

“perfect”, committed in the colonies and later on the battlefields of Europe. Like any ideologist, Gilroy fails to recognize that brutality is learned more quickly than the first suck of a new born baby, and that no amount of ideological idealism can protect humanity from brutality. For me the energies of scholars who write world views is misplaced. Our task is the careful, painstaking, systematic pursuit of knowledge in the language of the people whose doing - or wrong doings - we want to understand.

Coming of Age in Post-Soviet Russia

by Fran Markowitz, University of Illinois. Press, Urbana & Chicago, 2000. pp.

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This fascinating journey into the world of Russian youth is *"a tale of two transitions"*, writes Fran Markowitz in the preface to her book. It tells the story of *"Russia's reemergence as a nation-state after the USSR and of the individual children who have changed into adults in the midst of this grand transformation"* (p.3). This tale of Russian adolescence, however, turns out to be universal and is not confined to one place, one society, and one point in time. The external transformations of Russia notwithstanding, adolescence is a tale of young people searching for their individual identities, contemplating their future, and considering their career options. In the meantime, they are busy with their clothes, their music and their friends - busy being teenagers.

Markowitz's telling of the tale of Russian adolescents challenges some "self-evident truths" of social sciences as it poses the questions, "The adolescence crisis" - is it universal? Uniform in content and form? Is it inevitably the time of storm and stress? Can adolescents develop well without manifest revolt? Is "social stability" critical during adolescence? Do adolescents fully depend on it for their internal integration; in the face of instability do they necessarily lose their psychological balance? Fran Markowitz asks these questions during her encounter with post-Soviet youth and leaves the reader wondering. Over the course of the book and especially in the eleventh chapter, the answers become clear: social stability, like the construct of adolescence itself is, in her view, more a concern for adults than it is for the young people who navigate their society's ebbs and flows.

During her six months in Russia, Markowitz became an active participant in the post-Soviet youth experience. Not only did she interview scores of adolescents, she also visited eleven different schools in St. Petersburg, Dzerzhinsk and Moscow. She regularly attended classes with eleven-graders, getting to know their surroundings, their curriculum and their teachers. In a compelling and eloquent manner, she relates their childhood memories, their

views of glasnost and perestroika, their different school experiences, leisure activities, the music that they like, their expressions of national identity, politics and expectations for the future.

Young people at the center of Markowitz's volume were nine years old when glasnost started, and it is easy to find in their childhood accounts the nearly uniform scent of Soviet stability and security. Most did not remember much before they went to school and described their experiences as "*ordinary*". Already in kindergarten they "learnt to conform ... (and) shifted their allegiance to the caretakers' point of view that all children need to learn to suppress their personal desires in order to get along with the group", the *kollektiv* (p.43). Most of the teenagers lived stable, rooted lives, resided in one and the same apartment, and spent their summers in one and the same dacha. They all went through the powerful socialization processor - the Soviet school. They were initiated into the Pioneers and while taking momentary pride in being transformed "from small naive children (Octobrists) into responsible future citizens of the Soviet Union" they ultimately portrayed the ceremony as deceptive, and the duties of Pioneers as tedious and burdening. Some youths stand out from this background of uniformity. In the book we meet Olga, who hated kindergarten because she was oversensitive to the teachers' and children's demands; Sasha, who was eager to be initiated into the Pioneers, but was punished for bad behavior by being denied this privilege; and Sveta, a nine year old "dissident" who did not want to become a Pioneer because she thought "that communism was bad".

As they became Pioneers, so too came glasnost and perestroika, which everyone in the west was certain changed these teenagers' lives. Yet, most of them insisted that "Nothing in particular really changed". Markowitz admits that she "often lost patience with the teenagers who sat in front of me in their made-in-China sweaters and blue jeans.... "Look at yourself!", I wanted to shout (and often did)". It took several visits to their school and one in particular, where she was "reprimanded by door monitors and old lady janitresses" (p.65) to clean off her boots and hang up her coat in the same demeaning way as were the pupils, to convince her of their point of view. Little had changed in the everyday reality of many adolescents in Russia. But, the changes they did report were the ones most outsiders would overlook although these were significant to them in the daily routine of their young lives. The grand political transformations of their country paled in comparison to the major milestone of being able to dress as they wished when the Pioneers organization folded and school uniforms were abandoned. Yet it seemed that in the mid 1990s Russian adolescents were looking for a new uniform in order to solidify their group identity and their *kollektiv*. Markowitz suggests that this is at least part of what they are trying to express when they insist that "nothing has really changed".

Given western fears of violent right-wing nationalism replacing communism, the chapters on ethnicity and Russian identity were particularly compelling. In Markowitz's view "whatever nationalistic stirrings these young people may feel, they are mild and most probably cannot be turned into violence"

(p.166). They love their homeland and view it as a "benevolent and bountiful mother", the seat of "Russian culture", or the "Russian soul". They are proud of Russia's heritage and greatness, but avoid connections between Russia and militarism or war. Like many other adolescents, they are not entirely consistent. Declaring that "The only important thing is that the person is good and the nationality does not matter" (p.164), in the next sentence they may worry about Georgians or Chechens "selling at a much higher price than anyone else" or disparagingly talk of "the Blacks" from the Caucasus. Although ambivalent, about many national and political issues, these teenagers were eager "to condemn the outmoded extremism of the communists and the frightening militaristic fascism of Zhirinovsky" (p.176).

Markowitz suggests that adolescents who have lived their entire lives in transitions, may grow to experience them "as a knobby fabric of constancy ...their cultural ballast of stability and coherence" (p.4). They may therefore proceed undisturbed with the developmental task of becoming adults. And the post-Soviet flexible reality offers them new opportunities in this quest. Interviews with pupils from the Russian-Jewish and Russian-Georgian schools in Moscow demonstrate how these schools prepare the teenagers to "navigate within and negotiate between the two groups in which they have learnt to be a person. In this borderland they can separate and melt identities as they see fit, taking and rejecting bits and pieces of each to build their own... As they reflect about their experience and plan for the future, some find that the hybridized borderland is more of a home than Russia, Israel or Georgia alone." (p.117).

As the Soviet Union before it, post-Soviet Russia remains an enigma, just like adolescence - "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose".

From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organizations.

By Nitza Berkovitch, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1999. 207pp.

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For many people globalization is a new phenomenon. And in many ways it is. However, in *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, Nitza Berkovitch artfully informs us about the transformation of the global discourse around women's issues. She takes us from 1875, with the launching of the first international crusades concerned with women's issues, to 1985 when the Third-World conference on women (Nairobi) marked the end of the United Nations Decade for Women.

Berkovitch contends that movements for women's rights were not confined to a specific country or group of countries. Rather, the twentieth century struggles "became part of women's history in many nations about the same time." (p.4) What accounts,