

A final section entitled “Dissidents” discusses resistance, but given the context described above, such actions are few and far between. For Hungary, Kata Bohus chronicles the work of one Jewish intellectual, György Gadó, on the fortieth anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust, who argued that Jewishness should be “defined according to historic, cultural and ethnic factors,” instead of strictly religiously, if Hungary were ever to successfully transition to democracy (239). When it comes to life in Soviet Russia, it is difficult to equate the bravery of Gadó with the refusenik experience chronicled by Galina Zelenina at this collection’s end. She interviews Jews who once lived in the heavily Jewish dacha settlement of Malakhovka on Moscow’s eastern side in the 1970s and 80s and finds the idea of emigration to Israel—with perestroika well underway—failing to attract followers even as country houses were inundated with refuseniks on summer weekends. Taken together, the granular details of Jewish life under communism presented here make this volume’s articles indispensable knowledge for those attempting to chronicle what life after 1945 was actually like under the Kremlin’s fist.

Hillel J. Kieval. *Blood Inscriptions: Science, Modernity, and Ritual Murder at Europe’s Fin de Siècle.*

Jewish Culture and Contexts. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. ix, 298 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. \$65.00, hard bound.

Ellie R. Schainker

Emory University

Email: ellie.schainker@emory.edu

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.349

There has been a renaissance of scholarly works on the modern blood libel tied to critical analyses of modernity, antisemitism, and knowledge and authority in an age of science and print culture. Hillel Kieval’s new book, *Blood Inscriptions*, builds on his past articles on the topic and offers a European-wide narrative of the accreditation of the blood libel in the modern criminal justice system through six trials spanning the era between Jewish emancipation in central Europe by the 1870s and the dissolution of Europe’s continental empires in World War I. Rather than naturalizing the accusation of Jewish ritual murder as a ready-made anti-semitic plot since the Middle Ages available for scapegoating Jews in the event of unsolved local murder and broader socio-economic and political anxieties, Kieval argues for the newness of the phenomenon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ritual murder accusations were not pre-packaged narratives but rather socially constructed by individuals. Kieval pays close attention to the individual personalities and activities of investigators, state prosecutors, academic experts, medical examiners, and journalists who took part in this construction. Kieval upholds Max Weber’s classic theorization of modernity as characterized by secularization, or the “disenchantment” of the universe, thus dismissing analyses of the blood libel focused on “the lasting power of myth, or irrationality” (19) in the modern world. Kieval argues that the modern trial was argued in the language of science and reason (136–37); the key protagonists saw themselves as modern and held themselves to such scientific standards; and the narrative itself was not about Christian salvation but Jewish criminality.

The first main chapter provides a cultural history of small town and village life in central Europe focused on face-to-face Jewish-Christian encounters with an eye to occasional anti-Jewish violence despite the tenor of good Jewish-Christian neighborly relations. Kieval emphasizes

that big ideologies and discourses (Czech nationalism, German Kulturkampf and Catholic anti-liberalism/antisemitism, political antisemitism, Prussian/Polish politics) were less influential on daily life, and Jews generally “had a strong sense of place, and felt entitled to the protection of the state when . . . their security [was] threatened” (59). Each of the next four chapters examines a central European ritual murder trial: Tiszaeszlár (Hungary, 1882–83), Xanten (German Rhineland, 1891–92), Polná (Bohemia, 1899–1900), and Konitz (West Prussia, 1900–1902).

In the modern period, ritual murder was just one iteration of a general discourse criminalizing Jews as culturally deviant, politically unreliable, and socially dangerous (cue the fabricated Protocols of the Elders of Zion) to roll back Jewish integration and emancipation. I was particularly excited by Kieval’s focus on Jewish ritual and public culture, which is often overlooked in conversations on Jews and citizenship. Despite religious toleration, discourses on Jewish difference often centered on religious ritual, not just economic, national, and social separatism. Modern blood libel accusations focused on kosher slaughtering techniques and ritualized markings of Jewish difference, demonstrating local knowledge of Jewish practice and how Jewish ritual became a marker of incivility.

For all the book’s attempt to tell a European story, the argument focuses on four of six modern ritual murder trials in the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. The first and last trials in the Russian empire—Kutaisi (Georgia, 1879) and Beilis (Kyiv, Ukraine, 1911–13)—are referenced but not subject to individual analysis in the body of the book. How does the Russian empire fit in here? It was an illiberal regime with no representative or mass politics until after 1905, and only selective rather than full Jewish emancipation until 1917. The book’s argument that antisemitism was part and parcel of political liberalism means that the Russian trials (one third of modern ritual murder trials) do not fit its conceptual apparatus. In other respects, the Russian glance of the book enhances the historical framing. Kieval challenges the exceptionalism of pogrom violence in the late Russian empire by showing how anti-Jewish riots were a common feature of blood libel accusations in central Europe. In this respect, the modern blood libel’s significance goes beyond court proceedings; it was an “occasion for social exclusion” and “violent performances” (205–206) that accelerated Jewish emigration from towns to cities.

Overall, this long-awaited book brings a wealth of scholarship and sources in German, Czech, and Hungarian to English-speaking audiences, and offers a new argument for how antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence and exclusion are part and parcel of political liberalism and modern epistemologies of forensic science and criminology. While such trials might have collapsed epistemologically by WWI, Kieval highlights the persistence of anti-Jewish violence and discourses of Jewish criminality throughout the twentieth century until today.

Peter Kenez. *Before the Uprising: Hungary under Communism, 1949–1956.*

Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2022. vi, 281 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$99.99, hardbound.

Lee Congdon

James Madison University
Email: congdonw@jmu.edu

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.351

This is the second volume of Peter Kenez’s estimable history of Hungary from the end of the Second World War to the Revolution of 1956. In the previous tome, *Hungary from the Nazis to*