

Book Reviews

Model Citizens of the State: The Jews of Turkey during the Multiparty Period

Rifat N. Bali

Madison, Teaneck, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012. Pp. xxiii + 515, bibliography, index. \$110 (hardback) ISBN 978-1-61147-536-4

This is yet another book by Rifat N. Bali, the productive historian of Jewish life in Turkey in the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic.¹ An updated translation from the original Turkish,² it focuses on the period 1950 to 2003, with a prologue on the years since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 (pp.1–19) and an epilogue on the years 2003–10 (pp.479–81). The main aim of the work is ‘to honestly and accurately document and record the views of Turkey’s political, bureaucratic and intellectual elites regarding the country’s Jewish population and, to a lesser extent, Jews in general’ (Preface, p.xxi). In other words, this is no less an account of the Jewish community than an examination of official relations with it. The author’s main intention is to show, as his title indicates, that the Jews of Turkey were model citizens, loyal to their country and supportive of government’s policies. On the other side he observes that the attitude of the Turkish authorities towards the Jews has generally been fair but lately has become marred somewhat by increasing trends of nationalism and Islamism.

The chapters are divided according to periods:

1. The Democrat Party years, 1950–60.
2. From the 1960 revolution to the 1971 memorandum.
3. From the 1971 memorandum to the 1980 military coup.
4. The military administration, 1980–83.
5. The Özal years, 1984–93.
6. The ideological transformation of political Islam, 1994–2003.

All the chapters are fully annotated. There is a 20-page bibliography (including many unpublished sources) and a 14-page general index. The English translation by Paul F. Bessemer, himself an expert in Turkish affairs, reads smoothly and fluently.

Perhaps the most interesting discussion is found in the sixth chapter, also the longest (pp.349–478). Titled ‘The rise, fall and ideological transformation of political Islam, 1994–2003’, it presents the main events of those years, following the sudden death of President Turgut Özal on 17 April 1993. The Jewish community, striving to preserve its political neutrality, maintained a low profile but could not avoid being worried by the political victory of Necmettin

