

Labor Experience of Soviet Children in the USSR and Germany during the Second World War

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Abstract

The present thesis *Labor Experience of Soviet Children in the USSR and Germany during the Second World War* is dedicated to the study of Soviet children from the Soviet Union who worked in the USSR and in Germany. The project seeks to explain how Soviet children experienced labor in both countries, what was the policy toward them and what were the differences in their experiences. Moreover, this thesis is going to show that both contexts should be considered while talking about Soviet children at war, as labor experience was a huge part of Soviet childhood and the Second World War in general.

The first part of the research presents how children worked in the USSR, the government's propaganda, motivation of them, and their personal representation of labor experience. In the second part, labor in Germany is presented, also including German's propaganda and policy toward Soviet children. In the last part the post war experience is mentioned in order to show how children were re-integrated in the Soviet society after the end of the Second World War.

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Introduction

The question of children and the war has attracted the attention of many scholars. In countries which were involved in the Second World War, children experienced a shifting of borders between childhood and adulthood. The children in the Soviet Union also experienced such a change. After the Nazi invasion, the Soviet state mobilized all possible forces and turned its economy into a war regime.¹ This “engagement in total war” was followed by relevant actions.² Among people mobilized to contribute to the war effort, a great number were children. Soviet school children and university students were mobilized by the state to do various types of work for the front and for the entire population. At the same time, other children who experienced labor in wartime were sent to Germany and were called *Ostarbeiters* (*Eastern Workers*). In historiography these children are presented in the context of forced labor in Germany. Despite the fact that there are plenty of studies dedicated to Soviet children’s war experience as a whole, there is still a gap in studying of children who were sent to Germany in particular.³ What is more, scholars usually look at the labor experience of Soviet children separately, studying it only in the Soviet Union and only in Germany.⁴ This thesis seeks to investigate both cases in a broader context. In order to understand how Soviet children experienced labor during the Second World War, it is crucial to consider those who worked in the USSR as well as those who worked in Germany. I am arguing that in both of

¹ Wendy Z. Goldman and Donald Filtzer, eds. *Hunger and War: Food Provisioning in the Soviet Union during World War II* (Indiana University Press, 2015), 2.

² Ibid.

³ See, for example: Olga Kucherenko, *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War, 1941-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴ There are some works dedicated to the German experience of Soviet people, including children. See, for example: T. Kylo, *The Biggest Calamity that Overshadowed all other Calamities: Recruitment of Ukrainian “Eastern workers” for the War Economy of the Third Reich, 1941-1944* (PhD diss., Edmonton: Department of History and Classics, University of Alberta, 2009) and Pavel Polyak, *Zhertvi Dvukh Diktatur: Zhizn’, Trud, Unizheniya i Smert’ Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh I Ostarbeiterov na Chuzhbine i na Rodine* [The Victims of Two Dictatorships: Life, Labor, Indignity and Death of Soviet POWs and Ostarbeiters in Germany and at Home] (Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2002).

the cases children saw their experience as a “patriotic duty”. For Soviet case this concept is more complex as it includes labor of Soviet children as an inherent part of it. For those who had been in Germany “patriotic duty” meant work in order to survive and return home. For those, who worked in the USSR, labor was also a part of it, as children made a contribution because they had strong feeling of debt to their Motherland.

While exploring the question of children's experience it is also important to look at state policy. This thesis explains the Soviet methods of propaganda for motivating Soviet children to work. At the same time it also looks at how German propaganda worked and how Soviet children experienced its influence. Most of Soviet children in my study worked in Germany because they were unable to escape either recruitment or even capture, once the war had started.

Based on archival research and oral history interviews, this thesis looks at children's understanding of their labor experience in the wartime period and how in both cases they were seen by the Soviet state. In addition, this thesis will look at postwar changes that happened in children's lives, both who stayed and who returned.

Chapter 1. Soviet Childhood, Child Labor and the Second World War

1.1 Soviet Children and War: Historical Context

During the Second World War different social groups were influenced by changes immediately occurring in countries involved in the conflict. Children were one of those groups whose lives were transformed, including being asked or encouraged to work. Exploring the topic of the Soviet child labor experience is important within the global context of Second World War history, the history of childhood and the history of labor. The reason for importance of this topic is that it allows to look at Soviet children's experience from the perspectives of labor history. First of all, the beginning of the war brought a change in how the Soviet state conceived childhood as it needed to mobilize the entire population.⁵ As a result, children were mobilized as well as adults and started to work. Secondly, war conditions transformed the needs for labor and as a result, the definition of labor was changed and adapted through new labor legislation.

As children constituted a significant part of the workforce in the Soviet Union and forced laborers in Germany, both these cases should be taken into consideration while talking about the war experience of Soviet children. What is more, a gap still exists in studying Soviet child labor experience in Germany in comparison to Soviet child labor in the USSR through the Second World War. This particular aspect has not yet been covered by scholars, however, while talking about children and the war, forced laborers should be also taken into consideration as there was a significant number of them.

The central question of the present research is: How did the children's experience of labor in the USSR differ from the work experience of those who went to or were sent to

⁵According to French historian and representative of the Annales School, Phillipe Ariès, the conception of childhood began to develop only in 17th century, because of the visible changes in education. Previously there was no idea of childhood at all and age was not criteria for defining person as a child or as an adult. See: Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood. A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 125-126. In modern terms childhood is usually defined as the life stage between birth and adolescence. In this thesis childhood will be defined according to age.

Germany during the war? In order to answer the main question, I will address to a number of sub-questions which could be divided in three groups. The first group of sub-questions is dedicated to explaining conceptions of childhood and labor in general. Answering them, I will provide a general picture of changes and key turning points in the children's lives. The second group deals with children's experiences both in the USSR and Germany where I will answer such question as: What was the child labor experience in the USSR and Germany? This will let me compare two types of children's participation in labor in order to reveal how they overcame the difficulties which they faced and what was the government's attitude toward them. By looking at the last group of questions which deals with postwar experience, I will briefly explain how children fared in Soviet society after the war.

In this chapter, I am going to present theoretical, historiographical and methodological contexts for labor experience of Soviet children during the Second World War. The first part of this chapter reviews existing relevant literature; in the second part I am going to explain the main concepts and highlight my methodological approach which is based on a comparative analysis of primary sources.

1.2 Soviet Children and Their Experience during the Second World War: Historiographical Context

The existing literature about childhood, children themselves and their experience could be divided in two main groups. The first one consists of scholarships which study Soviet childhood and the Great Patriotic War. One such work is Catriona Kelly's study of childhood in the Soviet Union. She underlines that from the mid-1930s to 1953 the Soviet government made significant changes in how they handled social issues related to children and specifically

related to the wartime experience.⁶ Before the war children were taught to be obedient and the picture of Stalin was presented to them as a “father” who did his best to bring them up.⁷ Good children, who studied well at schools and behaved well, were rewarded, while those who did the opposite were punished.⁸ The Soviet state also struggled with street children and orphans. However, an important point which the author makes, is that the beginning of the Great Patriotic War significantly changed what children were expected to do and a “new type” of childhood emerged as well as new child heroes.⁹ By “new type” I mean changes in line between adulthood and childhood as children were asked to do work. This was possible within war conditions and state’s need for labor. During the war years the state could not provide children with appropriate supply of food and basics, however, for children of that period it was important that the state helped them in physical survival and moral “upbringing.” (*vospitanie*)¹⁰ Hence, she supports the idea that following the beginning of the war, the government’s attitude toward children and understanding of childhood visibly changed. It is an important argument for the present research as it gives an understanding of what childhood was before, during and after the Second World War.

A history of Soviet childhood from 1918 to 1958 is presented by Ann Livschiz in her PhD dissertation where she dedicates a large part of her work to the Great Patriotic War period. She also argues that the war changed relations between children and the state, and between children and their parents. Both were not exception of being recruited for different state's needs.¹¹ Livschiz states that the concept of childhood which emerged during the Great Patriotic War was similar to the period of the 1920s when children were seen as the most

⁶ Catriona Kelly, *Children’s World: Growing up in Russia, 1890 – 1991* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 221.

⁷ Ibid., 129.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 257.

¹¹ Ann Livschiz, *Growing Up Soviet: Childhood in the Soviet Union, 1918–1958* (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2007), 429.

patriotic labor force.¹² She argues that most children worked in agriculture and many of them were motivated by “patriotism” to make a contribution to the war effort. However, she differentiates urban and rural children and argues that for rural children the war did not make a significant change in their work as their parents were collective farmers.¹³ Moreover, she also makes a point similar to the previous studies that postwar children were not the same as children of the 1930s.

An outstanding example of research on Soviet children and the Great Patriotic War is the study by Julie de Graffenried¹⁴ where she argues that what emerged with the beginning of the Second World War was not just childhood as it used to be,¹⁵ but “sacrificed” childhood. The author proposes the idea that the Great Patriotic War dramatically transformed the Soviet childhood and children themselves. At the same time, de Graffenried argues that children and adolescents made a significant contribution to the outcome of the war in the Soviet Union.¹⁶ The Great Patriotic War created a “new type” of childhood which was very short as children were asked to do adult work and which was significant for the Soviet victory. Despite the fact that children made a contribution to the war effort, as de Graffenried points out, the war affected children’s psychological wellbeing because they began to cheat, lie or steal to survive; however, many of them saw their work as a part of their “patriotic duty”.¹⁷ She mentions that children were sent to Germany as forced laborers; however she does not develop this issue further.

Olga Kucherenko discusses Soviet child labor experience in the USSR and provides a particular background for children’s industrial labor. Her main point is that the Soviet regime

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 444.

¹⁴ Julie de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood: Children and the Soviet State in the Great Patriotic War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014).

¹⁵ Before the war there was an idea of “Happy Childhood” when children were seen as a future of the state and the state took care of them carefully creating organizations for their “upbringing” in the spirit of Communism. See: de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., 52.

¹⁷ Ibid., 34.

was able to mobilize a huge number of children from the beginning of the war.¹⁸ Hence, industrial child labor was crucial for mobilizing of children as well as adolescents. She makes a claim similar to de Graffenried, saying that “patriotism” and “self-sacrifice” were important for many Soviet children who worked hard in order to make a contribution to the war effort.¹⁹ In 1941 the Soviet government passed new labor legislation that increased the number of workdays and abolished holidays and made work-overtime which for adolescents was two hours per day. Children and adolescents were also included in all of these changes as they were a part of the working population during the war.²⁰

The second group of scholarly works is presented by those historians who study adult labor in Germany during the Second World War. There is a great variety of works which are dedicated to Soviet people’s experience; however, a gap still exists in representation of forced labor experience of Soviet children as a particular case and there were political reasons for that. Usually, such children are mentioned within the broader context when historians deal with investigation of Soviet people and their forced labor in Germany or in the context of Soviet children’s experience in a whole.

In order to understand why so many Soviet people were among the laborers in Germany during the Second World War, it is crucial to explain why foreign labor was so widespread in Germany. Klaus Tenfelde²¹ discusses the history of forced labor during the Second World War in Germany and states that there is still no clear definition of it. However, in the Forced Labor Convention it is defined as: “labor which is made possible and enforced by government measures that aim to compulsory labor market regulation and compel people

¹⁸ Olga Kucherenko, “State v. Danila Kuz'mich: Soviet Desertion Laws and Industrial Child Labor during World War II,” *The Russian Review* 71, no. 3 (July 2012): 391.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 412.

²⁰ Olga Kucherenko, *Soviet Street Children and the Second World War. Welfare and Social Control under Stalin* (Bloomsbury, 2016), 99.

²¹ Klaus Tenfelde, “Forced Labor in the Second World War: The German Case and Responsibility,” in *Work in Modern Society*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 131-152.

to work for an unlimited period of time, whereby these people are removed from their homes.”²² During the Second World War the largest number of workers from abroad was represented by Soviet people who had the lowest wages and suffered from bad conditions. Consequently, the author defines people who worked in Germany as forced laborers and tries to show how this system worked in Germany in the wartime period.

For the present thesis the significant study here is presented by Herbert Ulrich who dedicated his work to the investigating the emergence of foreign labor in Germany’s economy starting with the First World War. He, again, defines workers from other countries in Germany as forced laborers. As he emphasizes, there is still no evidence that the idea of recruitment of foreigners emerged earlier than beginning of the war.²³ The recruitment started as an experiment when the first Polish POWs were sent to Germany for agricultural work. However, once Polish workers started to interact well with Germans, many problems occurred. As a result, German policy toward them changed and new rules were introduced, for example, all connections between Polish people and German were prohibited, and even death penalties were introduced.²⁴

The other relevant study of foreign labor in Germany was done by Edward L. Homze who, as well as Herbert Ulrich, analyzed how Germany came to the decision to recruit foreigners to its economy. At the same time, Homze looks at the Second World War in particular. He argues that Germany had “comprehensive system of labor control” and could effectively recruit a lot of people from abroad without any side-effects.²⁵ Germans recruited millions of people because of lack of labor power. One of the concerns in recruitment of

²² Ibid., 134.

²³ Herbert Ulrich, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich*, trans. William Templer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28.

²⁴ Ibid., 74.

²⁵ Edward L. Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967), 13

Soviet people, as Homze points out, was fear of spreading Marxist propaganda.²⁶ He also stresses that the idea of foreign labor has its roots in German history and Nazi philosophy.²⁷

Pavel Polyan's book²⁸ provides a thorough examination of the experience of Soviet civilians and POWs during the Second World War. The first part of the book is dedicated to Soviet ordinary people's experience in Germany while the second part analyzes their life after the war and problems of return. The author criticizes the policy of the Soviet government toward forced laborers and underlines that after the end of the war many returnees were repressed or sent to camps despite their suffering in Germany. He depicts the Soviet people as victims of both German and Soviet regimes and as a result, the author displays a visible personal attitude toward Germany and the Soviet Union; however, the book is based on a huge number of sources and gives a foundation for studying the forced labor experience of Soviet people as a whole. What is more, it was one of the first works by Soviet scholars to shed light on this topic, which was forbidden in Russia for a long time. The same happened in Poland after the end of the Second World War when there was no place for studying and remembrance of Polish forced labor.²⁹ However, in the early 1990s the question about compensation emerged and various organizations, including the fund "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" were established.³⁰

The article by Johannes-Dieter Steinert³¹ compares Soviet and Polish child laborers in Germany during the Second World War. The author argues that in occupied territories Germans saw these children as a "social problem" because many of them, especially those

²⁶ Ibid., 73.

²⁷ Ibid., 299.

²⁸ Pavel Polyan, *Zhertvi Dvukh Diktatur: Zhizn', Trud, Unizheniya i Smert' Sovetskih Voennoplennykh I Ostarbeiterov na Chuzhbine i na Rodine* [The Victims of Two Dictatorships: Life, Labor, Indignity and Death of Soviet POWs and Ostarbeiters in Germany and at Home] (Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2002).

²⁹ Machteld Venken, "Child Forced Labor: an Analysis of Ego Documents throughout Time," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 22, no. 2 (2015): 368-388.

³⁰ Ibid., 370.

³¹ Johannes-Dieter Steinert, "Polish and Soviet Child Forced Laborers in National Socialist Germany and German-Occupied Eastern Europe," in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust, and Postwar Displacement*, ed. Simone Gigliotti, Monica Tempain (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 135-153.

who lived in urban areas, could not find any kind of job.³² In addition, a “social problem” was also seen in lack of upbringing of children as their parents had been displaced for soldering or work in various parts of the Soviet Union. That problem, according to Nazi policy, could be solved with their deportation to Germany.³³ Analyzing various testimonies, he provides detailed descriptions of the process of whereby children were separated from their families and taken to Germany, arguing that for Soviet children a transfer to Germany was worse in terms of conditions than for Polish children, at least because of the distance. The displacement from the Soviet Union could take one week or even more.³⁴ One of his main points is that Polish children had better conditions than Soviet children. For instance, they could walk on their own to work, while Soviet children were not allowed to do that and went to their workplace under strict supervision.³⁵ The reason for that partially was in the German attitude toward Soviet people. Like Polyan, Steinert underlines that both Polish and Soviet forced laborers were not accepted by their governments officially as victims of the Nazi regime, and in the Soviet Union, for example, this theme was forbidden until the 1990s.³⁶

Despite the significant input in the history of Soviet childhood that was made by various studies, most of them exclude forced labor experience of Soviet children in Germany. The majority of historians perceive it as a part of Soviet history which was not discussed because of political influence.³⁷ The reason for that was Soviet policy toward those people who were in Germany, as for a long time it saw them as “betrayers” because they worked for Germany’s needs. The materials were also not accessible for scholars who tried to study this theme for the same reason. On that basis, as nowadays we have access to the personal

³² Ibid., 137.

³³ Ibid., 137.

³⁴ Ibid., 141.

³⁵ Ibid., 142.

³⁶ Ibid., 145.

³⁷ According to Pavel Polyan the topic of Soviet forced laborers was not developed in the Soviet historiography. Polyan, *Zhertvi Dvukh Diktatur* [The Victims of Two Dictatorships], 9.

documents of people, children in particular, who were part of the workforce in Germany, it is possible to see how they experienced their labor and how the state saw them during and after the war. What is important for this research is that Johannes-Dieter Steinert deals with children, giving them a special place in the history of labor, and it is relevant for the present thesis as he also seeks to put the history of Soviet children's labor experience in a broader context.

Looking at Soviet children as forced laborers is crucial as there was a visible number of them among other workers and among all Soviet children as well. One of the primary ideas of the present thesis is to look at Soviet children's experience during the Second World War and to put it in a broader context in the history of Soviet childhood. By studying children who had to work in the USSR and those who were sent to Germany, this thesis seeks to make a contribution to existing literature, as the comparative aspect of Soviet child labor in the USSR and Germany was not yet covered by scholars. Despite the fact that some historians, for instance, de Graffenried, mentioned such children in comparison with those who stayed in the USSR, she did not develop this idea further despite the fact that these children "sacrificed" their childhood in wartime period as well. The data of forced labor experience of Soviet children could expand her argument about "self-sacrifice" and elaborate the Soviet government's attitude to these children. This thesis will shed light on labor of Soviet children in Germany in order to make more detailed comparison with those who worked in the USSR because they did similar work in agriculture as well as in industrial sectors. Moreover, forced laborers were a huge part of Soviet children who faced war hardships and in this case these examples would also help to get a clearer picture of what experience Soviet children had during the war beyond the well-known facts about it.

In addition, making a comparison between the two kinds of Soviet children experience will explore, firstly, how the government saw these children in both cases, and secondly, how

these children saw their experience themselves. Did children understand that they had to “sacrifice” their childhood because of conditions which emerged after the war started? Despite their differences, both cases could be interpreted in the broader context of Soviet childhood and labor.

Moreover, investigating this particular aspect of Soviet children’s experience during the Second World War, it is important to note that children who experienced hardships of the war were not the same generation as before the war. The war affected children and childhood long after its end. The young post-war generation tried to integrate new ways of behavior and thinking into the Soviet system, but at the same time they were not in opposition to it.³⁸ Hence, these children also faced the problem of re-integration after the war, and had to overcome trauma which was brought by it. For those who were in Germany it also relevant as that they had to re-integrate into the Soviet society and in some cases they were accused in work for “enemy.” What happened upon their return will be discussed in the last part of this thesis in order to understand how they were accepted by Soviet society and the government and how they experienced it.

1.3 Conceptual and Theoretical frameworks

The present thesis adopts Julie de Graffenried’s definition of “sacrificing childhood” as:

The acts, the values required of the young, reflected wartime needs for state. The language of children’s institutions changed to fit the environment as did images of children <...> self-sacrifice during the war had nothing to do with personal happiness or security and everything to do with patriotic duty.³⁹

³⁸For more details, see: Juliane Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

³⁹de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 7.

I am going to use her definition in analyzing labor experience of Soviet children in Germany in order to show that they also saw their work as a part of “patriotic duty”. In Soviet case “patriotic duty” was very strong because of labor which Soviet children had to perform and their contribution to the war effort. Moreover, I am going to use a comparative methodological approach to reveal similarities and differences between labor in the USSR and Germany and children’s personal image of “self-sacrifice”.

Historians provide various possible definitions of a “child.” For instance, Gelinada Grinchenko, analyzing remembrance of Soviet children who were sent to Germany from Ukraine, looks at those who were born in 1927 or later and includes all who were up to 16 years old.⁴⁰ In this thesis a “child” is also defined as a person who was born no earlier than 1927 and who at the beginning of war was no older than 16 years old. This information could be found in biographies which are presented along with interviews and memoirs. Other people who were born later could be considered as adolescents and for this thesis it is interesting to look at how Soviet children specifically experienced labor in both of the countries – in the USSR and in Germany.

Turning to the question of experience, not only during the Second World War, but in general, it is significant to understand how labor is defined by scholars. To begin with, we also should clarify the difference between work and labor. Was work a part of children’s life? How did they see what they had to do and how were they motivated? It is also important to look at those things which influenced their experience. In a broader context in order to understand how people who had to perform any kind of labor saw their experience, it is possible to look at the example given by Alf Lüdtke, who made a parallel between soldering and working. According to Lüdtke, “allusion to “work” allowed soldiers to normalize their

⁴⁰Gelinada Grinchenko, “And Now Imagine Her or Him as a Slave, a Pitiful Slave with no Rights”: Child Forced Laborers in the Culture of Remembrance of the USSR and Post-Soviet Ukraine,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 22, no. 2 (2015), 390.

actions and behavior.⁴¹ In addition, soldiers did their “work” because they had an opportunity for maneuver and their duties were routinized. Hence, soldiers saw their actions as their job and did things which they would probably not do in peacetime.⁴²

The term “experience” was debated by many scholars for its limits of interpretation and use in historical research.⁴³ According to Joan Scott, professor of social science, “experience” is one of the foundations that has been reintroduced into historical writing in the wake of the critique of empiricism; unlike “brute fact” or “simple reality,” its connotations are more varied and elusive.⁴⁴ In order to understand how “experience” fits in history, the author looks how the term is used by historians. For instance, looking at Raymond Williams points out that in various periods of time “experience” had different meanings. At the same time, from Williams points of view, experience was something that people had in their lives.⁴⁵ In contrast, he gives an example of E. P. Thompson’s usage of “experience” which for him means connection with “social being of people.”⁴⁶ Also, Thompson uses the term “experience” as closely connected with social consciousness and class identity.⁴⁷ Arguing that historians should take into consideration the notion of experience, Scott states that “experience” is both an interpretation and something which should be interpreted at the same time.⁴⁸

Turning back to E. P. Thompson, he defines “experience” as a result of productive relations.⁴⁹ According to him, “class” is a result of common experience of people which could

⁴¹ Alf Lütke, “Soldiering and Working: Almost the Same? Reviewing Practices in Industry and the Military in Twentieth Century Contexts,” in *Global Histories of Work*, ed. Andreas Eckert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 126.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Joan W Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry*, 17, no. 4 (Summer, 1991): 780.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 780.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 782.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 784.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 785.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 797.

⁴⁹ Stuart Middleton, “The Concept of “Experience” and the Making of English Working Class, 1924–1963,” *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 1 (2016): 197.

be defined in terms of productive relations. At the same time, class consciousness, according to him, is closely connected with culture (traditions, ideas).⁵⁰ He also stressed that consciousness of class develops in various places and time in the same way.⁵¹

My personal explanation of experience combines facts and events which Soviet children faced during the Second World War. It includes physical, social and moral experience as could be seen from interviews of former Soviet laborers and laborers in Germany. Underlining what they had to do, how they survived and how they interacted with others, I am going to show how personal experience was understood by children themselves.

The definition of Soviet childhood in general significantly changed since the Second World War started, and hence, other conceptions also changed. According to de Graffenried, labor was also understood in another way and children, as they started to work in various spheres, made a significant contribution in the agricultural sector. After the beginning of the war, in all around 300,000 children were mobilized to work in agriculture.⁵² As Kucherenko points out in her book, labor of Soviet children during the war was a significant part of mobilization of Soviet state.⁵³ Officially, around 712,000 14- to 15-year-old children were in the industrial sector; however, in total, the number of them in industry was lower than the number of those who worked in agriculture.⁵⁴ Hence, children also made a significant contribution to the industrial sector during the war. What is more, the mass recruitment of children for such work shows how Soviet society changed when children were called to participate in industrial work. In 1940 the Soviet government made the Labor Reserves systems and permitted children from 14-years-old to work; however, in 1942, it began to call

⁵⁰ Ibid., 200.

⁵¹ For more details, see: E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1980).

⁵² For more details see: J. Barber and M. Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front: Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London, 1991), 147.

⁵³ Kucherenko, "State v. Danila Kuz'mich," 394.

⁵⁴ de Graffenried *Sacrificing Childhood*, 54.

children under age of 14 for work.⁵⁵ These youths consisted around 18 percent of the Soviet industrial sector during the war.⁵⁶ Children who worked in this sector received low wages (sometimes the wages were not paid) and worked in hard conditions. In 1940 schools for industrial training (FZO – *Fabrichno-Zavodskogo Obucheniya*) were established, and usually adolescents (16 years old and older) studied there. Children under the age of sixteen also studied in railway colleges ZhU (*Zheleznodorozhnoe Uchilische*).⁵⁷ These schools aimed to prepare youths for future work.

Significantly in 1941 the Soviet government passed a new labor legislation. Firstly, it increased the number of workdays and abolished holidays. Secondly, it defined work-overtime and for adolescents, it was two hours per day. Children and adolescents were also included in all of these changes as they were a visible part of the working population during the war.⁵⁸ What is also significant is that the state punished those youths who did not want to work. As it can be seen, the concept of labor legally changed and the working population of the country consisted of not only regular workers (presented mostly by adults before the Second World War) but also children who, since the war started, were a visible part of it. For Soviet Union mass mobilization of people, including women who worked outside their home places, children and students was crucial for the war economy and the outcome of the war. Despite the loss of their prewar industrial base in 1942, Soviet Union was able to mobilize workers and at the same time was able to produce more weapons and other war equipment as needed.⁵⁹

The definition of labor which not only children but people in a whole had to perform is still debated. According to Donald Filtzer, the field of labor history usually dealt with

⁵⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁷ Kucherenko, "State v. Danila Kuz'mich," 394.

⁵⁸ Kucherenko, *Soviet Street Children*, 99.

⁵⁹ Stephen Kotkin, "World War Two and Labor: A Lost Cause?" *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 58 (Fall, 2000): 188.

studying of industrial working class in Western economies, but not so many years ago it changed its emphasis to looking at labor relations traditional views.⁶⁰ Labor by itself could also have various definitions depending on types of work which people perform. Here the other issues such as workers' lives and experience are important as well as conditions of labor and influence of other events on it. In this thesis we are trying to look at various types of labor and to understand how labor in the USSR and in Germany could be defined. Also, the question of attitudes to work is crucial here as the present research seeks to understand how children themselves saw their labor in both of the cases. As Karin Hofmeester emphasizes: "For many people work determines their position on society, and not having work – either by choice or involuntarily – in part determines an individual's identity. Work can provide satisfaction but it can also be numbing, sickening, and even potentially fatal."⁶¹ From this point, it is crucial to look at how people see their work and to understand their motivation as it would allow to understand their experience clearer. Labor relations which exist are needed to define under what rules someone works and for what reasons.⁶² In addition, these rules aim to define what type of work the person had to perform, under what conditions, duration of work and other issues regarding it.

Labor during the Second World War played an important role in the Soviet Union and in Germany as well. For Germany, such number of foreign workers who were recruited, "saved" German economy from its collapse.⁶³ The question of definition of foreign labor in Germany during the wartime could be discussed from various perspectives. As it was mentioned, Klaus Tenfelde's investigation is based on what historians mean by "forced labor." This definition has three key parts. First of all, forced labor aims to compel people to

⁶⁰ Wendy Z. Goldman, Gijs Wessler, Simon Pirani eds., *A Dream Deferred. New studies in Russian and Soviet Labor History* (Bern, 2008), 15-16.

⁶¹ Karin Hofmeester, "Attitudes to Work" in *Handbook of Global History of Work*, eds. Karin Hofmeester, Marcel van der Linden (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 411.

⁶² Ibid., 318.

⁶³ Kotkin, "World War Two and Labor," 182

work for unlimited time period, and usually such people work far from their homes.⁶⁴ Secondly, it includes workplace discrimination, and in the period of war it means “work for enemy.”⁶⁵ Finally, forced labor includes little chance of changes in work or working and living conditions, all complaints of workers are not considered.⁶⁶ All these parts are crucial for the investigation of forced labor and at the same time, work of Soviet children in Germany included these points. However, looking at another definitions of labor which have close meanings to the “forced labor” can provide another view on this notion.

Besides “forced labor” term there is also such a term which closed to it as “convict labor.” This type of labor could be defined as: “the work performed by individuals under penal and / or administrative control. It is the work of prisoners, deportees, individuals impressed into the army and the navy, prisoners of war, and military convicts.”⁶⁷ At the same time, not all convict laborers could be “forced” and “convict” is more relevant for those who work in labor camps or prisoners. However, in both of the cases the war play an important role as it not only produces need in the workforce but also dehumanization of “enemy” what allows to appeal to using of such kind of labor.⁶⁸ At the same time, convict labor represents repressive nature of the regimes and in case of the war these repressive measures become legitimized, while forced labor had additional features which differ it from the former.

Trying to understand what kind of labor Soviet children had to perform in both of the cases, it is also important to look at the question of mobilization. In the period of the war conflicts the states usually use mobilization as the war is following by the lack of the workforce. Hence, people who face mass mobilization see their experience from different perspectives. War brings a lot of people, including women and children in the workforce. As

⁶⁴ Tenfelde, “Forced Labor,” 134.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Christian G. De Vito, “Convict Labor” in *Handbook of Global History of Work*, eds. Karin Hofmeester, Marcel van der Linden (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 345.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 346.

Sheila Fitzpatrick points out, in various parts of the Soviet Union, conscript and convict labor was widely used during the Second World War.⁶⁹ At the same time, she also stresses that Soviet society was partially mobilized before and after the war, and “mass mobilization” which occurred since the war started, was not seen as dramatic changes.⁷⁰ However, I would argue with her that for children changes were visible as before the war they were not “mobilized” for kinds of work which they had to perform during the war. As it seems, child labor in the Soviet Union could not be strictly called “forced” as their performance was part of the “mass mobilization” of the society for the contribution to the war effort. At the same time, Karel Berkoff emphasizes that Soviet people were forced to work as “mobilization” meant that they could be sent to any place and to be asked to perform any kind of labor. What is more, he calls the situation which emerged in the Soviet Union after the beginning of the war “A single Forced Labor camp” which for him means that people had less rights and more obligations.⁷¹

The case of Germany is more complicated as the authorities recruited children for country economy’s needs and it also took them away from their country of origin. In both of the cases children had no chance to escape recruitment as it could follow by punishment. At the same time, Soviet children’s experience in Germany could be defined as “forced” in terms of Klaus Tenfelde’s definition which includes work far from hometown and “work for enemy” from Soviet perspective. What is also important in this case, is how children define themselves in the interviews as not all of them saw their experience as “forced” laborer but some saw it as “slave” or just “free” workforce. For instance, in Polish case some of them perceived their experience as “free worker’s experience,” “farm worker,” or also “slave

⁶⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “War and Society in Soviet Context: Soviet Labor before, during, and after World War II,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 35 (1989): 47

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Karel Berkoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Harvard University Press: London, 2012), 94.

worker.”⁷² Nevertheless, I would state that comparison of the both is based not on the same types of labor specifically but rather on types of work and conditions in which children experienced the war, and also their personal attitude to it.

1.4 Methodological Considerations

An important methodological concern is how to use primary sources. In order to contextualize and deepen the data from the official sources and fill the existing lacunae in the source base I am going to use textual analysis while working with personal documents such as interviews and memoirs which are easily accessible through secondary sources, open publications or online. It is crucial to understand how these interviews were made and who conducted them. Also, questions which were prepared and asked should be taken in consideration as in some cases they influenced what people said about their experience. The online archive *Forced Labor 1939-1945*⁷³ contains interviews of former forced laborers and provides significant information about various aspects of children's experience in Germany such as how they came to Germany, what kinds of labor they performed, what was Germans' attitude and treatment of Soviet children. These interviews also contain data about the children's return to the USSR after the war. However, it should be taken into consideration that many of the interviews were made much later than the events (most were taken in 2005-2006) and hence, it is important to use other personal documents which could make the picture clearer. The interviews were taken by historians who went to the cities where former laborers in Germany lived and made an audio-video-recording and biographical notes of each person. Some of the interviews also contain transcripts which are easily accessible. As these

⁷² Venken, "Child Forced Labor," 378.

⁷³ Online archive "Forced Labor 1939-1945" (<http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de>) was established in 2005-2006 with the support of such organizations as foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future", Free University of Berlin (Freie Universität Berlin) and German Historical Museum. It contains interviews with former forced laborers of various nationalities who worked in Germany during the Second World War. The interviews are accompanied by biographies of people, transcripts of videos and photos.

interviews were taken with specific aim to commemorate forced laborers, the questions were asked by historians who recorded these interviews. For example, the questions such as “What was your life in Germany,” “What did you do before and after the war,” “What was Germans attitude to you” and others were asked in order to get more details. Hence, it is important to consider that fact while working with these sources as questions could make people to tell particular aspects. Also, some of the former laborers who were in Germany were not able answer the questions in details because they did not remember what exactly happened. However, in most cases, interviews allow to cover many aspects of children’s experience as forced laborers in Germany. It is difficult to know exactly who was intended to work with the interviews but at the same time it is clear that they usually are used by scholars as these interviews in particular are crucial source for investigation of a quite new topic of labor experience of not only Soviet people but other nationalities. In this thesis 13 interviews from the indicated archive were used. They were selected according to the year of birth of people starting from 1927. In addition, two interviews were used from the international society “Memorial” in Moscow which were taken within the project about Soviet forced laborers in Germany.

4 interviews were used from the online database “I Remember” (*Ya Pomny*).⁷⁴ This collection contains short interviews with veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Some of them were taken even in 2018 but the project itself was established in the 2000s. It is supervised by Artyom Drabkin, a Russian public figure and the author of books about war veterans and their memoirs. The project was also supported by the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation.

Personal documents are crucial for the present thesis as they could provide a clearer picture of children’s experience and help understand how children themselves saw their work

⁷⁴ Online database “I Remember” (<https://iremember.ru>) contains not only memoirs of veterans but also letters and fragments of audio-interviews which are easily accessible.

in the agricultural and industrial sectors both in the USSR and Germany. Even though these memoirs and interviews were taken much later than the events happened, the details offered by those sources are still crucial in understanding of how children themselves saw their work and war experience.

Working with these sources I compare the existing interviews with other personal documents, which are either published or could be found online, in order to get a clear picture of Soviet children's experience during the Second World War. The other interviews which are used in this thesis are also published by historians or representatives of Veteran's Union which still exists in Russia. Apart from interviews, a significant example of other personal documents is the autobiographical novel written by former children who was as Ostarbeiter in Germany – Vitalii Syomin. He, being a young boy, had to overcome hardships of forced labor. In his novel, he tells the story of changes in child's life and growing-up in camp. This novel was firstly published in 1976 and became one of the major books about forced laborers' life in Germany during the Second World War. It gives a detailed analysis of all the events which happened not only to author himself, but also with those who shared his experience with him. Working with all these existing documents will let me ask particular questions about child labor experiences and identify personal answers to these questions. What is more, many ego-documents provide detailed evidence about children's experience which allow to reconstruct even small nuances of it.

Moreover, official documents from the *Russian State Archive* and the *Russian State Archive of Socio-Political history* will also be used in the thesis which will present a general picture of changes in labor policy in the USSR during the Second Word War. Also, data from the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in years 1941-1946 will be taken into consideration in order to provide a picture of child labor mobilization and to understand how the Soviet government saw these children and the significance of their labor. However, the historical

context of these documents should be considered as they emerged in the period of the war when significant changes in the governmental policy occurred.

I propose to tell the story from personal side primarily, but also emphasize the importance of using state materials. Combining these documents will let me answer questions about not only personal experience of children but also how the government saw them, how their labor was organized in both cases (although some of them were sent or taken to Germany by Nazis, Soviet authorities had reacted to that act), and what then the Soviet policy was toward them. Looking at the ideological dimension will help to explain children's important role and status in war and postwar society.

The next chapter is dedicated to those children who worked in the USSR. I argue in this chapter is that children were motivated by the state and labor was a significant part of their "patriotic duty".

Chapter 2. The Experience of Labor among Soviet Children in the USSR

A significant number of Soviet children were mobilized for work in various fields within the USSR. Physical mobilization of the Soviet people was a crucial part of state policy during the Second World War because the outcome of the war depended upon it. At that time children made a significant contribution to agriculture and industry; they worked on farms, collecting metal for making war machinery, worked in factories and participated in “socially-useful work” (*poleznaya obschestvennaya rabota*) – helping to people in need, collecting money, cloths, etc. This experience was also a part of Soviet childhood during the Second World War. As de Graffenried points out, approximately 5 million Soviet children worked on farms in 1941-1944. Despite the state’s demand for a minimum contribution from each collective farm (every farm had to contribute 15 work days per year), children did much more through wartime. As a whole, through this period they worked around 760 million workdays.⁷⁵ They worked in many areas of agriculture, even on small gardens and did essential tasks on farms, such as weeding, collecting grains, haying. What is also important, as de Graffenried stresses, is that in the years 1942-1943 there were around 70 percent of children among those who worked in agriculture in general.⁷⁶ This evidence again proves that the mobilization and contribution of child labor were quite crucial during wartime because, before the war started, children under age of 16 did not work in such a way for the state’s economy.

As well as in the agricultural sector, children also worked in the industrial sector. For instance, they worked in factories, making small parts for machines, or worked with engines to produce necessary parts for warplanes. Children’s industrial work was dangerous. Firstly, they had no prior experience of working in factories because of their age and secondly, the

⁷⁵ de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 50.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

conditions of work were not suitable for them. For example, they had to work outside when the temperature was -40 without warm clothes.⁷⁷ Also, wartime *a priori* means hardships in work because of lack of food, clothes, and social security. One more example is provided by de Graffenried. As a young boy described his work in a factory, he was “permitted” to work 4 hours per day, however, but he worked much more and even stayed for a night there.⁷⁸ Despite these conditions, both children and adolescents were recruited by the state because of the significant lack of labor power and mobilization of women and men for other kinds of work.

As for the age of children who were engaged in both agriculture and industry, for agriculture the government usually called those who were younger than 14-year-old for work according to their capability (as it was officially stated in the reports), and those who were older than 14-15-year-old also worked in agriculture, sometimes replacing adults and also were called to study at FZO⁷⁹ to be prepared for future work as drivers, operators, constructors and others.

The primary aim of this chapter is to analyze the labor experience of Soviet children in the USSR and to make a comparison with those who were sent as forced laborers in Germany. Also, the present chapter seeks to understand how the Soviet state mobilized children and its policy toward them.

2.1. Educational Development in Soviet Policy during the Second World War

Before starting to analyze memoirs of those children who worked in the Soviet Union during the war, it is important to look at Soviet policy toward them in general. The question of “upbringing” (*vospitanie*) at the wartime period was crucial and the state tried to mobilize

⁷⁷ Ibid., 103.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁹ FZO (Factory Trade Apprenticeship) were training schools in the Soviet Union based on various factories. These schools prepared students for various occupations within 6 months.

all possible forces to encourage and to bring children to work in various fields. Before the war children had to study at schools, get excellent marks and be good Soviet citizens. Also, in prewar period, the state tried to provide children with appropriate education and communist morals.⁸⁰ At the same time, the problems which existed before the war regarding difficulties in children's education worsened when the war started.

From the beginning of the Second World War a new policy in children's "upbringing" was widely discussed in the governmental structures and various organizations were involved in improving children's education. For instance, in the resolution order of Secretariat of Nationwide Central Council, dated 22 April, 1941, it was stated that some of the Soviet Young Pioneer camps, where many Soviet children spent their summertime, needed to improve their work with children and to organize "labor upbringing" (*trudovoye vospotanie*) for children who were there.⁸¹ First of all, as many people worked there to run the Pioneer camps and did a lot of things for children, they did not teach them to take care of themselves. Secondly, according to the resolution, children were not engaged in agricultural work as well as in "social" (*obeschestvennaya*) work which was crucial for war conditions. As these camps had to participate in mass mobilization of children, the state required them engage children to work. The Secretariat decreed that new camps which were to be established in 1941 had to revise the organization of children's work and rest, to "bring them up" in the Communist spirit and to develop the feeling of "love" to labor (*lubov' k trudu*).⁸² The kind of work that children had to perform, consisted of harvesting of berries, herbs, participation in cleaning of the camps, working in public canteens and in the kitchens. The age of children who spent their time there was from 9 to 15 years old. In another document, following this resolution,

⁸⁰ de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 2.

⁸¹ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 118. (Project of Resolution TSkVKPb and Reports of TSkVLKSM and VCSPS with Materials about Pioneer Camps, June-October, 1941), 9.

⁸² Ibid.

daily agendas for children were presented. These plans included mandatory procedures for health, for example, physical activity. Moreover, it was stated that children had to work in the nearest collective farms (*kolhozy*) to improve their skills and to help adults. An emphasis was made on legal amount of work which children could make. In addition, they also had to learn patriotic songs about the Soviet Union as their Motherland.⁸³

In a resolution of SNK (Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union) it was stated that children and adolescents who studied at schools from 6th year to 10th year had to be sent to collective farms for 2 months. As a result of this mandatory work, school after summer break started not in September, as it was before the war, but one month later, in October.⁸⁴ This practice was introduced in 1942. Also, those students who did not have special background worked in the fields, but those who studied at FZO or had needed background for labor, were called for work as drivers, operators on the combine and other similar activities.

At the beginning of the war the state identified “serious problems” with children’s “upbringing” (*vospitanie*), not only in mobilizing and organizing their activity, especially at the so called FZO – special training schools where young workers were prepared for future professions in the industrial sector. For instance, during the first years of the war, when masses of young people were mobilized in these schools, some of them left FZO without permission. The reason for that, according to resolution of Bureau of Commission of Party Control (on Checheno-Ingushskaya ASSR) was the “carelessness” (*nevnimanie*) of party organizations which did not follow the “rules of upbringing” in these schools. As a result, for breaking of labor discipline, children and adolescents were punished and were not allowed to change

⁸³ Ibid., 17

⁸⁴ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 133 (Project of Resolution TSkVKPb and SNK SSSR, reports, letters, telegrams, etc. About preparation of Laborers to FZO, January-December, 1942), 23.

sheets on their beds for the whole month or they had to wash the floors.⁸⁵ For “correct” education it was inappropriate as students of FZO had to learn how to work through the example of adults.

In other FZO schools, problems occurred for technical reasons. For instance, in many schools not all the machines were in workable shape and as a result, several people worked on one machine at the same time. That also resulted in problems with teaching as students could not study well because not all of them could practice their skills on the machines. Moreover, there were problems with safety regulations, as was stated in one of the reports, and conditions in which students lived.⁸⁶ These problems existed during the whole wartime period and, as it can be seen, it was difficult to solve them because of economic reasons. As a result, youths did not want to study there because of such conditions.

The agricultural sector had other issues. For instance, as some of the collective farms did not keep careful records about the numbers of youths who arrived for work and as a result, many children were left without any activity. It was a problem for the state as it needed as many working people as possible. Also, it was important to send children to those collective farms which were not far from their home but in some regions they were sent from cities to the farms 300-400 kilometers away from their home.⁸⁷ As well as in the FZO, conditions in collective farms where children spent their summer breaks working were also not good for everyday life – in some places there was no food, and children had to do an overwhelming amount of work.

⁸⁵ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 84 (Project of Resolution TSkVKPb, reports, letters of VCSPS, NKID etc. With resolutions of secretaries of TSK, etc., January – October, 1941), 49.

⁸⁶ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 85 (Project of Resolution TSkVKPb, reports, letters of VCSPS, NKID etc. With resolutions of secretaries of TSK, etc.), 92

⁸⁷ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 155 (Reports, letters of SNK, etc. About preparation and participation of pupils in agricultural work, etc., January, 1942-February, 1943), 49.

One of the significant organizations which was responsible for children's "upbringing" (*vospitanie*) and education not only during the war but in peacetime was VLKSM (*Vsesoyznyi Leninskii Kommunisticheskii Soyuz Molodyozhi*) – youth's union. Before the war the Komsomol organization which played an important role in youths' lives. It united young people and was responsible for their Communist "education". To be a member of the Komsomol was important for youths as it gave various opportunities. They participated in cultural and social life of the country, learned how to work and followed Communist ideas.

Following the beginning of the war, the Komsomol was also responsible for youth's education in the spirit of Communism. However, it had to change its educational strategies after the war started. Hence, in 1941, in one of the reports about the work of the Komsomol, it was emphasized that this organization made a lot of mistakes in its work and did not pay a lot of attention to the "right upbringing" of Soviet youths. The main issue was the Komsomol's lack of attention to developing young people's understanding of labor as their duty to the Soviet Union, their Motherland.⁸⁸ The Komsomol organization did not pay attention to school children who did not participate in work after classes. It was their main duty – to work in collective farms, help in road-building, help their parents. Avoiding this work, children, according to the report, could become weak facing difficulties of the war period.⁸⁹ Hence, the Komsomol and its organizations had to revise their activity and to "help" children and adolescents to be "disciplined." Despite the presentation of state policy toward children as education and care about their lives, in reality they were forced to work and could not escape it.

⁸⁸ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 85 (Project of Resolution TSkVKPb, reports, letters of VCSPS, NKID etc. With resolutions of secretaries of TSK, etc.), 37.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 38.

As it can be seen, the main emphasis of all these organizations was to develop children's patriotic feelings and eagerness to work. Children were mobilized for participation in all possible activities as a result of such propaganda and in most cases they had no choice of leaving work. At the same time, they saw this mobilization as a "patriotic duty", and they understood that their help was crucial for the Motherland.⁹⁰ Despite the difficulties which they faced, children said that they did their work in order to help their parents and country as a whole. At the same time, there were some of them, especially those who studied in FZO, who escaped from schools and did not want to study and work there. This could be explained through conditions in which they had to study and live.

2.2. Agricultural Work among Soviet Children in the USSR

Besides working on farms, children were involved in activities such as Saturday or Sunday work days (*subbotniki* or *voskresniki*) which usually united all people in weekends who had to do many crucial things for the country. For instance, children could collect wood, metal, gather vegetables, or clean roads, which was also significant during wartime.⁹¹ In one of the reports about *voskresnik* on August, 17, 1941, it was said that youths worked in collective farms and helped to harvest and in procurement of fodder for livestock. Some of them helped in building of railroads and in collection of metal.⁹² Collecting different items was one of the widespread "social" (*obschestvennaya*) works of children during the Second World War and for the state this activity was important. For instance, pioneers were searching for herbs, berries and food for the soldiers' needs. Moreover, they were asked to collect paper

⁹⁰ Vera Efimovna said that she and other children sang patriotic songs and were ready to help soldiers or guerrillas during the Great Patriotic War as the "patriotic" feeling was widespread among them. Vera Efimovna Burenkova (Anastasova), "I Remember," accessed 6 June, 2018, <https://iremember.ru/memoirs/grazhdanskie/burenkova-anastasova-vera-efimovna/>

⁹¹ de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 52.

⁹² Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 85 (Project of Resolution TSkVKPb, reports, letters of VCSPS, NKID etc. With resolutions of secretaries of TSK, etc.), 173.

and metal for the construction of weapons or other things for the front.⁹³ Children even collected money for the construction of war machines such as tanks, planes and cars.⁹⁴ However, they did not get wages for their work but could instead get a certificate from the state which proved their working contribution and thanked the children for it. That was also an important part of the state's propaganda and agitation for children to make a contribution to the war effort. In the Communist Party's speeches to the youths in 1940, it was stressed that the Communist Party and Stalin himself will make everything to provide Soviet children with happy childhood:

<...> Communist Party, your comrade Stalin, want Soviet children to be healthy, happy, vigorous, smart. Comrade Stalin wants the happiest Soviet children to be happier. Your Komsomol supervisors have to help you in doing those tasks which are set for Komsomol and pioneer organization by the Communist Party.⁹⁵

Through such slogans the Soviet government sought to develop a positive feeling toward ideas of Communism and Stalin as a father who cares about them.

The contribution by Soviet children to the war effort was significant, especially in the agricultural sectors. In the reports of the Commissariat of Agriculture it can be seen that in 1942-43 a great number of children were prepared for their work in agriculture: 717,000 students were prepared for operating machines, 126,840 for working on tractors, 27,360 for operating combines, 9,024 for driving cars and 229,767 for other activities.⁹⁶ As it was also stated, the experience of 1941 showed that children made a crucial contribution to the collective farms and the agricultural sector as a whole.

⁹³ de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 56-57.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁵ *My translation*. Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 32 (Projects of resolutions TSk VKPb and SNK SSSR, reports from Academy of Science, etc., May-November, 1940), 13.

⁹⁶ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 155 (Reports, letters of SNK, etc. About preparation and participation of pupils in agricultural work, etc., January 1942-February, 1943), 48

From existing memoirs, it can be seen that almost all children had to work, especially in helping their parents. Most helped their mothers in house work, for example, sitting with younger children, cleaning and washing. Others were engaged in work after school. Those who lived in villages, remembered how children from the cities came during the summer break and did not know how to work in the fields. As Zoya Kachalova, who was 12-years-old when the war started, stated in her memoirs:

Although we were not collective farmers, but we worked in the fields (I was 14-years-old). Those youths who were guests in the village (and there were a lot of visitors), could not do anything. However, they began to learn how to use agricultural tools and learned how to work! We cut, cultivated, seeded...⁹⁷

All of the children emphasize how hard their work was. During the summer they had to wake up at 3 a.m. and begin to work. During the winter children helped to clean the areas and in forest harvesting. Nina Medvedeva, who was born in a village near Uglich', Yaroslav region, remembers how she with other children helped in collective farms and had limited time to collect grains or hay and to load it into the car which came to various collective farms only for one day. As she emphasized, the most terrible thing was to take hay to a designated place because for her it was hard to unload it from the car.⁹⁸ Valentina Uhobotnova, born in 1934 in Kalinin region, was the seventh children in the family. Her parents worked all days in the collective farms while children helped them, especially in September during harvesting. As she stated, each collective farm had to give to the state milk, eggs and wool.⁹⁹ For those who grew up in villages it was easier to adapt to the conditions and work which they had to perform. In contrast, for those who came from the cities to collective farms it was necessary, firstly, to obtain knowledge in doing this job, and, secondly, to practice it. In addition, such

⁹⁷ My translation. A. Suslov, ed. *Bylo Detstvo i Byla Voina* [There Was a Childhood and There Was the War] (Ugлич, 2013), 147.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 151.

practice was significant for urban children, as they faced an unfamiliar before experience.¹⁰⁰ As Ann Livschiz underlines, it is important to distinguish those who were children of those people who lived in rural areas from those who lived in the cities because, the latter did not only contribute to the war effort as well as the others, but also gained valuable skills of “real work” for their future life.¹⁰¹

Most of the children remember the harshness of the conditions in which they lived and worked. All of them remember lack of food, when for children 200 gr of bread was given. As Matveeva Maria Yakovlevna, born in 1934 in the Perm region, stressed in the interview, her mother divided this small piece of bread for all children: they got smaller pieces in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening.¹⁰² She also remembers how children organized specific groups (*druzhiny*) in which they read stories about Pavlik Morozov, a boy who was a great example of a Soviet child-hero.¹⁰³ Such example shows that for Soviet children their heroes were important. What is more, the story about Pavlik continued to be important not only during the Second World War but was also well-known in the prewar period, when state aimed to make “A new soviet Man (Child)”.¹⁰⁴ Children also cooperated for painting special symbols on the houses in order to understand who needed help and where to go. Maria Yakovlevna with other children in her village helped in the houses with cleaning, washing, and those who were older chopped wood.¹⁰⁵ Most of the children worked in their free time after school or during the summer. Schinova Aleksandra Ilinichna was 8-year-old when the war started. She was born in Igrinskii region of Udmurtskaya ASSR and also worked in the collective farms. From her experience it can be seen that even those who were 7-8-year-old

¹⁰⁰ Livschiz, *Growing Up Soviet*, 455.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² L.M. Andreeva, T. A. Gauzova, G. D. Selyaninova, eds. *Dorogami Voyny. Vospominaniya Veteranov Fronta, Detei Voyny* [By the Roads of the War. Memories of Front Veterans, Children of the War] (Perm', 2010), 162.

¹⁰³ Pavlik Morozov was a Soviet pupil who became well-known pioneer-hero because of confrontation with his father, a “kulak element.” For more information, see: Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: the rise and fall of a Soviet boy hero* (London: Granta, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Andreeva, Gauzova, Selyaninova eds. *Dorogami Voyny* [By the Roads of the War], 162.

were also engaged in work. She, together with other children of her age had to seed, look after horses, and collect pieces of wheat. For her it was hard work as she had to do everything with her own hands while machines which were needed for the farms were sent to the front.¹⁰⁶

As for encouragement of children for their work, there were different competitions among children, schools and other groups. For example, those who would collect more pieces of grain or who would perform more in weeding or harvesting, could be encouraged by special diplomas. Other kind of motivation for children was state's messages to them such as propagandistic posters, brochures and articles in the newspapers. In official state newspaper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on August, 19, 1941, a whole page was dedicated to those children and adolescents who made a significant contribution to the war effort. In the article "Our Children" the following was stated:

<...> Pupils of the 44th school moved to log yard named after Molotov. For the whole day children packed stockpiles being glad to help to the Motherland, the Red army. According to incomplete evidence, 4000 of pioneers and pupils of Archangelsk participated in it on Sunday <...>.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 184.

¹⁰⁷ My translation. "Our Children," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 19 August, 1941, 3.



Figure 1 "Our Children," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 19 August, 1941, 3.

As can be seen, such propaganda, including reports about children's success, played an important role in children's mobilization for labor. In *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on August, 21, 1941, the story by Arkadii Gaidar called "The war and children" stated that after the end of the war, children will remember how much they contributed to the war effort:

In years to come you will grow up. And then, during good rest after big and peaceful work, you will remember being glad that in dark times for your Motherland, you did not sit at home and lazed away the time, but helped to your country as much as you could in its important fight with fascism.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ My translation. "The War and Children," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 21 August, 1941, 3.

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someone tried to escape these rules, he or she could be sent to prison and be accused of treason against the Motherland.¹¹⁰ Such people could be also punished, and so fear of punishment was also a motivation to work. In Schinova Aleksandra Ilinichna's experience, it was also not allowed to take any piece of wheat which they collected. She was sent to the field with her classmates and her older brother had to plow the field. She stated that they did everything without help of special machines and for them, as children, it was a very hard work.

As can be seen, the Soviet state used various methods to mobilize masses of children to face the Second World War. It tried to reach children through different ways – posters, brochures, newspapers - and emphasized their debt to the Motherland.¹¹¹ Despite the fact that newspapers stressed that child participated in work as volunteers, they did not comment on other methods which were used for children's engagement.¹¹² Fear was also a significant part of children's readiness to work. At the same time, in the agricultural sector children made visible contributions and were a huge part of the whole workforce. Child labor was important not only in terms of making contribution to the war effort but also in their "upbringing" (*vospitanie*) in the spirit of Communism.¹¹³

2.3. Industrial Labor among Soviet Children in the USSR

Besides their significant contribution to the agricultural sector, children were a visible part of those who worked in the industrial sector as well. However, there were more problems with organization and children's engagement in industry. In addition, using child labor in industry was new because labor reserves (*trudovye rezervy*) and trade schools were established only in 1940, one year before the war. The Soviet state motivated children to work in industry with the same methods as it did for their engagement in agriculture, using posters,

¹¹⁰ Andreeva, Gauzova, Selyaninova eds. *Dorogami Voyny* [By the Roads of the War], 147.

¹¹¹ Livschiz, *Growing Up Soviet*, 443.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 447.

newspapers, and brochures. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on January, 9, 1942, published a photo of a young girl, Dina Ibragimova, working on the machine. It was stated that she helped to the front at the beginning of the war but later changed her profession and started to study and work in FZO School #5 in Kuibyshev. Despite beginning to work in the school not long before, she became a *stakhanovka*.¹¹⁴ Newspapers also published articles calling upon students to enroll in the FZO where the experience of others was also mentioned. For instance, in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on January, 6, 1942, one emphasized that the experience of previous recruitment showed that those who studied in these schools mastered needed skills in a relatively short time. Also, as it was stressed:

Without a doubt new comers will obtain new professions with great enthusiasm, professions which are crucial for our Motherland in the conditions of wartime. Young patriots will put their work into a sacred agreement to fight the fascist invaders.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ “Young Patriot – Dina Ibragimova,” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, January, 9, 1942, 3.

¹¹⁵ My translation. “New Calling in FZO Schools,” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, January, 6, 1942, 3.

Молодая патриотка Дина Ибрагимова



Эта девушка много пережила за дни войны. Дина Ибрагимова училась в Одесском медицинском техникуме. Была отличницей, мечтала окончить институт.

Когда враг подошел к Одессе, она на время покинула аудиторию. В героические дни обороны города встала на пост санитарной дружинницы. Отец ее — командир танковой части, мать также отправилась на фронт. И Дина была в рядах тех, кто защищал город. В один из горячих дней отважную дружинницу ранено осколком вражеской бомбы.

Затем Дина переехала в Куйбышев. Это далеко от фронта, но и здесь патриотка борется за счастье своей Родины. Она переменила профессию, работает электрообмотчицей в школе ФЗО № 5. Дина недавно взялась за новое дело, но уже стала стажанткой, находчивой, любознательной и трудолюбивой.

К ней идут за помощью девушки. Надо что-нибудь показать — к Дине. Надо навести порядок в общежитии — опять к ней. Она поможет, похлопочет, настоят.

На снимке: комсомолка Дина ИБРАГИМОВА за обмоткой якоря.

Фото В. ИГНАТОВИЧА.

сцепления и тормоза и т. д. За каждым узлом закреплены определенные кадры.

Узловой метод полностью оправдал себя. Он обеспечивает быстроту и высокое качество. Люди квалифицируются и не допускают повторных ошибок. Кроме того при такой системе организации труда как-то само по себе разгорается социалистическое соревнование и широко развивается взаимопомощь. Рабочие передовой моторной группы Осипов, Сухарев и Александр Худяков частенько приходят на помощь отстающим узлам.

ПЛОДЫ ИНИЦИАТИВЫ И СТАРАНИЯ

Раньше МТС много деталей и запасных частей получала со склада Автоотракторобита. Теперь на это нельзя рассчитывать. Приходится самим изготавливаться. Да и дело-то уж не такое трудное. Стоило только приложить инициативу и старание. Реставрация старых деталей и изготовление новых стали для нас таким же обязательным делом, как ремонт трактора. Шестерни, коробки передач и промежуточные передачи дифференциала выполняются исключительно за счет реставрации.

Возвращаясь к жизни старых деталей много и упорно занимаются заботливый машинно-тракторной мастерской Николай Луруаев, Ефим Шалаев, самарцы Прохорин и Бискуп. Они же успешно освоили изготовление выжимных тросов, муфт сцепления, втулок и вин, пальцев поворотных цапф и поперечных тяг рулевого

«ВАШИ ЛОПАТЫ» ЛЕНИНГРАДСКИЕ РЕМЕСЛЕННИКИ для фронта

В самом центре огромного заводского двора расположен модельный цех. Под высокими сводами работают безусые подростки. Их движения то порывисты, то нарочито солидны и медлительны. Единственный безусловно взрослый человек здесь — это Константин Никитич Зубарев, старший мастер ремесленного училища.

До войны в мастерских ремесленного училища выполнялись несложные учебные задания. Когда началась война, ученики решили помочь фронту: в модельном цехе стали делать саперные лопаты.

Несложна маленькая саперная лопатка, но творит она большие дела на фронте. Этой лопаткой боец оказывается, отбивается от врага, если штык откажет, прикрывается от шальной пули, минирует поле, рубит дрова для костра. Надо ее и сделать так, чтобы она во всем безотказно служила бойцу.

Главная операция — врезка ручки в горловину лопаты. Врезку выполняют вручную на верстаке. Работают стамеской, стеклянной шкуркой. Ученики по несколько раз переделывают ручки, подреза-

Figure 3 “Young Patriot – Dina Ibragimova,” Komsomolskaya Pravda, 9 January, 1942, 3.

As it can be seen, propaganda again played an important role in children’s mobilization for work as a number of them were enrolled as volunteers, and they saw their contribution to the war effort as a part of their duty to the Motherland.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Al’bert Nikolaevich was born in 1931 and at the end of the war worked in collective farm. He stated that school children had a very strong patriotic feeling during the Great Patriotic War. Al’bert Nikolaevich

At the same time, labor in industry was much harder for children than in agriculture. In most cases they had to replace adults who were sent to the front, and what is more, the time for getting knowledge and needed experience in working on machines was limited. Conditions in training schools, as was mentioned, in most of the cases were not appropriate for studying and living. Recruitment to FZO and ZhU schools was forced and following the outbreak of the war, children had to work more hours than officially was allowed, they received extremely low wages and in some places they did not receive anything.¹¹⁷

As noted by most of the historians who studied Soviet child labor, conditions in these schools were terrible not only during the war, but also before and after.¹¹⁸ It also can be seen from the official sources such as reports and resolutions. For instance, one of the reports on the conditions in the FZO of the Novokramotorskii factory stated that a lot of students had lost their parents, and their situation was even worse because of lack of appropriate supplies. Also, sanitary conditions were problematic in that school.¹¹⁹ Unsanitary conditions were widespread in many places where these schools were established. As Ann Livschiz stated, work in the FZO was forced labor for children and adolescents as many of them did not have a chance to escape being recruited, especially those who lost their parents.¹²⁰ The same conclusion was reached by Olga Kucherenko, who stated that the regime expected “self-sacrifice” from children and masked conscription as a “patriotic duty”.¹²¹

In personal memoirs it can be seen that in many cases children had to replace adults working on factories. Because of a lack of workforce, Zueva Klavdia Dmitrievna, who was born in 1932, had to go for work on factory named after Dzerzhinskii in 1944, when she was

Shestakov, “I Remember”, accessed 6 June 2018, <https://iremember.ru/memoirs/grazhdanskie/shestakov-albert-nikolaevich/>

¹¹⁷ Kucherenko, “State v. Danila Kuz'mich,” 393.

¹¹⁸ Livschiz, *Growing Up Soviet*, 466.

¹¹⁹ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) f.17 (Technical Secretariat TSkVKPb) op. 121 d. 315 (About the help of soldiers' children, supply for young workers and teachers, etc., January-December, 1944), 10.

¹²⁰ Livschiz, *Growing Up Soviet*, 466.

¹²¹ Kucherenko, “State v. Danila Kuz'mich,” 412.

12-years-old. Before starting to work, she had completed 3 years of school. At the factory Klavdia Dmitrievna operated a machine:

Drilled racks for bombs. We lived in manufacturing area, went to work by train, our department was near Kamsk railway bridge in Perm. <...> We did not have money for tickets. When train arrived, we climbed on its roof. <...> When the war was over I continued my studies at school from the 4th year.¹²²

In an interview with Fyodor Ivanovich (surname unknown) the same situation happened. He also worked on factory during the war, when he was 14-years-old, and he had to operate machines.¹²³ What is more, after the end of the war and for the whole his life he continued to work in this factory. As can be seen, not all children went through the FZO but still worked at factories replacing adults who were sent to the front. At the same time, conditions in factories and the work itself were hard as many of children were younger than 16-years old, and what is more, lacked of food and other basic things which also influenced their experience.

As for children in the FZO, before the war and it beginning those who were younger than sixteen could not study there. However, in 1942, the Soviet state reduced the age of youths and children who could study there to fourteen and even younger,¹²⁴ especially children who were orphans, city dwellers, or children of peasants. Although the state presented the mobilization of youths as a success, conditions and ways of teaching in these schools were very poor.¹²⁵ Also, legislation for working children were presented, and as they consisted a significant part of workforce during the war, edicts were strict. For example, if children were absent from school without any reason they could be sentenced to a year of

¹²² Andreeva, Gauzova, Selyaninova eds. *Dorogami Voyny* [By the Roads of the War], 209.

¹²³ Ibid., 166.

¹²⁴ Kucherenko, "State v. Danila Kuz'mich," 400.

¹²⁵ Livschiz, *Growing Up Soviet*, 470.

imprisonment.¹²⁶ What is more, children were expected to perform well in industry and to work as adults.¹²⁷

The experience of children at the FZO was similar in most of the cases as they were forced to work and live in unsatisfactory conditions. Valentina Mikhailovna Monakhova, who lived in a foster home in Pokrov during the war, remembers how she was forced to enter FZO. She was 13-years old and was said that she had to study and not to be dependent of the state.¹²⁸ Kotenko Fyodor Eliseevich also was sent to an FZO from a foster home and became a tractor driver. After that he worked in a factory with low quality of food and poor conditions.¹²⁹ As it can be seen, children did not have a chance to escape recruitment at FZO, especially those who lived in foster homes without parents. Here is a parallel between those who worked in the USSR and those who worked in Germany as in both cases children were too young and had to perform work. What is more, in the FZO during the war children did not even study but had to work from the first days of their life there.

The work was dangerous and it was even worse during winters. One of the examples could be seen in article by Olga Kucherenko, where one of the trainees complained about the work: “The job is messy and dangerous. Many girls had their fingers torn off because we work the machines and it is very cold on top of everything else.”¹³⁰

Here a comparison could be made with experience of those who worked as forced laborers in Germany, who will be discussed in the next chapter, as many of them could not avoid recruitment. These children also had to perform work and in some cases, before start to

¹²⁶ Kucherenko, “State v. Danila Kuz'mich,” 401.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 402.

¹²⁸ Valentina Mikhailovna Monakhova, “I Remember,” accessed 15 May, 2018, <https://iremember.ru/memoirs/grazhdanskie/monakhova-valentina-mikhaylovna/>

¹²⁹ Fyodor Eliseevich Kotenko, “I Remember,” accessed 15 May, 2018, <https://iremember.ru/memoirs/svyazisti/kotenko-fedor-eliseevich/>

¹³⁰ Kucherenko, “State v. Danila Kuz'mich,” 405, citing Agapova, “Deti,” citing GOPAPO, f. 85, op. 26, d. 399, ll. 20-21 ob.

work on factories, they had to obtain needed knowledge. However, in both cases many children saw their experience as a “patriotic duty” and were ready for “self-sacrifice”.

Again, in industry children had to work as adults and during the war the number of volunteers was quite low. Despite the fact that in the FZO they expected to study, in most of the cases it did not happen as they were sent to the factories immediately.

In both of the examples of children’s experience working in the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War – in the agriculture and in the industrial sectors - they made a crucial contribution to the war effort. What is more, most of them saw their experience and their contribution as a debt to their Motherland and their eagerness to work and readiness to help depended on it. At the same time, it is likely that Soviet ideology influenced their understanding of their labor experience. Despite what the state presented as voluntary, children who stayed in the Soviet Union faced mandatory recruitment and forced mobilization. The Soviet state saw them as a significant part of those who could contribute to the war effort.

The next chapter is dedicated to Soviet children who were sent to Germany where I argue that firstly, the older they were, the harder was their work, and, secondly, they, as well as other Soviet children, had to deal with “self-sacrifice” in order to survive hardships of the wartime period which they faced.

Chapter 3. The Experience of Labor among Soviet Children in Germany

Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, many Soviet people were sent to Germany by Nazis as forced laborers, among them a significant number of children. The aim of this chapter is to analyze the forced labor of Soviet children in Germany and to look at various aspects of this phenomenon.

At the very beginning of the Second World War Nazis did not plan to use forced labor of foreigners as it seemed unproductive from an economic point of view.¹³¹ Moreover, it could be connected with Hitler's fear of spreading communist ideas among Germans by the immigration of many non-German people. However, at the end of the 1930s there was a lack of workforce in Germany and an exhausted economy, so in 1937 the country began to recruit foreigners as volunteers.¹³² Germany signed agreements with such countries as Poland, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria who could provide necessary workforce to support the German economy. However, problems occurred because Germany did not have enough foreign currency to pay these foreign workers.¹³³

Significant changes emerged after September 1, 1939. The forced recruitment of foreigners started with the employment of POWs. The experiment began with Polish POWs who were mostly recruited for agricultural work.¹³⁴ Work in agriculture was a kind of experiment in involving foreigners in the labor.¹³⁵ In the summer of 1940, the foreign workforce started to be used in industry as well; however, in this period, Polish POWs were employed only in construction but not in the metal industry.¹³⁶

However, in 1941 the first orders about recruitment of civilians from abroad were issued, and Germany started to use forced labor in order to support its economic sector, specifically

¹³¹ Polyan, *Zhertvi Dvukh Diktatur* [The Victims of Two Dictatorship], 60.

¹³² Tenfelde, "Forced Labor," 137.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹³⁴ Ulrich, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 87.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

because many German civilians were recruiting as soldiers and had to do military work. A workforce from the USSR was considered as one of the least expensive.¹³⁷ The reasons for that were not economical but rather political, and even racial, as it was noticed by Homze.¹³⁸ Germans recruited not only POWs but also civilians. The laborers got food and in some cases money, but Eastern workers were paid the lowest salary because of economic factors.¹³⁹ Officially, foreign workers had to be paid approximately 4.5 Deutschemarks with taxes.¹⁴⁰ However, not all the workers got salaries as this money was usually used for construction of camps for those who arrived. As numbers of foreign people including POWs and civilians had been increased, during the war the German economy was more or less stable.¹⁴¹ The idea of recruiting of Soviet people, including women and children, emerged from the Polish case.¹⁴²

3.1. Recruitment of Soviet Children for Labor in Germany

Recruitment (*verbovka*) of foreign workers at the beginning was voluntary and many people who did not know the situation in Germany believed in German propaganda and left the USSR for work there. The reasons were simple: for many people it was better to work in Germany than to stay in the USSR zones of occupation without any work, money or food. Also, at the very beginning, conditions of transportation were much better because people were sent to Germany in passenger railway carriages and conditions of labor were appropriate. However, during the war, those people who had volunteer relatives in Germany,

¹³⁷ Polyan, *Zhertvi Dvukh Diktatur* [The Victims of Two Dictatorship], 165.

¹³⁸ Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 79.

¹³⁹ Tenfelde, "Forced Labor in the Second World War," 63.

¹⁴⁰ V. Chernyavskii, *Pravovoi status Ostarbaiterov kak Sledstvie Realizatsii Politiko-Ekonomicheskikh Interesov Rukovodstva Tret'ego Reikha* [Legal Status of Ostarbeiters as a Consequence of Realization of Politico-Economic Interests of the Third Reich] (Gazette of Institute, Crime, Punishment, Reparations, 2013), 3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁴² T. Kylo, *The Biggest Calamity that Overshadowed All Other Calamities: Recruitment of Ukrainian "Eastern workers" for the War Economy of the Third Reich, 1941-1944* (PhD diss. Edmonton: Department of History and Classics. University of Alberta, 2009).

received letters from them about the hard labor and low level of life in Germany and changed their opinions soon.¹⁴³

A good example of German propaganda could be seen in one of existing German flyers which stated that those would go to Germany voluntarily would receive a very high salary and even would be able to save money.¹⁴⁴ In addition, all relatives of workers were also promised a job and in other cases to be supported with some money. Moreover, this document included letters from Soviet people who said that they were very happy to live and work in Germany.¹⁴⁵ At the beginning, as a result of such propaganda, many Soviet people believed that life in Germany would be much better and agreed to go there for work with high expectations. Also, on the territories of Western Ukraine there was a visible lack of work places. In existing sources, many former forced laborers remember how people from their city of origin went to Germany as volunteers and how German propaganda worked. For instance, a 14-year-old girl, Ekaterina Popova, said that on her way to Germany, she heard how POWs discussed Soviet people, saying that they went to Germany voluntarily.¹⁴⁶ This evidence proves that there was a high number of people who went to Germany on a volunteer base, and as a result, many people saw “forced laborers” as volunteers. What is more, this idea was widespread not only during the war but after, and as a result, many Soviet people and even children were accused for their work for Germans.

Despite the fact that wide propaganda was spread in the occupied territories, in Ukraine, for example, German authorities forced the local administration to send people from Kiev who were able to work to Germany.¹⁴⁷ They had a quota of 50 people from every district and

¹⁴³ Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 259.

¹⁴⁴ No information about the date of flyer is available. Archive of Russian History Institute. F. P-2, r. 6, op. 9, d. 25, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ekaterina Popova, *Ostarbaiter 2021: Moya Zhizn' v Germanii* [Ostarbeiter 2021: My Life in Germany], (Moscow, Voskresenie, 1997), 21.

¹⁴⁷ Ulrich, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 169.

authorities had to provide this number by exact date.¹⁴⁸ However, many people opposed forced recruitment and tried to avoid it.

Soviet children who were sent as forced laborers to Germany during the Second World War constituted a significant part of all Eastern workers. Among 5.5 million of them – 30% were children.¹⁴⁹ In 1944 there were approximately 75,000 Soviet children (according to the data of Ministry of Foreign Affairs).¹⁵⁰ The year 1942 was a starting point for children's forced departure to Germany.

Children from the USSR met with German recruitment in unexpected places. Some received letters with date, time and place of departure, others were captured in other places – in markets, in shops, during occupation of towns and villages. There are many examples in children's interviews of how they were taken for forced labor. For instance, Nikolai Gulyaev, who was born in Taganrog in 1928, remembered how he was captured with his brother when they were searching for tobacco at the market. He also said that Germans took only young people and children while others were not taken.¹⁵¹ That could be explained by German authorities searching for those who were able to work. They both were sent to Magdeburg but later moved to other factories in Regensburg. In this and other cases most children were unable to avoid being captured because firstly, many of them were taken unexpectedly, and, secondly, if someone ignored German recruitment letters, they and their family could be sent to prison or even killed. There were also examples of how parents of children tried to send the oldest brother in order to help the youngest avoid forced employment. Children were sent to Germany from a huge variety of cities and districts that were under occupation.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Pavel Polyan, "Ostarbaitery" [Ostarbeiters], *magazines.russ.ru*, 2005, <http://magazines.russ.ru/zvezda/2005/6/po8.html> (accessed 19 December, 2017).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Nikolai Aleksandrovich Gulyaev (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," *zwangsarbeit-archiv.de*), interviewed by Kozlova Alyona, Taganrog, Russian Federation, 17 July, 2005.

Consequently, there were two main ways of being sent to Germany – either voluntarily (which was not the main case for young children) or being kidnapped.

3.2. Life in Germany: Agricultural and Industrial Labor among Soviet Children

In 1942-1943 children from 14 years old could be recruited to work no more than 4 hours per day. However, starting from 1943, children from 10 years old were also employed as forced laborers. There are even data about children as young as 7 year old who worked in Germany doing such work as cleaning, collecting various items, and helping adults in camps.¹⁵² In reality, children worked more than 4 hours per day, which can be demonstrated through analysis of existing documents.

The regular workday was from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m; in some cases, children had to go to work from 4 a.m. Although Pavel Polyan emphasizes that the children's workday was no longer than 4 hours, they usually worked 12 hours per day and even more.¹⁵³ For instance, a Soviet boy, Viktor Zhabskii, remembers how he and other children had to wake up early in the morning and go to work.¹⁵⁴ Most of the examples show that there was no difference between children and adults, and all of them had the same length of work day.

When Soviet children arrived in Germany, they were either settled in barracks or sent to farms. Some were in Germany with their parents, but usually they were younger than 14 years old; others were separated from their families. Living conditions in barracks were quite poor: usually there was no pillow and blanket but only a thin cloth. Food consisted of cabbage and potato and substitute of coffee, called "ersatz." At the same time, this was a case for those who worked in factories, while those children who worked in agriculture had a chance to get

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Pavel Polyan, "Ostarbaitery" [Ostarbeiters], *magazines.russ.ru*, 2005, <http://magazines.russ.ru/zvezda/2005/6/po8.html> (accessed 19 December, 2017).

¹⁵⁴ Viktor Stepanovich Zhabskii (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," *zwangsarbeit-archiv.de*), interviewed by Kozlova Alyona, Novocherkassk, Russian Federation, 25 December, 2005.

better meals from their farmers. However, in general, the quality of food was very low. It could lead to sickness and often health problems. For example, a young Soviet boy, Viktor Shul'deshov, born in 1929, who was originally from the Altai Region but later moved to the Belgorod Region, USSR worked in a foundry in the city of Leipzig and said that:

The food had a very low quality. Once, Germans gave us something unfamiliar and we became sick. In the factory we all had problems with health. We did not have any medicine and took three days to recover.¹⁵⁵

In some interviews, children stressed that they did not have any food, but it was not a case for most of them. This comment may be connected with the type of source – an interview, - that was conducted long after the events happened.

Turning to the question of accommodation for children in Germany, it is important to emphasize that living conditions on most farms were much better. In some interviews, for instance, children stated that they had their own room where they could sleep and have some rest after the working day on farms. Some farmers allowed children to meet with their relatives if they worked separately. A notable example of this is taken from an interview with Anna Poleschuk, born in 1929, and who was 9 years old and who was sent to Germany from Pukhovichskii region of Belorussia to farms in the city of Linz in Austria. Also, her sister worked 4 kilometers from her. The German farmers allowed them to see each other on the weekend.¹⁵⁶ They also provided her with some clothes and personal care products.

All Soviet children who were sent to Germany had to wear an obligatory sewed-on piece of cloth with the word “OST” which meant “Eastern Worker”. This rule was for all Soviet people, not only children, but in most of the cases, children did not wear it. At the same time, in some factories or farms, Germans could force Soviet workers to have this sewed-on piece with them, otherwise they could be sent to prison or a concentration camp. This was an

¹⁵⁵ *My translation.* Viktor Vasilievich Shul'deshov (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Ostrovskaya Irina, Perm’, Russian Federation, 26 December, 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Anna Ivanovna Poleschuk (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Dolgovskii Aleksandr, Minsk Region, Belorussia, 18 August, 2005.

identification for all foreign workers and, for example, people from Poland had to wear “P” on their cloths.

There were two main types of work – either in the industrial sectors, in factories, or in the agricultural sector, where children did various kinds of work – gathering different materials for camps or cleaning floors and windows. One Soviet 13-year-old girl, Valentina Gridchina, in her interview remembers how she was sent to Germany with her mother and grandmother. Being sent with them made her experience better as her family supported her there. With other children as young as she, they helped to cook coffee (ersatz) while their parents worked in the factory.¹⁵⁷ The same situation was with another Soviet girl from Kyiv, Ludmila Tarasenko-Zalevskaya, born in 1929, also helped adults cleaning barracks. This girl was sent to Habelswert with her mother. She was too young to work in a factory and that is why she did another kind of work. What is interesting is that she worked only in the women’s part as men and women were strictly separated.¹⁵⁸ Anna Ermilova from the Saratov region (born in 1927), also had to clean barracks with other children. She worked in Hamburg, in the labor camp called “Radio Vyshka” (Am Funkturm).¹⁵⁹ Another Soviet girl, who was born in Griva village, Tver region, Tatyana Teplova, was 12 years old (born in 1927) and worked on Germany railroads, near the city of Zeitz. She had to clean carriages and lavatories because she also was very young. She also remembers how another 10-year-old girl cleaned windows.¹⁶⁰

Those children who were younger than others and worked in agriculture also cleaned or looked after gardens, and farm animals. Living conditions in comparison with factories

¹⁵⁷Valentina Pavlovna Gridchina (Lisovskaya) (International society “Memorial,” Moscow, Russian Federation. “Forced labor in Germany” program). Interviewed by Ostrovskaya Irina. Perm, Russian Federation, 1. 11.

¹⁵⁸ Ludmila Nikolayevna Tarasenko-Zalevskaya (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Pastushenko Tatyana, Kiev, Ukraine, 12 May, 2005.

¹⁵⁹Anna Matveevna Ermilova (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Kozlova Alyona, Astrakhan’, Russian Federation, 10 February, 2006.

¹⁶⁰Tatyana Arkhipovna Teplova (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Kozlova Alyona, Moscow, Russian Federation, 01 April, 2006.

were much better. Anna Poleshchuk, for example, said that she and her sister were sent to German farmers where she had to clean the house.¹⁶¹ In this case, she stressed that the farmer and his wife let her use the shower and gave her new clothes. In contrast, those who worked in factories and lived in camps sometimes had no opportunity even to have a shower. A 13-year-old boy, Georgii Tkachev, who was originally from Novocherkassk, remembered how the farmer in Germany where he was sent was very kind and helpful. He worked as a cattleman in various places and in 1945 was sent to the labor camp in Berlin.¹⁶² Because the farmer was not strict, this fact influenced his experience as it was a part of his motivation to survive.

Some children who came to Germany were sent to study how to work with particular equipment. It was important because many of them were too young to have experience in working in factories and operating machinery. Hence, it is clear that Germans tried to educate some children in order to make them work better. One such example is given in an interview with Mikhail Burin (born in 1931), who was 12-year-old when he was in Germany. He was born in Novogrudskii region, near Grodno, Poland. As this area was under Soviet occupation, he learned Russian and was brought up as Soviet. After he arrived to labor camp in Frankfurt-on-Main, he was sent to a locksmith in order to study for his future work in a factory.¹⁶³ The same happened with Ivan Knyazev, born in Voronezh region, who also studied at a German locksmithery in Mühlheim. Again, this was because almost all children did not have any experience in such kind of work. In some cases, adolescents, who were older than fourteen, had more knowledge and experience but still were not qualified workers.

¹⁶¹ Anna Ivanovna Poleschuk (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Dolgovskii Aleksandr, Minsk Region, Belorussia, 18 August, 2005.

¹⁶² Georgii Gavrilovich Tkachev (International society “Memorial,” Moscow, Russian Federation. “Forced labor in Germany” program). Interviewed by Ostrovskaya Irina, Novocherkassk, Russian Federation, 1. 8.

¹⁶³ Mikhail Arsen'yevich Burin (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Belanovich Alesiya, Hansen Imcke, Novogrudok, Belorussia, 16 August, 2005.

All previous examples illustrated that some Soviet children had more positive experience during their work in Germany. However, the older they were, the harder the work and working conditions they experienced. Some instances demonstrate how Soviet children under the age of 14 operated machines at factories, made detailed work for war weapons or had to work under strict control on farms. The Soviet girl Roza Soloukina, also worked in the agricultural sector faced abuse from the farm owners who were strict toward her.¹⁶⁴

Children's labor in factories depended on several factors: with whom they were sent to Germany and where; and of course, the human factor played a crucial role in children's experience. Cleaning, collecting different things and other activities were not the only case. Some children, especially those who were older than 13-years-old, had to do much more difficult work. For instance, 12-year-old Nina Meleshko, who was born in 1930 in Vileiskii region, Belorussia, had to work on the railway and move railway sleepers. She was located in the forced labor camp Gremmendorf, near the city of Munster.¹⁶⁵ Leonid Osipov (born in 1930) from Gomel region of Belorussia, worked in a factory in Dessau (Germany) as a grinder.¹⁶⁶ For such young children, this kind of work was hard but some of them said that it was not difficult in comparison with work done by adolescents and adults.

For Soviet child labor in Germany it is clear that they had to work as adults. They had the same length of workday and did not get appropriate food. The age of children in most of the cases did not matter; however, the older they were, the more possibly they could have harder work. Without a doubt, the kind of labor and working conditions depended on where children worked and with whom.

¹⁶⁴Roza Soloukhina-Zasedateleva, Nikolai Karpov, *On the Fringes of Victory. Small Ostarbeiter* [Na Zadvorkakh Pobedy. Malenkii Ostarbeiter], Pavel Polyan, Nikolai Pobol, eds. (ROSSPEN, Moscow, 2008).

¹⁶⁵Nina Petrovna Meleshko (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Belanovich Alesiya, Hansen Imcke, Belorussia, 10 August, 2005.

¹⁶⁶Leonid Pavlovich Osipov (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Kozlova Alyona, Astrakhan', Russian Federation, 08 February, 2005.

3.3. Adaptation and Methods of Surviving

One of the important factors which influenced children's labor experience in Germany was their strategies of surviving. Not all interviews of children contain information about their "free" time, and it is connected with a period when these interviews were recorded. Many of former forced laborers said that they did not remember details. Moreover, many of them worked for 12 hours per day and did not have free time for other activities. Also, it could depend on place where children worked as in some cases they even were not allowed to walk on the camp's territory where they lived. Not all children could overcome difficulties which they faced during their life in Germany. However, there are some demonstrated instances of how children tried to adapt to conditions in which they had to live during the war.

In an interview with Nina Meleshko, she said that workers of various nationalities in camps organized different activities - dancing, singing and talking. It was crucial because it helped her survive through hardships of labor.¹⁶⁷ In contrast, Ivan Knyazev in his memoirs emphasized that there were no activities in free time, nobody knew neither festivals nor birthdays.¹⁶⁸ In some interviews children remember how in the evenings they discussed their pre-war lives, their studying at school and what they would do after they returned to the USSR. These evening talks also played an important role in children's adaptation to the camp's conditions. Leonid Osipov also said that he found friends in camp and spent his time with them. However, many children from his neighborhood thought about food and not about returning home. There were also cases when children even were not allowed to talk each other. Some children cried together in the evenings and could not adapt to camp conditions.

A crucial factor for surviving was how children helped and supported each other. What is more, some Germans helped Soviet children make their experience less horrible. There are

¹⁶⁷ Nina Petrovna Meleshko (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Belanovich Alesiya, Hansen Imcke, Belorussia, 10 August, 2005.

¹⁶⁸ Ivan Vasilievich Knyazev (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Timofeeva Natalya, Voronezh Region, 13-15 July, 2005

many examples of how children shared their food and tried to find some berries, fruits or vegetables if it was possible. However, they could be captured for stealing and sent in prison for couple of days. Moreover, in some barracks there were heaters (*pechka-burzhuika*) with which children could cook some food.

The human factor played also an important role in children's experience in Germany. Some Germans, for instance, provided children with food, especially for those who worked in the agricultural sector. For instance, in the interview with Georgii Tkachev, he remembered how he got extra food from his farm keeper.¹⁶⁹

All Soviet children who experienced forced labor in Germany during the Second World War had to grow up much faster. They had to do adults' work and accept the reality which could not be combined with a "happy childhood". All children had to survive through hardships of the war. Vitalii Syomin, a young boy who was sent to Germany, wrote about his full rejection of reality which he faced:

In that time I realized what hate means. My soul was destroyed and a whole system of my child orientation in this world was destroyed <...> In camp I grew up not only physically.¹⁷⁰

This citation clearly represents the phenomenon of "sacrificing childhood", which de Graffenried introduced in her work. The war did not see a difference between child and adult and in every case, children had to accept the reality in which they were put. They had to understand how to survive in order to overcome the hardships of the war. They had to think not only about themselves but also about their relatives and people who surrounded them. In every example of children's experience, either labor or, for instance, soldiering, children had to sacrifice their childhood and this "self-sacrifice" was closely connected not only with personal security but, as de Graffenried pointed out, with "patriotic duty."¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Georgii Gavrilovich Tkachev (International society "Memorial", Moscow, Russian Federation. "Forced labor in Germany" program), interviewed by Ostrovskaya Irina. Novocherkassk, l. 6.

¹⁷⁰ My translation. Vitalii Syomin, *Nagrudnyi Znak OST* [Award Pin OST] (Rostov on Don, 1991), 94, 100.

¹⁷¹ de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*, 7.

3.4. Return and Postwar Integration of Children in Soviet Society

During the process of return back to the USSR after Germany after the war ended, potential Soviet returnees, including children, were divided in two groups. The first group of people expected to face difficulties after their return, the second group hoped to avoid punishment. At the same time, most of them wanted to return back to the USSR regardless of what would happen to them.¹⁷² On October 4, 1944, Soviet government decided to repatriate Soviet people from abroad and a special committee was established. Also, agreements on repatriation policy with the allies were reached at the Yalta conference of 1945. It was agreed that each country had to repatriate people to their countries of origin. The agreements were reached between Soviet Union, England, United States, Belgium and France. However, as Zemskov emphasizes, some of these countries tried to convince people not to return using various propagandistic methods.¹⁷³ Speaking about the repatriation of Soviet children specifically, it was a serious issue for the Soviet Union as a lot of them were sent to Germany at the very young age and without parents, and as a result, some of them became German-speakers and considered themselves as Germans. At the same time, it was common for those children who were sent to Germany as orphans and lived in foster homes before.

For most of children had been in Germany, a significant part of their experience was their way to the USSR. All of them mentioned it in interviews, stressing that the camps in which they worked and lived were liberated either by American soldiers or Soviet soldiers. When soldiers came, children and other inhabitants of the camps received some food and cloths. As Nina Meleshko, stressed, they all were very happy when camps were liberated.

¹⁷² Viktor Zemskov, “K Voprosu o Repatriatsii Sovetskikh Grazhdan” [To the Question about Repatriation of Soviet People], *History of USSR*, no. 4 (1990): 27.

¹⁷³ These countries organized a special campaign when they tried to find professors, candidates and doctors of science, and other specialists. See: Viktor Zemskov, *Vozvrashchenie Sovetskikh Perememshennykh Lits v SSSR, 1944-1952* [Return of Soviet Displaced People to the USSR, 1944-1952] (IRI RAN, Saint-Petersburg, 2016), 67.

After her return to the USSR, she continued her studies at school.¹⁷⁴ Although most of them emphasized help from the hand of allies, children also told about a wide propaganda campaign in which children and adults were told to go not to their countries of origin but to the United States, Canada or England: “The Soviet Union is destroyed, there is no place for you there, you will be seen as “enemies of the people in your country.”¹⁷⁵

However, in their interviews, children proudly state that they wanted to come back to Soviet Union and did not pay much attention to these messages. Such a desire to return was closely connected with children’s age. Also, those who were separated from their parents desired to return as they wanted to see their families and closest relatives, but at the same time, after their return many of them saw destroyed villages, towns and cities, and could not find parents immediately. At the same time, we should not exclude those who did not return to the USSR as there was a visible number of such people. In interviews, children also mention that some of people who were in camps went to other countries. Grigorii Verbitskii states that these people changed names, their places of birth in order to escape forced repatriation.¹⁷⁶

The return process was difficult and long. First of all, all the people, including children, after liberation had to go through filtration camps. After that, they were either sent to Germany or for further inspection. In case of children, it is common that most of them were sent immediately to the Soviet Union. They and their parents in most of the cases did not faced problems in filtration camps. In contrast, adults face the opposite situation and found it difficult to return home.

¹⁷⁴ Nina Petrovna Meleshko (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Belanovich Alesya, Hansen Imcke, Vileyka, Belorussia, 10 August, 2005.

¹⁷⁵ *My translation*. Inessa Borisovna Mirchevskaya (Online archive “Forced labor 1939-1945,” zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Pastushenko Tatyana, Kiev, Ukraine, 19 January, 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Grigorii Verbitskii, *Ostarbeiters: Ostarbeitery: Istoriya Rossiyan nasil'stvenno vyvezennykh v Germaniu vo Vremya Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny* [The History of Russians Sent to Germany during the Second World War] (SPBGU, Saint-Petersburg, 2004), 9.

In addition to the age of children which played a crucial role in their return, the human factor also was important during the questioning in filtration camps. Anna Ermilova, being a 14-year-old girl, stated that inspection was held without any problems and she successfully came back to Soviet Union.¹⁷⁷ Another Soviet girl, born in 1933, who returned with her mother, stated in her interview that after filtration camp they were immediately sent home:

I heard my Mother tongue. There were a lot of children. We did not do anything after liberation but after that registration began, I and my mother were called for it, and we were divided by republics: Ukraine, Belorussia, etc.¹⁷⁸

As it can be seen, children younger than sixteen did not face difficulties during the process of their return from Germany. At the same time, the older they were, the harder this process was, as those who were older could be accused in collaboration or voluntary work in Germany. However, it was more common for adults.

If the experience of return back to the Soviet Union was not as difficult as some of children imagined, the process of re-integration was much complicated as not all people in the Soviet Union saw returnees as victims. There was also an understanding of those who were in Germany as enemies because they worked there for other country's needs. However, again, such attitude was also connected with children's age as the younger they were, the less problem they had, as can be seen from interviews when children talked about their postwar experience. Most of them continued their studies at school and could successfully enter the university after that. In an interview with Nina Meleshko, she remembered how after the war she completed 7 years of school and continued her study in a medical college.¹⁷⁹ At the same

¹⁷⁷ Anna Matveevna Ermilova (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Kozlova Alyona, Astrakhan', Russian Federation, 10 February, 2006.

¹⁷⁸ *My translation.* Inessa Borisovna Mirchevskaya (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Pastushenko Tatyana, Kiev, Ukraine, 19 January, 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Nina Petrovna Meleshko (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Belanovich Alesya, Hansen Imcke, Vileyka, Belorussia, 10 August, 2005.

time, parents of children, if they returned together, faced difficulties in finding a job after return, and most of them tried to hide the fact that they had been in Germany.

Although most children did not face difficulties after the war, some of them still had problems. For instance, Galina Udaltsova, a 10-year-old girl, faced with a hostile attitude at school from her classmates. As a result, having postwar trauma and problems with health, she could not finish her studies.¹⁸⁰ Besides having postwar trauma and health issues, children also had the feeling of being guilty when they faced any accusations about being sent to Germany. Some of them mention it in their interviews while talking about the people's attitude toward them. At the same time, as was mentioned, the fact that they tried to hide their labor experience in Germany helped them to avoid any kind of accusations; however, it was more relevant for adolescents and adults.

As can be seen, for Soviet children returned from Germany the process of integration depended upon their age. However, they still could face difficulties as the whole attitude of people and country's policy toward *Ostarbeiters* was quite negative. What is more, many of them had postwar trauma and problems with health as they were too young for labor which they had to perform in Germany. As a result, a part of their experience was recovering after their return in both moral and physical terms.

In comparison with those who worked in the USSR, it is clear that in both of the cases, children's labor in both of the countries had some common features. In both examples they were seen as those who can make a contribution to the war effort. Again, as Karel Berkoff pointed out, repressive measures concerning labor were introduced in 1941 and in the Soviet Union, "the hinterland that Stalin introduced, a description of "a single forced labor camp" was quite appropriate."¹⁸¹ At the same time, he also emphasized that one of the main tools,

¹⁸⁰Galina Mikhaylovna Udaltsova (Online archive "Forced labor 1939-1945," zwangsarbeit-archiv.de), interviewed by Viktoria Semyonova, Pskov, Russian Federation, 14 July, 2005.

¹⁸¹ Berkoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 94.

which was used in this total mobilization, was the Soviet press, which aimed to mobilize people and let them show less initiative.¹⁸²

In both of the cases children experienced postwar trauma as they grew up early. The war affected children and their lives in both moral and physical term. At the same time, two cases of children's labor experience can show that in both of them they had different postwar experiences. If those who worked in the USSR could easily continue their studies and be "integrated" into the society, for forced laborers the process of reintegration was much more difficult. As Nick Baron pointed out, filtration which Soviet people faced after their return from abroad after the war can be characterized as "subjectification." It was a process of reconstruction after the war and included both self-identity and identity within the state.¹⁸³

It is difficult to call labor in the Soviet Union "forced" in its direct meaning, but at the same time, as people, and children in particular, did not have a chance to escape forced mobilization, it still could have some features of its definition. However, it is crucial to point out that labor of Soviet children in Germany could be definitely defined as forced, in that they at least had to work far from their homes. Despite this theoretical play with definitions of labor, children's personal attitude toward it is much more important in understanding of how they saw their war experience.

¹⁸² Ibid., 4.

¹⁸³ Nick Baron, "Remaking Soviet Society: the Filtration of Returnees from Nazi Germany, 1944–49," in: Gatrell P., Baron N. Eds. *Warlands. Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-1950* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009), 100.

Conclusion

Exploring the labor experience of Soviet children in the USSR and in Germany revealed the following tendencies: Soviet child labor was an inherent part of mobilization of all Soviet people including women, university students, men, and veterans. Children who were younger than 14 years old were engaged in agricultural labor, social work and in extreme cases in industrial work. At the same time, those who were older than 14 years old were called to enroll in the FZO (factory schools) and after studying there worked in factories. These children being a huge part of the Soviet workforce, made a significant contribution to the war effort but at the same time had to “sacrifice” their childhood. Even if they did it unconsciously, the fact that they had to work as adults and participate in various activities, shows that children had to grow up faster. Besides working in the Soviet Union, children experienced forced labor in Germany, and also had to perform work in agricultural and industrial sectors. The work in some examples in the USSR was the same as was for those who worked in Germany – they worked on machines, drilled, polished, made details for weapon or war equipment. The experience of those who worked in Germany was different but at the same time they also had to adapt to the reality which they faced and grow up early, even if they were sent to Germany with their parents.

As for state propaganda in both cases, it aimed to engage as many children as possible. If in the Soviet Union it was an important part of mobilization and children’s motivation for labor, in Germany it was also a part of motivation for children and entire population to work there. At the same time, in the case of Germany, propaganda lost its influence very fast as people understood what they would face if they went there on a voluntarily basis.

In this thesis I came to the conclusion that Soviet children who experienced labor during the Second World War saw it as their “patriotic duty.” In the Soviet Union they were motivated by making a contribution to the war effort, helping their parents and other people,

even though that fact that they did not have any easy way to escape labor. In Germany, “patriotic duty” also played an important role in children’s motivation as they worked in order to survive. In all the interviews that were used in this thesis, for children who worked in Germany, labor was their opportunity to come back to the USSR, as many of them wanted to return. At the same time, some children even tried to escape in order to return to the Soviet Union, but these escapes were often not successful. As Nick Baron pointed out, after the war, youths “became ever more conscious of the complexity and contingency of life as well as of the potential meanings and wider ramifications of events. At the same time, they become physically stronger, cognitively more developed and more able to take care of themselves and others.”¹⁸⁴

In addition, in this thesis the history of Soviet children who experienced labor in two countries was put together in order to understand how they saw what they faced. Before, this comparative aspect was not covered by scholars and there was number of reasons for it. Hence, this thesis attempted to fill the gap and to put the history of children in a broader context of the history of Soviet childhood and the Second World War.

Without a doubt, war influenced Soviet children and their future life. Those who worked in the Soviet Union were a war generation and were fundamentally changed by their experience. Also, as Juliane Fürst pointed out, these children had a common background, war experience in particular, which united them together.¹⁸⁵ The postwar life of those who came back from Germany depended on people who surrounded them. It is well-known that many Soviet people faced difficulties after their return to the USSR as they were accused of working for the “enemy.” It was a common problem for adults, but children could also face it. At the same time, for many of them there were opportunities to continue studying at schools and

¹⁸⁴ Nick Baron, “Placing Children in Twentieth-Century History: Contexts and Framework,” in *Displaced Children in Russia and Eastern Europe, 1915–1953: Ideologies, Identities, Experiences*, ed. Nick Baron (Brill: Leiden, 2017), 11.

¹⁸⁵ Juliane Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*, 32.

enter universities. Nevertheless, all Soviet children had to be re-integrated into the postwar Soviet society.

Although this thesis has investigated the labor experience of Soviet children from both perspectives, further research is needed in order to look closely at how their experience is remembered today in modern society, and to understand what policy modern states have in remembrance of those children who faced “self-sacrifice” during the Second World War.

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