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Review Of "The Jewish Revolution In Belorussia: Economy, Race, And Bolshevik Power" By A. Slein

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communities in Velizh including friendships (50–51), at times against the evidence provided through the investigation.

The Velizh case undoubtedly deserves this rich and detailed analysis. Avrutin integrates this Russian instance of a blood libel in the long trajectory of such accusations and defines its specific character with great expertise. The reader will gratefully acknowledge the outstanding amount of research that went into this volume. It will be of interest to an academic audience interested in Russian, legal, and administrative history and to those members of the general public with a keen interest in Jewish history in eastern Europe, and in the history of anti-Jewish prejudice.

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The Jewish Revolution in Belorussia: Economy, Race, and Bolshevik Power. By Andrew Sloin. *The Modern Jewish Experience*. Edited by Deborah Dash Moore and Marsha L. Rozenblit. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017. Pp. xiv + 332. \$90.00 (cloth); \$38.00 (paper); \$37.99 (e-book).

For the first decade or so of the communist regime, the Kremlin engaged in concerted efforts to stamp out popular antisemitism, promote the integration of Soviet Jewry into mainstream society, develop Jewish identity in a framework of ethnonational consolidation, and transform the socioeconomic makeup of Jews by turning them into productive workers. Recent scholarship by Elissa Bemporad, David Shneer, Anna Shternshis, and Jeffrey Veidlinger has added to the foundational work of Zvi Gitelman by revealing how Soviet Jews strove to maintain specific forms of Jewish culture and identity in the face of the communist party's pressure to acculturate, if not assimilate. In *The Jewish Revolution in Belorussia*, Andrew Sloin offers a detailed account of the challenges of bringing the revolution to the Jewish street and confirms the impact of Stalin's modernizing revolution from above on efforts to promote Jewish integration.

Sloin reveals how socioeconomic factors during the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s and the initial stages of the Stalinist revolution led to the resurgence of popular antisemitism and reinforcement of anti-Jewish stereotypes as economic exploiters. Sloin's emphasis on socioeconomic forces requires us to reconsider the extent to which the fledgling socialist economy replicated capitalist market and labor structures and therefore reinforced popular antisemitism. The contradictions of NEP, in which capitalist labor and market relations ran counter to pronouncements of socialism, created conditions for the suppression of Jewish national and cultural particularism, and strengthened anti-Jewish sentiment.

He shows how the rationalization of work, for example, affected nationality policy in general and the situation for Soviet Jews in particular. As more Jews entered the industrial work force, non-Jewish workers resented the newcomers' presence as competitors who were perceived as keeping down wages. They took out their frustrations by subjecting Jewish coworkers to physical and other forms of abuse. Compounding this problem was, according to Sloin, the emergence of a racialized discourse (one not rooted in blood or genetics but in ethnic identity and behavior) about Soviet Jews by the late 1920s that contributed to their continued social ostracism. The regime redoubled its efforts to combat all forms of popular antisemitism, but it also concluded that, rather than promote Jewish ethnonational identity, the Soviet Union should set out to create a homogenous *homo sovieticus*. Popular

perception focused on Jews as economic parasites and thereby reinforced the view of the Jew as an existential Other. In short, the inconsistencies and conflicts rising out of the economic relations of the 1920s contributed to the persistence of anti-Jewish attitudes and behavior on the shop floor and affected the Kremlin's thinking about ethnonational identity.

The book comes alive when Sloin draws upon real-life incidents on the shop floor to illustrate his argument. Take the story of Dreiza Barshai, a young woman who spoke Yiddish and a smattering of Russian and found employment at a glass factory in 1928. Even though she was unskilled and earning minimum wage, Barshai found herself victimized by a group of mostly workers who belonged to the Komsomol. Over a period of several months her coworkers hurled antisemitic slurs that mocked her and culminated in a vicious assault that broke her arm. Not surprisingly, local officials condemned the mistreatment of Barshai as the actions of class enemies who used antisemitism to weaken the Soviet state. But the investigation also revealed that management had been intensifying pressure on workers to produce more glass to fulfill quotas. In addition, the expansion of the work force led to increasing numbers of Jewish workers in the plant, which generated unease because of overcrowding and downward pressure on wages. One result was heightening tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish workers, with the latter venting their frustrations over deteriorating working conditions by verbally and physically abusing their Jewish coworkers.

The book adds to our understanding of how the Kremlin used efforts to bring the revolution to Soviet Jews to weed out so-called political deviationists who were perceived as undermining the building of socialism. In particular, campaigns against Bundism and Trotskyism were intertwined with the desire to transform the cultural and political lives of Jewish workers. In Sloin's words, Jewish identity was "not simply . . . a self-defined concept to be embraced or discarded by individuals, but also an ascribed category that became increasingly imposed from without" (13). The regime's struggle with antisemitism in the late 1920s had less to do with protecting Jewish life and more to do with targeting purported enemies of the regime and consolidating the Stalinist regime. The offensive against Stalin's opponents may have gone hand in hand with the struggle with antisemitism, but it also entailed attempts to efface Jewish identity. Moreover, Sloin argues that even though social and economic factors made it difficult for Jews to integrate into mainstream society, Communist Party activists nonetheless blamed ethnonational traits of Jews for the failure of Jews to shed their prerevolutionary characteristics.

Sloin's thorough research demonstrates the linkages between the economic crisis of the late 1920s in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the world. However, I wish the author offered more detail about the manifestation of the global economic crisis that he claims is linked to the crisis of the late NEP economy, that is, the two or three years immediately preceding Stalin's so-called revolution from above, when Soviet leaders debated the means to build a socialist society. I kept expecting more discussion of how the perceived dead-end policies of NEP, which led to shortages and price fluctuations, fueled decisions by the Soviet leadership that undermined policies designed to foster Jewish identity.

On the whole, *The Jewish Revolution in Belorussia*, is an outstanding piece of sophisticated scholarship. Cogently argued and analytically astute, the book is a major contribution to our knowledge of the "Jewish Question" in the early years of the Soviet Union.

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