

WHILE MESSIAH TARRIED: JEWISH SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS, 1871-1917. By *Nora Levin*. New York: Schocken Books, 1977. xii, 554 pp. + 10 pp. photographs. \$24.50.

To present a history of Jewish Socialist movements in a single volume is a formidable task, even when, as in Nora Levin's book, only the first half of the story is included and the time span is limited to less than fifty years, for the subject is both complex and controversial. The facts themselves are often a matter for dispute, having become enmeshed with a variety of political and ideological biases from which only the most dispassionate analyst might disentangle them. The sources, moreover, are in a multiplicity of languages, including Russian and Polish as well as Yiddish and Hebrew. And, apart from linguistic versatility, considerable powers of selection and synthesis would be required on the part of the author.

Attempting to overcome these difficulties, Professor Levin has avoided writing a comprehensive history of Jewish radicalism, which would have included such countries as England, France, Austria, Rumania, and Argentina. Instead, she has confined herself to the three largest and most important Jewish Socialist movements, those of the immigrant workers in the United States, the Bundists in Russia and Poland, and the Labor Zionists in Palestine, all of which had their origins in the tsarist empire during the 1870s and 1880s.

In discussing these three movements, Professor Levin does not tell us anything that was not readily available from other sources, nor does she give us a new interpretation of what was previously known. Basing her research largely on secondary materials, she leans heavily on a comparatively small number of works, nearly all of them in English and Yiddish. There are few references to the rich literature on the subject in Russian, Polish, and Hebrew, languages she apparently does not read, and even some of the most important works in English and Yiddish are neglected. Her citations from the Yiddish, moreover, are not always accurate. She refers, for example, to the May 10, 1890 issue of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, a journal which did not begin publication until July 4 of that year. A more fundamental criticism, perhaps, is that her book lacks intellectual focus, a problem compounded by the absence both of a proper introduction (for which the three-page foreword is an inadequate substitute) and of a concluding chapter with an overall evaluation of the three movements she describes.

In spite of these shortcomings, Professor Levin has written a useful book. Content to narrate, synthesize, and explain, she does not pretend to advance the frontiers of knowledge or to alter the familiar pattern of events. Only occasionally does her narrative falter, for she is a capable writer with an ability to elucidate complex political and social questions, so that the reader seldom loses the way. Indeed, one of the chief merits of the book is the clarity with which sharply differing temperaments and points of view emerge from Professor Levin's skillful treatment. The result, while not a work of original scholarship, is a sympathetic and readable history that will appeal to the student and the general reader, if not to the specialist in Jewish radicalism.

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THE JEWISH INTELLIGENTSIA AND RUSSIAN MARXISM: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF INTELLECTUAL RADICALISM AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVERGENCE. By *Robert J. Brym*. New York: Schocken Books, 1978. viii, 157 pp. Figures. \$16.95.

The central question this book addresses is: Why were members of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drawn to one or another of four distinct but related radical organizations—the Poalei Zion, the Bund, the Menshevik Party, and the Bolshevik Party? Drawing his data mainly from

secondary sources, but arranging them in new combinations, the author seeks to demonstrate that choices were made neither randomly nor on purely rational-intellectual grounds. Instead, they depended upon a variety of situational factors, above all, the degree of "embeddedness" of each *intelligent* in the traditional sociocultural world of East European Jewry, and also on the particular sociocultural characteristics of the populations among whom each worked. More generally, this study is designed to show that the intelligentsia—and not the Jewish sector alone—was not as detached from society, nor as totally absorbed in ideas to the exclusion of interests as is frequently asserted.

In my judgment, Brym succeeds in establishing his main point, and in the process, he produces some interesting secondary insights as well. Some of the findings seem like truisms, however. For example, is it surprising that members of the intelligentsia most strongly attached to Jewish traditions and culture affiliated with the Zionists and the Bund? On the other hand, his allegations of the insensitivity of other writers to the role of the social milieu in shaping the views of the intelligentsia are surely exaggerated.

Even though burdened with a ponderous vocabulary, with tables whose basis is not always clear and which are sometimes more confusing than helpful, and with an unnecessarily long (and yet often simplistic) historical background, sociological studies of this kind are welcome.

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KARL MARX: AN INTIMATE BIOGRAPHY. By *Saul K. Padover*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978. xx, 667 pp. + 16 pp. photographs. \$18.95.

Padover's biography of Marx is written in an easy, flowing, and readable style. The author has done a great deal of research for the book. Unfortunately, all of his research was concerned with trivia, because of Padover's aim of writing "an intimate biography," designed to reveal Marx as a "lover, husband, friend, fighter, father, foe" rather than as a philosopher or revolutionary (p. xvi). As a result, the reader is treated to six hundred and sixty-seven pages of highly irrelevant gossip. Padover discusses in gory detail every illness Marx had (from carbuncles to liver problems), every boyhood poem (most of which are very bad), every alleged love affair (so what?), and Marx's momentary attitudes toward friends and foes (mostly petty and irrelevant).

What Padover does not tell us are the answers to all the important questions about Marx: What were the origins of his ideas? What were the prior philosophies and state of the social sciences? What socioeconomic conditions moved Marx to write as he did? What were the socioeconomic conditions that made his ideas acceptable to many people immediately and to millions of people eventually? How did Marx's ideas evolve from youth to maturity? None of these questions are relevant to Padover's project of showing us the intimate Marx, and therefore, none of them are answered. His approach may be useful for studying the life of Rudolph Valentino, but for a figure like Marx—whose ideas were shaped by history and have shaped history—such an approach is a sheer waste of time and a frustration for the reader.

Padover notes that the standard biography of Marx is Franz Mehring's *Karl Marx: The History of His Life*, which is still the best biography, because Mehring does answer all the important questions that help us to understand Marx's evolution and influence. Of course, Mehring writes from a Marxist point of view, as does Isaac Deutscher in his powerfully moving and informative biographies of Stalin and Trotsky. Unfortunately, although Padover seems to have read all the collected works of Marx in German, in Russian, and in English, he does not seem to have understood the