

chapter on the postcolonial development of “blood diamonds” in Sierra Leone, Angola, and Zimbabwe.

Violent political upheaval after independence, the tendency of some rulers to assume and retain power at any cost, the easy access to alluvial diamonds, and the general culture in the global diamond trade and industry not to ask too many questions about provenance all help to explain how diamonds financed long and brutal civil conflicts. Both for Angola and Sierra Leone, Cleveland describes these conflicts in detail, but his analysis would have gained depth had he combined it with the information he gave in the previous chapters. Here, he explained how British indirect rule in Sierra Leone relied on paramount chiefs, and how it permitted illegal diamond mining and selling and a system in which miners were paid a share of what they found rather than in the form of a fixed wage. Ultimately, this undermined the state’s control and fostered corruption. This background helps us to understand the partial path-dependency of Sierra Leone’s postcolonial blood diamond history.

The penultimate chapter gives counterexamples and sketches the success story of diamond developments in Namibia, but most of all in Botswana. In Botswana, diamond deposits were discovered after the country’s independence, and its democratic government immediately nationalized the subsoil mineral resources. The very rich kimberlite mines proved to be enormously productive and caused huge economic growth that was also used to fund infrastructure, education, and health services. Although Cleveland observes the negative aspects of diamond developments even in these two countries, in his final chapter he ends with a tentatively positive view on the future of diamond developments in Africa.

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IVANOVA, GALINA, STEFAN PLAGGENBORG. *Entstalinisierung als Wohlfahrt. Sozialpolitik in der Sowjetunion 1953–1970*. Aus dem Russischen von Lukas Mücke und Shirin Schnier. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main [etc.] 2015. 280 pp. € 34.90.

Soviet social policy, understood as a protective and coherent policy, was founded and implemented only after Stalin’s death and flourished in the following decades. Galina Ivanova has written the first comprehensive history of this process to appear in German.<sup>1</sup> The author examines the political, economic, and financial aspects of Soviet social policy from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. Besides published sources, she has used materials from several central Russian archives, including the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). Among the RGANI materials – most of which have been available to

1. There is, however, an earlier monograph by the same author in Russian. G.M. Ivanova, *Na poroge „gosudarstva vseobshchego blagosostoianiiia“*. *Sotsial’naia politika v SSSR (seredina 1950-kh – nachalo 1970-kh godov)* (Moscow, 2011).

researchers only since around 2000 – are protocols of discussions on the state budget and state economic planning in the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Another rich sample of sources from the RGANI are collections of citizens' letters on critical aspects of social policy, which were dealt with by different departments of the Central Committee.

The temporal and causal connections between de-Stalinization and social reform are obvious. World War II had led to social eruptions on such a scale that the regime had to play a more active role. It was only after Stalin's death and with the onset of de-Stalinization that social reform really began and the "socialist welfare state" (p. 45) started to emerge. The author takes the assumption that a basic definition of the welfare state, as derived from the experience in Western countries, can be applied to the Soviet Union for a certain period, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s: a state that fulfils social security functions and guarantees to satisfy the basic social needs of its citizens. This definition holds true, although economic conditions and mechanisms in the Soviet Union differed significantly from those in Western countries (planned economy, state control of consumption, and administrative control of resources). In an attempt to make the Soviet welfare state comparable with others, Ivanova draws on a typology adduced by the sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen. He describes the conservative welfare state (Germany, Italy, and others), the liberal (US, Great Britain, and Japan), and the social democratic (Scandinavia). The Russian-Soviet case, Ivanova argues, is one of "state paternalism": it is the activity of the state that guarantees (or aims to guarantee) to fulfil the social needs of its citizens. Following Gerd Meyer (on the GDR) and Ulrike Götting (on Central and Eastern Europe), Ivanova presents state paternalism as an addition to Esping-Andersen's typology. The Soviet welfare system was based, she stresses, on the principles of egalitarianism and universalism.

In the context of the Cold War, ideological opposition framed mutual receptions. The works of Western scholars on the welfare state were little known in the Soviet Union and for most scholars de facto unavailable. In the general political debate, reception was hindered by negative connotations of "welfare state" and other terms when applied to Western countries. Much criticized was the high retirement age in Western countries as opposed to the low retirement age (fifty-five years for women and sixty for men) in the Soviet Union. Little appreciated was also the fact that social insurance premiums were deducted from workers' and employees' wages in Western countries while in the Soviet Union the state paid for social benefits directly through the social consumption funds (*fondy obshchestvennogo potrebleniia*). Soviet and Western concepts were confronted with each other at international conferences on social politics, the first of which took place in New York in 1968. Soviet specialists regarded the Soviet model as leading in the world. They argued that it implied clear regulations and few bureaucratic formalities. Social policy thus provided legitimacy within the country and in its foreign relations.

That legitimacy came at a price. The level of social spending of different kinds grew substantially in the period under examination. On average, social spending (understood as all expenditure from the consumption fund) made up thirty per cent of all budget spending. Social spending exceeded military spending until the end of the 1970s, when the balance tipped. The author dates the heyday of the welfare state to the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, when social benefits broadened substantially. In this period, the kolkhoz peasants were integrated fully into the welfare system, and the monetary income of the population increased. As a consequence, the state's budget was overstretched. The second half of the 1970s saw a worsening financial and structural crisis of the socialist welfare state.

One chapter of this book is devoted to the consumption funds that formed the basis of the state's social policy. They provided for monetary payments such as pensions and financed

services in public health, education, and sports. The funds were promoted by Nikita Khrushchev, who praised them in 1959 as a “truly communist way” of raising the population’s welfare. In the following decades, however, the size and structure of the consumption funds was much debated, even among economists. The author traces their development and those debates well into the 1980s.

In order to characterize the relationship between the powerful and the people, the term “social contract” (*Gesellschaftsvertrag*) is used. The contract secured the loyalty and work input of citizens to the highest echelons of power and, on the other hand, guaranteed paternalistic social welfare to the people. While this contract model is neither new, nor very complex, it seems to adequately characterize the situation of these decades. Additionally, the communication between the ruling circles and ordinary citizens is emphasized. Citizens contributed to the debates on social policy through letters and petitions to state and party leaders. These writings were regularly scrutinized and served as a source of information on critical situations for the party leadership.

The Soviet welfare system’s performance is evaluated differently in retrospect. Was it, as the sociologist B.A. Grushin wrote in 2003, “boundless poverty” that characterized Soviet everyday life and that could not be prevented by the state with its miserably low benefits? (p. 256). Grushin’s argument that people had, over time, adjusted to a very low standard of living and did not protest against it for this reason is not fully rejected by Ivanova. But she puts the living standard of the 1970s into perspective: it was considerably higher than twenty years before, and the housing situation – as is well known, the most critical realm of social life – was less strained. The quality of social assistance was low, as was social support. But living standards increased, and consumption was stimulated by social policy. Ivanova rejects the argument that the paternalist welfare system led to a lack of initiative on the part of citizens. Benefits were simply too low, and the low quality of social provision forced people to search for alternatives in exchange for payment.

In her conclusion, the author states that the transition from a social policy based on the production principle to one based on the egalitarian, universal provision of social goods happened gradually, starting in the 1950s and being completed in the early 1970s. The state provided for benefits based on rights regulated by law, which made humiliating procedures to prove one’s neediness unnecessary. On the other hand, most social services were available only through waiting lists and without many options to choose from. Despite the provision of services, the system could not always keep people out of poverty. Over time, the state increased its investment in social policy. But given the low productivity of the Soviet economy, these investments became a heavy burden for the state. Nevertheless, social policy was one of the most important factors in society’s stabilization and helped greatly to legitimize the regime.

The Soviet welfare state shapes Russian society to this day. Contemporary Russian society has evaluated it positively, and Soviet politics have shaped people’s understanding of welfare. The author cites a 2003 opinion poll, according to which fifty-seven per cent of respondents said they believed Soviet society was more just than current society. Most people regard the state, primarily, as being responsible for social security.

Some critical remarks on the book must be made. The chapters are not very well structured, which makes it difficult for the reader to follow Ivanova’s arguments. The many, very interesting source quotations would have benefited from additional commentary. The conclusion is short and could have been more extensive, the more so as the chapters themselves do not have conclusions. And, unfortunately, there is no index to the book.

In the form of a “Preface”, Stefan Plaggenborg contributes a kind of thirteen-page meta-introduction. He has directed a research project at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, of which the present book is one result.<sup>2</sup> In this preface, he aims to explain the historical context of Soviet social politics, summarizing the book’s results and putting them in a comparative context of social politics and the welfare state. An epilogue would have served this purpose better.

Plaggenborg highlights the contrast between the state’s social policy under Khrushchev and Brezhnev and the Stalinist system preceding it. He writes: “Social policy is de-Stalinization”, whereas during Stalinism deprivation and being unprotected prevailed. Besides terror, a constitutive element of Stalinism was, he concludes, the social misery in which the bulk of the population lived.

In the post-Stalin period, the Soviet Union was on its way to becoming a “social planned economy” (analogous to the social market economy) in which the rise of production was no longer the only aim. Plaggenborg concedes, though, that this change of direction in state politics was always under debate and that reality has erected serious obstacles to its achievement. Soviet leaders have (in retrospect) regarded workers’ low productivity, the “human factor”, as the most important of these obstacles. Plaggenborg asks whether this view does not contain some truth. Did workers not understand that they had to finance the social security systems through their work? As the author himself recognizes, this question cannot be answered on the basis of available sources. And it also seems unfair, as the root of low productivity could be found in the economic system itself. The concept of “social planned economy”, however, is definitely worth further consideration.

This book treats the subject in a multi-perspective way, based on a broad range of sources. The study gains from including the East–West divide and from drawing not only on political sources, but also on Soviet sociological and economic literature. Another strong point is its detailed examination of the consumption funds, which have so far been understudied. Surely, the debate on the Soviet welfare state is not over yet. And this study is an important contribution that will greatly enhance research in this field. It would be very useful to have an English version of it.

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2. The second, so far, is devoted to retirement benefits: Lukas Mücke, *Die allgemeine Altersrentenversorgung in der UdSSR 1956–1972* (Stuttgart, 2013).