

Its methodological shortcomings notwithstanding, the great virtue of Smyth's study is its concentration on the politicization of discontent as a major historical development in itself, irrespective as it were of subsequent events – indeed, Smyth is emphatic that the book is not about the background, causes and course of the 1798 rebellion. It is a free-standing study of considerable merit, essential reading for all historians interested in the 1790s. However, it also serves as the best introduction to the radical and popular political context of Ireland's tragic "year of liberty".

John Belchem

PETERSON, LARRY. *German Communism, Workers' Protest, and Labor Unions. The Politics of the United Front in Rhineland-Westphalia 1920–1924.* [Studies in Social History, Vol. 14.] Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 1993; International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. 556 pp. D.fl. 385.00; \$239.00; £157.50.

In recent years a series of studies on the trade union policies of the KPD during the Weimar Republic have been published, yet none previously in the form of a detailed specific survey for the Rhineland-Westphalian industrial region in the years from 1918 to the mid-1920s. Larry Peterson closes this gap with the book under review, which is based on his Ph.D. for the Columbia University in New York. He examines the various causes for economic discontent and its types among the workers, and in pursuing the reasons for the relatively strong power of the Communists in the region, the author emphasizes their concentration on the work in the ADGB, the trade union federation dominated by the Social Democrats. Traditionally did the KPD consider the industrial districts of Rhineland-Westphalia, alongside Berlin, as particularly important for the aspired Communist revolution in Germany.

In the first chapter the author deals with the trade unions and the German Left before 1920, especially with the "precursors" of the Communist labour unions from December 1916 onwards. In the first phase after the Party had been founded at the turn of the year 1918–1919 the KPD had a decentralized structure. At local levels, therefore, the Communists employed various tactics towards the trade unions, including the "Arbeiter-Unionen". The Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch of March 1920 had a general radicalizing effect on the industrial workers in Rhineland-Westphalia.

The following chapters are concerned with the origins and politics of Communist United Front tactics in the trade unions, i.e. the Party's "industrial strategy", to use the author's phrase. He gives a detailed description of the development in the various regions, whereby he carefully evaluates the police files in the State Archives in Düsseldorf, Arnsberg and Münster. Moreover, he examines the differences and correspondences with the Gelsenkirchener "Freie Arbeiter Union", as well as the effects of the so-called "März-Aktion" of the KPD in Rhineland-Westphalia. Among the consequences was a crisis within the party which also affected the trade union work and it was the cause for the reorganization of the party by setting up two new districts. The policies of a united front were continued until spring 1922 and the relations of the KPD to the "Union der Hand- und Kopfarbeiter" were newly adjusted. Peterson describes the

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