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Stalin's humanitarian government: class, child homelessness and state security in a historical perspective (1930s–40s)

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ABSTRACT

Informed by Didier Fassin's concept of humanitarian government, this article reveals a distinct pattern of secret care provisions imposed under Stalin by the secret police and its successor agencies (NKVD, MVD) first to the peasant children displaced by class war and the famine of 1932–33, and then to the children made homeless by the Great Terror and the 1940s' national deportations. The article also identifies the under-researched reception centres as crucial sites for both administering emergency assistance and establishing the social classification necessary to apply these discriminatory measures. Affected by the decreasing faith in their possible socialist rehabilitation and lack of any official display of compassion, these children's lives appeared even less worthy of saving in the course of major emergencies. These findings challenge the official Soviet view of the existence of a universal childhood worth protecting, which guided the first socialist country's intervention to save other children nationally and internationally.

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Introduction

Class was central to the socialist worldview and experience. Yet, official Stalinist legislation AQ3 regulating child welfare, that is, the system consisting of laws, agencies and residential and non-residential care provisions for homeless children (*besprizorniki*), appears surprisingly unbiased from a class perspective even at the height of the class war in the 1930s. Thus, one could erroneously infer that the Soviet child-welfare system established in the 1920s, and dominated by the Commissariat of Education and an ad hoc interagency Commission for the Improvement of Children's Life (hereafter: Children's Commission), simply expanded to automatically absorb the hundreds of thousands of children displaced by class war.[1] This creates a gap in the history of Russian and Soviet child homelessness between the tsarist era, when it was considered a form of parental neglect experienced by proletarian children, and the official creation of a classless Soviet society sanctioned by the 1936 Constitution.[2] It also hides a template of parallel, secret social policy that went on to be applied to the children of other enemies of the state, who were persecuted for their political untrustworthiness or nationality until the end Stalinism.[3]

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This class-neutral perception informs a large part of the existing specialized literature on Soviet child welfare that touches upon the 1930s. Although this does not ignore the repressive aspects of Stalinist social policy, by mainly focusing on *official,* class-neutral, policies and socializing programmes or care provisions with a positive outcome, inevitably it might overestimate its compassionate side, even when the secret police were involved.[4] The literature also fails to appreciate the evolution of the official view of child homelessness from an issue of welfare and public order into one of state security, which has been highlighted by historians of Soviet policing.[5] Nor is the gap filled by the scholarship on the impact of Stalinist political repressions on children, for this leaves any arrangements for children of enemies defined by class (or subsequent enemies) unexplained in the wider context of Soviet social policy on child homelessness.[6]

By contrast, this study discusses the formation and delivery of less well-known class-biased extra-legal care provisions, in large part formulated by ad hoc central governmental commissions in the early 1930s and overseen by the secret police. This casts new light on the gradual encroachment of the secret police in the child-welfare system in the first part of the 1930s and their eventual takeover of the nationwide network of reception centres (in Russian, *prinimateli-raspredeliteli,* literally 'admission-distribution centres'), an under-researched innovation sanctioned by the law 'On the Liquidation of Child Homelessness, Neglect and Hooliganism' (31 May 1935), a pillar of Stalinist child welfare.[7] These facilities gave homeless children temporary shelter before deciding the necessary residential or non-residential care provisions, so setting the terms of their reintegration into Soviet society.[8]

Informed by Didier Fassin's analysis of humanitarian government, this essay reflects on the nature of the Stalinist humanitarian mobilization to rescue homeless children, in particular how the Soviet state restricted access to ordinary child welfare for children of enemies of the state, with fatal consequences at the height of emergencies. Fassin alerts us to the consequence of having compassion, rather than rights or justice, as the historical drive of humanitarian assistance in Western culture. This creates unequal power relations between humanitarian agents and their beneficiaries, with the latter inevitably obliged to show gratitude for having their lives saved. It can also generate 'compassion fatigue' among humanitarian agents, resulting in humanitarian action that sets arrangements to save lives (biopolitics), but also produces a hierarchy of lives that are worth saving (politics of life).[9]

Although the atheist and class-biased Soviet state emerging from the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 had broken completely with both Western religious culture and the vision of universal human brotherhood, it always remained nominally committed to help all homeless children. However, its elimination of any independent national and international humanitarian actors within its territory under Stalin facilitated the introduction of an ideologically informed hierarchy of deserving and undeserving beneficiaries.[10]

Two critical moments stand out for the critical display of class-biased Stalinist humanitarian government: first, the deportation of rich peasants (*kulaks*), forcibly removed from the collectivized countryside and exiled to remote and underdeveloped parts of the country in 1930–32 (the process is known as *dekulakization*); second, the ensuing famine of 1932–33.[11] By then compassion for homeless children, millions of whom had strained the new socialist child welfare following the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917, the ensuing civil war, and a major famine in the Volga region in 1921, had already started to wane among some sectors of the central humanitarian bureaucracy, especially as some children resisted resocialization

and reintegration into socialist society. In fact, since the mid-1920s Stalin had even involved the secret police in cleaning socialist public spaces when their presence was being blamed on the Revolution.[12] This affected the attitude toward the children displaced by class war. In both emergencies at best, relief and welfare, overseen by the secret police, were used to isolate children from Soviet socialist society; at worst, their movement could be restricted to the point of putting their lives at risk. Crucially, when they had their lives saved, these children were expected, but not trusted unconditionally, to renounce the values held by their families, which led to long-term surveillance.

Thus, by presenting a case of state-led humanitarianism informed by a lack of humaneness, exercised unambiguously not to save lives, but to control and discriminate, this study of social policies in emergency adds a significant variation to the burgeoning literature on the twentieth-century history of national and international efforts to rescue unaccompanied children, that is, children separated from their families during wars, natural disasters and refugee movements, and the political considerations underpinning them.[13] The Soviet Union is already represented in this literature. Nationally, the very formation of Soviet child welfare was shaped by the need to assist hundreds of thousands of such children created by the early post-revolutionary emergencies.[14] Furthermore, by its nature of holding an internationalist approach to class and being keen on saving children, preferably proletarian, from the influence of competing ideologies everywhere, the Soviet Union welcomed the Spanish children sent overseas during the Spanish civil war.[15] Finally, the Soviet state promptly mobilized to assist the heroic child victims of the Second World War.[16] This experience, in turn, compels one to reflect on the contrast between the Soviet pledge to save some children, including foreign ones, but not others, ultimately according to their perceived potential for communist upbringing.

By documenting the evolution of the reception centres under the control of the Commissariat of Education and the bureaucracies of order (secret police, and, later, agencies of internal affairs) respectively, the essay argues that, by reaching the reception centres, homeless children of class enemies had a chance to live and receive care in the child-welfare system; however, once their social background was ascertained, they could be prevented from re-entering Soviet society with no stigma attached by restricting the range of care placements available to them, hitherto only hinted at in subjective accounts.[17] Furthermore, during the famine of 1932–33, the administrators of the reception centres could be asked to use them to return children to their places of origins, where their very lives would be in danger. The reception centres thus emerge as critical sites where Stalinist humanitarian government heavily played its policies of social inclusion and exclusion, which at certain times could also mean the difference between life and death for the children affected. Crucially, after the secret police took them over in 1935, they also went on to screen the children of other enemies of the state, from the children of the parents arrested during the Great Terror of 1937–38 to the national minorities deported in the 1940s. They also applied special care provisions to all the children, which were adapted from the original model devised for the children of the *kulaks*. As faith in homeless children's capacity to be redeemed through education weakened, especially in view of children's resistance, so was the belief that nurture, which could have facilitated their ideological rehabilitation, would prevail over nature.[18] Yet, as some children found a way to hide their social background, the reception centres ironically could also enable them to create new, safe social identities.

This essay relies mainly on published and unpublished sources from the Russian state archives. The latter group includes special collections of NKVD-MVD secret orders and regulations on child homelessness,[19] documents on the administration of the special settlements, and evidence produced by central state agencies in policy-making processes.

Class war and child homelessness

In 1930, Stalin decided to collectivize Soviet agriculture to fund the reindustrialization of the country (the First Five-Year Plan). An integral part of this strategy was to get rid of the *kulaks*, that is, the 'bourgeois' peasants, who owned most of the land and resources and could resist the policy. This entailed first classifying the *kulaks* into three groups according to the supposed degree of danger to the state, then shooting the heads of households of the first group, arresting those of the second, and exiling those of the third, together with the families of all groups. As a result, at least two million peasants were deported to underdeveloped places earmarked for economic development, including about half a million children. As violence was applied for the eviction of the peasant families in the villages and no preparation was made for their arrival and settlement (such as housing, medical services and schools) at their destinations, not only did peasant children share homelessness with the adults, but they were also orphaned, abandoned and lost in the process.[20]

This situation was complicated by widespread social and bureaucratic neglect, which in time would foster mass child homelessness and vagrancy. In the collectivized villages and places of exile, child-welfare services, which could have provided relief, were already lacking. Besides, the central authorities failed spectacularly in planning and funding out-of-plan provisions for children (day-care facilities, schools, out-of-school activities, medical assistance and so on). This left local authorities struggling, especially the local representatives of the commissariats of Education and Health.[21] Last, but not least, cognitive dissonance, in part fed by political propaganda and the lack of any public display of compassion, prevented the spontaneous mobilization of many an observer, including local party and soviet authorities. As Stalin had used very strong language in his attack against the *kulaks*, calling for their 'liquidation as a class,' they had been dehumanized, and so had their relatives and associates. Some did not immediately recognize in their offspring vulnerable children to rescue, as those displaced by the emergencies of the 1920s. Fear or hatred caused others to be ineffective bystanders. As Nadezhda Krupskaya, Vladimir Lenin's wife and a committed patron of homeless children, publicly denounced:

> A young child's parents are arrested. He goes along the street crying … Everyone is sorry for him, but nobody can make up his mind to adopt him, or take him into his home: 'After all, he is the son of a kulak …There might be unpleasant consequences.'[22]

As a result, deprived of prompt assistance, peasant children died or languished unattended in great numbers. Nonetheless, the most resilient made their way to the cities, joining existing flows of juvenile vagrants on the railways. Worryingly, some managed to even reach Moscow, the core of Soviet power, as recorded by the local reception centres.

The reception centres in Soviet child welfare

The reception centres were special facilities set up in the immediate post-revolutionary period, mostly in the cities. They are said to have replaced police stations to process children

caught without documents, those identified as loafers or breaking the law, as was the practice under tsarist rule. However, in the context of the post-revolutionary social dislocation caused by the civil war and the famine of 1921, they also provided 'emergency social assistance' to all homeless children. Hence, for children who had lost both family and abode, the reception centres became a refuge from abandonment, need or danger.[23] As a result, during subsequent humanitarian crises, the latter category would be overrepresented, as these institutions became the quickest channel to the post-revolutionary publicly funded child welfare.

Originally the reception centres were set up and controlled largely by the Commissariat of Education.[24] In the 1920s this even created 'Western-style' specialized child-centred institutions, which were called 'observation-distribution centres' for lengthier child-centred observation of delinquent and other 'troublesome' children requiring more study, although the sheer scale of child homelessness prevented their expansion.[25] However, alternative facilities emerged in the late 1920s under other agencies. These included carriage-shelters located at railways stations used by the transport police to catch vagrant children, at a time when the secret police enforced public order on the railways, and facilities supporting the secret police in 'cleaning' the capitals of waifs.[26] In 1931 the Moscow organs of criminal investigation, which had been operationally under the secret police since late 1930, even set up a reception centre in the Moscow Danilovsky monastery, which had recently been turned into a prison (hereafter, Danilovsky). This facility, which was to become a model for all subsequent reception centres run by the bureaucracies of order, processed delinquent and marginal juveniles between eight and 17 years of age. Two similar facilities operated in Leningrad.[27] Theoretically all reception centres provided children with suitable care placements developed by a novel socialist child-welfare system, whether in state residential institutions ('children's homes', that is, orphanages, for younger children and labour communes and colonies for juveniles) or as non-residential options (a job, vocational training, foster care and so on), although those run by the bureaucracies of order could divert some to places of detention (for example, reformatories). The bureaucracies of care providing the majority of such care placements included the commissariats of Education, Health and Social Security.[28]

Social classification was part of the work carried out in the reception centres from the outset. Although psychology was not completely ignored, especially in the 1920s, this great emphasis on social background differentiated the socialist approach to the study of the homeless, neglected and abused child from its Western (liberal) counterpart, which rather focused on the study of a child's individual characteristic features and experience.[29] The Commissariat of Education collected data on social origins together with data on age, family situation and individual degree of social neglect (such as engagement in prostitution, criminal activity, length of time spent on the street, and so on), which were useful when deciding the most appropriate forms of care and rehabilitation.

This sociological analysis was not a sterile exercise. Before the Revolution, orphans or children in need from a privileged class would be admitted to a military school, after which they would be allowed to enter society with no stigma attached. In contrast, children of peasant or working-class background would be sent to a 'children's shelter', that is, a residential institution for delinquent and abandoned children, from where they would emerge totally unprepared for life. If they committed an offence they could also be sent to prison with adults.[30] When ascertaining class, therefore, the new reception centres did so clearly for the

benefit of urban proletarian and peasant children, the offspring of the Russian downtrodden classes allied in the revolutionary alliance that had supported the Bolsheviks' revolution.[31]

Nonetheless, although social categories remained central to Soviet social classification in the early decades, they evolved not only with Soviet society, but also with the concerns of the agencies managing the reception centres. For example, in 1924 the Commissariat of Education circulated a questionnaire for the compilation of annual national statistics. This included the social categories of the New Economy Policy (NEP): workers, peasants, war veterans (mainly of the Civil War), craftsmen and traders of different categories respectively, with all the remaining children grouped under the general categories of paupers (*nishie*) and 'others'.[32] These categories were also used in other residential institutions under its control.[33] Yet, although sensitive to changes in the classification of the population after the end of the NEP, at least officially the Commissariat of Education did not acknowledge the presence of children displaced by class war. According to a published study of its Moscow reception centres for 1929–30, these were able to account for children of workers, peasants, white-collar workers, craftsmen, traders and unknown categories, even if the attack against the *kulaks* was going on.[34] By 1932 its institutions recorded only children of workers, peasants and white-collar workers.[35]

By contrast, other sources report that in 1931–32 the Danilovsky introduced a different classification, aimed at identifying the children displaced by collectivization and class war: children of collective farmers, poor peasants, middle peasants, artisans, professionals, invalids, pensioners and, significantly, *kulaks* and declassed elements, that is members of the disgraced tsarist elite and bourgeoisie.[36] In other words, while the Commissariat of Education was officially following a neutral system of social classification, the secret police emphasized the social classification informed by Stalin's policies of social and political exclusion.[37] According to a study completed in 1931–32, there were few children of declassed parents who had entered the Danilovsky, either as homeless children or lawbreakers, just seven children out of 3680; similarly the number of children of *kulaks* was just 24; but children would often lie about their social origins.[38] Moreover, some children came from far away, even from regions where *kulaks* had been deported, including the North Territory (80 people), Western Siberia (52), Eastern Siberia (32) and the Urals (142), although none of them stated whether they had escaped from special settlements.[39] Among the peasant children, 48.8% were orphans and 20% had ended up on the street because of poverty.[40] A lack of immediate assistance, especially in the countryside, had often turned what had been young, innocent orphans into resourceful vagrants.[41]

The presence of children of the *kulaks* in Moscow signalled two worrisome facts: first, homeless children of class enemies were not being taken care of by the child-welfare system, but rather were growing up outside the control of state socializing agencies, and were exposed to the corrupting subculture of the street;[42] and, second, they were not confined to the special settlements, in violation of special social policies decided for them.

Class war and social policy

Humanitarian government in the special settlements

By the time class war had created mass child homelessness, the Soviet state had already established a social policy regulating state assistance to homeless children. Together with other specialized laws, the decree 'On the Struggle against Child Homelessness' issued in

1926 regulated access to institutionalization and alternative family care (guardianship, foster care and adoption).[43] During the first round of peasant deportations these laws could have been applied automatically to the children abandoned and orphaned both in the collectivized countryside and the special settlements, yet this did not happen. By then, doubts had already emerged about homeless children's inherent innocence and ability to be redeemed, as a core of hardened waifs were left behind by the failure of the underfunded and ultimately over-optimistic 1920s' policies.[44] Moreover, the *kulaks* were for the Soviet regime 'untouchable', and this affected their children too.[45]

Consequently, even senior officials would look up for guidance. In 1930, for example, S. I. Syrtsov, the President of the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Republic contacted the 'administrators of the [affected] regions' for instructions; this was the secret police that co-ordinated the resettlement of the *kulaks*. A special interagency commission was subsequently set up, chaired by his deputy D. Z. Lebed' and including, among others, Krupskaya and M. S. Epshtein for the Commissariat of Education, and S. Messing for the secret police.[46]

The work of this commission shows that compassion was highly compartmentalized within the Stalinist humanitarian bureaucracy. The commission examined a draft decree 'On Guaranteeing Normal Conditions of Upbringing and Education to the Children of *Kulaks* and other Non-toiling Strata of the Population', which considered the fate of children of the *kulaks* proper, children employed by them (such as nannies and shepherds), and children fostered by them; it also reflected the hand of the Commissariat of Education by addressing issues raised by Krupskaya.[47] For children of *kulaks*, too, it envisaged the adaptation of some of the *ordinary* care options, which had helped to eliminate child homelessness in the 1920s: not institutionalization, therefore, but rather guardianship provided by relatives not deprived of political rights (under the supervision of local soviets) or by collective farms; and even adoption by families of trustworthy Soviet social categories, such as workers, collective farmers and white-collar workers, but not religious families, families with members with contagious diseases, and so on, as allowed by the 1926 Family Code and the Constitution.[48] Unfortunately, this draft failed to become law.[49] By contrast, in subsequent years in the special settlements distinct care arrangements emerged, restricting children's residence rights and facilitating their surveillance. While this policy turn was decided at the central level, as were all key decisions related to the *kulaks*, the secret police emerged as its enforcer.

The secret police were initially guided by the secret central resolution 'On Special Settlers' issued in 16 August 1931, which instructed:

> Orphans of children of special settlers should be distributed according to age to the agencies of the Commissariat of Education and Commissariat of Health, which will place them in closed children's institutions within the borders of the territory [of exile] or give them, together with material support, in foster care to local families, including families of special settlers with satisfactory housing and material conditions.[50]

These instructions were given by a central commission led by A. A. Andreev, set up to deal with the exile and resettlement of the *kulaks*. The commission, which also transferred the management of the special settlements to the secret police, ordered the commissariats of Health and Education to work more closely with the secret police, and invited the latter agency to look after the youngsters and not antagonize them.[51] The secret police also created a special central Department of Special Settlements as a special administration within the existing Soviet network of prisons and camps (Gulag).[52]

As living conditions remained dire, the confinement of orphans was relatively relaxed later. On 29 December 1931 M. D. Berman, then deputy head of the Gulag, ordered:

> Children of families with many children, orphans, and so on [can be allowed out of the special settlements,] besides on a case-by-case basis and only with the permission of [the local representative of the secret police].[53]

By 1932 alternative family care had been somehow normalized. On 11 June, Berman repeated to his plenipotentiaries and local branches that in the special settlements orphans should be provided with 'local' public care arrangements, whether in orphanages and labour colonies set up by the Commissariat of Education, or with jobs in local factories, but could also be 'given to relatives', without specifying the residence.[54] Nonetheless, this apparent softening went hand in hand with the deterioration of children's circumstances, which, due to lack of systematic assistance, transformed the original orphans into proper homeless children left to fend for themselves, especially during the famine of 1932–33.

To sum up, once the application of ordinary social policy envisaged in the compassionate 1930s draft law was dismissed, for children of the *kulaks* institutionalization emerged as a necessity, besides being confined to the places of exile. Even so, alternative family care, lobbied for by the Commissariat of Education and the Children's Commission, was allowed, but conditionally: foster care, lobbied for by the former, was allowed only locally and guardianship, lobbied for by the latter, only by relatives.[55] The striking omission was the only arrangement that would have allowed children to change class: adoption.[56] Ultimately, these children had to share the fate of their class, even when they had been orphaned and lost their 'bourgeois' connections. Moreover, by closely monitoring guardians or confining foster and institutionalized children in the places of exile, the secret police could keep children under surveillance, even when entrusting their direct care and upbringing to others.

Still, the children anonymously entering the institutions of the Commissariat of Education outside the special settlements remained out of the secret police's reach. By 1930, the Soviet legislation envisaged that homeless children should be assisted wherever they were rescued and not be returned to their places of birth or residence, unless either there was somebody ready and able to take them back or they had run away from an institution.[57] As a result, the Commissariat of Education was not responsible for policing children's movement. This became an even more serious issue during the famine of 1932–33, when a mass of children of all ages, whether alone or taken by adults, moved towards the cities, where food and welfare provisions for children were concentrated.[58] This specific emergency therefore became a test for Stalinist class-biased 'politics of life', as well as precipitating a major rearrangement of the management of Soviet child welfare in its aftermath.

Humanitarian government during the famine of 1932–33

The social portrait of the homeless child at the time of the famine of 1932–33 is powerfully outlined in a 'Report on the Liquidation of Child Homelessness' prepared by M. S. Epshtein, the deputy Commissar of Education, and submitted to a mid-1930s' commission revising the law on child homelessness (hereafter, Epshtein Report). This revision was part of a series of reforms addressing the social disorder created by collectivization, peasant deportations and the famine of 1932–33, which had produced large numbers of homeless and delinquent children.[59] The report provides crucial information about the children of *kulaks*.

The Epshtein Report acknowledged the existence of widespread child homelessness in the country, but rejected any responsibility of the Commissariat of Education, rather

blaming recent 'bad harvests', that is, the famine of 1932–33.[60] Since 1931 these 'bad harvests' had affected the entire country, but especially Ukraine, the North Caucasus territory, and Kazakhstan. As a result, in the Russian Republic alone by 1933, 400,000 children were institutionalized (there had been 124,000 in 1930). By mid-1934, even after placing 43,000 children in the care of families of workers, collective farmers or back with parents and relatives, 282,000 still remained in institutions. Overall, in the Soviet territory in mid-1934 children's homes, reception centres and labour colonies accommodated 386,000 children, including rural and urban orphans, abandoned children, and children whose parents had been arrested, as well as children of broken families and poor families led by invalids or single mothers. Half of them were recently deserted children of pre-school age (that is, below seven years of age).[61] Furthermore, the famine affected children in locations already exposed to state violence. In mid-1934, Kazakhstan, where peasant exile, collectivization and the forced settlement of nomadic populations had overlapped, had 82,000 children in need of care.[62] Another 40,000 were in the special settlements. The latter group included 16,192 'normal' (that is not disabled or delinquent) orphans in 82 orphanages in the Sverdlovsk region and 14,500 orphans in 138 orphanages in Western Siberia.[63] All in all, one could infer that the famine had only complicated the situation of these regions, undermining the ability of the Commissariat of Education to provide timely and sufficient assistance.

In addition to the Epshtein Report, other sources confirm that the special settlements suffered most. Here the Commissariat of Education could have helped the increasing number of abandoned children only if it had diverted funding earmarked for education.[64] Furthermore, the secret police refused to fund children's homes and other care arrangements.[65] This situation, in turn, pushed older children to leave in search of food and become vagrants.[66] Some of these runaway children made their way as far as Moscow. Worryingly, they also mixed with juvenile offenders, as the statistics collected by the Danilovsky reveal.[67] These show a dramatic increase in children processed between 1931 and 1933. While 4614 children had arrived in 1931, that number had increased to 13,430 in 1932 and to 28,184 in 1933. Furthermore, 42.9% of those recorded in the first four months of 1934 had lost their parents. Crucially, statistics on children of dispossessed *kulaks* continued to be collected. While in all of 1933 the Danilovsky had processed 254 children of *kulaks* out of the 28,184 children recorded, by May 1934 it had reached and then exceeded these figures with 242 out of 4490. These numbers could have been even higher, because the social origins of some remained unknown.[68] Thus, while the Stalinist regime was doing its best to purge the cities of undesirable social elements through mass arrests, purges and the introduction of passports, the children of *kulaks* were hard to get rid of.[69] This also undermined the existing special care provisions planned for them.

Furthermore, this mass of mainly unaccompanied peasant children included not only children of *kulaks* from collectivized villages or special settlements, but also thousands of children from Ukraine, a region heavily affected by the famine, whose peasantry was earmarked for both class and national repression.[70] This seems to have informed the unusually harsh conditions of the humanitarian assistance provided. To be sure, in Ukraine the residential and non-residential system expanded to rescue children displaced by the famine. In 1933 alone 170,000 children were taken off the street. The republic had had 226 children's homes in 1931 with 39,318 children, but by the end of 1933 it had 452 institutions with 96,057 children and had placed another 96,000 in foster care.[71] Relief for children was also mobilized.[72] On the other hand, other evidence shows some ambiguous decisions.

On 6 May 1933, the Ukrainian Politburo entrusted the republican secret police with overseeing children's return to their parents and places of origins, expecting full cooperation from the commissariats of Education and of Health.[73] The identity and whereabouts of the children's parents would have been ascertained mainly in the institutions managed by the Commissariat of Education, including an ad hoc central address bureau and, crucially, the reception centres, whose network expanded in these years.[74] While this decision was in line with existing policies, at this time it also meant the sending of children back essentially to starving localities. Made at the highest level of power, these decisions hardly reflect any humanitarian spirit; besides, they had the potential for actually hurting children.

In short, during the famine of 1932–33, too, the mobilization of the existing child-centred welfare system confirms disturbing aspects of Stalinist humanitarian government. It is clear that simultaneously other arrangements were being organized under the supervision of the secret police, whose purpose can hardly be defined as child-saving. These, incidentally, contrasted with the 1920s Soviet rescue of the homeless children displaced by the civil war and the famine of 1921. Then Feliks Dzerzhinsky, the very founder of the Soviet secret police, had initiated the formation of the Children's Commission to coordinate relief for children, especially peasant and proletarian, and so save the 'future of the Revolution'.[75] During the famine of 1921, the new Children's Commission had also helped to evacuate 50,000 children from the starving regions to other regions with available food, and even evacuated many abroad.[76] Nonetheless, at that time, the peasantry was still considered a trusted member of the worker–peasant political alliance supporting the revolutionary regime, while later it was considered a class to be subdued. Moreover, in these early post-revolutionary years, homeless children could be still presented as innocent victims displaced because of factors independent from the new regime, such as the recent international conflicts. As a result, although with their initial agrarian policies the Bolsheviks had contributed to the disarray of food production, they could acknowledge officially the famine of 1921 and even openly seek international relief for children and the population overall.[77] By contrast, after Stalin had isolated the country to build socialism, as a byproduct of new political, social and economic radical changes engineered by his regime, homeless children were disturbing reminders of the failure of state policies. Thus, the Soviet Union attempted to hide them at home and from international public opinion.[78]

Crucially, state assistance provided at the time of the famine may have continued to nominally aim at putting children in safe places – whether in rural areas, cities, or special settlements – so that not only would they be brought back to health, they would also be socialized as future Soviet citizens supporting communism. Yet, in the Epshtein Report, the Commissariat of Education finally admitted its difficulties in doing so, hence losing the argument that it should play a central role in the management of child homelessness because this was a social problem that could be solved through pedagogical means.[79] In an attempt to justify why children ran away from its institutions, and so counter the criticism of the secret police and others, the Commissariat of Education revealed that the mere re-socialization of ordinary homeless children required excellent educators, but that its institutions could guarantee them only in Moscow and Leningrad.[80] This admission confirms the negative impact of underfunding outside the capitals, which alone hosted model socialist institutions, as well as the difficulty of implementing central directives noted by Peter Solomon.[81] It also conveyed now widespread 'compassion fatigue' among all levels of the humanitarian bureaucracy. Finally, it implicitly cast doubt on the ability of

the Commissariat of Education to reform homeless and vagrant children of class enemies under its supervision everywhere else.

Eventually, as children of class enemies continued to slip away from the special settlements and swarm into cities and the Commissariat of Education proved unable to *both* keep them away from public spaces *and* provide them with a sound socialist upbringing, the secret police stepped in for good, facilitated by the law of 31 May 1935.

The reception centres under the secret police's NKVD

It should not be overlooked that the law "On the Liquidation of Child Homelessness, Neglect and Hooliganism" of 31 May 1935 did not replace the existing law of 1926 "On the Struggle Against Child Homelessness." For example, the bureaucracies of care continued to provide most care provisions for homeless children. Nonetheless, the Commissariat of Education was forced to hand over all its reception centres and labour colonies for older homeless and difficult children to the secret police.

Since 1934 the secret police had taken over a reorganized and most powerful pan-Soviet Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD).[82] Following the personal intervention of its commissar, Genrikh Yagoda, this would now oversee the overall Soviet policies toward homeless children, together with delinquent and anti-social ones.[83] Even so, the NKVD technically attempted to operate within the scope of child welfare, as shown by the fact that a new Department of Labour Colonies to run both reception centres and labour colonies was attached to the Economic Unit of the NKVD, not the Gulag, and it was run by officers with experience in re-socializing veteran waifs in the 1920s' labour communes.[84] The humane side of the secret police and its pedagogical success should not be overestimated, though. Their model institutions, too, were located near the capitals, and their clientele included the hardest-to-reform among the homeless children.

As the new goal was the total 'elimination' of child homelessness, neglect and hooliganism once and for all, the NKVD aimed to forcibly move all homeless children from public spaces to the appropriate social and socializing spaces with the support of its militia. The reception centres, after a possible preliminary stop in the new children's rooms created within the militia stations, aimed to separate local children with a family (called *beznadzorniki*) from utter homeless and vagrant ones, and this would play a pivotal role in identifying children and deciding their further care placements.[85] In the process the NKVD would also hold accountable state agencies, institutions, parents and other carers that neglected or abandoned children. This new strategy followed Stalin's official declaration of the achievement of socialism at the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party (1934) and, logically with it, the elimination of the causes of all social ills embedded in capitalism. Henceforth, the persistence of child homelessness could only be blamed on the cultural remains of capitalism and on neglect by parents, society and state agencies responsible for children, as warned by the Communist Party's *Pravda*.[86]

The new reception centres: statistics and internal organization

In June 1935 the NKVD received 153 reception centres with 23,655 children in them from the Commissariat of Education.[87] It also took responsibility for 85 fixed reception centres and 22 mobile carriage-receivers on the railways.[88] Because the reception centres were now meant to keep children no longer than one month before deciding their further care

Table 1. Who accompanied children to the NKVD's reception centres (1935–40*)

	Militia	Social organizations	Railway and other reception centres	Other institutions	Turned up voluntarily	Subtotal
1935	66,496	5,275	30,997	9,201	4,545	116,514
1936	109,107	7,289	57,419	15,413	7,407	196,635
1937	156,383	13,873	33,570	24,003	4,839	232,668
1938	77,018	9,536	51,347	12,520	3,996	154,417
1939	79,101	7,549	47,489	8,600	3,662	146,401
1940	17,095	1,176	9,340	1,659	623	29,895
TOTAL	505,202	44,698	230,162	71,396	25,072	876,530

Source: Report on the Movement of Children though the Reception Centres (1935–1940), GARF F.9412, op.1, d.519, l.6.
*From 1 June 1935, when the NKVD took charge of the reception centres together with the 23,655 children in them, to the first quarter of 1940 included.

provisions, in the following five years these facilities would process more than 800,000 children, largely delivered by the militia and transport militia, who remained subordinated to the secret police (Table 1).

Despite their reorganization, the reception centres did not lose their welfare credentials under the NKVD, and most of their functions and personnel remained unchanged. According to NKVD's new regulations of 5 July 1935, they continued to deal largely with lost and abandoned children between three and 16 years of age. They still cleaned and disinfected homeless children, provided a preliminary assessment, established the circumstances of their previous life and their interest for study or work, reconnected them with their families, if these could be located, or, according to their individual characteristic features, sent them to children's homes of the commissariats of Education (children between three and 14 years of age), Health (children with serious diseases), Social Security (children with disabilities) or children's colonies of the NKVD (lawbreakers and recidivist runaways from children homes between 12 and 16 years of age, and all children between 14 and 16 years of age). A pedagogue and a doctor remained responsible for evaluating children's physical condition and degree of pedagogical neglect, and providing expert opinion to decide these care placements, although lengthy observation was dispensed with because of the brevity of their expected stay.[89] Thus, for many non-delinquent, non-stigmatized children the reception centres remained the first port of assistance and a one-way ticket to the child-welfare system. This explains why some even turned up voluntarily.

Under the NKVD, however, the reception centres became closed institutions, with a strict disciplinary regime. From the regulations and the movement of children across institutions shown in Table 2 it is also clear that the new administrators of the reception centres would move children around a lot, whether to reunite them with their families, find them alternative care placements, or return them to other regions, where these care placements had to be provided. This can explain why between June 1935 and the first quarter of 1940, 62,844 children arrived from other reception centres. The control of the reception centres also allowed the NKVD to spirit away many homeless children to its labour colonies (or prisons) on an administrative basis. The attention to social background grew even further, too.

Ascertaining social origins

The reformed reception centres took great care in isolating the children of class enemies, which inevitably would have long-term repercussions for their social status. Three

Table 2. Care placements decided in the NKVD's reception centres (1935–40*).

Child welfare system**	Children
Parents and guardians	378,975
Commissariat of Education	252,759
Commissariat of Health	21,742
Commissariat of Social Security	4,920
Work and foster care	38,121
Other reception centres	62,844
Subtotal	769,361
NKVD corrective institutions	
Labour colonies***	80,539
Prison	5,797
Subtotal	*86,336*
Other	
Runaways	48,040
Dead	747
TOTAL	894,484

Source: Report on the Movement of Children though the Reception Centres (1935–1940), GARF F.9412, op.1, d.519, l.6.
*From 1 June 1935 to the first quarter of 1940 included.; **Residential and non-residential options.; ***From 1939 the labour colonies received only convicted juveniles, while homeless children were redirected to institutions of the commissariats of Education and Health.

fundamental changes characterized the new NKVD management. First, the NKVD introduced a professional system of registration of all children, including references to physical marks (for example, tattoos) and pictures for its database. This included retaining a copy of the file of each child that went through the institutions in its archive. Second, it reorganized the facilities 'like the Danilovsky'. This entailed not only making them 'closed' institutions to prevent escapes, but also extending its system of social classification to them, for example, introducing the category of 'children of *kulaks*'. Third, the NKVD dictated that only members of the secret police could direct these facilities and had the final say over the care placement of each child.[90]

While the first change would help the NKVD to fight recidivism, the latter two finally enabled it to investigate all children for ideological neglect, separate those of suspicious social origins and provide them with care provisions that facilitated their surveillance, such as sending them back to the special settlements to be looked after. The relevance of the early 1930s' class-biased policies was confirmed as late as January 1935, when Krupskaya, who was now alone in showing compassion pity for those children, complained that the continuous harassment of relatives, who had courageously become guardians of children of *kulaks,* and the clergy, was still a major obstacle to the solution of the problem of mass child homelessness.[91] While further research is necessary to confirm whether they were maintained after 31 May 1935, all evidence on the persistent NKVD's concern with identifying social background points to their continuous application. This casts new light on the order of Genrikh Yagoda, the NKVD's head, to his rank and file on the application of the 1935 law, where he singled out child homelessness as matter of state security and a breeding ground not only for future criminals, but also counterrevolutionaries.[92] Since in 1933 Stalin had declared crime counterrevolutionary after the achievement of socialism, homeless children that displayed anti-social behaviour and broke the law at a young age may have already appeared potential counterrevolutionaries.[93] One could argue that counterrevolutionary feelings could only be strengthened in homeless children who also belonged to social categories considered inherently counterrevolutionary because of their class, and this undermined even further any faith in their socialist re-socialization.

Class war and beyond

Little information about the work of the reception centres with children of class enemies under the NKVD has escaped censorship. Yet, although the new Soviet Constitution of 1936 declared the Soviet Union a classless society, the reception centres maintained the class-biased social classification acquired from the Danilovsky and continued to identify the children of the *kulaks* at least until the end of the decade.[94] Moreover, the distinct care provisions first designed for the children of the *kulaks* were restored suspiciously quickly for new groups of children displaced by state violence, which suggests that they remained in the repertoire of options of the reception centres.

The similarity between the fate of the children 'orphaned' and made homeless after the arrest of their parents during the Great Terror and those displaced by class war has been noted. During this novel political campaign the NKVD also updated the classification in use to include the new ad hoc category of 'children of repressed parents'.[95] Extra-legal care arrangements for minors in the ages sensitive to socialization (from three up to 15) were made in the reception centres and largely replicated those decided for the children of the *kulaks*: a preference for institutionalization and alternative family care limited to guardianship by relatives.[96]

These children's experience in the NKVD's reception centres is better documented. For example, one taken to a facility in Vologda, remembers:

> I landed in the [reception centre] … But [it] was surrounded by a fence … At the [reception centre], even there, children were locked up. Just imagine my condition, yesterday there were Papa, Mama, today there was no one. […] I cried for days on end; apparently I did not submit to some kind of routine or still something else happened. And I, a five-year-old boy, landed in the punishment cell … After all, it was a NKVD institution. NKVD. Well, I do not remember it clearly, I remember only that I was in the isolation cell. For a long time, how long, I do not remember. […] I remember that later they sent me from that [reception centre] to a pre-school orphanage [.][97]

There is also evidence for the dramatic change of status when a child was identified as a child of enemies. Another child, left homeless after the arrest of his parents, decided to steal in order to be caught and taken care of. A policeman classified him as 'a typical homeless waif' and delivered him to the Danilovsky. There, however, 'after I was checked, everything fell into its proper place, and from "a typical homeless waif" I was turned into a "political".

As the Great Terror abated, child homelessness was officially declared eliminated, as promised by the law of 31 May 1935, while the reception centres were required to process hitherto only 'delinquent' children.[99] From 1938, the Department of Labour Colonies was finally subordinated to the Gulag, together with its reception centres and labour colonies, and then it was eliminated.[100] On 29 May 1941 new regulations introduced in the reception centres had politically neutral categories of (children of) workers, white-collar workers, collective farmers, independent peasants, others and unknown, thereby eliminating the category of *kulaks*.[101] This does not mean that child homelessness stopped being a matter of state security; rather, the attention soon moved from class to nationality, a category included in previous questionnaires, but which would acquire a particular meaning in the course of the state attack on selected national groups.

During the Second World War the Soviet state deported some national groups with foreign 'homelands', which could ally with its enemies (such as Germans). It also punished others for resisting Soviet power (Chechen and Ingush peoples) or allegedly collaborating

with the enemy under occupation (for example, Crimean Tatars). All were deported like the *kulaks*, generating similar patterns of mass child displacement.[102] As a result, during the Second World War mass child homelessness may have been officially blamed on the attack of an external enemy, generating a specific new set of official emergency policies, but the presence of enemies within the state also prompted the restoration of the 1930s' NKVD organizational model to attend to the children of the deported nationalities.[103] By then the secret police was administratively separated from the forces in charge of internal affairs (a more bureaucratic NKVD). Still, their legacy lived on.

Following the new law "On the Strengthening of the Arrangements against Child Homelessness, Neglect, and Hooliganism" of 15 June 1943, the NKVD set up a Department for the Struggle against Child Homelessness and Neglect, which acquired the reception centres and coordinated policies similarly to the 1930s; Department of Labour Colonies.[104] From the start, using the data collected in these facilities, the regional sections of this office were able to send to the central authorities information on the homeless children of exiled national groups, who were called 'special re-settlers'. For example, in 1943 a report from Kazakhstan, a major destination of exiled nationalities, indicated the presence of children of the Volga Germans mobilized for work.[105] Another report for the first quarter of 1946 calculated that children of Chechens, Ingush and mobilized Germans amounted to 20% of all the homeless children rescued, noting this as an 'improvement', since in the previous quarters they had been up to 40%.[106]

Although the evidence is limited, it is clear that, like in the 1930s, statistical knowledge was a tool to administer distinct care provisions, especially for the children of the 'punished peoples', who were sentenced to be exiled forever. In March 1948, the head of the Department of Special Settlements instructed the Department for the Struggle against Child Homelessness and Neglect that children of deported national groups had to receive local care placements and they could not be given to relatives outside the special settlements.[107] (Adoption was again ignored, even if it had recently been restored to care for war orphans).[108] Furthermore, in July 1948, the recently renamed Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) reconfirmed secret instructions first issued in 1945, which made it clear that the children belonging to the nationalities forcibly deported (Germans, Chechen and Ingush peoples, and others) should be recorded as special re-settlers once they reached 16 years of age and be forbidden from leaving the regions of forced resettlement. Crucially, this applied even to the orphans who had been brought up in children's homes.[109] The children of other deported communities were not subjected to these restrictions.[110] This implies that if caught and identified elsewhere, possibly in the reception centres or children's rooms, the new 'special' homeless children should have been returned to the special settlements.[111] These provisions, made at the highest ministerial level, replicated the insistence on local care provisions, distrust in alternative family care, and the opposition to removing the children from the special settlements first applied to the children of the *kulaks*. Thus, the Stalinist state had only specific policy to deal with homeless children of its enemies, which reflected its distrust of their potential for growing up as loyal Soviet citizens.

Conclusions

To return to Fassin, the peculiar Stalinist humanitarian government of child homelessness introduced a hierarchy of groups of displaced children during class war. Affected by

decreasing compassion, in the case of the children of enemies defined by class – and later by political allegiance and nationality – it mobilized relief combined with surveillance and control at the hands of the bureaucracies of order. This aimed at isolating these children from socialist society by restricting care options, so preventing them from mixing with ordinary children and ordinary families, as well as at policing their return to established places of residence and exile, to their families or institutions. As a result, children shared the fate of their families and social or national groups, even when they had lost any contact with them by becoming homeless or vagrant. Under the secret police/ NKVD/ MVD the reception centres functioned as pivotal institutions facilitating the social, political or national classification necessary to enforce the associated exceptional social policies.

Ultimately, Stalin's humanitarian government hardly prioritized children's lives and well-being. Its essence can be summarized with two principles. First, the very life of children of enemies appeared to be of less worth than non-stigmatized children. One has only to compare the nationwide efforts to evacuate children from the regions affected by the famine in 1921 or exposed to Nazi attack and thereby save their lives, with the utter neglect of children exiled with the *kulaks* and the punished nationalities.[112] The Stalinist state implicitly rejected a universal view of children as deserving unconditional protection, no matter their social origins, which it itself may have embraced in the 1920s. Thus, it appears to politicize some groups of children, even if it had officially depoliticized Soviet childhood.[113]

Second, children's potential for a communist socialization and loyalty to the State influenced social policy. Ideological compliance was the price to pay for having their 'precarious lives' saved.[114] The Stalinist state attributed this potential only to the 'safe' categories of displaced children, whether national or foreign, preferably of proletarian background. Much has been said about family connections as a source of children's persecution.[115] In fact, these links had been severed by the very experience of homelessness, which should have been celebrated as the ideal condition for escaping the original influence of 'bad' family upbringing.[116] However, the evidence presented here points at the Soviet authorities' loss of confidence in the corrective power of its own children's institutions, which challenges what ideology, official proclamations and sympathetic scholarship would like us to believe. The Commissariat of Education certainly admitted to its own difficulties. Even the secret police, who claimed to have a better reputation in 're-forging' even delinquent and hardened waifs in its labour communes, and so may have justified the monopoly of the labour colonies from 1935, failed to obtain better results, though, as confirmed by the escapes from institutions run by the NKVD from the outset.[117]

Yet, Stalin's bureaucracies of order could not completely neutralize the resilience of their victims. Above all, homeless children were survivors. Children escaped both oppression and death by running away from designated places of confinement, whether reception centres or children's institutions, including those located in the special settlements. Furthermore, by providing false information about their social background while in the reception centres, they consciously attempted to avoid the discrimination and repression experienced by their family, class or national group. As a result, paradoxically, the reception centres could provide them with a path to a new identity and help them to avoid the planned social exclusion. Still, while children's agency – together with the often chaotic implementation of policies, occasional sympathetic welfare workers and the resistance of families, all documented in the existing literature on Soviet child homelessness – somehow softened the enforcement of the discriminatory arrangements examined here, it also caused the Stalinist state to

strengthen control over them by mobilizing the secret police. Hence, failure to implement the spirit of the Stalinist secret legislation systematically should not distract our attention from the full enormity of its underlying principles.

Notes

1. On the 1920s' development of the templates of Soviet child welfare, see Stevens, "Soviet Russia's Homeless Children" and Ball, *And Now My Soul*.
2. For the pre-revolutionary Bolshevik view of the causes of child neglect, linked to the difficulty for working women of peasant-working class background to look after their children properly, both in the countryside and the city, Krupskaya, *Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa*, 15–18; for its context, Neuberger, "Nobody's Children."
3. 'Parallel' social policy because these regulations issued by the Soviet Party, Government and secret police and its successor agencies (NKVD-MVD) were kept secret, so remaining outside the body of official law.
4. See the section on the 1930s in Fürst, "Homeless and Vagrant Children." Fürst's interpretation in part connects to post-revisionist studies aiming at rescuing the early Stalinist welfare state, which play down state violence to highlight "Stalinist civilization," such as Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; and Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses*. Although it still celebrates the educative power of the secret police, a more critical view is offered in Caroli, *Enfance abandonnée*.
5. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 56.
6. Viola, "Children of the Spetsperselentsy;" and Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*. While under Soviet rule political repressions produced mass child displacement, other universal causes of child homelessness, such as abuse, poverty and others, remained in place.
7. Published in *Izvestiya* TsIK SSSR – VTsIK, no 127, 1 June 1935; reprinted in Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa,* 183–7.
8. Frierson and Vilensky deny any redeeming welfare feature to the reception centres, so ignoring their reforming origins within the 1920s' Commissariat of Education in Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*, 62. Other authors acknowledge the welfare function, but fail to fully appreciate its systematic role in isolating children of enemies of the state; see, for example, Fürst, "Homeless and Vagrant Children," 251. No single work accounts for the entire range of care options, including the extra-legal ones, administered by these facilities in the 1930s–40s.
9. Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*. For the concept of biopolitics, Fassin refers to Michel Foucault; for the concept of "politics of life," he owes an intellectual debt to the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben.
10. All welfare was nationalized already after the October Revolution. As for relief, only during the famine of 1921 did the Soviet state accept help openly from both a soon-disbanded non-state national committee and international actors. See respectively Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 233–4; and Patenaude, *Big Show in Bololand*.
11. On peasant forced migration Viola, *Unknown Gulag*; on the famine of 1932–33, Davies and Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger.*
12. A. A. Plekhanov and A. M. Plekhanov, *F. E. Dzerzhinskii*, 637; Ball, *And Now My Soul*, 198.
13. Marshall, "Declaration of Children's Rights;" Danforth and Boeschoten, "Children of the Greek Civil War;" Zahra, *Lost Children*; Damousi, "Greek Civil War." For the definition of the category of "unaccompanied children," Ressler et al., *Unaccompanied Children*, 1.
14. See the literature in n. 1.
15. On Spanish children evacuated to the USSR, Sierra Blas, "Educating the Communists of the Future" and Kowalsky, "Evacuation of Spanish Children." For the original ideological context, see also Kelly, "Defending Children's Rights."
16. See Sinitsin, "Zabota." For Soviet children's experiences of the Second World War and its contemporary official heroic representation, see deGraffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood*.
17. On the experience of the children of enemies of the Soviet state, defined by class or other markers, see the memoirs reprinted in Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*; and the interviews in Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*.

18. For a discussion of the biological versus sociological sources of Stalinist repressions, see Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory."
19. The NKVD-MVD's orders have been partially published in Vilensky et al., *Deti GULAGa*, to which the text will refer where appropriate.
20. For the impact of peasant deportations on children, Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 219–20; Viola, "Children of the Spetspereselentsy;" Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy,* 36, 44; Annenkov, "Kulatskie deti," 164–5. For the figure for children, see Shearer and Khaustov, *Stalin and the Lubianka,* 103.
21. The gradual decentralization of Soviet child-welfare funding, which would undermine many a central policy in the 1930s, is recorded in Caroli, *Enfance abandonee*.
22. Quoted in Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 219.
23. Kopelianskaya, "Organy uchrezhdeniya," 6; and Agrikova, "Pervichnye uchrezhdeniya," 37; for their regulations under the Commissariat of Education, Sviridov, *Spravochnik*, 68.
24. Ball, *And Now My Soul*, 92–3.
25. Ibid., xix, 93. For the historical context of the study of 'troublesome' children in Russia, see also Balashov, *Pedologiya v Rossii*, 73–8.
26. Tizanov and Epshtein, *Gosudarstvo*, 63. For the urban raids, coordinated by the secret police, Caroli *Enfance abandonnée*, 140–6.
27. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) F.5446, op.26, d.18, l.197ob.
28. Tizanov and Epshtein, *Gosudarstvo*, 21–2.
29. On the Western psychological approach to the study of homeless and maladjusted children, see, for example, Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child;* and Smuts, *Science in the Service of Children*.
30. Agrikova, "Pervichnye uchrezhdeniya," 40; Rudakov, "Detskii priyut."
31. For the role played by class in Soviet social engineering, see Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks*, 33.
32. Sviridov, *Spravochnik*, 76.
33. Ball, *And Now My Soul*, 284, n. 30.
34. Deyanova, "Kto nashi besprizorniki," 18.
35. "Tsirkuliar' Narkomprosa No. 26/sh-8, 25 March 1932."
36. GARF F.5207, op.1, d.497, l.1.
37. For a discussion of these "enemy" social categories, Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class;" on the use of statistical categories to isolate "enemies" and so purge society, see also Holquist, "'To Count, to Extract."
38. GARF F.5207, op.1, d.497, l.1 (figures); ll.33, 37 (children's denial of social origins).
39. Ibid., l.29; Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy*, 17–18.
40. Ibid., ll.39–40.
41. Ibid., ll.34–6, 39.
42. By the end of the 1920s, homeless children were a permanent presence of the Soviet landscape, even developing their own subculture, see Bosewitz, *Waifdom in the Soviet Union*; Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia,* 148–54.
43. Published in *Izvestiya* TsIK SSSR – VTsIK, No.78, 6 April 1926; reprinted in Tizanov and Epshtein, *Gosudarstvo*, 20–4. Foster care and adoption had been outlawed in 1918, but were restored by 1926, see Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 52, 97–100; Bernstein, 'Evolution of Soviet Adoption Law;' Bernstein, 'Fostering the Next Generation;' and Smirnova, 'History of Foster Care.'
44. On the doubts on children's correction shared by 1920s' officials, educators and observers, Ball, *And Now My Soul*, 127–8; 193. On children's behaviour in the context of the often ineffective contemporary policies, ibid., 164–7.
45. The categories of ideologically 'untouchable' are discussed in Fitzpatrick, 'Ascribing Class.'
46. Telegram cited in Pokrovskii, *Politbyuro i krest'ianstvo*, 775, n. 31.
47. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 219. Some of the children fostered by the *kulaks* were former homeless children displaced by the emergencies of the 1920s. Then, alternative family care provided by peasants had helped to eliminate mass child homelessness, but at the cost of renouncing for good the Bolshevik dream of socializing all children's care and upbringing, Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 98–100.

48. GARF F.393, op.43a, d.1791, l.6ob, cited in Pokrovsky, *Politbyuro*, 775–6, n. 31; article 77 of "Kodeks zakonov o brake, seme i opeke."; and article 69 in the decree "Ot utverzhdeniii teksta Konstitutsii."
49. As noted in Pokrovskii, *Politbyuro*, 775, n. 31.
50. GARF F. 9479, op.2, d. 2, l.24.
51. Berelovich and Danilov, *Sovetskaya derevnya*, 679, 682.
52. For the economic logic of the integration of the special settlements into the Gulag system, see Khlevniuk, *History of the Gulag*.
53. GARF F.9479, op.1, d. 11, l.92.
54. GARF F.9479, op.1, d.11, l.43.
55. Respectively, GARF 9414, op.1, d.1945, ll.21, 46; GARF F.5207, op.3, d. 15, l.103.
56. The denial of adoption to children of class enemies, who were over-represented among the homeless children in this period, may logically explain the scarce popularity of this care option in the early 1930s, noted in Bernstein, 'Evolution of Soviet Adoption Law,' 212–13.
57. On the obligation to assist homeless children where they were found, Tizanov and Epshtein, *Gosudarstvo*, 21; and Kufaev, *Okhrana detstva*, 188–9.
58. Stopping children's rural-to-urban migration informed sections of the law of 31 May 1935, Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 162. In the countryside peasants self-funded their welfare through the Mutual Aid Societies, as noted in Madison, *Social Welfare*, 54. Hence, the dramatic underfunding of the child-welfare system and the rush to the cities.
59. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 220–9. Unsurprisingly, the main act of juvenile delinquency during the famine of 1932–33 was theft of food.
60. GARF F.5446, op.26, d.18, ll.85–9. The following references relate to several drafts.
61. Ibid., ll.85–6.
62. Ibid., l.85; Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy*, 22–3. On the impact of the famine of 1932–33 in Kazakhstan, see also Pianciola, "Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan;" Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe."
63. GARF F.5446, op.26, d.18, l.85.
64. GARF F.5207, op.3, d.25, ll.26, 27.
65. Ibid., ll.38–41. The secret police considered integrating other agencies' funding in 1933, but as last resort; see, for example, GARF F.9479, op.1, d.17, l.36.
66. GARF F.5446, op.26, d.18, l.86.
67. GARF F.5207, op.1, d.497, l.33.
68. GARF F.5446, op.26, d.18, ll.201–2. The figures on children of *kulaks* are my calculations, from percentages provided in this document. The two reception centres for juvenile offenders and waifs located in Leningrad identified only children of disenfranchised people, that is, people deprived of political and civil rights; ibid., l.205.
69. On the policy of purging the cities of their marginal elements, Shearer, "Crime and Social Disorder" and Hagenloh, "Chekist in Essence."
70. GARF F.5446, op.26, d.18, l.201. For an overview of the Ukrainian famine as a genocidal policy, Hryn, *Hunger by Design*.
71. Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 176.
72. Davies and Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger*, 221–2, 424–6.
73. Danilov, Manning, and Viola, *Tragediya Sovetskoi derevnii*, 670, 671. On the secret police's role in coordinating the "struggle" against child homelessness in Ukraine, ibid., 670; for the biography of the republican secret police's head, "Karlson Karl Markovich (1888–1938)," in Petrov and Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD*, 225.
74. Detkomissiya, *Otchet o deyatel'nosti za 1932–1933*, 7–8.
75. Kufaev, *Okhrana detstva*; 51–2; see also Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 230–6. During the famine of 1921 the secret police aimed to both coordinate *and* control national and international assistance.
76. Perel' and Lyubimova, *Bor'ba s besprizornost'yu*, 7; Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 235. On the evacuation of children abroad in 1921, see also Smirnova "Children Evacuated to Czechoslovakia."

77. Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 233.
78. In fact, the Soviet Union failed in hiding the famine of 1932–33, as this was revealed to the contemporary international public opinion by Gareth Jones, a Welsh journalist; see Gamache, *Gareth Jones*.
79. In the 1920s, the argument that child homelessness was a problem that could be solved with education had helped the Commissariat of Education to prevail over the commissariats of Social Security and Health, equally concerned with child homelessness, but proposing a strategy relying on welfare or medical care respectively, Stevens, "Soviet Russia's Homeless Children," 248–50.
80. GARF F.5446, op.26, d.18, l.196.
81. Kelly, "Defending Children's Rights," 718; for a critical review of the effectiveness of Soviet law enforcement, see Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice*; on underfunding of child welfare, see Caroli, *Enfance abandonnée*.
82. Until 1934 the NKVD had been a republican institution. For the evolution of Soviet agencies of state security and internal affairs through relevant documents, see Conquest, *Soviet Police System*; and the documentary collection Kokurin and Petrov, *Lubyanka*.
83. For Yagoda's key role in shaping the law of 1935, Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 225–7. One of his reports to Stalin, in which he accused the Commissariat of Education essentially of massive bureaucratic child neglect, has been published by a non-academic contemporary author close to the secret police, see Gladysh, *Deti*, 277–88.
84. Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 189. On the 1920s' labour communes of the secret police, see Pogrebinskii, *Trudovaya kommuna*. One such institution was also set up by the famous pedagogue Anton Makarenko; see his works (in translation) *Learning to Live* (1953) and *Road to Life* (1955). For a critical appraisal of its effectiveness, Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 75–9.
85. The category of *beznadzorniki* (literally, 'neglected children') was introduced in the late 1920s, when their appearance was associated with lack of access to school, parents' employment and belonging to a family with many children, Tizanov and Epshtein, *Gosudarstvo*, 10. These causes appear more benign than those blamed for creating the equivalent neglected children of the tsarist era: abuse and neglect in the family or as apprentices in workshops, Neuberger, "Nobody's Children," 168–9, 174.
86. "Tak zabotitsya o detyakh," 1.
87. GARF F.9412, op.1, d.242, l.53.
88. GARF F.R-9401sch, op.12, d.103, l. 32.
89. Ibid., ll.20ob, 22. The changes in the assessment process carried out by the reception centres coincided with the decline of the official support to the scientific study of children, see Etkind, "Essor and échec."
90. Adopting the 'Danilovsky model' for all the reception centres, with the implications explained here, was Yagoda's idea; Gladysh, *Deti*, 286. For the absolute power of their director, GARF F.R-9401sch, op.12, d.103, l.22. The questionnaire used in these institutions, with reference to social origins and also distinct physical marks, is included in ibid., ll.24–31. Similar social categories were used in the work of the children's rooms of the militia, ibid., ll.14–19. These were: workers; white-collar workers; collective farmers; individual peasants; *kulaks*; and others.
91. Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 176. Members of the clergy were also deprived of political and civil rights and rural priests were lumped with the *kulaks* and deported, Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class," 752.
92. Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 187.
93. On Stalin's view of crime as counterrevolutionary, Shearer and Khaustov, *Stalin and the Lubianka*, 123.
94. Syshchenko, *Zhertvy NKVD*, 149–50.
95. For the inclusion of the category 'children of repressed parents' into the classification used by the reception centres, ibid., 150. This new label must have been introduced by the regulations for the reception centres adopted on 21 December 1937, still classified, referred to in GARF F.9401, op.1a, d.105, ll.86–95.

96. The care arrangements for 'children of repressed parents', including their application in the reception centres, are discussed in Kuhr, "Children of 'Enemies of the People'".
97. Gheith and Jolluck, "Three Certificates," 120–1.
98. Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*, 168–9.
99. On the alleged elimination of child homelessness in the late 1930s, Astemirov, *Preduprezhdenie prestupnosti nesovershennoletnikh*, 20–1.
100. Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa,* 315–16.
101. GARF F.9401, op.1a, d.105, l.93. These regulations for the reception centres were updated on 7 July 1942 to reflect the changing nature of both child displacement and policy during the Second World War, but superseded by new ones on 26 June 1945, GARF 9401, op.1a, d.188, ll.180–191ob. The latter, valid until 1957, did not provide any more specific social groups for the category 'social origins'.
102. Suny and Martin, *Empire of Nations*, 15. For general accounts of national repressions and deportations, see Nekrich, *Punished Peoples*; and the documentary collection Bugai, *L. Beriya–I. Stalinu*. For the fate of selected nationalities, Bugai, "*Mobilizovat nemtsev*;" Bugai, *Deportatsiya narodov Kryma*; Bugai, *Repressirovannye narody Rossii*.
103. On social policy and child homelessness in wartime, Sinitsin, "Zabota;" and Kucherenko, "Without a Family." They respectively ignore and dismiss the fate of the children of repressed nationalities. These are also ignored in other works on the 1940s, see Fürst, "Homeless and Vagrant Children" and Zezina, "Orphans of the Postwar Period."
104. Published in Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 383–4.
105. GARF 9412, op.1, d.7, l.11ob.
106. GARF F.9412, op.1, d.72, 2ob.
107. GARF F.9412, op.1, d.172, ll.30, 31.
108. Adoption was available for 'good' war orphans, though, see Bernstein, "Adoption Rulings in the USSR;" Green, "Soviet Adoption."
109. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy*, 168.
110. Ibid., 180 and 73, respectively.
111. See GARF F.9479, op.1, d.213, l.25 (point 6).
112. For evacuations of children during the war, Sinitsin, "Zabota," 22; see also White, "Evacuation of Children." For the context, see Manley, *Evacuation and Survival*.
113. On Stalin's official depoliticization of childhood, see Kelly, *Children's World*, 104–5.
114. On the concept of "precarious lives," Fassin, *Humanitarian Government,* 3–4.
115. The role played by family connections in Stalin's politically motivated repressions is discussed in Alexopoulos, "Stalin and Politics of Kinship."
116. Kufaev, *Okhrana detstva*, 30, 80. Children brought up in ideologically untrustworthy families should ideally have been removed, which explains the logic of the care arrangement during the Great Terror.
117. Vilenskii et al., *Deti GULAGa*, 198, 199.

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