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'The Art of the Bribe': Corruption, Law, and Everyday Practice in the Late Stalinist USSR

Abstract

Focusing on the postwar decade between the wartime catastrophe and the death of the dictator, this study will begin to undertake an examination of bribery as a phenomenon of everyday life in late Stalinism. In the late Stalin period, bribery represented a particular variety of informal relationship between the Soviet population and representatives of the state. This study concentrates on interactions between ordinary people and the state officials who took payments for services that were either illegal or that they were required to provide for free. In this approach, bribery was a mode of negotiation, one that sometimes involved elements of coercion, between common citizens and office holders, between the buyers and sellers of services.