

groups. It refers, for example, to the mass demonstrations held in the “jubilee year” of 1913 for the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig and the Kaiser’s silver jubilee, which Lindenberger says “were certainly linked to the forms and contents of state and court ceremonial, but at the same time broke through into new dimensions of mass mobilization” (p. 376). These patriotic parades are interpreted as preludes to the demonstrations of July 1914, in which it was no longer the labour movement, as in 1910, but masses of enthusiasts for war (mainly but certainly not exclusively from middle-class backgrounds) who made the street their stage. Lindenberger sums up as follows: “The initiative in street politics passed to [the labour movement’s] political opponents” (p. 383).

This formulation does strike me as a bit overstated, however. Lindenberger certainly assesses the tendency of the development correctly, but I wonder whether he does not overestimate the importance of the 1913 celebrations and underestimate oppositional street activities between 1911 and 1914. Firstly, I am thinking here of the increasing public visibility of working-class sports groups, working-class cyclists, the demonstration-like parades of working-class youth and the increased number of public demonstrations on May Day (although admittedly all this did not take place in Berlin’s central business district). Secondly, it seems to me too dogmatic to describe the SPD’s mass demonstrations after 1910, which at times mobilized over 200,000 people, as “symbolic events with no further implications” (p. 383). It is certainly necessary to point out that demonstrations can become substitutes for action; but even if they have no political consequences in the narrow sense they can still exert a very important influence both externally and internally, as evidence and exercise of organizational ability and as the physical experience of political unity. Furthermore, it seems to me that Lindenberger also underestimates the countercultural character of the forms of demonstration practised at the time when he describes them as “the adoption of a preexisting bourgeois repertoire” without “significant innovations of their own” (p. 384). To describe the Sunday suits worn by many of the demonstrators as “bourgeois” is reasonable only within limits, and other aspects of the events should also be considered, such as the loud singing of working-class songs, the red flags which frequently made their appearance (despite being banned), chants such as “bloodhounds” (*Bluthunde*) (directed at the police), clenched-fist salutes at the statue of Bismarck, and so on. These clearly distinguish the conduct of the demonstration marches from bourgeois rules of conduct.

There are thus a number of points I would question. But I have no doubt whatever that the book fulfils all the requirements of a standard work on the history of political street culture. It is very much to be hoped that equally weighty studies will soon be devoted to the street politics of later decades, the 1920s in particular, and that these will manage to link political, social and cultural history in as productive a manner as Lindenberger has done.

*Bernd Jürgen Warneken*

STETTNER, RALF. “Archipel GULag”: Stalins Zwangslager – Terrorinstrument und Wirtschaftsgigant. Entstehung, Organisation und Funktion des sowjetischen Lagersystems 1928–1956. Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn [etc.] 1996. 448 pp. Maps. DM 68.00.

Though archival research into the Soviet forced labour system is still in its infancy, Stettner claims to offer the first general survey yet to appear in print. It

is, to say the least, early days, and it is essential therefore to consider carefully what the author is presenting, and what he *can* present.

In principle, Stettner offers a wide-ranging survey of every aspect of the Gulag system. He provides a detailed discussion of the 1920s, a decade warily characterized by the author as marking the prehistory of the NKVD GULag department, which was formally founded in 1934; he offers a detailed analysis of the many administrative branches of the Gulag apparatus between 1930/1934 and 1956; his study includes chapters on the social structure of the camp inmates and on the different types of camp (Corrective Labour Camps, Corrective Labour Colonies, Special Camps, Special Settlements – Stettner distinguishes more than fourteen types). The book also includes a description of daily life within the average Gulag camp. The author focuses too on issues concerning the function of the forced labour system in Soviet society as a whole, with, for example, a detailed examination of the vexed question of whether the Gulag made a net contribution to the Soviet economy (pp. 326–343). He also briefly discusses the effect on Russification of different peoples living together in the camps (pp. 325–326).

Within this broad framework Stettner's book is primarily conceived as the history of an organization (see pp. 13 and 19). His chief purpose is to analyse the organizational and historical roots, and the economic and legal preconditions for the Gulag complex. He therefore focuses mainly on the confusing multiplicity of institutional changes at the top. In comparison, his descriptions of what happened *inside* the camps are rather colourless and abstract. The author says he is well aware that his work is merely the first attempt to provide a general survey of the Gulag organization and as such it will contain inaccuracies that future archival research will correct. Nevertheless, he hopes the present survey will benefit this future archival research by enabling more clearly focused questions to be posed.

In order properly to judge the importance of Stettner's study it is essential, even more so than with other historical publications, to understand clearly how he uses his sources. What Stettner is aiming at is not a piece of original research into one or more features of the Gulag system based on a study of the *archives*, but a summary of all the available data on the overall organizational history of the Gulag complex so far presented in the *secondary* literature. In addition he has made use, albeit less exhaustively (see p. 25), of the memoirs of former camp inmates.

In itself, Stettner's research strategy is not incomprehensible. Despite certain optimistic voices, it is still difficult – even for Russian researchers and even in 1997 – to gain access to Russian archives relating to forced labour. Furthermore, in the past it has frequently been possible for researchers to achieve acceptable results without their having had access to Russian archives. It has always been and still is – this will come as no surprise to readers – standard procedure in research on the Soviet Union to compensate for the inaccessibility of Russian archives by combing other contemporary primary, *printed*, sources which appeared in the Soviet Union as late as 1930 and beyond: government publications, publications of the Communist Party, reports on political meetings in the periodical press, statistical material. That it was possible to do research on the basis of this material has been demonstrated by a number of studies on Soviet forced labour, including those of Conquest, Heller, Leggett and Jakobson.<sup>1</sup> Oddly,

<sup>1</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (London, 1968); Michel Heller, *Le monde concentrationnaire et la littérature soviétique* (Lausanne, 1974) [German edition: *Stacheldraht der*

Stettner makes no attempt to use these printed primary sources in his study, and in his reconstruction of the Gulag he is content to rely simply on data taken from the secondary literature (and only secondly on camp memoirs). But by consistently ignoring the primary sources, in itself quite incomprehensible in historical research, Stettner deprives himself of an instrument absolutely indispensable to the research strategy he has adopted, since the secondary literature on Soviet forced labour fails to give unequivocal answers to even the most elementary questions (such as “When was the first forced labour camp set up?” and “Which types of camp did *not* fall under Gulag administration?”). If one wants to establish which version is “true”, one will usually have to rely on printed sources in order to see what cards were held by those authors using the same type of material. Because Stettner discards his trump cards even before he begins, he is bound to err.

Let me give an example to explain what I mean. The earliest decisions on the forced labour camps were taken in the first half of 1919 by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) (pp. 57–61). According to Stettner the decrees of 17 February, 15 April and 17 May played a key role here, but, he says, historians give somewhat conflicting explanations on this point. Whether the 17 February decree referred to forced labour camps or to concentration camps is a particularly controversial issue, according to Stettner. He argues that a decision was then made to establish forced labour camps, and cites a passage from Heller, who quotes from a “law on forced labour camps, enacted on 17 February”. It is clear, however, that Heller has simply failed to see the obvious: the text which he quotes and whose date he gives as 17 February actually dates from 15 April.<sup>2</sup> Stettner also refers to a speech given by Feliks Dzerzhinsky on 17 February introducing the draft text of the decree in the VTsIK. The fragment does contain a passage on the need to set up forced labour camps. However, if one examines the text of the decree itself, which Stettner could have found in the *Izvestiia* of 18 February and elsewhere, it becomes clear that this document is actually about the relationship between the Cheka and the Revolutionary Tribunals and has nothing to do with forced labour (it merely reconfirms the Cheka’s administrative powers to refer people to concentration camps). Reading Dzerzhinsky’s *entire* speech alongside the text of the debates of the VTsIK in the same issue of *Izvestiia*, it is evident that, though interesting, Dzerzhinsky’s comments on forced labour were nothing more than a side issue in those debates.<sup>3</sup> The traditional view that the earliest

*Revolution. Die Welt der Konzentrationslager in der Sowjetischen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1975)]; George Legget, *The Cheka: Lenin’s Political Police* (Oxford, 1981); Mikhail Jakobson, *The Soviet Prison Camp System 1917–1934* (Lexington, 1993). Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War. Stalin’s Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives* (Basingstoke, 1994) is the first Western book on the Gulag to be based partly on – disappointingly brief – research in the Russian archives. See Mark von Hagen’s appropriately critical review in *The Russian Review*, 55 (1996), pp. 718–719.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the decrees can be found in *Izvestiia*, 18 and 21 February, 15 April and 17 May 1919. They were also published in *Sobranie Uzakonenii* (1919), no. 12, st. 130; no. 12, st. 124; no. 20, st. 235. The passage from Heller can be found at the top of p. 44 of *Le monde concentrationnaire* (and on pp. 54–55 of the German edition).

<sup>3</sup> The debates and the texts appeared in *Izvestiia* on 18 February 1919. For the full text of Dzerzhinsky’s speech see *Iz istorii Vserossiiskoi Chrezvychainoi komissii 1917–1921 gg.*

legislation on forced labour camps can be dated to the decrees of 15 April and 17 May thus survives intact. Stettner does attempt to provide serious documentation of these two decrees, which he publishes in the edition by Bunyan which appeared in 1967.<sup>4</sup> Bunyan's summary of the second decree is so cursory, however, that a great deal of information relevant to Stettner's subject is missing, information such as what guidelines were established for the newly-established department of forced labour at the NKVD, what authority the camp commanders had, and how the security and the administration of the camps were organized. Reference to the Soviet publications mentioned in footnote 3 would have enabled Stettner to see how different are the text of the decree of 17 May and the text presented by Bunyan. Why fear the original?

Although secondary monographs form the basis of Stettner's research strategy, he eschews any form of fundamental source criticism. When discussing particular sub-issues he offers ad hoc criticism of individual passages by specific authors it is true, but he fails to assess the reliability of the authors in general. Soviet authors are sometimes quoted alongside Western authors as if they are equally reliable (p. 57). The post-communist historian V. Zemskov, who since 1989 has published rather low estimates of the total number of camp inmates, is characterized as an apologist for the KGB (pp. 383–385). Essad Bey, who published a book on the GPU in 1931, is regarded as a reliable source by Stettner. But anyone even remotely *nourri dans le sérail* knows that this scribbler was prone to flights of fancy (pp. 81–86). Some recent Russian publications have not been used. They include the important volumes *Zvenja* (1991–1992) by Memorial, on the history of Gulag, and the equally important publication of source material on the special settlers in West Siberia.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the book Stettner pays disproportionate attention to German authors; this gives a provincial flavour to a study claiming to offer a survey of the state of international research into the Gulag.

While Stettner's survey of the period up to the mid-1930s is unsatisfactory because he fails to use relevant sources, his account of the period thereafter is equally deficient because it lacks sources of any kind. Despite his undoubted efforts, Stettner's reconstruction remains incomplete, and on a number of occasions he is forced simply to conclude that some problems are insoluble. For example, he is uncertain about what happened between 1938 and 1941 with the so-called Main Camp Administrations (for timber, railways, industrial construction and the like). Did they exist at all? Apparently. But, "if they existed, it is uncertain when they were integrated into the Gulag again after the war was over" (pp. 138–140). Elsewhere Stettner states that, in general, we know nothing of many of the organizational changes that occurred in the Gulag complex in the period 1934 to 1956. This makes it difficult to paint a picture of the organizational

*Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1956), pp. 251–257. P.G. Sopinov, *Abriss der Geschichte der Gesamtrussischen Ausserordentlichen Kommission (1917–1922)* (Berlin, 1979), pp. 153–154, contains just the brief eight-line passage on the need to introduce forced labour to which Stettner refers.

<sup>4</sup> James Bunyan, *The Origin of Forced Labor in the Soviet State 1917–1921: Documents and Materials* (Stanford, 1967), pp. 71–75.

<sup>5</sup> V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasil'nikov (eds), *Spetspereseleny v zapadnoj Sibiri* (Novosibirsk, 1992–1996), 4 vols.

form of the Gulag at any particular moment.<sup>6</sup> The author is not to blame for these problems, but the question remains whether it was not perhaps premature of him to attempt an institutional history of the Gulag.

*Leo van Rossum*

ESENWEIN, GEORGE and ADRIAN SHUBERT. *Spain at War. The Spanish Civil War in Context, 1931–1939*. Longman, London [etc.] 1995. xii, 313 pp. £36.00.

NASH, MARY. *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War*. [Women and Modern Revolution Series.] Arden Press, Inc., Denver 1995. xvi, 261 pp. Ill. \$32.00. (Paper: \$22.00.)

Historical research on 1930s and 1940s Spain – the key decades of structural and hegemonic crisis – remains a process of intense empirical reconstruction, interpretative revision and political contention. Apart from the complex legacy of the Franco dictatorship, this process has been further fuelled by the “end of the Cold War”. Its end has brought into sharp relief the reductionism of much of the received historical wisdom on the civil war (1936–1939) which, well into the 1980s, hindered the assimilation among wider audiences of new research perspectives – most particularly on the social and political evolution of the Republic during the conflict.

The most fruitful recent insights have come from historical research which either recontextualizes the Spanish experience in terms of the crises of modernity undergone by various states and societies in inter-war Europe, or which constructs from below the social and cultural histories of the civil war (indeed of the 1930s as a whole) in order to invest the abstract, two-dimensional ideological categories of explanation encountered in the standard accounts with a much more rounded historical understanding. Both of the books under review here explicitly set out to contribute to this task – albeit at quite different levels of specialism.

Mary Nash’s much-needed volume on the social and political mobilization of women in wartime Republican Spain makes a valuable contribution. It opens with a broad analytical overview of women’s history and gender discourse in Spain in the contemporary period (1890s to 1930s) – extremely useful in its own right given the limited English material available. In chapter two Dr Nash first sketches the wider context of the civil war – although perhaps rather too mechanically for the purposes of illuminating the particular story she goes on to tell. Second, she explores the different constructions of “women” in Republican rhetoric/iconography in order to set up the analytical lens through which the rest of the book’s material is focused: namely the ambiguities of these gender constructs and the contradiction between them and the lived experiences of women in Republican Spain. These experiences are all explored in turn – from political militancy through welfare service and war production on the home front to women as the intended object of eugenic reforms to their essential role in reproducing the minimum conditions of daily life (especially food procurement).

<sup>6</sup> See p. 133. Further evidence of lacunae in the documentation can be found on pp. 117–118, 133, 152, and 158.