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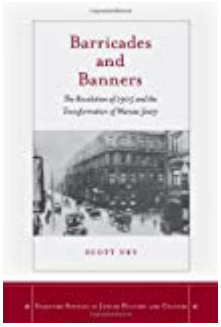

Scott Ury. *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry.* Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture Series. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. 448 pp. $60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-6383-7.

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Warsaw: The Incubator of Modern Jewish Politics

As Scott Ury claims, the recent significant production of studies on interethnic tensions in Israel has mainly focused on "the twentieth-century Middle East" in an effort to understand the origins of Jewish ethnic nationalism (p. 267). Yet Ury castes his gaze not to the Levant but to that great crucible of modern Jewish politics, Russian Poland. In so doing, he deepens scholarly understandings of how the Russian Revolution of 1905 politically engaged and endangered the Jewish residents of the region. More important, he exposes the dynamic interplay that emerged between Jewish and Gentile politics in a time and place wracked by rapid urbanization, political uncertainty, heightened ethnocentrism, and an ever-expanding public sphere. Consequently, by resisting traditional narratives that emphasize Polish Jewry's separateness from Gentile society, Ury implicitly calls on scholars to think through the lessons and legacies of Russian Poland to arrive at a better understanding of modern Jewish politics. It is this repositioning of ethnocultural political lenses that makes *Barricades and Banners* a groundbreaking contribution to both Jewish *and* Polish studies.

Barricades and Banners focuses mainly on Warsaw, with brief, but significant, mentions of Białystok and Siedlce. Warsaw in 1905 was, to put it mildly, an embattled place. Not only could Warsaw claim itself as the largest Jewish city in Europe, but it could equally claim to be the "first city" of both Józef Piłsudski's Polish Socialist Party and Roman Dmowski's National Democratic movement (hereafter, the Nationalist Camp). During the years leading up to 1905, Warsaw's Jews had enjoyed relatively good relations with Piłsudski's sympathizers and with other Gentile leftists, who seemingly wanted to offer Polish Jews a place within the Polish nation. Meanwhile, the Nationalist Camp, exhibiting all manner of chauvinism, was unwilling to broker any such deal, believing a properly constituted Polish nation would be free of Jews. Because of the Left's apparent openness toward Jews, we might

have expected that during the political crisis of 1905, when electoral camps first seriously coalesced, Warsaw's Jews might have formed a closer union with the anti-Dmowski-ite forces. In fact, no such thing occurred. As Ury argues, Warsaw's Jews came to see themselves as a separate, discrete, and ethnically defined political entity—one that had to gird its loins against the onslaught of an increasingly ascendant Nationalist Camp and that had to deal with those leftists who increasingly deployed the rhetoric and logic of Dmowski. Indeed, Ury writes, "Ultimately, all those who chose to participate in the Polish political sphere were forced to take a position on two increasingly exclusive yet intimately bound concepts: the Polish nation and 'the Jews.'... And, thus, two separate political communities—Poles and Jews—were redefined and juxtaposed against one another in an ongoing battle for the right to define, represent, and control the disputed city of Warsaw and the fate of 775,000 residents" (p. 260).

How "Jewishness" and "Polishness" became increasingly oppositional categories during the Russian revolutionary period of 1905 is a central question motivating Ury's text. Ury argues that Jewish ethnic nationalism was informed by Polish nationalism and by antisemitic violence. At its core, Jewish nationalism served as a "discourse of order" to help attain a sense of safety and security amid the political chaos and ethnic violence precipitated by the 1905 Revolution (p. 4). To demonstrate this, Ury focuses on the rising star of the Nationalist Camp. He notes their victories in the Duma elections of 1906 and 1907 and pays particular attention to their antisemitic rhetoric, which grew more "vicious" during this period and became more dominant within Warsaw's political landscape (p. 252). Ury shows that even those opposed to Dmowski began to internalize his antisemitic worldview, folding themselves into "the same conceptual universe" (p. 244). Yet Ury is quick to resist positioning Warsaw's Jews as passive recipients. Indeed, the second line of Ury's thought focuses on how Warsaw's Jews, as subjects of urbanization and modernity, had already begun to form a sense of political difference, thanks to the spread of print and performance cultures.

Ury's emphasis on the importance of urbanization to the emergence of modern Jewish politics is supported by an impressive array of Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish archival and secondary sources from Warsaw, Jerusalem, and YIVO. Indebted to the theories of Jürgen Habermas, Ury deftly shows how, on the eve of 1905 and throughout the revolutionary period, Warsaw's Jews, confronted by the challenges and vicissitudes of city life, sought to find order and meaning among the coffeehouses, Yiddish theaters, and publishing companies of Jewish Warsaw. Many Jews, Ury demonstrates, did, in fact, achieve a sense of political community within these institutions. Thus, Ury suggests, the Revolution of 1905—with its heightened rhetoric of ethnic difference—concretized nationalizing trends already in process.

Ury artfully weaves his narrative of Jewish self-definition alongside his tale of increased Polish ethnocentrism, making both forces active parties in the construction of modern interpretations of "Jewishness" and "Polishness." Moreover, Ury shows that Warsaw's Jews should not be relegated to some vanished world. Rather, though difficult to exaggerate the impact of the Shoah on Warsaw, Ury discusses how many of the founders of the State of Israel, including David Ben-Gurion, David Yosef Gruen, and Chaim Wiezmann, had cut their political teeth in revolutionary Warsaw. Thus, far from a dead end for Jewish history, Russian Poland served as the incubator, par excellence, for modern Jewish politics. As Ury shows, in seeking to find order, community, and safety in an increasingly violent and antisemitic space, Jewish nationalism had turned toward self-care and self-defense, long before Adolf Hitler's ravages or Palestinian threats.

Ury ends his narrative with reflections on the Białystok and Siedlce pogroms of 1906, which killed over one hundred Jews. These violent out-

bursts reinforced suspicions already held among nationally active Jews that neither the Poles nor the tsarist authorities could be looked to for safety, protection, and order in a world increasingly defined by urban landscapes, nation-states, ethnolinguistic communities, and democratic ideals. Ury maintains, "In an odd, sick way, the pogroms of Białystok and Siedlce ... succeeded in achieving their primary goal as many Jews in Warsaw began to reconsider their entry into the public realm.... The carnival of violence ... served as a stark reminder regarding the limits of intergroup cooperation" (p. 265). Fearing the Nationalist Camp and tsarist violence, "Jewish organizations began to construct their own brand of nationalism that was both democratic and exclusive" (p. 267). This turn toward "'Jewish National Democracy,'" Ury posits, has had longstanding consequences and is emblematic of the "Dialectics of Jewish Modernity," wherein Jewish nationalism should be understood as both modern and embedded (pp. 267, 4). That is, far from being the "oldest of nations" (p. 3), the Jewish nation was configured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during that same period when almost all other forms of modern nationalism asserted themselves.

In the final analysis, Ury's major historiographic intervention stands firmly in conversation with Jewish history and with the foundational narratives of Jewish modernity. As Ury puts it, in the face of Gentile hostility, those who constituted themselves politically as Jews were forced "to dance alone on the center stage of politics and culture in eastern Europe" (p. 206). The lessons of the revolutionary period taught many of Warsaw's Jews that to function in the modern world, they would have to do so not as individuals but as a fortified collective. For only then could they hope to find order and safety. Ultimately, Ury's book seems to suggest that it might be these lessons taught to Warsaw's Jews and woven into the warp and woof of the Israeli state that we might want to consider as we reflect on the genealogical antecedents of contemporary Israeli politics.

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