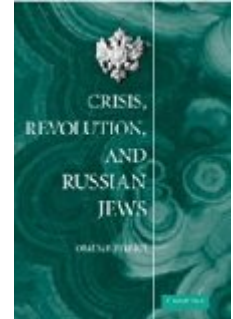


**Jonathan Frankel.** *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 324 S. \$85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-51364-7.



**Reviewed by** Alexandra Korros

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**Commissioned by** Jason Kalman (Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion)

This collection of Jonathan Frankel's essays provides us with a fitting overview of his career and a good sense of what made him such an exceptional scholar of Russian Jewish history. Those who have followed his publications closely will appreciate this compendium of essays while those unfamiliar with Frankel's body of work will be in for a treat. Frankel's special contribution to the study of Russian Jewry lay in his ability to explore how events in eastern Europe connected to the history of Jews in the United States or to the history of Zionism. While each essay is substantive and satisfying, their totality illustrates Frankel's great contribution to Jewish scholarship. It is sad that this collection evidently intended as a celebration of his career has been published only after his untimely death.

All chapters were published elsewhere or presented as public lectures. While most focus on Russian Jewry, they all examine politics either within the Jewish community or in its relation to outside political institutions. In the first essay, "Crisis as Factor in Modern Jewish Politics, 1840

and 1881-82," Frankel asks the reader to consider how specific episodes in the nineteenth century "involved the Jews, first and foremost, precisely as Jews, as a collective entity.... This fact ... lends these episodes their unique importance for the historian of modern Jewry. In studying them, he may hope to find his way to realities, forces, that in normal times remained hidden far beneath the surface of everyday existence" (p. 15).

Given the volume's title, we would expect it to focus on Russian Jews, yet the first chapter compares the crises of 1840 to 1881-82, while the second explores the "reception" of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in western and eastern Europe. Part 2 examines Russian Jewish politics specifically, but it contains surprises; two of the essays analyze the influence of the political writings of S. Ansky and Yosef Haim Brenner. Part 3 consists of one very interesting essay, "The Socialist Opposition to Zionism," which examines how various socialist groups in the Second International regarded the Zionist movement and how these themes persisted well into the late twentieth century. In

part 4, entitled "Overseas," two chapters examine "The 'Yizkor' Book of 1911: A Note on National Myths in the Second Aliyah" and "The Bundists in America and the 'Zionist Problem.'" The collection concludes with a discussion of the influence of the great Russian Jewish historian S. M. Dubnov, followed by a final essay on "Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Toward a New Historiography?"

Two chapters were especially interesting to this reviewer, a specialist in Russian history, because of the unexpected connections Frankel explores. In "Jewish Politics and the Revolution of 1905," Frankel contends that like the Damascus Crisis of 1840, which "first impelled leaders of Western--post Emancipation--Jewry to take up the Jewish cause abroad in areas of pre-Emancipation," or the pogroms of 1881, which caused Russian Jews to engage in the political organization leading to the first Jewish agricultural colonies in Palestine, the crisis of 1905-1907 brought the multiple political strands of Russian Jewry into a "complex system of interaction, of competition and cooperation, of mutual repulsion and mutual attraction" (pp. 57-58). Throughout Frankel weaves his story in the context of the larger framework he outlined at the outset, discussing the role of the Jewish Socialist and the liberal/constitutionalist parties during the pogroms, Russo-Japanese War, the 1905 Revolution, and the convening of the First Duma. However, Frankel does not limit his argument to events in the Russian Empire; rather, he extends his story to how these events affected Jewish politics in the United States, and in Palestine, focusing on how Jewish activists, particularly on the left, rethought their positions on questions of class struggle and Marxist ideas. He asks why by 1905 even Zionists and territorialists all viewed the successful conclusion of the revolution as a necessity, claiming that in 1881, revolutionaries in the populist People's Will and proto-Marxist Black Repartition were sympathetic to the pogromists hoping that popular anti-Jewish animosity would transform into revolu-

tionary overthrow. However, during the intervening decades as Marxist ideas dominated the revolutionary movement, Russian Social Democrats roundly condemned anti-Semitism. Following the 1905 October Manifesto, the number and popularity of Zionist and non-Zionist Socialist parties increased partly because of the Bund's efforts to organize Jewish self-defense units. As pogroms multiplied, Frankel relies on the writings of Dubnov to show that non-Socialist Jewish groups increasingly disputed the leftist organizations' (Zionist and non-Zionist) belief that the coming revolution would magically erase all prejudice. Frankel contends that the outcome of this debate transformed political geometry into a quadrangle that held until World War II: the Bund at one point, the non-Socialist Zionists at another, non-Zionist liberals at a third, and Socialist Zionists and territorialists at a fourth. Maintaining this theme, Frankel discusses how the Jewish Socialist Left grew further apart from more moderate groups, in Russia, Europe, Palestine, and the United States. Accordingly, outside Russia, the 1905 Revolution's greatest impact occurred in Palestine, because it produced the generation of the Second Aliyah whose leaders created the political institutions and ideologies characterizing the history of the Yishuv until 1948. Frankel justifiably concludes that "above all ... 1905 saw the emergence of a new generation in Jewish politics--very young, numerous, possessed of precocious political and organizational experience, confident in itself and its methods, trained by the Marxist method to think in terms of world-historical categories and change, ready to lead whenever the opportunity came--as it did, for example, with industrial unionism in the United States; with the Russian Revolution of 1917; and with the arrival of the Third Aliyah in Palestine after the First World War" (p. 71).

In "The Paradoxical Politics of Marginality: Thoughts on the Jewish Situation during the Years 1914-1921," Frankel brings together a series of events often discussed separately, but rarely in conjunction with one another--the tragedies that

befell east European Jews during WWI and such political achievements as the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and guarantees of Jewish emancipation in east European successor states. He argues that this juxtaposition of tragedy and triumph stemmed from similar conceptions of Jewish power among the various political players of the period. Frankel eschews viewing these events in the context of WWII and the Holocaust, claiming that doing so detracts from understanding the actual Jewish experience during and immediately following the First World War. He briefly reviews the disasters that befell the Jews of the East during 1914-19 in both Russia and Palestine. Referring to the attacks on Jews during the Russian Civil War, Frankel asserts that Jews suffered not only because of traditional interethnic tensions, but also because so many Bolshevik leaders were of Jewish origin regardless that the vast majority of Jews failed to support the Bolshevik cause. Because the war made it impossible for western European Jewish organizations to come to the aid of Jews in the East, the "neutral" American Jewish community created the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in 1914 to lead relief efforts. Frankel explains how the German, Turkish, and Russian governments all permitted the JDC to intervene in the suffering in the Jewish communities under their control partly out of fear of alienating the wealthy Jewish financiers who backed the JDC. As a result of their wartime efforts, international Jewish organizations emerged stronger. Further, he asserts that the efforts of the representatives of the European and American Jewish organizations attending the Paris Peace Conference resulted in the inclusion of safeguards for Jewish minorities in the newly independent and reconstituted states of eastern Europe. Frankel tries to understand why these extraordinary political achievements occurred. "After all, here was a people whose weakness had been exposed mercilessly by the war—a people lacking both its own state and its own territory" (pp. 143-144). He attributes these successes to a variety of factors, including the refusal of

American Jewish investment bankers, such as Jacob Schiff, to loan money to tsarist Russia or to participate in British loans unless the government guaranteed that none of the money would be used to help the Russian Empire. Moreover, as news of Jewish suffering reached the West, Frankel claims, "exalted promises of freedom for the small nations of eastern Europe and the Middle East; and the popular assumption that peace would introduce a radically new and better era combined to make Zionism look no longer a fantasy but rather the height of reason" (p. 145). Yet Frankel does not ignore the prevalence of the myth of Jewish power, citing German and Russian documents which claimed that placating international Jewry could play a crucial role in winning the war.

A parallel cycle occurred at war's end; Frankel asserts that the Red Scare led to polarization between Left and Right as well as to the loss of idealism characterizing much of the rhetoric about the war. As anti-Jewish rhetoric escalated among rightist anti-Communist groups in the West, Jewish institutions disappeared in the USSR. Nevertheless, Frankel asserts that in 1919-21, Chaim Weitzmann and Louis Marshall were able to use the fear of the spread of Communism as a powerful argument for Jewish emancipation as well as for building a national home in Palestine. Frankel maintains that the attraction of Zionism led to an "outpouring of young men and women" from Russia and Poland, the Third Aliyah, to Palestine demonstrating "once again—as in the post-1905 period—how much the Zionist movement could gain from the potent synthesis of socialism and nationalism" (p. 153). The successes growing from the catastrophes of World War I, Frankel argues, caused Jews to believe that better years lay ahead and that using their newfound influence on Jewish organizations would be able to prevent disaster. Nevertheless, he concludes, "Few realized just how much this myth, albeit a source of political strength, was still more—given the es-

sential weakness it disguised--a source of danger without limit" (p. 154).

The essays in this collection constitute a fitting overview of Frankel's great strengths as a scholar, highlighting his versatility and ability to integrate his vast knowledge of Russian, European, and Jewish history into larger contexts. His syntheses of these questions provide us with an opportunity to look at historical questions in innovative ways. Reading this book reminds us why he will be so sorely missed.

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