

terizations were internalized and sincerely believed (one curious effect of studies that appeal to textualité is a certain absolutization of what is found in the text, which must be taken at face value, without any appeal to implicit subtexts or rifts in its rhetorical strategies that might expose them as insincere). To say (or imply) that we can tell that the given author is being disingenuous—as Halfin often does (cf. his claim in the cited examples to know what the students and Ivanov were really thinking)—is, however, something quite different.

In the end there is not really any empirically evident “illiberal self” (165) here at all, nor, for that matter, any strong evidence that individualistic, liberal selfhood vigorously survived. There is simply no warrant for speculating broadly about the aims and presuppositions of documents written for such a narrowly circumscribed purpose. The documents Halfin has examined show us what they show: how petitioners rewrote their pasts in order to attain or avert a very particular pragmatic end. Of that practice *Red Autobiographies* is an engaging study; but it offers no particularly new perspective on selfhood in the Soviet era.

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*Wege zum Pik Stalin: Sowjetische Alpinisten, 1928–1953.* By Eva Maurer. Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2010. 496 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. €57.00, hard bound.

Alpinists are always looking to reach new heights. In the 1930s, Soviet alpinists were literally looking for “routes to Pik Stalin” and to other peaks in the Soviet Union. But *Wege zum Pik Stalin* is a metaphor, too, because alpinists were also attempting to attain a high standing in the symbolic orders of Stalinist culture and society. Eva Maurer analyzes the difficult paths of a mostly academic elite, its formal organizations and informal networks, whose originally bourgeois and quintessentially “individual” leisure practices “in the broad field of social relations” between “private and public” (333) found various ways into the Stalinist order, though none of them were easy. Based on a broad range of sources such as alpinist literature, archival accounts, press reports, and, in part, movies, Maurer provides an outstanding, informed, analytically ambitious, and multifaceted survey of Soviet alpinism during the Stalin years.

Some books spring their main ideas on the reader on the first page, with all subsequent pages being variations on the first. *Wege zum Pik Stalin* does not belong to this category. Chapter 1 begins far from the Stalinist scene, summarizing the history of Alpine alpinism and its first Russian branches in the late tsarist empire. Some readers may find this inconvenient, but Maurer’s characterization of the prerevolutionary alpinism of a “liberal, educated, urban” (71–72) elite, who, unlike their western counterparts, were interested in science, but not so much in the military or in sporting competition, provides an important basis for the following breathtaking analysis of alpinism’s fight for status and position in Stalinist society.

It first helps to understand the complexities of “proletarian alpinism” and early Soviet leisure culture examined in chapter 2. Power struggles between old networks, patronage, and new agents such as the Komsomol added to this complexity, as did the composition of alpinist groups and discourses between old ideas and “proletarian” concepts. For instance, while proletarian tourists ought to have served as cultural workers at the underdeveloped periphery, “old Bolsheviks” on a Pamir expedition in 1928 presented themselves as being beyond the “norms of urban civilization” (118) and clearly enjoyed mountaineering in a similarly open way as their bourgeois predecessors had done. In various sources, Maurer finds the complex signature of a transformational time, with old elites rubbing elbows with newer ones within newly developed Soviet structures and organizations.

This prehistory also helps to explain the tremendous shift in official discourses in the 1930s, when subjective descriptions of travel were no longer published—although

they continued to exist in private diaries. “God’s view” of a Stalinist landscape replaced “pilgrimage reports” (134). Still, chapters 3 to 5 do not tell a story of passive recipients of Stalinist discourse. Instead, they demonstrate how alpinists in public tried to link their practices to a variety of new discourses, such as *massovost*, the *kul’turnost* of new Soviet persons, and militarization. To them, mountaineering served as a “legitimization of individual mobility” (325) for a privileged elite. Yet, although alpinism became very popular in the 1930s, legitimizing alpinism in itself through Soviet discourse was no easy task. Eventually, the terror of the later 1930s “almost completely” killed the “old alpinist elite and the organizational leadership” (197). The next generation of alpinists, these Soviet academic elites, were caught in-between: agents of the system, but at the same time its victims.

In line with current research, chapter 6 presents late Stalinism as yet another transformational period. The social position of academic elites was strengthened after the war, but the Cold War and the USSR’s subsequent entry into the international sporting arena paradoxically depoliticized alpinism as a cultural practice and discursive phenomenon. Furthermore, contacts with foreign alpinists amplified debates and created a more open culture of discussion in the “partial public” (*Teilöffentlichkeit*, 19, 267) of alpinist circles.

Chapter 7 focuses on the “inner-world” of alpinism under Stalin, stressing the importance of alpinist literature for creating both a “communicative community” (273–74), the fascinating field of group memory that was “not always in line” with outside representations, but also inequalities within alpinist groups. Regarding nationality, for instance, the “difficult relations between . . . Russian and Georgian citizens of the Soviet Union were manifested through alpinism” (304).

*Wege zum Pik Stalin* offers a rich analysis that shifts Soviet sport and leisure studies from a promising to a profitable field. It combines discursive analysis, social history, and most surprisingly memory studies to capture the complex interaction of people, discourses, networks, and organizations in time. A lot of effort in research today is invested in overcoming the dichotomy of state versus society; here Maurer shows us what kind of actor-centered analysis could be most effective in doing so. Ideally, a work of such intellectual importance should be made accessible to a broader English- and Russian-speaking audience.

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***The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia: Health, Hygiene, and Living Standards, 1943–1953.*** By Donald Filtzer. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xxx, 379 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$110.00, hard bound.

This prodigiously researched book enriches the picture of the Soviet working class that Donald Filtzer has been constructing over the years. It seeks to broaden our understanding of living conditions beyond wages and costs to include such quality-of-life factors as “housing, access to sewerage and safe water supply, whether or not streets were cleaned of rubbish and excrement, and the population’s ability to bathe and maintain basic levels of personal hygiene” (6). According to these criteria, Soviet workers did not fare well in the postwar period. Filtzer recounts in extraordinary detail the appallingly filthy world of many urban inhabitants and what this meant in terms of diet, rates of disease, and mortality, not to mention daily existence.

The book’s five chapters reinforce the profound interrelationship between the different areas being examined. Chapters 1–3 provide a dense narrative that covers the cleaning of cities, water supplies, and public hygiene and epidemic controls. The last two chapters are loaded with demographic data as part of the exploration into nutrition and infant mortality. Throughout, the experiences of western Europe are judiciously employed to suggest both the temporal lag of Soviet industrialization and the ways in which Soviet experience recapitulated or diverged from capitalist development. More important, the longitudinal study of different regions, with a particular focus on the “hinterland regions” (11) outside major combat zones, allows Filtzer to identify patterns that speak both to the specific effects of the war and the enduring structures of the Soviet system.