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und kommt deshalb zu leichten Antworten. Insofern bleibt dieses Buch ein solider Überblick über Ideologie und Organisation des Komsomols bis in die Kriegszeit, neue Forschungshorizonte öffnet es jedoch nicht.

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Olga Kucherenko

Soviet Street Children and the Second World War. Welfare and Social Control under Stalin

London, Oxford, New York [u. a.]: Bloomsbury, 2016. X, 245 S., 14 Abb.

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Vse luchshee – detiam (“All the best for the children”): this slogan attributed to Lenin was meant to sum up as well as inform policies regarding children, who were represented as the future of communism. On the one hand, this slogan has somewhat watered down to a cliché throughout the decades; but on the other hand, the view that the early Soviet state did all it could for its children in times of need continues to dominate discourses about Soviet child welfare (1920s–1950s) in scholarship as well as the public sphere. In her book, Olga Kucherenko sets out to trace this view of Soviet childcare back to its origins, namely state propaganda, and refute it, thus filling a major hole in the scholarship about the Great Patriotic War and its commemoration.

Kucherenko casts aside what she calls the “carefully constructed metanarrative of the Second World War” (p. 1), which focuses on victory and saving all the children thrown into destitution by the German invaders through a major welfare effort and well-planned evacuations. She argues that in fact, child welfare had a low priority for the Soviet state, which was focusing on winning the war at the front; and controlling the population on the home front. But Kucherenko goes further than that. According to her, the Stalinist state even contributed to the humanitarian catastrophe it had blamed solely on the invaders, through poor law enforcement, deportations, punitive legislation, and inefficiency. To prove these claims, she examines the fate of street children during that time.

The book is split into three parts. The first part addresses the extent of the “alarming rise of child neglect, vagrancy and delinquency” (p. 13) brought about during the war. Kucherenko shows how institutional underfunding, war-related family breakdown and extreme poverty brought children to the streets in search for food, and many of them resorted to begging or stealing, joined gangs or tried to make it to the army. She argues that the extent of starvation among civilians has been understated, although it had wide-ranging consequences, such as rising crime rates and uncontrollable migration. Mass migration during the war, partly spontaneous, and partly state-organized in forms of evacuations and deportations, deepened the disastrous situation on the home front, and created more street children. Kucherenko shows how despite official claims, the evacuation of children (with or without their families) was chaotic and unprofessional.

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The second part deals with how state practices were not only ineffective in preventing child vagrancy and delinquency, but even led to the marginalization of these children in the first place. Kucherenko argues that “mismanagement was made possible as much by the organizational weakness, short-sightedness and unresponsiveness coming from the centre as by bureaucratic bungling, inertia and corruption at a local level” (p. 74). The state further put many Soviet children’s safety and wellbeing in jeopardy with its terror campaigns against certain social and ethnic groups. These deportations took families to isolated places, where they experienced starvation, homelessness or overcrowding, unemployment, disease, and often abuse and exploitation by the local population. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership marginalized thousands of young people through draconic labour legislation and compulsory labour mobilization. Many underage workers ran away from their workplaces, which however could lead to convictions under the new labour legislation. According to Kucherenko, this was a general trend of the time for law enforcement to favour unnecessarily harsh punishments and thus create more “deviants”.

Part three addresses the residential institutions dealing with homeless and delinquent children, such as reception centres (DPRs) and reform/labour colonies (managed by the NKVD). The agencies and people in charge frequently ignored regulations which allowed those who had merely been picked up on the street, petty thieves, and violent criminals to mix. The core of this third part is a thorough analysis of these colonies. Kucherenko shows convincingly that although these reformatories had been conceived as places of resocialization, they often found themselves in isolated locations and unacceptable conditions, which rather turned them into places of initiation to criminal culture. In addition, children were frequently hired out to perform hard physical labour under the threat of violence. For many of these teenagers, there was no support after their release, often no way to return home, and a stigma preventing them from finding work. Thus, with poor health and extreme poverty added, many of these formerly incarcerated teenagers saw no other way but to (re) turn to crime. Consequently, the aim of turning them into useful workers for the socialist cause failed.

Kucherenko frames her study in its historical context, and this is where her book still has more potential. She sees the war period as a specific and distinct period within the history of childhood. However, it would have been worthwhile to emphasize continuities more as well. The juvenile delinquent subculture spreading across reformatory institutions and into society with its gang structures, rituals, language and ties to the adult criminal culture sounds almost identical to its counterpart from the Soviet 1920s and 1930s, as do the dynamics of life on the street, and the public’s reactions to street children and juvenile delinquency. The authorities’ wartime approach was reminiscent of earlier times, namely the years of collectivization and the ensuing famines. During those years, the Stalinist leadership had also ‘practiced’ wide-ranging deportations of whole social groups, such as the *kulaks*, to special settlements; they repeated such settlement policies in the 1940s, and the local population treated those deportees with equal contempt. These examples show that while the Great Patriotic War surely presented a specific time period of its own, it is important to point out the continuities of how the Stalinist leadership treated its population on the one hand, and how the population reacted to it on the other.

The priority of public order over child welfare was also a common occurrence in Soviet history. Getting street children out of sight generally fulfilled the state’s minimal requirements; it seems like as long as these children stayed out of public perception, work training and education were

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welcome but not a priority. Kucherenko thus finally places heavy blame on the Soviet leadership's handling of child welfare: being aware of the widespread problems they failed at improving the children's fate because of disinterest, mismanagement, and corruption, and thus reproduced delinquency and its 'leaking' into society. 'Ideology and political expediency prevented those in power from admitting that although the cost of war to the Soviet Union was enormous, a substantial portion of that had to be attributed to their own doing' (p. 175), she concludes.

With *Soviet Street Children and the Second World War*, Kucherenko offers a well-researched and well-written addition to the histories of the Second World War, of childhood, policing and to the social history of the Soviet Union. With rich source material, it provides fascinating case studies and excellent analyses, which help to unearth what the Soviet leadership had meant to bury.

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Yuli Kosharovsky

„We are Jews again.“ Jewish Activism in the Soviet Union

Transl. by Stefani Hoffman. Ed. by Ann Komaromi. With a Foreword by Joshua Rubenstein. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 2017. XXVI, 420 S., 45 Abb. = Modern Jewish History. ISBN: 978-0-8156-3519-2.

Um die *refuseniks*, die Juden, deren Ausreiseanträge von der Sowjetunion abgelehnt wurden und die aus dem Arbeitsleben ausgeschlossen wurden, ist es in den letzten Jahren stiller geworden. In den 1970er und 1980er Jahren war die Zulassung der Auswanderung jüdischer Menschen aus der Sowjetunion nach Israel ein nicht unwesentlicher Aspekt des Ost-West-Verhältnisses. Während sich die UdSSR gegen jede Emigration sträubte, erfuhren die *refuseniks* eine gewisse Unterstützung durch die USA. Über Weizenlieferungen konnte der Sowjetstaat so in der Spannungsphase der 1970er Jahre „motiviert“ werden, bei den Ausreisegenehmigungen großzügiger zu sein, was sich in der gespannten Situation der 1980er Jahre (bis die Liberalisierung der Perestrojka 1989/90 alle Sperren beseitigte) zu einem nahezu totalen Ausreisestopp 1986/87 verengte.

Während es in den letzten beiden Jahrzehnten des Kalten Krieges durchaus eine einhellige westliche Unterstützung für die Kampagne „Let My People Go“ gab, ließ das Interesse nach, als die Migration frei wurde, der befürchtete antisemitische Schub in Russland ausblieb und ein Teil der israelischen Neubürger das politische Spektrum ihrer neuen Heimat nach rechts rücken ließ. Auch Yuli Kosharovsky (1941–2014) gehörte zeitweise dem Likud an, bevor er sich 2003 der linksliberalen Shinui-Partei anschloss. Er war Ingenieur für die elektronischen Systeme der strategischen Raketen in der „geschlossenen“ Stadt Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg) gewesen, was ihn als „Geheimnisträger“ zu einem klassischen *refusenik* machte, der seine jüdische Identität im Zusammenhang mit dem Sechstage-Krieg 1967 entdeckte und später einen Ausreiseantrag stellte.