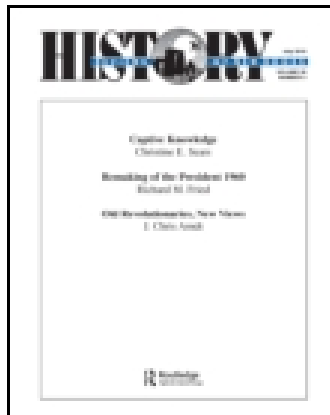


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A New History of Sierra Leone

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One suspects that both the reasonably well-informed Western general reader and the reasonably aware average Soviet citizen will also find here much that is familiar. The professedly personalized historical review, for example, essentially repeats the official line of socialist-distorting Stalinism, inadequately planned and socially shallow Khrushchevian reformism, Brezhnevian stagnation, and neo-Stalinism. Similarly, although the book has its scholarly qualities, there is, nonetheless, a certain "common-sense" flavor to Zaslavskaya's analysis of the interconnections of a hypercentralized economic system, a closed and authoritarian political régime, and a society divided into very unequal privileged and unprivileged sectors. And, at the risk of oversimplification, even the proverbial person on the street—Soviet or Western—surely already suspects that one's support for or opposition to perestroika is very closely related to one's perceptions of likely personal advantages and disadvantages.

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Alie, Joe A. D.
A New History of Sierra Leone
New York: St. Martin's Press
300 pp., \$39.95, ISBN 0-312-03742-2
Publication Date: August 1990

This is a history of Sierra Leone from precolonial times to the present. Obviously written with a student audience in mind, the work is a straightforward one which leans heavily toward presentation of basic factual material while making little pretense of pursuing interpretive avenues. Within these parameters, Alie, a native of Sierra Leone who presently teaches at that country's Fourah Bay College, does a quite reasonable job.

The book is, without question, strongest in its coverage of the twentieth century (and particularly the postindependence era). On the other hand, and perhaps this is to be expected given the tenor of our times, Alie's treatment of the long period of British imperial rule is rather perfunctory and shows less than complete conversancy with the literature of the field.

Speaking of literature, therein lies what to this reviewer's mind is one of the book's most significant shortcomings—there is no bibliography. To be sure, a list of references accompanies each chapter, but it makes little sense to mention standard works such

as C. P. Foray's *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* (1977) and Christopher Fyfe's *A History of Sierra Leone* time and again. Likewise, there seems little reason for inclusion of several of the appendixes. The basic information in these, most notably the text of Sir Milton Margai's independence speech and President Momoh's inaugural address, would have been better worked into the text at the appropriate places.

These reservations having been duly expressed, the fact remains that taken as a whole the work is a useful one. It includes questions with each chapter which should be helpful to both teachers and students; full marks are certainly due for the inclusion of many maps and illustrations; and the balance of the work is, on the whole, quite good (I would like to have seen a bit more attention to cultural and intellectual matters).

This book fills a significant need, but one wonders how many of its intended audience will be able to afford the quite steep price. It is hoped that it will be available in a cheaper paperback format in Sierra Leone. In this country, the book belongs in all academic libraries supporting African studies.

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Stillman, Norman A.
The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times
Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society
604 pp., \$39.95
Publication Date: 1991

When one considers Jewish history in the twentieth century, thought first turns to the destruction of the major European Jewish communities in World War I and World War II and, more recently, the mass exodus from Russia. The living Jewish culture of more than a millennium is no longer located within its former borders. Yet, as Stillman points out, a parallel situation has also occurred in reference to the Jewish communities formerly located in Arabia and North Africa. Even though genocide was not one of the factors, modern Arab countries from Morocco to Iraq are shown also to be *Judenrein*, and many of these locales had been home to Jews for nearly three thousand years. The author's comprehensive presentation examines these dislocations, which he supports with a broad selection of pertinent documents tracing these developments over the past crucial century.

With the nineteenth century's progressive European intrusion into Ottoman affairs, Muslims became increasingly irritated and readily balked at foreign-sponsored reforms dictated from Constantinople. However,

non-Muslims reached out to such modernization as the means to raise their status above that of *dhimmis*, who traditionally "enjoyed a status that, on the one hand, combined a position of inferiority with certain legal and social disabilities and, on the other hand, guaranteed their lives, their property, and the right to worship as they chose (within certain discreet limits)." Changes within the Jewish communities varied from significant in Algeria, where French influence had penetrated for most of the century, to negligible in Yemen in its isolation.

World War II, together with the antagonistic atmosphere and events leading up to it both locally and abroad, are shown as having clearly demonstrated how tenuous Jewish life in Arab lands was becoming. Shipments of Jews en masse to European death camps were prevented just in time by the Allied conquest of North Africa. However, the colonial powers presented very little in the way of security. The Vichy French allowed their native anti-Semitism to express itself freely with the imposition of Nazi-style legislation. Especially shocking for Algerian Jewry was the abrogation of the Cremieux Decree, which had won them full French citizenship over seventy years earlier. When the Free French arrived, they actually kept the Vichy personnel in office and did not rush to restore the rights of Jews or recognize their crucial efforts in the resistance. In Egypt, the British control may have dampened the expression of anti-Jewish feelings where nationalistic figures were quite prepared to welcome a triumphant Rommel. In Iraq and Lybia, however, British restraint only served to allow the local population to perpetrate pogroms against their Jewish neighbors. Not only did the Jews have to reevaluate their allegiance to the European powers, but the silence and neutrality, at best, of the Arabs in the face of anti-Jewish measures and actions only reinforced the sense of isolation and insecurity. The war left the Jews even more aligned with Zionism because any assimilationist ideals of the past had been discredited, and Arab nationalism remained foreign.

The postwar push for independence in the Arab world further spurred nationalistic feelings together with religious fervor. Such attitudes left little room for the Jewish inhabitants. Arab expressions of encouragement and appeasement to the Jewish communities did little to alleviate their fears. Obviously, the rise of Israel and Jewish nationalism, culminating with the Arab-Israeli War in 1967, left only one alternative for the Jews. Their vulnerability having become more apparent as the century proceeded, the Jewish population of more than 800,000 throughout the Arab world rapidly dropped to approximately 16,000 in one generation.

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