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## REFERENCES

Claudie WEILL, **Les cosmopolites. Socialisme et judéité en Russie (1897-1917)**. Paris : Syllepse, 2004, 189 p.

- 1 How did the “non-Jewish Jews” (to use Isaac Deutscher’s well-known term) in the Russian revolutionary parties relate to their Jewish origins, their “Jewishness”? Such is the primary question which Claudie Weill explores in this short but thought-provoking book. The importance of even concealed ethnicity has been dramatically illustrated, she suggests, by the way in which the Communist efforts to create a new supra-national society culminated in the eventual emergence of innumerable nation-states. And she might have added that the reassertion of overt nationalism in Eastern Europe has served to focus specific attention on the role played by the “non-Jewish Jews” in the Russian revolutions, in the Bolshevik party and in the now defunct Communist regimes – a role described, for example, by Solzhenitsyn in highly critical terms in his book on Russian-Jewish relations, *Dvesti let vmeste* (*Two Hundred Years Together*).
- 2 At first glance, it might appear that there could not be much to say about the Jewishness (*judéité*) of revolutionaries who declared themselves to be in favour of strict internationalism; of class as opposed to national solidarity; and of full assimilation – in effect the gradual disappearance of the Jewish people – as the inevitable solution to the “Jewish Question.” Such, after all, was the ideological position held not only by individual revolutionaries (non-Jewish Jews among them), but also by two of the four movements described by Claudie Weill in her book: the supra-national, all-Russian (*vserossiiskie*) Bolshevik and Menshevik parties. The position of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries was much less well-defined, but was clearly oriented toward the Russian “people,” the *narod*, leaving little space for any concern with particular Jewish affairs. Even the Bund (the General Jewish Labour Union in Russia, Lithuania and Poland), the fourth party that occupies the author’s attention, and like the Bolsheviks and

Mensheviks a constituent organization within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), had within it initially a powerful assimilationist wing.

- 3 Nonetheless, Weill argues, once the historian moves from the realm of party doctrines to that of personal biographies – and her book is grounded on the analysis of much memoir material – what emerges is a highly variegated pattern characterized by conflicting viewpoints with regard to the Jewish past, present and future. Moreover, however much many of the Jewish revolutionaries argued for the irrelevance of their national origins, ethnicity proved to be remarkably tenacious as a marker not only because of the persistence of anti-Semitism in society at large, but also because once the Bolsheviks were in power notions of “affirmative action” based on nationality became an increasingly important factor in the apportionment of state resources: access to elite education and governmental appointments. (Even though the book, as stated in the title, focuses primarily on the years 1897 to 1917, the author in fact devotes considerable attention to the later, Communist, period.) Thus, the choice of the name, *Les cosmopolites*, can be seen as ironic, selected to highlight the vast gulf separating early internationalist aspirations from ultimate outcomes: the term “cosmopolitan,” after all, was that employed by Stalin’s regime in its vicious campaign of 1949-50 against the highly integrated and russified (or occasionally ukrainianized) Soviet-Jewish intelligentsia.
- 4 The author places great emphasis on the differing political cultures that predominated in the rival parties and that exerted their influence on the Jews in their ranks. Illustrating the point, she notes, for example, that the Bolsheviks of Jewish origin tended more than their counterparts in the other parties to adopt permanent pseudonyms, usually those with a clear Russian sound to them (Kamenev, Liadov, Lozovskii, Sokolnikov, Trotsky, Voldarskii, Iaroslavskii, Zinoviev, and so on). But even then, there were individual exceptions such as Lazar Moiseevich Kaganovich and Lev Semenovitch Sosnovskii, who employed their given names after the revolution.
- 5 The political culture characteristic of the Mensheviks was never as monolithic as that developed by the Bolsheviks and their alliance with the Bund, initiated in 1912, only served to reinforce greater diversity with regard to Jewishness and the Jewish question. In their memoirs, for example, two of the Tsederbaum brothers, Iulii and Vladimir, recalled at length how deeply impressed they had been when, exiled from St. Petersburg to towns in the Pale of Settlement, they first made contact with some of the revolutionary, Yiddish-speaking workers who came to form the rank-and-file of the Bund. In this context, it can be noted that while Iulii and Sergei, yet a third brother, chose pseudonyms with a Russian ring to them, Martov and Ezhov respectively, Vladimir preferred a Jewish-sounding name, Levitskii. Their sister Lidiia, yet another Menshevik, settled for the pseudonym of her husband, Fedor Dan (originally Gurevich).
- 6 It was in the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, with its populist roots and its suspicion of Marxist determinism, that Claudie Weill finds the greatest diversity of viewpoints. In a series of thumbnail sketches she introduces the reader to such individual and often idiosyncratic figures as Chaim Zhitlovskii (one of the founding fathers of diaspora Jewish nationalism and Yiddishism); S. Z. An-skii (author in his late years of the famous play “The Dybbuk”); Isaak Steinberg (the Left SR and a religiously observant Jew who served briefly in 1918 as People’s Commissar of Justice in Lenin’s *Sovnarkom*); and Mark Vishniak (who became a renowned expert after the First World War on the constitutional rights of national minorities in general, and of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe, in particular).

- 7 Weill notes that the SRs had their own equivalent of the Tsederbaum clan, the rebel offspring of the interlinked Gots, Vysotskii and Gavronskii families. As with Martov and Dan of the Mensheviks, so Mikhail and Abram Gots formed part of the top leadership of their chosen party. Both families could trace their heavy political involvement to the generation of the grandfathers. Aleksandr Tsederbaum had been exceptionally prominent in the Haskalah (Hebrew Enlightenment) movement, serving as publisher and editor of important Jewish journals in Hebrew, Russian and Yiddish during the reigns of both Alexander II and Alexander III. And the Gots brothers were closely related to Kalonymus Vysotskii, a wealthy Moscow tea merchant, who had provided significant financial support to the proto-Zionist Hibbat Zion movement after its foundation in 1884. It is Claudie Weill's argument that the adoption of universalist ideologies by the revolutionary generation rarely brought with it a complete break with family, with a Jewish milieu of one sort or another, and with a measure of ethnic consciousness. And it would seem that this fact applied with particular force to the Jewish members of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries. Indicatively, the SRs of Jewish origin rarely chose to adopt permanent pseudonyms. The term, non-Jewish Jews, applicable at least to some degree to many of the Bolsheviks, was thus simply not apt, for the most part, with regard to the SRs.
- 8 The final two chapters, some third of the book, focus on the development of the Bund. On the face of it the decision to assign a prominent place to the Bund in a work entitled "The Cosmopolitans" could seem odd, to say the least. After all, the Bund was a Jewish party, claiming the right to be "the sole representatives of the Jewish proletariat" in the tsarist empire, and had committed itself to support Jewish national-cultural autonomy in the anticipated democratic Russia of the future. But as the author rightly states, the Bund had its roots in the Vilna group of Social Democrats who in the late 1880s and early 1890s had originally set out to do no more than prepare a small cadre of workers to serve in the revolutionary movement in heartland Russia. Inter alia, this had involved the intensive teaching of the Russian language. At that stage, the self image of the group was, if not "cosmopolitan," then certainly strictly internationalist, Marxist and absolutely opposed to Jewish nationalism in any shape or form.
- 9 It took a complex evolution over some fifteen years until the Bund emerged not only as a movement rooted in the Yiddish-speaking working class in the Pale of Settlement – a development formalized with its establishment as a full-fledged party (in all but name) in 1897 – but also as an organization pledged to non-territorial cultural autonomy for the Jewish nation in the Russian state. What Claudie Weill rightly emphasizes is that this long drawn-out process involved constant controversy with the claims of trans-ethnic class solidarity being pitted against those of national self-determination.
- 10 For a short period it was hoped the conflict could be overcome by the so-called "neutralist" doctrine put forward in 1904 by Vladimir Medem. The Bund, according to this theory, should avoid taking a stand for or against the survival of the Jewish people, leaving it to long-term socio-economic processes to decide whether or not assimilation was inevitable. The purpose of autonomy on this reading was simply to provide the Jewish collectivity with a survivalist option if history were so to ordain, to create "a level playing field." Neutralism was soon abandoned, but the tension between the two poles, outward-looking internationalism and inward-looking nationalism, remained central to Bundist history, not only in Russia until the party was disbanded by the Bolsheviks in 1921, but also in inter-war Poland. The author therefore makes a most

valuable point when she insists that any analysis of the party's development has to give greater weight than is often done to the fact that it placed extraordinary value on remaining within the broader framework of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Its period of complete independence was thus short-lived, lasting only from 1903 until 1906. Its credentials as an orthodox Marxist party were of key importance to its self-perception and nothing was more anathema to it than the idea of replacing class politics by the politics of Jewish solidarity (*klal-yisroel politik*).

- 11 The section of the book devoted to the Bund largely follows well-trodden paths, with the exception of the short chapter on the émigré politics of the Russian Bund in the interwar period. Largely missing here is the memoir material so imaginatively employed in the analysis of the ethos characteristic of the other three parties. As Claudie Weill herself informs us, she has not made use of the extensive autobiographical sources available in Yiddish, a fact which explains the comparative lack of human interest and personal detail in the final parts of the book.
- 12 Overall, though, *Les cosmopolites* is a welcome addition to the historiographical literature dealing with the Jewish presence in the Russian revolutionary movement. It is unsystematically structured, to be sure, but the fragmentary and impressionistic approach effectively brings out the inherently idiosyncratic nature of so many of the *dramatis personae*. Much of the material employed will be familiar to specialists in the field; Claudie Weill, though, approaches the subject from an unusual angle. There will be very few readers who do not find something to intrigue them in this work.