



# Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism

By Juliane Fürst

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'Stalin's last generation' was the last generation to come of age under Stalin, yet it was also the first generation to be socialized in the post-war period. Its young members grew up in a world that still carried many of the hallmarks of the Soviet Union's revolutionary period, yet their surroundings already showed the first signs of decay, stagnation, and disintegration.

Stalin's last generation still knew how to speak 'Bolshevik', still believed in the power of Soviet heroes and still wished to construct socialism, yet they also liked to dance and dress in Western styles, they knew how to evade boring lectures and lessons in Marxism-Leninism, and they were keen to forge identities that were more individual than those offered by the state.

In this book, Juliane Fürst creates a detailed picture of late Stalinist youth and youth culture, looking at young people from a variety of perspectives: as children of the war, as recipients and creators of propaganda, as perpetrators of crime, as representatives of fledgling subcultures, as believers, as critics, and as drop-outs. In the process, she illuminates not only the complex relationship between the Soviet state and its youth, but also provides a new interpretative framework for understanding late Stalinism - the impact of which on Soviet society's subsequent development has hitherto been underestimated, including its role in the ultimate demise of the USSR.

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#### Review

"[O]ffers convincing arguments for the transformation of the postwar generation of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, her book is a major contribution to a growing literature that helps our understanding of how and why the Soviet Union collapsed."--*The Historian*

"A substantial contribution to the growing field of 'youth studies'...*Stalin's Last Generation* is an engaging, informative and thoroughly researched work of scholarship that deserves the attention of anyone interested in post-war Soviet culture in general, and youth culture in particular."--*Slavic and East European Journal*

"The book is a rich analysis of a generation that has undergone little previous study...*Stalin's Last Generation* is a very well-written monograph drawing on a variety of sources...The book makes a considerable contribution to existing research on cultural aspects of the Cold War era and to the current debate on what chronological framework can best serve our understanding of the character of postwar Soviet society."--*Journal of Cold War Studies*

#### About the Author

**Juliane Fürst** graduated from Oxford and the LSE. Subsequently, she was a lecturer at Magdalen College, Oxford, and a Junior Research Fellow at St. John's College, Oxford. She is currently lecturer in 20th Century History at the University of Bristol.

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