

also contains a misplaced historical perspective of the November revolution and more than 200 pages of commentary on Dittmann's writings. The notes, which fill nearly the whole third volume, are arguably too detailed in many instances. Specifically, the notes to Dittmann's reports of the debates in the SPD parliamentary group from 1914–1916 are almost as long as the original text, not least because they include lengthy extracts from minutes and notes already published elsewhere. But there is no doubt that the editor, Jürgen Rojahn, has approached his task with great care and expertise. In particular, the exemplary index, the list of Dittmann's publications and the list of periodicals set high editing standards.

However, the thoroughness of the edition and the unusual breadth of the introduction and background material also present a drawback. Covering three volumes and totalling around 1,800 pages, Dittmann's memoirs are on sale at the prohibitive price of DM 420, which is likely to keep this important work beyond the reach of many. But it deserves a large readership, since Dittmann's is a major voice, which should be heard, not least because it represents the first first-hand exposition of the standpoint of the USPD's right wing. Many senior majority SPD members were able to justify the party's policies during the war and the revolutionary period in memoirs published during the Weimar period (e.g. Noske, Scheidemann, H. Müller) or soon after 1945 (e.g. Severing, Löbe, Keil, O. Braun, and David's wartime diaries were published in 1966). But the voices of the former USPD leaders remained unheard. In some cases this was unavoidable: Haase was murdered in the autumn of 1919, Breitscheid and Hilferding perished during the Nazi period, and Kautsky, Ledebour and Däumig did not write any memoirs. This is one reason why Dittmann's memoirs are so significant. And in light of this it is to be hoped that the publication of this comprehensive edition will be followed as soon as possible by a smaller edition at a more affordable price. This could comprise Dittmann's memoirs, which are still readable without extensive annotation, and a minimal commentary.

Eberhard Kolb

DAS, SURANJAN. *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905–1947.* [Oxford University South Asian Studies Series.] Oxford University Press, Delhi [etc.] 1993. xvi, 311 pp. Maps. £7.95.

When Suranjan Das's book first appeared in 1991, it was widely reviewed and acclaimed as a piece of erudite and in-depth research. Its reappearance in paperback certainly indicates the value of this meticulous study on communal riots in Bengal between the two partitions of the province in 1905 and 1947. In the history of communalism, which in the context of the Indian subcontinent means the Hindu-Muslim divide, Bengal occupies an important position. Not only did this province have a large concentration of Muslims, it also witnessed the first articulation of a political consciousness among these people. It is no wonder that in 1906 the Indian Muslim League was born in Dacca in the eastern part of the province, where an enthusiastic Muslim leadership had already distanced itself from the Hindu-dominated National Congress and was fighting for a share of political power – a process which ended in the partition of the

province and the creation of East Pakistan in 1947. Das has ventured to study this process by exploring a series of Hindu-Muslim riots that took place in Bengal in the first half of the twentieth century.

Das has two clear assumptions. First he distinguishes between religious conflict and communal violence, the former being the hallmark of Hindu-Muslim relations in the pre-colonial and perhaps also the early colonial periods, while the latter phenomenon characterized the late colonial period. While, in his opinion, religious conflicts centred around "sectarian and doctrinaire differences", communal animosity was engendered by "political power and economic resources". He does not deny the interconnections between the two, but he does stop short of exploring what they were. His second important assumption concerns the distinction between elite and popular communalism. The two realms, he argues, were not mutually exclusive and it is their gradual merger in the 1940s which is the main focus of his study.

In the early twentieth century communal violence in Bengal, in the Mymensingh riot of 1906-1907 for example, Das finds more evidence of class grievances of the Muslim peasantry against their Hindu economic overlords. Some communal aspects of crowd behaviour could also be detected, but they were not yet as prominent as they would become a few years later. In subsequent riots in Calcutta, Pabna and Dacca between 1918 and 1926 he finds varying degrees of convergence between community and class identities. Although interconnections between organized politics and communal rioting were becoming more and more visible, there was no clear pattern as yet. In the period between 1927 and 1931 such a pattern slowly emerged. In the Patuakhali and Ponabalia riots of 1927, in the Dacca riot of 1930 and in the Chittagong disturbances of 1931, intervention of institutional political leaders from above was a prominent feature, while the Kishoreganj riot of 1930 again saw a return to old-style spontaneous class-based rural conflict. It was actually the Dacca riot of 1941 which constituted the watershed in the history of communal violence in Bengal. In it Das finds a complete convergence of the two streams of organized elite politics and spontaneous popular protest. This riot clearly indicated, as he argues, the emerging vertical solidarity among the Bengali Muslims on the issue of "Pakistan" or a separate nation state for the Indian Muslims. The subsequent "Great Calcutta Killing" of August 1946, the Noakhali violence that followed weeks later and the partition riots clearly evinced this pattern of being organized and overtly political. Religious and political motives, rather than class or economic grievances, were now the chief determinants of crowd behaviour. This resulted ultimately in the partition of the province and the creation of Pakistan.

One might, however, suspect that this progression from "primitive class-based outbreaks to sophisticated and organized overt communal violence" was not as clear-cut as Das has assumed it to be. Overlaps or continuities are hard to ignore; the vertical solidarity could well have been fragile and full of tension. Even in the 1940s there were considerable differences among the Bengali Muslim leaders over the "Pakistan" question; and while the leaders regarded it as a political concept of a separate nation state, to their followers in the east Bengal countryside "Pakistan" was still a kind of a peasant utopia. In other words, it is difficult to assume there was a homogeneous communal perception or a consensus even among the Muslim community, while the Hindus were more divided and confused. The dominant political view need not be taken as the

consensus view of the community; it is doubtful whether the communal divide in Bengal was as all-encompassing even in 1946–1947 as this book would have us believe. One may also argue that a study of riots cannot be a convenient way of understanding the communal mind, for it provides only a spasmodic view of history. These extraordinary moments of confrontation were punctuated by periods of adjustment and coexistence. Das himself concedes that the Bengali workers and peasants were not innately hostile to their Hindu or Muslim brethren, except at brief moments of violence. But at the end of the day, one has to admit that these violent outbursts of hatred also altered their perceptions and aspirations and in the process influenced their relationships. This book, which is a veritable mine of information on inter-communal relations in Bengal during a forty-year period, brings that out with admirable clarity.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay

HOFFMANN, DAVID L. *Peasant Metropolis. Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941.* [Studies of the Harriman Institute.] Cornell University Press, Ithaca [etc.] 1994. xv, 282 pp. Ill. Maps. \$35.75.

The First Five-Year Plan in the Soviet Union was meant to transform the USSR from a rural and agrarian society into an urban and industrial paragon of the socialist system. A key element in this transformation, both in plan and reality, was the recruitment of millions of peasants into the wage labor force. David Hoffmann's book explores the dimensions of this recruitment and its implications for social and political stability by focusing on the expansion of the industrial labor force in the USSR's largest city, Moscow, between 1929 and 1941.

Dimensions of this problem of transformation of the Soviet labor force have been addressed before, particularly in works by Moshe Lewin, Robert Davies, Donald Filtzer, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Lewis Siegelbaum, Hiroaki Kuromiya and Vlad Andrie. Hoffmann, however, focuses on a specific case study: he concentrates on the city of Moscow in general, and on a few key industries (metals, machine-building, textiles and construction) in particular. He has also employed oral histories; marvelous vignettes from interviews with retired workers who first journeyed to Moscow during the first plan years introduce each chapter. Hoffmann also enjoyed access to central and local party archives, and his book illustrates the value of primary cell party records for historical research. In addition, he makes extensive use of periodicals and official documentary sources such as statistical reports.

The term "peasant" in the book's title is the key thematic element here. The purpose of the study is to address the questions: in what ways did the city transform the peasant migrant? in what ways did the peasant migrant transform the city? Hoffmann's challenge to prevailing historiography is to demonstrate the failure of Soviet officials' efforts to delineate a new social identity for these peasants, failing to transform them into proletarians, and to illustrate the modes of resistance of peasant migrants as they drew upon their rural traditions, networks and cultures.

Beginning with a social demographic portrait of Moscow, Hoffmann turns to an analysis of the sources and dynamics of peasant in-migration, arguing that village networks, like almost everywhere in the developing world, were more