

These various activities were supposed to instil in them values of virility and masculinity intended to transform them into “citizen-soldiers” (p. 59). Those who did not comply with this harsh discipline faced a range of punishments. Despite this threat, many inmates resisted the institution and its relentless settlement, the subject of the third chapter (“Resistance”). The author lists the various types of refusal by the inmates, ranging from homosexual practices, tobacco use, and tattooing, to attempted escapes.

Over the years, the disciplinary system at Mettray increasingly became the subject of sharp criticism, in particular from the press. And, from the 1880s, even some of the deputies were shocked by the level of violence at the colony (“Discord”, Chapter Four). This criticism and three scandals (in 1887, in 1909, and during the interwar period) led to the institution being discredited. This had an important impact on French society and led to its being closed on 5 November 1937 (“Denouement”, Chapter Six). As Toth shows, what began as a resolutely utopian project that emerged from an optimistic representation of juvenile delinquents by reformers in the first half of the nineteenth century was marked by a slow drift towards a strictly authoritarian and punitive model.

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McGEEVER, BRENDAN. *Antisemitism and the Russian Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2019. 247 pp. £75.00.

The Russian revolutions of 1917 gave rise to a practical question: Could the socialist transformation of Eastern European societies solve the “Jewish problem”? The Jews of the Russian Empire welcomed the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in March 1917, viewing it as a great victory that would end their suffering and open a new era of liberation. The new government repealed 650 decrees that prevented equal rights for Jews. However, although antisemitism was officially outlawed, the administrative apparatus was not free of antisemites, and the Orthodox Church, a main advocate of antisemitism, was not impeded. Church-sponsored newspapers continued to rally against the Jews. As a result, antisemitism “increased markedly on the streets of the Russian capital and beyond, in the former Pale of Settlement” (p. 23).

There are a number of works on antisemitism in 1917 as well as during the Russian Civil War, focusing mainly on the anti-Semitic atrocities of the counterrevolution. Little has been written about anti-Semitism within the Red Army, however. Following the works of Ulrich Herbeck and Oleg Budnitsky, the present book, authored by Brendan McGeever, Lecturer in Sociology at Birkbeck College, University of London, is the most detailed study on this topic to date.

Only a minority of Jews supported the Bolsheviks in November 1917. Bolshevik leaders of Jewish origin such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sverdlov, Radek, Litvinov, and Joffe

1. The author thanks Chris Gordon for his help in proofreading this review.

were involved in the Russian and international labour movements, but not those specifically representing Eastern European Jewish workers. Thus, most left-leaning Jews in Russia supported the Jewish Workers' Bund, the Mensheviks, or the various Zionist-Socialist parties, of which the Poalei Zion (Workers of Zion) was the most significant.

After the Bolsheviks came to power, they quickly sought to resolve the national question, including the Jewish question, despite their lack of practical experience. The "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", adopted by the Council of People's Commissars on 15 November 1917 (new style), proclaimed the equality and sovereignty of peoples, their right to self-determination up to the formation of independent states, the abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions, and the unhindered development of all national minorities and groups of people. These basic principles were intended to be put into practice by establishing national departments at the People's Commissariat for Nationalities and by forming organs of self-government for the various ethnic groups.

In January 1918, a Commissariat for Jewish Affairs was founded, with Semen M. Dimanstein as its head. It formed a department within the People's Commissariat for Nationalities headed by Stalin. Despite the lack of Yiddish-speaking staff, the Jewish Commissariat (Russian abbreviation: *Yevkom*) was able to publish the first issue of the daily newspaper *Der Emes* (*The Truth*) on 7 March 1918 in Leningrad and later in Moscow. In addition to *Yevkom*, Jewish sections (in the Russian singular abridged to *Yevseksia*) were formed within the framework of the Communist Party. At the first joint conference of the two organizations held in Moscow on 20 October 1918, Dimanstein stressed that *Yevseksia* had a dual task: it was to help disseminate Marxism among Jewish workers while also contributing to the consolidation of Bolshevik power in their communities. The formation of a department for the struggle against anti-Semitism and pogroms was announced at the conference. A resolution passed at the conference noted the "sad and unfortunate fact" that anti-Semitism could be found in Soviet institutions and even among government officials (p. 83).

On 9 August 1918, the Council of People's Commissars declared:

In the RSFSR, where the principle of self-determination of the working masses of all peoples was realized, there is no place for national oppression. The Jewish bourgeoisie is our enemy, not as a Jew, but as a bourgeois. Incitement to hatred against any nation is not tolerable, but shameful and criminal. The Council of People's Commissars declares that the anti-Semitic movement and pogroms against the Jews are fatal to the interests of the workers and peasants' revolution and calls upon the toiling people of Socialist Russia to fight this evil with all means at their disposal. National hostility weakens the ranks of our revolutionaries, disrupts the united front of the toilers without distinctions of nationality, and helps only our enemies. The Council of People's Commissars instructs all Soviet workers', peasants', and soldiers' deputies to take uncompromising measures to tear the anti-Semitic movements out by the roots. Pogromists and pogrom-agitators are to be placed outside the law.¹

McGeever considers that declaration a "significant moment" in the Bolshevik fight against anti-Semitism (p. 78).

1. The original Russian text I translate here can be found in *Dekrety sovetskoï vlasti* [Decrees of the Soviet Government], Vol. 3 (Moscow, 1964), p. 93.

During the Civil War, a considerable number of Russian and Ukrainian Jews gradually moved from opposition to the October Revolution and the Bolshevik regime to loyalty and even substantial support. The White armies and Ukrainian nationalists used violent anti-Semitism as a weapon in their struggle against the Soviet regime. It is estimated that the Ukraine was the battleground of about 2,000 pogroms. The immediate loss of Jewish lives was enormous, exceeding 50,000. Adding those who later died of their injuries, the number of victims may well have exceeded 150,000, amounting to ten per cent of the entire Jewish population. It was the greatest anti-Semitic massacre before Auschwitz.

Anti-Bolsheviks and anti-Semites entered into such a brutal and unfortunately effective alliance that even those Jews in the Russian Empire who had opposed the October Revolution eventually joined the Bolsheviks in search of protection from the White pogroms. They looked to the Red Army as their sole hope of salvation, although Red Army soldiers were also responsible for around eight per cent of the pogroms.

The pogroms carried out by the Red Army served to discredit fundamentally the revolutionary project. Even before the October Revolution, some Bolsheviks had insulted their Menshevik opponents as “*zbidy*” (“kikes”), despite the party leadership’s unequivocal attitude of solidarity. Fears were expressed that the violent anti-Semitic Black Hundreds were “filling up the ranks of the Bolsheviks” (p. 32). Writers such as Ilya Ehrenburg expressed their anxieties that revolutionary politics and anti-Semitism would overlap (p. 31).

The causes of anti-Semitism in the Red Army were both social and political in nature. Most Red Army soldiers were peasants who had traditionally been infected by anti-Semitism. During the Civil War, many Red Army units actually changed sides several times, sometimes fighting for the Reds and sometimes for the Whites. In order to achieve military success, the Bolsheviks were even forced to conscript former Tsarist army officers whose anti-Semitism was well-known.

Some of the most brutal Red Army pogroms were carried out in the summer of 1920 during the Soviet-Polish War by the First Cavalry Army under Semyon Budyonny (p. 109). It should be noted that many members of this army were Kuban Cossacks, among whom anti-Semitism was traditionally widespread. *Yevsekiia* functionaries were among the first to alert the Bolshevik leadership, demanding that something had to be done. The *Yevsekiia* also held rallies to discuss the growth of anti-Semitism in the Red Army and the seeming lack of the party’s press to publicize pogroms carried out by Budyonny’s army. However, Budyonny had the support of Stalin and his aide Voroshilov in concealing the crimes committed by his troops (p. 179).

Leon Trotsky, head of the Revolutionary Military Council, called for Jews to be mobilized into the Red Army. He and other Bolshevik leaders argued that the most effective way to reduce Bolshevik anti-Semitism was to have Jews fighting side by side with non-Jews. “We must immediately command the Jewish communist organizations to mobilize the maximum number of Jewish workers”, he wrote in June 1920 (p. 188).

After the devastating pogroms committed by the Red Army Cavalry during its retreat from Poland in late September and early October 1920, the military leadership immediately established a commission of inquiry that ultimately proved ineffective. On 9 October, the Revolutionary Military Council dismantled all units involved in the pogroms. An estimated 400 perpetrators of these pogroms were executed. In addition, the leadership sent high-ranking Bolsheviks to the front to oversee propaganda events.

Despite all the violence committed by Red Army soldiers, it would have been a much greater tragedy for the Jews had the counterrevolution been victorious. The author of this remarkable book warns us never to forget this.

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MARTIN, BARBARA. *Dissident Histories in the Soviet Union. From De-Stalinization to Perestroika.* [Library of Modern Russia.] Bloomsbury Academic, London 2019. xv, 293 pp. Ill. £85.00. (E-book: £73.44.)

The task of incorporating an assessment of Stalin, Stalinism, and Stalin's crimes into a historical narrative that is acceptable to the ruling regime in Russia has long been daunting. The story of Soviet repression can prove unsettling, even to the fundamentals on which the present government rests. Included in the instrumental questions such histories have addressed, or circumvented, is whether the system of repression – even beyond the Gulag – was the *modus operandi* of Soviet rule, or were Stalin's crimes an aberration of the ideals of Leninism? Furthering that, what were the limits of this discussion in the post-Stalin period, and how much were they determined by the ideology of the historians themselves?

In a well-written, timely micro-history of the careers and fates of four chief protagonists, Anton Antonov-Ovseenko, Roy Medvedev, Aleksandr Nekrich, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, historian Barbara Martin chronicles the determined struggle to disseminate stories of repression, along with the evolution of the state's responses to these alternatively accepted and proscribed themes. The legitimacy of the anti-Stalinist narrative was established by the 20th and 22nd party congresses; each of these authors would test its limits in different ways.

All four historians were prominent voices in the campaign for de-Stalinization, but some, notably Medvedev, tried to insulate the Party itself from rigorous criticism. His hope was that the exercise of exposing the Stalinist past would strengthen the Party. When attacked by opponents who feared “rubbing salt into wounds that are still bleeding”, Medvedev argued that analysing “the causes and the nature of the terrible disease that our Party and our movement have suffered” (p. 104) would promote healing. Medvedev gathered indispensable histories from eyewitnesses – many of them Old Bolsheviks – who trusted this son of repressed parents to accurately record their narratives. He was true to his word, and he incorporated their stories into an interpretation of history that came out in favour of the October Revolution, one that essentially justified a culture of violence and repression as an acceptable means to an end, which was the success of the Revolution.

Solzhenitsyn, on the other hand, on the basis of his own incarceration and the recording of numerous witness accounts, condemned the crimes as part and parcel of a system rotten to the core, the ideology of communism being the source of its evil (p. 162). Solzhenitsyn insightfully argued that the line between good and evil runs through every man's heart. Despite having identified this grey zone, Solzhenitsyn had no tolerance for official