

THE JEWISH RELIGION IN THE SOVIET UNION. By *Joshua Rothenberg*.

New York: Ktav Publishing House and the Philip W. Lown Graduate Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 1971. vii, 242 pp. \$10.00.

This is an immensely important book, a milestone in the study of Jews in the Soviet Union. It has the brilliant and possibly unique virtue of confining its purview strictly to the religious aspects of its subject, without succumbing to the temptation to confuse the issue with cultural and national repressions suffered by Jews in the USSR. Not that the author is unaware of these other matters. However, he exercises extraordinary self-discipline, bringing them into the account only as they are relevant to the strictly religious subjects under consideration. The postwar suppression of Yiddish culture, for example, is mentioned in connection with the decline of Purim (p. 79), and national discrimination is treated in the chapter on circumcision in contrasting Soviet policy toward Moslems.

After a brief but masterful introduction the author commences with a chapter on laws on religion, which is an abridged version of his contribution in Richard H. Marshall, Jr., ed., *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917 to 1967* (Chicago, 1971). The chapters on holidays, ceremonies, and education are tours de force. The argument on circumcision may be slightly overstated, but the treatment of funerals is a model of objectivity and balance. The concluding treatment of propaganda is perhaps a bit cursory.

The major faults are those of the publisher: there are far too many typographical errors, footnotes are hard to find, and there is no bibliography but rather an extensive, occasionally inaccurate, and always unworkable index incorporating footnote references. Regrettably, conclusions are lacking. It would seem to this reviewer that, on balance, Judaism has received par treatment from Soviet antireligious policy—a bit worse than some (Orthodox or Baptists), a bit better than others (Pentecostals or Buddhists). But judging from his profound immersion in the subject of this book, Mr. Rothenberg possesses the best qualifications in the Western world (certainly better than mine) to draw conclusions about such problems, and one wishes he had done so.

The tragedy of the situation is that Jews in the Soviet Union suffer not only religious disabilities but also severe restrictions owing to Soviet cultural and nationality policies. This book is absolutely essential for an accurate understanding of their situation.

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SOVIET NATIONALITY PROBLEMS. Edited by *Edward Allworth*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971. x, 296 pp. \$9.95.

This collective work, the product of a Columbia University Seminar on Soviet Nationality Problems, is distinguished from previous studies of nationality in tsarist Russia and the USSR by its focus on theoretical issues (e.g., pp. 13–14), its deliberate avoidance of concrete treatment of “different nationalities as individual groups” (p. viii), and its almost total dependence upon Soviet published materials. It includes nine substantive chapters, covering theory (Allworth), imperial policies (Raeff), Communist views (Kohn), implications for the Soviet state (Brzezinski), legal reflections of national differences (Hazard), the Islamic legacy (Bennigsen),

and ethnicity and cultural differences (Rubel). An extensive bibliography embracing Soviet and Western academic writings (but not the extensive émigré literature), appendix data from the 1970 USSR census (mostly still in Russian), and an index augment the basic chapters.

The work contributes little that is new. John Hazard's competent review (pp. 83–116) documents the modest autonomy granted the union republics even within the domain of private criminal and civil law. Robert Lewis's essay on historic trends in population geography by ethnic group (pp. 117–67) displays much that is doubtful, in part because the underlying data and calculations (e.g., on net migration rates between 1959 and 1970, p. 143) have not been presented. The concepts used, such as "mixing," are fuzzy. The impression of an overinterpretation of scanty and ambiguous materials results. Vaclav Lamser's schema (pp. 183–210) also appears to be rather arbitrary. Alexandre Bennigsen acknowledges with felicity the profound gaps in current knowledge of the Islamic legacy in the USSR (pp. 168–82). Nevertheless, even he appears to be guilty of unwarranted generalization in his view that "the Soviet system, by suppressing the nomads and by prohibiting all social traditions inherited from the past such as the endogamous and the exogamous taboos, and the leveling of all social differences, had destroyed all subnational, clanish, or tribal loyalties and consciousness" (pp. 180–81).

Overall, *Soviet National Problems* suffers from conceptual diffuseness and excessive generalization. It is doubtful whether every type of ethnicity, from Ukrainian to Chukchi, can be meaningfully combined into a single rubric. Moreover, it is doubtful that language is necessarily the key criterion of ethnicity: the Old Believers certainly represent a markedly dissident group within Soviet society, while the Islamic tradition unifies peoples of differing stocks in both the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. Above all, nationalism, ethnicity, and localism have been sensitive topics subject to intense censorship throughout Soviet history. In dealing with them, a high dependence upon Soviet publications, without judicious use of émigré reports, *samizdat*, and the local radio and press, leads to fundamental omissions and distortions.

For these reasons, *Soviet National Problems* supplements but does not replace the earlier literature. The best general survey remains the one edited by Erich Goldhagen, *Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1968). This covers factually and objectively many facets, such as Ukrainian and Jewish nationalism, barely referred to in the Allworth volume. For the Ukraine, John Armstrong's *Ukrainian Nationalism* (2nd ed.; New York, 1963) is fundamental; documentation on current dissidence and repression is given in the book edited by Michael Browne, *Ferment in the Ukraine* (New York, 1971). For the Moslems, the basic study, which includes a brief reference to the seminal reforms of Catherine II (pp. 12–23) is S. A. Zenkovsky's *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960). Olaf Caroe's *Soviet Empire* (New York, 1953) contributes much on Central Asian history, as well as an incisive discussion of the effects of World War II—a subject also handled, with much bitterness, by Robert Conquest in *The Nation Killers* (New York, 1970).

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