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The Attitude of American Jewry Towards East European Jewish Immigration, 1881-1914. By Myron Berman. New York: Arno Press, 1980. xiv + 571 pp. \$50.00.

American Jewry and United States Immigration Policy, 1881-1953. By Sheldon Morris Neuringer. New York: Arno Press, 1980. iii + 481 pp. \$45.00.

Few subjects in American Jewish history have received so much attention as the relationship between Germans and East Europeans, the proverbial tension between "uptown" and "downtown." As early as 1881, the very year that mass immigration of East European Jews to America began, Henry Gersoni, editor of the *Jewish Advance*, lamented that "even in America, the Russian emigrants

are thrown out of the society of their own brethren." He pointed out that "sectional prejudices" among Jews had long prevailed in Europe with unfortunate consequences. In America, he hoped Jews could unite.

In subsequent years a whole range of opinions on this subject were expressed. Rabbi Moses Weinberger, writing in 1887, praised the German Jews for their charity, which he considered superior to that of his own fellow Eastern Europeans. Dr. George Price, writing in 1893, shared some of Weinberger's sentiments toward the German-American *Yahudim*, and offered an analysis of "uptown"- "downtown" relations that remains one of the most insightful and fairminded ever to have been produced:

[T]he American Jew, who enjoys political freedom, tries to avoid anything which might provoke enmity against him and might supply fuel to the dying flame of intolerance. That is why Russian-Jewish immigration brought the American Jew face to face with a special problem. The American Jew is afraid that the mass influx will delay the process of assimilation - the process of Americanization of the Jews of the United States. . . . On the one hand, here are his true relatives who are dear to him and whom he wants to help; on the other hand, what a blemish! All his aristocratic neighbors, and he, himself, will again become aware of his descent, of his past and of his poverty. But he cannot help himself. The relatives are in need. They require help. Our friend spends a great deal of money and tries to rehabilitate his relatives. But, after this first party of relatives, there arrives a second, third and fourth and there seems to be no end to the influx. . . . This is the position the American Jew finds himself in. (*Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 48, 109.)

Unfortunately, Price's evenhanded psychological perspective on the conflict was not developed. Instead, most subsequent historians have painted a somber picture of aloof, prejudiced and cold-hearted *Yahudim* who worried more about status and Americanism than about tzedakah and Judaism. Thus Ezekiel Lifschutz, writing in *Yivo Bleter* (1932), lambasted America's German Jews mercilessly. To his mind, they "did not take the condition of the Russian-Polish Jews strongly to heart, for they considered them culturally and even more so economically inferior." Lifschutz went so far as to imply that early East European immigrants found more sympathy in Christian circles than among Jews.

While Zosa Szajkowski, Irving Mandel, and particularly Moses Rischin strove to be more evenhanded, the picture that emerged from their work was still a damning indictment of America's German-Jewish elite. When translated into popular terms - books like *Our Crowd* and *Poor Cousins* - the German Jews came out looking suspiciously like nativist American patricians. That image lingers.

Readers of this journal, however, know better, for in 1973 they were treated to Zosa Szajkowski's revisionist article, "The *Yahudi* and the Immigrant: A Reappraisal." Based on his own research and two decades of reflection, Szajkowski in this essay advanced more forcefully than anyone had before him the German Jew's rebuttal. Recanting his earlier view, Szajkowski concluded that German Jews' "very positive and meaningful action" on behalf of East Europeans deserves respect. Their successes, he pointed out, were notable, and even their failures usually stemmed from highminded ideals. This view of *Yahudi*-immigrant relations, which distinguishes attitudes from actions and substitutes ambivalence for animosity, finds eloquent expression in Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers*:

The east European Jews felt free to release their bile because they knew that finally the German Jews would not abandon them, and the German Jews kept on with their good works even while reflecting on the boorishness of their "coreligionists." Out of such friction came a modest portion of progress (p. 235).

The two volumes under review were both completed before Szajkowski's revisionist essay appeared in print. Both were originally written as doctoral dissertations, and neither has been updated (although Berman has added a brief preface placing his 1963 work in perspective). Arno Press has now published both volumes straight from typescript without benefit of even so much as an index.

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, Myron Berman's *The Attitude of American Jewry Towards East European Jewish Immigration, 1881-1914* merits a place on any university bookshelf. For years it has stood as the most complete work available on East European Jewish immigration to the United States, and though now partly superceded, it still possesses immense value for its voluminous citations and its exhaustively detailed treatment of institutional responses to mass immigration. Berman understood, as many of his predecessors in the field did not, that attitudes display themselves in actions no less than in words. He therefore went beyond newspaper studies and selective quotations from private correspondence to show what Jews did, and - most importantly - how their actions changed over time. His work begins with a survey of the "immigration crisis" and the organizational response to it, moves on to consider the battle to keep America's gates open, and ends with a general survey of social, economic and cultural developments through World War One. Berman's conclusions - (1) that American Jews gradually improved their opinion of the East Europeans and by 1914 considered them welcome additions to the population, (2) that up to 1914 the overwhelming majority of Jews seek-

ing American shores were granted admission, and (3) that in comparison to other immigrant groups Jews were not received badly – all remain rather convincing.

Some of Berman's material, notably his statistics and his sections on Zionism, require revision based on more recent research and Yiddish sources. Moreover, Berman commits the usual fallacies, grouping all East Europeans together, and confusing the New York experience with that of American Jewry as a whole. Still, his remains a valuable counterpart to *World of Our Fathers*, whose vantage point is that of the East European Jew; Berman's is generally that of the *Yahudi*. To compare the two volumes, the one emphasizing labor and culture, the other legislation, philanthropy and Americanization, is to gain yet another perspective on the chasm that divided two interdependent Jewish worlds from one another.

Though completed six years later, Neuringer's *American Jewry and the United States Immigration Policy, 1881–1953* is in some senses a more antiquated work. It focuses narrowly on publicly expressed attitudes toward proposed immigration policies, ignores German Jews' efforts to have laws liberally interpreted and loosely enforced, and instead endeavors to prove that American Jews displayed far more sympathy toward immigration restriction legislation than is generally assumed. During the period 1893–1896, Neuringer finds that “anti-immigrant sentiment among the American Jews had been so powerful that for the first time since the restrictionist agitation had begun in the late 1880's, the approving aspect of American Jewry's dual attitude toward restrictive legislation clearly predominated over the opposing one” (p. 46). Later he asserts that “there most likely existed a considerable amount of pro-literacy test sentiment in the American Jewish community in 1901–02” (p. 65). Still later, he finds German Jews insufficiently active in opposing the 1921 quota legislation, “precisely from the desire to avoid a loophole in the law that could have admitted large numbers of co-religionists to America” (p. 167). Neuringer does discuss Jewish opposition to restriction, and he concedes that between 1905 and 1921 anti-restrictionist views prevailed. Yet he consistently emphasizes the seamier side of the picture. His conclusions about Jewish attitudes toward 1950's restrictionist legislation stand as typical: “The liberalism of the Jewish groups on immigration during the early 1950's was not quite as strong and certain nor the motives behind it quite as pure and lacking in self-interest as some spokesmen had made it out to be” (p. 382).

Had Neuringer been content to show that *some* Jews, particularly German Jews, supported restriction and that *most* showed some degree of ambivalence toward the mass influx of newcomers,

he would have been correct. Immigration always confronts individuals with the tension between altruism and self-interest, and everyone must find for himself some acceptable balance. Those who expect Jews to display altruism exclusively, without giving any thought at all to their personal interests, are quite unreasonable. But to generalize, as Neuringer does, about “Jewish restraint in favoring liberal immigration over the seventy-two year period encompassed in this study” (p. 391) is highly misleading. Selective quotations, many of them taken from testimony offered at congressional hearings, do not refute a substantial body of scholarship demonstrating overwhelming Jewish opposition to restrictionism, particularly in comparison to majority sentiment abroad in the country. Neuringer devotes insufficient attention to this larger picture, and totally ignores the whole question of tactics. What he sees as German Jews' pro-restrictionist sentiment, for example, often turns out upon deeper examination to be nothing more than one of Louis Marshall's compromises or some carefully considered American Jewish Committee plan to support a mild form of restriction in order to thwart something far stronger and more pernicious.

In short, Neuringer presents some useful correctives and new facts, as well as including some embarrassing errors and old facts (including totally outdated chapters on Jews and post-1933 immigration policy), and an unfortunately large number of one-sided arguments and wrongheaded ideas. In his eagerness to portray conflict between natives and immigrants, Neuringer overlooked what could have been a fascinating story with considerable contemporary significance: the saga of how an increasingly united minority group, bound together by its special interest in a less-than-popular cause, sought to exert power in the face of growing majority opposition.

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