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# **ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ СОВЕТСКИХ ГОСОРГАНОВ В СИСТЕМЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ**

# THE ACTIVITIES OF SOVIET STATE BODIES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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The activities of Soviet state bodies in the education system

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# In children's institutions of Kuzbass: 1945—1950

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**Abstract.** The article analyzes the problems of child homelessness and neglect in Kuzbass. The characteristics of the material, living conditions of detention, provision of pupils in children's distribution centers and orphanages are given. The issues of physical condition, education, the formation of a communist worldview and morality, as well as the employment of graduates of orphanages, the problems of their supply with housing, clothing and shoes are considered.

The authors conclude that the level of homelessness and neglect in the rear area of the country in the post-war years was high. Multinational children's collectives contained orphans taken from the siege of Leningrad, children of repressed parents and special settlers, children of dead front-line soldiers, as well as children abandoned by mobilized workers from many parts and regions of the Soviet Union. The situation of the pupils of children's institutions in Kuzbass was significantly influenced by the difficulties experienced by the country's population in the post-war period.

The article is based on documentary sources kept in the Information Center of the Main Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Kemerovo Region.

**Keywords:** homelessness, neglect, Kuzbass, children's reception centers, orphanages, school education, factory training schools, morbidity of orphans, Department for Combating Child Neglect and Homelessness in Kuzbass

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### Деятельность советских госорганов в системе образования

Научная статья

# ${ m B}$ детских учреждениях Кузбасса: 1945—1950 гг.

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Аннотация. В статье анализируются проблемы детской беспризорности и безнадзорности в Кузбассе. Дана характеристика материальных, бытовых условий содержания, обеспечения воспитанников в детских приемниках-распределителях и детских домах. Рассмотрены вопросы физического состояния, обучения, формирования коммунистического мировоззрения и морали, а также трудоустройства выпускников детских домов, проблемы их снабжения жильем, одеждой и обувью.

Авторы приходят к выводам о том, что уровень беспризорности и безнадзорности в послевоенные годы в стране был высок. В многонациональных детских коллективах содержались вывезенные ранее из блокадного Ленинграда сироты, дети репрессированных родителей и спецпоселенцев, дети погибших фронтовиков, а также дети, брошенные мобилизованными рабочими из многих краев и областей Советского Союза. На положение воспитанников детских учреждений Кузбасса существенное влияние оказывали трудности, которые испытывало население страны в послевоенное время.

Статья написана на основе документальных источников, хранящихся в информационном центре ГУ МВД России по Кемеровской области.

**Ключевые слова:** беспризорность, безнадзорность, Кузбасс, детские приемникираспределители, детские дома, школьное образование, школы фабрично-заводского обучения, заболеваемость детей-сирот, Отдел по борьбе с детской беспризорностью и безнадзорностью в Кузбассе

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In the 1940s–1950s Kuzbass, like many rear areas of the country, was swept by a wave of child homelessness and neglect. The process of eliminating homelessness and neglect was regulated by a whole series of state directives, resolutions, and instructions [1]. Orphans were distributed to children's institutions through special commissions under the executive committees of the regional, regional, city and district Councils of Workers' Deputies. These commissions included: Deputy Chairman of the executive committee, members of the Komsomol, representatives of trade unions, NKVD bodies, public education, and health. This issue was under the strict control of the NKVD – the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, the Council of People's Commissars of the Union and Autonomous Republics. During 1946–1950, the bureau of the Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (b), city and district party committees in the major cities of Kuzbass annually adopted a detailed decision "On measures to prevent homelessness and neglect" [2, 1.113–115]. In Kuzbass, orphanhood issues were supervised by departments and departments for combating child homelessness

and neglect at the Prosecutor's office of the region, and since 1944 a group for juvenile affairs was established, which performed the functions of supervision.

The NKVD of the USSR was entrusted with the duties of identifying all street children and street children and placing them in distribution receivers. Both during the war and in the post-war period, street children and teenagers from three to 15–16 (and sometimes 17) years old were admitted to children's distribution centers (CDC) inclusive [3, 1, 69–72], and then orphans (including children of German settlers and repatriates) were sent through the public education authorities to children's homes under the authority of the People's Commissariat of Education. Children under three years old entering reception and distribution centers were identified by the local health authorities in the homes of the baby (children's homes). Adolescents over 14 years old, but mostly from 15 to17 years old who have completed grades 5–7 were enrolled in Factory Schools (FS), Craft Schools. Those who have completed the training in the assessment of the People's Commissariat of the Union Republics, were sent to work in industry or agriculture.

In the Kemerovo region in the 1940s–1950s, there were six children's reception centers located in different settlements (Mariinsky, Stalinsky, Kemerovo, Tutalsky, Anzhero-Sudzhensky, Leninsk-Kuznetsky), with a capacity of 450 places. Due to the large "influx" of children in 1944, it was decided to open a seventh one, located in Prokopyevsk. At the end of the Great Patriotic War, five children's police rooms were operating in Kuzbass (Stalinsk, Prokopyevsk, Leninsk-Kuznetsky, Kemerovo, Anzhero-Sudzhensk). Formally, they were registered with the departments of public education. In the region there were 22 vocational schools and 33 factory training schools (FZO), which were under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Education (until 1946) [3, 1, 121].

As soon as they were enrolled in any children's institution, all future pupils underwent a medical examination. During the examination, more than 90% were diagnosed with "dystrophy" of 1, 2 degrees, tuberculosis, pneumonia, acute respiratory diseases. Some of the pupils were infected with typhus, the epidemic of which was raging at that time in the north of the Kemerovo region, and in the spring of 1946 they fell ill.

For new arrivals to children's institutions, it was necessary to carry out a series of quarantine measures, take tests for the presence of infectious diseases. In local conditions, it turned out to be impossible to do this quickly. Sanitary and bacteriological laboratories were in large cities (Kemerovo, Stalinsk, Tomsk), at a considerable distance from children's shelters. In the village of Tutalskoye<sup>1</sup>, in Yurga and in Mariinsk they were completely absent, so for the necessary tests and vaccinations, the pupils had to be taken quite far, for example, to Tomsk [4, p. 11].

In each of the children's shelters, the approximate number should have been from 40 to 60–80 people and staying in them – no more than two weeks. However, in 1946, the duration of residence in the CDC ranged from two weeks to one to three, and sometimes up to five months with an average workload of 90–100 people, and sometimes their number reached 130–140 people. In the Kemerovo region in the 1940s–1950s, there were six NKVD-MIA children's distribution receivers (Kemerovo, Stalin, Anzhero-Sudzhensky, Leninsk-Kuznetsky, Tutalsky, Mariinsky), and at the end of December 1945, due to the increase in street children, a seventh one was opened in Prokopyevsk. Judging by the reports of the Department for Combating Child Homelessness and Neglect of the NKVD of the Kemerovo region for 1945–1946, more than 15 000–20 000 homeless and neglected children annually. For this reason, the need for distribution receivers and orphanages was very large. There was a similar picture in other parts of the country<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Tutalskoye is a village located in the Yashkinsky district, a railway station. Administratively, the station and the settlement at the station were part of the Polomoshinsky Village Council of the Kemerovo region.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> More about this: [5, p. 64–79].

There were plenty of reasons for that. Firstly, all children and adolescents were admitted to the receiver-distributor in an extremely depleted state, so, they were unhealthy or infected [6, 1.56-57]. Secondly, in the spring of 1946 (as in the subsequent 1947) the epidemic situation in the region worsened, and the incidence of scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis increased. As a result, the administration of the Tutalsky<sup>1</sup> CDC needed time to take sanitary and hygienic and preventive measures appropriate to the situation. If the infectious disease was diagnosed immediately, then the children were determined for treatment in local hospitals. In the second half of 1946, the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kemerovo region stated that all orphans could receive timely assistance both in hospitals and in outpatient, in medical institutions of the region. However, the morbidity rate of street children was very high, there were not enough beds in hospitals. The reports stated that all hospitals were provided with sufficient medical supplies. However, significant child mortality rates in all Western Siberian regions showed the opposite, as repeatedly stated at various meetings of party organizations [6, l. 60-61]. After recovery, additional tests required a long time. As a result, orphanages were regularly, almost monthly, closed for quarantine. For example, the Tutalsky reception center practically did not leave quarantine due to the spread of scarlet fever and measles throughout 1946, and its "guests" on average stayed within its walls for more than two months. In the 2nd quarter of 1946, there were 35 people in Tutalsky. In the 3rd quarter, there were already 434 people. In the 2nd quarter of 1946, there were 35 people. Because of the constant outbreaks of infectious diseases [2, 1, 56].

In the second half of 1946, the leadership of the region stated that it was very difficult to solve the issue of transferring pupils from children's homes to orphanages due to untimely medical examinations. There was almost no diagnosis for tuberculosis There was no tuberculin preparation in Kuzbass, so it was impossible to carry out the necessary tuberculin diagnostics – a specific test using a single intradermal tuberculin Mantoux test (Pirke reaction) for all those who were in the distribution receivers. Pirke's reaction made it possible to diagnose tuberculosis in children in its early stages. This made it possible to take timely measures for its treatment and prevention. Tuberculosis was the fifth leading cause of child mortality in the post-war period. In this connection, the Ministry of Health of the USSR on 02.12.1947 issued an order for 487 "On strengthening the fight against tuberculosis" [7, p. 58–64].

All orphanages were equipped with dezokamerams, so, as a rule, there were no problems with the disinfection of clothes. However, it was very difficult to resolve the issue of providing the pupils with new clothes and shoes, since the clothes in which they arrived for wearing were completely unsuitable. The transfer to orphanages was delayed, including due to the lack of necessary equipment in sufficient quantities.

In most orphanages in the post-war years, the "re-set" of pupils was permanent. The administration was required to free up space in the organization faster, but it was not always possible to do this for the above-mentioned reasons. Only by 1947, Tutalsky child-receiver-distributor began to cope with a large influx of children and had a small number of pupils with violations of the terms of their stay in this institution.

Children's distribution receivers were funded from the local budgets of the Sovnarkoms of the Union Republics and the People's Commissariat of Finance of the USSR. In the post-war conditions, all children's organizations experienced material and financial problems. This was explained not only by the difficulties of the post-war period, but also often by inconsistency with local authorities. In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Tutalsky children's receiver-distributor of the NKVD was in the village of Tutalskoye in the Yashkinsky district of the Kemerovo region. There was an orphanage in the village, where children of special settlers of various nationalities were also sent.

the first post-war period, unsanitary conditions and poor-quality cooking took place in children's shelters. Often food was covered with dirty rags; children were given breadcrumbs instead of bread. In the bedrooms, the mattresses were not sewn up, and there were not enough boards on the beds. The pupils walked dirty; many had no shoes of any kind. It was cold in the rooms. Until 1947, there was no private bathhouse in the Tutalsky children's hospital, which is why the sanitary treatment of newly admitted children was carried out in one of its main buildings. The administration has repeatedly asked the region to allocate funds for the construction of a bathhouse, arguing that washing in an unsuitable room leads to damage to the structure [8, l. 156–157].

They were able to cope with the tasks of material support when the Department for Combating Child Homelessness and Neglect of the Kemerovo region appealed to the directors of the factories with requests for the release of beds, dishes, and other equipment, as well as for financial support in purchasing the necessary sets of clothes and shoes. It should be noted that despite the post-war difficulties, industrial enterprises of the region provided feasible assistance to children's institutions almost everywhere.

The first skills of Soviet education were obtained by children and teenagers while they were in the CDC, where three hours a day were given to school classes and preparation for them. Initially, everyone studied Russian, learned to read, and write.

Educational work was subordinated to the tasks of forming a communist worldview and morality, instilling skills for collective socialist labor and careful attitude to property. To do this, from time to time they tried to conduct conversations and political information with the pupils, read books and newspapers aloud, learned poems, learned songs, watched movies four times a month with their subsequent discussion, and sometimes arranged matinees dedicated to significant Soviet historical dates and events. Choral and drama clubs operated in the Tutalsky children's home, they studied a short course of the CPSU (b) to instill love for the leaders of the Soviet Union and their comrades-in-arms, pride in the socialist motherland. The selection of books in libraries was carefully monitored, "undesirable" literature by foreign authors was withdrawn from their collections [9, 1. 234–236].

All groups were divided by age, which is why many brothers and sisters were separated. In the younger groups, educators tried to pay more attention to the kids. In the older ones, they tried to attract teenagers to self-government, chose ward elders, attendants, orderlies.

The staff of the orphanage, as a rule, was multinational, its members had various personal, often negative, experiences and social "baggage". There were children of front-line soldiers, and those taken out of besieged Leningrad, children of repatriates, repressed parents, special settlers (including Germans), and those who, for various reasons, found themselves "on the street".

The leadership of the region paid great attention to the selection of personnel (educators, nannies). Mostly, educators were appointed persons who had pedagogical education, work experience with children and positive characteristics. However, this rule was not always respected due to a shortage of personnel, so those who worked in orphanages studied in absentia at pedagogical schools, improved their skills at various courses organized by the Regional Educational Society. In rural areas, local teachers, or Komsomol members, were hired. Mostly they were young women. On their shoulders lay not only the fulfillment of their direct duties, but also the care of "wounded children". The children, who lost their mothers, suffered grief and suffering, especially babies, were weak, often sick, and cried at night. Morbidity in children's homes was a serious problem and, as noted by the regional health department, this issue deserved the most serious and immediate solution by the local authorities and the USSR Ministry of

Education. Thus, the reports of the Regional Educational Society commissions recorded the presence of an impressive number of malnourished, as well as psychologically traumatized children and adolescents.

At the same time, people from orphanages recalled the ability of educators and teachers to "warm up", to give warmth, care, and attention. Many years later, a letter came to the Kolyon orphanage with words of gratitude from Wilbert Petsher, who lived in Germany, immigrants from Bessarabia, who was simply called Vitya in the children's collective.

From the constantly difficulties with the availability of places in orphanages, children were often "transferred" from one institution to another. As the principle of relationship was not considered during the transfer, many brothers and sisters were separated. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, sick children were sent to hospitals, and after recovery, they could be placed in a completely different orphanage. Secondly, after graduation, older brothers or sisters entered to the handicraft schools, Factory Training Schools, and their younger relatives remained in orphanages. Thirdly, from time to time the orphanages were quarantined; accordingly, all the pupils were transferred to another one. Such cases of transfer to orphanages were not rare.

There are no secondary (low-grade) schools in different villages, but mostly primary ones. Consequently, in order to continue the education, they needed to transfer the child from one locality to another. The youngest "residents" of the Kolyon orphanage, organized within the walls of the local school of the village of Kolyon in the Izhmorsky district, were more fortunate than others. There was a seven-year-old school in the village, where children and teenagers studied together with local children for the whole period of time.

At the beginning of the school year, all children and teenagers from seven years old and older who are in orphanages were placed behind a school desk in nearby village junior secondary or primary schools. As a rule, these were elementary schools and junior high schools-seven-year-olds. In Kuzbass, as in the whole country, the percentage of those who were not enrolled in general education was high. At the end of 1945–1946, there were 5 677 children who did not study in the region, 434 of them were children of special settlers. However, those who got into an orphanage attended school [10, 1.134].

They studied according to the Soviet school program with a standard set of subjects in each class. Boys and girls were taught separately. Soviet education was designed not only to solve the problems of education, but also to instill skills for work, to educate the "young builders of communism" in the spirit of state patriotism and proletarian internationalism, to form their socialist beliefs and views.

In the first, second and third grades, children were identified regardless of age, but considering their training. There were not enough textbooks and school supplies, because of that there were difficulties with homework. Often one manual was for the whole team, and it was necessary to write on top of torn sheets from various books [11, 1. 137].

The serious problem, which difficult to solve, in the first post-war decade was the supply of orphanages. So, for example, in the Kemerovo region in the winter of 1946, pupils of children's institutions were not provided with felt boots and outerwear, which the conditions of the Siberian winter led to cases of frostbite and contributed to an increase in the incidence of children and adolescents, especially pneumonia. In the "coal" region, local authorities have not allocated fuel. The issue of providing these institutions with coal was solved thanks to the intervention of the Deputy People's Commissar of the Coal Industry of the Soviet Union, V.S. Abakumov<sup>1</sup>, who was in Kemerovo at that time. The Department of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Abakumov Viktor Semenovich (1908–1954) – political leader, colonel general, commissar of state security of the 2nd rank), minister of state security of the USSR (1946–1951). Cm.: [12].

Combating Child Homelessness and neglect with his help achieved the release of coal to all children's organizations of the region from the trusts of the People's Commissariat of the Coal Industry (Narkomugol) [13, 1, 9].

Orphanages, nurseries, children's home, as well as orphanages in Kuzbass were catastrophically overcrowded. At the end of the war, 50 orphanages were opened in the Kemerovo region. Among them, 42 are for schoolchildren and eight preschools. In November 1945, another orphanage with a special regime of maintenance was opened, and the following year, for the initiative of the management of industrial enterprises and local Councils, orphanages at the Kuznetsk Metallurgical Combine and Ferroalloy Plant began to work. By 1949, seven industrial enterprises of the region had orphanages for orphans whose parents had ever worked for them [14, 1.78-79]. Despite this, there were not enough places in children's institutions in the second half of the 1940s - in the 1950s in Kuzbass. Firstly, the level of homelessness and neglect in the rear area of the country was very high. The multinational children's collectives included orphans, which had been taken out of besieged Leningrad, children of repressed parents and special settlers, and children of dead front-line soldiers, and also abandoned by mobilized workers from many territories and regions of the Soviet Union. Secondly, for various reasons, "overgrown" (teenagers over 14-15 years old), who also graduated from two or three grades of school, they did not have time to get the minimum education that was necessary to work at enterprises by their adulthood, were detained in children's institutions.

When teenagers were sent to work in industry and agriculture, receivers-distributors and orphanages had to provide the minors with the necessary clothing in the sum about 200 rubles per person. At the same time, clothes and shoes were provided by local authorities at the request of the NKVD–MVD. The management of enterprises and state farms, the chairmen of the boards of collective farms, employing teenagers, had to provide them with housing. However, in cities and villages it was sorely missed [15]. The Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kemerovo region noted that people from orphanages were in extreme need, especially in the provision of warm clothes, so necessary in the cold Siberian autumn and winter [16, 1. 135].

At the incomplete general village schools, children generally finished five or seven grades and then entered special craft and railway schools with a two- or four-year study period for teenagers, or factory training schools (FZO) with a six- or ten-month study period, respecting all admission rules and taking into account the applications of industrial enterprises in the region [17, p. 139–141].

Young people who completed five years of school and then technical schools were sent to work in industry, and some of them were sent to agricultural work on collective and state farms in the Kemerovo region, but to "menial" and low-paid jobs.

Moreover, there were several reasons for this [18]. Firstly, it was almost impossible to employ 14–17-year-old teenage orphans in enterprises with high salaries, because they lacked production skills. In the industrial region, first of all, "men's hands" and skilled workers were needed. There were not enough places for female labor in Kuzbass, as well as in Novosibirsk and other Siberian regions. Kolkhozes and state farms were also reluctant to accept orphanage leavers (especially girls), because they could not provide them with sufficient work, housing, and especially means of subsistence. Despite repeated instructions from Moscow, the Labor Reserves Administration promoted the employment of teenagers with great wariness.

Secondly, the problem of employment, especially for young people from among the special settlers, was resolved slowly. Enterprises refused to hire teenagers because they did not have enough student personnel and no funds for clothing and shoes. The workers' dormitories were overcrowded and there was a cata-

strophic shortage of places. However, the most important reason was the low level of qualifications of young people and the lack of professional skills. The problem of the situation of working youth was repeatedly considered and became key on the agenda of the regional executive committee, at meetings with the leaders of industrial cooperation, with the administration of industrial enterprises, with Komsomol members and with representatives of the regional prosecutor's office.

To summarize, it is fashionable to note the following. In the industrial region of Kuzbass, the level of homelessness and neglect was very high in the first postwar years and remained high in the first half of the 1950s. The reasons were the difficult recovery period after the end of the Great Patriotic War and the unresolved social problems of the majority of the Soviet population. In the rear region there were a large number of industrial enterprises evacuated from the European part of the country, mobilized workers, as well as special contingents. The Soviet government took decisive measures to eliminate homeless children. However, this problem continued into the subsequent 1950s.

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