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Stefan Karner. *Im Archipel GUPVI: Kriegsgefangenschaft und Internierung in der Sowjetunion, 1941-1956.* Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1995. 236 pp. DM 48.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-486-56119-7.

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Stefan Karner's 1995 work, *Im Archipel GUPVI: Kriegsgefangenschaft und Internierung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1956* contends that recently opened Soviet archives shed new light on the experiences of German prisoners of war and civilian internees in the Soviet Union by elucidating the intricate structure of the camp system as well as the daily sufferings of the prisoners, the Soviet justice system in which they were entangled and the contributions which those prisoners made to the Soviet economy during the first post-war decade. Published under the auspices of the Ludwig Boltzmann-Institut fuer Kriegsfolgen-Forschung in Austria, whose archives Karner also uses, the book serves as a useful and concise, if only slightly updated addition to our knowledge of the prisoner of war experience which until now has primarily been derived from the immense efforts of the Maschke commission during the 1960s and 1970s, which were produced without the benefit of access to Soviet sources.

The book's early chapters provide a dense yet brief description of the structure of GUPVI (*Glavnoe upravlenie po delam voennoplennych iinternirovannych* – Central Administration for POW and Internee Affairs) and the various classifications of prisoners: POWs, "mobilized and interned Germans", and civilian internees (*Zivilver- schleppte*). The fate of the first group, by far the largest, naturally occupies center stage, but for reasons relating to his thesis on the contributions of imprisoned Germans to the Soviet economy, "mobilized and interned Germans" also play a key role. These include "Volks"-Deutschen who happened to be in areas of Eastern Europe overrun by the Soviets, political prisoners from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, and women who had served as *Wehrmachthelferinnen* or even (so it was rumored) Red Cross nurses (25). The first chapter also deals briefly with Cossack units which had fought for the Germans and other Soviet citizens who either collaborated with the Germans or had the misfortune of being captured by the Wehrmacht and subsequently repatriated, then to be labeled as deserters or traitors by Stalin.

Chapter Two briefly details the origins and development of the camp administration and the material conditions endured by the inmates. The "reeducation" efforts, hunger, sickness, and death – all familiar to anyone who has read the Maschke series – are present here as well. When possible Karner provides augmentation from the Soviet archives. Yet the basic outlines are little changed from what Erich Maschke, Kurt Boehme, Kurt Baehrens and others presented over twenty years ago.

More informative are Karner's sections on Soviet justice as it impacted the prisoners and on the contributions by prisoners to the Soviet economy in first postwar decade. Thanks to Soviet archives, Karner describes the workings of the the "special commission" (OSO, *Osoboe sovescanie*) and other military tribunals which between 1942 and 1953 sentenced some 30,000 German and Austrian prisoners to 25 years imprisonment or, in the case of 262 people, to death (176).

Karner also provides specifics on the labor performed by prisoners of war while in the camps. The unifying element for the entire Soviet internment policy, he claims, was the intent to use prisoners as a form of reparations and thus make good the damage done by the Wehrmacht. The Soviets always wished to make the camps pay for themselves (which almost never occurred) and to maximize the proportion of healthy, productive prisoners within the total population of internees. As a result, sick or handicapped prisoners, to the extent that they survived, were generally repatriated much earlier than healthy ones. Furthermore, of the 187,042 "mobilized and interned" Germans held in December 1944, 115,086 were between the ages of 16 and 50 (25) – proof of the Soviet desire for the largest possible number of *ar-*

beitsfaehig prisoners. Between 1943 and 1949, Karner calculates, foreign prisoners performed a total of 1.08 billion man-days of labor, two-thirds of which was attributable to Germans or Austrians (142). This amounts to between eight and ten percent of the total effort expended in accomplishing the first postwar Five Year Plan (9). Karner's work is especially unique for its focus on Austrian nationals held in the GUPVI camps. This, together with discussion of postwar Austrian governmental efforts to secure the release of prisoners, are both lacking in the Maschke volumes. In his final chapter Karner also hints at the difficulties which Austrians and Germans had in integrating into postwar societies, which had changed dramatically since the soldiers or internees had last seen them.

Overall, however, Karner's work is better at supplying specific numbers and corroborative proof of conclusions already reached by Erich Maschke and his research team. While he does an admirable job of detailing the structures and practices of the Soviet leadership, the basic outlines of these elements and the suffering endured by prisoners are already well known. In fact, the Maschke series, which relied more heavily on the testimony of released prisoners and could afford to devote an entire volume [III], for example, to the "*Factor: Hunger*", provides a far more complete account of life in captivity than does Karner's book. Yet Karner's contributions are several. The author had access to sources of which Maschke could only have dreamt, and it is testimony to both his and Maschke's diligence that those archives yielded further proof of the conclusions reached in the 1960s and 1970s. Karner's work is also an admirable condensation of the findings of the Maschke commission. *Im Archipel GUPVI's* 236 pages (which includes 136 pages of photographs, tables, charts, and documents) contrasts favorably with the Maschke series' twenty-two volumes, seven of which were specifically devoted to the situation of prisoners in the Soviet Union. Karner's ability to provide a concise overview of the POW experience, his contribution on the particular Austrian response to captivity, his work on Soviet justice and his research on prisoners' contributions to the first postwar Soviet Five-Year plan, make this book a meaningful and useful work.

A final note regarding the unsolicited review submitted to H-German by Paul Boytinck in January 1996: That review gives a skewed impression of Karner's book, which deals only tangentially with the problem that preoccupies Boytinck – the issue of POW deaths. It is generally believed that roughly 1.5 million German prisoners died in captivity in the Soviet Union, the vast majority between capture and arrival at "permanent" prisoner of war camps. Arrival at an exact estimate is complicated by the chaotic nature of the immediate postwar months; the fact that official Soviet pronouncements on the matter frequently changed and were thus unreliable; and the until- recent inaccessibility of Soviet archives. Karner's archival research, which deals only with GUPVI (which administered the *permanent* camps as well as temporary collection points at the front) cannot shed any light here. The registration of prisoners did not occur until they had reached the permanent camps, so Karner can only provide the official GUPVI figure of 356,687 German prisoners who died from illness and other causes while in the permanent camps (79). This figure leaves roughly a million missing soldiers.

Boytinck argues that if 1.5 million Germans had died in Soviet captivity instead of only 350,000, then Soviet officials would have certainly recorded it. "These archives," writes Boytinck, "were SECRET, and they recorded the deaths of some 350,000 or so Germans. Why should the Soviets have been reluctant to adduce proof of the existence of still another million dead Germans when the proof would merely moulder in another archive declared off-limits for all time and never see the light of day?" Yet if the so-called "missing million" did not surface in Karner's archives, then no one aware of the bureaucratic procedures (however chaotic) which must have prevailed within an organization like GUPVI should be surprised. It was unprepared for the massive number of prisoners it was forced to register and maintain. Those million(s) simply fell outside of the jurisdiction of GUPVI bureaucrats and therefore were never entered into their registers. Thus Karner is forced to rely on the same evidence that other historians have used (accounts of both German and Soviet eyewitnesses and knowledge of the situation at the time) to conclude (quite correctly, I believe) that the missing prisoners died from exposure, neglect, murder and chance, *en route* to the camps where the official registration took place. To draw more sinister conclusions from the absence of any official Soviet documentary evidence that so many prisoners died, as Boytinck does, is hardly justified; and if he is trying to resurrect the sensationalist theories of James Bacque (which claim that if the prisoners did not die in the USSR then they must have died in the camps of the Western Allies – as he seems to attempt in the fifth paragraph of his review), then he is standing on shaky ground indeed. Guenther Bischof, Steven Ambrose, and others in *Eisenhower and the German POWs: Facts against Falsehood* have effectively disproven Bacque's shoddily researched conclusions.

Karner's position on this issue is by no means "anomalous," nor do his conclusions regarding the so-called *Dunkelziffer* lack credibility. If anything, Karner does not go far enough to remind readers of the *Dunkelziffer*'s existence. By emphasizing the official Soviet statistics on GUPVI prisoners who died (356,687 German and 10,891 Austrian) or on the small number of prisoners executed (262) by the Soviets between 1942 and 1953, Karner draws attention away from the horrifying fact that roughly a million men and women simply disappeared in the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1956.

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