. 161–178. On [Jewish] religious affiliation, see: M. Altshuler, "Religion in the Soviet Union in the Late 1930s in the Light of Statistics," *JIT* 1(14) (1991), pp. 23–26; D. Haruv, "The Jewish Population of the Soviet Union According to the Census of 1937: Some Statistical Data," *ibid.*, pp. 14–22.
3. *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1937g., Kratkie itogi* (The All-Union population census of 1937, concise results), (Moscow, 1991).

sented about foreign citizens of Jewish origin who were in the Soviet Union at the time of the census; the information includes geographical distribution, citizenship, and sex (see Tables 1 and 2).

The tables do not include data about foreign Jews present on the territory of the Karelian ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic). Statistics for this republic were not sent on time to the *Tsentral'noe Upravlenie Narodno-Khoziaistvennogo Ucheta SSSR* (Central Authority for National Economic Accounting of the USSR, or TsUNKhU) and, hence, were not included in the processing of the census results.⁴ Among the areas missing in the tables are also the Amur, Voronezh, Zhitomir, Lower Amur, Riazan', and Sakhalinsk Provinces and the Kalmyk, Mari, Chuvash, and Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics. When the census was conducted there were no foreign Jews in these places.

The tables include Ashkenazi Jews, who constituted the majority of foreign citizens among the Jews, and a large group of Kurdish Jews or Lakhluks.⁵ Most of the latter had Iranian citizenship. Jews from Iran constituted almost one third (30.4%) of the total number of foreign Jews. The majority of these Jews lived in three locations: Georgia (76.7%), Azerbaijan (8.7%), and Uzbekistan (5.4%). Most other Lakhluks had Turkish citizenship.

At this time in the Soviet Union there were also 13 Persian-Jewish non-Soviet citizens (in Azerbaijan), eight Mountain Jews (in Azerbaijan and Georgia), eight Georgian Jews (in Georgia), and three Central Asian (Bukharan) Jews (in Uzbekistan).⁶

Analysis of the census materials reveals that there were 2,358 foreign Jews in the USSR in addition to the above-mentioned small groups. They constituted 1.2% of the total number of foreign citizens then in the Soviet Union.

One may assume that the majority of the Ashkenazi part of the Jewish foreigners were members of European Communist parties (of Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Austria, Germany, etc.) and/or of the Communist International or Comintern, who had fled either from antisemitism or persecution for their political activity or from both. There were also a number of foreign specialists or technicians who had come to work in the USSR during the "Great Depression" and those who settled on Jewish *kolkhozy* (collective farms) in the Crimea and the Jewish Autonomous Region (Birobidzhan). All of these were suspect as foreigners and, of course, were under the close surveillance of the NKVD. At the time of the 1937 census some of these foreigners had already been arrested and exiled to the North, the Urals, or Siberia, as one can surmise from their geographical distribution.

A significant proportion of foreign Jews in the USSR, i.e. 29.3%, were Polish citizens. Most of these (76.1%) lived in the Russian Republic, with most of the others residing in Kazakhstan (8.5%), Ukraine (8.2%), and Belorussia (4.5%). Jews who

4. Rossiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (The Russian State Archive of the Economy or RGAE), *f.* 1562, *op.* 329, *d.* 148, p.1.

5. See I. Krupnik, M. Kupovetskii, "‘Lakhluksi’—kurdistskie evrei v SSSR" (The "Lakhluks"—Kurdish Jews in the USSR), *Sovetskaiia etnografiia* 2 (1988), pp. 102–110, esp. pp. 102 and 105–106.

6. RGAE, *f.* 1562, *op.* 329, *d.* 148, pp. 1–109; *d.* 149, pp. 1–136.

were Romanian citizens constituted 8.2% of the foreign Jews; those who were Latvian and Lithuanian citizens constituted 4.1% each, and Austrian citizens, 2.8%.

There were 494 Jews (20.9%) who were citizens of other countries, including Afghanistan (164 Jews), Germany (63), Turkey (42), and the United States (26).

Among cities, the largest concentrations of foreign Jews were in Moscow (316 in the city, 358 in the entire province) and Leningrad (74 in the city, 78 in the entire province). The provinces with the largest number of foreign Jews were Sverdlovsk and Cheliabinsk (195 and 179, respectively). The highest percentage of Jews among all citizens of foreign origin was recorded in these two Ural provinces.

With regard to gender, there was a slight preponderance of males. Part of the foreign Jewish population was composed of minors up to age 18. Calculations show, however, that their share was small. For example, in Sverdlovsk province there were 117 minors out of 1,223 foreigners (the corresponding figures for Jews were 26 of 195), while in Cheliabinsk province 279 out of 1,500 were under 18 (27 out of 179 for Jews).⁷

Consequently, processed data from the All-Union Population Census of 1937 found in the special closed section (*spetskhran*) of the Russian State Archive of Economics in Moscow on foreign citizens allow us to determine with a high degree of accuracy, first of all, the number, composition, and geographical distribution of foreign citizens in the Soviet Union and, secondly, can aid us in clarifying the fates of those foreigners who were victims of the great purges.

7. *Ibid.*, d. 149, pp. 27-30; pp. 40-44.

Table 1
Foreign Citizens by Republics, Territories, and Provinces

Republic/territory/province	Jews	Jewish males	Total
RSFSR	1,085	587	88,215
<i>including:</i>			
Moscow province ⁸	358	148	8,071
Sverdlovsk province	195	127	1,223
Cheliabinsk province	179	109	1,500
Leningrad province	78	30	2,562
Crimean ASSR	44	25	8,748
Novosibirsk province	25	20	2,664
Kuibyshev province	20	9	232
Far Eastern territory	18	10	15,409
<i>including</i>			
Jewish Auton. Region (Birobidzhan)	13	5	280
Primorskii province	2	2	7,436
Khabarovsk province	2	2	1,699
Ussuriisk province	1	1	2,086
Omsk province	15	12	1,172
Stalingrad province	13	7	826
Krasnoiarsk territory	12	8	1,684
Arkhangelsk province	11	10	288
Tula province	9	4	337
Orenburg province	9	7	236
Gor'kii province	8	2	344
Komi ASSR	7	7	381
Rostov province	6	4	3,203
Kalinin province	6	3	283
Saratov province	6	5	438
Tatar ASSR	6	2	235
Altai territory	5	4	726
Vologda province	5	2	109
Chita province	5	5	1,155
Volga German ASSR	5	2	124
Udmurt ASSR	5	4	74
Kirov province	4	1	40
Tambov province	4	3	219
Buriat-Mongol ASSR	3	1	707
Smolensk province	3	2	212
N. Osetin ASSR	3	1	1,333
Krasnodar territory	2	2	23,191

8. Here and below, "provinces" (e.g., Moscow, Leningrad) include both the capital city of the same name and the province.

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Republic/territory/province	Jews	Jewish males	Total
Bashkir ASSR	2	2	187
Ivanovo province	2	1	189
Kabardin-Balkar ASSR	2	1	427
Mordovian ASSR	2	2	51
Chechen-Ingush ASSR	2	0	1,241
Ordzhonikidze territory	1	1	2,543
Irkutsk province	1	1	526
Iaroslavl province	1	1	173
Dagestan ASSR	1	1	2,526
Kursk province	1	1	111
Orel province	1	0	210
Georgian SSR	601	309	30,717
Ukrainian SSR	166	91	9,519
<i>including:</i>			
Odessa province	50	26	2,034
Dnepropetrovsk province	34	19	1,396
Kharkov province	25	12	1,213
Donetsk province	16	10	2,875
Nikolaev province	14	10	321
Kiev province	10	4	779
Moldavian ASSR	5	1	81
Poltava province	5	5	121
Kamenets-Podolsk province	4	3	89
Vinnitsa province	2	0	146
Chernigov province	1	1	250
Turkmen SSR	145	80	11,373
Kazakh SSR	124	91	4,081
Uzbek SSR	83	49	5,720
Azerbaijan SSR	74	40	37,658
Belorussian SSR	55	29	642
Tajik SSR	22	11	1,569
Armenian SSR	2	1	493
Kirgiz SSR	1	1	2,956
Total for USSR	2,358	1,289	192,943

Source: RGAE, *f.* 1562, *op.* 329, *d.* 148, pp. 1-109 and *d.* 149, pp. 1-136.

Table 2: Foreign Jewish Citizens, by Country

	Total	Iran	Poland	Romania	Larvia	Lithuania	Austria	Germany	US	Britain	Palestine	Other
RSFSR	1,085	20	526	116	75	72	51	50	20	9	1	145
<i>including</i>												
Moscow province	358	1	99	25	30	37	29	21	14	7	1	94
Sverdlovsk province	195	0	145	38	2	0	7	1	0	0	0	2
Cheliabinsk province	179	0	140	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8
Leningrad province	78	0	19	4	16	9	6	5	4	1	0	14
Crimean ASSR	44	11	16	2	1	0	0	13	0	0	0	1
Novosibirsk province	25	0	14	1	1	5	1	2	0	1	0	0
Kuibyshev province	20	0	10	0	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0
Far Eastern territory	18	0	4	0	0	5	2	3	0	0	0	4
<i>including</i>												
JAR (Birobidzhan)	13	0	2	0	0	5	2	3	0	0	0	1
Primorski province	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Khabarovsk province	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Ussurijsk province	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Omsk province	15	0	13	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Stalingrad province	13	0	5	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Krasnoarsk territory	12	0	7	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arkhangelsk province	11	1	6	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tula province	9	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Orenburg province	9	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Gor'ki province	8	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
Komi ASSR	7	0	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rostov province	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Kalinin province	6	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saratov province	6	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Tatar ASSR	6	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Altai territory	5	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vologda province	5	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chita province	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Volga German ASSR	5	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Udmurt ASSR	5	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kirov province	4	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tambov province	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Buriat-Mongol ASSR	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Smolensk province	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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	Total	Iran	Poland	Romania	Latvia	Lithuania	Austria	Germany	US	Britain	Palestine	Other
N Osetin ASSR	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Krasnodar territory	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bashkir ASSR	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ivanovo province	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Kabardin-Balkar ASSR	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mordovian ASSR	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chechen-Ingush ASSR	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Ordzhonikidze terr.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irkutsk province	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Iaroslavl province	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dagestan ASSR	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kursk province	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Orel province	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Georgian SSR	601	551	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	46
Ukrainian SSR	166	5	57	27	11	15	11	12	1	2	0	25
<i>including</i>												
Odessa province	50	2	18	12	1	2	4	3	0	1	0	7
Dnepropetrovsk prov.	34	1	11	3	4	4	1	2	0	0	0	8
Kharkov province	25	0	4	1	4	5	4	4	0	0	0	3
Donetsk province	16	0	13	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nikolaev province	14	0	3	7	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0
Kiev province	10	1	2	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	2
Moldavian ASSR	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Poltava province	5	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kamenets-Podolsk p.	4	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vinnitsa province	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Chernigov province	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkmen SSR	145	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	123
Kazakh SSR	124	9	59	48	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2
Uzbek SSR	83	39	10	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	28
Azerbaijan SSR	74	63	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Belorussian SSR	55	1	31	2	3	5	1	0	5	0	0	7
Tajik SSR	22	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Armenian SSR	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kirgiz SSR	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total for USSR	2,358	718	691	194	97	97	67	63	26	11	1	393

Source: RGAE, *ibid.*