Review of “Punishment and Social Structure,” By George Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer

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with Contract, Employment, and other relations. In his first edition, Dean
Green considered them important enough to be allotted some six hundred
pages. In the present edition, those cases are completely eliminated from
the text and merely cited in footnotes to annotate about forty pages of the
editor's own analysis of the problems involved. Though one welcome result
of this case deletion has been a reduction in the size of the book (the first
edition ran well over 1800 pages of small print), its wisdom will surely be
questioned. Certainly he editor's explanation is hardly compelling—that
the interests involved in the excised cases "are entirely too many, too diffi-
cult of treatment and too important to be summarily dealt with." One
naturally answers, If they are important, and precisely because they are
so difficult, why not rather eliminate some of the cases and materials on
topics relatively less important and less difficult? Nor will the editor's
suggestion that they be treated, if possible, in a separate course on Torts,
as is done at Northwestern, appeal to the many teachers of torts, who,
like the present reviewer, are confined by curricular exigencies to one three-
hour course for two semesters. With due respect to all the many merits of
the present edition, this reviewer must regard the change as a serious
obstacle to the more extensive use of the book for class-room purposes.

   Israel Treiman.†

Punishment and Social Structure. By George Rusche and Otto Kirch-

Most of what has been written on the subject of punishment has been
concerned with penal theory: the philosophical justification of various
theories of retribution, deterrence or reformation. A refreshingly new ap-
proach is found in this monograph, which might be described as a study of
the history of punishment from the viewpoint of economic determinism.
Its thesis is that both crime and punishment are affected mainly by eco-
nomic developments, and that society at every stage of development has
devised methods of punishment which correspond to the current system of
production. This reviewer is not inclined to challenge that idea. If others
are, they will have a difficult time to rebut the mass of evidence which
Messrs. Rusche and Kirchheimer have here assembled.

They trace the development of punishment starting with the early mid-
dle ages, when the task of criminal law was primarily to keep the peace
between equals, a task which could be performed almost entirely by the
imposition of fines. The great increase in population in later medieval times
and the resulting increase in poverty led to an increase in crimes against
property. Fines were out of the question as punishment for these impover-
ished criminals, and corporal punishment and the death penalty became
increasingly common. No other way seemed to offer itself for society to
get rid of dangerous persons. It was a penal system obviously the product
of a society in which there was no shortage of labor. As Professor Thorsten
Sellin says in his Foreword to this book, "The sanguinary punishments and
tortures of old are no evidence of bloodthirstiness or sadism on the part

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of those who used them. They rather testify to the fact that those who
designed them could conceive of no better, that is more efficient, way of
securing protection for the social values which they treasured."

The extension of trade toward the end of the sixteenth century created
an increased demand for labor. Wages rose. The ruling class fought this
rise with all the weapons at its command, and did not neglect the use of
prison labor. Workhouses were established, in which persons who would
not work voluntarily were forced to do so—at a profit to the state or to
the private entrepreneurs to whom such workhouses were often farmed out.

From the workhouse grew the modern penitentiary system. Unfor-
tunately, however, imprisonment became the generally accepted form of
punishment just as its economic basis, the need for man-power, began to
disappear. The new factory system could produce goods more cheaply than
the prisons with their handicrafts, and so made prison labor unprofitable.

The authors also credit the industrial revolution rather than humani-
tarian principles for the amelioration of savage punishments early in the
nineteenth century. The abject poverty into which the working class was
plunged and the rise of the "reserve industrial army" of the unemployed
rendered it unnecessary any longer to use savage punishments to coerce
the propertyless class into continuous work. The threat of starvation could
be relied upon to provide such coercion. Thus increasing pauperization of
the masses was accompanied by more lenient treatment of the poor.

Galley slavery and transportation are also traced by the authors to eco-
nomic bases. Both were practiced because they were or seemed to be
economically wise, and were abandoned not because they were inhumane,
but because they were uneconomic. "Once transportation ceased to pay, the
colonists realized it was a shameful business unworthy of them."

The historical chapters of the book are primarily the work of Dr. Rusche,
and were written in German as a project for the International Institute
of Social Research. When his manuscript was submitted in 1934, the Insti-
tute had been closed by the German government and had transferred its
activities to Columbia University. It was decided to amplify Dr. Rusche's
work, and Dr. Kirchheimer was assigned to that task.

Dr. Kirchheimer also added several chapters of his own, dealing with
prison reform, the fine in recent penal practice, trends in penal policy under
fascism, and penal policy and crime rate. On the last named subject, he
reaches the same conclusion which Ferri reached at the turn of the century:
that severity or leniency in penal policy seems to have no effect on the
prevalence of crime. "The crime rate can really be influenced only if society
is in a position to offer its members a certain measure of security and to
guarantee a reasonable standard of living." Unfortunately, so long as
society is unable to solve its social problems, it will always be ready to
take the view that crime is caused by inherent human wickedness, which
can be curbed only by more repressive punishments. Increased knowledge
has given us greater capacity than ever before to understand and to solve
the problem of penal treatment, but—paradoxically—the defects in the
social order make the acceptance of such solutions more remote than ever.

It might be objected that the authors try too hard to make out a case;
that their material is too narrowly focused upon one viewpoint. Even if this criticism is valid, it must be admitted that it is a viewpoint which eminently deserves presentation, and that it is here presented in a manner both scholarly and stimulating.

HENRY WELCHOFEN.†


Probably because there has been so much evidence of apparent irresponsibility on the part of states in the family of nations in recent decades, the subject of the general responsibility of states under international law has become increasingly prominent in recent writing and discussion. Dr. Silvanie under the direction of Professor Joseph P. Chamberlain of Columbia University has undertaken a study of one phase of the problem and in the volume here under review has reported his results.

The study is based primarily on the decisions and opinions of international arbitration and claims commissions, to which frequent references are made in the footnotes. The principal sources are also listed in a brief bibliography at the end of the volume; but several outstanding recent contributions both on the general field of state responsibility and on the work of particular claims-commissions, especially the recent claims-commissions of the United States and Mexico, are strangely nowhere mentioned.

The value of Dr. Silvanie's treatise is not in the presentation of any new principles, conclusions, or procedures but rather in the assembling, unifying, and further substantiating of what was already pretty generally accepted. In simple and clear style he covers the subjects of Insurgent Loans, Concessions and Alienations, Acts of Government Routine, Taxes and Customs Duties, and Tortious Acts.

The theses stated and supported by the documentation may be briefly summarized:

1. A state is not liable for either private or public foreign loans to unsuccessful insurgents for use in support of the rebellion or insurgency, unless the insurgents have succeeded sufficiently to establish themselves as the de facto government at the time when the loan is made.

2. A state is not bound by contracts, concessions, or alienations involving its public domain made by unsuccessful insurgents.

3. In the fixing of liability it is a well established practice to distinguish between the insurgent government and the permanent administrative machinery or civil service; between the acts of the insurgent government in its personal or political character and the acts of government routine; between the acts for carrying on the rebellion and the acts of normal administration. For the one the state has been consistently held not liable; for the other it has as consistently been held liable.

4. When, as a result of compulsion, taxes or duties have been paid to

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