

Zitierhinweis

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Corinna Kuhr-Korolev

Gerechtigkeit und Herrschaft. Von der Sowjetunion zum Neuen Russland.

Paderborn [usw.]: Schöningh, 2013. 246 S. = Kulturen der Gerechtigkeit, 10.

ISBN: 978-3-506-77864-2.

On February 23rd 2012, Berlin held a memorial ceremony in honour of the ten victims (of Turkish and Greek origin) of the right-wing terrorism carried out 13 years earlier by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU). For years, the victims' families had been forced to fight to uncover the reasons behind the series of murders, only to be faced with the enforcement agencies' inaction and silence. The victims were even suspected of involvement in the drug trade and mafia connections. In many instances, the police and the secret services were proven to have acted hypocritically and concealed information. Should we consider this scandal a glitch in the functioning of the modern law-based state and Western democracy? And what about the justice proclaimed towards the liberal subject in Europe if that subject is not white and male?

The matter of justice is often defined by insider or outsider views of violated rights. What is imperceptible to the insider often appears obvious to the outsider. It is the blending of these frames of perception that defines the strengths and weaknesses of the book by Corinna Kuhr-Korolev, who has carried out a detailed historical analysis of the culture of justice in the USSR, from the Gorbachev years to the Putin era. This is the first comprehensive study of Russia's contemporary history, which will become a starting point for future research for many years to come. As an insider, the author (who has lived for many years in Russia) gives a strong voice to those who fight for human dignity, presents a variety of everyday conflicts and forms of (extra-)judicial conflict resolution, and explains the world of complex interactions between the rulers and the ruled, including careful translations of common terms for readers. As an outsider, the author continues the "Western" intellectual, liberal tradition of seeing Russia as an anti-law, anti-democratic, criminal and corrupt state and society in contrast to "civilized" Europe. This perspective helps shift the analytical focus from recognizing individuality to affirming communal structures of social integration, from institutional normativity to the sphere of informality and unwritten rules, from subjects' legal practices to the opposition between state and society, from legal procedures and the use of the law "from below" to a static search for the regime's "pros" and "cons". As a result, the book predicts the downfall of the existing political order in contemporary Russia, despite its argument that the mechanisms of upholding justice through the personification of the state, which utilize appeals and complaints to the state leadership, have ensured a line of continuity during changes of regime and have supported the reproduction of an undemocratic order over the last several centuries.

The author defines the subject of her study as the set of ideas about what constitutes a just political order and just rule that Russian society bears within itself. It was particularly during the age of Glasnost, as the author demonstrates, that mass discontent with the principles of justice became the driving force of Perestroika.

In the first chapter, the author suggests interpreting the stability and collapse of the Soviet state through the prism of conceptions of justice. For a long time, the idea that social justice would be victorious with the coming of communism served as the legitimizing factor for the USSR. The

most common channel for localizing public dissatisfaction and asserting justice was appeals to state authorities. Negotiations over justice were possible exclusively about specific topics involving consumption and the improvement of everyday life, but could not touch on the foundations of political legitimacy. Kuhr-Korolev skilfully reconstructs the emergence of the public sphere of Perestroika, in which people felt the expansion of the borders of permitted speech through the developing discourse of rights and justice, active struggle with manifestations of illegality and the outward displacement of decades of accumulated anger. The entire country was involved in a wave of scandals testing its collective power in dethroning officials and standing up for individual interests. Scandals on the scale of the entire Soviet Union included financial machinations in Moscow's central supermarkets and the so-called "Cotton Affair", which uncovered mafia structures and their links to the political elite. The arrests of Gdlian and Ivanov, investigators into the Cotton Affair, drew a symbolic boundary for the imposition of justice. It ended where it came into conflict with the interests of the ruling class.

The second chapter focuses on the question of political justice demanded by dissenters or dissidents. These did not constitute a single group and could be broadly divided into "Westernizers" (who emphasized the individual's value, dignity and personal freedom) and "Slavophiles" (who valued the collective, the union of the individual with the nation, and national traditions). The author examines in detail the argument between Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn in the form of open letters to each other and to the Soviet leadership. Through samizdat they laid the foundations of an intellectual tradition of describing the unlawful nature of the Soviet state and questioned the legitimacy of Soviet power. To dissidents, social issues were secondary. They were united by the primacy of spiritual values and the dismissal of the masses' material needs. They believed in the ideal of the "Human with a capital H", who would value above all the individual's personal dignity, not their public recognition, status and honour.

Debates over privilege as one of the drivers of Perestroika are at the heart of the third chapter. Given mass expectations of universal social equality, the population simultaneously demanded the realization of the principle of justice associated with individual contributions to the country's welfare. Overall, the author demonstrates the violation of the social contract which served as the basis of the people's acceptance of the Soviet regime at least as far back as the Brezhnev era. Firstly, while material conditions did improve for the populace, social welfare suffered from its poor quality and lack of resources, which led to the problem of growing social inequality. Secondly, the absence of a differentiated salary system and a clear mechanism for receiving privileges based on just rewards for workplace achievements, as well as pitiful living conditions, led to unrest, especially among the young and educated postwar generation. Most letters from citizens lacked any criticism whatsoever of the political order. The author draws the significant conclusion that even during Perestroika there was a language policy of permitted discussion and acceptable topics for public communication on social justice.

The fourth chapter covers the 1990s, from the collapse of the USSR to Putin's rise to power. The August putsch represented the sun setting on the Soviet era and the affirmation of the presidency of Ieltsin, who had built his popularity through his juxtaposition with all that was Soviet. On the one hand, he was a guarantor of democratic transformation. On the other, the expansion of the president's rights threatened the establishment of a democratic legitimization of the state through the parliament and the constitution. The sociological surveys cited by the author confirm the public's

minimal interest in political justice as opposed to its high expectations of social justice, which were ignored by Ieltsin and would later be placed at the heart of Putin's policy. The ideal of the paternalistic state responsible for caring for its citizens explains the phenomenon of nostalgia for the Soviet past, which gave pride of place to the principles of social equality and a strong, personified regime. Attempts to conduct economic reforms led to an increase in inequality and the destruction of faith in a just order. With little public trust in the legal system, and the population's feeling that lawlessness and arbitrariness were rife, vigilantism and legal uncertainty received a new lease of life, which ultimately reinforced hopes for the "strong arm" of the state.

The fifth chapter deals with the period from Putin's ascent to power to virtually the present day. With the strengthening of the "power vertical" and the "dictatorship of law", there is a renewed stress on social justice: that is, regular payment of salaries and pensions, alongside citizens' rights to rest and work, medical care and education, all of which had been basic entitlements since the days of Stalin's 1936 Constitution. In this way, the Putin government established lines of succession from the Bolshevik propaganda state. The Putin cult serves as the source of state legitimation. The ideals of a strong state and security were put in opposition to the pluralization of the political system, reforms, and the fortification of the democratic foundations of the state. The human rights discourse was marginalized. Advocates of human rights were declared enemies. The opposition was terrorized and muscled out of the public space. All of this took place against the background of excluding Putin and Medvedev from the domain of criticism and the amplification of the discourse of gratitude to the nation's leaders. In representing the state as a healthy body and the opposition as bacteria threatening the country's unity, the president appears as a healer bringing salvation. As it did after World War II, Russia has once again announced its global mission of preserving peace on earth. What is new for contemporary Russia is its reliance on the Russian Orthodox Church, which supports the perception that the regime possesses the divine right of kings and demands obedience to the president as the supreme guarantor of justice. The idea of the strong state, the author concludes, has vanquished the idea of justice.

The book makes for stimulating reading, opening up many new avenues of investigation. Firstly, this monograph will inspire studies of both the emotional experience of injustice and how such experience is processed and expressed by individuals and within families, taking into account generational and gender perspectives. Secondly, questions surrounding the search for justice will put several important topics on the research agenda, including state policies of stigmatizing deviant behaviour and drawing official boundaries for permissible discourse and behaviour through psychiatric stigmatization of persons inconvenient to the regime. The process of tearing off the masks of a "madman", "muckraker", or "deviant", which were forcibly imposed on citizens by the security and healthcare agencies, must become an integral part of the analysis of the transformation of (post-)Soviet subjectivity. Thirdly, since Russia is a multi-ethnic and multinational state, our analyses must distinguish between different republics where customary practices and written law are enforced or compete with each other in a variety of ways.

By introducing new sources from the Russian archives, the author transcends the gap between theoretical and empirical levels of research on justice. This concerns above all collections of letters to the people's deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which facilitate the analysis of popular conceptions of justice and responses to injustice. However, letters to the regime were not the sole instrument for upholding justice. As Jane Burbank argued in her excellent study, *Russian Peasants*

Go to Court: Legal Culture in the Countryside, 1905–1917, without analyses of courts at the base level, it is impossible to comprehend practices of struggling for justice and to understand the law as a way to resolve conflicts. We need to see justice as a procedure of multiple written laws, a set of institutions and (in-)formal interactions, and as a social practice driven by the desire of individuals for legal means of settling disputes. This everyday legal life was a part of the USSR's unconscious history which should be explored further by historians. The very fact of such large-scale mobilization of the population by including it in the discourses and practices of rendering justice and unmasking injustice brings late 20th-century Russia into the rapidly burgeoning field of human rights history. And this long history of Russian citizens as legal and civil subjects begins far before Perestroika, which demands that scholars' distance themselves from (Western) representations of Russia as a backward and lawless country.

ALEXEY TIKHOMIROV
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Aliaksandr Dalhouski

Tschernobyl in Belarus. Ökologische Krise und sozialer Kompromiss (1986–1996).

Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015. 220 S., 16 Abb., 2 Graph., 2 Ktn.

= Historische Belarus-Studien, 4. ISBN: 978-3-447-10415-9.

Die Nuklearkatastrophe von Tschernobyl gehört zweifellos zu den Schlüsselereignissen der späten Sowjetgeschichte. So vielfältig wie die Spekulationen über gesellschaftspolitische, ökologische, ökonomische oder gesundheitliche Langzeitfolgen sind, so reichhaltig präsentiert sich die Forschungslandschaft rund um den ersten atomaren Super-GAU der Geschichte. Aliaksandr Dalhouski nimmt in seiner Monographie, die aus einer 2012 an der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen verteidigten Dissertation hervorgegangen ist, mit Gomel' und Mogilev die zwei weißrussischen Regionen in den Fokus, die 1986 am stärksten durch radioaktiven Fallout kontaminiert wurden. Mittels hermeneutischer Analysen von typisch sowjetischen Petitionen, den sogenannten Eingaben, fragt der Autor nach dem „Wandel in den Eingabeinhalten und -praktiken“ (S. 26). Davon ausgehend, dass „Loyalität als Gegenleistung für die Absicherung eines gewissen Wohlergehens“ (S. 30) in einem fiktiven Vertrag zwischen dem Staat und seinen Bürgern laufend neu ausgehandelt wird, will der Autor „den Inhalt des ‚Sozialkontraktes von Tschernobyl‘, dessen Dynamik sowie die durch das Eingabewesen eröffneten Einflussmöglichkeiten der betroffenen Bevölkerung auf dessen Konditionen“ (S. 31) untersuchen. Dabei geht Dalhouski von der These aus, dass „im Laufe der Entwicklungen“ (S. 26) immer weniger vom offiziellen Weg über das Beschwerderecht Gebrauch gemacht wurde. Tschernobyl entwickelte sich stattdessen zu einem wichtigen Thema einer zunehmend öffentlich geführten und von politischen Parteien geprägten Debatte. Diese Entwicklung wurde allerdings nach 1991, „mit der Herausbildung des autoritären Regimes“ (S. 26), stark gebremst. Um dem An-