

Communist policies in the Rhine and Ruhr area after the "Ruhrbesetzung" of January 1923 in great detail: the period of super-inflation, the attempts to revert to united front policies, the establishing of "proletarische Hundertschaften" (armed groups of workers), the increasing influence of the KPD up to summer 1923 and the relatively successful Communist trade union policies in Rhineland-Westphalia after the currency reform of mid-November 1923. The installation of the Left KPD leadership in 1924 led to a decline in trade union work, the membership of the "Union der Hand- und Kopfarbeiter" decreased from 55,000 to 10,000 approximately in the years 1924–1925.

In the second part of the survey (Chapters 7–11), Peterson deals with important basic problems, such as the KPD policies in Rhineland-Westphalia, the social structure of the Communist opposition within the trade unions and the various party factions, Communist trade union theory and the KPD's revolutionary strategy. The latter is characterized by him as a combination of traditional Marxist trade union concepts and the lessons applied from the protest movement of the years 1914–1920. Moreover, the author describes the Communist basic organizations.

This book is an extremely important study, very learned and detailed, which is based on a careful interpretation of unpublished sources and specific, expert literature. As mentioned above, the study completes the literature about the KPD and especially its trade union policies in the industrialized parts of Rhineland-Westphalia. But we do have to observe that the northern parts of the Ruhr area, especially the "Vestische Zone", are more or less omitted. Peterson's conclusion, that the Communist united front policy failed as a revolutionary strategy, has to be agreed with.

In the period under discussion also a centralizing process took hold of the KPD in Rhineland-Westphalia, which led in 1924–1925 into the "Bolshevization" of the party. It is therefore a pity that the integration of this German section of the Communist "World Party" in the Comintern and RGI policies, as well as the interpretation of the sources and the literature is given relatively little attention.

Siegfried Bahne

JAKOBSON, MICHAEL. *Origins of the Gulag. The Soviet Prison Camp System 1917–1934.* The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 1993. xiv, 176 pp. Ill. \$28.00.

Beginning with an analysis of the penitentiary system of the Russian Empire, which was controlled almost entirely by the Ministry of Justice, the author retraces the fundamental steps in the formation of the Soviet prison system, from its birth in October 1917 to its unification in 1934 under the control of both the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei (the GULag), which was responsible for the administration of the camps.

The main topics dealt with in this book, the first bureaucratic-institutional history of the Soviet penitentiary system and the birth of the labour camps, are the Bolsheviks' views on crime, on punishment and on the re-education of prisoners; the structure and the interrelationships between the different agencies

that ran the penitentiary system; and the struggles between the various commissariats and agencies connected with them for control of prisons, labour camps and colonies.

The debate on crime and punishment among the Bolsheviks has always been based on the Marxist dogma according to which once capitalism was defeated crime would progressively diminish until it finally disappeared. But since the number of prisoners actually increased more and more after the birth of the USSR, Soviet lawyers and politicians were forced to continuously justify and correct the Marxist-Leninist theory on crime, which had proved to be too optimistic. In fact, during the Stalinist years a new theory emerged according to which crime would continue to exist and increase proportionally to the extent the class struggle was intensified, until the passage from capitalism to communism was completed and the proletariat had triumphed over the bourgeoisie and the "intermediate classes".

Throughout the period examined by the author, the control of prisons, camps and colonies was in the hands of the Cheka (later the GPU and the OGPU) of the People's Commissariat of Justice (NKIu) and of the NKVD. The book provides a detailed analysis of the struggles between the commissariats for the control of and the centralization of the penitentiary system. The most significant dates in these struggles were 1917, 1922, 1930, and 1934.

In November 1917 the Commissariat of Justice took over control of the penitentiary system, but its inability to prevent prisoners escaping and to exploit prisoners as workers in an efficient manner led the Cheka to assume responsibility for the most dangerous criminals. In June 1922, just when, thanks to Lenin's support, the Commissariat of Justice was winning the battle against the NKVD for control of the penitentiary system, Lenin fell ill, and, the author argues, the NKIu lost control of prisons and other detention centres to the NKVD as a result.

Because of huge costs and, moreover, the large number of prisoners, in 1922 it was decided to replace the existing system of punishment with one based on organized concentration camps, like the camps on the Solovetskii Islands. In the following years, all prisoners sentenced to more than three years in prison were sent to the North, to Siberia or to the extreme East of the USSR.

In 1929–1930, as part of a more general policy of centralization, the Republics' NKVDs were liquidated, the Republics' Commissariats were abolished and replaced by pan-soviet commissariats, and the NKIu took over control of the NKVD's prisons agency, the GUMZ. Here, the author offers a one-sided view of these events: he maintains the reason the various Republics' NKVDs were abolished was that they had supported Bukharin against Stalin. The struggle was now between the GUMZ and the OGPU. Thanks to Stalin's support, in the following years the OGPU was able to enlarge its powers to a remarkable extent and, through the GULag, it accomplished ambitious projects like the Moscow-Volga canal and the canal linking the White Sea to the Baltic. The author devotes particular attention to those achievements. He describes in detail the life and the working conditions of the prisoners, and the zeal of the managers in demonstrating their abilities as entrepreneurs.

The author suggests that in 1933, Kirov, Kuibyshev and Ordzhonikidze suggested the OGPU be abolished. In July 1934 the USSR's Commissariat of Internal Affairs was completely reformed, and as a result of the reorganization

it absorbed several other agencies, including the people's militia and the OGPU. The GULag became a sub-agency within the NKVD. This incorporation was purely formal since in fact it was the OGPU which took control of the Commissariat: Iagoda, who had recently been appointed head of the OGPU, was also appointed Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

The Soviet prison system was thus unified and the NKVD (later the MVD) continued to run it for twenty years. Thanks largely to Beria, it became one of the most important economic ministries, whose managers had considerable influence on national economic policy and on the elaboration of economic plans. It was only after Stalin's death and Beria's arrest that control of the GULag passed to the Ministry of Justice; the GULag was finally liquidated in 1956.

The opposing positions taken by the two commissariats was also reflected in an ideological conflict concerning the question of whether it was more important for prisoners to be re-educated or productive. While the NKIU always gave priority to re-education and was sceptical of the prospect of the prison system becoming self-supporting, the NKVD never doubted that the system could become not only self-supporting but also productive. This ideological conflict, described in detail by Jakobson, even underlies the different mentalities of Soviet bureaucrats: on the one hand the most traditional and conservative lawyers as far as the importance of re-education was concerned, on the other the more unscrupulous mentality of the organs of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs, which, not coincidentally, predominated with Stalin's rise to power. After 1934 the problem of re-educating prisoners was shelved for more than twenty years and only became an issue again in 1956 in the debate on the need to reform the penitentiary system.

The author has used a variety of sources, including government decrees, Russian and Soviet journals, prisoners' memoirs, and several documents from the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University. The government decrees are published in *Sobranie zakononii i raspriazhenii Rabochego i krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva* (Collection of Laws of the Workers' and Peasants' Government), the most important periodicals are the *Ezhenedel'nik Sovietskoi Iustitsii* (Soviet Justice Weekly) and the *Sovetskoe gasudarstvo i revoliutsiia prava* (The Soviet State and the Revolution of Law), both published by the People's Commissariat of Justice. Two periodicals published by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the *Vlast' sovetov* (The Power of the Soviets) and the *Administrativnyi vestnik* (The Administrative Herald), have also been utilized.

Apart from a number of memoirs published in the West, such as those of Eser Ekaterina Oliitskaia, the author has been able to consult several of the unpublished memoirs of former prisoners who succeeded in leaving the USSR during the Second World War kept in the Hoover Institution Archives. In these archives Jakobson has also consulted a collection of documents smuggled out during the war, reports from socialists in the Soviet Union to colleagues abroad, and messages from officers in the Imperial Russian intelligence service, which was still operating in the early 1920s.

The book was probably written long before it was actually published: neither the documents available since the recent opening of Soviet archives nor the works published by V. N. Zemskov, which provide data on the number of prisoners interned, and O. B. Khlevniuk, which give the first account of the

economic empire built first by the OGPU and later by the NKVD, have been utilized. In this sense Jakobson's book is outdated since it is based on data presented by Conquest, Dallin and Nicolaevsky which have been superseded.

Nevertheless, the book remains an important attempt to reconstruct the fundamental stages of the birth of the GULag, and, with Zemskov's and Khlevniuk's essays and the numerous publications of the "Memorial" association, it will be very useful in the study of the forced labour system in the USSR.

Marta Craveri

HONEY, MICHAEL K. *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights. Organizing Memphis Workers.* [The Working Class in American History.] University of Illinois Press, Urbana [etc.] 1993. xiii, 364 pp. Ill. \$49.95. (Paper: \$17.95.)

For historians interested in civil liberties, minority rights, and the struggle for political democracy, the American South offers a fascinating, and often horrifying, field of study. Dixie entered the twentieth century burdened by widespread poverty and an apartheid-like racial system. How could the system be made more equitable? Could working-class southerners organize to overcome their powerlessness and poverty? Michael K. Honey's outstanding book analyzes the efforts of southern workers to do just that. From his gripping introduction, in which black organizer Thomas Watkins is nearly killed and run out of town, through his nuanced discussion of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the post-World War II decade, Honey delivers a forceful and convincing narrative.

The book focuses on labor organization and the black freedom movement in Memphis, Tennessee, from the early twentieth century through the mid-1950s. A Mississippi River city, Memphis became an exaggerated – but tragically real – caricature of southern patterns of racial and class oppression. From the late 1920s through the 1940s, Memphis was under the thumb of Democrat Edward H. Crump's powerful political machine. Always business-friendly, and at turns progressive and brutal, "Crump's regime increasingly resembled a ruthless police state" (p. 61). In this setting, carefully described in Part I of the book, white workers did not see themselves as having common interests with black workers; indeed, white workers vigorously championed white supremacy, which ensured them slightly better jobs, wages, and social status than African Americans. But if poor whites benefited from economic segregation, Honey argues, they suffered from it as well. Racial discrimination undermined the potential for unified working-class protest and therefore allowed employers to impose low wages and oppressive working conditions across the board.

Honey's principal theme is immediately clear: racial subordination and anti-unionism went hand in hand, and a biracial working-class movement was the only hope for both organized labor and black freedom. Trade unionism and civil rights in Memphis would rise and fall together. Not surprisingly, they mostly fell. Their best chance, Honey insists, was the CIO and its campaign for biracial industrial unionism during the late 1930s and 1940s; more specifically, it was