

tain limits to the effectiveness of the Germans' transparently instrumental view of collaboration in Belorussia.

An additional complication was the role played by the Polish minority. In some regions, such as around Lida, the Poles retained control of the local administration and Belorussian nationalist activities remained severely constricted. Surprisingly, as German influence waned with the approach of the Red Army, the German authorities were able even to cut deals with the local Polish Home Army leadership, allowing them to "steal weapons" so they could fight the Soviet partisans.

Another important aspect, which Rein explains clearly and in some detail are the various local Belorussian Self-Defense forces, which were recruited successively as different groups of Belorussian collaborators rose and fell in German esteem. For example, the Samaakhova was recruited primarily by the Belorussian Self-Aid organization, which fell increasingly into disrepute, once its leader Dr. Ivan Yermacenko was arrested by the Germans and accused of financial impropriety on a massive scale. Rein also examines the role of the Belorussian Central Council, headed by Radaslau Astrouskii, which was a last-ditch attempt by the Germans to mobilize local forces for the anti-partisan struggle, in exchange for only a very limited "consultative" role in German governance. And he confirms the murderous collaboration of many local policemen in the Holocaust in Belorussia, participating in the liquidation of ghettos and the tracking down of fugitive Jews.

Yet overall, Rein only partially achieves the ambitious goals he sets out in the introduction, concluding himself that there is need for further, more detailed, research. Many of his key insights mirror those of Chiari, Jerzy Turonak (*Białorus pod okupacją niemiecką*, 1993), and others. Surprisingly, he does not effectively assess the strength of Belorussian collaboration, in comparison, for example, with neighboring Ukraine or Lithuania, but is concerned mainly to point out that it was actually stronger and more enduring than most postwar assessments (especially Soviet) had been prepared to admit. While he is correct on this last point, his dogged insistence that the 30th Waffen SS Division (including many former Belorussian policemen) made a useful fighting contribution for the Nazis on the Western Front appears to protest too much—given that it was in combat only a few days before collapsing ignominiously in a second round of mass desertions and surrenders, as amply documented in the loss reports at the Wehrmachtauskunftsstelle (WAST).

In particular, Rein fails to deliver much on his promise to shed more light on events in the east of Belorussia and also gives us only scant examples of the role of the local administration or economic collaboration. Even with regard to partisan warfare, which eats up much of the book, most of his attention is reserved for German political calculations and issues of local police organization. The absence of more detailed local studies, using, for example, war crimes trials or partisan records, leaves us with little sense of the daily battle for hearts and minds within Belorussian villages, and even within families, torn between service in the collaborationist local police or alignment with the Soviet partisans. It was at this local level that collaboration took on a deadly personal significance and was renegotiated daily, as thoughts of revenge or fears for the future pulled at individuals' loyalties alongside national identity, political ideology, and economic rewards.

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*Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War, 1941–1945.* By Olga Kucherenko. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xiii, 266 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$99.00, hard bound.

*Little Soldiers* is a major contribution on an important and neglected topic. The use of children as soldiers has received a great deal of attention from sociologists and political scientists as a recent phenomenon, but very little attention from historians. That deficit is probably the result of the difficulty in researching this topic. When children are involved in war, it is usually on an ad hoc basis, in ways that are not recorded in unit logs and official

histories. The paper trail on child soldiers is scanty and scattered. Olga Kucherenko is a brave scholar to take on such an elusive topic for her first book.

The inclusiveness of Kucherenko's research is astonishing. Child soldiers are mentioned in many sources, but only in passing or anecdotally. Their stories are to be found in archives and memoirs, military histories and cultural studies, but finding the information must have been like searching for a few hundred small needles in thousands of very large haystacks.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part 1 perhaps overdoes its goal of explaining the motivation of child soldiers; Soviet education and cultural indoctrination have been well covered by other scholars. The key point is that Soviet children were educated as future warriors. When Germany invaded in 1941, many children were eager to rush into the responsibilities they expected to take on as adults in the defense of their country. For many Soviet children, the question was more "when" than "if." Patriotism was not mere propaganda or a culturally acceptable shading of memory, but a genuine motivation for many child soldiers.

This mentality led to a characteristic that made the Soviet experience unique: the child soldiers of the Red Army were almost all volunteers (aside from some 16- and 17-year-olds who were mobilized). This stands in stark contrast to the coercive and traumatic enlistment of child soldiers in recent conflicts. Kucherenko stresses the relative maturity of Soviet child soldiers, who "acted as responsible and rational agents" (7). She also notes that the Soviet government never intended for children to fight; the willing participation of tens of thousands of children in military and partisan activities was an unintended consequence.

Some Soviet children ran away to the front; others found themselves run over by the front. For many children, survival and pragmatism was also a motivation. Children in the path of war, many of whom were orphaned or separated from their families, could improve their chance of survival by attaching themselves to military units; despite the dangers of the front, they were cared for and fed.

The heart of the book is part 2, which includes chapters on child soldiers in the army, partisans, and naval forces. The stories of individual child soldiers are compelling and often all too brief. The information is necessarily anecdotal, as there is no systematic way to count these children, but Kucherenko concludes that "the presence of children in the field was a widespread yet spontaneous phenomenon, which the state was unable to control" (192), which left commanders in the field a great deal of latitude.

One thing missing from the extensive discussion of prewar Soviet culture is an overview of child soldiers in Russian history. The author mentions that "child involvement in military actions was not a novelty in the Russian context" (1), but she does not provide any details of precedents. Similarly, Kucherenko notes that estimates of the number of child soldiers range from 60,000 to 300,000, but analyzes those estimates only in a footnote and does not suggest a more likely number. She mentions that child soldiers only gained official status as veterans long after the war, but she does not say when or how or provide a citation.

Given the vast array of sources cited, the book seems curiously devoid of visual documentation. There are only twelve photographs; this work merits much more extensive illustration. A list of the most important archival documents and collections would have improved the select bibliography. A list of interviews would also have been interesting. Most important of all, a literature review would have greatly added to the value of the work. Kucherenko's footnotes include intriguing works on children and war, including some relatively obscure Russian-language materials; a discussion of these sources would have been most enlightening.

*Little Soldiers* is a must-read for anyone studying World War II, Soviet war culture, or childhood in the era of the Great Patriotic War. It is an important contribution in the scant literature on child soldiers in history. Unfortunately, the publisher has chosen to price this book out of reach for a broad audience.

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