

kolonii, TVKs). Altogether, some 1.15 million were processed by the DPRs, and the numbers arriving in each of the three institutions reached a peak as the USSR was winning the war in 1944 or 1945. Many of the children were arrested illegally and/or excessively punished. Their living and working conditions were atrocious. The institutions, often located in remote areas, were severely overcrowded, and the children suffered from lack of clothing, poor hygiene, disease, and starvation. Some ate snow for hydration. Often, they received no basic education, and some of their assigned mentors were hardened criminals, for whom “the youngsters became easy prey . . . [the adult criminals] pimped them out to fellow inmates and free workers . . . took away their rations and forced them to gamble, commit crimes or take responsibility for the crimes of others” (162). Savage beatings by the adults were not uncommon. Not surprisingly, the children challenged the oppressive authorities in several ways. There were numerous escape attempts, and groups of children rioted fairly frequently. Kucherenko concludes that “the colonies did more harm than good” and often initiated children’s “odyssey across the Soviet penal system” (167). She also contends that the colonies “indirectly introduced the juvenile delinquent culture into wider society” (170).

Although there were some attempts at humanitarian reform of the system, they were “rarely prompt or effectual” (169). Only in June 1943 did the NKVD establish a “Department for Combatting Homelessness and Neglect” to supervise the DPRs and labor colonies, but it “failed to improve the situation” (53).

What is missing in this impressive study is some consideration of the alternative: how many children might have died on the streets, or how many other people might have been robbed or assaulted by roving gangs of hungry youths (mainly boys), if the state had not implemented some sort of system to care for the homeless and unsupervised children? In addition, the author could have organized her findings more clearly and situated her research within the larger context. For example, only toward the end of the book does the reader learn that only a small fraction of children in DPRs were sent to TVKs. Information from the detailed appendix reveals that far more children who were cycled through DPRs were, in fact, sent back to relatives or transferred to orphanages (*detdoma*), especially the younger children, than were sent to all other institutions combined, including factories, trade schools, and the labor colonies. Despite these shortcomings, this work is a formidable and valuable contribution to the expanding scholarship on the Soviet home front during the war.

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Kyiv as Regime City: The Return of Soviet Power after Nazi Occupation. By Martin J. Blackwell. Rochester Studies in East and Central Europe, Vol. 16. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016. xiv, 239 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$99.00, hard bound.

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Soviet forces triumphantly watching the German Wehrmacht flee depopulated Kyiv in November 1943, just in time for the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, found quite a mess on their hands, which only became worse as large numbers of people continued to seek haven there. It took the authorities years to sort out the complexities. The first winter was especially difficult: bitter cold, torn clothing, little food and renewed Luftwaffe bombardments. Integral to the authorities’ success, as Martin J.

Blackwell illustrates, were the establishment of the “Temporary Commission for the Regulation of the Entrance of Citizens into the City of Kyiv” and resolutions that temporarily prohibited the return of many prewar or would-be residents or allowed for evictions. Less successful were resolutions mobilizing the work force.

Blackwell’s useful monograph is a tightly knit examination of multiethnic Kyiv between November 6, 1943 and early 1947. He documents the rapid and uncontrolled (though not from want of trying) growth of population—from 200,000 residents at “liberation” to its prewar size of over a million—and the rebuilding of this devastated Soviet capital: specifically, the restoration of housing, factories, sewage systems, and food supplies; engaged workers (including German POWs who remained until 1954); and revived efforts at maintaining law and public order as well as keeping away the so-called socially dangerous.

After a brief contextual introduction to Kyiv, the main focus rests on the ups and downs of exchanges between “ordinary” Ukrainians (such as those who had not left during the occupation or demobilized soldiers and other returnees with extended families) and the various political elites in their—at times tense—initial attempts to rebuild and/or Russianize the city (especially still during the war). As Blackwell points out, different objectives and interests had to be weighed as ideological and pragmatic priorities shifted, resulting in disappointment, frustration or also satisfaction, depending on whose point of view. Concerned that studies so far about postwar reconstruction of other war-torn Soviet cities have ignored investigating both the power and insecurity of the Soviet state or “why ordinary people’s interests might have contributed to the deemphasizing of the ideological imperatives associated with building communism in favor of simply rebuilding a Russian-led state” (13), Blackwell undertakes to demonstrate that “a comprehensive story of Soviet power’s return to post-Nazi Kyiv is an ideal window for determining how the Stalin regime operated at the Cold War’s outset” (15), which emphasized an “anti-Semitic and statist discourse” (2).

The research leans heavily on official resolutions or decrees and minutes from Oblast and Party committee meetings, which Blackwell found in the Central State Archive of Civic Organizations of Ukraine (TsDAHOU) and the State Archive of Kyiv Oblast (DAKO). He also makes use of select fonds from the Central State Archive of the Higher Organs of Power of Ukraine (TsDAVOVU). Contemporary memoirs are avoided because, according to the author, “uncensored literature . . . is scant” (14). To make up for this, Blackwell provides some vignettes from newspaper clippings, letters of complaint from ordinary citizens, and excerpts from confiscated private letters. The narrative arc, clearly divided into three parts (or six chapters), covers “resettlement” (who could and did return and stay and for how long), “reassembly” (housing, food, and labor issues) and the “relegitimization” of Soviet control. Nicely chosen black-and-white contemporary photographs of Kyiv accompany each part.

Blackwell’s limited choice of sources is both its strength and weakness. Clearly we learn much about the Kyiv urban project and the difficulties policy-makers (in Moscow or interest groups in Kyiv) had in fulfilling expectations, largely due to a complicated competition for resources, not least male bodies: do you mobilize them for construction or the Red Army? But much of the bigger picture is missing: an analytical comparison to Kyiv’s rapid urbanization in 1934, the enduring effects of the Great Terror and wartime massacres (awkwardly perhaps, Babi Yar is spelled Babyn Iar), on the returning or resettling citizens. Blackwell goes only so far as to explain why his protagonists avoided these issues. A gender analysis (symbolically, the index entry “women” relates mainly to behavior and harassment), and a thorough discussion of the urban youth (including the Komsomol) are absent. The narrative also suffers at times from “bureaucratic speak” (see for example the first sentence quoted

in paragraph three above). A chronological list of the relevant resolutions, decrees, memoranda, and minutes would have been most helpful.

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Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years.

By Christine Varga-Harris. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. xx, 289 pp.
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Khrushchev's program of providing individual apartments for millions of Soviet families from the late 1950s onwards has held a certain fascination for scholars and the public for several years. The ubiquitous four-storey *Khrushchevki* are a familiar sight to inhabitants of and visitors to most towns and cities across the former Soviet Union. They still serve as homes to millions of post-Soviet families. While parallels in terms of mass housing programs can be seen across Europe, nothing on this scale was attempted elsewhere. The housing program represented some things about the Khrushchev era that were absent from late Stalinism: a concern for the well-being of Soviet citizens, the application of new technologies to improve the lives of citizens, optimism and hope for the future, evidence of the Soviet Union's efforts to catch up with the west, and an earthbound reflection of the superpower's achievements in space.

In the latest of at least four recent large-scale studies of the program, this optimism and idealism shines through. Christine Varga-Harris concentrates on Leningrad, which allows for a focused depiction of the achievements, setbacks, and reception of the program. There is something refreshing in Varga-Harris' approach, which accepts the values and aims of the program at face value, refrains from cynicism about its utopian basis, and does not gloat over the setbacks in construction and completion (that are described in full), which in other hands are forefronted as evidence of the failings of the planned economy and, therefore, of the whole program. While there were many complaints—about waiting lists, construction delays, and poor workmanship in the apartments themselves—the predominant mood was one of enthusiasm, which this book captures well.

Of particular interest is Varga-Harris' focus on what happened around the new apartment blocks—the commitment to “Green Spaces” as part of the planning, and the active cooperation of new residents in kitting out these shared areas by planting trees and flowers, providing or making outside furniture and playground equipment, and often correcting or completing the shoddy work of building workers. The commitment to a rounded and healthy life that the green spaces reflect, and the continuation of at least part of the tradition of collective living for a group of residents, is seen as characteristic of the ideological basis for the program. Housing was a gift of the collective effort going into it.

It is always tempting to see something as extraordinary as the Khrushchev housing programs as linked to the promotion of a mentality and way of life that is peculiar to communist societies. Certainly, Khrushchev saw this as a central plank of his goal to prove the superiority of communism over capitalism (which, he was disturbed to observe on his visit to the US, provided not just separate apartments but separate houses for many working class families). But the idea of green spaces linked to apartment living had originated in central Europe much earlier, and was well advanced in the social-democratic countries of the European north long before Khrushchev's program was launched.