

The most extreme legacies of tsarist antisemitism were pogroms and blood libels. These events were central to the Jewish experience in late tsarist Russia, the only country with widespread anti-Jewish violence in the early twentieth century. After the Soviets came to power, they claimed that they had eliminated both these phenomena. In this revelatory book, Elissa Bemporad demonstrates that the Soviets' claim was part propaganda, part reality.

In the fifty-year-span from the Bolshevik Revolution to the early years of Krushchev, a living generation of Jews and non-Jews alike vividly remembered the violence of the prerevolutionary years, including the Beilis Affair (the 1913 trial of Mendel Beilis on charges of murdering a Ukrainian child for ritual purposes), and the horrific pogroms of the Russian civil war of 1917-21 (which led to the death of as many as 150,000 Jews). Bemporad examines the ways in which Jews reacted to and remembered the unprecedented violence of the pogroms, and the strategies they adopted to confront accusations of ritual murder.

Contrary to official Soviet claims, there were numerous blood libel accusations against Jews in the USSR, and the response to them by local authorities ranged from indifference to endorsement to fierce condemnation. Soviet pogroms were indeed a rarity, and for decades Jews acknowledged the Red Army as their saviors from the pogroms of the civil war. But pogroms spiked in the USSR in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

By tracing the "afterlife" of pogroms and blood libels in the USSR, *Legacy of Blood* sheds light on the broader question of the changing

position of Jews in Soviet society. In doing so, Bemporad tells the story of the ever-changing and at times ambivalent relationship between the Soviet state and the Jewish minority group. It also addresses questions of hatred against Jews, questions that help us better understand contemporary antisemitism in Europe and the United States.

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