

Although scholarly literature often depicts the Soviet 1920s as sexually liberated and the 1930s as sexually repressive, Bernstein offers a different view. She acknowledges that the recriminalization of prostitution, sodomy, and abortion in the 1930s re-introduced significant restrictions. But, according to Bernstein, the “sexless-sex model” promoted in the 1920s laid the groundwork for the Stalinist repression of sexuality in the 1930s. Moreover, during both the 1920s and the 1930s, Soviet officials deployed “normalizing” discourses of sexuality to intervene in the lives of citizens and discipline the Soviet populace. Bernstein’s work also calls into question the idea of the Stalinist 1930s as a radical retreat from women’s equality. Throughout the book and in particular in her excellent chapter on public health posters, she demonstrates that rigid ideas about gender difference and sexual roles informed understandings of sexual health and “normal” sexuality in the 1920s. As Bernstein observes: “Sex education illustrations communicate the limits that were placed on woman’s requirements for healthy citizenship, and consequently on her participation in civil society” (p. 128). In the 1920s, then, women’s liberation was hindered by the medical belief in the inescapable biological sexual difference between men and women and the attendant “advocacy of gender-specific roles and responsibilities” (p. 6). Bernstein’s gendered analysis would have benefited from greater discussion about how her work challenges or complements existing analyses of gender in the 1920s and 1930s.

*The Dictatorship of Sex* is a well-researched, invaluable book for scholars and students interested in gender, sexuality, medical professionals, and public health in the Soviet 1920s.



Frank Grüner, *Patrioten und Kosmopoliten: Juden im Sowjetstaat 1941–1953*. Cologne: Böhlau, 2008. 559 pp. €66.90.

*Reviewed by Sener Akturk, Harvard University*

This book by Frank Grüner was originally a doctoral dissertation, “The End of the Dream of Jewish Soviet Men? Jews and the Soviet State, 1941 to 1953,” completed at Heidelberg University. Focusing on the period from Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 to the anti-Semitic “Doctor’s Plot” in 1953, the book traces what it argues were the most important years in the transformation of Jewish identity in the Soviet Union.

The book consists of three parts that discuss the impact of key events on Soviet Jewish identity. The first, titled “Between Annihilation, Persecution, and Self-Assertion,” examines the period from 1941 to 1948, focusing on the Second World War and the activities of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC). The second part examines anti-Semitism and the Holocaust during and after the war, with chapters on the formation of a Jewish national identity, the attempts to establish a Jewish homeland in the Soviet Union and the founding of Israel, and the role of Jewish religion. The third and final part of the book examines the relationship of Jews and the Stalinist regime,

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showing how the regime initially saw Jews as the ultimate Soviet patriots but later came to revile them as “rootless cosmopolitans,” a transition reflected in the title of the book. In tracing the evolution of a Jewish national consciousness in the Soviet Union, Grüner relies on a content analysis of a rich array of memoirs, letters, public speeches, and other primary sources produced by Soviet Jews who lived in this period, ranging from prominent figures such as Ilya Ehrenburg to ordinary citizens of Jewish background.

One of the major themes of the book is “assimilation,” highlighting the resistance of some Jews to Soviet attempts at assimilating them, in contrast to the views of others like Ehrenburg who welcomed assimilation (pp. 285ff). The book opens with a letter from Aleksandr Markovich Lifich to the JAC, thought to be written sometime between 1942 and 1948 (p. 1), and it ends with the statement that by 1953 Jews were left with two options: emigration or accepting an assimilated, “non-Jewish” existence as a Soviet citizen (p. 511). This sets apart the story of the Jews from many other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. Assimilation was anathema in official Soviet ideology and in most cases was not sought after in practice, as is evident from many Soviet policies ranging from assigning territories to ethnic groups, supporting their languages, and applying positive discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. Why were Jews eventually targeted for assimilation when most others were not? The material presented in this book suggests that the failure to provide territorial autonomy for Jews within the USSR and their eventual association, in the eyes of Soviet authorities, with a foreign nationalism (Zionism) and state (Israel), as was the case with some other Soviet nationalities (Germans, Koreans, etc.) help to explain this outcome.

The book also demonstrates, however, that assimilation and discrimination, which were so pervasive by 1953, did not characterize the Soviet state’s policies during most of the 1940s. Crimea was contemplated as a potential homeland and autonomous territory for the Jews, both in the 1920s and again in 1944 (pp. 307–316), but when that plan failed to materialize, attention shifted back to the Jewish Autonomous Oblast (JAO) established in Birobidzhan in the Russian Far East in 1934 (pp. 314–316), an entity that still exists today. However, the JAO never attracted more than an insignificant fraction of Soviet Jews, making Israel, the newly found Jewish state in Palestine, the most successful and attractive project of Jewish state-building for the Jews in the USSR (p. 316). The rise of a Jewish nationalist identity in the Soviet Union is therefore in need of explanation, which this book attempts to provide.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact, which Grüner refers to as the Hitler-Stalin Pact, “the alliance with the ‘fascist arch-enemy’ that obviously had a greater impact than the repressions at the time of the Great Terror,” led to an observable “distancing of the Jews from the [Soviet] regime” (p. 161). Following the agony of 22 months of Soviet friendship with Nazi Germany (1939–1941), the war seemed almost a relief and witnessed a “normalization” of relations between the people and the state, especially in the case of the Jews. The war also had a positive, integrative effect on the ethnically, religiously, and socially diverse Soviet citizenry (p. 161). Grüner puts significant emphasis on the work of the JAC during and after the war (1941–1948) in the formation of a Jewish national identity (pp. 55–128). The JAC facilitated international contacts

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between Soviet and non-Soviet Jews, stoking the feeling of a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (a community of fate), a fate laden with successive waves of persecution and suffering. (I find it ironic that the post-1990 reunified German nation was also defined as a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* by the German Constitutional Court in its rejection of non-German immigrants' right to vote in local elections in the early 1990s.)

The Second World War and the Holocaust were crucial in the formation of a distinct Jewish identity. The founding of Israel in 1948 was paralleled by a decisive political rupture between the Soviet state and the Jews. Golda Meir's visit to Moscow as the new Israeli ambassador in 1948 was accompanied by "spontaneous bursts of enthusiasm of tens of thousands of Jews, who gathered in the Soviet capital, in order to hail the representative of Israel" (p. 128). After 1948, Soviet leaders began to conceptualize Soviet Jews as "theirs," akin to a "fifth column" of Israel. Part II of the book in particular is an attempt to apply theories of nationalism to the case of Soviet Jews in explaining the rise of Jewish national consciousness. It is noteworthy that "Israeli people," an expression not used before World War II, began to be used by Soviet Jews in describing themselves (p. 250).

Another leitmotif of the book is more general and goes beyond Soviet Jewish identity. Jews, who were perhaps the best representatives of the "new Soviet man" in the 1920s, were cast away as "rootless cosmopolitans" by the 1950s. This trajectory may have been symptomatic of a deeper problem with the project of creating the "new Soviet man," especially the ambiguity of the ethnonational content of the project.

I recommend this book for graduate seminars on ethnonational questions in the USSR and for anybody interested in Jewish history and politics in the twentieth century.



Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. 304 pp. \$30.00.

*Reviewed by Simon Ertz, Stanford University*

In this ambitious and multifaceted book, Hiroaki Kuromiya endeavors to reconstruct the experiences of "ordinary" victims of the Great Terror in the Soviet Union of the late 1930s. Through a close reading of their case files, he seeks to retrieve what he calls the "true voices" of several dozen randomly selected individuals who were arrested, interrogated, and (with few exceptions) executed by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) in the "mass operations" from summer 1937 to autumn 1938 in Kyiv. Even though various scholars, including Kuromiya, have much expanded our knowledge of the background, chronology, and mechanics of the Great Terror in recent years, no one has previously offered as meticulous an examination of individual interrogation records. Whenever the longhand interrogation protocols have been preserved, Kuromiya has analyzed them because they often exhibit revealing differences from the typed versions. He has carefully attended not only to the content and the dy-

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