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Clare Anderson, ed., *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*. xiv + 389 pp., maps, illus., tables. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. ISBN-13 978-1350000674. £90.00.

Aidan Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876–1903*. xiv + 352 pp., maps, illus., tables. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017. ISBN-13 978-0520293977. $85.00.

At first glance it is not at all clear why the readers of *Kritika* should be particularly interested in these books. True, Clare Anderson's edited volume contains a lucid essay by Sarah Badcock and Judith Pallot on convicts and penal colonies in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, which is an excellent introduction to the subject; otherwise, neither Aidan Forth's monograph nor the other contributions to Anderson's volume seem to have anything in particular to say to historians of Russia and Eurasia. Looming over both these books, however, is the question of how far the forms of incarceration developed by liberal European states at home and abroad before World War I were precursors of the camps that came to define the history of 20th-century Europe: Nazi labor and extermination camps and the Soviet Gulag (though not—and I will return to this—the vast system created by Communist China). In their essay Badcock and Pallot are absolutely clear that the most obvious predecessor of the Gulag—the Siberian exile system under the tsars—was very different in both scale and kind.[1] Between the 16th century and the October Revolution,

Thanks to Beatrice Penati, Peter Thonemann, and Tom Welsford for their comments on this review.

[1] See also Badcock's excellent monograph, *A Prison without Walls? Eastern Siberian Exile in the Last Years of Tsarism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), reviewed in *Kritika* 19, 4 (2018): 849–60.

perhaps 1.5 million people were exiled to Siberia, not all of whom were subject to imprisonment or forced labor, and many of whom immediately escaped. At this point, Badcock and Pallot note tersely that Foucauldian ideas of the modern penal system controlling the body and mind of the prisoner are of little relevance to understanding the Russian and Soviet experience (275). The currently available figures for the Gulag are some 18 million prisoners and another 6 or 7 million subjected to internal exile, crammed into a period of around 30 years, with almost no possibility of escape and mortality rates of up to a third—so high that Golfo Alexopoulos concludes that parts of the system were effectively run as death camps.[2] Between 1930 and 1941 alone, 20 million people were convicted and another 3 million exiled or deported, out of a notional USSR-wide population of 160 million.[3] This was repression on a scale that no state ever contemplated before 1914, whether metropolitan and liberal or colonial and despotic. Badcock and Pallot note that tsarist exile regimes were often cruel, but a political prisoner might, for instance, receive medical treatment if he fell ill on the journey: "this was to contrast sharply with the indifference towards human suffering in the Soviet period" (280). The common factor, which endures in the Russian prison system until the present day, is the use of geographical distance as a form of punishment: the journey into exile is a consistent theme in memoirs, although what lay at the end was very different before and after 1917. Still, what we take away from their essay is that even Russia, the most illiberal of European states before World War I, did not begin to approach the horrors its Soviet successor would inflict on its population from the 1920s to the 1950s.

An understanding of the clear distinction between 20th-century totalitarian regimes of punishment and extermination and those of their imperial predecessors is certainly not unique to Russianists, but that clarity is much less evident in Aidan Forth's book. My jaundiced view of *Barbed-Wire Imperialism* may be partly because it is not an easy read: thickly forested with scare quotes, most of Forth's arguments come hedged around with qualifications that

[2] Golfo Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity in Stalin's Gulag* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 85–108, 234–44. Steven Barnes gives a much lower estimate of around 10 percent mortality (*Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011], 1–2, 7–8, 22). The discrepancy arises because Alexopoulos argues that many of those "released" from the Gulag were in fact already mortally sick and died shortly thereafter.

[3] See the exhaustive calculations in Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans. Vadim A. Staklo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 287–329. In reality, the population of the USSR was probably a good deal lower because of those who had died from state-induced famines in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, but this fact was disguised in the 1939 Soviet census.

render them slippery—both hard to criticize and hard to grasp. Occasionally he slides to the opposite extreme, with superficially profound statements such as "the British Empire was made of canvas and thatch" (100). Really? What about corrugated iron? Or cement? What I would take to be his central conclusions are quite reasonable: namely, that techniques of camp design developed in India to deal with plague and famine victims would later be applied to the notorious concentration camps in which tens of thousands of civilians were incarcerated and died of disease and starvation during the Boer War. This was not a case of adapting a technology of repression developed in one part of the empire to another, but largely a hygienic and humanitarian breakthrough: after experts from the Indian Medical Service were deployed to South Africa, the murderous death rates in the camps plummeted (193–203). The story of the Boer War camps—and the notion that they constituted a precedent for the Nazis (as the latter themselves claimed) has been told many times before, but Forth makes an original contribution by establishing the importance of intraimperial connections in the development and use of camps by the British to control and manage large groups of colonial subjects. He has done an impressive amount of archival research in Britain, India, and South Africa, which shows that the usual genealogy for the Boer War camps—that they were based on those used during Spanish campaigns in Cuba in the 1890s—is inadequate. Nowhere was there a greater concentration of expertise in the use and design of camps than in India, and that was where the authorities looked as the death rates among Boer civilians—principally women and children—became a global scandal.

If Forth had left it at that, this would be a fine book (and not accidentally a more modest one). Instead, both here and in the doctoral thesis on which the book is based he has been encouraged to make much more ambitious arguments, summed up on the back cover in the claim that "camps were artifacts of liberal empire that inspired and legitimized the practices of future regimes." No prizes for guessing which "future regimes" we are talking about here. The growing tendency among historians to draw an equivalence between the crimes of European colonialism and those of the Nazi and Soviet regimes seems to have crept up on us by stealth, until it has become a normal part of academic discourse. The pioneer was perhaps Mike Davis in *Late Victorian Holocausts*, a book that has acquired near-canonical status despite being riddled with elementary errors of historical fact and tradecraft. Davis's crass title was intended to suggest that the millions of deaths worldwide which occurred as a result of famine and disease in the late 19th century should be considered in the same light as the deliberate mass killings perpetrated by the

Nazi regime in the 20th. His argument was that the integration of peasant subsistence farmers into global markets made them far more vulnerable to famine caused by fluctuations in global grain prices. For this argument to work, Davis had to demonstrate that famine had been unknown or at the very least much rarer in precolonial times, which he did by cheerfully taking absence of evidence as evidence of absence. As one of the leading historians of famine, Cormac O'Grada, puts it: "again and again, historians have been unable to resist the temptation to infer the incidence and frequency of famines from the documentary record."[4] Davis is a particularly egregious example of this tendency, claiming that "Mogul [*sic*] India was generally free of famine until the 1770s,"[5] while the British colonial state that succeeded it was unable to prevent or mitigate famine because of its doctrinaire adherence to *laissez-faire* and reluctance to intervene in grain markets.[6]

This argument is reproduced verbatim by Forth (2, 45–46), for whom Davis is the sole, unquestioned authority on famine in India under British rule. He also makes use of the comparison implicit in Davis's title. Referring to images of the emaciated bodies of famine victims, Forth explicitly compares them to those of Nazi extermination camps: "In this sense, at least, the victims of nineteenth-century imperialism prefigured those of twentieth-century totalitarianism" (50).

While Forth is describing the physical resemblance between these two groups of starving bodies, and the inevitable element of horrified voyeurism

[4] Cormac O'Grada, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 25.

[5] Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001), 285.

[6] Ironically enough, the evidence Davis cites in the three-page section of his work devoted to precolonial systems of famine relief in India consists largely of unsupported assertions of the superiority of Mughal systems by conservative East India Company officials such as Sir John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone, who in the 1820s and 1830s were engaged in a polemical debate with "westernisers" in Calcutta over whether British rule should take on "European" or "Oriental" forms, a debate Davis is clearly completely unaware of. The extent of his ignorance of Indian history can be gauged by his reference to "traditional Indian elites, like the great Bengali *zamindars*" (287)—when the latter were, of course, a British administrative creation, noted not for their paternalism, as Davis argues, but for screwing as much revenue as they possibly could out of the land the colonial state had given them (Sugata Bose, *Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital: Rural Bengal since 1770* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 70–71). See also Edward Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), 83–86; Stokes, "The First Century of British Colonial Rule in India: Social Revolution or Social Stagnation?," *Past and Present*, no. 58 (1973): 136–60; and D. A. Washbrook, "India 1818–1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 3: *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 395–421.

involved in gazing on images of them, his hint that there is a moral or functional equivalence between those dying of starvation in camps designed specifically to exterminate them and those starving in camps whose purpose was, however ineptly, to try to save their lives left me feeling distinctly queasy. Beyond this, however, Forth's failure to engage with the broader historiography on Indian famines feels like a political, not a scholarly, decision. Davis's work is highly contentious and has been strongly criticized by economic historians of India and specialists in the history of famine, most notably Tirthankar Roy and Brian Tomlinson.[7] As Roy notes, partly thanks to the work of B. M. Bhatia (heavily relied upon by Davis) it has become commonplace to attribute late 19th-century Indian famines to colonialism and to suggest that the colonial state's failure to cope with them was a sign of deliberate neglect rather than a lack of capacity that it probably shared with its predecessors.[8] The appalling death rates seen in 1876, 1896, and 1898 did not recur thereafter. The 1943 Bengal famine notwithstanding, the 20th century saw a permanent fall in mortality and a demographic transition, with no further serious population shocks after 1915. Since, Roy notes, colonialism did not come to an end in 1915, we must look elsewhere for explanations both for the continued occurrence of famine in 19th-century India and its disappearance thereafter.[9] Instead, he considers that it was the increased *openness* of Indian markets, aided by a spreading rail network, which helped mitigate famines after 1915. This was combined with increased knowledge and capacity on the part of the state, aided by the ever more voluminous famine reports—and the codes that were based on them—compiled by the authorities from the 1870s onward.[10] As O'Grada puts it, "In the longer run, although colonial rule may have eliminated or weakened traditional coping mechanisms, it meant better communications, integrated markets, and more effective public action, which together probably reduced famine mortality."[11] Forth's famine camps, however unpleasant and humiliating for their inmates, were a part of that increasingly effective response, and yet the impression we get from his book is that famines were a particular, well-nigh deliberate product of colonial rule, and that the response to them by the colonial state

[7] B. R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India: From 1860 to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 48–49, 244; Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India, 1857–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 140–41.

[8] B. M. Bhatia, "Famine and Agricultural Labour in India: A Historical Perspective," *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 10, 4 (1975): 575–94.

[9] Tirthankar Roy, "Were Indian Famines 'Natural' Or 'Manmade'?," *LSE Economic History Working Paper*, no. 243 (2016), 5.

[10] Ibid., 9–10, 18, 23.

[11] O'Grada, *Famine*, 19.

was both coercive and largely futile. Forth also insinuates that as a disciplinary technology in a sinister Foucauldian mode, the famine camp and its close relation, the plague camp, were paving the way for the horrors of the 20th century. This is a theme I return to below.

Anderson has provided an endorsement for Forth's book ("creates a usable past that is of vital relevance in the world today"), and there are indications in her introduction to *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies* that she too sees the carceral and coercive practices of 19th-century liberal states as comparable with and productive of those of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, although she never goes as far down this road as Forth. The ERC-funded research project from which this volume emerges aims "to shift convict transportation out of the history of crime and punishment and into new questions that are being raised within global and postcolonial history, about the role of coercion and confinement within global expansion and divergence."[12] As she puts it in her introduction, "Convicts … were agents of imperial occupation and expansion and labour pioneers. All the global powers used them in order to settle and then push back national and imperial boundaries and borders" (5). This is surely correct, and a rather more modest claim than the inflated puff from Antoinette Burton on the back cover ("Anderson and contributors prove without a shadow of a doubt that convicts made the modern world"). Hyperbole aside, Anderson's volume is global history of a high order, in large part because each chapter is written by a specialist in the field with a full command of the source base and the requisite languages. It also succeeds in being more than the sum of its parts, since the reader is able to find unexpected parallels and connections between, say, Japanese and Portuguese practices of transportation. As with Forth's volume, however, in places we find a defensible and well-supported scholarly argument—showing how the nodes of European empires worldwide were often first established by convict transportation—hijacked by an unnecessary attempt to include and draw parallels with the very different practices of the Nazi and Soviet regimes.

Anderson wishes to make an argument for the statistical significance of convicts and penal settlements in overall global migrant flows from the 16th century to the 20th—in her own table (7) they make up just over 33.5 million people out of a grand total of 223 million, or around 15 percent. But this figure is enormously reliant on those incarcerated in European penal labor camps, principally in Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain (5 million), which were an extralegal phenomenon and did not involve permanent or

[12] A description of Clare Anderson's project, "The Carceral Archipelago: Transnational Circulations in Global Perspective, 1415–1960," can be found at https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/history/research/grants/Carchipelago.

long-distance migration, and on the key case of Russia and the USSR (where she gives a total of 11.9 million Gulag internees—26.9 million if all deportees are included). Her figures for the tsarist and Soviet periods are lumped together, eliding the fact that—as Badcock and Pallot make quite clear in their essay—even on the lowest estimates more than ten times as many people were subject to deportation, forced labor, and penal exile in the 30 years from 1925 to 1955 as in the previous 300 years of Romanov rule. Meanwhile the 13 million forced laborers used by the Nazis during World War II are for some reason placed in a different category from those of the Gulag, while their concentration and extermination camp victims are not included in these figures at all, though they do figure in the final chapter on European penal camps (337–70). There is no mention of the camps run by the British during the campaigns against insurgencies in the final years of empire in Malaya and Kenya. While pre-independence North America is featured in several chapters, the United States appears only at second hand in the one on Latin America, despite the notorious penal colony at Guantanamo Bay, the last survivor of what was once quite an extensive network. As Anderson notes, China is not included because there is still too little information available on its penal structures and practices, despite (or, she suggests, because of) the fact that its current regime makes more extensive use of deportation, concentration camps, and penal colonies than any other in the modern world, with the possible exception of North Korea.

Part of the reason for these exclusions might be the volume's focus on convict flows as a factor in global population mobility rather than on incarceration per se—but if that is the intention, then there are clearly several category errors. The inclusion of the victims of the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust (358–62)—though not of Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia—confuses this focus on convicts, penal colonies, and transportation. So does the inclusion of the Gulag. Anderson writes that "Like the penal labour camps of twentieth-century Europe, convict transportation, exile and collective resettlement in Russia and the Soviet Union are not usually incorporated into such estimates" (7). It seems to me that there are very good reasons for this, which she has chosen to ignore. Gulag internees in some cases suffered such high mortality rates that they can hardly be considered a permanent addition to the population of the regions they were deported to.[13] Those who survived also need to be carefully differentiated by region and nationality: while few remained permanently in barely habitable areas such as Kolyma and Vorkuta, those sent to Karlag did indeed transform the demography of

[13] Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity*, 243–4; Khlevniuk, *History of the Gulag*, 320–27.

northern Kazakhstan.[14] Even here though, while the Germans remained, the Chechens were eventually allowed to return home.[15] Even if we are trying to situate the Gulag and the Nazi camps within an understanding of the coercive and penal practices of the state, as opposed to histories of global labor migration, then it is clear that they belong in a different category, partly because of their scale, partly because of their motives, and partly because of their extralegal nature. Between 1415 and 1976, the estimated total of convicts transported for *all* the western European empires provided by Anderson is just under 1.5 million. If tsarist Russia is added, she considers that provides a further 1.9 million (1.5 million according to Badcock and Pallot). The bulk of these convicts were imprisoned and transported after some form of judicial process, however flawed. Most of them were transported because they had been found guilty of crimes, not because of politics or race, and the central intention was neither to work them to death nor to suppress all forms of dissent. For all these reasons the implied equivalence of penal transportation with either the Gulag or the Nazi camps or the forced laborers of World War II is, in my view, not remotely appropriate. The Atlantic slave trade, which Anderson includes in her figures for global labor movement flows, would be a better comparison, because of its scale (an estimated 12.5 million people) and its racialized, dehumanizing logic, separate from all notions of criminal justice, but this is not pursued anywhere in the volume.

The originator of the idea that the penal and disciplinary practices of modern liberal states were somehow comparable to the Gulag is, of course, Michel Foucault, whose reference to the former as a "Carceral Archipelago" in the conclusion to *Discipline and Punish* was a conscious response to the publication in French of Solzhenitsyn's work the year before.[16] Foucault also referred to it as a carceral system, a network (*réseau*), a mechanism, a fabric (*tissu*), and a pyramid, but these terms seem to have had less resonance with scholars, no doubt because they lacked the echo of Solzhenitsyn. "The Carceral Archipelago" is the title of the research project out of which Anderson's volume emerged.[17] Forth also cites Foucault and uses the expression to describe

[14] Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, 32–33, 237–44.

[15] Michaela Pohl, "'It Cannot Be That Our Graves Will Be Here': The Survival of Chechen and Ingush Deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944–1957," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, 3 (2002): 401–30.

[16] Jan Plamper, "Foucault's Gulag," *Kritika* 3, 2 (2002): 261; Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 308, published in English as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1991), 301; A. Solzhenitsyn, *Arkhipelag GULag, 1918–1956*, 2 vols. (Paris: YMCA Press, 1973), translated as Alexandre Soljenitsyne, *L'archipel du Goulag, 1918–1956*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

[17] "Carceral Archipelago."

new forms of prison that emerged in early 19th-century Britain (17–19), while employing the phrase "archipelago of camps" in the title of an earlier article that summarized many of the major conclusions of his book.[18] To historians of Russia and the USSR the uncritical application of Foucault's ideas about punishment and incarceration has long been troubling. In a seminal article Laura Engelstein showed clearly why there were major problems with applying Foucault's ideas about changing practices of punishment to Russia. As she argued, Foucault's casting of the due process of the law in bourgeois liberal states as something inherently oppressive blinded him to the far more terrible consequences of its absence in the Soviet Union and came with a fair helping of hypocrisy.[19] Jan Plamper has further refined this argument, drawing on a wider range of Foucault's writings to show clearly that he was never able to fit the Gulag coherently into his understanding of the punitive powers of the state and could not make up his mind whether it was a modern disciplinary phenomenon or a throwback to premodern forms of state compulsion. As Plamper notes, Foucault displayed "a striking lack of familiarity with Russian history," while in general his approach was "disastrous for any historian working in a field that privileges traditional questions: what happened? Why? And who is to blame?" He nevertheless insists that Foucault's ideas can represent a useful toolbox in which historians can rummage to find inspiration or guidance, while warning that "in order to gain anything from Foucault beyond a murky sense of skepticism about the Enlightenment, we must, I am afraid, determine case by case if Foucauldian questions are applicable to it. This requires an awareness of the nature of the field into which we intervene."[20]

By and large Anderson and her contributors have that awareness in spades—and generally cite Foucault only to explain why his ideas are in fact inapplicable to their case study (203–5, 275, 337). Anderson herself notes the need to "reconceptualise Foucault's claims," although she does suggest that there were some generalized shifts in practices of penal transportation in the late 18th century (9). Ann Laura Stoler, who supplies a somewhat diffuse afterword, cites Foucault approvingly but nevertheless writes that "punishment as labour, labour as punishment were neither limited to an old regime of governance nor invented for new ones" (371). In fact, almost without exception the many excellent contributions to Anderson's volume pass over

[18] Aidan Forth, "Britain's Archipelago of Camps: Labor and Detention in a Liberal Empire, 1871–1903," *Kritika* 16, 3 (2015): 651–80.

[19] Laura Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *American Historical Review* 98, 2 (1993): 338–53.

[20] Plamper, "Foucault's Gulag," 266, 272, 279.

what is meant to be the crucial Foucauldian divide—between the coercive and theatrical justice of premodern absolutism and the disciplinary, penitential justice of the bourgeois liberal state—without missing a beat.[21] In most cases, they devote at least as much attention to exploring penal transportation in the 16th and 17th centuries as in the period of Foucault's "Carceral Archipelago." Reading about Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, British, French, Russian, Latin American, and Japanese practices, it becomes abundantly clear how varied these were, and how the chronology of punishment was also inconsistent and never followed a single Foucauldian path or divide. As Hamish Maxwell-Stewart demonstrates, the British abandoned transportation from the metropole in 1874 (202). Jean-Lucien Sanchez's excellent essay shows that, notwithstanding some experiments under the *ancien régime*, this was only 20 years after transportation had been systematized in the French Empire, where it persisted until 1953 (123). Johan Heinsen, writing of the short-lived Danish and Swedish penal colonies in North America and the Caribbean, demonstrates that these neighboring Scandinavian states approached transportation in totally different ways. Swedish convict deportees had a fixed term to their sentences and often remained in the colony (Delaware) after their release, rising in colonial society. Their experience did not differ hugely from that of indentured laborers. Danish convicts, by contrast, were sentenced to hard labor for life and permanently stripped of their honor, and they died like flies in the Caribbean (112—14). In her own, excellent chapter on transportation from British India to the Andaman Islands and other Indian Ocean penal colonies, Anderson notes that shipboard mortality rates in the 1840s were remarkably low, possibly because "there was a bottle of wine and a bottle of lime juice for every two and a half convicts" (219)—commodities in rather short supply on the Dal′stroi ships that carried prisoners across the Sea of Okhotsk to Magadan and Kolyma. In a particularly fascinating chapter (308–35), Minako Sakata shows how from 1880 on the Meiji government in Japan consciously imitated British and French practice in deporting convicts to the island of Hokkaido. This came to an end after just 27 years because of high mortality rates and criticism that it discouraged colonization on a frontier vulnerable to Russian imperial expansion—but not before the convicts had built most of the roads on the island and thus made further settlement possible. As in Siberia, while conditions were harsh, a surprising number seem to have been able to escape, and one memoir paradoxically referred to the "freedom" of convict life (328–29). Mary Gibson and Ilaria Poerio cite Foucault in their chapter on penal colonies in modern

[21] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 8–16.

Europe, but they then point out that these were an institution of the *ancien régime* that persisted into the liberal 19th century, with the most fundamental change coming after World War I:

> First, the absolute monarchies of the eighteenth century and the parliamentary nation states of the nineteenth applied the punishment of internal exile mostly to common criminals, while the dictatorships of the twentieth century targeted political dissidents. Second, most penal colonies formed part of the regular judicial system in the earlier era but developed into autonomous, extra-legal institutions of punishment in the interwar period. Third, while most early penal colonies were reserved for men and boys before the First World War, they became increasingly mixed in terms of gender in the twentieth century. Finally, race replaced class as the defining characteristic of inmate populations. (338–39)

Unfortunately they do not follow these observations to their logical conclusion, which is that the 20th-century camps (which were also on a far larger scale than what came before) were not an outgrowth of the bourgeois reforming and disciplinary idea of justice at all but opened a new and far darker chapter in human history. The misleading nature of Foucault's analysis and chronology is shown to the full in Forth's invocation of him, when he writes that "confinement replaced banishment and execution as the Victorian era's standard strategy to regulate deviance" (18). Anderson's volume explores a greater variety of penal regimes than Foucault could ever conceive of and shows emphatically that this was not so.

All of which really begs the question—why bother invoking Foucault at all, other than as some sort of equivalent of Marx or the *Istoriia KPSS* for historians who want to genuflect toward postmodernism? As Anderson and Stoler both note (9, 374), he chose to ignore penal colonies and transportation almost entirely in *Discipline and Punish*, and his ideas add nothing to a volume that is largely driven by solid, old-fashioned empirical research, and all the better for it. Plamper's article brilliantly exposes the incoherence of Foucault's thinking on the Gulag and the basic hypocrisy of his position as someone who enjoyed all the legal protections of individual rights afforded by the French bourgeois liberal state and yet was fundamentally unable to see how the absence of those protections made Soviet rule what it was. Plamper is too generous when he says that we can still gain from rummaging in the Foucauldian toolbox—the evidence of both these volumes is that we are better off without him, or at least without *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's distinction between *ancien régime* and 19th-century liberal regimes of punishment was far less significant than the distinction between the latter and the horrors that 20th-century Europe would produce.

Forth does not say directly that he considers the Nazi and Soviet systems of camps to be descended from British colonial models, often referring to the humanitarian purposes of the latter. Instead he provides a series of rather oblique hints:

> To place facile blame on British imperialism for the horrors of Auschwitz and the Gulag, moreover, is to overlook the pivotal and familiar role of events (World War I and World War II), personalities (Hitler, Stalin), and ideologies (fascism, communism). It is also to misread the nature of British camps, which maintained a humanitarian mandate despite the violence and coercion they entailed. Yet Britain's contribution cannot be dismissed entirely. (213–14)

> The imperial contribution, then, did not ordain future practices in any deterministic way. But should it be dismissed entirely? The infamous extermination centers of occupied Poland inhabit another universe from Britain's famine, plague, and wartime concentration camps: mass murder and the terrifying precision with which it was conducted made them exceptional even when compared to their counterparts at Dachau and Buchenwald, or in Stalin's Soviet Union … the Soviet Gulag … conformed to common paradigms about rehabilitating marginal populations through the discipline of mass labor. (218)

Steven Barnes's work notwithstanding, I think most historians of the USSR would question whether rehabilitation, as opposed to the brutal enforcement of ideological conformity and the purging of undesirable elements, was central to the purpose or practice of the Gulag.[22] "Common paradigms" here presumably refers to those of colonial camps, which were quite different in purpose and scale from the Gulag or Nazi labor camps, but Forth continues to dance around this argument without ever quite bringing it home: "The cultural centrality of the Holocaust, however justified, obscures other manifestations of forced encampment, which drew logistical and ideological succor from Britain" (219).

Forth also refers to the use made by the Nazis of the Boer War concentration camps as justification for their own carceral practices, as well as the propaganda value that they had for the later apartheid regime in South Africa. He suggests that their employment by the British somehow normalized concentration camps and made them acceptable within a liberal understanding of justice and incarceration (213–16), before concluding his book with the suggestion that modern refugee camps also belong within the same genealogy. The Boer concentration camps were certainly a gift for Nazi and

[22] Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, 11–27.

apartheid propaganda, but given the brazen shamelessness of both regimes, that hardly justifies Forth's insinuation that they made the establishment of either the Nazi camp system or the apartheid regime significantly easier or more likely. Nobody denies, or has ever denied, the shocking mortality among Boer women and children that made the concentration camps of the Boer war an international scandal, the notorious "methods of barbarism," as the then Liberal leader Henry Campbell-Bannerman denounced them in Parliament at the time (180–85).[23] Far from becoming accepted or normalized, the Boer camps became a byword for injustice and suffering. It is hard to imagine a similar public condemnation of the Gulag in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR under Stalin or of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, while we are still waiting for a denunciation of the current mass detention of Uyghurs, Qazaqs, and other Muslim peoples in prison camps from the Presidium of the Chinese National People's Congress.[24] Couching the comparison in these terms, of course, serves to highlight its absurdity. This is not to say that liberal and democratic states do not frequently and scandalously fall short of their judicial ideals, as Britain did in Kenya during the suppression of Mau-Mau or the United States does in Guantanamo Bay today—but these were actions that could not be kept secret and exposed both governments to strong domestic public criticism at the time.[25] There is a vital difference between this and regimes where extrajudicial incarceration, forced labor, and political "re-education" are foundational to the very existence of the state and its ideology, so pervasive that they affect all of society, and yet cannot even be publicly discussed.[26]

Beyond this, what Forth actually demonstrates is that it was precisely the disciplinary and hygienic techniques developed in India, which he portrays in such a sinister light, that brought down the terrible mortality rates in the

[23] Isabel Hull notes that in Britain the military were sufficiently subordinate to the liberal political establishment to be brought to heel in South Africa, in a way that did not happen in Germany during the genocide of the Herero in Southwest Africa (*Absolute Destruction*: *Military Culture, and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005], 182–93). Though the level of outrage over the treatment of the Boers certainly was at least in part because they were white, the massacres that followed the 1857 Indian rebellion and the Amritsar massacre of 1919 also aroused moral disquiet and divided public opinion in metropolitan Britain. See Kim Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bheg: The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857* (London: Hurst, 2017), 178–85; and Derek Sayer, "British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre 1919–1920," *Past and Present*, no. 131 (1991): 130–64.

[24] "China Forces out Buzzfeed Journalist," *New York Times*, 23 August 2018 (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/23/world/asia/china-buzzfeed-reporter.html).

[25] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: W. W. Norton, 2005).

[26] Khlevniuk, *History of the Gulag*, 330–44.

Boer camps, rendering them oppressive but not dangerous. Colonial famine and plague camps, Boer War concentration camps, and modern refugee camps were and are terrible places to be. People end up in them arbitrarily, without judicial process, and in many cases stand a high risk of dying in them of disease or starvation. But they are not Buchenwald, Auschwitz, or Kolyma. These are horrors peculiar to high modernist regimes that wanted to remake humanity in ways that comparatively weak European colonial states never contemplated. Conflating the two is both conceptually and morally muddled. It says a lot about the "usable past" that Forth claims to be creating (225–26) that it is better suited to making armchair criticisms of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees than to denouncing the detention of a million Uyghurs in Orwellian "re-education" camps by the Chinese Communist Party in Xinjiang.[27] This is what an illiberal world order looks like.

Forth's book is at least beautifully produced and carefully copy-edited. The same cannot be said of Anderson's volume, which shows signs of hasty editing and poor translation in places. We learn that Solzhenitsyn wrote *The Gulag Archipelago* "in the middle of the nineteenth century" (9), when the accompanying footnote makes it clear that Anderson does know when it was actually written. Meanwhile the copy-editors at Bloomsbury seem to have made heavy use of the automatic spelling corrector and failed to notice its effects—I allowed myself a chuckle over "chicken coups" (255), which sounds like the title of an unwritten novel by Dick King-Smith. The images summoned up by references to the fragrant tropical isle of "Fernando Poo" (found thus throughout Christian de Vito's chapter on the Spanish Empire) are probably best left to the reader's imagination.

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[27] Rian Thum, "What Really Happens in China's 'Re-education' Camps,'" *New York Times*, 15 May 2018 (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/opinion/china-re-education-camps.html); Chris Buckley and Austin Ramzy, "Star Scholar Disappears as Crackdown Engulfs Western China," *New York Times*, 10 August 2018 (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/10/world/asia/china-xinjiang-rahile-dawut.html).