

historians who are able to converse directly with the world outside the ivory tower in great style and without simplifications.

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GUASCO, MICHAEL. *Slaves and Englishmen. Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World.* [The Early Modern Americas.] University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2014. 315 pp. Ill. £29.50. doi:10.1017/S0020859015000541

In this extremely well-researched book, Michael Guasco, Associate Professor of History at Davidson College, has made an important contribution to the study of slavery in the Atlantic world of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. With a primary focus on the emergence of slavery in the English New World colonies, he has much to add to the evolution of ideas concerning slavery in England and the influence of the Spanish in their colonies on English developments. He also has discussions of the patterns of behavior of the other European settlers of the Americas, the importance of European knowledge of slavery in Africa, and the treatment of Native Americans in various parts of the Americas.

The main contributions of Guasco concern the basic attitudes of the English towards what they called slavery and the importance of the Spanish in framing the English understanding of slavery in the New World. Slavery was a concept well-known to Englishmen at this time, and there are numerous debates and discussions about its meaning and its presence in England and its colonies even before its establishment in the colonial empire. An important background to the English concept of slavery had been the earlier system of slavery that had emerged in the Spanish colonies. The Spanish had settled in the Americas, and the Portuguese in Brazil and India, a century before the English arrivals. In many ways the English in the Americas had a precedent established by the Spanish either to follow or otherwise react to, depending on local conditions. For these reasons there was no need for the English to start completely fresh with legal and other arrangements regarding enslavement.

Guasco thus starts from the premise that the English reactions to slavery were influenced by their past knowledge of what they, and other nations, had experienced as slavery. The English did regard themselves as exceptional in that their citizens were considered free from enslavement and enjoyed more freedom than citizens of other nations. The presumed exceptionalism, as Guasco points out in detail, was greatly exaggerated since variants of coerced labor had existed (and continued to exist), although presumably to a lesser extent than elsewhere.

There were contemporary discussions comparing the differences between slaves and servants, based on the duration of the period of coercion and the punishments permitted. After the introduction of indentured servitude, it was often described as slave-like to distinguish it from actual slavery. Initially slavery was regarded by the English not as a measure to increase the amount of labor, as was later the case with African slaves. Rather, it was then usually justified

“as a positive, virtue-instilling institution”, and as a means to “a progressive form of individual improvement and social control” (p. 33). Slavery was intended “to instill a sense of virtue, frugality, and hard work and to make working men out of idle men” (p. 36), indicating that slavery was regarded as limited in time, not for life.

The English had different attitudes to the enslavement of Native Americans and of Africans. The enslavement of Indians was primarily to establish an ordered society. Since the Indians were already settled in the Americas, and the British wished to encourage colonization, there were, at first, writings emphasizing the possibility of peaceful relations, not the goal of conquest or the exploitation of native labor. The willingness to treat Indians in some way like Englishmen with regard to enslavement ended, however, after Bacon’s Rebellion in 1622, and “by the early eighteenth century, Indian and African slaves alike were valued for their ability to produce cash crops for English markets” (p. 227).

The English attitudes to Africans began somewhat differently, both because African slavery had already been firmly established by the Spaniards in Latin America, and because of the greater presence of African slaves in Spain and Portugal than elsewhere in Europe. The first Africans had come to the English colonies as slaves, arriving from Spanish America. The limited contacts of Englishmen with Africa made them knowledgeable about the existence and role of slavery among Africans. While the introduction of English colonial laws about the slavery of Africans and Native Americans did not come until the 1660s, it is argued that these laws mainly codified what the English had long been doing anyhow: as Guasco claims, “the English were really only protecting themselves and thereby ensuring their ability to continue doing what other Englishmen had already been doing for the better part of a hundred years” (p. 233).

In describing English attitudes concerning slavery for Englishmen, Native Americans, and Africans, there is much interesting information provided on slavery in Spain and Spanish America, as well as in the Islamic nations, including the enslavement of white Europeans in the Mediterranean Sea regions, the role of manumission in maintaining slave societies, and the repercussions of Anglo-Spanish military conflicts for New World territory.

Guasco’s arguments are based on numerous primary and secondary sources, predominantly in English. This book represents an important contribution to the study of slavery and other forms of human bondage in the early modern Atlantic world, and will have an influence upon discussions of the rise of slavery and racism throughout the Americas.

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For several generations of scholars, few problems in modern history were quite as elusive as Soviet participation in the Spanish Civil War. This was a consequence, on the one hand, of