

of winning over the Italian masses and defeating fascism and capitalism. As any reader of the *Prison Notebooks* will affirm, these were not positions that were abandoned or rejected in his later writings, but rather, formed a crucial intellectual underpinning to his theory of hegemony which reworked and critically appropriated their most useful insights in an implicit attack on the Stalinization of the Comintern in the Third Period. Gramsci thus emerges from this volume as a thinker who had a more nuanced and complex relationship with the early Comintern than is sometimes suggested.

Those familiar with Derek Boothman's *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks** will not be surprised to find the same thorough and engaging scholarship in translation and editorial clarity and explanation that characterized that work in the introduction and critical apparatus that accompanies this volume. For Anglophone scholars of Gramsci, the book fills an important gap in the literature and will sit nicely alongside the late Frank Rosengarten's *Letters from Prison*.** Scholars of the Comintern too should find space for this important and most welcome publication.

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Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), ISBN 9781137510280, viii + 227 pp., £60

Brigitte Studer has delivered a long awaited study of the Communist International (Comintern) and the people working for the apparatus in Moscow during the interwar period, who Studer fondly calls the 'Cominternians'. The book forms one of the first attempts to write a

* Gramsci, A. *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Derek Boothman, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995.

** Gramsci, A. *Letters from Prison, Vol I-II*. Edited by Frank Rosengarten and translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

cultural history of the Comintern, as the research topic has by tradition remained surprisingly immune to the shiftings theoretical strands within historical research. Despite the archive revolution of the 1990s that has led to an immense production of scholarly works on the history of international communism, conventional political history has until recently defined the research questions. There is however an increasing number of exceptions to this trend. Studer, as an historian specialising on stalinism, communism and gender, has for example, made significant advances in the theoretical framework and analysis of the Comintern. Some of these earlier results are now to be found in the book under review as all of its seven major chapters have previously been published in German or French between 2000 and 2012, now for the first time accessible in English. All chapters have been reworked and updated for the volume. It is divided into seven thematic areas that convincingly peel off one layer after the other, working itself deeper into the transnational lives of the Cominternians.

Chapter one is focused on the institutional context in Moscow. The second chapter deals with the role of women within the Comintern, which is followed by a chapter on the everyday lives of the foreign communists in Moscow. The fourth chapter puts its focus on the question of security and control of the Cominternians. Chapters five and six deal with the issue how the Cominternians were educated to 'work on the self' and the way one was thought to 'speak about oneself' in public and private. The last chapter before the epilogue is dedicated to the Cominternians' tragic fate in the claws of the Great Terror, which is followed by a discussion on the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943.

The study is due to the great magnitude of the Comintern as an international organisation, limited in most cases to the study of the German speaking Cominternians, including those from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, although others are at times included. Who were then the 'Cominternians'? In a sense the term includes all who worked in Moscow at the Comintern complex, including technical staff such as typists, translators and archivists, and the foreign delegates of communist parties, or workers who had studied at the International Lenin School. The book offers comprehensive new data on the different groups working in Moscow based on personal files and autobiographies preserved in the Comintern archives (RGASPI), which in a pivotal way deepens our understanding of

the Comintern and its inner workings. Some of the Cominternians stayed only for shorter periods, others lingered on for years, while many never had the opportunity or intention to return to their native countries.

The principal focus of the study is on the high ranking Comintern officials who were delegated to Moscow by their respective parties. Studer convincingly analyses how the different positions within the organisation affected the lives and experiences of the Cominternians in Moscow – starting from living quarters, food supply, hygiene, and social privileges. Studer makes also a central contribution to the analysis of the women working in the Comintern, who often have been overlooked and neglected in the previous research. The level of power within the organisation naturally limited the room to manoeuvre within the world of the Comintern. As Studer shows, whereas a select few were included in the inner circles of power, so were others only present as parts of the huge international apparatus. Some arrived as working class students, lacking any significant experience and education, whereas others came as veritable super stars from the West, full of prestige and power, including prominent intellectuals, scientists and worker delegations from the West.

Perhaps due to the fact that Studer's previous research has been focused on stalinism, her history of the Cominternians is also dominated by their experiences during the mid and late 1930s. Unavoidably, this characterises the story that is being told: It is a story of betrayed hopes, of the rising power of stalinism and slow sublimation of the foreign enclave in Moscow into the heart of darkness, the stalinist terror machinery that turned the international organisation of world revolution into a branch of the Stalinist state apparatus, vigorously controlled and purged by its secret services. Although there is nothing false in this picture, it neglects dealing with the period of euphoria and hope in the Comintern as an international organisation comprising the vanguard of the world's revolutionaries. The striking absence of the experiences and mentalities of the Cominternians in the early days of the Comintern (1919–1929) before the stalinist revolution, makes an unfortunate impression on the reader. Although the initial phase of eagerness and enthusiasm of the research subjects are at times brought into the picture, they merely represent a place of departure, not an area of investigation. The inclusion of the total life span of the Cominternians would perhaps

better explain their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the the Comintern's increasing demands to become in both mind and body a true 'Bolshevik'.

Despite the disproportional focus on the stalinisation of the Comintern, this is also where Studer is at her best. She shows in a striking way the willingness of the Cominternians to substitute their selves into model Bolsheviks. One is in a sense bewildered by the process, as communists in most cases were used to carry the role of protesters and hard headed individuals standing in the ranks of the communist parties in the Western world, unable and unwilling to integrate themselves into orderly citizens. From a state of mind characterised by resistance and opposition to complete submission and orderliness in the Soviet society must have been quite a process. However, this raises the question of what the Cominternians actually learned in Moscow? Many were certainly broken and remodelled by their new masters, but others must certainly have learned to survive in the Soviet system, who found their own personal strategies to survive as individuals. As Studer shows, the process of becoming 'Bolshevik' demanded an outwardly and internal change of their thinking and understanding of themselves as individuals. These changes were often made against the threat of expulsion from the party, or becoming a victim of the purges within the Comintern apparatus. One needs to ask, to what extent was then the new self that was imposed in Moscow only a role employed to survive the increasingly harsh circumstances and what was in reality accomplished by these trainings on the self. Was it a permanent condition or something that would vanish once liberated from the prison that Moscow had become?

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