

BOOK REVIEWS/КНИЖНЫЕ РЕЦЕНЗИИ

Ziva Galili and Boris Morozov. *Exiled to Palestine: The Emigration of Zionist Convicts from the Soviet Union, 1924-1934*. Oxford: Routledge, 2013. 160 pp. \$44.95 (paper). ISBN-13: 978-0-41564-769-4.

Exiled to Palestine, a book co-authored by historians Ziva Galili and Boris Morozov, introduces the reader to an unfamiliar aspect of early Soviet policies – permission to some Zionist and Zionist-Socialist activists to opt for deportation to Palestine as alternative to imprisonment or internal exile. While Morozov authored the chapter dealing with Soviet policies, Galili authored the chapter on administrative, financial and political aspects of accepting the deportees within Palestine. Together the two authors present a detailed and convincing picture of the factors that led Soviet authorities, relevant Zionist organizations and ruling British authorities in Palestine to accept deportation as a positive solution for Zionist activists in Soviet Russia.

Boris Morozov's contribution to the book details the Russian administrative organization of the deportation option. He starts with David Shor, a pianist respected by the Bolshevik elite, who first approached the Secret Services with the deportation idea. He then details the legal actions against Zionist activists and the process through which an arrested or exiled activist requested deportation. Morozov ends with the gradual narrowing of the opportunity to emigrate during the late 1920s and the closing of the Committee to Aid Political Prisoners – the organization that assisted imprisoned and exiled Zionists in negotiating the Soviet bureaucracy. The chapter makes clear that the myriad of bureaucratic and financial obstacles could not be surmounted without the Committee's assistance and especially that of its head Ekaterina Peshkova. Peshkova was well connected to the Bolshevik leadership not only because she was writer Maksim Gorkii's first wife but also due to her pre-revolutionary activism. Thus, she was in a position to negotiate with the regime on behalf of arrested Zionist activists. Morozov's chapter is highly detailed and will interest readers who wish to learn about early Soviet bureaucracy's operation in general – not just in the specific context of Zionism and emigration.

Ziva Galili's chapter addresses the emigration option from another direction. She discusses the organizational and financial difficulties of receiving the immigrants from Russia in Palestine. Due to growing anti-Semitism in Poland during the 1920s and the increasing power of Nazism in Germany during the early 1930s, many Zionists required assistance to

immigrate to Palestine and the Zionist movement's resources were scarce. Thus, while there was much sympathy towards Zionist activists trying to emigrate from Soviet Union both within the Zionist organizations and on the part of British administrators in Palestine, not all of those given permission to emigrate could do so. Another problem faced by potential immigrants was their inability to gain British authorities' permission to enter Palestine. Because Palestine was a poor agricultural country, the number of people capable of sustaining themselves there was limited; in addition British authorities were concerned about the political ramifications of letting too many Jewish immigrants into the country. Thus, while according to Galili the British authorities in Palestine often gave Soviet Jews visas beyond the usual quota for Jewish immigrants, when the numbers of applicants were too large some potential immigrants were refused a visa.

Galili concentrates on addressing contemporary allegations that Zionist activists either in Palestine or within the organization's leadership in London discriminated against some potential immigrants due to political considerations. She points out that while different Zionist organizations in Palestine tried to support potential immigrants among their own members, this was seldom the main reason that Soviet Jews could not migrate. The main issue was that both the potential immigrants and their organizations were often too poor to handle the necessary expense. Galili also points out that the British government, while generally sympathetic towards political exiles from the Soviet Union, over time grew anxious about potential Soviet spies among the émigrés. This concern made acquiring permission to enter Palestine considerably more difficult. Oddly enough, Britain's growing reticence to admit Soviet Jews coincided with the tightening of Soviet policy on Jewish emigration in the late 1920s and early 1930s as well with an overall decrease in the number of Zionist groups in the Soviet Union.

During the early Soviet years both Mensheviks and some opponents of the Bolsheviks from among the intellectuals and political activists were occasionally permitted or even forced to opt for deportation. This, though, was never a consistent policy, as the one described in this book. The very fact that such a policy was so unusual makes the story interesting in order to understand the contemporary Soviet regime.

The book concentrates on administrative procedures, both within and outside the Soviet Union. That is more than enough for one manuscript, especially considering there is no other scholarly literature on the topic. Still, I felt disappointed that the authors chose not to address more personal aspects of the decision to emigrate. Specifically, the authors point out that several Zionist groups tried to prevent their members from choosing the emigration option since they understood that this option adversely

affected their political activism within Russia. Therefore I assume that the decision to leave was not easy, both personally and politically. Since the authors worked with letters and with immigrants' memoirs, it was surely possible to discuss this here. It is a pity that the authors decided to do so only by telling a couple of short personal stories in the end, rather than analyze the political and personal issues involved.

While the actual book is well researched and highly detailed, I found the introduction disappointing. The introduction simply states that Zionist organizations were active in Russia since the early 1880s and until the period discussed within the book. It never references the political conflicts between these and other Jewish political organizations. Therefore it fails to provide the reader the background information needed to understand the conflicts among Jewish political activists after the revolution. Even worse, while the authors point out that the Bolsheviks closed down Jewish organizations and fought against the Hebrew language and culture in the Soviet Union, there is no mention of the flourishing Yiddish culture, of governmental support of Jewish educational institutions, and of the many newly opened educational and employment opportunities for Jews during the early Soviet period. Surely this is relevant for understanding the life choices made by contemporary Jewish youth, including those described in this book. Despite these shortcomings, the book tells an interesting story of both the early Soviet regime and the Zionist movement and is well worth reading.

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