

Baldwin builds on recent work in cultural studies to show how African-American writers used the Soviet Union to build an internationalist identity while at the same time promoting their cause within national borders. While acknowledging her debt to Paul Gilroy's notion of the "Black Atlantic," Baldwin compellingly shows how Gilroy's concept misses crucial elements of the black thought by ignoring the USSR. (She is also so taken with Neil Lazarus's criticism of Gilroy's exclusion of Marxism that she repeats a sentence on the topic verbatim – pp. 10, 217.) The paradox of promoting national aims in an internationalist context was one that all of the figures in Baldwin's study faced.

A related paradox also lay at the heart of the modern freedom struggle for African-Americans. How could these writers challenge the notion that race marked biological difference while at the same time using race as a rallying cry to mobilize black Americans seeking to throw off the legal and economic restrictions they faced? This paradox had a direct analogy in the Soviet context, as Soviet nationality policy sought to create a "new Soviet person" while at the same time encouraging the cultural expression of cultural and linguistic minorities. Unfortunately, Baldwin offers little on this score, perhaps limiting Soviet experts' interest in her book. She frequently notes how African-American writers (including those, like Richard Wright, not included here) grew interested in the USSR because of its nationality policies, yet spends rather less time showing what those policies were and how they evolved. Baldwin has passed up the chance to connect her work to remarkable new scholarship on Soviet nationality policy.

Nevertheless, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain* has much to offer. Baldwin's familiarity with a wide range of literary theory and historical scholarship makes the book essential reading for scholars interested in African-American literature, the culture of transnational America, and Americans' attractions to the Soviet Union.

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*Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. Edited and with introduction by Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir P. Naumov. Translated by Laura Esther Wolfson. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001. xxvii, 527 pp. \$ 35.00.

In mid-1952 fifteen defendants were tried in a secret proceeding by the military commission of the USSR Supreme Court on charges of state treason. Most, including a member of the Communist party's Central Committee Solomon Lozovsky, had either been active members of or had some relation to the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC), a USSR propaganda organ that worked between 1942 and 1948 on mobilizing international support for the Soviet fight against Hitler's Germany. The initial arrests came from suspicions that 1947 leaks to the Western media about the private life of Soviet leaders had passed via JAC's channels. Other charges, however, dominated the investigation and court proceedings: that the JAC's media dispatches and communications with foreigners (assumed to be spies) contained secret military and economic information; that several members, inspired in part by Jewish-American leaders, petitioned the Soviet government to establish a Jewish republic on the strategically important Crimean peninsula; and that the committee's ideological work served the cause of Jewish nationalism rather than Soviet patriotism.

In the course of a two-month trial, the defendants took back or refuted so many of the confessions they signed in prison, that the general presiding over the court tried to return the case for another investigation. He failed, since the Politburo and Stalin had already decided upon the verdict on the basis of investigators' reports. All defendants except one who was

exiled and another one who became seriously ill and died later in prison were convicted to death. Three years later, during the post-Stalin thaw, another secret military commission of the Supreme Court posthumously absolved the victims of any crime. It concluded that the investigators (most of whom by that time had themselves been executed on various charges of abuse) had fabricated the case by using illegal methods of interrogation – beatings and sleep deprivation – and, generally, by distorting and inflating innocent acts and honest mistakes to the level of state crimes. Neither the initial verdict nor the reversal in 1955 were published, but the disappearance of several prominent Jewish political and cultural figures – both among the defendants and among others, arrested around the same time on similar or related charges – could not pass unnoticed. In unofficial Soviet rumors and Western commentaries, the case was usually understood as the pogrom of Yiddish culture – “The Night of the Murdered Poets” – and considered the ultimate example of state anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

The transcript of the trial was first published in Russian as *Nepravednyi sud: Poslednii stalinskii rassretel* (Moscow: Nauka, 1994), and its English translation now appears in the reviewed volume. As a publication of this important historical document, the Russian edition is actually more reliable. Although it, too, printed the long transcript with significant cuts, their locations were at least marked by ellipses, and in some places the Russian editors added short summaries indicating what kind of information was excluded. Unfortunately, these omission marks and some of the summaries were removed in the English translation, and numerous additional editorial cuts were made without any markings in the text. Thus, for example, when the published transcript says on page 144: “With these words, uttered by Markish on May 13 at 8:45 P.M., his testimony came to a close,” an Anglophone reader would not know that the last words by Peretz Markish are actually missing. In his omitted statement, Markish entered a correction that his earlier guilty plea of anti-Soviet nationalism applied only to one metaphor in his one poem out of “80 thousand poetic lines written and published with the appeal to fight for socialism” (Russian edition, p. 75). Equally misleading is the editorial assertion on page 119, “This is the end of Teumin’s testimony,” since it is preceded by a lengthy omitted section concluding with Emilia Teumin’s admission that her memorandum “contained state secrets,” although she was unaware of it at the time of composition (Russian edition, p. 58).

Similar unmarked omissions – either long or short – can be found, on average, every second page of the published transcript, and, as in the above examples, the cuts were neither unimportant nor ideologically neutral. What made the editors feel somewhat uncomfortable about the text were the defendant’s impeccable communist credentials and beliefs. Indeed, the majority of the victims – twelve out of fifteen, by my count – considered themselves first and foremost communists and internationalists, and only then – and to a varying degree – Jews (being a Yiddish writer did not contradict such self-identity). None saw any good in religion, but some valued Jewish traditions as cultural heritage, others were concerned about the dwindling numbers of Yiddish readers, and others were fully assimilated and did not care about either language or Jewish traditions. As the writer Leyb Kvitko put it: “When a religious offender stands before the court and believes he has been wrongly condemned . . . he can comfort himself with the thought . . . at least god knows the truth. . . . The only god I have is the Bolshevik power – that is my god. And it is before that faith that I speak. . . . I will tell you everything that I know and regard as accurate. I don’t value my own life. Most important to me is to purify my heart” (Russian edition, pp. 91, 97).

Their trial behind the closed doors was anything but a rehearsed performance staged for public consumption, resembling instead an earnest discussion at an internal party meeting. The accused behaved as principled communists were supposed to: engaged in sincere soul searching, setting the record straight, looking for possible mistakes they might have allowed

to happen, accusing themselves and others when they felt justified, and denying phony accusations against themselves and others. They believed in many of the same things as their prosecutors: that in the end, the party was always right, nationalism was a crime, enemies of the people were plentiful, and spies could hide amongst the closest friends. This worldview could make some of them admit unknowingly aiding foreign spies, repent nationalist lapses, and accept co-defendants' confessions signed in prison as proof of guilt – even knowing under what pressures they were made to sign their own confessions. Despite all this and the defendants' willingness to cooperate with the judges in unmasking real wrongdoings, the case against them still fell apart, precisely because, as their stories unfolded, it was becoming all too obvious that in reality, there were neither spies nor Jewish nationalists in the room, but true and sincere communists or communist sympathizers.

This very fact, however, threatens to undermine their status as innocent victims in the eyes of many contemporary Anglophone readers, who after fifty years of uninterrupted Cold War propaganda automatically assume "communist" to be a dirty word. The editors could have tried to correct this common prejudice, but opted to correct the document instead. Although a limited amount of doctoring could not radically change the overall picture, certain cuts made the accused appear somewhat more Jewish (in our contemporary sense) and less communists. The readers are spared some dismissive remarks about religion, some admissions of guilt and accusations against co-defendants, some expressions of love towards the party, and references to the defendants' services as the party's secret agents abroad. Interesting autobiographical stories rich in important detail about Jewish culture in the revolutionary decades were also cut, probably because they reveal important reasons why Jews were embracing the communist cause and strongly worded disagreements among them on issues such as national territory, assimilation, and the fate of Yiddish and Hebrew. Instead, editorial introductions wishfully interpret some of these disagreements, as well as personal and literary squabbles as signs of opposition to the Soviet regime. Some defendants are furnished with Jewish identities of the kind, they themselves would have considered nationalist, and their ideologically Soviet writings and pronouncements are characterized as either insincere or forced. The editors' good intentions, however, lead to a genuine problem: an unnatural and undesired collusion with Stalinist investigators, who – acting on completely different, anti-Semitic rather than anticommunist prejudices – also wanted to believe that the defendants' expressions of communist faith were insincere, a duplicitous cover for subversive "Jewish nationalism" and attempts to save their lives.

Another option is still possible, that of fully acknowledging and respecting the sincerity of commitment which gave Doctor Boris Shimeliovich the will to resist all interrogations and never sign any confession of crime, in order to be able to tell the judge: "The party gave me all that was possible. . . . I ask the court not to consider any of my achievements in the field of health care . . . if I committed a transgression against the party. If the court finds me guilty of a crime against the party, then let it sentence me to death" (pp. 310-11). The court's chairman, Lieutenant General of Justice Aleksandr Cheptsov did not manage to commute the predetermined verdict, but he showed at least some courage and sympathy towards the unjustly accused in letting them speak their minds fully and freely, so that we today can hear their true confessions. This leaves us, historians, an obligation to understand the beliefs the victims devoted their lives to and explain them to the readers, who otherwise will be uncomfortably puzzled by the volume's main content. In order to do so one would need to explain why so many among the Jews identified themselves so completely with communism, and why – before the creation of the state of Israel – so many of them saw in the Soviet state their chief protector against anti-Semitism and supporter of Jewish causes. One would also have to make clear that in Stalinist society, Jews were not only persecuted, as in the above case, but also provided the status of privileged ethnic minority and an un-

precedented degree of state support for the development of Yiddish literature and culture. Perhaps another volume in the Annals of Communism Series is needed to present and carefully document this important chapter in Jewish history, which has been practically erased from the memory of the living generations. If, in the process, some favorite postulates of Cold War propaganda would have to be allowed to fall, so be it, but the result, at least, would be truer to memory of the victims, the Soviet Jews, and to history in general.

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G. S. Smith. *D. S. Mirsky: A Russian-English Life, 1890-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, xviii, 398 pp. \$110.00.

Biographers are fascinated people. They normally start their research out of sound interest in a certain person, then usually become so obsessed by their subject, that they lose themselves in mere fetishism of details. It therefore often takes either a very indulgent reader, or someone as fascinated as the author himself to really enjoy a biography. Fortunately, these inconveniences are easily overcome when the biographer in question is as good a writer as professor G. S. Smith of Oxford University and the subject of his study is a figure as fascinating and enigmatic as Dmitri Petrovich Sviatopolk-Mirskii.

Prince D. P. Sviatopolk-Mirskii (1890-1939) was the son of a tsarist Minister of the Interior who made his first steps in literature – as a poet – in his late teens. During the Civil War, Sviatopolk-Mirskii fought on the side of the Voluntary Army and therefore had to leave his country. In 1921 he emigrated to England, where he became lecturer at Sir B. Pares' London School of Slavonic Studies, thanks to the interference of Maurice Baring, an old friend of Sviatopolk-Mirskii's father. In England, however, Sviatopolk-Mirskii – now D. S. Mirsky – did not confine himself to lecturing. He wrote a famous *History of Russian Literature* (1927), overthrowing the hitherto accepted, rather mystical and impressionistic conceptions of Russian literature in Britain and America. At the same time he published on contemporary English and Russian literature in the émigré-press. Eventually, he became politically involved with the Eurasian movement and by the end of the 1920s turned to communism. Under the protection of Maksim Gor'kii, D. S. Mirsky in 1932 returned to Russia. Unfortunately the former Prince and White Guard Mirsky was as out of place in Soviet Russia as he had been in the West. His contributions to Soviet literary criticism did not prevent him from being severely criticized, especially after the death of Gor'kii in 1936. Thereafter, it was only a question of time before he would be arrested and put on transport to the GULag.

G. S. Smith did not choose the easiest way. He wrote the biography of a man who obviously did not want anyone to look into his matters and whose secretiveness completely isolated him from the outside world. Moreover, the personal archives of D. S. Mirsky did not survive, so that Smith had the tremendously harsh task to reconstruct Mirsky's life on only partially available information. This, however, has actually been most fortunate for both author and reader, because scrutiny of details necessarily had to be outbalanced by generalizing overviews to fill out the many gaps in Mirsky's life. This is most obviously the case in Mirsky's "Russian periods," both before his emigration from and after his return to the Soviet Union. They make up the first and third parts of the book. The second part of Smith's study, devoted to Mirsky's "émigré" or "English" period, is more detailed, mainly because of Mirsky's impressive bibliography from that period. This bibliography served Smith as a pretext to thematically divide this part in "Writing English," "Writing Russian" and "Writing Politics". Taking into account the difficult task Smith was facing in terms of

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