Ideology and Identity: 'Knowing' Workers in Early Soviet Russia, 1917-1921

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Abstract

The period 1917-1921 provides an insight not only into the policies of the new Soviet state but the mindset of its leaders. These four years were a time of intense political struggle and socio-economic disruption, which exposed the tension between ideology and practice in Bolshevik discourse and policy making. Workers, specifically metalworkers, were a focal point of Bolshevik ideology and policies in this period. This thesis will explore how the Soviet state conceptualised metalworkers, through ideology, and how this informed their engagement with workers, through policy. This will be done through an examination of state statistical data and how prominent state polices, cultural policy and treatment of dissent, and discourse changed over this period.

It will also focus on a case study of Sormovo Metalworks, a suburb of Nizhnii Novgrorod, and use local sources to investigate how the tension between ideology and practice played out on a local level. It will explore how local Bolsheviks conceptualised and engaged with Sormovo workers and how this was shaped by three things: Bolshevik ideology, the context of the Civil War and the specific local conditions of Sormovo and its workforce. The Civil War period witnessed a change in the discourse and policies of the Soviet state, which became more coercive, interventionist and repressive as the war progressed.

Sormovo Metalworks was a large metalworking complex in a largely rural province; it had a skilled workforce with a tradition of labour activism through striking and was dominated by the Socialist Revolutionary Party. The move towards an increasingly centralised state was utilised by local Bolsheviks in Sormovo in an attempt to end the labour activism of its workforce and crush political opposition. However, despite the increasingly assertive discourse about the identity of metalworkers and the state's drive for economic, political and cultural centralisation, Sormovo workers had the ability to challenge, subvert and negotiate state labels and even policies. This case study reveals that although Sormovo workers suffered repeated challenges to their identity by the state, local government and the economic crises of the Civil War, they continued to utilise self-identification based on their skill and shared socio-

economic experience. This in turn shaped their vertical and horizontal social, economic and political relationships with those around them. Although the central state became politically and economically centralised and authoritarian, the identity of the grassroots in Sormovo remained diverse and fluid.

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Glossary

Agitprop: Agitational Propaganda

Agitki: short agitational films

Agitpropotdel: Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee

Cheka: Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle against Counter-Revolution and Sabotage

Chernorabochie: 'Black worker', unskilled worker

Glavprofobr: Main Committee for Vocational Technical Education

Guberniia: Province

Istpart: Department of Party History of the Central Committee

Komsomol (VLKSM): All-Union Lenin Communist Youth League

Komuch: The People's Army of Komuch, Members of the Constituent Assembly

Krasnaia Zvezda: *Red Star*, agitation ship

Krasnoe Sormovo: Red Sormovo

Kuznitsa: 'Blacksmith', organisation of proletarian culture

Lichnost': Personality/ individuality

Kruzhki: Workers' circles

Masterovye: Skilled worker

Narodnogo Obrazivaniia: Department of People's Education

Narkomprod: The People's Commissariat of Food Supply

Narkompros: The People's Commissariat of Education

Narkomvoenmor: The People's Commissariat of Defence

Narkomzdrav: The People's Commissariat of Public Health

Narodnyi Dom: People’s House

NGU: Nizhnii Novgrod State University

Nizhgubispolkom: Political Committee of Nizhegorod Region

NKVD: The People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs

Ob"edinennaia Trudovaia Shkola: United Labour School

obschestvennost’: Late Imperial liberal movement to improve education of the ‘masses’

obucheniye: Technical education

Peripis: Census

Proletkul’t: Proletarian Cultural-Educational Organisation

proletkul’t: Proletarian Culture

Rabfaki: Worker faculties, to act as a stepping stone to university for workers

Rabochii: Worker (blue-collar)

Razvertska: compulsory fixed levy of foodstuffs

RK: Raionnyi Komitet

RKP(b): Russian Communist party (Bolsheviks)

RSDLP: Russian Social Democratic Labour Party

Samosud: mob punishment

SD: Social Democrat

Sluzhashchie: Employee (white-collar)

Sormovskii Zavod Prodovolstvennoi Upravi: Sormovo Factory Food Board

Soslovie: Social estate legal categorisations in the Tsarist period

SR: Socialist Revolutionary

Tsentral'noe Pravlenie Gosudarstvennykh Ob'edinennykh Mashinostroitel'nykh Zavodov: GOMZa, Central Board of the State Joint Machine-Building Plants, established in 1918

Tskehovschina: Craft consciousness, identity based on a workers' craft or workshop

TsSU: Central Statistical Administration

Uezd: district

Vepered: *Forward* (pre-1917, Bolshevik splinter group focusing on cultural education of workers)

VKP(b): All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)

Vospitaniye: Moral education

Vrag: enemy

Zavod: Factory

Zemlechestva: Workers who lived together and formed a kinship like bond, often from the same village.

Zemstvo: local self-government in Tsarist period

Zhenotdel: Women's Bureau

All dates in Russia are given according to the Gregorian calendar

All transliterations from Russian to English have used the Modified Library of Congress system

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Preface

> 'History has now confronted us with an immediate task, which is the most revolutionary of all the immediate tasks confronting the proletariat of any country. The fulfilment of this task... would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. And we have the right to count upon acquiring this honourable title, already earned by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the seventies, if we succeed in inspiring our movement, which is a thousand times broader and deeper, with the same devoted determination and vigour.' – V.I. Lenin, 1902[1]

> 'It is the [Bolshevik] party that was at the head of the workers in 1905 and which since then... has merged with the working class and it alone can lead that class to a profound, fundamental change in the old society.' - V.I. Lenin, 1919[2]

> 'The Russian worker, except the very top of the class, usually lacks the most elementary habits and notions of culture.' - L. Trotsky, 1923[3]

These quotes from Lenin and Trotsky sum up the competing and conflicting discourses about workers within the Bolshevik party in the early twentieth century. On the one hand, Russian workers were to lead the socialist revolution in Russia and become the 'vanguard of the revolutionary international.' On the other hand, their mindset, political consciousness and culture needed transforming, with the help of revolutionary socialists, before this could be achieved. This thesis will explore these discourses. It will investigate the Bolshevik conceptualisation of workers and the 'working class' and how this informed their engagement with workers, following the October Revolution in 1917 up to the end of the Civil War in 1921.

It will specifically focus on discourse about metalworkers in the revolutionary period. Metalworkers were targets for Bolshevik agitation and political ideology because they were skilled workers who had an established tradition of organised labour activism since the late nineteenth century. As permanent urban workers, who were largely literate, metalworkers were

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[1] V.I. Lenin, 'What is to be done?: Burning questions of our movement', in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol.5 (Moscow, 1961), p.373

[2] V.I. Lenin, 'Speech At The First All-Russia Congress Of Workers In Education and Socialist Culture', in V.I. Lenin *Collected Works*, 4th ed., vol.29 (Moscow, 1972), p.535

[3] L. Trotsky, 'Not by politics alone', in *The Problems of Everyday Life: And other writings on culture and science* (New York, 1986), p.20

deemed ripe for Bolshevik propaganda and cultural transformation, which was viewed as a necessary pre-condition for a socialist revolution. This discourse was shaped and irreconcilably changed by the context of the Civil War. The period 1914-1921 was one of mass social, economic and political dislocation in Russia.[4] The Soviet state attempted not only to enact new socio-economic policies, but to secure a popular discourse which justified not only these policies but the existence and future of the Soviet state. The repeated economic crises, food shortages, political struggle and continued labour activism during the Civil War resulted in the Soviet state increasingly utilising interventionist and coercive policies. It also resulted in the creation of a revolutionary discourse. The pre-revolutionary discourse which portrayed workers as saviours of revolution was transformed into discourse, where the collective identity and individual interests of workers were subsumed by the urgent needs of a state in a revolutionary class war. In essence, the discourse changed from emphasising that the state was in the service of workers to demanding, through language and policies, that workers' identity was based on their contribution to the state. This experience was a formative one for the Soviet state and shaped the infrastructure and discourse of the Soviet Union for years after 1921.

The analysis of Soviet discourse will be done on both a central and local perspective. This will reveal the relationship between the centre and locality during the Civil War, both in the formation of policies and discourse. The local perspective will be a case study of Sormovo Metalworks, in Nizhegorod province. It will use central state published sources, including statistical data and newspapers and archival sources from Sormovo Metalworks. These sources reveal that both the central and local Bolsheviks struggled to create a coherent discourse or policies regarding workers in the early Soviet state. They also reveal that the specificity not only of Sormovo's geographical location, but of its regional social, economic and political history intimately shaped Bolshevik policies *and* discourse towards workers there. Sormovo was an industrial suburb of Nizhnii Novgorod, which was politically

[4] See L. Lih, *Bread and authority in Russia, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, 1990); and P. Holquist, *Making war, forging revolution: Russia's continuum of crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, 2002)

contested throughout the Civil War. Unlike other large metalworking factories and urban areas in Moscow and Petrograd, it was the Socialist Revolutionaries not the Bolsheviks who had a strong support base there in 1917. Therefore, the local Bolshevik discourse and policies towards Sormovo workers were shaped by three things: the increasingly assertive and agressive state discourse and ideology, the urgent socio-economic problems of the Civil War and the specific local conditions of Sormovo, notably the continued labour activism of its workers.

Ideology shaped the SD and Bolshevik movement from its inception. The creation of a political movement and discourse based on Marxist writings, in a largely agrarian country, meant the Bolsheviks faced a conflict between language and practice well before 1917. This ideology did not disappear once they seized power in 1917 but was shaped by ideals of the Bolshevik elite and the life or death context of the Civil War.[5] Bolshevik ideology was infused with an urgent sense of mission and survival, which informed policy making. The Foucauldian link between discourse, policy making, power relationships and coercion is evident in early Soviet Russia, where the mixture between Bolshevik ideology and the context of the Civil War resulted in a powerful discourse that was intertwined with violent coercion and rapid centralisation.[6] Foucault clarifies this idea:

> 'This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth, on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects.'[7]

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[5] See J. C. McClelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik policy: The proletarian culture debate', *Slavic Review*, 39 (1980), 403-425

[6] See for example M. Foucault, A. Sheridan (trans.), *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* (New York, 1995); For the importance of language and discourse in early Soviet Russia see, in I. Halfin (ed.), *Language and revolution: Making of modern political identities* (London, 2002); L.H. Siegelbaum, and R.G. Suny (ed.), *Making workers Soviet: Power, class, and identity* (New York/ London, 1994); M.S. Gorham, 'Mastering the Perverse: State Building and Language "Purification" in Early Soviet Russia', *Slavic Review*, 59 (2000), 133-153

[7] M. Foucault, 'Afterword: The Subject and Power', in H.L Dreyfus, P. Rainbow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., (Chicago, 1983), p.212

The revolutionary discourse during the Civil War shaped how the state conceptualised and engaged with workers in Sormovo and state language permeated the everyday lives of metalworkers there. Soviet cultural policy in Sormovo was formulated in accordance with their ideological belief that the culture of workers needed to be transformed in order for socialism to thrive. This cultural mission was accelerated and intensified during the Civil War when Sormovo Metalworks was nationalised and repeated economic crises and food shortages threatened to shut down the factory and cause an explosion of labour activism. Furthermore, Bolshevik policy towards opposition was framed in reference to the Civil War as a 'class war'. The continued fighting and economic crises informed Bolshevik ideology about state 'enemies' and as a result the ideological language about state opposition became fluid and indiscriminate, regardless of ideologically ascribed class or social identities. Therefore, during the Civil War the state both used discourse to justify policy *and* used policy to justify their discourse.

However, despite the repressive nature of Soviet discourse in this period, in everyday life Sormovo workers had the ability to ignore, subvert or oppose state ascribed identities for them. Sormovo workers continued to resist coercive Bolshevik policies and discourse. By 1919, Sormovo workers lost their ability to strike without the threat of violent and repressive measures. Furthermore, Bolshevik control over pay, hiring and firing and food rations meant that Sormovo workers had much less incentive to use a strike as a way to demonstrate their grievances. This did not mean Sormovo workers accepted that their ascribed identity as a Soviet worker, which was predicated on their service to the state. Factory records and Bolshevik correspondence reveal that Sormovo workers continued to frame their identity in the workplace in reference to their skill and specifically their shared experience in the workshop, in which they spent their daily lives.[8] The local Bolsheviks

[8] I am using the term 'identity' in a loose way to explore how Sormovo workers had a strong sense of self-identification based on their shared experience of skilled work inside the factory. This does not suggest that all skilled workers, even in one workshop, acted in the same way. It only suggests that an important part of some workers' identities in Sormovo factory was predicated on the specificity of their position within Sormovo factory and as an extension of their socio-economic and political position within the province. For an exploration of problems of the overuse of the word 'identity' see, R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000), 1-47

repeatedly expressed their fear about the confident and independent minded nature of Sormovo workers, which threatened to interrupt economic life and political stability in the region. Sormovo workers were politically active in 1905 and 1917 and took part in spontaneous protests and marches throughout 1917. However, this was an extension of their workplace identity. Their stated demands focused on primarily economic issues and though many supported the SRs in soviet elections this did not mean that workers were influenced by their policies. Sormovo workers were confident in their ability to exact concessions from management and government through striking because of their key role in production and position within the province, as the largest and most prominent metalworking factory.

After 1917, the local Bolsheviks attempted to persuade Sormovo workers to end labour activism by creating a discourse about the importance of economic work and creating cultural courses which propagated the importance of service to the 'workers'' state and the futility of labour activism. Sormovo workers certainly took part in these courses but did not accept Soviet discourse and ascribed identities without question. Steinberg argues that no discourse can be monolithic. Ultimately, the use of language in early Soviet Russia was shaped by *how* individuals used this language, which in turn was shaped by material conditions of their lives, including social location and socio-economic relationships:

> 'Discourse, in this view, is both product and producer of meaning, and meaning is both material and cultural, formed in a continual interaction between context and text, between what is represented and how it is represented, with neither element subordinate to, or even fully separate from, the other.'[9]

Workers had the ability to articulate their own identities.[10] Their identities were not singular but diverse, multiple and overlapping. Sormovo workers supported some Bolshevik policies, including nationalisation of the factory, in

[9] M.D. Steinberg, 'Stories and voices: History and theory', *The Russian Review*, 55 (1996), p.350

[10] See for example, M.D. Steinberg, *Proletarian imagination: Self modernity and the sacred in Russia, 1910-1925* (Ithaca, 2002)

1917 because it suited their interests. They also supported SR policies in 1918 in opposition to the increasingly coercive methods of the Bolsheviks. They also appropriated state language and discourse when it was in their interests. Their self identification as the most prominent workers in Nizhegorod province was merged with the Bolshevik discourse about the importance of workers and the workers' movement in 1917. Sormovo workers used Bolshevik language about the role of workers in the revolutionary movement to demand access to privileged food rations throughout the Civil War. Although Soviet policies became violent and repressive towards Sormovo workers, which inhibited their ability and willingness to exert their socio-economic identity through striking, Soviet discourse was not and could not be fully monolithic. Workers formed their own identities in reference to the state but also in reference to each other and their specific socio-economic relationships.

This thesis will be split into three questions. How do we 'know' workers? How did the Bolsheviks conceptualise workers and the working class? And how did the state, and other political agents, attempt to engage and communicate with workers? Chapter 1 will focus on how the close link between policy and ideology in the Soviet Union has shaped the historiography of workers. The study of workers and the working class has long been a focus of Soviet, post-Soviet and western historiography. However, recent historiography about workers has moved away from the idea of 'class' as a meaningful identity for Soviet workers. The grouping terminology 'class' was fundamental to the popular political language of 1917 and then the Soviet discourse and language conceptualising the Civil War. By framing the actions and mentality of Sormovo workers solely in class terms, the local Bolshevik conceptualisation of workers was simplistic and denied Sormovo workers individual agency. However, this does not mean that class, or socio-economic, identity did not have real meaning for Sormovo workers in this period. Class identity was paramount in early Soviet Russia because the identity as a proletarian initially enabled workers to access social and economic benefits. This chapter will explore how historians have struggled to conceptualise workers in Soviet Russia without stepping outside the framework of class. Even when 'class' is not used as a grouping term, other revisionist theories rely

on generalised markers that workers had a shared mentality and actions that resulted in the revolutionary situation in 1917. This thesis will explore the multiple identities of Sormovo workers, including their class and socio-economic identity, and how these workers managed to survive and identify themselves in a period of acute economic, social and political dislocation.

Chapter 2 will examine the case study of Sormovo Metalworks. It will argue that it was the specificity of Sormovo's regional conditions and of its workers that shaped both Bolshevik language and practice towards them. The study of one factory in this period reveals how the micro-climate of that region, and the vertical and horizontal social relationships within it, informed not only local policy but state policy towards the factory and its workers during this period. The language and actions of both the state and of workers informed the conceptualisation and engagement between the two. The local Bolsheviks appropriated the language of Sormovo workers' grievances in order to win support for their party in 1917 and even afterwards. Sormovo workers appropriated Bolshevik language and policies when it suited their best interests and subverted state discourse and language when their perceived 'rights' were being impinged on. They had a strong sense of their own identity which was based on their shared socio-economic experience in their workshop as skilled workers and this was not created nor shaped by political agents or ideologies in Sormovo, even in 1917.

Chapter 3 will explore Soviet statistical material after 1917 to examine how Bolsheviks conceptualised workers and the working class and how this conceptualisation informed their policies. It will focus on the publications of the Central Statistical Administration (TsSU) after 1917 and the conflicting aims of data collection. The Soviet state had a pressing practical need to calculate the economic and agricultural resources of Russia during the Civil War. However, the state also had an ideological aim to shape the Soviet state and its population within Marxist class categorisations, in order to 'prove' to opposition, domestically and abroad, and the Russian people themselves, that Russia was the first successful socialist state. The conflicting practical and ideological aims of Soviet data collection in the first few years after 1917 is paralleled in almost every Bolshevik policy decision in the early Soviet state.

Chapter 4 will unpick Soviet cultural policy in the early Soviet state and focus on how policy makers were torn between conflicting practical and ideological aims. It was this conflict between pragmatism and ideology that resulted in the emergence of coercive discourse and policies. The utopianism of the Bolshevik elite, manifested in their belief in the spontaneous cultural transformation of workers, gave way to an intensified repressive vision of cultural transformation. This ideology of cultural transformation had little to do with literacy or political consciousness, as it had done in the years before 1917, but was transformed into a Soviet culture based on hard work and loyalty to the state. The state's cultural mission became increasingly interventionist in response to the context of the Civil War. Although the cultural events and courses in Sormovo had much in common with late Imperial liberal ideas of cultural transformation, the methods of the Soviet state were completely different. Soviet cultural policy signalled the beginning of a totalitarian state that was not only concerned with tangible educational improvement but the mindset and attitude of workers, both inside and outside the workplace.

Chapter 5 will explore how the early Soviet state formulated a definition and discourse about their opposition and how this discourse informed and shaped policy making. This was an area where discourse intimately shaped policy. Marxist discourse provided the state with a framework for finding ideological opposition to the state based on the vague labels of 'bourgeoisie' and 'petty-bourgeoisie'. These socio-economic labels were an integral part of the state's revolutionary discourse. As the conditions of the Civil War worsened, the definitions of these labels were expanded and the discourse about 'enemies of the state' became increasingly fluid and indiscriminate. When Sormovo workers continued to utilise strikes within the now nationalised factory, in response to harsh labour laws and food shortages, the local Bolsheviks and the central state utilised these vague socio-economic labels not only to punish Sormovo workers and name them as 'opposition' but to deny them their identity as a worker. Alongside this expanding discourse of opposition, was the expansion of state mechanisms to interfere inside the

factory through surveillance and the forcible co-option of workers into the state infrastructure.

1. Introduction: 'Knowing workers', Class and the challenges of Soviet Historiography

Introduction

This thesis will argue that we cannot dismiss 'class' as an organising category of the Soviet state or as a meaningful form of identity for workers in late Imperial and early Soviet Russia. The concept and framework of 'class', both as a societal analysis and identity construction, dwindled in both historical and sociological studies in the 1990s. The *end of history,* as Fukuyama envisioned, encapsulated the prevalent belief that ideologies such as Marxism and class consciousness were rooted in the past and were no longer worthy of study, nor relevant to post-modern historical research.[1] By the early 1990s, the diversification of a globalised world meant that discrete class categorisations had little practical resonance with many European societies. There has been a recent resurgence in class analysis, as there often is after economic crises, but again the focus has been on class as an economic phenomenon and not on class an expression of self identification.[2] Class is defined in this thesis not as a discrete economic phenomenon but as something that, in E.P. Thompson's words, 'happens', an active process of self identification 'which owes as much to agency as to conditioning'.[3]

In Sormovo class identity was formulated by the workers themselves and not imposed upon them, either by impersonal economic forces or by Soviet state discourse. It was an identity that was partially shaped by economic forces and Russia's political backdrop but it was also specific to the socio-economic and political experience of the locality, the workers' socio-economic relationships, inside and outside the workplace, and the nature of skilled metalwork in late Imperial Russia. Class identity was integral to worker collective identity in Sormovo and shaped labour activism there, before and after 1917. It was the shared socio-economic experience of skilled workers in Sormovo that created shared experiences, mentalities and intimately shaped

[1] F. Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (London, 1992)
[2] For example see, T. Piketty, A. Goldhammer (trans.), *Capital in the twenty-first century* (Cambridge, 2014)
[3] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English working class* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p.8

worker demands and grievances in the workplace. The workers shaped this class identity themselves through their shared experiences. It was not a static permanent identity; it changed and developed in response to changing relationships, discourse and socio-economic experience.

Alongside Sormovo workers' class identity on the micro level was Soviet state discourse about class on the national level. The Soviet state based their definition of class on Marx's theory of class as an economic and even a cultural phenomenon. High level Bolsheviks attempted to utilise Marxist economic class categorisations as a basis for their discourse and policies after 1917. The idea of distinct economic class identities and class conflict was fundamental to early Soviet discourse. It was the basis of Soviet revolutionary discourse, which framed the Civil War as a dichotomous fight of the state against the 'enemies of the people,' and was also fundamental to the formulation of state socio-economic policies.[4] 'Class' categorisations and class identity therefore had very real meaning and practical consequences in early Soviet Russia. The state's ascribed economic identities cannot therefore be completely abandoned by historians of revolutionary Russia. Class discrimination was codified in Soviet legislation in 1918, which meant that being a member of a certain class provided either practical economic benefits or political and economic discrimination. Class categorisations and class conflict also provided the framework for all contemporary Soviet sources and framed Soviet historiography. Ascribed economic class categorisations in early Soviet Russia did not represent the diverse factors involved in identity construction in early Soviet Russia. However, these ascribed identities were encoded in law had practical consequences for Sormovo workers, not only for their living and working conditions but also for the ongoing development of their socio-economic identity.

Early Soviet statistical data did not represent the diversity of the Russian population. Soviet class based histories of Sormovo routinely distorted local socio-political history to present class as a solely economic phenomenon. It is important to deconstruct Soviet constructions of class conflict and class

[4] S.B. Smith, 'Introduction', in *Captives of Revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik Dictatorship, 1918-1923* (Pittsburgh, 2011)

identities in an attempt to understand the multiple, diverse and individual identities of workers in Sormovo. However, disentangling sources and approaches from broader theoretical notions about class identities remains a problem for revolutionary historiography today. It is difficult to completely step outside the Soviet framework of class when all official sources were framed in class terms. Later Russian labour historiography has often sought to replace class analysis by grouping workers together in a way that reveals a shared set of values or actions. This is most evident in the historiography of 1917.[5] Grouping the actions and mentalities of workers in this way faces the danger of predicting mentalities based on actions, or the other way around, and ignoring worker behaviour, discourse or relationships that do not fit this pattern. As Steinberg suggests, it is important that one theoretical framework for conceptualising worker experience and culture is not simply replaced with another.[6]

The Revisionist theory of 'social polarisation', as an explanation for the explosion of labour activism, violence and social dislocation in 1917, provides an alternative framework to a class based explanation of 1917 but is also reductive. This is not to say that we should not seek to understand shared identities and mentalities of workers in early Soviet Russia but to understand that not only did workers have multiple identities but they had the ability to appropriate or subvert discourse and ascribed identities.[7] Class identity was important and meaningful in early Soviet Russia. The language and discourse of class permeated workers' everyday lives in Sormovo through state propaganda and policies, but this was not their *only* identity.

Attempting to look beyond ascribed identities for workers can be difficult when first hand sources from workers were rare. Furthermore, the

[5] For historiography about the role of skilled workers in 1917 see: L. Haimson, The problem of social stability in urban Russia, 1905-1917 (Part One), *Slavic Review*, 23 (1964); L. Haimson, The problem of social stability in urban Russia, 1905-1917 (Part Two), *Slavic Review*, 24 (1965); V.E. Bonnell, 'Rethinking the role of workers in the Revolutions of 1917', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 26 (1984); D. Koenker and W.G. Rosenberg, 'Skilled workers and the strike movement in revolutionary Russia', *Journal of Social History*, 19 (1986), 605-629

[6] M. Steinberg, 'Stories and voices: History and theory', p.350

[7] M.D. Steinberg, 'Modernity and the poetics of proletarian discontent', in I Halfin (ed.), *Language and revolution: Making of modern political identities*, p.107

early Soviet period was one of structural socio-economic and political change, where relationships between workers and the state, and between each other, were radically re-defined. A micro study of worker identity in Sormovo metalworking factory can reveal not only the everyday experience of workers but their relationships within the workplace and their interactions with state agents. This thesis will build upon the rich variety of regional case studies of Russia during the revolutionary period that illuminate the variety of worker experience in local areas.[8] As the largest metalworking factory complex in the province, Sormovo metalworkers were more 'exceptional' in Nizhegorod region than the many metalworkers and skilled metalworkers, with their own districts and suburbs, in Moscow and Petrograd. Their daily lives and even their labour activism were not only shaped by their work but by a number of factors, such as their relationship with local political parties, their position within the province and even transport and communication links. These things were specific to Sormovo and its specific context was different to any other region of Russia. Case studies of workers in a geographical area can reveal the specific experience of workers, only then can this be used to inform theoretical ideas about the wider pattern of worker behaviour in the revolutionary period.

Class

Class formation

The Soviet state's conceptualisation of class and the working class was reductive and discriminatory. Russia was not economically developed enough

[8] For the early Soviet period see, D. Raleigh, *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov* (New York, 1986); H. Phillips, '"A Bad Business': The February Revolution in Tver'', *Soviet and Post Soviet Review*, 23 (1996); S. Badcock, *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history* (Cambridge, 2007); Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922* (Cambridge, 2008); M.C. Hickey, 'Local government and state authority in the provinces: Smolensk, February– June 1917', *Slavic Review*, 55 (1996) For the Civil War see for example, Badcock, Novikova and Retish (eds.) *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-1922;* E. C. Landis, 'Between village and Kremlin: Confronting state food procurement in Civil War Tambov, 1919-1920', *The Russian Review*, 63 (2004); S.Z. Rupp, 'Conflict and crippled compromise: Civil War Politics in the east and the Ufa State Conference' *The Russian Review*, 56 (1997); D. J. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's civil war: Politics, society, and revolutionary culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton, 2002); D.P. Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian printers and Soviet socialism, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, 2005); S.V. Iarov, *Gorozhanin kak politik: Revoliutsiia, voennyi kommunizm i NEP glazami Petrogradtsev* (St Petersburg, 1999); S.V.Iarov, *Proletarii kak politik: Politicheskaia psikhologiia rabochikh Petrograda v 1917-1923 gg* (St Petersburg, 1999)

to match Marxist predications of the development of class society. The new Soviet state used these vague socio-economic categorisations to formulate many of their discriminatory policies against individuals perceived to belong in certain categories. Class was viewed as a concrete phenomenon which resulted from the economic and political development of a country and as a result predicted the behaviour of individuals on the basis of their class identity. This definition of class as an observable economic phenomenon formed the foundation of Bolshevik ideology and policy. In Sormovo, workers did have a shared socio-economic identity based on their shared daily experiences in the workplace. However, this was not imposed on them, it was an identity they created for themselves through language based on shared experiences and grievances and their relationships within the factory. This class identity of Sormovo workers had the potential to be fluid and was up for negotiation, it was formed as a result of the specific local conditions of Sormovo in the early twentieth century.

Class is a concept that has layers of meaning and eludes a specific definition. Marxist sociologists and historians have sought to root their definitions of class in economic development.[9] As Wright has argued, a Marxist class analysis 'provides a central part of the explanation of what can be called the epochal trajectory of human history'.[10] Marxist class analysis is based on historical materialism, a linear socio-economic progression of society from workers who are slaves of economic forces to liberated proletarians. The formation of class identities is viewed as a direct result of impersonal economic forces, these class identities are then themselves a social cause of societal political changes. A Marxist class analysis is not based within a situational context; it is viewed as part of larger societal changes that are an inevitable result of economic changes. Workers themselves are not given

[9] For sociological explorations of class that are influenced by Marxism and historical materialism see: G.A. Cohen, *History labour and freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford, 1988); E.O. Wright, *Class Counts* (Cambridge, 1997); F.Devine, M.Savage, J.Scott and R.Crompton (ed.), *Rethinking class: Culture, identities and lifestyle* (Basingstoke, 2004); P. Bourdieu., R. Nice (trans.), *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (London, 2010); W. Atkinson, *Class* (Cambridge, 2015); M. Savage, *Social class in the 21st century* (London, 2015)

[10] Wright, *Class Counts,* p.1

agency in the creation of their class identities because these identities result from economic progression.

Wright has argued that to understand class we need to understand the three aspects of class identity: class formation, class struggle and class consciousness. He states:

> 'Class formation is the formation of collective actors organised around class interests within class structures; class struggle is the struggle between such collectively organised actors over class interests; class consciousness is the understanding by people within a class of their class interests'. [11]

Firstly, he argues classes are formed as a result of economic exploitation. There is an essential 'us and them' element to class formation; those that own the means of production and those that do not. Both the exploiter and exploited cannot exist without the other in a capitalist system. Workers need work and the capitalists need cheap labour to profit from.[12] Richard Hoggart argues that class identity gains its strength as a uniting force from the presence of an 'us and them' dichotomy. He explains that 'them' could be "the people at the top', 'the higher-ups', the people who give you your dole, call you up, tell you to go to war, fine you.... 'aren't really to be trusted', 'talk posh'', so anybody who is perceived to be gaining something from the poor conditions of workers: the exploiters.[13] The shared articulations and actions of Sormovo workers consistently referenced an 'other', who was perceived to be denying them their rights as skilled metalworkers. The idea of the 'other' was an important factor in uniting Sormovo workers in collective action, skilled and unskilled, in 1917. However, the identity of the 'other' was not always stable and not all Sormovo metalworkers articulated their demands in reference to their 'exploitation', especially after 1917. Chapter four will explore how it was actually the Soviet state's discourse that routinely used the concept of the 'other' to formulate its own identity as a state.

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[11] Wright, *Class Counts*, pp.3-4
[12] Wright *Class Counts*, p.9
[13] R. Hoggart, *The uses of literacy: Aspects of working-class life with special reference to publications and entertainment* (London, 1965), pp.72-75

Furthermore, a concrete economic definition of class formation and class struggle is too simplistic to apply to late Imperial and early Soviet Russia. Sormovo workers did create and articulate a shared identity in reference to their socio-economic experiences and 'exploitation' by the 'other' and their 'rights' as skilled workers but their identity was also more nuanced than this. Wright's definition of macro class formation is linear and would imply that a metalworker in Sormovo would have the same class identity as a worker in Moscow or Petrograd. The huge diversity of socio-economic, political and geographical experience of workers across Russia before and after 1917 does not fit into neat class categories or definitions.

More consistently than focusing on the 'other', Sormovo skilled metalworkers referenced their 'rights' as skilled workers. This was in reference to their perceived importance not only to the factory but to the regional area, as the largest metalworking factory in the province. Wright argues that workers or employees with skill are in a potentially privileged position within the hierarchy of exploitative class relations. They are still being exploited by capitalists but because of their scarcity and value to the factory are not exploited to the extent that other unskilled workers would have been. Wright goes further than this and argues that some employers are forced to use 'loyalty-enhancing mechanisms' in order to achieve the co-operation of skilled workers.[14] This could explain why Sormovo workers were assertive in their economic demands during the late Imperial period. Their high level of skill was valued both by industrialists in the late Imperial period and by factory organisations and the local Bolshevik party after 1917. Chapter one explores how Sormovo metalworkers articulated their identity as skilled workers before and after 1917.

Wright's economic definition of class categories and class identities implies that Sormovo workers had their identity imposed on them. The third stage of Wright's class formation is 'class consciousness.' This implies that workers gain agency to overcome their exploitative relationships. Marx's writings emphasise that workers gain agency through the achievement of 'class

[14] Wright *Class Counts*, p.18

consciousness', from a class in itself to a class *for* itself. Workers are awakened to their exploitation and seek to become 'masters of the productive forces of society' by abolishing their previous form of exploitation and all other forces of exploitation. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx explains the agency and 'awakening' of proletarians as 'the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority.'[15] This prescriptive description of class identity and class consciousness is not one that gives workers agency. Workers act only within the parameters of their 'class', which in turn is formulated within the parameters of economic progress. It does not allow for exceptions or deviations from the linear progression of society. Nor does not take into account the individual motives, relationships and contextual circumstances of class identity, which were an integral part of the class identity of Sormovo workers.

Class 'happens'

E.P. Thompson's groundbreaking book *The Making of the English Working Class* changed the way many historians and sociologists viewed class. He aimed to "rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loomer weaver, the 'utopian' artisan... from the enormous condescension of history". Thompson disagreed with the Marxist definition of class that categorised society according to the relationship of individuals to the production of goods. He argued that this was far too simplistic and broad and did not take into account the motives, experiences and relationships of individuals. Therefore, he argued that he did not view 'class as a 'structure', nor even as a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships'. In his history of the working class, workers are given agency and placed at the forefront of his historical research. The English workers created the working class through their actions, mentalities and their human relationships. This was a history that was critical of crude Marxist class labels which gave little historical

[15] K. Marx, 'The Communist Manifesto' in C. Pierson (ed.), The Marx Reader (Cambridge, 1997), p.137

importance to the culture and actions of the individuals that made up the working class.[16]

Thompson's definition of class as something that comes into existence through relationships and shared experiences is visible in Sormovo Metalworks in the late Imperial period and was accelerated by the Civil War. Sormovo workers did have a shared economic identity based on their relationship to the production of goods. The factory was composed of many skilled and unskilled workers, many of whom had a shared identity based on their level of skill and relationships within a specific workshop. However, to define the identity of Sormovo workers based only on their relationship to production is reductive and inaccurate. If this was the case then the experience of skilled metalworkers in Sormovo would have been exactly the same as skilled metalworkers in Moscow or Petrograd. The shared socio-economic experience of Sormovo workers blurred with their political identity as it did in other areas of metalworking production and resulted in similar actions from skilled metalworkers, particularly striking as the predominant form of labour activism. However, because of the specific geographical location and socio-economic conditions of Sormovo a worker in Sormovo may have exhibited similar actions or aims as a skilled worker in Moscow but their identity was not the same.

Steadman-Jones explored how class identity is rooted in the contextual situation in which the individual is living. Writing after the linguistic turn in social history, he argues that class was not and is not an a-priori phenomenon and workers were not economically determined. He argues we should study the language of class in order to understand the context in which class identity is being reproduced. Class therefore is not a social description but part of a discourse that is subject to change depending on individual circumstances.[17] Joyce also states that we must be careful when studying the language of 'class', arguing that the 'consciousness of a class need not be the consciousness *of* class'. He warns that what we perceive as a language of class

[16] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English working class,* pp.13, 8-10
[17] G. Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English working class history, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p.7

may actually be a shared articulation of another identity such as a regional identity or a shared custom.[18]

It is difficult to discern whether a shared discourse is a language of class or a shared language that articulates another shared identity. This does not mean that Sormovo workers could not have both. Workers in Sormovo had multiple and overlapping identities that were rooted in different shared experiences, whether these were permanent or a passing moment. Identities were shaped by gender, family size or a worker's role in World War One as much as by a shared specific economic experience in this period. The regional identity of Sormovo workers was crucial in the articulation of their grievances and shared identity. Sormovo workers had an assertiveness when dealing with the factory administration or local government, due to their importance as skilled metalworkers in the biggest metalworking factory in Nizhegorod province. This would not have perhaps evolved in such a way in another regional area with several smaller metalworking factories. However, the shared language and articulation of grievances in Sormovo were rooted in the language of skill and shared socio-economic experiences of daily life in the factory. Although they may not have labelled themselves consistently as a class, they based their actions of labour activism on their workplace experiences, their skill, their shared grievances that arose from this and their assertiveness as a workforce because of the situational context of Sormovo and the socio-economic and political experience of its population during the late Imperial and early Soviet period.

This thesis will use the methodological concept that 'class happens' to explore the socio-economic identities of Sormovo workers. Class did not have a distinct meaning in early Soviet Russia and nor does it have one today. What was meaningful for Sormovo workers in the revolutionary period was the shared daily experiences in the workplace. Sometimes this was an experience they shared with other workers in the factory, or even with workers in Moscow and Petrograd, for example food scarcity during the Civil War. At other times it was an experience only shared with skilled workers in one workshop, for

[18] P. Joyce, *Visions of the people: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p.15

example an abusive foreman. This meant their socio-economic identity was consistently shifting and responding to economic events and state policy but also on a micro scale. It shifted in response to relationships and experiences within the workplace. The most persistent form of self-identification of Sormovo workers after 1917 was their identity as skilled workers within the largest metalworking factory in the province. The self-identification of Sormovo workers can be studied through their articulations to factory management and the local Bolshevik party after 1917. This was rooted in the experience of workers in the metalworking industry in Russia but was also intimately shaped by the situational socio-economic and geographical context of Sormovo and cannot be generalised for other areas of Russia. This was an assertive economic and political self-identification of 'rights' and 'privileges' that was articulated by the workers themselves. It was a class identity based on skill in a specific geographical location that persisted through a world war, several economic crises, two revolutions and a Civil War.

Historiography

Workers and the 'working class' have been the focus of Soviet and western historiography about revolutionary Russia since 1917. This is because the life of the ordinary Russian worker represented more than a history of the Soviet workforce. The living and working conditions of workers in the Soviet Union were used both by Soviet and western historians as a barometer for the success or failure of the Soviet state and as an extension socialism as a political and economic system. For Soviet scholars, and their pro-Soviet western counterparts, worker experience and worker role in production provided proof that Russia had created the first successful socialist state. For other western scholars Russian workers represented an oppressed and powerless group. Their autonomy had been crushed by the totalitarian state and Soviet Russia was a country run by a small political elite and large bureaucracy.

The politicised history of workers in the Soviet Union has meant that many historians distanced themselves from class, not only as an organising category for Soviet society but in the research of worker experience and identity. Revisionist historians in the 1970s and 1980s sought to look further than economic class analysis as an explanation for worker actions and

mentalities in Soviet Russia. Utilising different sources, such as Trade Union records, memoirs, newspapers and limited access to published archival material, they created a broader and more diversified account of the lives of workers in revolutionary Russia. However, Revisionist macro historical theories relating to the behaviour of workers, especially in 1917, may have abandoned the terminology and ideology of class identity but still serve to diminish the agency of individuals and multiple worker identities through this focus on social processes of change. The post-revisionist historiography of revolutionary Russia explored workers' lives in even more depth. After the collapse of the Soviet Union historians utilised the now open archives to gain an understanding not only of the economic identity of workers but their social, cultural, gender and sexual identities. Furthermore, the access to regional archives opened up the possibility of micro regional case studies of worker identity which situated the experiences of workers in the local context. The specificity of the geography, economy and politics of the local region was found to have much more influence over the actions and identity of workers than national politics or broader economic processes.[19] This thesis will build on the diverse regional case studies of revolutionary Russia. It will explore the class identity of Sormovo workers in reference to their socio-economic experiences which were affected deeply by the mass social, economic and political upheavals of crises of revolutionary Russia. However, there was also a persistence of a distinctly localised identity in Sormovo which was articulated throughout the Civil War period as an assertive identity based on 'rights'.

Soviet Historiography

The peculiarity of the historiography of Soviet workers is a result of the Soviet state's monopolisation of history making, which had already become well established practice by 1921. By the end of 1917 several state endorsed histories of Russia had been published to narrate the Bolsheviks' 'messianic

[19] S. Badcock's regional study of Kazan and Nizhegorod province reveals that the political concerns of ordinary people were focused on the locality and furthermore the dynamic of 1917 in these regions was determined by specific local conditions, *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history*, p.238

intervention in history'.[20] Leninist notions about class conflict, vanguardism, the role of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie marked the beginning of the 'official histories' of Russia, which characterised the Soviet regime up until its collapse. These histories focused on the 'progression' of workers in their journey to class consciousness.

From the beginning of the twentieth century Lenin and other leading Bolsheviks had already formulated their own version of Russian history that relied on Marxist class categorisations and historical materialism. In his *The April Theses* Lenin tried to cement a discourse about the February Revolution as a bourgeois revolution that was a result of the 'insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat', which placed power into 'the hands of the bourgeoisie' and not the proletariat.[21] This SD, Bolshevik and then Soviet narrative constructed a discourse and history of the Russian working class as Marxist proletarians oppressed by the capitalistic system until they gained 'consciousness'. The ideological concept of class consciousness was an important tenet of Bolshevik discourse because Leninism asserted that this consciousness was not only a result of economic forces but of Bolshevik revolutionary ideology.

A reflection of this monopolisation of Soviet history making can be seen in the proliferation of state publicised local histories in Sormovo after 1917. These publications illuminated some details of the lives of workers in a regional area for historians outside of Russia during the Soviet period. However, they were produced by the state in order to promote a discourse about the important role of party members and Sormovo metalworkers in revolutionary history. These histories went into little detail about the Sormovo workforce or the lives of ordinary workers. They instead relied on Marxist generalisations about the actions and mentality of the Sormovo metalworkers and focused on revolutionary leaders who 'helped' Sormovo workers gain class consciousness. Using class as the only collective identity of the working

[20] I. Halfin, *From Darkness to light: Class consciousness and salvation in revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, 2000), p.395, 464; For an example of this Soviet historiography, see G. Lindov, *Kratkii ocherk istorii Rossiiskoi sostial-demokraticheskoi rabochei partii* (Petrograd, 1917)
[21] V. I. Lenin, 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution: The April Theses', *Pravda*, 26 (7th April, 1917)

class meant that Soviet historiography paid little attention to individual identities or the multiple conflicting identities of workers.

Soviet historiographies of Sormovo focused on the years of 1902 and 1905 or the lead up to 1917 and created a narrative of progression of the Sormovo workers from unconscious workers to revolutionary class conscious workers, as a result of SD and Bolshevik influence. In 1902 the leader of the SDs in Sormovo, Pytor Zamolov, was praised for his influence over Sormovo workers through workers' circles, which introduced Marxist theory and practice into their lives.[22] Vasilli Nikolaievich Kaiurov was a member of the Sormovo SD organisation and a skilled worker in Sormovo factory. He emphasised how Sormovo workers were integral to the Russian revolutionary movement:

> 'Historians of the revolutionary movement cannot pass by the ... revolutionary facts that took place in Sormovo in the period 1899-1906. Sormovo at the time was a clot of revolutionary energy and was the site of major events that affected not only the environment of the working masses of the province and the petty bourgeoisie, but also had a frightening effect on the ruling class. It is unlikely that there was such a place in Russia where the revolutionary movement so sharply and persistently progressed. It is all the more significant that Sormovo (at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth), with 15,000 workers, did not have higher or secondary educational institutions and consequently did not have a home-grown intelligentsia ... It was the most ordinary working village, divorced from the city and its culture.' [23]

This deferential description of Sormovo workers, as conscious revolutionaries in 1902 and 1905, was tempered by the belief in their apparent lack of education and culture. Kaiurov's description of the initial meeting of Sormovo workers and members of the SD party highlights the difference in education and culture between worker and socialist:

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[22] V. P. Fadeev, *Istoriia Krasnogo Sormova* (Moscow, 1969), p.104
[23] V.N. Kaiurov, *Sormovo v pervoi revoliutsii* (Gorky, 1930), p.5

‘The word "socialist" was a scarecrow for the workers. For example, we give such a case. One of the summer evenings of 1895... several workers were sitting with their wives having a conversation "about this, this and that," simply speaking, the conversation was empty. Someone drew attention to the figure of a man dressed in a decent suit with a hat on his head, [who] suddenly appeared at the end of the street. The drunken blacksmith from Kurbatov's factory, having recognized him, informed the others:

- Mr H: A socialist who does not believe in God and does not recognise the Tsar!

Everyone laughed at the courage of the blacksmith and looked curiously at the approach of this "supernatural" man. Finally, he came closer. Greeted [the workers] politely and in turn received a complacent answer and continued his journey. When he departed, a fairly considerable distance, the arguments began:

- He seems polite and well-dressed, and, they say, he does not drink, but does “such” things.

The blacksmith Andrei, interrupting the speaker, authoritatively remarked

- So they [the socialists] are deliberately going to lure us into their networks - into their party?’[24]

Sormovo workers were portrayed as politically backward individuals who had the economic and cultural potential to become revolutionaries but without education believed that socialists were strangers to be feared. The ‘native’ culture of Sormovo workers was not respected or explored and the blacksmith, a skilled worker, who questioned the socialist, was portrayed as a drunk. Chapter 4 will explore worker culture in Sormovo, which was viewed by socialists and socialist chroniclers as something to be moulded into revolutionary consciousness.

[24] Kaiurov, *Sormovo v pervoi revoliutsii*, p.10

The narrative framework for these histories was that Sormovo workers were introduced to revolutionary ideas by the local SD party and the results were revealed in co-ordinated labour and political activism of Sormovo workers in 1905 and 1917. These Soviet narratives of Sormovo workers served only to create a narrative of Bolshevik successes in the area both politically and culturally. We know and understand little about workers and their identities from these histories, as they were treated as an undifferentiated mass. The detail was saved for 'revolutionary workers', many of whom were not workers but students who had little contact with the majority of Sormovo workers before 1917.[25] The labour activism of Sormovo workers was linked directly to the aims of the Bolsheviks, and the workers were used primarily as a narrative device to 'prove' that the Bolsheviks had the mass support of the strategically important metalworkers both in 1905 and more importantly in 1917.

This was the issue at the heart of Soviet historiography, to prove that Russia was a socialist state and had the support of the workers. There was little need for official histories to go into depth about the everyday lives of workers and the diversity of the workforce because the workers needed to act as a whole unit as a working class to fit in with the Soviet version of history. Workers were given no agency in Soviet official histories of Sormovo. Their ascribed class identity was used as a reference for collective identity and revolutionary consciousness and not used to reflect the everyday living and working conditions of workers.

The Revisionists: Peasant and Proletarian

The focus of Soviet historiography on the workers' journey to class consciousness resulted in a historiography which created a dichotomous identity of the 'working class'. The peasant represented the unconscious worker, who had a lower level of education, had rural ties and did mainly unskilled work. The proletarian archetype in Soviet historiography focused on skilled workers, with a higher level of education and a cultural appetite for self improvement and politically enlightenment, with the help of Bolshevik party members. The journey from peasant to proletarian implied more than an

[25] See estimates for Sormovo Bolshevik membership in 1917 in Chapter 2.

inevitable economic process. It required conscious effort from the individual and external help from 'conscious' party members. Although this trope did not represent the diverse and fluid identity of workers in late Imperial Russia, this was a dichotomous identity paradigm that influenced historians outside the USSR and even Revisionist historians from the 1970s. Revisionism of Soviet history attempted to downplay the role of Bolshevik and Marxist ideology and class identities in the history of 1917 and after, but in doing so some studies and theories replaced a Marxist paradigm with an oversimplified and generalised representation of workers' lives influenced by long term social processes of change and shifting identities related to these processes. The generalisation of worker experience in the historiography of revolutionary Russia is why post-revisionist regional studies are integral to the research of worker identity in this period. They illuminate the multiple, diverse and adaptable identities of workers in the revolutionary period.

Soviet ideology indicated that early Soviet Russia was a society with clear class categorisations. The Soviet discourse about October was that Russia had a large and developed working class that supported the Bolsheviks. Therefore, categorising the Russian population as largely proletarian was important ideologically for the Soviet state, not only during the Civil War but after too, in the justification of October as a popular proletarian uprising. Contemporary and Soviet sources either falsified statistics about economic production and out-migration to the countryside, or created ideological categorisations of Soviet society to secure a discourse of a workers' state with a large proletarian population. This dichotomous distinction between peasant and proletarian came to represent more than just a social categorisation of Soviet society. Western historians utilised these labels in their research of the first 'socialist' state as a measure of whether it was a Marxist state. This distinction was integral to ascribed Soviet class identities and worker autobiographies. It perpetuated the artificial division between a worker and peasant identity, which in reality was much more fluid.

The political importance of the socio-economic class labels of peasant and proletarian meant that many western historians, writing in the 1960s, also utilised these labels in their research of the lives of workers. Pro-Soviet

historians, most notably E.H. Carr, argued that 1917 had been a 'socialist revolution led by the proletariat'. After discussing agricultural policy Carr describes the Bolsheviks' industrial policies as 'straightforward enough' because 'the control of industry would naturally be taken over by the workers acting on their own behalf and in their own name'.[26] The workers are portrayed as completely separate from peasants and as the followers of Bolshevik orders; this is the result of the inevitable processes of class history. Conversely, anti-communist historians such as Richard Pipes used the history of people in Russia to prove Russia was not ready for a socialist revolution. He argued that workers had not led the revolution and Russia was still largely an agrarian system. Importantly, he argued that the Bolsheviks only built upon the Tsarist autocratic system of governance to deny ordinary Russian people any form of autonomy. This led him to argue that the USSR did not represent a workers' state but an extension and continuation of Russia's totalitarian state structure.[27] This link between the Soviet regime and the Tsarist regime was anathema to Soviet and Marxist discourse, which was based on a 'conscious' working class and a clear break from the oppressive capitalist past.

Although the arguments of Carr and Pipes are different, their narratives of the workers and the working class are very similar. Both of their histories focus on state policies rather than the workers themselves. The subjects of in depth analysis are the Bolshevik leaders and their aims and motives for the working class after 1917, rather than the workers themselves. The focus on class labels meant that workers were often grouped together either as victims of the totalitarian state or the benefactors of inescapable class forces. They both utilised Soviet social and class labels in their research. The workers that Carr and Pipes present are also workers with no agency. Their research was shaped by responding to Soviet official histories of workers and their class identity and continued to frame workers with limiting social labels.

Even Revisionist historiography of late Imperial and early Soviet Russia focused on the economic, social and cultural distinction between peasant and proletarian. Russian labour history is still viewed through this lens

[26] E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923: Volume Two* (Harmondsworth, 1966), p.62
[27] R. Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik regime, 1919-1924* (London, 1995)

of the transition from peasant to proletarian. This is evident in historiography about rapid urbanisation in late Imperial Russia. Many studies of in-migration to urban centres in the late nineteenth century focused on the distinction between those who permanently resided in the city, workers, and those who were seasonal migrants, peasants.[28] This socio-economic identity was so important to historiography because the identity transition from peasant to proletarian represented a progression of identity construction and political consciousness that provided an explanation for the eruption of worker protests in 1917. Therefore, the distinction between peasant and proletarian remained important for western historians. These identities were not meaningless to workers; the city was a place where cultures clashed and workers tried to establish an identity in a chaotic period. However, as chapter 4 will explore, these social and cultural identities were not dichotomous. Contemporary memoirs and observations of working life in the cities exaggerated the split between peasant and worker identity.[29] Lower class culture and identities, in the early twentieth century were contradictory, diverse and multiple.

1917 and 'Social Polarisation'

The Revisionist historiography of revolutionary Russia therefore could not completely break away from the identity paradigms constructed by Soviet historiography. Western historiography continued to frame working-class socio-economic and cultural identity as a trajectory or process of transformation. This is best exemplified in the Revisionist theory of 'social polarisation' as an alternative to the Soviet discourse about the explosion of labour activism and overtly political protests in the February Revolution. As Zelnik argues, historians still face the danger of viewing the history of the working class in late Imperial Russia through a lens of the 'social identity paradigm'.[30] This paradigm is based on the identity of workers in reference to

[28] For example, J. Bradley, *Muzhik and Muscovite: Urbanization in Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 1985); J.H Bater, *St. Petersburg: Industrialization and change* (London, 1976); R.E. Johnson, *Peasant and proletarian: The working class of Moscow in the late nineteenth century* (Leicester, 1979)

[29] Von Geldern, 'Life in-between: Migration and popular culture in late Imperial Russia', p.365; see also V.E. Bonnell (ed.), *The Russian worker: life and labor under the Tsarist regime*

[30] Zelnik, 'On the eve: Life histories and identities of some revolutionary workers, 1870-1905', p.27

how they related to impersonal socio-economic forces and how they formed vertical and horizontal societal relationships.

The differentiation of the working class in terms of working life and culture directly influenced ideas about which members of the working class or which type of workers were the most 'revolutionary' or were the most visible in 1917. Ideas about the composition of the working class and their actions and mentality informed debates about 1917. Although recognising the diversity of the late Imperial workplace, these debates about 1917 are not removed from the framework of class identity. Within the acknowledgement of the diversity of the late Imperial workplace is an attempt to relate the individual and shared identities of workers with long term processes of change in late Imperial Russia.

Factory case studies

The 1970's and 1980's saw a proliferation of factory case studies focusing on 1917 in the Russian capitals, Moscow and Petrograd. These studies brought E.P Thompson's theory of class formation, created through everyday relationships, to the forefront of revolutionary historiography. The focus of the historiography moved from a top-bottom approach to a grassroots approach and the previously undifferentiated Soviet 'working class' was revealed to be much more complex than given credit for in earlier Soviet and western historiography. For the first time the experiences of Russian workers before and after 1917 were viewed on a micro scale and their social and political identity was rooted in their daily experiences in factories or even one workshop. These factory studies not only revealed that the 'working class' experience was not homogenous but that workers acted rationally in 1917. They responded to political and economic events not just by protesting but establishing factory committees to represent their everyday economic concerns in response to repeated economic crises. Despite this, the focus remained on factories in the two capitals of Russia, Moscow and Petrograd in 1917. Mandel's explanation for the October Revolution summarises the narrow view of worker experience within some Revisionist historiography. He argued that 'by October there was scarcely a factory in which a good majority of workers

were not waiting for the establishment of Soviet power'.[31] The more nuanced arguments about social and economic divisions within the workforce, and the multiple factors that influenced their identity construction, were then often then generalised to make broader theoretical arguments about the role of workers in 1917 based on the experiences of some workers, often skilled, in Moscow and Petrograd.

In their studies of workers in Petrograd in 1917, Smith and Mandel revealed that a small scale study of workers' lives can illuminate the importance of the factory in the construction of socio-economic identities. For skilled metalworkers in Petrograd, the factory was where they spent most of their lives. Their 'class' identity was not imposed on them from Bolshevik party members but formulated from shared economic concerns within the factory, in addition to socio-economic relationships within the workplace. Their case studies revealed that not all workers had the same political and economic goals in 1917 and this was a result of differentiation of the workforce according to skill, relationship to the countryside, age, sex and many other socio-economic factors.[32] They presented a much more complex and diverse picture of workers lives before 1917. Not only did workers create factory committees as a rational response to economic problems in 1917, Smith argues, they also shaped the nature of the revolutions in 1917. He argues that, 'the manifold transformations of social relations were dependent on the collapse of state power, but they in turn shaped the processes whereby centralised, bureaucratic state power was reconstituted.'[33] Workers were put at the forefront of the story of 1917 and they had transformed from an undifferentiated mass into a conscious, diverse rational and often cautious working class.

Social polarisation

From this more complex picture of the everyday lives of workers in 1917 came attempts to try and explain the mass protests and political revolutions in

[31] D. Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power: From the July Days 1917 to July 1918* (London, 1984), p.262
[32] D. Koenker also presents a more diversified and nuanced view of worker identity construction in, *Moscow workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton, 1981)
[33] Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the factories, 1917-1918* (Cambridge, 1983) p.1

reference to worker identity. In their study of the strike movement in revolutionary Russia, Koenker and Rosenberg argue that 1917 represented a moment when long and short term processes of socio-economic change met with a change in established relationships of workers. The workers were differentiated and had complex identities based on their lives in the factory but ultimately they were members of an increasingly economically, socially and politically polarised society and acted within this parameter. Therefore, they argue that the role of workers in 1917 should not be treated separately from the broader processes of socio-economic and political change.[34]

The idea that there was a long term process of 'social polarisation' is a theme which runs through revisionist historiography of 1917. Haimson's two part article, published in 1965, first proposed this social identity paradigm. 'The problem of social stability' in Russia in the early twentieth century both acknowledges the role of workers and Russian political, social and economic structures. His core argument is that by the outbreak of World War One in 1914 there was a polarisation between the workers and educated and privileged society, which by 1917 had become irreversible and sealed the fate of the Provisional Government.[35] Although the term 'class' is not explicitly mentioned, this is a history of the growing separateness of the workers, the educated elite and the autocratic Tsarist state which differs little from a Soviet history of 1917. The rapidity of political events in 1917 and the socio-economic turmoil of the country was a phenomenon unique to Russia. In seeking explanations for why 1917 happened in the way it did generalisations and assumptions about the role of the working class have been made, in an attempt to explain the actions and mentality of workers.

One of the focuses of this 'social polarisation' is the relationship between workers and employers in 1917, as indicative of their separate identities. Koenker argues that after February, workers' demands in strikes became predominantly economic in nature but this served to solidify 'class antagonisms' between workers and employers. Strikes became a forum for

[34] D. Koenker and W.G. Rosenberg, 'Skilled workers and the strike movement in revolutionary Russia', p.606

[35] Haimson, 'The problem of social stability in urban Russia, 1905-1917' (Part One)'; Haimson, 'The problem of social stability in urban Russia, 1905-1917 (Part Two)'

political participation for workers that served to solidify their united position against employers in the spiralling economic situation in 1917.[36] The theory of 'social polarisation' based on class identity is repeated throughout the historiography of 1917 because class identity had become a politicised idea by 1917. It was also a way to explain why there was a rapid increase in the 'radicalisation' of workers in 1917 and their 'disposition to seek increasingly radical solutions to social and political problems'.[37] The focus of this radicalisation and politicisation of workers in 1917 has been the identity of skilled workers.[38] Bonnell argues that the level of skill was vital in determining how 'radical' a worker became in 1917. This is because being a skilled worker also represented an identity based on gender, wage, status in the workplace and links with the countryside.[39] This focus on skilled workers has served to undermine other workers and participants in February 1917, notably women workers. It also mirrors Soviet historiography on the emphasis on skilled workers in the revolutionary period.

This is not to diminish the importance of class and skill as identity markers in 1917. The politicisation of these socio-economic labels in 1917 meant that self-identification was implicitly linked to political participation and protest of the existing order. Chapter 2 explores how skill was of vital importance to worker identities in Sormovo in the early twentieth century. It was an identity based solely on work in the factory, and often one workshop within a large factory. Identity based on skill was important to metalworkers in Sormovo, especially after their autonomy within the workplace was encroached upon by managers and foremen. However, this was not the only identity of workers in the late Imperial period. The theory of 'social

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[36] D. Koenker, *Moscow workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Guildford, 1982), p.293; D. Koenker and W.G. Rosenberg, 'The limits of formal protest: Worker activism and social polarisation in Petrograd and Moscow, March to October 1917', *The American Historical Review*, 92 (1987), 296-326
Haimson argues that it was the mixture of economic and political demands in the strike movement after 1912 that sped up social polarisation and gave workers movement additional 'momentum', Haimson, 'The problem of social stability in urban Russia, 1905-1917 (Part One)', p.629

[37] V.E. Bonnell, 'Rethinking the role of workers in the Revolutions of 1917', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 26 (1984), p.55

[38] Koenker and Rosenberg, 'Skilled workers and the strike movement in revolutionary Russia', p.606

[39] Bonnell, 'Rethinking the Role of Workers in the Revolutions of 1917', p.55

polarisation' creates a narrative where more skilled workers are presented as more 'class conscious', even if they are not named as such. Their identity is based on their relation to production, in addition to their identity as a worker, and their relationship with other workers, the management and the state. This version of 1917 differs in approach but not much in conclusion to a Soviet or Marxist history of 1917 based on impersonal economic forces and class identities of workers.

The theory of social polarisation by definition refers to the experiences of workers before 1917 in reference to their opposition to other socio-economic groups more than their self identification as a worker. The deteriorating economic and political situation in 1917 is portrayed as a result of the relationship of workers with employers and by extension the Provisional Government. There is an understanding that not all workers worked together in a united way but that to a large extent their actions in 1917 are explained by 'class antagonisms'. Creating macro theories about the intentions of workers in 1917 and after has the tendency to diminish the individual agency of worker action and mentality.

The regional turn

Revisionist factory case studies revealed the day to day lives of workers based on limited archival access and published Soviet material. They caused a fundamental shift in the focus of worker experience from the top down in Soviet historiography to the bottom up. However, they were almost solely based on the experiences of workers in Moscow and Petrograd.[40] The theory of social polarisation may have seemed like a logical conclusion from studying the actions, resolutions and relationships of workers in the 'centre'. However, this theory becomes redundant when matching it with the experiences of workers in Sormovo. Sormovo workers shared an identity as skilled metalworkers with workers in Petrograd and had similar economic grievances as a result in the systemic changes in the metalworking industry before 1914. However, in direct opposition to Mandel's argument about the overwhelming

[40] Exceptions to this are D. Raleigh, *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov* (New York, 1986) and R.G. Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: class and nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, 1972)

support of workers for the Bolsheviks in many metalworking factories in Petrograd, in Sormovo there was no such support.

Sormovo metalworkers were more 'exceptional' in Nizhegorod region than the many metalworkers and skilled metalworkers, with their own districts and suburbs, in Moscow and Petrograd. Their daily lives and even their labour activism were not only shaped by their work but by a number of factors, such as their relationship with local political parties, their position within the province and even transport and communication links. These things were specific to Sormovo and its specific context was different to any other region of Russia. Furthermore, the nature of state power differed throughout Russian provinces and was often shaped by local agents of power, whether this was the Bolshevik party or other officials. This is most evident in the experimentation of the state's procurement policy.[41] Research of 1917 and after that is based on broad ideas of 'class' and 'social polarisation' does not take into account the intricacy and diversity of life of different workers over the vastness of the Russian empire before 1917. Case studies of workers in a geographical area can illuminate the specific experience of workers which can then be used to inform theoretical ideas about the pattern of worker behaviour in the revolutionary period.

Soviet historiography tended to ignore geographical case studies of urban workers because micro studies lacked the broad theoretical arguments associated with a general study of the working class and the ideological importance of case studies from the centre. The official histories of Sormovo were produced because the district was a politically contested area after 1917, due to the continued presence of the moderate socialists there. The proliferation of geographical case studies after the collapse of the Soviet Union was both an attempt to challenge Soviet historiography about local workers and also explore workers' lives in more depth.[42] Provincial studies revealed

[41] 'Introduction: A kaleidoscope of revolutions', in S. Badcock, L.G. Novikova and A. Retish (ed.), *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-1922: : Book 1. Russia's Revolution in regional perspective* (Bloomington, 2015), p.12

[42] For 1917 see for example, D. Raleigh, *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov*; H. Phillips, '"A Bad Business': The February Revolution in Tver'', *Soviet and Post Soviet Review*, 23 (1996); S. Badcock, *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history* (Cambridge, 2007); Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity,*

that the 'social polarisation', which may have appeared more obvious in the capital, was not necessarily a linear pattern followed by other regions and workers. Not only did workers experience the economic crisis and political change differently in 1917 and afterwards but they also responded differently.

Suny's study of Baku in 1917-1918 and Raleigh's study of the revolutions and Civil War in Saratov exposed that the supposedly linear story of events in Petrograd in 1917 that culminated in the Bolshevik revolution did not necessarily apply to other regions in the Russian empire. Suny argues that his study of Baku 'where class and national struggles were intertwined, offers a useful corrective to generalisations based on the better known case of central Russia'.[43] His use of local archives and published Soviet material reveals that far from seizing power the Baku Bolsheviks worked for a 'peaceful transition' to socialism, it was not until March 1918 that they won a majority in the soviet. They also adapted their propaganda and appeals towards oil workers there, who had suffered in the economic crises.[44] Although Raleigh does not use archival sources in his study of the Volga he highlights that the February revolution in Saratov took on a momentum of its own due to the specific socio-economic and political circumstances of the local area.[45]

The opening up of the Soviet party archives after the fall of Communism meant that the diversity of the working class in regional areas could be researched in depth. This meant that more data about the day to day lives of workers became available for historians, such as police and party

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and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922; M.C. Hickey, 'Local government and state authority in the provinces: Smolensk, February– June 1917', *Slavic Review*, 55 (1996) For the Civil War see for example, Badcock, Novikova and Retish (eds.) *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-1922;* E. C. Landis, 'Between village and Kremlin: Confronting state food procurement in Civil War Tambov, 1919-1920', *The Russian Review*, 63 (2004); S.Z. Rupp, 'Conflict and crippled compromise: Civil War Politics in the east and the Ufa State Conference' *The Russian Review*, 56 (1997); D. J. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's civil war: Politics, society, and revolutionary culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton, 2002); D.P. Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian printers and Soviet socialism, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, 2005); S.V. Iarov, *Gorozhanin kak politik: Revoliutsiia, voennyi kommunizm i NEP glazami Petrogradtsev* (St Petersburg, 1999); S.V.Iarov, *Proletarii kak politik: Politicheskaia psikhologiia rabochikh Petrograda v 1917-1923 gg* (St Petersburg, 1999)

[43] R.G. Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: class and nationality in the Russian Revolution,* p.1

[44] R.G. Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: class and nationality in the Russian Revolution,* p.xii

[45] D. Raleigh, *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov*

records, trade union and factory correspondence and press. Research about their role in different industries, working hours, pay and local relationships with employers and with each other built up a more complex and multifaceted narrative of urban workers in the early twentieth century. Badcock's study of Sormovo in 1917 revals that the local political situation was shaped by the peculiarity of Sormovo's and Nizhegorod's regional conditions.[46] The recent publication of a collection of many regional case studies during the Civil War period reveals that this was the case for other local areas too.[47] Karsch's study of Voronezh and Retish's study of Izhevsk reveals that the intertwining of national events and local socio-economic experiences and concerns shaped 1917 in the localities.[48] This study of Sormovo in the Civil War period adds to the historiography of Russia's regions during this time of political, social and economic upheaval. Despite the proliferation of recent regional case studies of 1917 and after, this is still an area of revolutionary historiography that needs more development through the research of local areas in Russia. These local studies reveal that rather than 1917 being a linear pattern each local area and even a factory within that local area experienced 1917 differently precisely because of the local context.

One example of the different experience of workers in regional areas is shown by the level of violence perpetuated by local Bolshevik party, workers, peasants and paramilitary organisations in Voronezh, Izhevsk and Sormovo. Comparable to the Sormovo Bolsheviks, in Voronezh the Bolsheviks were a small group with little backing and support, whilst the SRs enjoyed broad support. However, the mood and policies of the local Bolshevik parties and the experiences of the workers in the two regions were different. The Bolsheviks and Left SRs in Voronezh resorted to working with the unreliable local militias

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[46] S. Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917' in D. Filtzer, W. Goldman, G. Kessler, S. Pirani (ed.), *A dream deferred: new studies in Russian and Soviet labour history* (Oxford, 2008), 69-95

[47] Badcock, Novikova and Retish (ed.), *Russia's home front in war and revolution, 1914-1922*

[48] S. Karsch, 'Voronezh: Revolutionary violence and the Bolshevik victory', and A. B. Retish, 'The Izhevsk Revolt of 1918: The fateful clash of revolutionary coalitions, paramilitarism, and Bolshevik power' in Badcock, Novikova and Retish (ed.), *Russia's home front in war and revolution, 1914-1922*, 323-35, 299-323*;* see also A.B. Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922* (Cambridge, 2008); for the importance of local identity in 1917 in Nizhnii Novgrorod and Kazan see S. Badcock., *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history*

as a way to keep the populace in check. They were also willing to use coercion in their direct interactions with workers by hijacking workers' meetings and demanding their resolutions be passed.[49] In Izhevsk returning soldiers from World War One formed an independent Red Guard and resisted heavy-handed Bolshevik tactics. Workers and veterans represented an overlapping group that supported Bolshevik power, and then turned against it in an open rebellion in 1918, which was violently crushed. Retish argues this was not just evidence of a political battle between moderate socialists and the Bolsheviks but was evidence of how 'complex local economic concerns and politics met up with the approaching frontline' to cause an outburst of violence from workers and the state.[50]

For the first six months after October the Bolsheviks in Sormovo enacted little violence against political opposition and especially against workers. After mid-1918, the archival sources relating to the private correspondence between the local Bolsheviks, provincial organisation Bolsheviks and the centre revealed a mindset of fear among the local Bolsheviks about the continued labour activism of Sormovo workers. They also revealed that Sormovo workers must have acted on some shared understanding or shared identity based on the factory or the workshop, which led them to continue to use labour activism as a form of protest well after 1917.

Although all three regional areas exhibited strong support for the SRs, the specific socio-economic and geographical conditions caused not only different experiences for workers but identities too. Unlike Voronezh and Izhevsk, Sormovo and Nizhnii Novgorod were not directly threatened by encroaching front lines during the Civil War. This was a significant reason for the frenzied and violent response of the local Bolsheviks in both areas to political worker opposition. Both Sormovo workers and workers in Izhevsk were skilled workers who were politically active in 1917 and afterwards. However, the returning soldiers into Izhevsk integrated with workers and

[49] S. Karsch, 'Voronezh: Revolutionary violence and the Bolshevik victory', pp.327; 334
[50] Retish, 'The Izhevsk Revolt of 1918: The fateful clash of revolutionary coalitions, paramilitarism, and Bolshevik power', p.300

initially supported the Bolsheviks; this was based on a military culture within the workplace. Despite the continued presence, and worker support for, the SR party in Sormovo the metalworkers there continued to utilise labour activism in response to Bolshevik coercive policies and not violence. The insular position of Sormovo within a largely rural or textile based province meant that Sormovo workers did not integrate with other groups of workers, militia groups or even political parties in the province. The SRs struggled to influence Sormovo workers, even in 1917. As the Bolsheviks began to be progressively coercive, inside and outside Sormovo factory, Sormovo workers lost the recourse for labour activism. However, before 1919 the workers continued to use striking as their form of protest because they knew it had worked in the past and it was likely to work again, in order to get their grievances addressed. Sormovo workers may not have categorised their identity as 'class' based in the sources but they shared a specific socio-economic experience which led to a shared mentality and actions inside and outside the workplace.

A geographical case study of workers in Russia after 1917 does not exclude attempts to find broader patterns of worker mentalities and actions in and after 1917. The local sources develop an insight into the complex interactions and relationships of workers in the early Soviet period and add depth and question the previous dominance of historiography based on the centre. The experience of workers in Sormovo is specific to Nizhegorod region because of the multiple factors that shaped the identities of the workers there. Yet it is also possible to use Sormovo as a comparison to other regional case studies either with a similar regional history, power structure or with similar industrial patterns.[51] Although workers' voices are not always directly heard in the local sources the discourse created about the workers by the local Bolsheviks reveals information about the identities of Sormovo workers. The Sormovo workers' identification with their skill and their tradition of labour activism, although not unique to Sormovo, shaped both their identity as a Sormovo worker and Bolshevik responses to them.

[51] There are several similarities with Sormovo and Tula. Both had a similar base of heavy industry and also experienced continued worker support for the SRs after 1917, see Smith, *Captives of Revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik Dictatorship, 1918-1923,* pp.62-64

Conclusion

Historical debates about workers in the Soviet Union have shaped not only how we view the lives, experiences and relationships of workers but by extension it has shaped views of the Soviet state. The dominance of class based history in Soviet and even western historiography skewed and simplified the experiences of the 'working class' both as a result of the sources and methodologies used. However, class will remain an important social and methodological framework for social history and especially for the historiography of Soviet Russia. Class categorisations and class history are so inextricably linked to Soviet sources and history that it would be counterproductive to remove the grouping term completely from historical practice. Class identities, or similarly identities based on skill, were of vital importance to many workers in 1917. The shared socio-economic experience of Sormovo workers and their strong identification with a specific workshop led to a confidence in their vertical social relationships, not only towards managers but to state agents too, especially in 1917. This was not an identity that was imposed on them. Sormovo workers formulated and negotiated their own class identity not as a result of impersonal economic forces but through their shared experiences in the workplace, their relationships within the factory hierarchy and specific local conditions. This was not a fixed identity, nor their only identity but Sormovo workers' class identity was an expression of their shared economic experience, relationships and tradition of labour activism. Their class identity was a self-identification that persisted well after 1917.

There is a danger, however, in grouping the different actions of workers in 1917 and afterwards as indicative of 'class' behaviour and by extension political behaviour. There is a tendency to view the process of 1917 as a united working class unwilling to work with their 'superiors', and then link this to the political views of some skilled workers and an overarching theory of worker behaviour. Research of worker experience should be supplemented with in-depth studies of Russian workers, especially regional ones, which can build up a more complex picture of worker identities. Though workers' voices are not directly heard in many Soviet sources, the Bolshevik discourse created about Sormovo workers reveals both how the Bolsheviks perceived their identity and

how local conditions shaped their actions. Regional case studies like Sormovo can reveal the multiple and intricate relationships of workers which can then inform broader theoretical ideas and patterns. The next chapter will consider how the socio-economic and political conditions of Sormovo intimately shaped Bolshevik policy towards Sormovo workers throughout the Civil War.

2. Sormovo Metalworks, 1849-1921: War, Revolution and Economic Crisis

Introduction

This chapter explores the socio-economic and political experience of Sormovo metalworkers in the early twentieth century. It will examine the relationship between political agents and factory organisations with workers during the Civil War, and how this influenced the relationship and communication between the centre and locality. The specificity of Sormovo's social and political climate shaped these relationships. Communication between the centre and locality reveal a Bolshevik party in Sormovo that feared the confidence and labour activism of Sormovo workers. This influenced their discourse and policies towards Sormovo workers and the moderate socialist opposition.

Sormovo Metalworks was a large factory complex district located in a suburb of Nizhnii Novgorod town in Nizhegorod province. It was a factory with local importance and national significance during the twentieth century. It produced state ordered munitions during World War One and the Civil War. The experience of Sormovo factory in the early twentieth century is comparable to other large metalworking factories in Moscow and St Petersburg. In the late nineteenth century Sormovo's production scale and workforce expanded rapidly and a skilled permanent workforce emerged. After a relative period of stability for skilled metalworkers in late Imperial Russia, changes in the organisation of the metal industry threatened the wages and the position of skilled workers. Sormovo did not escape the prolonged period of crisis, or the second 'Times of Troubles', from 1914-1921, where war and revolution caused a prolonged socio-economic crisis around the country.[1] Like many other areas of Russia, the workers in Sormovo factory faced unemployment, food scarcity and harsh working conditions during the revolutionary period, in addition to the breakdown of law and order.

[1] L. Lih coined the term the second 'Time of Troubles' from 1914-1921, in *Bread and authority in Russia, 1914-1921*

The focus on one factory in the revolutionary period provides an insight into the economic and political microclimate of Sormovo, Nizhnii Novgrorod and Nizhegorod province. Sormovo workers had a tradition of labour activism, which was similar to metalworkers in Moscow and Petrograd. However, in 1917 Sormovo's political climate inside and outside the factory was dominated not by the Bolsheviks but the Socialist Revolutionaries.[2] Other provincial metal factories, engaged in defence production, such as Tula and Izhevsk, also displayed continued support for the SRs throughout 1917 and 1918 but Sormovo had its own specific experience of the revolutionary period. This was formed by local demographics, economics and social identities.[3] The continued labour activism of workers and antagonistic party politics in Sormovo throughout the Civil War period made it an exception within Nizhegorod province and gave the factory increasing attention from the central state in Moscow.

The state, the local representatives of the state and moderate socialist parties in Sormovo continuously attempted to gain the support of the strategically and ideologically important metalworkers before and after 1917. Before 1917, the local political agents attempted to conceptualise Sormovo's metalworkers to formulate policies and to suit their political narratives. After 1917, due to the nature of the political and economic instability in Sormovo, the central state worked with local Bolsheviks to try and win, or force, worker support for their policies. It was in response to the threat of sustained SR and Menshevik support and continued labour activism after 1917 that many of the Bolshevik central and local policies towards Sormovo workers were shaped. Bolshevik policies were also shaped and irreconcilably changed by the experience of the Civil War. The Bolsheviks in Sormovo became more interfering and coercive, which was part of a wider process of centralisation and consolidation of political power by the Soviet state during the latter end of the Civil War. In Sormovo the Bolsheviks used local conditions and local history to their advantage to shape a discourse about Sormovo workers and

[2] See Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917'
[3] See Smith, *Captives of Revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik Dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p.26; For Izhevsk see A.B. Retish, 'The Izhevsk Revolt of 1918: The fateful clash of revolutionary coalitions, paramilitarism, and Bolshevik power', 299-323

formulate wartime policies, in an attempt to mould Sormovo workers into Soviet citizens.

The Socio-Economic Experience in Sormovo, 1849-1917

Sormovo Metalworks, 1849-1900

The factory complex of Sormovo is situated on the edge of Nizhnii Novgorod town in the north-western part of Nizhegorod province, in the Volga region of Russia. In 1917, Nizhegorod province had a population of just over two million, including 70,000 urban workers that were concentrated in the industrial suburbs of Sormovo and Kanavin.[4] Sormovo had a strong link to the centre when it was established in 1849. It was created as a joint stock company funded by Russian industrialists from St Petersburg. Dmitry Egrovich Bendarkii was the main shareholder. Originally named Nizhegorodskii Machine Factory and Volga Shipping Company, it produced ships, railway carriages and steam engines that were transported all over Russia. Sormovo's success rested on its location near the meeting of the Volga and Oka rivers. This made it ideal for the delivery of raw materials and fuel in addition to the marketing of finished products.[5] Due to its location and large production scale, by 1900 Sormovo Works was one of the largest industrial enterprises in the Russian empire and remained one of the biggest by 1917.[6] It became part of the Sormovo-Kolomna organisation of factories in 1918, producing locomotives and munitions, and was named Red Sormovo (*Krasnoe Sormovo*) from 1922, producing ships and munitions during World War Two.

Until it became its own uezd in 1922, Sormovo was a part of Balahinskii uezd in Nizhegorod province. In the 1897 census of Imperial Russia Balahinskii uezd had a population of 38,000 and the workforce in Sormovo numbered 12,000-15,000.[7] By comparison the population of Nizhnii

[4] Golub (ed.), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia,* p.335; Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917' , p.71

[5] Parusov and Shul'pin (ed.), *100 let zavoda "Krasnoe Sormovo" imeni A.A. Zhdanova (1849-1949),* p.8; see Appendix: Map 3.

[6] V.E. Chernaiev (ed.), *Piterskie rabochii i diktatura proletariata. Oktabria 1917-1929 gg. Ekonomicheskie konflikti i politicheskii protest: Collection of documents* (St Petersburg, 2000), p.113; J. White, 'The Sormovo- Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo in the February Revolution', *Soviet Studies*, 31 (1979), p. 477

[7] Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia, Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897 g.: XXV Nizhegorodskaia Guberniia., *Izdanie Tsentral'nago Statisticheskago Komiteta Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del'* (St

Novgorod town at the end of the nineteenth century was 69,000 but the number of factory workers was significantly lower at 1,322 (802 male and 520 female). Even Kanavin, the other prominent industrial settlement near Nizhnii Novgorod, had only half the workforce of Sormovo in 1897, at almost 6,000 workers.[8] Sormovo Metalworks was the centre point of Balahinskii uezd and the most prominent factory in Nizhegorod province. By 1917, Sormovo's workforce had doubled to 25,000 and encompassed almost 18% of the entire urban workforce of Nizhegorod province.[9]

In 1861 there were 10,000 workers employed in heavy industry around Russia. Most of these were freely hired, privately owned serfs and state peasants.[10] After emancipation and until the late nineteenth century Sormovo factory recruited its workforce locally, from the peasantry of the surrounding countryside villages such as Koposovo, Vysokovo, Malyy, Bol'shoy Kozin, Knyazhnikh and Gorokhovo, where metalworking was a traditional handicraft industry.[11] After rapid industrialisation in the late nineteenth century, the metalworking sector expanded rapidly and Sormovo's expansion mirrored the expansion of metalworking factories in Moscow and St Petersburg. Sormovo was exceptional within Nizhegorod province, and distinct from contemporary local factories in other provinces, because of its advanced large-scale production of metalwork and its complex division of labour. As Badcock noted, Sormovo had more in common with urban centres in Moscow and St Petersburg than it did with areas geographically surrounding Nizhnii Novgorod town.[12]

After the technological advancement of the metal industry the Sormovo engineers, the most skilled workers, began to be recruited from other industrial towns, from as far as Riga, Reval and St Petersburg, where urban centres were

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Petersburg, 1903): British Library, p.v; Kaiurov., *Sormovo v pervoi revoliutsii* (Gorky, 1930) is a politicised history of Sormovo commissioned by the Soviet state, he claimed that in the late 1890s Sormovo had 12,000-15,000 workers, p.6

[8] Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia, Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897 g, p.i

[9] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917'; *Zhizn'*, (2nd June, 1917)

[10] H. Hogan, *Forging revolution: Metalworkers, managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890-1914* (Bloomington, 1993), p.12

[11] White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo in the February Revolution', p.477

[12] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.70

much more developed.[13] The 1897 Russian Imperial Census shows that migrants from St Petersburg made up one of the largest group of 'non-natives' in Nizhegorod province, behind migrants from Vladimir and Kostroma, which are both significantly nearer. In 1897 14.9% of the worker population were non-natives.[14] Sormovo would have been a significant pull for workers from established urban areas, being the most technologically advanced and largest factory in Nizhegorod.

By 1900, Sormovo was a geographical area and a factory complex that became unique within Nizhegorod province. Its predominately skilled workforce was a mixture of local former peasants and migrants from urban centres, both geographically close to Nizhegorod and further away. Skilled metalwork was a respected profession, which entailed good pay and significant autonomy within the workplace. The close proximity of the large workforce in Sormovo fostered a distinct identity based on their shared experiences and their prestige within the factory and the province.

Russia's Metal Industry, 1905-1917

The experience of Sormovo metalworkers needs to be understood in the context of wider relationships and changes within the metalworking sector in the early twentieth century. The workforce of Sormovo Metalworks faced the same challenges and instability as metalworkers in the centre.[15] The metalworking industry was machine based and advanced technologically but by 1900 was still heavily dependent on the manual skill of craftsmen.[16] Due to the subdivision of different metalworking crafts into separate workshops there was a trend towards *tsekhovschina* (workshop loyalty). Murphy's study of the Hammer and Sickle metal factory in Moscow reveals how shop loyalty transcended craft divisions in the early twentieth century. He argues that former peasants maintained strong ties between specific shops and particular

[13] White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo', pp.477-478
[14] B.V. Tikhonov, *Pereseleniia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1978), pp.170-3, 205
[15] See K. Murphy, *Revolution and counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow metal factory* (New York, 2005) S. Smith, 'Workers against foremen in St. Petersburg, 1905-1917', in Siegelbaum, and Suny (ed.), *Making workers Soviet: Power, class, and identity*; H. Hogan., *Forging revolution: Metalworkers, managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890-1914*
[16] S. Smith 'Craft consciousness, class consciousness: Petrograd 1917', *History Workshop*, 11 (1981), p.41

villages, for example the nail makers tended to be recruited from the Tver region outside Moscow.[17] The pattern of t*sekhovschina* was evident in Sormovo where members of the same village formed kinship like bonds (*zemlechestva*) and often worked in the same workshops and lived together. White notes that members of Vysokovo village worked in the wagon shop in Sormovo and those from Gorokhovo worked in the boiler shop.[18] This fostered an identity based on a shared loyalty to a certain shop and certain workers rather than to the factory as a whole.

The nature of metalwork production meant that it necessitated large factories with a strict hierarchy of skills subdivided into many specialised shops.[19] The subdivision of the factory into the 'hot' (unskilled) and 'cold' (skilled) shops meant the skilled and unskilled workers were physically separated from each other. This further fostered the construction of separate identities and shop loyalty. The 'hot' shops were the domain of unskilled workers, which required physical strength but not much skill. The 'cold' shops required a high level of skill, literacy and independence to make decisions about the production process.[20] Skilled metal workers were highly trained and took a pride in their craftsmanship. Semen Kanatchikov, a metalworker from the List factory in Moscow in the early twentieth century, described his identity as a skilled metalworker in the pattern shop as separate and above that of his unskilled counterparts. He described how he loved his craft and 'put a lot of spirit and initiative into it' and how he liked to differentiate himself from his unskilled peers through his smart appearance, lack of 'foul' language and sobriety.[21]

The amount of training involved in becoming a skilled metalworker meant that it was not seasonal work and by the late 1890s a permanent workforce emerged, consisting of mainly young men who became apprentices

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[17] Murphy, *Revolution and counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow metal factory*, p.12
[18] White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo', pp.477-478
[19] H. Hogan., 'Industrial rationalisation and the roots of labor militance in the St. Petersburg metalworking industry 1901-1914', in in Siegelbaum and Suny (ed), *Making workers Soviet: Power, class, and identity* (New York/ London, 1994), p.166
[20] Smith 'Craft Consciousness, class consciousness: Petrograd 1917', p.36
[21] S. I. Kanatchikov, '*From the Story of My Life'* in V.E. Bonnell, *The Russian Worker: Life and labor under the Tsarist Regime* (Berkeley/ London, 1983), pp.46-49; For the cultural identity of workers see Chapter 4.

as children. The use of apprenticeships to train workers meant that from a young age skilled workers spent most of their daily lives in one workshop. After the rapid expansion of the metal industry in the late nineteenth century skilled workers held an increasingly essential role within the workplace. Their skill meant that they had greater autonomy within the production process and could earn up to double that of their less skilled colleagues.[22] The relative importance of skilled workers in maintaining production meant they had a better bargaining position with managers. They could afford to leave their job and find a new one relatively easily and their importance to production meant that the absence of a few highly skilled workers in a production unit could shut down the entire enterprise.[23] Therefore, they had less to lose in striking than their unskilled counterparts, who could be easily replaced.

After 1905, the rationalisation and mechanisation of the metal industry, by the state and industrialists, meant that unskilled workers, including women and youths, began encroaching on the autonomy and security of skilled workers' jobs. After the mass protests of 1905 industrial rationalisation had the dual aims of increasing production and decreasing dependence on skilled workers, who were the most visible workers in labour protest. It entailed an industrial policy based on Taylorism and introduced many technological changes into the workplace. Skilled workers began to have less autonomy and bargaining position with managers. Mechanisation and specifications on how long a task should take also meant that unskilled or semi-skilled workers took over aspects of a skilled worker's role.[24] So metalworkers were faced with threat to their worker identity both from above and below. This also involved the introduction of a new wage policy and a lowering of the piece rate. This meant that workers had to be more attentive to individual tasks rather than their daily work and were scrutinised more by the foremen in their shop.

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[22] L. Haimson, 'Structural processes of change and changing patterns of labour unrest: The case of the metal processing industry in late Imperial Russia 1890-1914' in L.Haimson and C. Tilly (ed.), *Strikes, wars, and revolutions in an international perspective: Strike waves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (Cambridge, 1989) p.380; Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution*, p.12

[23] Koenker and Rosenberg, 'Skilled workers and the strike movement in revolutionary Russia', p.605

[24] Haimson, 'Structural processes of change and changing patterns of labour unrest: The case of the metal processing industry in late imperial Russia 1890-1914', p.388

After the structural changes of the metal industry in the early twentieth century, skilled workers found that their previously autonomous workspace was being encroached upon by the supervision of foremen.[25] Before the industrial reforms, foremen were responsible for rate setting, allocation of work and labour discipline. After the introduction of rationalisation, foremen only became responsible for labour discipline. There was no longer any informal bargaining between foremen and skilled workers over piece rates and the opportunity for foremen to address worker grievances declined dramatically.[26] By 1914 the status of the skilled metalworker's privileged position within the workforce was increasingly uncertain.

Like many metalworking factories across Russia during World War One and the Civil War, Sormovo production was turned almost entirely towards military orders.[27] The production orders came from the state and the factory was highly dependent on the regularity and volume of these orders. By 1917 the skilled metalworkers were facing several challenges to their authority within the labour hierarchy. From 1914, many skilled workers were conscripted in the military draft and women and youths took their place.[28] By 1916 adult men only made up 46% of the Sormovo workforce.[29] This was a significant shift in the male to female ratio of workers in the metalworking industry before 1914. In Nizhegorod province in 1897 the number of men listed as working in the manufacturing industry was 80,774 and the number of women was 17,121.[30] This demographic shift inside and outside the factory not only affected the working experience of metalworkers in Sormovo but their identity too. Their jobs were no longer secure and the value of their skilled work had declined due to the influx of unskilled workers. In 1917 the demographics of the remaining male workforce was not the same as it was in 1913. In 1915 eight military enterprises were evacuated from Riga and moved

[25] Hogan, 'Industrial rationalisation and the roots of labor militance in the St. Petersburg metalworking industry 1901-1914', pp. 170, 174
[26] Smith, 'Craft consciousness, class consciousness: Petrograd 1917', pp. 116, 118
[27] Smith, 'Craft consciousness' p.44; Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.71
[28] Murphy, *Revolution and counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow metal factory*, p.27
[29] Badcock., 'Politics, parties and power', p.71; *Izvestiia Nizhegorodskikh Sovetov rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov* (19th October, 1917)
[30] Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia, Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897 g, p.xiv

to Sormovo and the need for skilled workers during the war meant many workers were 'imported' from other urban centres in Russia.[31] If there was not a stable skilled workforce in Sormvo this would have affected the close knit worker bonds formed through *tsekhovschina* and *zemlechestva.*

By the time of the February Revolution the once secure and prestigious job of a skilled metalworker had undergone several challenges and changes. Industrial rationalisation had stripped the skilled metalworker of bargaining position within the labour hierarchy and the figure of the abusive foreman was a long held grievance for metalworkers. World War One had further challenged the security of skilled work. With women and youths taking up a proportion of previously skilled male jobs many workers in Sormovo and in other urban centres feared that their jobs were being watered down, so management could pay unskilled workers less. Nevertheless, despite the changing composition of the workforce, metalworkers still maintained a strong identity based on *tsekhovschina* throughout this period. They were one of the most visible groups in labour protest throughout 1917 and had a long tradition of labour activism before 1917. In Sormovo workers continued to defend their 'rights' when they were threatened by economic and policy changes and, as a workforce, exerted a considerable influence on provincial politics in 1917.

Labour Activism and Party Politics in Sormovo, 1890-1921

Changes to the structure of the metalworking sector, in the years after 1905, was met with a more organised and systemised form of labour activism from skilled workers. Since the late nineteenth century, metalworkers in Sormovo had used a strike as the preferred method of labour protest, in attempts to force concessions from management. Skilled workers across Russia displayed a pattern of collective protest that usually started in one workshop and spread across the factory. From the late nineteenth century labour protest was becoming less violent and sporadic and more organised and co-ordinated.[32] The labour protest in Sormovo before 1917 largely followed the strike patterns

[31] Badcock., 'Politics, parties and power', p.71; Golub (ed), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia,* p.335; Murphy, *Revolution and counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow metal factory*, p.28

[32] R.E. Johnson, 'Primitive Rebels? Reflections on collective violence in Imperial Russia', *Slavic Review*, 41 (1982), pp. 432-435

of other large metalworking factories in Moscow and St Petersburg. The prominence of skilled workers in strikes and the labour movement made them a target of socialist propaganda in the late Imperial period. The rallies that often accompanied strikes in Sormovo acted as an intersection of worker and underground socialist parties who tried to radicalise and influence workers before 1917.

When labour protest continued in Sormovo after the establishment of the Soviet state, the local Bolsheviks struggled to produce a coherent reaction. The sustained support for SRs during the Civil War, and the national importance of Sormovo Metalworks in producing munitions, meant that the central and local Bolsheviks were anxious about the influence of moderate socialist opposition on the metalworkers. Despite local Bolshevik private fears and public rhetoric that the SRs were behind strikes in Sormovo, there was not a linear connection between worker protest and local opposition before or after 1917. By examining the case study of Sormovo Metalworks we can explore if and how workers and the local opposition influenced each other after 1917. In some cases worker demands made explicit reference to SR or Menshevik policies but in other instances local SRs advocated worker grievances. Sormovo workers supported the SR party more than the Bolsheviks during 1917; this is evident from the percentage of votes cast for them in the local Soviet elections. This did not mean however that the SR party influenced or orchestrated labour activism in Sormovo.

Labour Protest and Economic Grievances in Sormovo, 1890-1917

The persistence of *tsekhovschina* in metalworking factories in the late Imperial period is shown by the individual shop consistently being used as an organisational basis for labour protest and worker demands focusing on the grievances of workers in one workshop. Skilled workers represented the core of labour protesters in early 1917, of which 60% were from the metal industry.[33] The traditional use of strikes by skilled metalworkers before 1917 meant that in response to challenges to their skilled work they were the first to down their tools in 1917. Although many strikes in Sormovo before 1917

[33] Koenker and Rosenberg, 'Skilled workers and the strike movement in revolutionary Russia', p.608

focused on specific economic aims, the strike often spilled outside the factory gates. The importance of Sormovo factory to the economy of Nizhegorod, and their production of state ordered munitions after 1914, meant that a strike by skilled metalworkers in Sormovo was always more than just an economic act.

During 1917 one of the main economic demands of workers in Sormovo was higher pay and better working conditions. In May 1917, shop commissions in Sormovo formulated the demands of workers for higher wages and sent them to the management to consider. The management replied stating although the demands of Sormovo workers were high and would be ruinous to the factory they would try and reach a compromise. The representatives of workers and employees rejected this and there was a strike held in Sormovo between 20th June and 8th July 1917.[34] Though the stated aim of the workers was economic, the confidence of Sormovo workers in challenging management and demanding more pay was due in part to the increasing confidence of worker movements across Russia in 1917.

One of the consistent demands of skilled workers before 1917 was the dismissal of abusive managers and foremen. Worker petitions and protests before 1917 suggest that there was a moral element to purging abusive foremen. This was a direct result of the changes made to the metalworking sector before 1917. Steinberg's study of the print industry in the early twentieth century showed that abusive foremen were viewed as degrading workers' moral dignity. Foremen had a direct relationship with workers on a day to day basis, in contrast to factory management, and tended to be former workers, so their abuse of workers was viewed as deeply offensive. The workers' mob punishment (*samosud*) of perceived abusive foremen often had a moral element, including wheelbarrowing and mock 'courts of honour', where the foremen were forced to apologise to groups of workers.[35] This idea of worker 'moral justice' remained in Sormovo in 1917 and occasionally accompanied or preceded a strike. There was a widely reported incident of

[34] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p. 81; GARF, f.1834, op.2, d.1224, On the demands of the workers and employees of the General Joint Stock "Sormovo" and the response of the Board of the company to these demands (28th May, 1917)
[35] M. Steinberg, *Moral communities: The culture of class relations in the Russian printing industry, 1867-1907* (California, 1992), pp. 236-237

wheelbarrowing in the shell manufacturing shop in Sormovo in July 1917, which the local SR newspaper *Narod* condemned as 'wild play' and 'primitive' behaviour from the skilled workers.[36]

What started as an economic strike or seemingly random act of labour violence had the potential to erupt into a riot and even a revolt in late Imperial Russia. The oppressive working conditions and lack of civil rights in the Tsarist regime meant forms of labour protest were viewed with increasing suspicion and fear from Tsarist authorities and with revolutionary potential by revolutionary socialists.

Party Politics in Sormovo, 1900-1921

The revolutionary atmosphere of 1905 and 1917 meant that economic and political strikes became increasingly intertwined. Strikes had the potential to evolve into more overtly political forms of labour protest. Strikes could be accompanied by political rallies, meetings and in extreme cases riots. The most overt intersection of local politics and labour activism were spontaneous and organised political rallies, before and after 1917. The rallies and protests of 1902 and 1905 reveal there was a close link between some forms of worker activism and political events and Sormovo workers were keenly aware of national politics. This exploded in 1917 when strikes were transformed into political marches, forcible releasing of prisoners and occasionally violence. The revolutionary events of 1917 had imbued Sormovo workers with a confidence that continued after 1917. In 1917, Sormovo workers went out on strike or threatened to strike at least six times and this continued into 1918. The Bolsheviks struggled to not only control Sormovo labour activism after 1917 but to shape a discourse about Sormovo workers and their role in the revolutionary movement.

Before the February Revolution, Sormovo workers participated in many well documented overt political protests, which gained Sormovo a national significance. Maxim Gorky's novel *Mat'* (Mother), written in 1907, used the 1902 May Day protest in Sormovo to represent the generalised

[36] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power', p. 88; *Narod*, 48 (August 1917)

struggle of the working class against the oppressive Tsarist bureaucracy.[37] His characterisation of the local Social Democratic organisation, and its real-life leader Pytor Zamalov, brought Sormovo factory and its workforce into the limelight. Based on the events of the May Day march of Sormovo workers in 1902, the workforce was represented as potential recruits for the burgeoning local RSDLP party. The workers were initially described as 'frightened cockroaches' who worked day in day out in the oppressive factory, who drank vodka to dull their senses and beat their wives and fellow workers as a form of tension relief.[38] The local RSDLP group offered Sormovo metalworkers hope for the future and a way out of the cycle of oppression of the workplace. The May Day events were depicted as a solemn march through the town and used as proof that Sormovo workers' support could be won for the RSDLP movement. The workers cheered Pavel's (the fictionalised version of Pytor) name and support for his cause and after he was arrested his mother reported that the whole factory was 'up in arms'.[39]

Sormovo's skilled metalworkers were viewed as ideal targets for socialist 'education' by underground parties in Nizhnii Novgorod in the early twentieth century. In socialist propaganda they were hailed as the most 'advanced' workers educationally and politically. Gorky was personally involved in trying to recruit Sormovo workers. In 1901 a police report accused Gorky of propagandising the workers of Sormovo. After the arrest of Zamalov in 1902, he hired lawyers to defend him and helped to edit his speech he gave at his trial.[40] The May Day demonstration in Sormovo in 1902 involved 5,000 workers.[41] After an initial strike of 600 workers on 1st May, the reported brutality of the police to the demonstrators in the rally supposedly intensified the labour protest. By the 2nd May it was reported that 3,000 workers were involved in the strike.[42] Vasiliy Kaiurov, who was a prominent member of the local RSDLP organisation in the early twentieth century (and later became a Bolshevik), remembered the demonstration and strike in Sormovo in 1902 as

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[38]M. Gorky, *Mother* (Moscow, 1965), pp.15-17
[39]Gorky, *Mother*, pp. 199, 217
[40] T. Yedlin, *Maxim Gorky: A political biography* (Westport, 1999), p.29, 32
[41] White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo in the February Revolution', pp.478-479
[42] Fadeev, *Istoriia Krasnogo Sormova*, p.98

'the biggest event of the time' both locally and nationally. For him and other members of the RSDLP organisation in Sormovo it was the first 'open street battle with the autocracy' and 'proved' the 'power and potential of Sormovo workers.'[43]

The local political parties in Sormovo were constantly aware of events taking place in the centre, and news of revolutionary events and strikes spread fast to the province. Ivan Chugurin, another prominent Sormovo RSDLP member, recalled how in January 1905 the SDs received notification of the strike in St Petersburg and in response proposed to organise a strike in Sormovo factory, which never came to fruition. The local RSDLP group organised several secret meetings and open speeches against the Russo-Japanese war, and another demonstration took place along the streets of Sormovo, which caused clashes with the armed police. On the 8th October 1905, after hearing of the general strike in Moscow and St Petersburg, workers from all over Nizhnii Novgorod went on strike in solidarity and headed to the town centre for a mass meeting on 9th October.[44] During this time a workers' militia was organised in Sormovo by the SDs. The engineering skills of the workers in Sormovo meant they could manufacture weapons for the militia which included bombs and even a small cannon. Kaiurov himself collected revolvers that were manufactured by Sormovo workers in the flat of one of the RSDLP members, to give protection to political meetings being held illegally there. After the granting of basic civil liberties in the 1905 October Manifesto the Sormovo SD's extended their activities and expanded Sormovo's worker militia.

The events in Sormovo corresponded with events in larger urban centres. In December 1905, the central authorities began to clamp down on the newly established soviets in Moscow and St Petersburg. On 3rd December, the police forcibly shut down the St Petersburg soviet and arrested the members of the Central Executive Committee. The Moscow soviet was shut down on 6th

[43] Kaiurov, *Sormovo v pervoi revoliutsii*, pp.48-49
[44] J. D. White and V. P. Sapon, 'The memoirs of Ivan Chugurin', *Revolutionary Russia*, 24 (2011), pp.3-4

December.[45] After a general strike was declared on 6th December, many unions in Moscow and in cities around Russia formed armed militias to take part in an insurrection. In Sormovo the workers' militia grew in size and spread across the town. It proclaimed to protect workers from the incursions of the police and even established a special people's court to administer justice. Like the police crackdown in Moscow and St Petersburg in mid December, a joint police and a Cossack force encountered the workers militia in Sormovo and after bitter street fighting the short lived Sormovo 'republic' was crushed on 15th December 1905. Chugurin and other prominent SD members were arrested and others fled Sormovo to escape arrest.[46]

These SD memoir accounts of worker protest, and even insurrection in Sormovo, portray a narrative of local, educated, SD members who organised Sormovo workers for revolutionary ends. This politicised history of Sormovo workers presents a skewed image of Sormovo's local politics. There was certainly political protest and even insurrection in Sormovo in 1905 but workers were not led or shaped by the local RSDLP party. The rapid development of the metal industry and the establishment of a permanent workforce in Sormovo, in the late nineteenth century, was viewed in Soviet historiography as a vital factor in the development of a 'conscious' workforce. The Soviet historiography narrated how younger workers, perhaps recruited from other industrial centres, developed a base of Social Democratic support in the factory. In a history of Sormovo, published in Moscow in 1969, Fadeev argued that in the late nineteenth century there appeared a new generation of workers 'all of them imbued with socialist consciousness' who spread the word of socialism to ordinary workers.[47] Illanariov wrote in his 'revolutionary chronicle of Sormovo workers' in 1922 that newly 'conscious' workers set up workers' circles and read revolutionary literature and were joined by students of local schools.[48] There is an explicit link between worker activism and support for the local RSDLP party in most of these histories of Sormovo.

[45] V.E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' politics and organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900-1914* (Berkeley/ London, 1983), pp.178-179
[46] White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo in the February Revolution', pp.479-480
[47] Fadeev, *Istoriia Krasnogo Sormova*, p.77
[48] V.T Illarionova, *Materialy po istorii Revoliuzionnovo Dvizhenia*, Vol 1-2 : Nizhnii Novgorod, 1920-1921, Baykov Collection (Mic 5988) 1922

Kaiurov held posts in *Istpart* (Central Committee's Department of Party History) from 1926-1932 and attempted to establish a narrative that wiped out the SRs from Sormovo political history.[49]

The proliferation of Soviet historical scholarship about Sormovo factory is due in part to the national importance of the metal industry in Sormovo. It also reflected the need for the Soviet state on a local and national level to create a coherent narrative about the support for the Social Democratic party in Sormovo, where to a large extent it did not exist. At the beginning of 1917 the SR organisation in Sormovo was one of the strongest in the country. The Sormovo SRs had a substantial income of 25,000 roubles in 1917 and by June their local party had a membership of 5,000.[50] Before 1917, the SRs had built up a substantial underground network of members. The SR member Z. Magergut arrived illegally in Sormovo at the beginning of 1916 to help expand SR activities there. He described the attempts of the local SR members to spread leaflets in Sormovo factory, which were passed around different workshops.[51] They met regularly in secret and consistently tried to infiltrate the factory and recruit new members. In comparison, the local Bolsheviks had a small and weakly developed organisation with only 600-700 members by July and 1,000 by December.[52] Magergut reported in 1916 that the Sormovo Bolshevik group were weak because their members were constantly being arrested.[53]

There was a similar situation in Moscow Metalworks where the SRs' stance of avoiding advocating political strikes meant their members escaped detection from authorities. However, in Moscow by mid-1917 the Bolsheviks' influence began to solidify in the factory. The Bolsheviks dominated the Metalworkers' Union in Moscow, had increased its membership in the factory and many workers contributed to strike funds organised by the union. By October, workers in Moscow Metalworks had declared their support for the Bolshevik revolution and collected money for Red Guard Units to 'defend the

[49] White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev Zemlyachestvo in the February Revolution', p.476
[50] Badcock, 'Politics, Parties and Power: Sormovo Workers in 1917', p.73
[51] RGASPI, f.274, op.1 d. 26, Memoir of Z. Magergut, member of the Sormovskii organisation of the Social Revolutionaries from its existence in April 1916 to April 1917
[52] Golub (ed.), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia*, p.375
[53] RGASPI, f.274, op.1 d. 26, Memoir of Z. Magergut

revolution.'[54] Even in 1905 in Moscow and St Petersburg, there was already a trend for new large unions to support the RSDLP party line.[55] The soviets were quickly re-organised over the summer of 1917. Initially many unions and factories across the provinces and in the centre in Russia did not pledge their support for the Bolsheviks but they began gradually to win a majority of votes. By September 1917, urban soviets throughout Russia swung towards the Bolsheviks.

The local elections in Sormovo reveal that Sormovo did not follow the trend of other urban centres by late 1917 in supporting the Bolsheviks. Moderate socialist influence dominated the elections to the Sormovo soviet throughout 1917. After the July elections in 1917, the Sormovo Bolsheviks conceded that the SRs won an 'overwhelming majority' of seats when they achieved 76% of the vote and the Bolsheviks only achieved 8%.[56] During the summer the perceived failings of the Provisional Government worked to the Bolsheviks' advantage. The Sormovo Bolsheviks reported that after the Kornilov revolt in August their party had gained increasing support from Sormovo workers. The Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Committee of the RSDLP(b) reported that the last two Bolshevik organised rallies in Sormovo attracted 10-15,000 workers.[57] In the September elections to the Sormovo soviet, the Bolsheviks' vote increased to 46%, with the SRs in second place at 32%, Mensheviks received 10% and other parties 12%. Despite this Bolshevik gain, the Bolshevik majority remained unstable throughout 1917 and 1918 and the moderate socialist influence remained significant in the soviet. The SR-Menshevik coalition abstained from voting in the soviet and refused to participate in the presidium and executive committee, which caused the Bolsheviks great political difficulties.[58] By the end of 1917, the Bolsheviks still lacked funding and were poorly organised. Just after the success of the

[54] Murphy, *Revolution and counterrevolution: class struggle in a Moscow metal factory*, pp. 46, 59-60
[55] Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' politics and organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900-1914*, p.159
[56] GOPANO, f.1, op.1, d.2, Minutes of the meetings from the First Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Conference of RSDLP(b): Field report of Comrade Sergushev from Sormovo organisation of RSDLP(b) (30th September, 1917)
[57] TsANO, f. 149, op. 1, d. 13, Letter from the Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Committee of RSDLP(b) to the Moscow Regional Office of RSDLP(b) (9th October,1917)
[58] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.82, 75

September soviet elections, the local Bolsheviks complained in the First Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Conference of RSDLP(b) that their 'poor state of party work' was causing a strengthening of SR support. They lamented that the local Bolshevik party lacked 'intellectual forces' and were overworked in comparison to the well organised and experienced SR party.[59]

In elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917 the SRs gained the most votes again in Sormovo but only by a fraction (181 votes). The SRs achieved 42% of the votes, to the Bolsheviks' 41% and the Kadets (Constitutional Democrats) received 9% and Mensheviks 8%.[60] The results from Sormovo broadly matched the national results for the Constituent Assembly, where the SRs won 39% of the vote, making them the majority, and the Bolsheviks won 22%.[61] Sormovo's results differed significantly to Nizhnii Novgorod town, where the Kadets won a majority of the votes to the Constituent Assembly and the SRs received significantly less votes than the Bolsheviks.[62] The success of the SRs in Sormovo contrasts with the overwhelming success of the Bolsheviks in Moscow and Petrograd, where they won almost half of the votes and the SRs won less than 20%.[63] Sormovo was not the only provincial metalworking urban area where the SR opposition enjoyed success after 1917. The SRs' greatest urban successes provincially were in Tula and Izhevsk, both centres of defence production.[64] These regions also exhibited large factories with a large and skilled workforce but did not

[59] GOPANO, f.1, op.1, d.2, Minutes of the meetings from the First Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Conference of RSDLP(b)

[60] Results for Sormovo elections for the Constituent Assembly were in *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (16th November, 1917)

[61] L.G Protasov, calculates that the SRs won 191,100,74 votes to the Constituent Assembly nationally and the Bolsheviks won 108,894,37 out of 484,019,62 votes cast, *Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel'noe Sobranie: Istoriia rozhdeniia i gibeli* (Moscow, 1997), p.366; Radkey calculates that the SRs won 15,848,004 votes to the Constituent Assembly nationally and the Bolsheviks won 9,884,637 out of 41,686,876 votes cast: O.H. Radkey, *Russia goes to the polls: the election to the all-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917* (London, 1989), p.18

[62] For information on November elections to Constituent Assembly for Nizhnii Novgrorod Town see Golub (ed.), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia*, p.550

[63] For information on November elections to Constituent Assembly for Petrograd and Moscow see Protasov, *Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel'noe Sobranie: Istoriia rozhdeniia i gibeli*, p.363

[64] Smith, *Captives of revolution: the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p.26

support the Bolsheviks. In Tula the SRs won an even higher percentage of the vote with 47% to the Bolsheviks' 44%.[65]

This pattern of provincial support for the SRs, even in areas with highly skilled workers with a tradition of labour activism and political consciousness, questions the Soviet historiographical narrative of sweeping support for the Bolsheviks in 1917. To some extent this may have been true for other large industrialised urban centres, especially near Moscow and Petrograd, in 1917. However, each province, uezd and even factory in Russia had its own microclimate based on traditions, worker identity and economic conditions that shaped the results of the soviet and Constituent Assembly elections. Sormovo was a large industrial complex in a largely rural area, where the SRs tended to have more support. The size and composition of the factory meant that Sormovo metalworkers lived and worked in the same area and although were well aware of events in the province and the centre, rarely made attempts to co-ordinate strike action across the province before 1918. The Bolsheviks did not have a strong base in Sormovo not only because it was a distance away from the universities in Nizhnii Novgorod but because the workers there already had a distinct sense of their own identity as skilled metalworkers, which did not rely on an ascribed identity from the Bolsheviks. They had a tradition of labour activism which was not forged or shaped by local parties but by their confidence as skilled workers within the province. They articulated their shared demands to managers and local parties even after 1917.

[65] Protasov, *Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel'noe Sobranie: Istoriia rozhdeniia i gibeli*, p.365

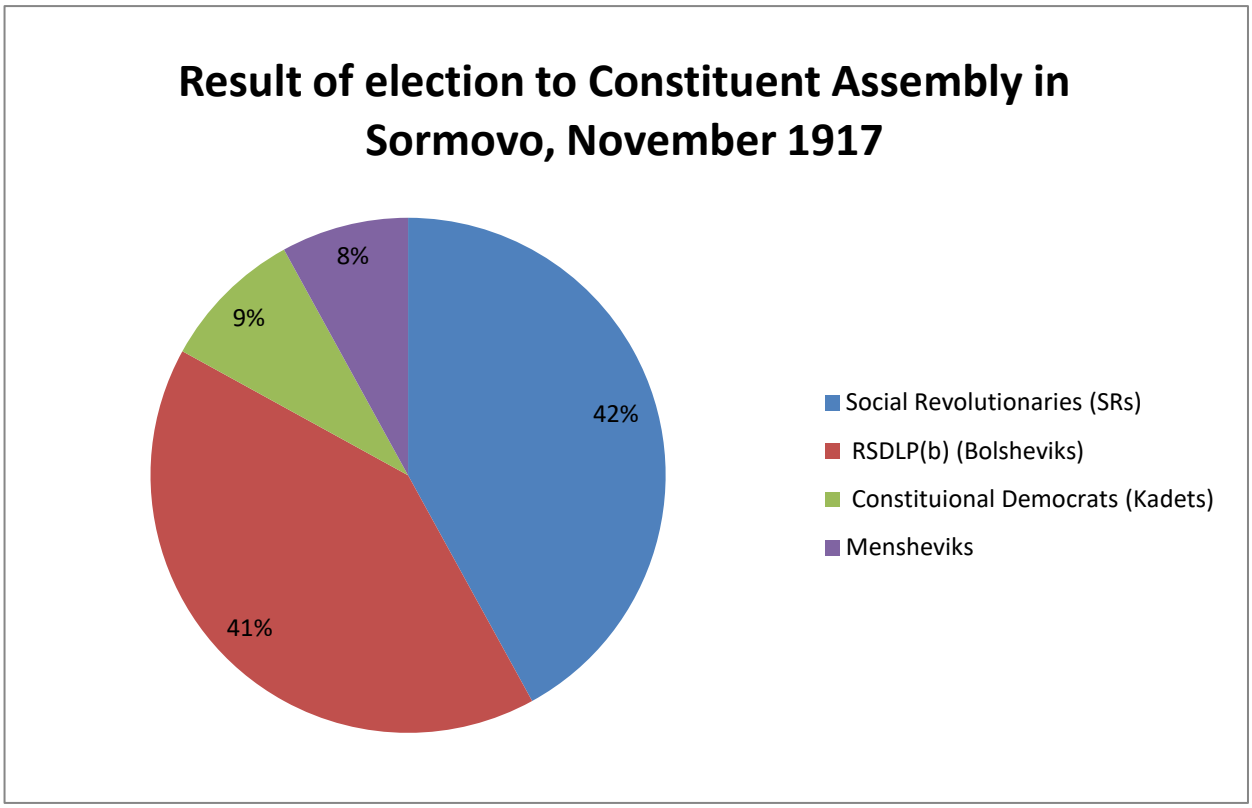


Figure 1. Election results for Constituent Assembly in Sormovo, November 1917

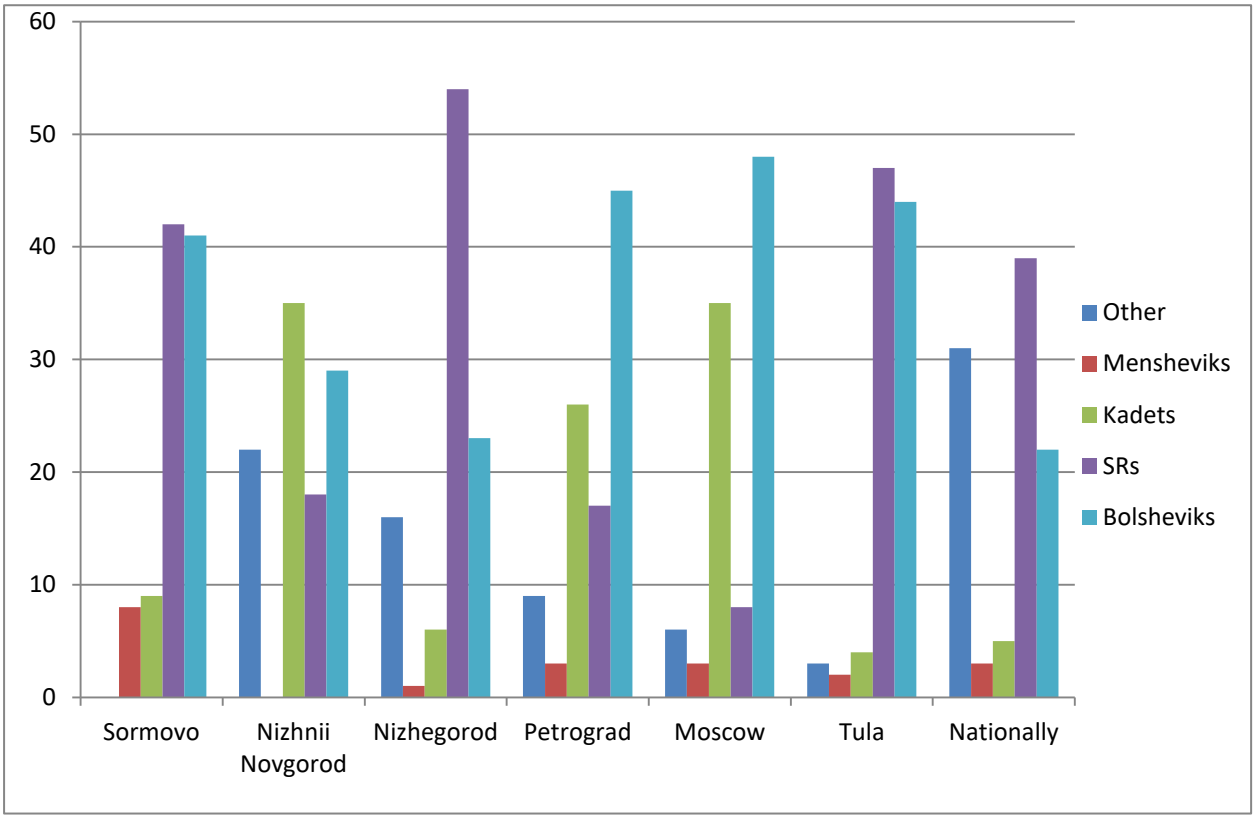


Figure 2. Results of the election to the Constituent Assembly in different regional areas, November 1917 (% of votes)[66]

[66] The chart for voting patterns in Nizhnii Novgorod is incomplete because the information only gave data on the parties who gained the highest percentage of votes: The Bolsheviks, SRs and Kadets.

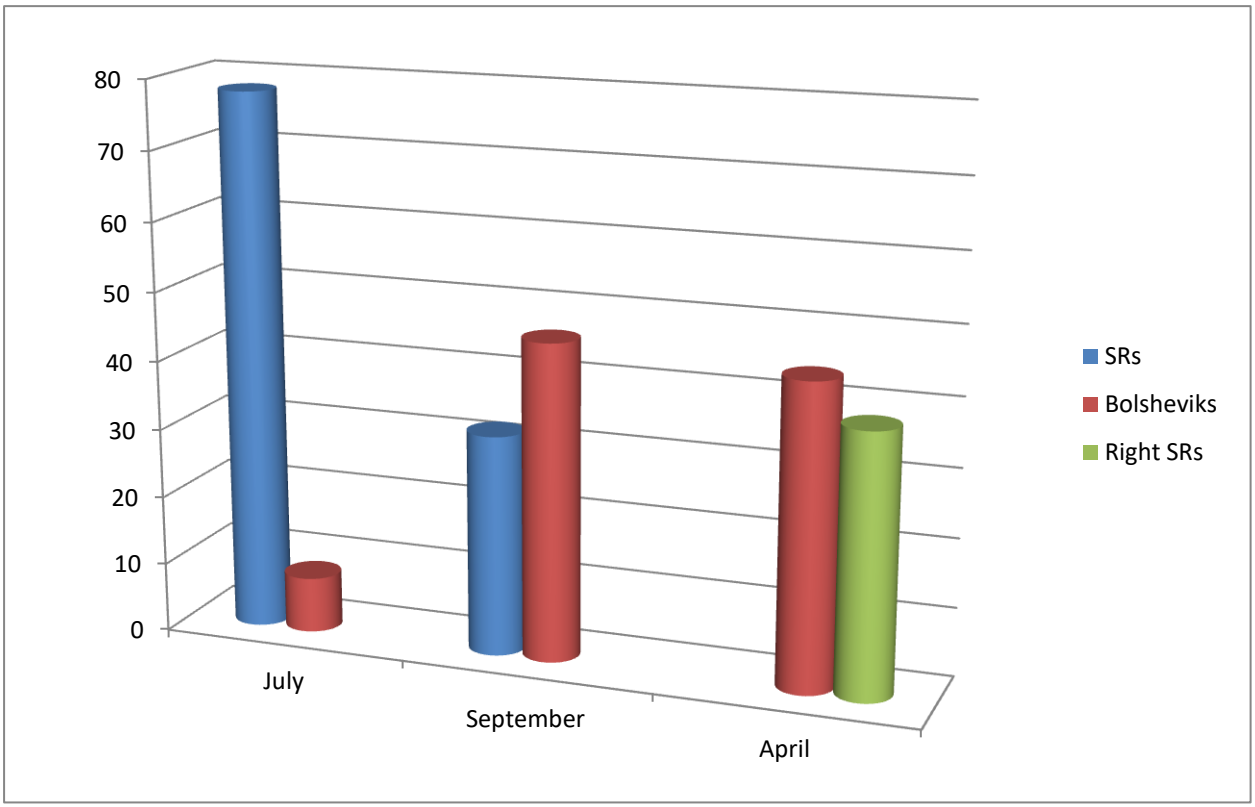


Figure 3. Results of elections to Sormovo Soviet for the SRs and Bolsheviks, from July 1917- April 1918 (% of votes)

Who Influenced Whom? Labour Activism and Party Policy, 1917-1921

The increase of overtly political protest in 1905 and especially in 1917 was linked to an increase in political party membership. However, labour protest cannot be linked explicitly to the policies of any party. The SRs may have had a base in Sormovo since the late nineteenth century, and continued to receive financial and political support from Sormovo workers, but it is important to distinguish that they did not lead them nor shape their patterns of labour activism, not even in 1917.

The news of the February Revolution in the centre rapidly arrived in Sormovo. The son of the editor of *Nizhegorodskii Listok* told Sormovo workers on the 28th February of the revolution, knowing they would spread the news rapidly because of their political activism and underground revolutionary links.[67] On 1st March 1917 there was a one day strike in Sormovo. As many as 10,000 workers, half the workforce, marched to Nizhnii Novgorod town prison demanding the release of military deserters and political prisoners.[68] Magergut stated that Sormovo worker members of the SRs, who before 1917 had not taken an active part in the activities of the party, were revolutionised by the news from the centre. He described how workers marched towards the prison waving red scarves, singing revolutionary songs and shouting 'long live the revolution'.[69] Workers demanded that the Mayor Sirotkin release both political prisoners and deserters. After he refused to release the deserters, the crowd surged into the prison and released more than 1,000 prisoners.[70] This spontaneous rally of Sormovo workers had the aim of releasing political prisoners who they believed were imprisoned unjustly. In a similar way, in early February 1917 Sormovo workers had planned a one day strike and rally to protest against the trial of Sormovo workers who had taken part in a strike in July 1916. The authorities feared that this strike would turn into a riot and 300

[67] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.34
[68] TsANO, f.962, op.1, d.30, From a review compiled by the deputy prosecutor of the district court of Nizhnii Novgorod on the economic situation of different sectors of society in Nizhnii Novgorod and the province
[69] RGASPI f.274, op.1, d. 26, Memoir of Z. Magergut
[70] TsANO, f.962, op.1, d.30, Review of the deputy prosecutor; see Appendix: Image 8.

soldiers were sent to Sormovo to keep the peace.[71] These rallies do not show a direct influence of political parties on worker activism but they do reveal the tradition of radical labour activism in Sormovo. Although there were workers who were members of the SRs and Bolsheviks before 1917, and the authorities believed that Sormovo was a hotbed of revolutionary workers, workers usually stated their own demands during labour protest, which were distinct from any party policy.

In fact, it was political parties who responded to these spontaneous protests of Sormovo workers and quickly tried to gain support for their policies. After hearing news of the February Revolution, Magergut recalled that the SRs quickly printed leaflets about the revolution in Petrograd to disseminate to workers on the march. The Bolsheviks and SRs also organised rallies and marches to attract workers on broad revolutionary themes and disseminated information on their particular policies. Before the May Day celebrations in 1917, the SRs were well prepared to spread their policies, in an attempt to gain more worker support. Magergut described how the local SRs produced more than 40,000 leaflets from February to May and co-ordinated with other local SR party members in areas surrounding Sormovo, in Nizhegorod province and in other provinces like Kazan, Samara, Ribinsk and Moscow. On May Day the SR members Tiurikov, Magergut and Stepanov gave speeches to a crowd of up to 80,000 workers, who had already assembled waving red flags.[72]

The main aim of the Bolsheviks and SRs was to attract Sormovo workers to join their party and support their policies. However, they did not just push specific policies onto the workers but tried to understand and capitalise upon worker grievances. Party activists attended factory meetings to propose resolutions they thought the workers would be sympathetic to. In Sormovo the local Bolsheviks recognised skilled metalworkers' grievances and tried to win support by purporting to represent worker interests throughout 1917. During a prolonged economic crisis in Sormovo in late 1917 the

[71] 'Report of the Governor on the workers movement in Sormovo' in M. Liubovikov, I. Nechaiv, M. Shniprov, *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsionnykh sobytii v gor'kovskom krai* (Gorky, 1932) p.10-11
[72] RGASPI, f.274, op.1 d. 26, Memoir of Z. Magergut

Bolsheviks saw an opportunity for Sormovo workers to support their twin policies of worker control and nationalisation of the factory. As the economic crisis worsened at the end of 1917 many workers were sympathetic to the nationalisation of Sormovo and there were several resolutions that supported this from workshop level to the Board of Trade Union and Workers.[73] Worker control was viewed by workers as a way to purge oppressive managers and stabilise factory production. Just after the October Revolution a resolution of the general meeting of the blacksmith shop in Sormovo resolved that the factory committee should control production.[74]

In Sormovo on 5th September in a general meeting of nine workshops of the rolling department the workers agreed to support a written Bolshevik resolution on nationalisation of the plant, and as an extension Bolshevik power. They stated:

> 'We recognise [that] only the conquest of power by revolutionary democrats can prevent the devastation of the final economic life of the country. We invite all fellow workers to rally around the revolutionary social democracy [Bolsheviks] as [the] faithful exponent of the interests of the working class'. [75]

Worker support for the Bolsheviks certainly grew in Sormovo over the course of 1917 but this resolution does not represent unanimous worker support for the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks continuously struggled to gain Sormovo worker support for their resolutions or for their votes in the soviet. The workers that supported the resolution on the nationalisation of Sormovo in September reflects more the desperation of workers to keep the factory open, after continuous financial difficulties, than unanimous support for Bolshevik

[73] TsANO, f.552, op.2, d.40, The resolution of the general meeting of workers in the steel foundry workshop in Sormovo plant (20th October 1917, TsANO, f.552, op.2, d.33, From the minutes of the general meeting of workers of nine workshops of the rolling department of Sormovo plant accession to the resolution of the Bolsheviks over the alleged closure of the plant (September 5th 1917); TsANO, f.4527, op.1, d.7, Emergency meeting of the Board of the Trade Union of Workers and Employees in Sormovo (November 23rd 1917)

[74] Resolution of the general meeting of working blacksmith shop Sormovo plant to support the activities of the factory committee to control production (27th October, 1917) in Velikorechina and Seleneva (ed.), *Pobeda Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoii revoliutsii v Nizhegorodskoi Gubernii*, p. 308

[75] TsANO, f.552, op.2, d.33, Meeting of the presidium of the General Factory Committee of Sormovsky government workers (23rd May, 1919)

policies. The persistence of Sormovo worker support for the SRs and the continuation of SR and Menshevik activities after 1917 was a continuing grievance to the local and central Bolsheviks.

After 1917, more workers began appropriating SR policies as a form of defiance against the increasingly coercive political and economic policies of the Soviet state. The most common worker demands in line with SR policies were calls for the immediate convening of the Constituent Assembly and the end to Civil War.[76] In the few days after the closure of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, the local Bolsheviks were so concerned about the political protest of Sormovo workers they banned any demonstrations and put up posters explaining why workers should not take part in any demonstrations against the Bolsheviks. Their fear was the SRs and Mensheviks would take advantage of anti-Bolshevik feeling amongst the Sormovo workers because of the closure of the Constituent Assembly.[77]

Sormovo worker appropriation of SR and Bolshevik policies did not mean that they followed the directions of political parties in 1917 and after October. It suggests that policies of both parties appealed to them in 1917 and the workers appropriated the policies that suited their economic and political demands. This is why they often demanded a re-opening of the Constituent Asssembly in 1918 during labour protest but did not demand a re-distribution of land, another key SR policy, in 1917. It was not as relevant to them as they were a skilled workforce that lived permanently in close proximity to the factory. Appropriation of polices and demands was also not a one way street. The SRs and the Bolsheviks were well aware of the tradition of labour activism in Sormovo, which is why revolutionaries repeatedly attempted to infiltrate the factory in the early twentieth century. The political parties in Sormovo appropriated worker demands as their own policies in an attempt to both elicit support from the strategically important Sormovo workers and create a discourse of skilled worker support for their party. After 1917, the

[76] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p.189
[77]'Minutes from the Committee of the RSDLP(b)', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (24th December, 1917)

continued support of Sormovo workers for some SR policies was a continued political and ideological problem for the local Bolsheviks. By 1919, in response to the economic crisis resulting from the Civil war, Bolshevik policies attempted to control the lives of Sormovo workers. They began to shape their policies in response to the desperate conditions of the Civil War but also in response to the tradition of labour activism in Sormovo and the particularly hostile political climate there.

Sormovo in Crisis: The Shaping of Bolshevik policies, 1917-1921

As a result of economic collapse, food shortage and political struggle the local Bolsheviks attempted to halt the labour activism of Sormovo workers, which they had continuously supported and promoted before 1917. They shaped a discourse about Sormovo metalworkers based on the practical needs of the central and local state during the Civil War, namely increased production of munitions. The local Bolsheviks became increasingly coercive and repressive in their interactions with local workers after 1918. Although the local Bolsheviks desperately attempted to minimise the impact of the economic crisis in Sormovo, they also used the economic collapse to their advantage. It allowed them to create a discourse of a dichotomous struggle of the state against 'the enemy' that was linked closely to discourse and policies from the centre but also was specific to the circumstances of Sormovo. The economic crisis and food shortage was used against Sormovo workers to define and solidify the state constructed identity of Sormovo workers, the opposition and the state itself.

<u>The Political Struggle, 1918-1919</u>

After the closure of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, political relations between the Menshevik-SR coalition and the Bolsheviks in the soviet declined precipitously. This resulted in the formation of two separate soviets in May 1918. This heightened political atmosphere in Sormovo in 1918 meant that any strike by Sormovo workers was viewed by the SRs as an opportunity to instigate a revolt against the Bolsheviks and by the Bolsheviks as potentially disastrous for their unstable grip on power. It was this political atmosphere that shaped Bolshevik interactions with Sormovo workers and catalysed a coercive and violent reaction to labour protest.

At the end of January 1918, the Bolsheviks closed the SR and Menshevik newspapers *Narod* and *Zhizn'.* They declared it was because of the increasingly 'anti-soviet' stance of the papers but the Bolsheviks also feared a Sormovo worker uprising.[78] They also prevented Sormovo workers from attending a scheduled conference of the SR-Menshevik coalition on 21st January, by occupying the space and preventing workers from assembling.[79] In February 1918, a prominent local SR, Chernov, and his wife were shot dead. The SR-Menshevik coalition in the soviet set up an investigation into Chernov's murder, financed his funeral and compensated his family.[80] The Mensheviks accused the local Bolsheviks of complicity in the shootings and political tensions were further heightened.[81]

Shortly after, elections to the Sormovo Soviet in April secured an SR-Menshevik success. The national SR party split in December 1917 and in Sormovo the SR Filipov with some other SRs left the party and formed an independent Left SR organisation who agreed to co-operate with the Bolsheviks.[82] The Bolsheviks won the most votes (5,603) but the total combined votes of Right SRs (4,888) and Mensheviks (2,375) gave them significant leverage in the soviet.[83] On the first session of the soviet the Bolsheviks demanded that the SRs and Mensheviks recognise their soviet power. They refused and the Bolshevik coalition, with the Left SRs and Polish faction, left the soviet to work in the old building without them.[84]

In early 1918 the SRs increased their interaction with Sormovo workers. Just before the election, the Bolsheviks complained that Right SRs

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[78] 'From the minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the Nizhnii Novgorod Soviet of Workers 'and Peasants' Deputies on the closure of the SR-Menshevik newspapers (23rd January 1918)', in Velikorechina and Selezneva (ed.), *Pobeda Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoii revoliutsii v Nizhegorodskoi Gubernii*, p. 430

[79] TsANO, f.56, op.1, d.7 From the minutes of the meeting of the Presidium of the Nizhnii Novgorod Soviet of Workers 'and Peasants' Deputies on the Prohibition of the Menshevik-SR conference in Sormovo (18th January, 1918)

[80] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 29

[81] *Svobodniia Zhizn'* (19th February, 1918)

[82] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.74

[83] 'Sormovo Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (11th April, 1918)

[84] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 29; 'Sormovo Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (21st April, 1918); *Volskaia Kommuna* (23rd April, 1918)

and Mensheviks organised several meetings in workshops in Sormovo.[85] Meanwhile, conditions were deteriorating in Sormovo factory. There were increasing money shortages and mounting dissatisfaction in the factory. Motivated by the economic catastrophe, workers began to adopt resolutions echoing slogans from other large defence plants critiquing Bolshevik rule.[86] The importance to the Bolshevik government of maintaining order in Sormovo is shown by the arrival of Commissar for Naval Affairs Fyodor Fyodorovich Raskolnikov in mid-May, who attempted to re-unite the two sections of the soviet. The local Bolsheviks organised a rally where he spoke, which was attended by 1,000 workers.[87] Despite Raskolnikov's efforts the opposition between the two coalitions intensified. The Right SRs and Mensheviks planned a workers' conference for 9th June 1918. They sent invitations to Sormovo workers and some trade unions handed out leaflets. The local Bolsheviks strongly urged all trade union organisations to rebuff the attempts to 'provoke action by the workers against the soviets'.[88] The provincial authorities banned the workers' conference and on 10th June Cheka units were sent in from Moscow to occupy the building where the conference was due to meet. The crowd of workers and the political opposition began to taunt the soldiers and the Bolsheviks opened fire killing several protestors.[89] This was an incident that provoked national condemnation from the SRs. In a national meeting of the SR party in June 1918 they issued a statement about the events in Sormovo:

> 'The meeting authorised is deeply perturbed by the shooting of workers in Sormovo, [we] send our fraternal greetings to the comrades bravely fighting for the workers' cause. One government has tried to crush and the massacre the labour movement'.[90]

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[85] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (17th March, 1918)
[86] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 62
[87] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (9th April, 1918)
[88] *Volskaia Kommuna* (7th June, 1918)
[89] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 63; *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (11th June, 1918)
[90] 'Resolution of the Extraordinary Meeting of factories and mills of Petrograd (12 June 1918) - SR draft' in Chernaiev (ed.), *Piterskie rabochii i diktatura proletariata. Oktabriia 1917-1929 gg. Ekonomicheskie konflikti i politicheskii protest: Collection of documents*, p. 110

The organisation of the workers' conference represented significant political unison between some workers and the SR-Menshevik coalition. They refused to recognise Soviet power, exemplified by the reference to the government as 'one government' and not 'the government.' This was met with Bolshevik violence. After the shootings of 10th June, the conference activists organised a one day strike of Sormovo factory on 18th June. The striking workers passed a resolution labelling the Soviet government a 'hostile regime' and called for an investigation into the shooting of the workers. When the Nizhnii Novgorod Union of Commercial and Industrial Employees joined the strike the Bolsheviks reacted rapidly and harshly. Cheka declared that all shops and enterprises that struck on 18th June would be closed until further notice and many workers were fired.[91] On 27th June, the Red Guards fired on a crowd of workers who were protesting the arrest of the local Menshevik worker Upovalov, leaving two killed. The Sormovo workers went out on strike again. It began in the cast-iron foundry workshop, quickly spreading to the machine shop and those workers called for workers in all shops to join the strike. The Bolsheviks again fired into a gathered crowd, although it was reported that no-one was killed and eight people were harmed.[92]

The increasingly violent reaction to labour activism in Sormovo, through the shooting strikers, was not just a result of labour activism in Sormovo or the SR-Menshevik coalition. It was part of a wider Soviet state policy of social interference and political centralisation during the Civil War. By mid-1918 Bolsheviks either shut down soviets or walked out of them, if their composition was not to their liking. This coincided with the SR entry into the Civil War and establishment of Komuch in the Volga region. In Tula, after an SR-Menshevik victory in the soviet in December 1917, the local Bolsheviks disbanded the soviet and shut down the local Menshevik newspaper and arrested its leaders.[93] Tula was also an area with concentrated heavy industry which faced increasing unemployment and unstable economic conditions and the response of the local Bolsheviks there to worker protest was progressively

[91] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 63
[92] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (29th June, 1918)
[93] V.N. Brovkin, *The Mensheviks after October: Socialist opposition and the rise of the Bolshevik dictatorship* (Ithaca, 1987), p. 137

violent. Worker protest tied to SR-Menshevik workers' conferences reached a peak in mid-1918. Worker conferences were organised all over Russia by the Right SRs and Mensheviks and they co-ordinated strike movements of workers. By July 1918 the Bolsheviks began a concerted crackdown on moderate socialist opposition and declared all workers' conferences illegal. A national workers' conference was organised in Moscow for the 20th July with delegates from Moscow, Petrograd, Sormovo, Tula, Yaroslavl and other industrial centres. The Bolsheviks raided the proceedings and arrested the participants.[94]

By the end of 1918, the moderate socialist opposition in Russia was in disarray. The SR party had struggled to co-ordinate national action against the Bolsheviks since 1917. Their party had a wide appeal but had a weak organisational structure and contained members with hugely diverse views. After the split of the national party in late 1917 the Right SRs found it increasingly difficult to control provincial, especially rural, soviets. Smith argues this was the most important, and ultimately, fatal consequence of the split in the SR party.[95] The Left SRs eventually split with the Bolsheviks after growing tension over the signing of Brest-Litovsk. They initiated an armed uprising against the Bolsheviks in July 1918. This ended any SR participation with the Soviet government.[96]

Although the proportion of SR votes had declined in the Sormovo Soviet after the local party had split, the Right SRs' moderate socialist coalition with the Mensheviks, on a national and local scale, catalysed a rejuvenation of concerted opposition to the Bolsheviks. However, when the workers' conference movement was violently halted by the local Bolsheviks, the SRs and Menshevik opposition had little opportunity to connect with the workers again on a scale they had in early 1918. The workers in Sormovo and

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[94] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 27, 64

[95] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, pp.10-11

[96] See A. Rabinowitch, 'The suicide of the Left SRs', *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington, 2007), pp.283-309; R.I. Kowalski,'"Fellow travellers" or revolutionary dreamers? The Left Social Revolutionaries after 1917', *Revolutionary Russia*, 11 (1998), 1-31

in regions like Tula began to tie their grievances with the SR-Menshevik coalition. They began to link their specific workplace grievances to wider political issues and economic and political protest became inextricably linked. The moderate socialist opposition came to represent a political solution to the increasingly harsh militaristic conditions instigated by the Bolsheviks. In the revolutionary atmosphere of 1917 Sormovo workers blamed management for the economic crisis and mishandling of production in the factory but by 1918 workers began to accuse the local Bolsheviks of harsh working conditions and the violent repression of worker protest and opposition movements.

‘An acute situation with food issues’: Economic Crisis and the Shaping of Bolshevik Policies, 1917-1921

Despite the violent crushing of political opposition, by late 1918 the labour activism of Sormovo workers continued, albeit on a smaller and more sporadic scale. The confidence of the Sormovo workers at the beginning of 1917, by demanding higher wages and better working conditions, was gone. This was not just due to the deteriorating political situation but that the Bolsheviks were using these deteriorating socio-economic conditions to their political advantage. The factory suffered crippling economic problems from late 1917 and the disruption of the Civil War caused major food shortages in Nizhegorod and around the country. The Bolsheviks struggled to restrict the impact of the economic crisis in Sormovo during the Civil War. However, paradoxically the chronic food shortage and economic chaos put the Bolsheviks in a position of power in Sormovo. The rationing of food and nationalisation of industry in 1918 meant the central and local Bolsheviks had control over the distribution of pay and rations. They used both political repression and economic coercion in an effort to end labour activism in Sormovo.

The confidence and political consciousness of Sormovo workers in 1917 is revealed by their reaction to food shortages within the province. In 1917, Sormovo had one of the most regular food supplies of all the regions in Nizhegorod province. As Nizhegorod did not have a surplus of grain, the local authorities in most of the regions had to import grain from other provinces and faced serious shortages throughout 1917. Although Sormovo faced acute food shortages at the beginning of 1917, the factory complex had its own provisions

committee, which worked autonomously of other uezd organisations in the province. Workers in Sormovo were supplied with food provisions by both their own Factory Provisions Committee and the Volost Zemstvo Provisions Administration. This meant Sormovo workers were in a privileged position regarding food supply in 1917 and the town administration in Nihznii Novgorod made several attempts to redress the imbalance of food supply to non-workers. It was worker-led organisations which tackled the food crisis and it provoked hostility from non Sormovo workers, soldiers and other citizens living in the area.[97] Sormovo workers used their status and identity as highly skilled metalworkers to assert their 'right' to privileged food rations. Their confidence and assertiveness towards local government organisations was both a result of their tradition of labour activism and the national workers' movement in 1917.

In 1918, Sormovo was still in a privileged position regarding food supply in the province. Its contribution to the war effort enabled the factory to be designated by the state as a 'special unit' by the class rationing system.[98] However, the regularity of food supply in Sormovo deteriorated over the course of the Civil War. The Sormovo Factory Food Board (*Sormovskii Zavod Prodovolstvennoi Upravi*) was charged with making sure that food was supplied to the factory workers on a regular basis. They regularly reported a shortage of oats and flour throughout 1918 and in August had to plead with the factory management in Kanavin for supplies of flour, tea, sugar, oil, soap and salt.[99] A solution to the food supply issue was the recurrent demand of workers in 1919. There was a three day strike in several workshops in March 1919, where workers demanded a more regular supply of food, and another strike was held in May by the Metalworkers' Union in Sormovo.[100] The Sormovo Bolshevik organisation believed the strike was a direct response to the lack of

[97] Badcock, Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history, p.213, 227

[98] 'From the minutes of Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Congress of Soviets on the situation in the field and work with the provincial council (28th June, 1918)', in Velikorechina and Selezneva (ed.), *Pobeda Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoii revoliutsii v Nizhegorodskoi Gubernii*, p.529; For more information about classed-based rationing see Chapter 3: 'The Conceptualisation of Urban Workers in the Early Soviet State'

[99] TsANO, f.1257, op.1, d.13, Reports from the Sormovo Factory Food Board (4th March,1918; 25th November,1918; 12th August, 1918)

[100] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.61, Sormovo regional committee of RKP(b): Materials from the commission investigating the strike in Sormovo

food supplies in the factory. Their inquiry into the strike identified its origins in the boiler shop on 25th March, from whence it spread to at least three other shops by 27th March. The workers in these shops refused to work until they were given bread and it was described as 'an acute situation with food issues'.[101]

This situation was mirrored in Petrograd where after the severe winter of 1918 the city authorities resolved to try and get extra rations for 20,000 workers by 5th March. The failure of the authorities to deliver on their promises caused a strike to break out in Putilov factory, which spread to other factories across the city.[102] At the end of May 1919 the local Bolshevik organisation reported that the Sormovo workers were still angered by the food shortages in the factory. They reported that the workers seemed to believe that the Bolsheviks were holding back food and they could only force them to hand over more supplies by striking. In response to repeated strikes the central state agreed that Sormovo could temporarily have an increase in food rations. In a letter to Sormovo Bolsheviks and the General Factory Committee the state letter detailed:

> 'There is certainly no doubt that these strikes are motivated by the food issue. Sormovo workers use strikes as a way to get more food. This is very harmful to the, more or less, steady productivity of the plant which has an important public value. We will take measures to temporarily release products [foodstuffs] in May [1919]. This will dissuade negative opinion in the factory and boost productivity at the state factory.'[103]

This letter from the centre to Sormovo reveals how grave the food crisis was in Sormovo and how a Soviet policy was shaped directly as a result of the labour activism of Sormovo workers. The local Bolsheviks responded to the food shortages in Sormovo by initially working with the Sormovo Food Board and General Factory Committee, to ensure a regular supply of food in the factory.

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[101] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.6, Sormovskii Raikom RKP(b) Nizhegorodskii Gubernia: Proceedings of the commission to investigate the strike in Sormovo (March 25th- 27th 1918)
[102] M. McCauley, 'Bread without the Bourgeoisie', in Koenker, Rosenberg and Suny, (ed.), *Party, state, and society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in social history*, p.164
[103] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d. 25, Central letter RSFSR to Sormovo region (26th May, 1919)

On a central level, like the Provisional Government and the Tsarist regime, the Soviet state struggled to get enough grain from peasants to supply the cities. The state first worked within the framework created by the Provisional Government by using the principle of a state grain monopoly.[104] They established *Narkomprod* (People's Commissariat of Food Supply) the day after they took power and by 1920 it had become one of the biggest government ministries and dominated economic policy.[105] However, this policy rested on an inventory of every producer in the country which just did not exist. In the first few months after October the Bolsheviks left food procurement to the spontaneous initiatives of workers organisations and local soviets, which only added to the chaos of food supply problems.[106] Eventually, the Soviet state made the district authorities responsible for meeting a fixed levy (*razvertska*) and supplying it to their district. This put huge pressure on local officials as well as peasants.[107] The countryside became devastated by continuous warfare, famines and failed state polices.

However, the food supply crisis was not a complete disaster for the position of the Bolsheviks in Sormovo. The lack of food within Sormovo factory meant that the Bolsheviks had a bargaining tool which they could use if Sormovo workers decided to strike, by threatening to withdraw their food rations. In a resolution about the prevention of further strikes the Sormovo Bolsheviks resolved that 'those who stop work in the locomotive and boiler shop will be deprived of the right of food until they begin work again.'[108]

That the workers in those shops were striking precisely because of the shortage of food within the factory reveals how disastrous the impact of the withdrawal of rations would have been. Sormovo workers were no longer in a

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[104] Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922*, p.164

[105] B.M. Patenaude, 'Peasants into Russians: The utopian essence of War Communism', *The Russian Review*, 54 (1995), p.553

[106] S. Malle, *The economic organisation of War Communism, 1918-1921* (Cambridge, 1985), p.338

[107] Holquist, *Making war, forging revolution: Russia's continuum of crisis, 1914-1921*, pp.248-249; P. Fraunholtz, 'The collapse and rebuilding of grain procurement authority in Civil War Russia: The case of Penza, 1919', in in Badcock, Novikova and Retish (ed.), *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914-1922*, p.83

[108] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.61, Sormovo region RKP(b)Material from the Commission to investigate the strike in Sormovo (26th March, 1919)

position of political or economic confidence and authority that they briefly held in early 1917. The factory faced financial issues throughout 1917 and by September it was facing closure. Immediate closure was avoided but the economic crisis worsened in the factory after the October Revolution. The factory was de-mobilised and again it was proposed by the Board of Management that the factory would close on the 10th December.[109] The Council of Workers Deputies and the General Factory Committee resolved in an emergency meeting on 25th November that the central state needed to help out the factory either through a mutual trust fund (Menshevik and SR resolution) or through allowing the introduction of workers' control (Bolshevik resolution).[110] On the 22nd December 1917 worker delegates from Sormovo were sent to Petrograd to ask for state funding of the factory and the issue was resolved 'in a positive way', to keep the factory open and workers wages paid through state aid.[111] However, a telegram received in Sormovo just a day after reported that workers' pay would not be received before the Christmas period.[112]

The financial crisis in Sormovo continued into 1918. In the factory budget on 13th January 1918 it was announced that the de-mobilisation of the factory had caused a significant decrease in production. By January 1918 the factory had laid off more than 8,000 workers.[113] The Factory Control and Finance Committee issued a grave warning in February that there was not enough money to last longer than one month and urged that any expenditure must first go through their organisation.[114] More redundancies were made in March 1918 and in April the Board of the Trade Union of Workers and Employees passed another resolution on the need for the nationalisation of Sormovo factory 'to unite all categories of workers' and to raise production.[115]

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[109] TsANO, f.1257, op.1, d.7, Emergency meeting of the Board of the Trade Union of Workers and Employees in Sormovo (23rd November, 1917)
[110] *Krasnoe Znamia* (30th November, 1917)
[111] *Krasnoe Znamia* (12th December, 1917)
[112] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.91; *Krasnoe Znamia* (30th November, 1917); *Narod* (23rd December, 1917)
[113] *Krasnoe Znamia* (13th January, 1918)
[114] GOPANO, f.4527. op.1, d.5, Meeting of the Control and Finance Committee of Sormovo Plant (20th February, 1918)
[115] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Metalworkers' Trade Union of workers and employees Sormovo district (5th March, 1918); TsANO, f.1257, op.1, d.7, Resolution of the Board of the

This period saw an extensive decline of the status and bargaining power of skilled metalworkers. Once able to bring a factory to closure through strike action before 1914 by late 1917 many workers were fighting for their jobs due to the de-mobilisation of the factory.

In May, a new wage schedule was worked out in the Sormovo Metalworkers Union and approved by the Sormovo Commissioner of Labour, but the provincial authorities refused to implement it.[116] The Sormovo workers still continued to use strike action throughout the Civil War period, as a response to a decline in pay and food rations, but they no longer held the prestige and political power they had held in 1917 in the province. The state became increasingly involved in Sormovo's economic crisis. In mid 1918 an Emergency Extraordinary Commission was formed by the Supreme Economic Council to audit and inspect the factory's finances. Sormovo was nationalised on 18th June 1918, after the Soviet state declared a sweeping nationalisation of industry, mining and transport, and the factory became known as the Sormovo-Kolomna engineering plants.[117] On 5th September, on the order of the Commissariat of Defence (*Narkomvoenmor*), Sormovo was re-militarised to supply military equipment to the Volga flotilla and, where needed, repair the vessels.[118] From 1918-1920, 50 armoured cars, 30 armoured trains, 83,000 shells and 22,000 gun barrels were produced in the Sormovo-Kolomna complex.[119]

This solved the immediate problem of increasing unemployment in Sormovo but the metal industry continued to be plagued by economic problems throughout the Civil War period. Furthermore, the nationalisation of Sormovo Metalworks meant that the national and local Bolsheviks had control of not only pay and rationing inside the factory but working conditions and

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Trade Union of Workers and Employees in Sormovo on the nationalisation of the plant (18th April, 1918)

[116] 'Sormovo Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (12th April, 1918); Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p.29

[117] *Volskaia Kommuna*, (19th May, 1918); Chernaiev (ed.), *Piterskie rabochii i diktatura proletariata*, p. 113; R. Wade, *The Bolshevik revolution and Russian Civil War* (Westport/ London, 2001), p.71

[118] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (5th September, 1918)

[119] S.S. Khromov (ed.), *Grazhdanskaia Voina i voenia interventsiia v USSR: encyclopedia* (Moscow, 1983), p.556

factory regulations too; things that affected the daily lives of workers. The Soviet policy of Militarisation of Labour from early 1918 meant that workers' lives were more strictly controlled and any potential strike was labelled 'sabotage' and treated harshly.[120] The military conditions within the factory meant that Sormovo metalworkers had no bargaining power and their 'right' to demand a redress to their grievances through strike action was permanently taken away from them. This redress of grievances through strike action was a central component of the identity of skilled workers in Sormovo.

From late 1918-1920 there were scattered strikes and protests around the country mainly about the dire shortage of food rations but the collective worker movement of 1918 was not seen again until 1921.[121] In Sormovo, more passive protest to the Bolsheviks' militaristic labour conditions can be seen in the Bolsheviks' repeated complaints that workers were either absent or late to work. From late 1918-1920, the factory administration in Sormovo was told by the centre to register any cases of labour desertion, workers not turning up for 'overtime', workers leaving work early and 'other cases of violations of discipline'.[122] These forms of worker protest were less overt and less reported by local Bolsheviks and the factory administration but they reveal that the traditional labour activism of Sormovo workers decreased significantly by the end of the Civil War. Even these acts of passive labour protest were punished harshly, with the withdrawal of rations. The economic crisis created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear for Sormovo workers which the Bolsheviks used to their advantage in an attempt to end labour activism.

This uncertainty and instability in the factory was a result of the economic crisis that enveloped Russia during the Civil War period. The pre-war expansion of large-scale industry, especially defence production, which expanded five-fold from 1913-1916 was followed by a rapid collapse in 1918-1920. By 1920 production from large-scale industry had fallen to 13% of the 1913 level and the production of certain goods like iron and steel declined to

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[120] Wade, *The Bolshevik revolution and Russian Civil War*, p.71

[121] S. Pirani, *The Russian revolution in retreat, 1920-24: Soviet workers and the new communist elite* (London, 2008) pp.4,6

[122] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Letter from Sormovo Factory Commitee to the Bureau of Labour (September, 1920)

3.6% of its 1913 level.[123] By 1920, Sormovo's workforce had declined to 8,000 workers and had suffered several economic crises.[124] This fits in with the general pattern of employment of industrial workers throughout Russia during the Civil War. Gatrell estimates that by the end of the Civil War employment in large scale industry had declined by 55% from the beginning of 1917.[125] This was in part due to the chronic shortage of raw materials being sent to factories for production, meaning factories were forced to shut down.[126] It was also symptomatic of a larger breakdown of the economy and central political authority during the Civil War.[127]

Once Sormovo had been nationalised the financial crisis put the metalworkers under direct control of the central state. The workforce had declined by over 50% in a three year period. This questioned the identity of Sormovo's skilled workers. It questioned if a worker was made redundant were they ideologically still classed as a worker, and did they deserve class-based rations. After the introduction of class-based rationing in July 1918 the unemployed workers not only lost their pay but also risked losing their privileged food supply.[128] The central state faced a dilemma in deciding whether an unemployed worker was still ideologically and practically categorised as a worker. The Bolsheviks inherited an existing rationing system from the Provisional Government based on who they deemed needed the food most, which was children and workers involved in heavy physical labour. The Red Army had privileged rations and in July 1918 a new classification system of rationing included those engaged in heavy physical labour in category one and workers in less heavy manual labour and white collar employees in category two. At the bottom of the class-based rationing system was the 'bourgeois' category and rentiers, stall owners and members of the intelligentsia. The unemployed were put in an appropriate category depending

[123] R.W. Davis, 'Industry', in R.W. Davis, M. Harrison and S.G Wheatcroft. (ed.), *The economic transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945* (Cambridge, 1994), p.135
[124] Chernaiev (ed.), *Piterskie rabochii i diktatura proletariata*, p.113
[125] P. Gatrell, 'The First World War and War Communism, 1914-1920' in R.W. Davis, M. Harrison and S.G Wheatcroft. (ed.), *The economic transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945* (Cambridge, 1994), p.218
[126] Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923, Volume One*, p.62
[127] Lih, *Bread and authority in Russia, 1914-1921*, p.2
[128] Wade, *The Bolshevik revolution and Russian Civil War*, p.71

on what their previous employment was and how long they had been unemployed.[129] Therefore, rationing was not entirely based upon the occupation of the individual but the 'class' they belonged to. This class categorisation was not a practical categorisation but was ideologically ascribed by the state. Initially, unemployed Sormovo workers were still classed as category one workers because of their ascribed socio-economic identity as 'conscious' skilled workers.

A state decree on 11th December 1917 declared that it was the responsibility of the trade unions, factory committees and health insurance companies in the factory to provide funds for recently unemployed workers. Further to this, on the 30th December another decree stated that unemployment benefit must last at least a month after the date of dismissal.[130] At the beginning of 1918 several factory organisations in Sormovo tried to establish how to provide aid to unemployed workers. In March 1918 Sormovo Factory Commitee proposed that unemployment benefit must end after a worker was unemployed for three months or more.[131] Also in March, the director of Sormovo plant stated that only workers who had worked in Sormovo for two years or longer should be entitled to unemployment benefit, although this could only be introduced with the agreement of the Labour Commissioner.[132] The management of Sormovo was concerned with being as efficient as possible in issuing unemployment benefit. They ordered that all individual shops within Sormovo submit lists of those workers who were to be dismissed at least three weeks in advance so their benefit could be organised efficiently.[133] Labour Exchanges were established in an attempt to get unemployed workers back into work and to issue unemployment benefit. In Sormovo the Factory Committee determined whether unemployed workers could be transferred to other areas of production, repair or even cleaning work.

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[129] McCauley, 'Bread without the Bourgeoisie', p.163

[130] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (21st March, 1918); GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Commissariat of Labor Bureau of three Sormovo Council of Workers' Deputies (March, 1918)

[131] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Correspondance from Sormovo Factory Commitee to Sormovo Professional Union of Metalworkers (4th March,1918)

[132] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Statment from the director of Sormovo Factory

[133] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Extract from the instruction of Administration of Joint Stock Company Sormovo works (March, 1918)

It was made clear that if the worker refused to take on the task assigned to them by the Labour Exchange their benefits would be stopped.[134]

Initially, the local Bolsheviks and various factory organisations in Sormovo attempted to distribute their limited food supplies as best they could. The rising unemployment caused a significant problem in the endeavours of the Sormovo Factory Food Board. In April 1918, the Board noted the 'mass complaints in connection with the ongoing job cuts' and the fear of the unemployed that they would not get their rations. They devised a scheme where they distributed food rations according to family units. The Board stated that only one person per family could be made redundant and before calculating this several things must be taken into account, including the size of the salary of those who remained at work, the number of family members and dependents of the employee.[135] This implied that all the workers' family lived in close proximity to Sormovo factory. Joining the factory as young apprentices, many metalworkers in Sormovo did not have familial links to the countryside to fall back on during times of scarcity. The factory organisations faced a grave task in attempting to organise rations for employed and unemployed workers during the Civil War. They worked with the state and local Bolsheviks but the brunt of the burden for organising food supply was left with the food board and factory committee.

Furthermore, the turmoil of the Civil War meant that the food 'guaranteed' under the rationing system was not reliable. By the end of 1919, workers' families in Russia received less than half of the grain, flour and potatoes from their official ration. Money still mattered in early Soviet Russia. Ordinary workers increasingly relied on the black market and barter economy to make up for the lack of security the rationing system gave them.[136] Unemployed workers did not have the same opportunity to purchase foodstuffs on the black market as workers who were still receiving a salary. Although rationing theoretically guaranteed workers regular rations, the transportation

[134] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Factory resolution on the suspension of work (March, 1918)
[135] TsANO, f.1257, op.1, d.13, Reports from the Sormovo Factory Food Board (25th April, 1918)
[136] M. Dobb, *Soviet economic development since 1917* (London, 1966), p.106-114

issues and shifting fronts meant that food supply was unreliable.[137] The factory organisations were aware of the complaints of workers about unemployment and food supply and in mid-1918 the Health Insurance Board in Sormovo suggested that workers who were financially secure must give up their jobs for long term unemployed workers.[138] This was an unorthodox and potentially dangerous policy. If the state continually changed the composition of the workforce in order to avoid labour protest and the starvation of workers it did not work. Labour protest continued well into the Civil War and food supply issues only deteriorated. The reliability of the state system of rationing was never assured with the economic crisis and ongoing Civil War. The administrative bottleneck of command from centre to locality only added to the confusion of distributing food supply in Sormovo, so authorities faced ongoing problems trying to feed its workers and unemployed.[139] By 1920, the head of the Food Commission for Sormovo factory was completely overworked and unable to fulfil his task. In a letter to the centre, a representative of Nizhegorod stated:

> 'Kudrin is at present the only employee in said [food] commission, he is overworked with other duties, such as dealing with the orphan problem. He has to make frequent trips to the city and as a consequence does not have the ability to take the time to instruct the company [about the distribution of rations].'[140]

The collapse of authority and efficiency within the factory, due to the economic crisis, meant that the state began to tighten its control over Sormovo factory. The local Bolsheviks began to restrict the free movement of workers on the orders of the central state. On 31st October 1918, the Soviet state introduced compulsory labour for males over 16, re-introduced piecework rates (payment for the amount of work done, not a daily salary) and implemented

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[137] Gatrell estimates that by 1920 up to 56% of locomotives in Russia were inactive'The First World War and War Communism, 1914-1920', p.225

[138] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Correspondence from Health Insurance Fund Board to the Professional Metalworkers' Union of Workers and Employees in Sormovo District (5th March, 1918)

[139] Dobb, *Soviet economic development since 1917*, p.114

[140] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Complaint from the Commander of the 2nd Company of Special Designation (5th August, 1920)

harsh work rules and punishment for workplace infractions.[141] The correspondence between management and local authorities in Sormovo reveals the movement of workers was still frequent, even if this was only within Nizhegorod province. The Bolshevik authorities in Nizhegorod had the right to request the management in Sormovo to release some of their workforce to undertake work the state deemed more important, mainly for repair work to railway lines. In 1918 the Supreme Economic Council requested that some Sormovo workers be sent to help with the construction of an important railway line between Vyksa and Navashino in Nizhegorod province.[142]

The enlistment of skilled workers in railway work continued throughout the Civil War and the factory administration and worker organisations complained to the management of the state railway projects that all their skilled workers were being taken. In 1920, Sormovo Factory Commitee wrote to the military enlistment office in Vladimir province asking for the return of Sormovo 'shock group' workers repairing the infrastructure there.[143] A couple of days later the Sormovo Factory Committee wrote to the Nizhnii Novgorod health department complaining that there was 'an urgent need for skilled transport workers' in Sormovo, which was worsened by the outbreak of typhus in the factory.[144] The antagonism between factory organisations and local party organisations, about the conscription of workers, also occurred on a national scale. In the congress of nationalised GOMZa United Machine Building Plants (*Tsentral'noe Pravlenie Gosudarstvennykh Ob'edinennykh Mashinostroitel'nykh Zavodov*), of which Sormovo was a part, representatives of several unions, in a discussion about 'the relationship of the plant with local professionals and the Soviet party organisations', argued that

[141] Wade, *The Bolshevik revolution and Russian Civil War*, p.71
[142] GARF, f.4390, op.5, d.29, Extracts from the minutes of meetings of the Supreme Economic Council of the RSFSR and the Provisional Central Management of the combined national machine-building factories "Sormovo - Kolomna" (4th September, 1918)
[143] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Correspondance from Sormovo Factory Committee to Shuisky District Military Enlistment Office (9th August,1920)
[144] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Correspondence from Sormovo Factory Committee to Nizhnii Novgorod County Health Department (11th August, 1920)

skilled workers should not be used to do ‘dirty work’ that did not befit their skills.[145]

This meant from 1917-1921 in Sormovo there was both a situation where the management was forced to make mass redundancies because of the economic crisis, and struggled consistently to feed and pay all its workers, but at the same time there was a shortage of skilled workers to do essential metalwork. The shifting economic policies of the Soviet central state and local government only added to the chaos. Despite the attempts of the local government to work with factory organisations in order to alleviate the food crisis, the central state policy of economic and political centralisation meant that the idiosyncrasies of Sormovo’s and Nizhegorod’s food and economic crisis were ignored. Without backing from the centre, Sormovo Bolsheviks would not have had the political or financial means to tighten their political and economic grip on Sormovo factory. The Bolsheviks in Sormovo used their fragile grip on power in Sormovo as an excuse to use coercive and centralised political and economic policies. This was part of a wider pattern of an interventionist central Soviet state, which was solidified after the Civil War, but it was also a response to the specific situation in Sormovo. Sormovo factory organisations attempted to appease skilled metalworkers and keep production steady in the factory. In comparison, the local government used the economic crisis to their advantage in an effort to end labour activism in Sormovo and the political and financial dominance of the SR party in the factory and district.

Conclusion

The radical labour movement, which the authorities feared in Sormovo in 1917, was almost wholly absent in the factory by 1921. The economic consequences of the Civil War in addition to the severe militaristic conditions inside and outside the factory had left little opportunity for open protest against the local Bolshevik regime. In 1917, the independent labour activism in Sormovo was representative of an assertive workforce used to getting most of their economic demands from management because of repeated successful

[145] TsANO, f.15, op.1, d.810, Resolutions adopted by the Administrative Section of the Congress factories "Gomza" (1922)

strikes in the past. The brief period of political freedom in 1917 and the beginning of 1918 shows how local political parties desperately sought to gain the support of Sormovo workers for their policies and to get their votes in the Sormovo Soviet. The moderate socialists and the Bolsheviks adapted their policies in line with traditional worker grievances in the hope that the factory organisations would pass resolutions in support of them.

After the closure of the Constituent Assembly the relative political freedom enjoyed by Sormovo workers and the political opposition came to an end. The forcible closure of local soviets around Russia formally separated the Bolsheviks and SR-Menshevik coalition as opposing parties. The SRs now came to represent more than just their policies to workers but opposition to the increasingly repressive national and local Bolshevik dictatorship. The sustained support of the workers for the SRs after 1917, and the joining of Sormovo workers and local SRs in the workers' conference, was a result of the organisational strength of the SRs before 1917. Sormovo was one of the regions where the SR opposition movement survived the longest but by 1919 both the local political opposition and the assertive labour activism of Sormovo workers diminished as a result of economic centralisation. After initial co-operation with factory organisations, the local Bolsheviks used national centralisation and the economic crises to their advantage in order to force Sormovo worker support, or at the least compliance. The central state and local Bolsheviks communicated about the fragile Bolshevik hold on power in Sormovo and the specificity of Sormovo's political and economic climate. The unstable economic and political climate in Sormovo was used to justify increasingly interventionist, centralised and coercive state policies.

3. The Conceptualisation of Urban Workers in the Early Soviet State

Introduction

This chapter explores how the early Soviet state attempted to reconcile an ideological and practical conceptualisation of workers in the formulation of social policies. The Bolsheviks used the tension between ideological categories of identification and operative economic categories to create centralised policies that solidified Soviet power. Class categorisations were a vital part of Soviet discourse and policy in early Soviet Russia and came to imply much more than social identity but an individual's relationship to the state.

In 1918, the Bolshevik regime was teetering on the edge of collapse with domestic and foreign enemies threatening the survival of the state. In the same year in the midst of the Civil War the Soviet state undertook its first census in an effort to 'know' the population of the vast country it was purporting to govern. This was an extremely difficult and significant undertaking for the new Soviet regime. Not only did it mark the first wide scale attempt at recording Russia's demographics since the 1897 Imperial census, it also signified an ambitious attempt by the Bolsheviks to exert socio-economic control over industry and agriculture. The Russian economy had been in a downward spiral since early 1917 and the Provisional Government had failed to control food distribution. The Bolsheviks had an urgent need to understand where Russia's resources were located so they could utilise all industrial and agricultural production in the Civil War effort. The Central Statistical Administration (TsSU) was established in 1918 and focused on recording and categorising Russian industry, agriculture and population. Significantly, the language in these publications did not rely on Marxist ideological terminology to categorise workers. In comparison to Bolshevik propaganda and the state press, the statistical data collected by the Soviet state superficially seemed to be based on a practical need to understand and control the Russian population for the war effort and not on an ideological need to justify the revolution with Marxist categorisations.

However, the aims of Soviet data collection went far beyond merely trying to 'know' the population. The Soviet state formulated policies and constructed a discourse about Soviet society that had little to do with 'knowing' the population, but as a way to construct an imagined socialist state and formulate policies that would economically and politically benefit not the workers but the state. Like Tsarist legal *soslovie* categorisations, Soviet class categorisations were not stable legal identifiers of social identity, because the ascribed class identities were fluid. There was no effective means of class identification in early Soviet Russia, because of social mobility and displacement, so it often relied on parental occupation, individual testimony, the job they occupied after 1917, or their proclamation of support for the Soviet state. When the Bolsheviks used the statistical data as a basis for their policies of centralisation, taxation and rationing they used it to exert state control over the Russian population, especially at the expense of the peasantry. The Bolsheviks clung to the ideological oversimplified Marxist class categorisations that meant little in reality, as a justification for their harsh policies and to demonise any opposition to the state. The use of social labels in early Soviet Russia was an integral part to Bolshevik discourse and policy.

The TsSU: 'Knowing' Industry and Population in Early Soviet Russia

The 1918 Professional Census

In 1918 the TsSU organised a 'professional census' of Russia. The main objective of this census was to obtain 'objective statistical data, for comprehensive coverage' of industry and to 'meet the practical problems' regarding the organisation and regulation of Russian industry.[1] In this publication there was no reference to traditional Marxist-Leninist terms like proletariat, bourgeoisie or even class, and workers were split up into nine main practical categories or 'groups of production'. These included mining and metallurgical work, metalwork and engineering, wood processing, chemical production, food production, leather and fur production, textile production, paper processing and other. These industries did not reflect the diversity of

[1] *Tsentralnoe Statisticheskoe Uprvalenie, Vserossiskoi Promishlel'naia i Professional'naia Peripis' 1918 goda: svodka dannikh: Predvarintl'naia svodnie tablitsii po Sovetskii Republikie* (Moscow, 1920): British Library

work in Russia in 1918 but during a time of Civil War, and the mass displacement that accompanied it, the census does provide a snapshot into heavy industry, even if it was not comprehensive. It recorded that in the 31 provinces where data was collected, food production dominated with 3335 factories, followed by textile factories (1064) and metalworking factories (1034). In terms of worker numbers collected for the professional census, the largest workforce recorded was textile workers (620,987), followed by metalworkers (220,579). This is because those industries tended to have larger factories, a more complex division of labour and therefore more workers.[2] These national figures are then broken down on a regional level. Nizhegorod region was recorded as having a large number of textile factories (encompassing wool and clothing production), followed by tanneries, then chemical factories and metalworking factories. The percentage of metalworking factories recorded in Nizhegorod province in 1918 was 7.8%. This suggests that Sormovo must have contained a significant percentage of Nizhegorod metalworking production because it was a large factory complex. The percentage of metalworkers in Nizhegorod province was much higher, at 18.7%, than the comparable percentage of metalworking factories in the province. This is possibly due to the large size of the Sormovo workforce which had roughly about 17,000 workers in 1918.[3]

The census also provided information about the ratio of male to female workers on a regional level. Over the age of 15 the workforce of Nizhegorod region was composed of 80.2% men and 19.8% women workers. This seems like a gross underestimation of the female workforce in Nizhegorod region, as Moscow region was recorded as having a 55.1% male to 44.9% female ratio and nationally the ratio was 59.2% male to 41.8% female.[4] Furthermore, as noted earlier, just a year earlier in 1917 adult males only accounted for 46% of the workforce in Sormovo.[5] Metalwork was a male-dominated industry before

[2] *Professional'naia Peripis', 1918 goda*,p.5
[3] *Professional'naia Peripis', 1918 goda,* p.XXI; Sormovo had a workforce of 25,000 workers in 1917 but a report from the factory management published in *Krasnoe Znamia* (13th January, 1918) stated that 8,000 workers had to be laid off because of de-militarisation, making the estimate number of Sormovo workers in 1918 17,000
[4] *Professional'naia Peripis', 1918 goda*, p.30
[5] Badcock, 'Politics, parties and power: Sormovo workers in 1917', p.71; *Izvestiia Nizhegorodskikh Sovetov rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov* (19 October, 1917)

1917 and was composed of highly skilled mostly male workers. The decrease in the male workforce throughout World War One would suggest that the number of skilled workers had also decreased. During the Civil War this changed composition of the workforce in heavy industry suggested a 'watering down' of the skill of the workforce and therefore ideologically questioned the validity of the Soviet state as a skilled workers' state. Although this is a 'professional census', the main professions which are listed at the beginning of the publication poorly reflected the diversity of Russia's workforce. With the exception of the textile industry, the other eight professions listed were industries that were traditionally dominated by men, notably in the skilled workforce.[6] In the 1918 census, the male to female ratio in the national metalworking industry was recorded as 83.7% to 17.3%. In an expanded list of twenty industries in the census, women workers outnumbered men, or comprised nearly 50% only in the textile industry (comprised of separately listed cotton, flax, wool, mixed fibre and silk production.)[7] The lowest percentage of women workers was in the 'physical labour' category, with 91% men and 9% women.[8] The male-dominated industries were the industries that early Soviet statistics focused on. Furthermore, it was workers in heavy industry, notably physical labourers and skilled workers, who received the biggest ration quota; this would have adversely affected women workers. In June 1921, Lenin confirmed that increased productivity had to come first, before egalitarianism, in economic reconstruction after the Civil War. He stated:

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[6] The issue of women undercutting unskilled men's pay was a recurrent labour issue in the metal industry leading up to 1917 and then again after 1918 when male soldiers were being de-militarised: Murphy, *Revolution and counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow metal factory*, pp. 26 ,124; Haimson, 'Structural processes of change and changing patterns of labour unrest: the case of the metal processing industry in late imperial Russia 1890-1914', p.388

[7] *Professional'naia Peripis', 1918 goda*, pp.32, xvii

[8] M.P. Sacks' research on women workers in the USSR in 1920's and 1930's reveals that during this period there was a extreme demand for labour which caused a rapid growth of female non-agricultural workers in the economy, for example in industry generally the percentage of women workers increased from 28% in 1928 to 41% in 1940, this increased further during World War Two 'Women in the Industrial Labor Force' in D. Atkinson, A. Dallin and G.W. Lapidus (ed.), *Women in Russia* (Sussex, 1978), pp.195-196

> 'The republic must support only that which was necessary for production... we must separate out the parts that are better equipped, which promise most productivity, and support only those.'[9]

The census' focus on a handful of industries reveals the industries which the new Soviet state deemed as the most important. These were the industries the Soviet state wanted to nationalise and regularise and were viewed as the most vital for the economy. They were also industries which after 1918 had a low proportion of women workers. The TsSU publication's focus on heavy industry and urban areas reveals an indifference to collecting data on light industry, agricultural work and female-dominated industries.

The focus on heavy industry in the statistical data was also because it provided a showpiece of Soviet propaganda, both domestically and internationally, at a time when the Bolsheviks faced a grave threat to their survival during the Civil War. Many of the state economic journals in early Soviet Russia did not use overtly ideological language in an attempt to prove the success of the first socialist regime. Instead they used statistics to 'prove' that not only was the Russian economy thriving under socialism but that living conditions and pay had improved for workers, at least some workers. This included statistics which 'proved' that the Russian economy was outperforming other European countries in 1918, including Sweden and the USA.[10] Other economic journals focused on a comparison with Tsarist Russia and how production had improved since then, according to the data they had collected. The journal *Narodnoye Khozaistva* claimed that the production of heavy machinery had increased by 30% from 1914-1919 and oil 49% since 1914, even though the years 1918-1920 saw a drastic collapse in large scale industry.[11] Furthermore, the state either drastically underestimated or fabricated statistics about the number and nature of labour conflicts in 1918. In a section about the 'relations department' in Soviet industry the vast majority (212) of recoded labour conflicts from 1918 were reported as 'verbal

[9] This is an excerpt from V.I. Lenin's speech to a national food supply conference in June 1921, 'Na put' kollektivnogo snazbeniiaa', in E.A. Wood, *The baba and the comrade: Gender and politics in revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, 1997), p.149
[10] *Technika: Organ VSNKh* (15th October, 1918), p.6
[11] *Narodnoe Khoziaistva* (January, 1920), p.32; R.W. Davis 'Industry', in Davis, Harrison and Wheatcroft. (ed.), *The economic transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945,* p.135

disagreements', whereas only 6 strikes were recorded and only one arrest, in the glass industry.[12] In reality, early and mid-1918 was a period of continuous and intense labour conflict both in the centre and in the provinces. There were repeated strikes in Sormovo Metalworks in 1918 and there was a citywide general strike in Petrograd, organised by the Extraordinary Assembly of Delegates from Petrograd Factories and Plants, on the 2nd July 1918, which was met by rapid and harsh repressive measures.[13] Soviet statistics were therefore routinely fabricated as propaganda tools for domestic and international purposes. During the Civil War and throughout the 1920s, statistics became increasingly subject to political control and there was every incentive given to participants at every level to exaggerate reported results, whether this was the industrial output of one factory or the grain collected in a province.[14] Statistics in any form can rarely offer objective societal analysis because there is always a rationale behind collecting statistics, whether this is to mobilise economic resources or for taxation purposes. However, the Soviet state's approach to statistics and the collection of data reveals an ideological purpose which is not obviously evident in the endless lists of numbers in their state publications. The focus on heavy industry and the selective surveys of industrial conflict reveal a state that was attempting to construct a new idealised socialist society that had little practical meaning.

[12] 'Otdel' Vzaimootnoshenii', *Biulleten Narodnago Kommisariiata Truda* (August-September, 1918), p.50
[13] Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The first year of Soviet rule in Petrograd*, p.255
[14] S.G. Wheatcroft and R.W. Davies, 'The crooked mirror of Soviet statistics' in Davies, Harrison and Wheatcroft (ed.), *The economic transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*, p.30

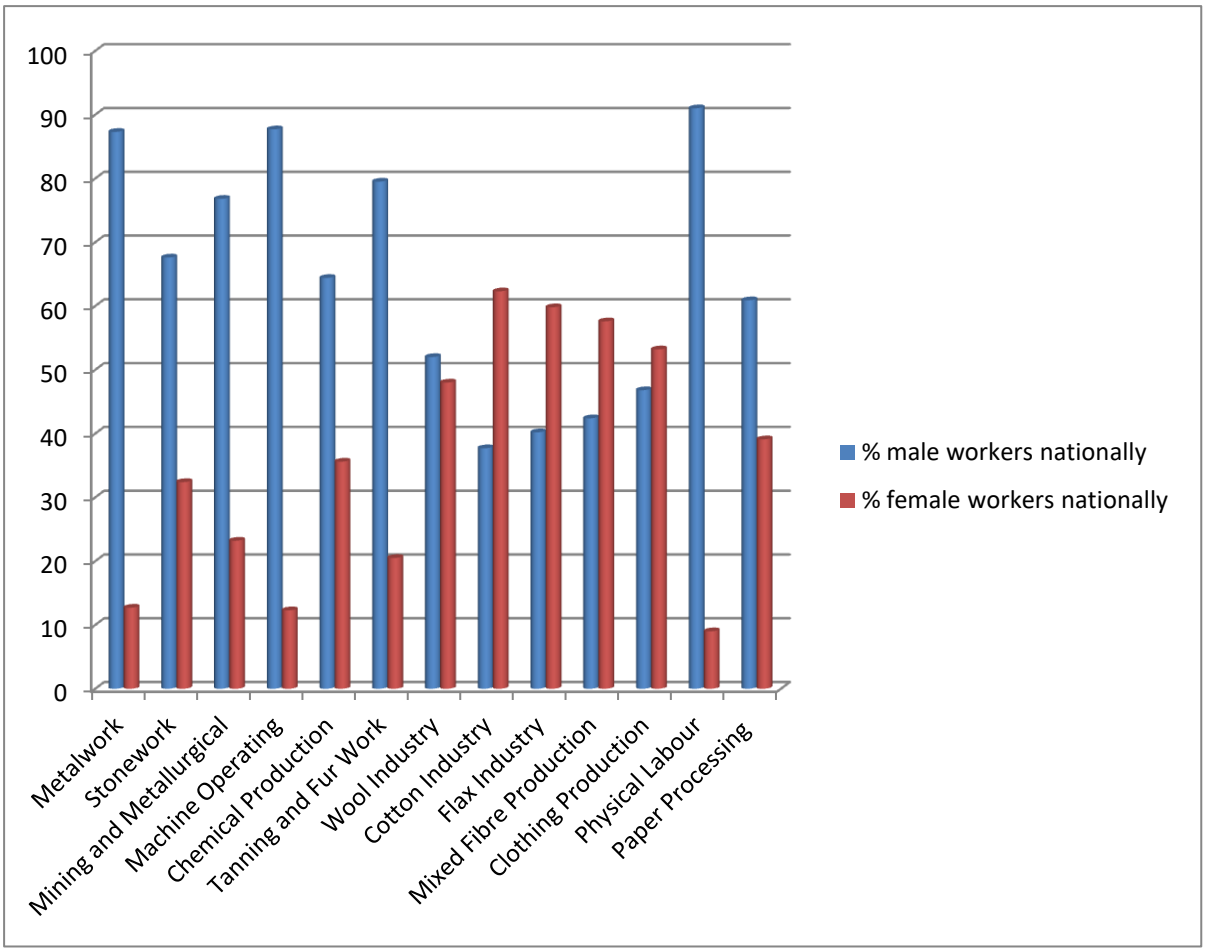


Figure 4. Percentage of male and female workers in Russia nationally in 1918 (according to the 1918 Census)[15]

[15] *Professional'naia Peripis', 1918 goda*, pp.32, xviii

The 1920 Census: *Rabochii and Sluzhashchie*

The Soviet census of 1920 goes further than the 1918 census in the categorisation of industry and it was the first comprehensive evaluation of industrial production and workers in Russia. However, it was also a politicised document which completely ignored 'middle class' professions and s*luzhashchie* (white-collar workers). The census and Soviet policy towards s*luzhashchie* exemplifies the tension between normative and operative categories of social identity in early Soviet Russia. The ideological connotation was that if Russia still had a large middle class then the Bolshevik socialist revolution had not yet succeeded. Whilst the state ideologically ignored the existence of s*luzhashchie* in state documents and in propaganda, they also desperately needed the expertise of white collar workers in industry, medicine and science.[16] What emerged was a situation where the state routinely ignored the existence of s*luzhashchie,* and attempted to disband their organisations, but they continued to work in many industries and professions with little interference during the Civil War.

The 1920 census was a monumental undertaking for the Soviet state in a time of moving borders, population displacement and socio-economic transition. At the turn of 1917 the number of 'displaced' persons such as soldiers, foreign prisoners of war and refugees in Russia numbered 17.5 million (12% of the population). By the end of 1918, the economic collapse and accompanying starvation meant thousands of urban industrial workers began returning to the villages, reversing a generational trend of urban in-migration.[17] Due to the Civil War, the 1920 census was incomplete and left out many regions that were out of Soviet control, near the front or contested. The next census was undertaken in 1923 which focused on urban areas and the first national census that involved all of the Soviet population was conducted in 1926 in the First All-Union Census.[18] The Soviet state placed considerable

[16] D. Orlovsky, 'The hidden class: White-collar workers in the Soviet 1920s', in Seigelbaum and Suny (ed.) *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity,* p.229

[17] P. Gatrell, 'War, population displacement and state formation in the Russian borderlands, 1914-1924', in P. Gatrell and N.Baron (ed.), *Homelands: War, population and statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia, 1918-1924* (London, 2004), p.10

[18] F. Hirsch, *Empire of nations: Ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, 2005), pp.104-105

funds and energy into the categorisation of Russian industry and professions after 1917.

The 1920 census listed hundreds of categories of workers in Civil War Russia that went far beyond the limited list in the 1918 census.[19] The classifications of workers involved a summary of industrial data then a grouping of workers into the 'corresponding 'class' and, for some industries, 'sub-class' of the classification.[20] What followed was a detailed alphabetical list of professions in Russia. This included a diverse range of light and heavy industries including: No.80 aeroplane production and repair, No.507 domestic tableware and utensils production, No.643 umbrella production and No.964 corset production.[21] There are twenty groups of workers that these industries are grouped into. These are similar to the ones listed in the 1918 census but also included groups such as the transport and cleaning industries, the latter of which would have had a significant female workforce as other domestic services had.[22] The diverse representation of the Soviet workforce in this census was a vast improvement to the limited professional census of 1918. However, there are also some significant omissions in both the 1918 and 1920 censuses, not in the data itself but in how the data was categorised and codified.

The 1897 Imperial census listed professions which included private law, the training and educational professions, public service and estates and even Orthodox priests.[23] These 'middle class' professions are completely absent from the Soviet censuses. Although there is a list of 16 types of

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[19] Slovar' Proizvodstv': Posibie dlia razrabotki dannikh Vserossiskoi Perepis (ucheta) promishlennikh zavedenni i Demograficheskо-Proffesional'noi Perepisi 1920 g., *Tsentralnoe Statisticheskoe Uprvalenie* (Moscow, 1921) : British Library

[20] The terms used are Klass and Pod-Klass, *Slovar' Proizvodstv',* p.1

[21] Slovar' Proizvodstv': Posibie dlia razrabotki dannikh Vserossiskoi Perepis (ucheta) promishlennikh zavedenni i Demograficheskо-Proffesional'noi Perepisi 1920 g

[22] D.P. Koenker, argues that even after 1917 when more women were working in factories and heavy industry there was a still a gender divide where men tended to work the machines and directly produce goods and women provided public domestic services, 'Men against women on the shop floor in early Soviet Russia: Gender and class in the socialist workplace', *The American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), p.1456

[23] Pervaia Vseobshaiia Perepis Naseleniia, Rossiskoi Imperii, 1897 g.: XXV Nizhegorodskaia Guberniia, *Izdanie Tsentralnavo Statisticheskavo Komiteta Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del'* (St Petersburg, 1903): British Library, p.158

metalworker, there is not one mention of shopkeepers, teachers or lawyers.[24] The only hint of white collar work in the 1918 and 1920 censuses is in the figures of employees (*sluzhashchie*), who were a group of workers distinct from 'workers' (*rabochii*). In the small scale survey of workers in 1918, which included over one million workers and employees, the census stated that 91.6% of the industrial workforce were workers and only 8.4% were employees.[25] Orlovsky argues that Soviet statistical data repeatedly and purposely underestimated employee figures. Since 1917, it had been a core part of Bolshevik ideology to play down the role of *sluzhashchie* in the revolution, especially in the first few years of 'Soviet construction' after 1917.[26] Orlovsky regards the *sluzhashchie* as a 'hidden class' in early Soviet Russia, partially because as *sluzhashchie* the employees themselves were keen to identify themselves as proletarian but also because they were not represented in Soviet data or policies.

The actual definition of an employee is not given in the statistical data from the TsSU but the accepted difference was physical and mental labour. The connotations were that the *rabochii* worked with their hands (blue collar worker) directly in the role of production and the *sluzhashchie* (white collar worker) earned a wage but were not directly involved in the production task.[27] The term *sluzhashchie* did not mean that much in concrete or practical terms. As Soviet statistical data did not clearly define who the *sluzhashchie* were their position within Soviet society remained unstable and uncertain. In reality many were involved in the party administration and within factory administration.[28] Members of the TsSU themselves were *sluzhashchie*, or as Orlovsky names them, 'lower-middle strata'. These employees were mainly civil servants or engaged in state work, many were pre-revolutionary professionals and some

[24] Slovar' Proizvodstv': Posibie dlia razrabotki dannikh Vserossiskoi Perepis (ucheta) promishlennikh zavedenni i Demograficheskо-Proffesional'noi Perepisi 1920 g ., p.45
[25] Professional'naia Peripis', 1918 goda, p.xxviii
[26] D. Orlovsky, 'State building in the Civil War era: The role of the lower-middle strata' in Koenker, Rosenberg and Suny (ed.) *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History*, p.181
[27] W.J. Chase, *Workers, society and the Soviet State: Labor and life in Moscow, 1918-1929* (Illinois, 1990), p.122
[28]For more detail on *sluzhashchie* in Sormovo metalworks see Chapter 5: 'Language and Practice: Finding Enemies and Shaping Workers in Early Soviet Russia'

previous zemstvo statisticians.[29] Although they did not represent the rich aristocratic bourgeoisie of the Tsarist elite the lower-middle strata certainly did not coincide with Soviet hagiography of the skilled labourer, or the New Soviet Man. The economic category *sluzhashchie* or lower-middle strata could and were turned into the normative social category or estate of 'bourgeoisie' or 'petty bourgeoisie', when it suited Bolshevik propaganda. In a tract Lenin wrote in 1905, he described the Marxist term 'petty bourgeois' as encompassing a variety of occupations in Russia from an urban shopkeeper to a rural small landowner.[30] They were a varied group that were distinct from the proletariat not only in occupation but in mindset. Lenin argued a 'petty-bourgeois' intellectual did not have the 'iron discipline of the proletariat' but instead were selfish in their views of self-promotion.[31] The *sluzhashchie* therefore were not, and could not, be workers and lead the construction of a socialist society. Bolshevik ideology claimed they did not have the revolutionary mindset to do so.

Employees did continue to have their own unions which were not hidden or banned, although many were assimilated after 1917. For example, in Moscow in July 1918 the separate white-collar unions of commercial employees and the trade industry became one Moscow Union of Employees.[32] Furthermore, many *sluzhashchie* were grouped together in the Union of Soviet and Commerical Employees, which by the mid-1920s was the largest single union in Soviet Russia. It was the result of a state merger of many regional and occupational unions including shopkeepers, government officials and commercial employees.[33] In reality, employees made up as much of the workforce, if not more in some industries, as workers. In his study of the Moscow labour force in interwar Russia, Chase estimates that from 1920 employees were Moscow's largest occupational force making up one third of the workforce, with the largest single concentration of employees in state or party institutions.[34] In the more widespread and accurate censuses of 1923 and

[29] D. Orlovsky, 'The hidden class: White-collar workers in the Soviet 1920s', pp.222, 226
[30] V.I. Lenin, 'Petty-Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism', *Proletary* (7th November, 1905)
[31] V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Childishness', *Pravda* (9th May, 1918)
[32] 'Soiuz sluzhashchie g. Moskvoi i Okrestnostii', *Pravda* (7th July, 1918)
[33] Orlovsky, 'The Hidden Class: White-Collar Workers in the Soviet 1920s', p.230
[34] Chase, *Workers, society and the Soviet state: Labor and life in Moscow, 1918-1929*, p.122

1926 the data showed the existence of a large number of *sluzhashchie*, who equalled or exceeded those categorised as workers. Orlovsky argues that by looking at the categories in the 1923 and 1926 census factory workers actually made up a small proportion of the urban population. However, as the *sluzhashchie* were hidden in many different categories of the census, such as 'individuals engaged in economic activity', and their work undermined by official publications, their presence is easy to miss.[35]

Therefore, the Soviet statistical data itself and the publications of the TsSU did not routinely or overtly categorise workers and employees in Marxist-Leninist class terms. However, in contrast to the 1897 census, the absence of white collar professions in the 1918 and 1920 censuses reveals how the Soviet state valued blue-collar work above white-collar work. Furthermore, they attempted to hide the presence of the *sluzhashchie* even though they were present in almost every industry in early Soviet Russia and specifically the party administration itself. By ignoring the *sluzhashchie* in statistical evaluations of industry the Bolsheviks could claim to be a socialist state dominated by skilled workers, whilst continuing to utilise *sluzhashchie* throughout industry and agriculture in early Soviet Russia, without admitting their existence.

The Soviet statistical data in the first few years after the revolution created a categorisation of the Russian population in terms of its relation to production. These 'new social relations' were explained to workers in Nizhegorod province by the Nizhnii Novgorod Trade Union Council as:

> 'The struggle against the remnant of the old, close participation in production... the elimination of economic dislocation, the raising of labour productivity, a deliberately conscious working mass with properly organised and operating workers' organisations.'[36]

Here these socio-economic categories of identity are solely based on economic production levels and the workers' relation to the production of goods. The

[35] Orlovsky, 'The Hidden Class: White-Collar Workers in the Soviet 1920s', p.228
[36] 'Rabochiia Zhizn': Iz Soveta Professional'nikh Soiuzov', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (2nd November, 1918)

most important workers both in Marxist and Bolshevik ideology were those who were productive. The term 'class' as stated in the 1920 census was used as a practical way to group together similar industries rather than creating an identity of a worker. However, class in the Marxist sense was not an identity ascribed by the state but a socio-economic category based on the workers' relation to production.[37] The Soviet state went further than this; they constructed economic identities for Russian workers not only in relation to production but their relationship to the workers' state. By focusing on industries of production the 1920 census implicitly categorised the listed workers as *rabochii* and as workers whose work had the most value to the state. The implications of the economic categorisations and identification of worker and employee extended far wider than the workplace.

Social Identity

Class categorisations and class discrimination became codified in the Soviet constitution in 1918. This meant that state ascribed societal categorisations became much more than economic labels in early Soviet Russia; they had social and political consequences. Separating the population into categories and labels was the foundation of Bolshevik policies of food distribution and political persecution. The Soviet state pursued a coercive policy of inclusion and exclusion of the population based on these vague socio-economic labels. These categorisations and identifications were imbued with increased political power during the Civil War. They were utilised by the state not to categorise the population in socio-economic terms but to create an ideological discourse about who was an ally and who was an enemy, which had very real consequences. The fluidity and subjective nature of class labels meant they became a powerful political tool in the hands of both the state and ordinary Russians well after 1917.

The early Soviet statistical data not only created categorisations of industry and workers in Russia but also formulated identities and social categorisations for the Russian population, suggested by which groups they focused on or did not include. When the Bolsheviks conducted their first

[37] S. Fitzpatrick, 'Ascribing class: The construction of social identity in Soviet Russia', *The Journal of Modern History*, 63 (1993), p.745

census in 1918 they followed the limited and redundant Tsarist *soslovie* (estate) legal and social categorisations of Russian society in late Imperial Russia. Certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century this categorisation of the vast experience of the Russian population had become increasingly redundant. The rapid industrialisation of the late nineteenth century had caused a growth in urban centres and an increase and diversification in the urban labour force. The Tsarist *soslovie* system was abolished along with service and ranks within a month of the October revolution.[38] The term 'class' offered a revolutionary alternative to Tsarist limiting categorisations but it did not offer practical operative categories of social identity especially in Russia, a country still largely agrarian in 1917. Despite the relatively practical categorisations in the censuses, the Soviet state utilised collected statistical data for their own ideological ends. The aim of Soviet state was not only to create practical categorisations of the Russian population based on economic data. The use of labels allowed the Soviet state to formulate coercive social policies that discriminated against certain 'groups' in society, with little more justification than Marxist ideology.

The Bolsheviks used terms such as worker and employee, proletariat and bourgeoisie interchangeably and often not in a continuous way. In ascribing an individual's class identity the Soviet state used a double identification system to practically categorise workers which took into account an individual's class before 1917 and after. Therefore, a worker who had been promoted within a factory to a managerial role, after the mass purging of factory managers in 1917, could still be categorised as a worker.[39] Furthermore, white collar workers who worked within the party administration could still be ideologically categorised as proletarian, although their work would not have been catalogued in the 'professional census', of 1920.[40] Soviet publications attempted to solidify a discourse that party members and administration were not *sluzhashchie* but skilled workers. In *Pravda*'s praise of

[38] S. Fitzpatrick, ''Ascribing class: The construction of social identity in Soviet Russia', p.751
[39] S. Fitzpatrick, 'New Perspectives on the Civil War' in Koenker, Rosenberg and Suny (ed.), *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History*, p.5
[40] Most of the high level members of the Bolshevik party were intellectuals not workers. S.Fitzpatrick discusses this ideological and cultural problem in 'The Bolsheviks' dilemma: Class, culture, and politics in the early Soviet years', *Slavic Review*, 47 (1988), 599-613

skilled metalworkers it claimed that 'the Soviet government draws a huge percentage of their party 'organisation, administration [and] heads of plants' from the skilled workforce.[41] There was not a practical or a coherent way to establish which socio-economic categorisation an individual or occupational group belonged too. The state socio-economic and political categorisations became so embedded in Soviet language because they not only created and justified a societal hierarchy they also defined an individual's relationship to the state itself.

A state publication about the aim of the 1920 census revealed the purpose of the Soviet state in 'knowing' the population through data collection. It portrayed 1920 as a significant year for Soviet Russia:

> 'The third year of the difficult and heroic struggle of the working people of Russia is drawing to a close. Surrounded by the ring of blockade of rapists, in courage and hardship, the Soviet Republic and the heroic Red Army forges its freedom on the fronts. The hour is approaching when the path to creative work, to peaceful economic construction will be opened.
>
> The working people of Russia have proved to the whole world that there is no higher heroism than the heroism of the proletariat fighting for its liberation. But in order to win on a new front, on the bloodless front of labour, heroism is not enough.' [42]

The 1920 census was viewed as an integral part of not only the re-building and re-organisation of the economy and agriculture after many years of war, but the building of a new socialist society including its people. This rhetoric about the building of a new society and the great task that the party and people jointly faced was a focus of state publications about the economy. Soviet citizens were categorised not as individuals but as a collective who had duties towards the survival of the state. The socio-economic categories of proletariat or *rabochii* were the focus of many economic journals and statistical

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[41] 'Ne Zabyvat Kvalifitsirovannovo rabochevo!', *Pravda* 112 (25th May, 1921)
[42] British Library, General Reference Collection 74/1865.c.17.(80.), 'O Vserossiskoi Perepis', *Tsentralnoe Statisticheskoe Uprvalenie* (Moscow, 1920)

data. By basing social categorisations on Marxist notions of a person's relationship to production the Soviet state created a hierarchy of class identification based on which workers held the most value to the state.

Skilled workers: Inclusion

This separation of the population into socio-economic categories was the basis of Soviet social policies, which were based on the principle of inclusion and exclusion. Skilled workers held both ideological and productive value for the early Soviet state. Therefore, they practically benefitted, or Bolshevik discourse proclaimed they benefitted, from many Soviet social policies. In Marxist and Bolshevik cultural ideology skilled workers were conceptualised as the most politically conscious workers and many skilled workers did support or join the Bolshevik party in 1917. Many more went out on strike in 1917 demanding better working conditions and crucially more autonomy over their work. Their identity was based on their skill and *tsekhovschina* that did not necessarily equate with support for the Bolshevik party.

After 1917 the Bolsheviks used statistical data in an attempt to prove, domestically and abroad, that Russia was a workers' state and workers supported the state. This meant that skilled work was the focus of the TsSU and a discourse was created about skilled workers based on their ideological importance to the state. This discourse was not based on 'knowing' skilled workers, their demands or grievances but shaping census data to fit with a narrative about the relationship between workers and the state. Practically, skilled workers also held immense value to the Soviet state because of their production of munitions during the Civil War. Ultimately, it was this value which was at the forefront of Soviet social policies towards skilled workers. They benefitted economically from the ration system not because of their ideological value, although this is how the policy was justified, but because heavy industry was vital to the survival of the Soviet state. The living and working conditions of Sormovo workers actually declined after 1917. Food shortages, financial crises, mass redundancies and harsh labour laws

contributed to the sharp decline in workplace autonomy and living conditions.[43]

Skilled workers were categorised in early Soviet Russia not in terms of their individual identities but their collective value to the state. In the state press skilled workers were heralded as the backbone of the Soviet regime, especially metalworkers. In an article in *Pravda* entitled 'Do not forget a skilled worker!', metalworkers in particular were named as the 'mainstay of Soviet power [and] ... the main reserve of the creative organising force of the R.S.F.S.R.'[44] Even before October 1917, skilled workers were identified as vital to the Provisional Government's war effort. In the iron rolling mill in Sormovo in 1917, workers were identified as exempt from a future military draft because their work was seen as of vital importance to the state.[45]

The Marxist ideological value of skilled workers to the Soviet state was based on an oversimplification of worker cultural identities. Before 1917 the skilled workers in heavy industry had been the focus of Bolshevik and RSDLP propaganda and agitation because they had a higher literacy rate than unskilled workers and by 1917 had an established tradition of labour activism through striking. Marxist and Bolshevik ideology separated workers into 'conscious' and 'unconscious' ideological categorisations. This portrayed a separation of political identity, work ethic and popular culture between skilled and unskilled workers where it did not rigidly exist.[46] This ideological separation between skilled and unskilled workers was also based on their relative production value. Before 1917, factory managers in the Tsarist state had categorised workers into normative and operative identities, which suggested much more than their skill or production task but their mindset, culture and social identity.

The workplace categorisations, skilled, partially skilled, unskilled and *chernorabochie* 'black workers' were used before and after 1917 as a way to

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[43] For example, the Sormovo Factory Food Board reported of continous food shortages during the Civil War in Sormovo factory. TsANO, f.1257, op.1, d.13, Reports from the Sormovo Factory Food Board (4th March,1918; 25th November,1918; 12th August, 1918)

[44] 'Ne Zabyvat Kvalifitsirovannovo rabochevo!'

[45] 'Sormvoskii Zhizn'', *Izvestiia Nizhegorodskikh Sovetov Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deuputatov* (19th October, 1917)

[46] L.L. Phillips, 'Message in a bottle: Working-class culture and the struggle for revolutionary legitimacy, 1900 -1929', *The Russian Review*, 5 (1997), p.26

distinguish not only the skill of a worker but their social identity and political consciousness. *Chernorabochie* was a categorisation of work and a derogatory label that had been used in the late Imperial period by management, factory organisations and even by workers themselves. It was used to denote unskilled workers, namely labourers in heavy industry who worked in the 'hot shops' to carry heavy weights and transport goods throughout the factory.[47] It was a label that was used to imply an unskilled worker who 'did all the dirty work'. In pre-revolutionary Russia, skilled workers appropriated the title *masterovye* to separate themselves from other workers. It was considered a serious insult if factory management called a skilled worker a *chernorabochie* because a skilled worker 'possessed skills that it had taken him three to six years to acquire' and many had worked in the factory since childhood.[48] Skilled workers also used this term to enforce a workplace hierarchy where their work and identity was at the top. They appropriated the label to denote that their skill and pay was above unskilled workers. Bolsheviks continued to use this label after 1917 to categorise workers in terms of their production value and their ideological value to the state.[49]

Skilled workers in Sormovo also continued to use the term *masterovye* after 1917 to cement a workplace hierarchy and their identity as skilled workers. A resolution of Sormovo workers addressed to the local Bolshevik representative Khramov, regarding the establishing of a new proletarian club, was written as 'we the *masterovye* and workers of Sormovo factory... welcome the construction of the proletarian club'.[50] However, the similar term *master,* which translated as foreman, had been wiped from Bolshevik industrial language because it had too many negative connotations from before 1917. In the journal of the Metalworkers Union in January 1918 it is emphasised that old types of technical management and supervision had been eradicated. Roles

[47] Koenker and Rosenberg, 'Skilled workers and the strike movement in revolutionary Russia', p.607

[48] This is how P. Timofeev defines the *chernorabochie* workers, who worked in metalworking plants in late Imperial Russia, in 'What A Factory Worker Lives By' in Bonnell (ed.), *The Russian worker: Life and labor Under the Tsarist Regime*, p.75

[49] Sculpturers were referred to as *masterovye* in an article in *Pravda* when describing their upcoming work around Moscow for the anniversary of the October Revolution, *Pravda* (24th November, 1918); The Bolsheviks also referred to joint meetings of '*masterovye* and workers', for example in a meeting of Moscow Iron Foundry workers in 1918, *Pravda* (13th July, 1918)

[50] 'Rabochiia Zhizn' Sormovo', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (12th November, 1918)

such as supervising 'the method of operation' of the machinery, which in the 'old enterprises' had been run by the foreman, were now run by 'machine installers', skilled workers.[51] This was of ideological importance for the metalworkers and the Bolsheviks. Although one-man management continued in early Soviet Russia, the change of language about industrial management was significant because it implied a respect for skilled workers and the continuation of workers' control.[52] Bolsheviks appropriated labels and terms from pre-revolutionary Russia that suited their ideological narrative, of a socialist society based on a class conflict between conscious and unconscious workers and *sluzhashchie*.

Despite *chernorabochie* being an offensive label in Tsarist Russia the Bolshevik state also continued to employ this label in early Soviet Russia. They were viewed by the Bolsheviks as a group of workers who needed the most sustained cultural transformation in order to have a revolutionary, or Soviet, mindset.[53] They were already separated from skilled workers by working in different workshops in the factory and after 1917 had different educational and cultural courses targeted at them, and even in some factories had separate living and recreational quarters.[54] They were also paid much less than skilled workers in early Soviet Russia, which provided a material marker of separate identity for skilled workers. Data published in *Izvestiia* in July 1918 detailed the pay rates of workers in a paper factory in Moscow. Skilled workers were paid on average 1,031.8 rubles per month. This was almost double the wage of a *chernorabochie,* which was listed as an average of 659.3 per month. The reason given for this was that some of these workers were not 'pure proletariat' because they had not worked in the factory from a young age, as skilled worker had, and had only recently moved from the village or

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[51] *Vestnik Metallista*: Organ Vremmnavo Tsentral'navo Komiteta Vserossickavo Soiuza Rabochikh-Metallistov, 2 (Petrograd, January 1918), p.23

[52] J. Aves, estimates that by the time of the 1920 census 82% of industries surveyed operated under one man management, however for some important metal factories (including Sormovo) that were grouped into GOMZa, this remained only 64% by 1920. *Workers against Lenin: Labour protest and the Bolshevik dictatorship* (London, 1996), p.30

[53] For more detail on Soviet cultural policies directed towards workers, see chapter 4

[54] An example of the *chernorabochie* being given separate living quarters can be seen in a factory in the Khamovniki district of Moscow, 'Obshchezhite dlia Chernorabochikh', *Pravda* (21st November, 1918)

continued to return there.[55] This type of pay scale was also seen in Sormovo in 1918 where the hourly rate for a 'blacksmith' was 1.5 rubles and for a 'loader' it was 0.75.[56] The importance of a permanent urban working class was vital to Marxist theory and skilled workers in pre-revolutionary Russia came to symbolise and embody the class term proletariat. Not only did the difference in pay between skilled and unskilled workers symbolise their relative worth in the workplace it also suggested a wider social identity based on which workers held the most ideological and practical value for the state.

Class-based Rationing

This social categorisation of a workplace hierarchy also had implications far beyond the workplace. Using the data collected from the TsSU the Soviet state formulated socio-economic policies and constructed a discourse about Soviet society that had little to do with 'knowing' the population or the logistics of the economy. Ideological and practical considerations about workers' importance to the construction of a socialist Russia were the backbone of the Soviet state's rationing policy during the Civil War. The censuses of 1918 and 1920 were vital in the Soviet state's food policy. They provided information about industry and agriculture and also formulated socio-economic categories of Russians that the Bolsheviks could base their policies on. The rationing system that the Bolsheviks inherited from the Provisional Government issued food on a needs basis, so heavy physical labour was a priority because their strenuous work meant they needed more food. The Soviet state adjusted this so that rationing was not only on a needs basis but was judged on how much that individual, or group of individuals, contributed towards the building of a Soviet state. A party slogan at the time was 'he who does not work neither shall he eat.' This meant that education had no standing in the rationing system and members of the *sluzhashchie* were set firmly below workers.[57] Soldiers in the Red Army were in the priority category for food rations, even though their

[55] 'Bumagotkatsaia Fabrika Belova v Mosckve', *Izvestiia* (1st July, 1918)
[56] *Vestnik Metallista*: Organ Vremmnavo Tsentral'navo Komiteta Vserossickavo Soiuza Rabochikh-Metallistov, 1 (Petrograd, 1917), p.60
[57] D.R Brower, "'The City in Danger", the Civil War and the Russian urban population' in Koenker, Rosenberg and Suny (ed.), *Party, state, and society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in social history*, p.65

daily work tasks might not have been as arduous as an unskilled labourer or *chernorabochie.*

Class rationing was introduced mainly to make sure that industrial workers received more rations and to do this the number of people who had a right to a supplementary ration was decreased by 800,000 people to 150,000. After mid-1918 figures on non-worker rations were rarely published.[58] There were ideological considerations at the forefront of class rationing which were based on the categorisations used in the 1918 and 1920 censuses and broader vague Marxist categorisations of society. However, when academics and scientists were desperately needed during the Civil War by the state, 'special rations' were introduced. The term 'special rations' suggested that this was to be a temporary ration for specialists and scientists whose knowledge would contribute to the economy, even though they were placed in the 'bourgeois' category. Leading specialists in various fields were given extra rations, better quality living conditions or exemption from labour duties, which came to be known as the 'academic ration'. The broad and vague categorisations of class and the appearance of special rations meant that the rationing system was abused. Employees of the government's bureaucracy, including top level employees of the TsSU, were among those who secured themselves high rations, despite not being specialists.[59]

In times of severe deprivation during the Civil War, the Bolsheviks continued their rhetoric of a workers' state and the importance of the metalworkers in Sormovo, in an attempt to justify economic crises and extreme privations. During a food shortage in 1918 in Sormovo the local Bolsheviks reminded the skilled metalworkers there that the Sormovo workers were 'the advanced detachment of the revolutionary' state and that 'only the efforts of the proletariat can save the day' and win the Civil War.[60] This ideological language was used by the local Bolsheviks in an attempt to assure the metalworkers in Sormovo that they were the highest level of worker in the Soviet state but it also had practical considerations.

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[58] Malle, *The economic organisation of War Communism, 1918-1921*, p.358
[59] Borrero, *Hungry Moscow: Scarcity and urban society in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1921,* pp.131-132
[60] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (18th May, 1918)

Class-based rationing was introduced in 1918 partially so the Bolsheviks could enforce their ideological categorisations into policy but it was also because there was increasing national labour unrest in mid-1918. In a table of industrial conflicts in 1918 the metal industry came out on top with the most recorded conflicts for that year. In comparison to the 73 conflicts recorded in the metal industry, the next highest recording for industrial conflicts was in glass production with 17 and then food production with 14.[61] The Bolsheviks continued to show deference to the workers in Sormovo because they feared another strike and labour disruption as a result of their shortcomings in food supply. Metalworkers in particular were vocal about how they deserved the same rations as the Red Army because of their high skill level. They also utilised state discourse by proclaiming their value to the state. Sormovo workers defended their right to privileged rations, which had been given to them in 1917 by the Provisional Government, by striking in times of food shortages.[62] After repeated strikes about food issues in Sormovo the Bolshevik newspaper, *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna*, assured Sormovo workers that their ration would be protected under new rationing laws on a provincial basis 'in the very near future', along with the opening of three new canteens, which could hold a thousand workers in each.[63]

Even the local Bolsheviks pleaded with the central state that Sormovo workers keep their privileged rations. In a meeting they stated the 'critical work carried out by [Sormovo workers]' was being undermined by the deteriorating food crisis, which was causing productivity to collapse. They also warned of the unstable 'mood' of the workers there and called for 'permanent class rations' to be instigated in Sormovo immediately.[64] Despite Sormovo being categorised as a 'special unit', and given privileged food rations after it was incorporated into GOMZa, the food crisis continued both locally and nationally.[65] Large factories formed their own food detachments which were

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[61] 'Otdel' Vzaimootnoshenii', *Biulleten Narodnago Kommisariyata Truda* (August-September, 1918), p.50
[62] Badcock, *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history*, p.213, 227
[63] 'Otdel obshestvennovo Pitaniia', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (17th June, 1919)
[64] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.25, Meetings of the Presidium (9th December 1919)
[65] 'From the minutes of Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Congress of Soviets on the situation in the field and work with the provincial council (28th June, 1918) in Velikorechina and Selezneva (ed.), *Pobeda Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoii revoliutsii v Nizhegorodskoi Gubernii*, p.529

sanctioned by the state, but were mainly organised by workers themselves. The creation of these armed factory squads represented more than just marauding armed bands stealing food from the village; they were also justified as a fulfilment of their role as, mainly skilled, proletarian workers.[66] Skilled workers appropriated state labels for themselves when it suited their purpose. The October Revolution gave skilled metalworkers, like those in Sormovo, a sense of importance and identity within the new state. Although Sormovo workers routinely defended their workplace 'rights' before 1917, after 1917 the skilled metalworkers employed state language to justify their labour activism, especially in regards to the keeping of their privileged rations. As Steinberg argues, workers had 'the power and the space to actively appropriate, rework, misuse and subvert available cultural forms'.[67] State discourse and labels may have not been fully appropriated by skilled workers but these social labels affected their access to food, pay and work and Sormovo workers knew when to use them to curry favour with the local and central state.

The Peasantry: Exclusion

The Soviet state used a sustained policy of scapegoating other social class categories in an attempt to create a common enemy and distract skilled workers from economic crises and food shortages. To answer urgent questions about food supply in mid-1918 the Soviet state blamed the 'rich villager' who was identified as bourgeois and self serving; the state claimed they were hiding the grain.[68] As skilled workers were at the forefront of Soviet ideology the peasantry were excluded from much Soviet discourse and if they were mentioned it was in purely negative terms. The Bolsheviks' disdain for the peasantry was present throughout their statistical data. Despite the peasantry having the vital role of growing and producing food, the Bolsheviks repeatedly conceptualised them as un-revolutionary and not having an important role in the construction of socialism in Russia. This stemmed from a traditional view

[66] Chase, *Workers, society and the Soviet state: Labor and life in Moscow, 1918-1929*, pp.23-24
[67] M.D. Steinberg, 'Modernity and the poetics of proletarian consent', in Halfin (ed.), *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities*, p.107
[68] 'Prodovol'stvennaia Diktatura', *Pravda* (12th May, 1918)

of the peasantry as 'backward' and isolationist that was present in intellectual circles well before 1917.[69]

Bolshevik discourse about the peasantry and rural dwellers was also ideological because they had no role to play in a Marxist state. The village was imagined as a community with clear class divides composed of rich and poor peasants who were at war with each other. In June 1918, the announcement of the food dictatorship legalised the categorisation of the peasantry into different social classes by encouraging the formation of poor peasant committees (*kombedy*). This introduced binding legal social categorisations in the countryside in an attempt to promote class warfare there and mobilise the poor peasantry against the 'kulaks', by confiscating surplus grain and helping distribute them in the city and army.[70] The *kombedy* were viewed as a way to unite parts of the peasantry and workers in the construction of a socialist Russia. The establishment of the *kombedy* in Tula province was welcomed by *Pravda* by stating that it was doing the same 'organisational work' within the Soviet state as the workers soviets in urban areas.[71] There were claims of the success of these peasant organisations with the *kombedy* organisation in Penza reportedly confiscating 3 million puds of bread.[72] In reality, the *kombedy* did not take off in the villages and were resisted by peasants. Soviet attempts at class warfare 'could not penetrate the collective solidarity of the village'.[73]

After only a few months the state abandoned the language of class warfare in the countryside. Instead, the Bolsheviks' pre-revolutionary idea of 'middle' peasants was re-introduced into state discourse about the peasantry and a theoretical policy of non-interference into the peasant economy was drawn up by the end of 1918.[74] The introduction of the *razvertska* was an attempt of a de-centralised method of food procurement by the Soviet state. It gave local authorities a quota to meet and it was up to them how they achieved

[69] For pre-1917 elite conceptualisations of the peasantry, see Chapter 4
[70] Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922*, pp.192-193
[71] 'Kombedy i Soveity', *Pravda* (9th November, 1918)
[72] 'Po Penzenskoi i Tambovskoi Guberniiam', *Pravda* (19th December, 1918)
[73] Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922*, p.193
[74] Patenaude, 'Peasants into Russians: The utopian essence of War Communism', p.554

it. This was viewed as an ideological retreat by some high level Bolsheviks because they believed it represented a concession to the rich peasantry.[75] The uncompromising and arbitrary nature of the *razvertska* system and the unachievable high quotas became a symbol of the ideological assumptions and harshness of War Communism in the countryside.

The Soviet state's increasingly centralised and interventionist policies in the economy and agriculture only increased during the Civil War. Ultimately, the peasant 'class' was excluded from Soviet society through policies that routinely discriminated against them and statistical data that was fabricated or ignored their working conditions. The Bolsheviks' attempt at create class warfare in the countryside had failed and the introduction of *razvertska* was an implicit admission of defeat by the Soviet state who had failed to introduce popularised class categorisations into the countryside.

However, even though the peasants were excluded from Soviet discourse, data and preferential policies they were co-opted into the Soviet state through the Bolsheviks *razvertska* taxation policy. This implicitly made them members of Soviet society. In a similar way to taxation policies in late Imperial Russia, Soviet peasants became citizens in the sense that they had a duty to the Soviet state, by paying taxes, but few legal rights.[76] Even the disenfranchised 'declassed' social category in early Soviet Russia were subject to taxation and therefore in some way still members of the state and an imagined social structure. The Bolsheviks actually renewed the Provisional Government's income tax in December 1917, which was universal. This reflected the Soviet ambition to have all Russians in the service of the workers' state but not included within all state functions.[77]

Like the peasantry, the 'declassed' and even the *sluzhashchie, rabochii* workers had duties towards the Soviet state in terms of tax, production levels and later labour conscription but they also had more rights. To a certain extent skilled workers also enjoyed the respect of local government, especially in a

[75] L. Lih, 'Bolshevik Razverstka and War Communism', *Slavic Review*, 45 (1986), pp.676- 677
[76] Y. Kotsonis, '"Face to Face" The state, the individual, and the citizen in Russian taxation, 1863-1917', *Slavic Review*, 63 (2004), p.222
[77] Y. Kotsonis, '"No Place to Go"': Taxation and state transformation in late Imperial and early Soviet Russia', *The Journal of Modern History*,76 (2004), p.563

place like Sormovo where the tradition of labour activism was at the forefront of the local Bolsheviks' mind. Unlike large industrial areas like Moscow and Petrograd, Sormovo workers were an exception in Nizhegorod province. Workers in Sormovo were given more 'class' privileges than those in traditional urban areas because of the disruption of the Civil War. If a large amount of skilled workers joined the army or were conscripted into other state labour tasks it would have been difficult to find other skilled workers to fill the void in Sormovo. However, the Civil War intensified the state's interventionist policies after 1918 and the privileges the Sormovo workers and other metalworkers enjoyed after the October Revolution began to fade away by 1920. Class rations failed to solve starvation in urban centres and the implementation of the food dictatorship in 1918 and the nationalisation of most large scale and small scale industries by 1919-1920 meant the Bolsheviks had nominal control over all workers' and peasants' daily lives.[78]

The Soviet state did not abandon its class categorisations but just abandoned the rights and privileges that went with them. The re-introduction of the Tsarist passport system in the 1930s reveals that class and social categorisations still had an important ideological and practical purpose in the Soviet Union. The passport system was designed to be a key tool in surveillance of the Russian population and linked socio-economic identities to employment, residence and access to goods.[79]

Conclusion

The early Soviet state and the TsSU undertook substantial statistical research after 1917. In a country devastated by years of war, economic collapse and social and geographical displacement, the Soviet censuses are an achievement in themselves. Although some later economic statistics in economic journals were fabricated, the 1918 and 1920 censuses provide a snapshot into aspects of Russian industry in the early Soviet state. However, the aim of Soviet data collection were not just practical but ideological. The statistics were not just used to analyse Russian industry but to construct a socialist society based on

[78] Y. Kotsonis, *States of obligation: Taxes and citizenship in the Russian Empire and early Soviet Republic* (2014, Toronto), p.307

[79] D. Shearer, 'Elements near and alien: Passportization, policing and identity in the Stalinist State, 1932- 1952', *The Journal of Modern History*, 76 (2004), p.838

labour hierarchy, where skilled workers were at the top and former 'bourgeois' professions at the bottom. The absence of the *sluzhashchie* in the 1918 and 1920 censuses was a reflection of Soviet class and social categorisations that extended from the workplace into society. The class structure in early Soviet Russia did not in any way reflect the diversity of the Russian population or even the workforce. *Sluzhashchie* continued to work in industry and agriculture and far outnumbered the number of skilled workers in industry during the Civil War. However, the ideological value of skilled workers meant that they were the focus of state statistical analysis. Their existence and the fabricated statistics about heavy industry production figures provided 'proof' that the Soviet state was an advanced industrial society and on a path to socialism.

Although the class categorisations were no more representative of Soviet society than the Tsarist *soslovie* categorisations, this did not mean that they had no real meaning. The legalisation of class categorisations in 1918 meant that an individual's membership in a class category determined their access to food, pay and other basic rights. To some extent Sormovo workers enjoyed privileges that other unskilled workers, and especially *sluzhashchie*, would not have been entitled to, but only for a brief period after 1917. During the Civil War the class categorisation of Soviet society became a tool of coercion and control for the increasingly centralised Soviet state and not a balancing of rights and duties. Class labels became an effective means of demonising any opposition to the state and not even skilled workers were exempt from this. By 1921, the interventionist state had co-opted all workers and peasants into the Soviet state by demanding obligations of all members of Russian society, especially the peasantry who were faced with a crippling tax in kind throughout the Civil War. Although the language of legalised class categorisations continued well into the 1930s the devastating conditions of the Civil War meant that the economic and political benefits and 'rights' that accompanied the class categorisations had all but disappeared by 1921.

4. The Cultural Revolution: State Building through Culture and Education in Early Soviet Russia, 1917-1921

Introduction

This chapter examines Bolshevik educational and cultural policy in the early Soviet period, 1917-1921. The Bolsheviks created a discourse about the enlightenment of workers before 1917 and held a pervasive belief in the transformative power of culture after 1917 to improve workers' lives and in turn to secure Soviet power.[1] In the face of a series of social, economic and political challenges that gravely threatened the new Soviet regime the Bolsheviks continually upheld the importance of educational and more generally cultural transformation as essential in securing the future of the Soviet state. The last chapter explored how the Bolsheviks sought to 'know', conceptualise and categorise workers in the early Soviet state. The conceptualisation of the population in socio-economic terms created a state discourse where some members of the population were worth more than other members. The conflicting practical and ideological aims of Soviet data collection in the first few years after 1917 is paralleled in other Bolshevik policy decisions in the early Soviet state. This chapter will explore how this conceptualisation of workers informed and shaped how the state engaged with workers through educational and cultural policy after 1917 and the discrepancy between theory, policy and practice. This was an area where the tension between ideology and practicality was openly exposed and caused much disagreement and discord within the Bolshevik party.

In Marxist and Bolshevik ideology cultural transformation was an integral part of the revolutionary process, but there was very little agreement amongst leading Bolsheviks on how this would be achieved.[2] *Narkompros* (The Commissariat of Enlightenment) was established a few days after the October Revolution to deal with the task of educational transformation and was led by Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky. Lunacharsky had been a leading left Bolshevik thinker since the early twentieth century and had written many

[1] A. Gleason, 'Introduction' in A. Gleason, P. Kenez and R. Stites (ed.), *Bolshevik culture: Experiment and order in the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington, 1989), p.ix
[2] L. Mally, *Culture of the future: The Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley, 1990), p.xvi

essays on the transformative power of education, art, science, philosophy and culture. His fellow left Bolshevik, close friend and brother-in-law Alexander Aleksandrovich Bogdanov, established the quasi-governmental organisation *Proletkul't* (Proletarian Cultural-Educational Organisation), which aimed to foster the development of *proletkul't* (proletarian culture.) Bogdanov had also written a substantial number of utopian fictional and non-fictional works theorising on a future socialist society revolutionised by science, technology and cultural change.[3] Although both organisations had slightly different aims and policies that sought to transform Russian culture and improve the daily lives of workers, they both held the same assumptions about the 'backward' culture of the Russian population.

The aims of Bolshevik cultural transformation are exemplified by Pavel Ivanovich Lebedev-Polianskii's (Chairman of the All-Russian Council of *Proletkul't*) thoughts on proletarian cultural transformation. In a speech to the first All-Russian Conference of Proletarian Cultural-Enlightenment Organisations in 1918 Lebedev-Polianskii told the audience that 'our task is to give the class an integral upbringing, indisputably directing collective will and thought'.[4] This is a strikingly similar discourse to pre-revolutionary Tsarist and liberal cultural discourse. It was based on paternalistic notions of the primitive culture of workers and especially peasants. The Bolsheviks held the assumption that the culture of the masses must be transformed if Russia was to develop socially, economically and politically into a modern state.

Narkompros initially paid lip service to the idea that cultural transformation must be developed spontaneously by workers. The quasi-independent *Proletkul't* especially, introduced independent 'laboratories of culture', where it was hoped ordinary workers could establish a collective cultural identity.[5] However the idealism of *Proletkul't* came into conflict with

[3] The most prominent socialist utopian political, scientific and cultural fantasy written in the early twentieth century was *Red Star.* Written by Bogdanov in 1908, it depicts a utopian communist society on Mars. A. Bogdanov, *Red Star: The first Bolshevik utopia* (Bloomington, 1984)

[4] P.I. Lebedev-Polyanskii, 'Revolution and the Cultural Tasks of the Proletariat' (16th September 1918), in W.G. Rosenberg (ed.), *Bolshevik visions: First phase of the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia* (Ann Arbor, 1990), p.55

[5] Mally, *Culture of the future: The Proletkul't movement in revolutionary Russia*, p.128

the Bolshevik elite's narrow but multifaceted definition of what *prolekul't* would entail. *Narkompros* refused to recognise any aspect of worker culture which went against cultural tenets of sobriety, a thirst for self-enlightenment and a conscientious workforce and created an infrastructure of education and cultural activities which left little room for worker spontaneity. With no concrete detail of how cultural transformation was to be achieved and little concern for native worker culture, nor how the workers would respond to elite conceptions of *proletkul't,* the Bolshevik cultural programme became a tool of coercion, where *Proletkul't* was subsumed by the state and the independent cultural freedom of workers remained an ideal not a reality.

The scope of the Soviet cultural programme went far beyond any liberal or Tsarist attempt in the late Imperial period as propaganda trains and boats toured the country arriving in provincial industrial areas like Sormovo with a specific message and directive about proletarian culture. As the Bolsheviks' need for a stable workforce increased during the Civil War, the state's definition of *proletkul't* became more rigid and was used a means of socio-economic control. The few years after 1917 witnessed an increasingly interventionist state not only in public cultural life but in the private sphere, where not only the actions of workers were judged but their attitudes too. The metalworkers in Sormovo were a focus of the cultural enlightenment programme on a national and local level. Their work producing munitions was vital to the war effort and the continuing popularity of the SRs in the area made them an urgent target for Bolshevik cultural courses. The state-sponsored cultural programme in Sormovo began as voluntary educational courses and rallies and was transformed into a militaristic and intrusive ideology that focused on production in the workplace. A discourse was created by the state regarding the cultural identity of the workers, to suit their cultural and political agenda. In a similar way to liberal notions of the enlightenment of the Russian people, the Bolsheviks never truly intended to develop a new culture but to control it. However, unlike liberal attempts at cultural transformation, the scope of the Bolshevik cultural programme reached every corner of Russia and

was transformed by the context of the Civil War from a means of educational and cultural control into social control.[6]

Continuity and Change: Educational Reform, 1900-1921

The Soviet state embarked on their self proclaimed revolutionary educational reforms with the same conceptualisation of popular culture as the Tsarist autocracy and liberal elites in late Imperial Russia. The aims of the educational programmes of the autocracy, liberals and socialists were very different before 1917. The Tsarist state sought the maintenance of the status quo, the liberals aimed for an educated and literate populace and the Bolsheviks and other radical socialists primarily wanted to gain support for their revolutionary cause. Yet all these groups had the same basic assumption about the popular culture of the masses, that it was 'backward' and needed transforming. Despite the proclamations of the Soviet state that their educational reforms would be a clean break from the 'bourgeois' educational system of the past, they had little or no concern for understanding or appreciating the native culture of the workers. This cultural assumption about the backwardness of lower class culture was accompanied by hope that workers in particular would gladly welcome Bolshevik culture as a path to self enlightenment. With the ambitious aims of Lunacharsky, to change human nature and society through education, *Narkompros* embarked on a reform of the educational system to open access for the poor and aimed to control the education system from the bottom up. However, the reality of Civil War Russia did not live up to the ideological aims and expectations of Lunacharsky. The context of the Civil War meant that many educational institutions remained closed or had low attendance, even in urban areas. In the first years of Soviet rule *Narkompros* struggled to put their

[6] See S. Fitzpatrick, 'The Civil War as a formative experience', in Gleason, Kenez and Stites (ed.) *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and order in the Russian Revolution*, 57-77; M. Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1970); S.F. Cohen, 'Bolshevism and Stalinism' in R.C. Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism: essays in historical interpretation* (New York, 1977); Pirani, *The Russian revolution in retreat, 1920-24: Soviet workers and the new communist elite*: These works also argue that the experience of the Civil War militarised Bolshevik political culture, which made it repressive and unwilling to engage with democratic reforms, which paved the way for Stalinism.

educational ideas and plans into practice in a revolutionary situation. They had great expectations but with limited practical achievement.[7]

A Moral Panic? Elite Assumptions of Cultural Transformation

At the turn of the twentieth century Russian society was rapidly changing. The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation that followed changed not only the demographics of the city but questioned prescribed social identities. Moscow was one of the biggest and fastest growing cities in Europe. In the 50 years before 1914 its population had quadrupled, mainly as a result of the migration of peasants who sought new job opportunities in the cities.[8] By 1900, 63% of the population of St Petersburg were classified by the census as 'peasants' and 79% were classified as immigrants. These were mainly men aged 16-35.[9] This percentage was even higher for certain groups in the city, such as factory workers. According to the municipal census in Moscow in 1902, 92.7% of factory workers working in Moscow had been born elsewhere.[10] The rapid and apparent chaotic nature of urbanisation and demographic change was at the forefront of elite social theories about cultural change. The mass of peasants who were migrating to the new urban centres represented a new indistinct social group. Although many of these peasant-workers retained some form of ties with the rural village, whether because of the tight control of the village passport system or as a safety net to return to in case of unemployment, it questioned the traditional Tsarist *soslovie* categorisations of Russian society.[11] *Soslovie* categories came to suggest more than just the hierarchy of Russian society but implied a cultural separateness between them.[12] When peasants began moving into the city and loosening their ties with the traditional

[7] S. Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organisation of education and the Arts under Lunacharsky* (London, 1970), p.xvii
[8] Bradley, *Muzhik and Muscovite: Urbanization in late Imperial Russia*, p.41
[9] S. Smith, 'Masculinity in Transition: Peasant Migrants to Late-Imperial St Petersburg', in B. Evans Clements, R. Friedman and D. Healey (ed.), *Russian maculinities in history and culture* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.95
[10] R.E. Johnson, 'Peasant migration and the Russian working class: Moscow at the end of the nineteenth century', *Slavic Review*, 35 (1976), p.652; The figure was lower in non established urban areas like Sormovo, where the figure for non-natives in the factory in 1897 was 14.9%, see chapter 2
[11] I. Thatcher, 'Late Imperial urban workers' in I. Thatcher (ed.), *Late Imperial Russia: Problems and prospects* (Manchester, 2005), pp.101-102
[12] G.L. Freeze, 'The Soslovie (Estate) paradigm and Russian social history', *The American Historical Review,* 91 (1986), pp. 1,19

patriarchal structure of the village there were concerns by the elite that this would entail a change in ideas, values and behaviour.[13]

There was a rise in recorded criminality in urban areas at the turn of the twentieth century which included reports of public disturbances, rowdiness, drunkenness, rock throwing, public obscenities and more serious crimes like mugging and assault.[14] There were also concerns about the spread of diseases, notably sexual diseases. Social theorists used specific language to describe this apparent rise in crime and disease which explained the perceived problems of social decline and individual deviance using biophysical theories about human nature and social interaction.[15] There emerged an educated middle class movement (*obschestvennost'*) whose social identity and culture was predicated on forcing their apparently superior cultural beliefs on the working class. Social theorists and the press created a discourse of 'moral panic', which was used to explain a perceived mentality of defiance by the lower classes. It became an evocative symbol of social disintegration, cultural difference and decay in the early twentieth century.[16] Various groups in late Imperial Russian society including the state bureaucracy, privileged and educated elements responded to vast and rapid socio-economic changes by formulating various competing cultural and social ideologies.

There was little concern to understand or respect lower class culture or behaviour by any groups in late Imperial Russia, even by socialist groups, as their cultural policies were based on the conceptualisation that the culture of the masses was 'backward'. This is exemplified by the language used by elites and socialists towards peasants and workers in the late Imperial period. State agricultural reforms from the mid-nineteenth century were based on the theory

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[13] Johnson, 'Peasant migration and the Russian working class: Moscow at the end of the nineteenth century', p. 652

[14] J. Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, culture, and power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley, 1993), pp.1-4

[15] Much of this discourse was influenced by Lombroso's theory of a physically and mentally inferior criminal underclass; C. Lombroso and H.P. Horton (trans.), *Crime: Its causes and remedies* (Montclair, 1968); D. Beer, *Renovating Russia: The human sciences and the fate of liberal modernity, 1880-1930* (London, 2008), pp. 1,2,7,10; L. McReynolds and C. Popkin, 'The objective eye and the common good', in C. Kelly and D. Shepherd (ed.), *Constructing Russian culture in the age of revolution: 1881-1940* (Oxford, 1998), p.60 ; L. Engelstein, 'Morality and the wooden spoon: Russian doctors view syphilis, social class, and sexual behavior , 1890-1905', *Representations*, 14 (1986), 169-208

[16] Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, culture, and power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914*, pp.1-4

the peasantry was largely illiterate and 'backward' and therefore needed decisions made on their behalf. [17] Liberals and socialists conceptualised workers in a similar way. The Social Democrats viewed socio-economic change in the late nineteenth century less as a moral panic and more of an opportunity. The dissolution of the patriarchal bonds of the countryside was seen as an opportunity for workers to develop a 'class consciousness.'[18] However, the cultural discourse they created about workers was strikingly similar to the language of cultural transformation used by the state and educated elite in the late Imperial period. The foundation of socialist attempts of the cultural transformation of workers was vanguardism; the theory that workers needed to be led by the party intelligentsia to be culturally and politically enlightened.[19] They focused their attempts at cultural guidance on skilled workers who were perceived to be the most susceptible to cultural change and willing to abandon aspects of popular worker culture, for example heavy drinking, that the SDs and educated elites deemed backward.

The RSDLP party in Sormovo in the late nineteenth century focused their efforts on garnering the support of the skilled workers there.[20] The nascent RSDLP targeted skilled workers in Sormovo because they were viewed as a new generation of conscious workers. This ideology of consciousness extended far beyond the belief that Sormovo workers were skilled and politically literate. It implied they had transformed their mindset, culture and identity too. Kaiurov described in his memoir how the SDs tried to target the workers like himself who did not revel in excessive drinking and similar 'cultural activities'. The skilled workers who worked overtime and

[17] Y. Kotsonis, *Making peasants backward: Agricultural cooperatives and the agrarian question in Russia, 1861-1914* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp.2-4; J. Pallot 'Introduction', in J. Pallot (ed.), *Transforming peasants: Society, the state and peasantry , 1861-1930* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp.2-3

[18] Johnson, 'Peasant migration and the Russian working class', p.652

[19] D.L. Pearl, 'Narodnaia Volia and the Worker', in R. Zelnik (ed.) *Workers and Intelligentsia in late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, 1999) p.55; L. Lih argues that far from being a Leninist concept the idea of vanguardism was central to many nineteenth century international socialist movements: L.Lih, *Lenin rediscovered: What is to be done? In context* (Chicago, 2008)

[20] Fadeev, *Istoriia Krasnogo Sormova*, p.77

saved their money were of particular interest to the small RSDLP movement in Sormovo.[21]

In the early twentieth century, some skilled metalworkers did implicitly or explicitly support the goals of the SDs and some became party members. Chugurin, who worked in the wagon and then tin plate department of Sormovo factory, described how he was convinced by the revolutionary goals of the Sormovo RSDLP party after their demonstration in Sormovo in 1902. Although he was initially only convinced by their demands for an 8 hour working day, and not their banners proclaiming 'down with the autocracy!', he soon began working actively for the party. He narrates how he distributed their proclamations and illegal literature and then set up a workers circle with 30-40 members, including both workers and students.[22] The Soviet state often referred to the 'rich revolutionary movement' in Sormovo before 1917.[23] By the end of the nineteenth century, there was emerging in Sormovo a distinct group of skilled metalworkers who demonstrated labour activism and a 'political consciousness.' However, this did not necessarily equate to support for the RSDLP party and their revolutionary goals or overlap with elite perceptions of worker culture.

Some workers did engage with socialist attempts at cultural enlightenment in late Imperial Russia. Although the SDs had little success in Sormovo, in the centre a small but strategic group of skilled workers began to act upon the promise of educational and moral advancement offered by the intelligentsia. These self styled 'conscious' workers, sometimes known as the 'worker intelligentsia', not only displayed a new political awareness but also sought to raise their cultural level and internalise a new set of values based on individuality (*lichnost'*) and respectability. There was an explicit link between political consciousness and a change in the cultural attitudes and beliefs of the 'worker intelligentsia'. This was also linked to the abandonment of ties to village life and the full assimilation into the city and factory life through skilled permanent work. This new group of workers viewed themselves as

[21] Kaiurov, *Sormovo v pervoi revoliutsii*, pp. 8-9
[22] White and Sapon, 'The memoirs of Ivan Chugurin', p.2
[23] See for example 'K Istorii Revoliutsionnovo Dvizheniia v Sormove', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna*, (29th July, 1919)

morally and culturally superior to the mass of workers, many of them peasant recruits, whom they criticised fiercely for the ignorance they seemed to be content with.[24] Kanatchikov reminisced when he first joined the factory as a peasant recruit and his more 'advanced' worker colleagues mocked his clothes and haircut, calling him a 'green country bumpkin'.[25] Steinberg argues that the emergence of a 'labour aristocracy' was composed of skilled, upwardly mobile workers who earned higher than average wages, were devoted to personal cultivation and held themselves aloof from the mass of workers.[26]

Though the distinctive political culture of 'conscious' workers overlapped with the revolutionary intelligentsia, it was not and could not be identical to it. The revolutionary intelligentsia and worker intelligentsia occupied different worlds. The workers had experience of life in the peasant village, had a much lower level of formal education and spent every day in the factory environment surrounded by different lower class sub-cultures.[27] Some workers did join the revolutionary parties, and worked on their behalf to achieve their revolutionary goals, but more workers, especially in Sormovo, established their own culture of labour activism that was distinct from the revolutionary goals of the socialist parties. Workers did not live in a world of dichotomous identities based on urban or peasant culture. The urban environment was a collision of lower class cultures caused by seasonal and permanent immigration to the cities and workers attempted to 'negotiate the space in-between'.[28]

Persuasion and Repression: The Solution to Cultural 'Backwardness'

Before and after 1917 the proposed solutions to Russia's social, educational and cultural backwardness were varied but all rested on the assumption that the culture of the masses needed to be transformed. This was done through a mixture of opportunity and suppression, of persuasion and repression which

[24] McReynolds and Popkin, 'The objective eye and the common good', p.69
[25] Kanatchikov 'From the Story of my Life', p.39
[26] Steinberg, *Moral Communities: The culture of class relations in the Russian printing industry, 1867-1907*, p.101
[27] D.L. Pearl, 'From worker to revolutionary: The making of worker Narodovol'tsy', *Russian History*, 23 (1996), pp.12-13
[28] Von Geldern, 'Life in-between: Migration and popular culture in late Imperial Russia', p. 366

was duplicated by the Soviet state after 1917. Bolshevik assumptions, theories and policies of social and cultural transformation of workers were not new but influenced by liberal ideas from the late Imperial period. When Lunacharsky was appointed as Commissar for Enlightenment in October 1917 he sought a reshaping of human behaviour and society through education by moulding a new workers' intelligentsia, refashioning education and science, building a new culture and essentially transforming and improving everyday life for ordinary Russian's.[29]

One of Lunacharsky's main aims for *Narkompros* was the establishment of a universal education system. In an article written in 1918 Lunacharsky realised the vast task that awaited him in creating a general educational system. He stated that the centre of gravity of school work had to move towards workshops, with its main purpose being the creation of a skilled worker. He wrote in detail what becoming a skilled worker entailed: 'A conscious worker, a citizen with theoretical as well as general educational preparation.'[30] In 1918, the new United Labour School programme was announced, which aimed to create an equal and general educational system for children but with very little explanation of what the standard curriculum would be.[31] It was finally agreed that the new schooling system would incorporate intellectual, moral (*vospitaniye*) and technical (*obucheniye*) learning and be anti-authoritarian in nature.[32] An important principle of *Narkompros* was the belief that education should be administered locally, which consciously moved away from the Tsarist method of control of education by a centralised bureaucracy.[33]

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[29] L.E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931* (Bloomington, 1991), p.3; M. David-Fox, *Revolution of the mind: Higher learning among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929* (Ithaca/ London, 1997), p.1

[30] A. Lunacharsky, P. Grigorev and A. Tolstov, 'On the Foundation of the Soviet Educational System: Personal Memoirs' (1918) in Rosenberg (ed.), *Bolshevik visions: First phase of the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia*, p.320

[31] J.C. McClelland, 'The utopian and the heroic divergent paths to the Communist educational ideal', in Gleason, Kenez, Stites (ed.), *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and order in the Russian Revolution*, p.116

[32] Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organisation of education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, p.32

[33] J.C. McClelland, 'Bolshevik approaches to Higher Education, 1917-1921', *Slavic Review* 30 (1971), p. 821

The United Labour School was to replace all vocational schools, gymnasiums, lower and higher elementary schools and commercial schools with a single co-educational institution. It promised free and compulsory schooling for all children aged between 8 and 17 years of age.[34] There was also a vast growth of pre-schools after 1918 with 5,000 pre-schools, nurseries and childcare centres opened in 1920s.[35] There were two new pre-schools opened in Sormovo by 1919, in a region of Sormovo that was 'overcrowded with working class', and it was specifically aimed at the children of workers in Sormovo factory. Though the local Bolsheviks had aimed to establish six pre-schools in Sormovo, for children aged 4-7, they complained that the two schools were poorly attended.[36] Under the department of 'People's Education' (*Narodnogo Obrazivanyia*) in 1919 a 'professional school' was established in Sormovo, in addition to a children's summer school. This summer school was especially aimed at children from the villages as a 'starting point' for their education. The lessons to be taught were not technical skill training but theoretical learning, such as history lessons listed as 'history of the moment' and the 'success of the Russian proletariat'.[37] In a report of another local school the aims of the new Soviet education system were listed as:

> 'Objectives: 1) the scientific development of answers to theoretical and practical problems posed by modern life 2) disseminating general social ideas of labour beginning from school age and providing possible assistance during their life.'[38]

The Soviet school was more than just a place of learning. It was to build a new generation of Soviet citizens who, through their education, would be invested in the regime. They would become literate skilled workers and managers to

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[34] Holmes, *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, p.8

[35] Y. Valkanova, 'The passion for educating the "New Man": Debates about preschooling in Soviet Russia, 1917- 1925', *History of Education Quarterly*, 49 (2009), p. 211

[36] 'Delo Narodnogo Obrazovaniia', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (30th August, 1919); 'Otdel Obrazovaniia', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (22nd June, 1919)

[37] 'Delo Narodnogo Obrazovaniia', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (15th August, 1919); 'Shkol'nimi podotdel'om', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (30th August, 1919)

[38] 'Shkolnaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (8th October, 1918)

staff Soviet industry and technology.[39] Lunacharsky's belief was that the combination of technical and general education would not only enhance the Soviet economy but achieve a wide ranging proletarian class consciousness and drastically improve workers' lives. Lunacharsky hoped the working class would willingly undertake this education to improve not only their industrial skills but their education and personal development.[40] Schools were to become the agents for the remaking of all human beings.[41]

The creation of a general education system, with the aim of transforming the culture and intellect of the lower classes, was not a Soviet idea but a liberal one. The public education movement and the Soviet educational policies were based on both hope and fear. The rapid urbanisation and social change of the late nineteenth century had presented the educated elites both with an opportunity and a problem. The liberal and socialist education movement had hoped for the enlightenment of the lower classes but also feared that their backward culture would prevent them from being involved in civic life, or more gravely emerge as a destructive social force. There was tangible educational progress in the late Imperial period. As a result of zemstvo led education programme, the literacy rates of the Russian population had risen from 21% in 1897, to 40% on the eve of World War One, although it was still lower in rural areas than urban towns.[42] There was also a growth of adult schools and People's Universities before 1917. By 1895, the Imperial Russian Technical Society had set up 35 adult schools in St Petersburg, mainly attached to large factories and after 1905 People's Universities were established for workers which sponsored public lectures for

[39]L. Atwood and C, Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity: The 'New Man' and the 'New Woman', in Kelly and Shepherd (ed.), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution 1881-1940*, p.257

[40] McClelland, 'Bolshevik approaches to Higher Education, 1917-1921', p. 821

[41] Holmes, *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, p.4

[42] Brooks estimates that rural literacy rate was 6% in 1860's and 25% in 1910's. This rate was higher in provinces that were nearer to industrial centres, for example in 1897, male literacy outside the cities in Moscow province was 70%. Literacy was also particularly high amongst the young, in 1920 among children aged 12-16 in European Russia 71% of boys and 52% of girls were literate: J. Brooks, *When Russia learned to read: Literacy and popular literacy, 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985), p.4

working adults.[43] In Sormovo, many of the skilled workers were literate and some had been attending voluntary educational and cultural classes since the late nineteenth century, in addition to having links to Nizhnii Novgorod Peoples University.[44] In the evacuation of universities eastward during World War One the Warsaw Polytechnic University moved to Nizhnii Novgorod and became the Nizhnii Novgorod Polytechnic Institute, which provided more educational opportunities for worker students.[45]

Both the Provisional Government and the Soviet state attempted to build upon the zemstvo education system. As *Narkompros* had hoped that educational opportunities would make workers invested in the Soviet regime, the Provisional Government hoped that educational campaigns would transform Russia's subjects into citizens. Only then it was believed that all Russians could participate in the building of a democratic Russia.[46] Although the Provisional Government promised new freedoms and duties for the workers and the peasantry, such as a democratisation of universities, educational activities were organised by elites and the traditional discourse of the peasants as 'dark masses' continued.[47] This rigid discourse about the Russian peasantry by the Provisional Government and local elites Retish argues was 'a major factor in the destruction of the Provisional Government'.[48]

Before 1917, the left Bolshevik splinter group *Vepered* (forward) hoped to transform proletarian culture through establishing workers' schools, based

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[43] McReynolds and Popkin, 'The objective eye and the common good', pp. 66,68; J.C. McClelland, *Autocrats and academics: Education, culture and society in Tsarist Russia* (Chicago, 1979), pp. 34-35

[44]TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Sormovo Factory Committee (16th August, 1920)

[45]A.E. Ivanov, 'Higher Education in Russian during the First World War and Revolution', in M. Frame, B. Kolonitskii, S. G. Marks and M. K. Stockdale (ed.), *Russian culture in war and revolution, 1914-22: Book 1. Popular Culture, the Arts, and Institutions* (Bloomington, 2014), p.291

[46] S. Badcock 'Talking to the people and shaping revolution: The drive for enlightenment in revolutionary Russia', *The Russian Review*, 65 (2006), pp.617, 622

[47] The Provisional Government accepted a 'Commission of Reform' established by representatives in Higher Education in 1917. This lay the path for more permanent and professionalised staff and courses at higher educational institutions, in addition to lower contributions from students. However, the Provisional Government offered no money to expand and democratise universities and announced that the academic year for higher education centres was to be postponed until 2nd October 1917 and in Petrograd until 1918; Ivanov, 'Higher Education in Russian during the First World War and Revolution', p. 306

[48] Retish 'Creating peasant citizens: Rituals of power, rituals of citizenship in Viatka province, 1917', pp.47-48

on the cultural-political beliefs of their founders, including Lunacharsky and Bogdanov. Maxim Gorky was another prominent member of *Vepered* and focused his attentions on Sormovo workers. The police repeatedly accused him of attempting to propagandise Sormovo workers.[49] The success of the *Vpered* group was limited and their courses and schools did not reach many ordinary workers, nor ever asked for input in their own education. After many *Vpered* members left Russia after the 1905 Revolution, the Bolshevik intelligentsia had little contact with the reality of Russian factory life and only rarely had ties with active representatives of the workers' movement.[50] After 1917, Luncharksy continued with the aims of *Vepered* and made clear that *Narkompros'* reform of the educational system was not just for children but adult workers too, as part of a continuous process of cultural transformation. In the statement on the 'Basic Principles of the United Labour School' Lunacharsky stated that the whole system of schools 'starting with kindergarten and going up to the university, must compromise one single body, one single hierarchy'.[51] It meant the cultural transformation of all of the Russian population to participate in the Soviet state.

Although they had similar aims, the Bolsheviks' educational reforms were far more wide ranging that the Provisional Government's. One of the most revolutionary early enactments of *Narkompros* was a decree of 2nd August 1918 which proclaimed the abolition of all admission requirements to higher educational institutions. There was to be no restrictions of sex or nationality or entrance exam, the only requirement was the prospective student had to be 16 years of age. This was a radical policy unparalleled anywhere else in Europe at the time. Furthermore, preference was given to poor workers and peasantry if the higher education classes became filled quickly. The organisation sought to expand both the number of higher education institutions and drastically increase the enrolment of working class students. By 1921, the number of higher schools that existed had reached 278, which was three times

[49] Yedlin, *Maxim Gorky: A Political Biography*, p.29
[50] J. Scherrer, 'The relationship between the Intelligentsia and workers: The case of the party schools in Capri and Bologna', in R.E. Zelnik (ed.), *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 172
[51] A. Lunacharsky, 'Osnovnye printsipy Edinoy Trudovoi Shkoly', *Izvestiia* (16th October, 1918), p.6

the number of schools in existence in 1914. Workers signed up in their thousands to take part in this new, radical educational opportunity.[52] Two types of higher educational institutions were created as successors to People's Universities which focused on educational (*Vysshee Uchebnoe Zavedenie*) and technical (*Vysshee Tekhnicheskoe Uchebnoe Zavedenie*) learning for workers, to expand on the Soviet school educational system.[53]

The rapidly growing number of students without a high school education led to rising complaints from professors that the new students were not capable of completing their assignments.[54] Responding to this problem, *Narkompros* began sending worker students to *rabfaki* (worker faculties) which were established to prepare them for higher education and its advanced curriculum, sometimes for as long as three to four years.[55] A *rabfaki* department was established for Sormovo workers in Nizhnii Novgorod State University (NGU) in 1918. This had the aim of creating a 'wide opportunity for Sormovo proletariat to receive higher education.'[56] These faculties were designed to bring up worker students to a normal standard of university entrance and they offered courses on subjects as diverse as accounting, physics, commercial law, politics and writing.[57] The *rabfaki* remained a constructive means of preparing the working class for higher education and was an important part of the Soviet educational system until 1940. In addition to creating young workers for the country the Bolsheviks aimed to create its own 'proletarian intelligentsia' to replace bourgeois specialists in education, to transform education from the bottom up. [58]

There were also many shorter educational courses advertised in Sormovo after 1917 and most of these classes were organised by NGU. It offered Sormovo workers free or subsidised evening courses and lectures on

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[52] McClelland., 'Bolshevik approaches to Higher Education, 1917-1921', pp. 819, 822-823
[53] S. Fitzpatrick, *Education and social mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.4-5
[54] Ivanov, 'Higher Education in Russian during the First World War and Revolution', p.309
[55] Fitzpatrick, *Education and social mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934*, p.49
[56] 'Sobranie Sormovskich Studentov N.G.U.', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok*, (27th October, 1918)
[57] Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organisation of education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, p.79
[58] McClelland, 'Bolshevik Approaches to Higher Education, 1917-1921', pp.825

both general and technical subjects. These ranged from physics, mathematics, chemistry, history and economics to engineering, mechanics and mining technology.[59] There was even an astronomy course advertised in the local newspaper for Sormovo workers in July 1919.[60] Many skilled workers became invested in these new educational opportunities. Some of the highly skilled workers in Sormovo gave lectures and offered guidance to worker students at NGU. Such high value was placed on educational courses for workers that the university made a petition to the state that such workers be exempted from military conscription. The petition was a success and one such worker was Stepan Samulovich who was named a 'luminary':

> 'Performing the role of draftsman at Sormovo factory [Stepan] was on the list made by the university as offering guidance to students, as an indispensible expert and therefore free from conscription to the army and military training'.[61]

The early Soviet state's campaign to improve public education for adults introduced many different educational and cultural opportunities to Sormovo. There was a stress on teachers in schools and universities to take account of workers educational needs and develop their courses accordingly. A mathematics course was advertised in Sormovo for both weaker and stronger students:

> 'The course is designed for persons who have studied mathematics, both for those who have a strong comprehension and those without. It will take two months for the stronger candidates and three months or longer for those who are weaker or completely unfamiliar with certain departments of elementary mathematics.'[62]

Workers in Sormovo also received some time off work to attend courses. In 1920, some Sormovo workers were sent to Moscow for a short course with other metalworkers or skilled workers. The Board of Education in Moscow

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[59] 'Otdel'nie Nizhegorodskovo Gosudarstvennovo Universiteta', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna*, (7th August, 1919)
[60] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (19th July, 1919)
[61] 'Sormovskaia Khronika', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (3rd May, 1919)
[62] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (11th June, 1919)

sent a recruitment letter to Sormovo factory detailing a course of 'physical labour'. This was specifically aimed at 'skilled workers' including metalworkers, woodworkers and printers who were already 'well educated' and had basic knowledge of mathematics and technical drawing. The course was to take place in Moscow and was free of charge. The aim of this course was to improve the skill level of already skilled workers in the hope of helping the war effort.[63] *Narkompros'* sustained drive for educational reform built upon liberal ideas of formal education but was drastically different in its scope. The emphasis on the educational needs of workers was extraordinary during a time of Civil War and economic crisis. The opportunities the early Soviet educational reforms gave to Sormovo workers were far more wide ranging than any policy of the Imperial state or Provisional Government.

This ambitious democratisation of higher education and educational courses theoretically gave any worker an equal chance to progress to higher education and even become part of the state administration. In reality, the harsh economic conditions of the Civil War meant that the initial growth of worker students dropped as they sought out full time employment or joined the Red Army. This meant that the social composition of the permanent student body did not drastically change in the few years after 1917.[64] Furthermore, many labour schools ceased to function during the Civil War. Surveys undertaken by *Narkompros* found that many schools did not open until December every year because of shortages, hunger and epidemics. Absenteeism was also high during the spring planting season in the villages, when from 40 to 70% of students did not attend school. The 'labour training' many of the schools offered comprised of cleaning and repairing the school and collecting water and firewood. A report released by *Narkompros* in 1925 revealed that in Russia from 1919-1922 universal education was a dream not a reality. On average children received 2 years of education in rural areas and 3

[63] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, School Instructions (15th September, 1920)
[64] McClelland, 'Bolshevik approaches to Higher Education, 1917-1921', pp.823-825

in urban areas and around 20% of children did not advance to the second grade.[65]

Even when courses did offer educational opportunities for workers they did not leave much room for the popular initiative Lunacharsky envisioned for the development of education. The aim of one of these courses is revealed from a central instruction sent to district committees throughout Russia for the organisation of a two-week party school for workers in 1919. In this circular are instructions sent to Sormovo for the local party members, who were to be running the course and lecturing the workers. In one section there is a list of 'obligations' laid out for the proposed lecturers. It detailed that they must only choose a lecture from a pre-determined list of acceptable topics and must encourage attendees to ask questions about this specific topic only and point them in the direction of further reading. The aim of this short course is summed up as educating 'listeners in the Marxist outlook' and enabling them to understand the 'point of view of the party in all matters of life'.[66] This exemplifies the increasingly centralised control over local educational courses by *Narkompros*. In reality, formal educational courses in the centre and in Sormovo had strict guidelines both the teachers and the students had to adhere to. In 1918, Lunacharsky had promised that teachers and pupils were to organise their own learning and they were promised minimum outside supervision.[67] However, teachers were strictly monitored and the Russian Teachers Union was disbanded, both in Nizhnii Novgorod and nationally, due to 'counter-revolutionary' activities.[68] The Bolsheviks had their own conception of what was an acceptable formal educational and cultural programme of development for workers and instead of waiting for local and popular initiatives to inform their policies they created a discourse of the cultural identity of a Soviet worker.

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[65] Holmes, *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, pp.17-18

[66] GOPANO, f.1, op.1, d.677, Meeting of the Provincial Committee R.K.P(b), in accordance with the organisation of mass education and a lecturing commission, with the participation of district committees (August, 1919)

[67] Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organisation of education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, p.32

[68] 'Sobranie Uchashchikh', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (28th January, 1919)

Agitating the Masses: *Proletkul't* and the Bolshevik Cultural Programme

Narkompros' educational reforms were the tip of the iceberg of the Soviet cultural mission. The ambitious scope of the Bolshevik cultural programme gradually interfered in everyday life in a way liberal reformers had never imagined in the late Imperial period. In Trotsky's 1923 work *The Problems of Everyday Life* he described how the goal of Soviet cultural work was no less than the creation of an 'improved edition' of man.[69] This tract goes much further than proposing the regulating of workers' free time. It is an incredibly intrusive definition of *proletkul't,* which entailed not only the transformation of cultural habits but also the moral and social values and even the thought processes of Soviet workers.[70] After 1917, the Bolsheviks had a proliferation of theories and policies of cultural transformation and created a far reaching propaganda infrastructure that went further than anything the Tsarist regime and Provisional Government had tried. Their vague rhetoric of *proletkul't* was carried around Russia both by the state and the quasi-governmental organisation *Proletkul't* in a desperate attempt to win the hearts of minds of workers during the Civil War. Despite the economic pressure exerted on Sormovo Metalworks during the Civil War, the local area boasted of an impressive array of cultural events including theatres and cinema, art shows and poetry readings. Ordinary workers in Sormovo took advantage of new opportunities to expand their cultural horizons after 1917 but this did not mean they blindly followed the cultural discourse of the state, *Proletkul't* and the other local parties. Whereas the Bolsheviks embroiled themselves in debate on how to achieve *proletkul't* the Sormovo workers rarely concerned themselves with such questions and worker culture remained diverse and their cultural identities remained fluid.[71]

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[69] Trotsky, 'Habits and custom' in *The problems of everyday life: And other writings on culture and science*, pp.27, 32

[70] In *The problems of everyday life* Trotsky argues that mental and physical labour should be joined and treated as one. This forms part of his belief that through the educational and cultural transformation of the beliefs and habits of Soviet workers in turn they will perform better at their jobs and so contribute to higher production levels: Trotsky, 'A few words on how to raise a human being', *The problems of everyday life: And other writings on culture and science*, p.140

[71] P. Herrlinger, 'Worker Culture(s) during War and Revolution' in Frame (ed.), *Russian culture in war and revolution, 1914-22*, p.82

Utopian Visions: Bolshevik Theories of Cultural Transformation

High level Bolsheviks like Lenin and Lunacharsky and Bolshevik outsider Bogdanov had years before 1917 to think about and detail what a socialist Russia would look like. The perceived economic and cultural backwardness of Russia propelled idealistic thinking about the cultural transformation of Russia.[72] The Civil War intensified the state's cultural mission because it represented a time of both devastation and creation and perpetuated the belief in cultural utopias that were linked directly to the survival of the state.[73] For a brief period after 1917 the Bolshevik party was one of pluralistic views and competing theories of cultural change both theoretical and practical. This meant that the Bolshevik cultural programme lacked coherence and competing ideologies caused dissension in the party.[74]

Marxism was the starting point for SD and Bolshevik ideas about a future socialist society. Marx had predicted that a political revolution would lead to a centralised state structure and an 'improvement' in human behaviour and proletarian consciousness, which would spread across society and eventually lead to a withering away of the state.[75] The elusive idea of proletarian consciousness was more an object of reverence for Bolsheviks and was not susceptible to any empirical investigation. A 'conscious' worker was a worker who fitted the Bolshevik intellectuals' notion of what a worker ought to be and there was not a consensus on this before or after 1917.[76] After the October Revolution, sharp disagreements soon erupted over the Bolshevik cultural programmes, as prominent Bolsheviks wanted to implement their visions for the future. McClelland perceives a divide in the Bolshevik party's cultural policy after 1917, between 'utopian' and 'revolutionary heroic' traditions. Proponents of the 'utopian' position, notably Bogdanov, argued for immediate and drastic changes in the existing culture with the premise that

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[72] R. Stites, 'Utopias in the air and on the ground: Futuristic dreams in the Russian Revolution', *Russian History*, 11 (1984), p.243

[73] Mally, *Culture of the future: The Proletkul't movement in revolutionary Russia*, p.xxviii

[74] C. Read, *Culture and power in revolutionary Russia: The intelligentsia and the transition from Tsarism to Communism* (Basingstoke, 1990), p.95

[75] K. Marx, 'The Communist Manifesto' in C. Peirson (ed.), *The Marx Reader* (Cambridge, 1997), p.145

[76] S. Fitzpatrick, 'The Bolsheviks' dilemma: Class, culture, and politics in the early Soviet years', *Slavic Review*, 47 (1988), p.599

socialism could only be built *after* the masses had acquired a truly proletarian class consciousness. The 'revolutionary heroic' position, led by Lenin and Trotsky advocated centralised control of the economy and crash industrialisation, arguing that economic development had to precede not follow or accompany social and cultural change. [77]

As early as 1902 in *What is to be Done?* Lenin laid out a pragmatic guide for the overthrowing of the autocracy. He argued that the SD party needed to lead the revolutionary struggle and direct the thoughts of workers in line with party aims and goals before cultural transformation could occur.[78] Bogdanov believed that the cultural and educational transformation of workers was vital for the success of the Soviet regime. In the *Proletkul't* journal *Proletarskaia Kul'tura* Bogdanov wrote that the creativity of the proletariat depended on workers working collectively both inside and outside the workplace. He argued that 'all creativity- technical, socio-economic, political, scientific and artistic' was entering a new 'transitional stage' in the Soviet state, which was a result of a consciousness about the importance of collective work. This he stated was equally important in the arts as it was in industry because it signified a new stage of worker development and creativity, stating 'there can be no strict boundaries between creativity and work'.[79]

Initially, these ideological differences were tolerated within the Bolshevik party and Lenin and other members of the Bolshevik elite showed some restraint towards cultural heterogeneity during the Civil War. This is best exemplified by *Narkompros'* funding of *Proletkul't*. *Proletkul't* was established in Petrograd in 1917 just a few days before the October Revolution. From a loose coalition of clubs, factory committees, workers theatres and educational societies in 1917 it evolved into a national movement that by its peak in 1920 had 400,000 members in 300 branches across Russia. Left Bolshevik and *Vperedist* Bogdanov directly inspired the organisation. In opposition to the growing encroachment of the state on the cultural sphere, the

[77] McClelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik policy: The proletarian culture debate', pp. 403-406, 409
[78] Lenin, 'What Is To Be Done?'
[79] A. Bogdanov, 'Puti Proletarskovo Tvorchestva', *Proletarskaia Kul'tura*, 15-16 (April-June, 1920), p.50

cardinal principles of *Proletkul't* were to defend the autonomy of its organisation from the state and to allow for independent action and creativity from workers to create a new proletarian culture.[80] Lunacharsky supported his close friend Bogdanov's vision for *Proletkul't*. In his first declaration as Commissar for Education, Lunacharsky essentially abdicated the powers of the Soviet Government in *Proletkul't* affairs and agreed that it was to remain an independent body, albeit with close links to the state.[81] *Narkompros* funded *Proletkul't's* wide ranging activities which spread all over Russia, splitting the money between the categories of theatre, cinema, music and singing, fine art, clubs, literature and libraries.[82]

One of the persistent disagreements within the Bolshevik party was whether 'old' bourgeois culture should influence the 'new' *proletkul't*. Bogdanov's belief that the February Revolution had been a result of the cultural advancement of the bourgeoisie led him to argue that the proletariat should take some cultural lessons from 'old culture'. As leader of *Proletkul't* he acknowledged that the bourgeoisie 'accumulated an enormous wealth of material' of scientific development that should not be abandoned but be developed. It was the individualistic and fragmented nature of cultural advancement that Bogdanov argued prevented an 'orderly systematic coherent organisation' of intellectual development, namely collectivism.[83] Fellow *Vperedist* Lebedev-Polyanskii argued, at the first All-Russian Conference of Proletarian Enlightenment Organisations, that a future proletarian culture had 'roots in the culture of preceding generations'. He stated that it was possible for a proletarian culture to be born in capitalist Russia before 1917 but it presented 'sickly, pallid sprouts which we must make grow into a mighty tree'.[84] Lunacharsky argued that the culture of the past had to be critically assimilated rather than rejected and then used as a basis for a new and different

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[80] Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia*, pp. xvii-xix, xxv

[81] Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organisation of education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, p. 89

[82] Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The intelligentsia and the transition from Tsarism to Communism*, p.128

[83] A. Bogdanov, 'Nauka i Rabochii Klass', *Proletarskaia Kul'tura*, 2 (July, 1918), pp. 21-22

[84] P.I. Lebedev-Polyanskii, 'Revolution and the Cultural Tasks of the Proletariat' (1918) in Rosenberg (ed.), *Bolshevik visions: First phase of the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia*, pp.62-63

proletarian culture. As the head of *Narkompros* he supported a wide array of avant-garde artists, poets and actors who sought protection commissions and jobs, many of whom he had met in exile before 1917.[85] Ultimately, he hoped that socialist art would not be just a class culture but would become universal and classless.

However, many Bolsheviks were hostile to the notion that they had something to learn from the bourgeoisie. Arguments for 'cultural iconoclasm' were frequent after 1917 as Bolshevik 'ultra-utopians' and the anarchic Futurist movement fiercely denounced 'old culture'.[86] The Futurism movement, led by Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky, equated futurist art with proletarian art and demanded that for true proletarian art to flourish it must be separated from the state. They called for a third cultural revolution 'of the spirit' to follow the two political revolutions in 1917, which for them meant the creation of an entirely new culture.[87] In 1912 Mayakovsky was adamant that all 'bourgeois' culture should be abandoned. In his poem *Slap In The Face of Public Taste* he and other futurists set forth a manifesto which promised to 'Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., etc. overboard from the Ship of Modernity'. This included a demand that the 'cheap fame' of bourgeois writers be forgotten and that Russians should 'feel an insurmountable hatred for the language existing before their time'.[88]

Lenin took a middle ground and pragmatic approach towards creating *proletkul't*. He did not see it as the priority Bogdanov did. In the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922, when Proletkul't was disbanded, Lenin rejected the notion that any semblance of proletarian culture had been achieved yet.[89] In one of his last writings *Better fewer, but better* he spoke scathingly about *proletkul't* arguing 'in matters of culture, haste and sweeping measures are

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[85] R.C. Williams, *Artists in revolution: Portraits of the Russian avant-garde, 1905-1925* (London, 1978), p.57

[86] McClelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik Policy: The proletarian culture debate', pp. 415-416

[87] B. Jangfeldt, 'Russian Futurism 1917-1919' in N.A Nilsson (ed.), *Art, society, revolution: Russia 1917-1921* (Stockholm, 1979), pp. 107-108, 115

[88] D. Burlick, A.Kruchenykh, V. Mayavovsky and V. Khlebnikov, 'Slap in the Face of Public Taste', in A. Lawton and H. Eagle (ed.), *Russian Futurism through Its Manifestos, 1912-1928* (Ithaca, 1988), p.52

[89] Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia*, p.224

most harmful. Many of our young writers and Communists should get this well into their heads.'[90]

However, he utilised cultural 'experts' after 1917 for Soviet festivities. He worked with Mayavovsky and the Futurist movement to create striking posters and poems during the Civil War.[91] He also tolerated the existence of *Proletkul't* but remained hostile to Bogdanov and argued that he was turning proletarian culture into a philosophy rather than a reality. Like Bogdanov, he stated that the culture of the past needed to be assimilated to create *proletkul't*.[92] Unlike Bogdanov, Lenin viewed the problem of *proletkul't* in a pragmatic not a theoretical way. He urged restraint from the more radical elements in the Bolshevik party towards famous 'bourgeois' artists and scientists because he believed Russia needed the skills of these 'experts' to transition to socialism.[93]

This pragmatic approach is exemplified in Lenin's organisation of festivals in the early Soviet period, where he appropriated techniques and events from the past and used them for his own ends. Lenin harnessed the Russian tradition of mass celebration, especially in February 1917, to organise May Day in 1918.[94] In comparison to the spontaneous celebration in Sormovo and around Russia in February 1917, May Day created a distinct focal point for celebration and represented a move towards standardised symbolism through the creation of a new national anthem and flag. In the decree 'On Monuments of the Republic' Lenin laid out a broad coalition with artists and the education department in a plan to celebrate May Day. Old Tsarist monuments were to be removed and replaced with new ones, the city was to be decorated and street names that were associated with the Tsarist regime were changed, a popular name being 'Prospekt Revolutsii'.[95]

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[90] V.I. Lenin, 'Better fewer, but better', *Collected Works* (2nd ed.), Vol. 33 (Moscow, 1965), 487 - 502

[91] Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The intelligentsia and the transition from Tsarism to Communism*, p.164; See Appendix: Image 8.

[92] Mc Clelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik Policy: The proletarian culture debate', p.424

[93] P. Kenez, 'Lenin's concept of culture', *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989), pp.360-361

[94] See Appendix: Image 9.

[95] 'Decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars, 'On monuments of the Republic'' (12 April 1918), in Tolstoy, Bibikova and Cooke (ed.), *Street art of the revolution: Festivals and*

As 1918 progressed, the Soviet state attempted to exert a greater control on public celebrations. The aim of these mass spectacles was not to celebrate the pluralism of Russian cultural expression but to control it by standardising legitimate cultural celebrations. The first annual celebration of the October Revolution in November 1918 was markedly different to the May Day celebrations. The symbolism was standardised and there was greater planning and control by the government.[96] Lunacharsky led the organisation of the Revolution's anniversary in Petrograd and revealed his grand plans to the public in *Izvestiia*. He announced the festivities were to last for three days, they would begin with public lectures in the city's districts, 'to explain the meaning and significance of the revolution to the masses and to review preceding historical epochs'. Monuments were to be unveiled, poetry and prose readings would take place all over the city in addition to theatre shows and the third day would be devoted to parades and national festivities.[97] In Revolution Square in Moscow busts of Marx and Engels were unveiled and the History Museum was decorated in different colours bearing the name of revolutionary leaders, including Lenin.[98] This centralised drive for public celebration did not mean a radical break from the past. The mass gatherings were reminiscent of religious processions during the late Imperial period and the spontaneous celebrations of 1917.[99] However, the standardisation of public celebration during 1918 meant that despite the illusion of a new found cultural

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celebrations in Russia, 1918-1933, p.38; C. Kelly, 'Introduction: Iconoclasm and commemorating the past', in Kelly and Shepherd (ed.), *Constructing Russian culture in the age of revolution: 1881-1940,* p.230

[96] R. Stites, 'The origins of Soviet ritual style: Symbol and festival in the Russian Revolution', in C. Arvidsson and L.E. Blomqvist (ed.), *Symbols of power: The esthetics of political legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Michigan, 1987), p.33

[97] A. Lunacharsky, 'Report on the organisation of celebrations for the first anniversary of the October Revolution' (25th September, 1918) in Tolstoy, Bibikova and Cooke (ed.), *Street art of the revolution: Festivals and celebrations in Russia, 1918-1933*, p.55; for a detailed overview of the organisation for May Day in Petrograd in 1918 See A. Rabinowitch, 'Celebrating the 'greatest event in the history of the world' in Rabinowitch, *Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd,* pp.356-388

[98] 'Report on the first anniversary of the October Revolution', *Pravda,* (9th November, 1918) in Tolstoy, Bibikova and Cooke (ed.), *Street art of the Revolution: Festivals and celebrations in Russia, 1918-1933*, p.56

[99] For celebrations and cultural events in the provinces in 1917 see S. Badcock, 'Talking to the people and shaping revolution', in Badcock, *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: A provincial history*, pp.123-144; Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922*, pp.73-83; See Appendix: Images 12 and 13 for popular celebration and demonstrations in Sormovo in 1917

freedom and celebration public cultural events were carefully controlled by the central state.

Despite the Bolsheviks' attempts to standardise and control public celebration, in Sormovo the mass gathering always proved to be a space of political contestation. The local Bolsheviks were furious when their May Day celebrations in 1918 were hi-jacked by 'right socialists'. In a report about the event the Bolsheviks complained how the street demonstrations, apparently led by Sormovo workers, were infiltrated by local Mensheviks and Right SRs. A Bolshevik newspaper report from 4th May 1918 reveals the tension between the moderate socialists, who still had large popularity in Sormovo, and the Bolshevik party, who were in the minority:

> 'The counter-revolution does not sleep; it is ready to act at any moment, as soon as there is possibility. And the opportunity presented itself on the first day of May. On that day the proletariat made his enemies, not the bourgeoisie, who have already been crushed, [but] the Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries.'[100]

The May Day celebrations in Sormovo had been orchestrated by the local Bolsheviks. Their plans were produced in *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok*. The demonstration in Sormovo was to begin at 9am and was to be made up of a procession of male and female workers from Sormovo and surrounding areas, children playing music and members of the Bolshevik party organisation.[101] Therefore, the Right SRs' and Mensheviks' disruption of the proceedings was disastrous for the careful organisation of the Bolsheviks. Even more so when, after refusing to take part in the demonstration, the moderate socialists held placards in the street and began shouting slogans like 'Welcome the Constituent Assembly.' After the forcible closure of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 the Bolsheviks were uneasy about the possibility of Sormovo workers supporting other socialist groups who wanted a re-opening of the democratic assembly. May Day was a historical celebration

[100] '1st Maia: Menshevik i Pravi Eseri', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok*, (4th May, 1918)
[101] 'Poriadok Shestviia 1-go Maia', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (1st May, 1918)

of the workers and the international worker movement and so the public celebration in Sormovo became a space where local parties tried to impose their own meaning of the workers' movement and tried to claim they represented workers' needs. The 'right socialists' were claiming to represent the workers by calling for a democracy. The Bolsheviks vehemently criticised the Mensheviks and Right SR's by claiming they represented counter-revolutionary elements who were trying to infiltrate the workers movement to spread messages that were 'against the proletariat and the gains of the proletariat revolution.'[102]

Public celebration in Soviet Russia was not only a space to celebrate events in the holiday calendar but the careful organisation of festivals was a way the Bolsheviks attempted to create a monolithic visual representation of Russia and her people. It was an example of how the Soviet state became gradually more interfering, not only in political and economic spheres but cultural and social ones too. Carefully planned Bolshevik festivals were portrayed as spontaneous or at least willing celebrations of the Soviet state by workers. In a time of repeated upheavals Bolshevik festivals provided a space where history could be moulded to reflect the most attractive sides of Bolshevism and present an idealistic vision for the future. This is why, despite the economic privations during the Civil War, festivals were deemed as crucial work and politicians devoted precious time and money to organise and participate in festivals.[103] During the economic breakdown and internal and external political challenges during the Civil War, it was vitally important that the Soviet state created a clear political programme that was disseminated to as many people as possible.[104]

<u>To the People: The impact of *Agitprop* in Early Soviet Russia</u>

The careful orchestration of festivals and public celebration in the early Soviet period was only one aspect of the wide reaching Bolshevik propaganda machine. The Soviet policy of *agitprop* (agitational propaganda) in early Soviet Russia was far more wide ranging than any cultural policy of the Tsarist

[102] '1st Maia: Menshevik i Pravi Eseri'(4th May, 1918)
[103] J. Von Geldern, *Bolshevik festivals, 1917-1920* (Berkeley, 1993), pp.2-5
[104] Kelly,'Introduction: Iconoclasm and commemorating the past', p.231

regime or Provisional Government. However, it was also a continuation of the liberal notion of 'rational recreation'; an attempt to persuade workers to educate themselves and dissuade them from engaging in cultural activities deemed destructive or backward. The purpose of *agitprop* was to link the centre to the localities by spreading a uniform propaganda message across Russia and to agitate workers in local areas to support the state. Sormovo was a focus of *agitprop* because it was a politically contested area and had a large skilled workforce, judged by the Bolsheviks and *Proletkul't* as ripe for cultural enlightenment. In September 1920 *Agitpropotdel* (Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee) was established to formalise and control cultural policy. It signalled the decline of the autonomy of *Proletkul't* and the open discussion of cultural affairs within the Bolshevik party.[105] However, in the first few years of the Soviet state, despite the Bolsheviks' best efforts to create a mass culture of political subservience, the introduction of new cultural opportunities on a national and local level actually encouraged a diversity of opinion, styles and tastes on the local level.[106]

The idea of controlling worker leisure time was a continuation of Bolshevik and SD tactics before 1917. It built on the formation of underground workers' circles (*kruzhki*) in factories before 1917, with the purpose of 'self education' of the workers and theoretical preparation for a socialist revolution.[107] It also built on the establishment of People's Houses (*Narodnye Doma*) by liberal philanthropists, which hoped to alleviate the social problems associated with poverty and foster a new moral and cultural code for the lower classes.[108] Despite the liberal connotations of 'People's House', the Sormovo People's House kept its name after 1917 and continued to be used by the local Bolsheviks as a less formal venue for educational courses and cultural events. For 'Universal Education Day' in May 1919 there was a parade held in the day and a large meeting in the evening, where there was reported to be 'a large

[105] Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The intelligentsia and the transition from Tsarism to Communism*, pp.94, 170
[106] J. Von Geldern and R. Stites (ed.), *Mass culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, poems, songs, movies, plays and folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington, 1995), p.xii
[107] D. Offord, *The Russian revolutionary movement in the 1880's* (Cambridge, 1986), p. xiii
[108] For People's Houses in late Imperial Russia see A. Lindenmeyr, 'Building society one brick at a time: People's Houses and worker enlightenment in late Imperial Russia', *Journal of Modern History*, 84 (2012), 1-39

gathering of workers'. The meeting consisted of speeches and lectures, not too dissimilar to the activities of People's Houses in the late Imperial period.[109] These events were organised and controlled by the *Narkompros* department 'People's Education'.[110] During the early Soviet period, the People's Houses around Russia were a hub of cultural and educational events organised by the state and *Proletkul't*. Despite being an initiative of liberal philanthropists in late Imperial Russia, their activities were built upon and expanded after 1917.

The cultural organisation *Proletkul't* built upon the liberal notion of 'rational recreation' by promoting cultural transformation through local cultural initiatives and spontaneity. Both *Proletkul't* and state sponsored cultural events spread to Sormovo through art clubs, theatre groups, poetry performances and even dances at People's Houses and other local venues. On 14th January 1918, Sormovo workers were invited to a performance 'in the premises of the local school where a circle of amateur actors performed the play of Alexander Ostrovsky: "Poverty is No Crime."' *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* reported that it was the first performance of the circle and 'was met with great interest' by the audience.[111] Two months later another 'student evening' was arranged where a historical play with several songs was performed. The reviewer described the performances of the pupils as 'perfectly executed' with costumes and scenery to match the play which gave a 'good impression' to the assembled audience.[112] The aim of these performances was to acquaint Sormovo workers with the local students in the hope of raising their cultural level. A conservatoire was even opened in Sormovo in March 1918 and the 'State Symphony Orchestra' performed there to honour its opening. There were regular performances after this arranged by the Department of Music in Nizhnii Novgrorod.[113] In the local newspaper these events were often titled as 'Art of the People'.[114] These were events specifically targeted at workers and ordinary people, they were to be inclusive and either free or as cheap as possible.

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[109] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (27th May, 1919)
[110] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (28th January, 1919)
[111] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (28th January, 1918)
[112] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok*, (21st March, 1918)
[113]'Teatr i Isskystvo', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (8th March, 1919)
[114] 'Isskustvo- Narodu', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (7th March, 1919)

Another popular event in Sormovo was the art exhibition. In May 1918, *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* advertised an 'exhibition of paintings by artists in Sormovo (in the Sormovo County School).' The exhibition was popular with workers, as the newspaper reported it was extended by a week.[115] Three days later there was an extensive review of the art exhibition in the same newspaper. The reviewer stated that all the art in the exhibition was from 'self taught artists' from Sormovo factory:

> 'Sormovo workers are interested in art, they want to host art courses, and open an art museum. They need art: A man cannot live by bread alone. These bright aspirations we welcome wholeheartedly and wish the initiators of this great cause complete success. And success there will be! But only with more courage, more self-criticism and a more rigorous attitude to their work. At the exhibition there is a beautiful, talented work; work that is pleasing and invigorating.'[116]

The review then goes into detail about individual works of art and offers advice on how they could be improved. For example, he recommended worker-artists stop 'slavishly copy[ing] postcards, reproductions and paintings' and find inspiration for their own paintings.[117] This extensive review in a Bolshevik newspaper reveals that the Bolshevik aim of cultural transformation was not confined to formal education, nor was it superficial or theoretical. It was a practical sustained effort to encourage worker cultural development in local areas across Russia. The cultural development of Sormovo workers was viewed as more than just the enlightenment or the attainment of class consciousness of workers in line with party policy. Local events and courses aimed at developing the Soviet equivalent of a renaissance man, whose cultural knowledge would lead to the cultural and economic advancement of Soviet Russia. Many local areas did not have enough resources to stage many cultural activities over the Civil War but there was clearly interest from Sormovo workers in both *Proletkul't* and Bolshevik led courses and cultural events. In addition to the Sormovo workers who had their work displayed in the

[115] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (12th May, 1918)
[116] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (15th May, 1918)
[117] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (15th May, 1918)

exhibition, the attendance figures for the exhibition were calculated as almost 2,000 in late 1917 and early 1918.[118]

Many reading rooms were established in Sormovo and Nizhnii Novgrorod in an attempt to improve the literacy of workers and encourage independent writing. In August 1918, a reading room was opened in Sormovo both for the loaning and selling of 'all kinds of literature and magazines'. The reading room was open from 4 pm to 10 pm, to fit in with work hours, and also produced a new magazine called the 'Sormovo Bulletin', which cost 75 kopeks.[119] There was even a reading room in the premises of the Metalworkers' Union in Nizhnii Novgorod. In December 1918, the members of the Metalworkers' Union were told to evacuate the premises of their building within the next few days, with the purpose that it would become the Sormovo *Proletkul't* building, although they were still allowed access to the reading room.[120] The state and *Proletkul't* initially worked side by side and often together in the creation of local cultural and educational events in Sormovo. The scope of Bolshevik cultural transformation and the localisation and de-centralisation of culture through *Proletkul't* organisations meant that cultural opportunities for Sormovo workers expanded rapidly after 1917.

Proletkul't also attempted to foster proletarian writers in their national journals. In the first edition of the Moscow *Proletkul't's* journal *Gorn,* the editor wrote that their journal was a 'celebration' of the work of the proletariat in their 'self-education'. It included poems and prose from various 'proletarian' authors, who through their writings reveal their attempt to create a *proletkul't* for workers everywhere.[121] One of the themes in workers' writings before and after 1917 was the imagery of the machine as the saviour of Russia. There was very little focus on other industries or workplaces and the factory of heavy industry came to be viewed as the zenith of urban worker life, because of the predominance of skilled workers and their organisational skills. For worker writers the urban landscape represented not only a physical place where

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[118] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (15th May, 1918); There were many advertisements for art and theatre courses exclusively for workers, for example, 'Proletkul't', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (4th July, 1919)
[119] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (16th August, 1918)
[120] 'Rabochiia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (12th December, 1918)
[121] Mosckovskii Proletkul't (1918), 1, *Gorn,* pp.1-2

workers worked and lived but also a symbolic landscape in which they could express judgements about other issues such as the social order.[122] This especially appealed to metalworkers who represented a permanent workforce and were familiar with the imagery of the heavy machinery in proletarian poetry.

An example of this is Vladimir Timofeievich Kirillov's poem *Iron Messiah* (1918) in *Proletarskaya Kul'tura*. This is a poem about the power of the machine in destroying the old world and levelling the new world:

> 'To the world he brings a new sun,
> He destroys the thrones and prisons,
> He calls the peoples to eternal fraternity,
> And wipes out the boundaries between them.'[123]

These poems glorified the machine, technology and collectivism with vivid imagery. Mikhail Mikhaylovich Gerasimov's poem *We* (1919) mixes religious imagery with that of a burning stove in a factory:

> 'Was it not for us that on Mount Sinai,
> in the burning bush,
> the Red Banner glowed,
> like the sun, Amid storm and fire.' [124]

Aleksei Kapitonovich Gastev's poems and stories also romanticised the environment of the factory and mixed it with religious imagery. His short story *The Wonders of Work* (1918) focused on the boiler shop in a plant whose workers view their shop in a mystical, sacred way:

> 'The dear crowd were greeted by nihilists - the preachers:
> Do you believe in God again?
> - We? Nonsense – We are new idolaters; we worship and sing to the boiler created by us.'[125]

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[122] M. D. Steinberg, 'The urban landscape in workers' imagination', *Russian History/ Histoire Russe*, 23 (1996), p.48
[123] V. Kirillov, 'Zheleznoi Messiia', *Proletarskaia Kul'tura,* 2 (July, 1918), p.28
[124] M. Gerasimov, 'We' (1919) in Von Geldern and Stites (ed.), *Mass culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, poems, songs, movies, plays and folklore 1917-1953*, p.6

As a former metalworker Gastev became the leader of the Taylorist movement in Russia to increase labour efficiency. In his poem *We Grow Out of Iron* (1918) he anthropomorphised the mechanisms of the factory to suggest the worker and machine were one:

> 'Fresh iron blood pours into my veins.
> I have grown taller.
> I too am growing shoulders of steel and arms immeasurably strong. I am one with the building's iron'
> I have risen.[126]

Like Bogdanov's promotion of cultural and economic collectivism this poem suggested a united proletariat would grow and develop through their experience of shared labour. This symbolism appealed to many metalworkers as several of the *Proletkult's* first organisers, Fedor Kalinin, Vladimir Kossior, and Aleksei Gastev had either been metalworkers or became active in the Metalworkers' Union.[127] Many of the poems and prose published in national *Proletkul't* journals were written by former workers, students or party members who did not represent the reality of everyday working life in Civil War Russia. The idea was that these worker authors would represent ordinary workers' needs and experiences through their poetry and prose and 'understand their moods and feelings'.[128] The contradiction in the aims of both organisations was that they sought to promote the spontaneity of proletarian writers and *proletkul't* but at the same time were selective in the material they published, and created a formulaic notion of what *proletkul't* was, based on self improvement through education and a collective work ethic.

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[125] A. Gastev, 'The Wonders of Work' (Chudesa Raboti), *Proletarskaia Kul'tura,* 2 (July, 1918), p.31
[126] A. Gastev, 'We Grow Out of Iron' (1918) in Von Geldern and Stites (ed.), *Mass culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, poems, songs, movies, plays and folklore 1917-1953*, p.3
[127] Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia,* p.71; For Gastev see R. Hellebust, 'Aleksei Gastev and the metallization of the revolutionary body', *Slavic Review*, 56 (1997), 500-518
[128] P.I. Lebedev-Polyanskii, 'Motivni Rabochii Klass', *Proletarskaia Kul'tura*, 3 (August, 1918), p.1

However, the importance of metalworkers to the national economy meant they were a focus of *Proletkul'tists* and the state who were interested in their thoughts and day to day work experiences. In 1920, Gerasimov and other worker writers including Semen Abramovich Rodov even left *Proletkul't* to form *Kuznitsa* (The Blacksmith) arguing that *Proletkul't* was hindering the 'creative capacities' of proletarian writers.[129] Petrograd Metalworkers' Union sent a request for help to Sormovo workers in writing their journal *Metallist.* They wanted stories from everyday life in the factory and information about their local trade union movement.[130] Furthermore, the membership of *Proletkul't* was not just made up of students or party members but ordinary workers. The Sormovo *Proletkul't* organisation was composed of representatives from many different local organisations. This consisted of membership from the Metalworkers' Union, the Union of Soviet Employees, the Youth League, the General Factory Committee of Sormovo Factory, the Student Organisation of Sormovo, Nizhnii Novgorod State University and the drama and musical section from the Department of Education in Nizhnii Novgrorod.[131]

As *Prolet'kult* spread from Petrograd to local areas of Russia it had the most success in the most industrially advanced regions. In addition to the Sormovo *Proletkul't* organisation four of the other nine private plants that were nationalised in 1918 to form GOMZa had their own *Proletkul't* organisations.[132] Both metalworking plants in Tula opened *Proletkul't* organisations and in a report to *Proletarskaia Kul'tura* the region reportedly held a total 60 cultural events over the winter (January-April) of 1920. This included 16 lectures, 8 concerts, 18 film viewings, 10 children's ballet performances and plays, 5 meetings and 3 miscellaneous. In most issues of *Proletarskaia Kul'tura* there was a section *Provintsii* devoted to cultural activities in the provinces. This included industrial areas such as Izhevsk, Nizhnii-Novgorod, Simbirsk, Tver, Tula and Yaroslavl but also more

[129] Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self Modernty and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925*, pp.55-56
[130]GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, 'Metallist' Organ Vserossiskovo i Petrogradskovo Soiuza: Rabochikh- Metallistov (December, 1917)
[131] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (15th June, 1919)
[132] Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia*, p.71

agricultural areas such as Penza and Tambov. In Penza the local Proletkul't organisation established a workers club and hosted regular plays at a theatre, which in April 1920 was Gorky's *Mat'.*[133]

The reach of *Proletkul't* into local areas in Russia was unlike any cultural organisation that had come before it. However, its wide spread was also a reason for the downfall of the organisation. The focus on de-centralisation and spontaneity meant the organisation had no clear plan or policy about the practicalities of cultural transformation. Read argues that 'where *Narkompros* was strong on organisational reform and weak on the principles of cultural revolution, *Proletkul't* was the reverse.'[134] In the second edition of *Proletarskaia Kul'tura* Lebedev-Polyanskii discussed the problem of proletarian cultural transformation. In an article about worker poets he lamented that:

> 'The authors of pamphlets, articles, reviews are simply chroniclers recording cultural and educational work among the proletariat. In most cases they do not have a clear idea of what a proletarian culture is or what the process should be for replacing the old culture with the new culture.'[135]

State-controlled *agitprop* had much more control over the spread of propaganda to the localities than *Proletkul't*. Despite Lunacharsky's rhetoric of spontaneity, the Soviet state made a conscious effort to control *agitprop* from the centre. *Agitprop* used similar techniques to *Proletkul't* and staged similar cultural events and courses in local areas but the state went much further than introducing new cultural opportunities to Sormovo workers. The Bolshevik cultural programme in the localities was a centralised mass agitational programme. Through new mediums, notably film, the Bolsheviks spread a message of political conformity throughout Russia's localities framed as cultural transformation. In a vast country with a widely scattered population, and rapidly shifting war fronts, the Bolsheviks required a mobile and reliable

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[133] 'Provintsii', *Proletarskaia Kul'tura,* 15-16 (April-July, 1920), p.76
[134] Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The intelligentsia and the transition from Tsarism to Communism*, p.111
[135] Lebedev-Polyanskii, 'Motivni Rabochii Klass', p.1

medium of communication between the state and the people and from the centre to the regions. *Agitprop* became the Bolshevik propaganda machine which travelled around Russia with *agit*-trains and *agit-punkty* (stations) to bestow theatre, film, speeches and newspapers on the masses.

The use of the cinema was one of the most innovative and wide reaching aspects of Bolshevik propaganda. It developed the visual propaganda used by the Bolsheviks after 1917. By 1914, the total audience for the cinema had overtaken audiences for theatres, opera houses, concert halls, circuses and music halls put together.[136] It was the only mass medium available in an era where television and radio were not fully developed.[137] Originally after October 1917, the Bolsheviks allowed private film studios to continue producing and making films but in June 1918 the Bolsheviks restored film censorship that had been relaxed after the February Revolution.[138]

The Moscow and Petrograd Cinema Committees began producing *agitki* for mass consumption, which were short agitational films, many no longer than 30 minutes, which dealt with a particular topic in a strongly visual manner.[139] Film was also much easier to control than theatre, it was highly centralised and the authorities could be sure that a film sent out to the provinces would be identical to one shown in Moscow, the same could not be said for travelling theatre troupes. One such film produced by the Moscow Film Committee, to mark the first anniversary of the Red Army, was called 'The Fugitive' (*Beglets*). It told the tale of a deserter from the Red Army who returns to his village to be chucked out of his house by his brother and then realises his mistake when the front reaches his village and he eventually returns to the army.[140] The content of the *agitki* worked on straight forward class lines and were designed to propagandise Bolshevik programmes and

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[136] R.Taylor, 'A medium for the masses: Agitation in the Soviet Civil War', *Soviet Studies*, 22 (1971), p. 563, 565

[137] R.Taylor, 'The Birth of the Soviet Cinema' in Gleason, Kenez and Stites (ed.), *Bolshevik culture: Experiment and order in the Russian Revolution,* p.190

[138] D.J. Youngblood, 'Fade to Black: The Russian commercial film industry during war and revolution' in Frame (ed.), *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914-1922*, p.93

[139] R.Taylor, 'Agitation, propaganda and the cinema: The search for new solutions, 1917–1921', in Nilsson (ed.), *Art, society, revolution: Russia 1917-1921,* p.242

[140] Taylor, 'The birth of the Soviet cinema', pp.191,194; *Beglets,* Moscow Film Company (1919)

policies during the Civil War.[141] They also provided a form of escapism from the extreme suffering of the Civil War by portraying utopian fantasies and a celebration of socialist labour.[142]

One of the most famous *agit*-steamers was the *Red Star* (*Krasnaia Zvezda*) which spent three months in 1919 sailing down the Volga.[143] It carried the political commissar Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov and the *Narkompros* representative and head of the Commissariat for Education Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya. That these high level Bolsheviks were spared from the centre, to make a tour around localities in Russia, signifies the political importance of Bolshevik propaganda. The future Minister for Foreign Affairs, Molotov was there to 'instruct and inspect' local party and state organisations, who were commanded to give him full co-operation and assistance, which he then reported back to central government.[144] On its two voyages in 1919 and 1920 the steamer showed more than 400 films to over 500,000 people.[145] The *Red Star* began its journey from Nizhnii Novgorod in July 1919 and the passengers stopped by in Sormovo before it set sail. The local Bolsheviks used the arrival of these prominent Bolsheviks to promote their policies and raise their popularity in an area where they were outnumbered by SRs. *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* reported on the arrival of the *Red Star* and the high level Bolsheviks in Sormovo:

> 'On Friday, 4th July, there was a grand rally held in the garden of the People's House. At this meeting there were more than 5,000 working men and women. Before the speeches the Symphony Orchestra (of Sormovo's Department of Education) and Sormovo music school pupils played *The Internationale*. The rally was opened on behalf of comrade Rybakov [a leading local Bolshevik] ... Krupskaya Ulyanova

[141] Youngblood, 'Fade to Black: The Russian commercial film industry during war and revolution', p.96
[142] Von Geldern and Stites (ed.), *Mass culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, poems, songs, movies, plays and folklore, 1917-1953*, p.xiv
[143] For information on the *Red Star's* jouney see Taylor, 'A medium for the masses: Agitation in the Soviet Civil War', pp. 572-573 and Krupskaya's journal from the journey: N. K. Krupskaya, *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia v deviati tomakh*, volume 11 (1963)
[144] D. Watson, *Molotov: A biography* (Basingstoke, 2005)
[145] Taylor, 'The birth of the Soviet Cinema', p.196

> gave a speech recalling the role of Sormovo workers in the revolutionary movement both locally and in Petrograd.'

Other speeches from local and national Bolsheviks included themes on the international labour movement, the fight against Kolchack and the successes of the Red Navy in the Volga. The meeting was attended by local Bolsheviks and representatives of Moscow and Petrograd Soviets and it must have been an impressive spectacle for the Sormovo workers. After the meeting, the People's House was turned into a free cinema where five *agitprop* films were shown which included 'October Revolution', 'Daredevils of Revolution' and the educational *agitki* 'Labour Commune'. The next day, the local Bolsheviks handed out newspapers produced inside the *Red Star* (and named *Red Star*) to Sormovo workers which was reported as being 'popular' amongst Sormovo workers.[146]

A year before the *Red Star* arrived, the Commissar for Naval Affairs Raskolnikov was sent to Sormovo where there was a rally 'attended by about 1,000 workers', there:

> 'Comrade Raskolnikov delivered a great report on the current situation. His report was heard with great attention and applause by the vast majority of those present at the meeting. With fierce and defamatory language he criticised the leaders of Sormovo Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, and as a result of the debate the workers overwhelmingly adopted a resolution proposed by the Bolsheviks and Left SR Maximalists.'[147]

This is a highly exaggerated account of Raskolnikov's visit to Sormovo as reported in a Bolshevik newspaper. Raskolnikov was used as a show piece to bolster the support for local Bolsheviks during a time of high tensions between the moderate socialists and Bolsheviks in the local soviet. It created a narrative of a popular Bolshevik party in Sormovo and conceptualised Sormovo workers as supportive of Bolshevik policies in the local press.

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[146] *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (8th July, 1919); See Appendix: Images 10 and 11
[147] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (7th April, 1918)

These propaganda rallies and showpieces in Sormovo reveal how far Bolshevik *agitprop* reached during the Civil War and how important the support of Sormovo workers was in a time of extreme political struggle on a local and national level. In their use of cinema, festivals and rallies the Bolsheviks wanted to create a mass culture of understanding for and support of the new Soviet regime. *Agitprop* spoke with one powerful voice, it depicted a world of sharp contrasts, whether that was the cinematic evil landowner against the humble peasant or the rhetoric of the Bolsheviks in Sormovo against the 'counter-revolutionary' Mensheviks and SRs.[148]

It is difficult to decipher how much Sormovo workers were influenced by state and *Proletkul't* efforts of cultural reform. The attendance of Sormovo workers to the show pieces of Bolshevik propaganda reveals that there must have been an interest in the new technology of Soviet film and speeches of famous Bolsheviks, but it does not mean that the workers assimilated its message. Equally just because local workers attended the cultural events put on by the local *Proletkul't* organisation this did not mean they were partaking in creating a new *proletkul't*; at the most it signifies workers were eager to take new cultural opportunities. In Sormovo at least, the hegemonic Soviet propaganda did not work. In a meeting of Sormovo Bolsheviks in December 1918 the speaker reported that in Sormovo:

> 'The People's Education Department is looking into the darkness of ignorance in this district. This is a struggle we have not won.'[149]

As the participation in *Proletkul't* and state led cultural events were seemingly quite high, this must be referring to the continuing labour protest in Sormovo through the Civil War. This was viewed as at odds with the state's cultural messages of political conformity. There remained a diverse worker culture in Sormovo which involved attending Soviet and *Proletkul't* cultural events but also a pattern of collective protest against the Soviet state. In other areas of Russia, workers did not see a stark polarisation between celebrating Soviet

[148] Von Geldern and Stites (ed.), *Mass culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, poems, songs, movies, plays and folklore 1917-1953,* p.xiv
[149] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.27, 'General Meeting of Sormovo Bolsheviks' (3rd December, 1918)

propaganda and attending educational events and exerting traditional workplace customs including drinking and brawling.[150]

Culture as Social Control

In the face of intense political and economic struggles during the Civil War the scope and reach of Bolshevik cultural policies is remarkable. However, the cultural mission of the Bolsheviks cannot be viewed as taking place *in spite* of the struggle for survival after 1917 as their policies were intimately shaped and changed by the desperate situation of the Civil War. The vague idealism of cultural philosophers like Lunacharsky and Bogdanov, who envisioned a grassroots *proletkul't* forming within no clear timeframe, soon came into conflict with the needs of the state during wartime. By 1921, idealistic and decentralised cultural policies were replaced by a narrower and more controlling discourse of *proletkul't,* which equated culture with workers having a duty to partake in the economic and political survival of the Soviet state, because it was a 'workers' state'. By mid-1918, Lenin no longer had time for autonomous and diverse experiments in cultural policies and education and the ideas of *Narkompros* and *Proletkul't* were slowly crushed by a militaristic vision of *proletkul't.* This narrow definition of *proletkul't* created archetypes of the New Soviet Man based on the ideal worker and soldier. This was a centralised and far reaching cultural policy. It increasingly encroached on the private sphere of everyday life and excluded not only cultural traditions but vulnerable groups in Russian society, especially women. State discourse and policy moved away from experimentation and became centralised and militarised. Discourse was a form of social control that had little concern for the diversity of native worker culture.

<u>An Interfering State: Early Soviet Intervention into the Private Sphere</u>

Despite Lunacharsky's rhetoric of de-centralisation and non interference in cultural and educational matters, *Narkompros* was an umbrella organisation that controlled, co-ordinated and funded many departments. These departments included mainstream cultural sectors such as Education, Music, the Committee of Literacy and *Proletkul't* but also included departments that intruded into the

[150] Phillips, 'Message in a bottle: Working-class culture and the struggle for revolutionary legitimacy, 1900 -1929', p.26

private lives of Russians, such as the Sanitary Education Commission and the Scientific Department.[151] Public health, most notably the spread of sexual diseases, was a growing concern for most European states in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and most states made efforts to stop the spread of sexual diseases.[152] The public health crisis reached new levels in Russia during the Civil War, not only as a result of war casualties but of food shortages and the rapid spread of disease, which was heightened by social dislocation. However, it was not only public health that was the concern of the new Soviet state. The private sphere was not exempt from Soviet policy because cultural transformation was viewed by Trotsky, Lunacharsky and even Bogdanov as the rebuilding of human beings, who in turn would build a socialist state. The Soviet state's concern with health problems such as sexual diseases and sanitation was not new but the mechanisms and policies affected individual's private lives, and the revolutionary ideology catalysed by the Civil War, was.

Public health was one of the Soviet state's priorities as food shortages, epidemics, high infant mortality and social dislocation associated with World War One accelerated after 1917. Urban areas were devastated by diseases such as typhus as health care declined and public sanitation failed to operate. Between 1918 and mid-1920, the Soviet authorities registered almost 5 million cases of typhus, and deaths far outnumbered births during these years.[153] The new nationalised health care under the People's Commissariat of Public Health (*Narkomzdrav*) faced a national health crisis when it was founded in 1918.[154] The new organisation focused upon three areas of healthcare which included unity of the healthcare system, universally available professional care and preventative medicine through sanitation. The Soviet state also introduced a wide range of legislation in sanitation which included obligatory vaccination

[151] Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organisation of education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*, p.23

[152] For post nineteenth century approaches to sexual disease in Europe see R. Davidson and L.A. Hall (ed.), *Sex, sin and suffering: Venereal disease and European society since 1870* (London, 2011); For the USA see A.M. Brandt, *No magic bullet: A social history of venereal disease in the United States since 1880* (New York, 1987)

[153] Brower, '"The city in danger" The Civil War and the Russian urban population', pp.60-61; N.B. Weissman, 'Origins of Soviet health administration', in S.G. Solomon and J.F.Hutchinson (ed.), *Health and Society in revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, 1990), p.102

[154] F. L. Bernstein, 'Envisioning health in revolutionary Russia: The politics of gender in sexual-enlightenment posters of the 1920s', *The Russian Review*, 57 (1998), p.191

against smallpox and hygienic inspections of housing. After October 1917, the state had placed control over factory medical facilities in the hands of hospital funds, which remained outside of *Narkomzdrav's* control. [155]

Factory management and organisations were also continuously concerned about the health of their workers after 1917. In Sormovo, the General Factory Committee viewed the health of the metalworkers as vital to the productivity of the factory. They worked with the Health Insurance Fund and a medical centre was established at the factory, in addition to regular visits from a doctor.[156] In 1919, a Sanitary Commission established by the General Factory Committee reported several shortcomings to the Factory Board regarding the sanitary conditions of the electric department in Sormovo Factory:

> "Hereby please be informed that the Sanitary Commission, on inspection of the electric shop, noticed the following shortcomings:
>
> 1) The shop is cold, close and dirty
>
> 2) There is no sink in the electrical workshop
>
> 3) There is no ventilation in the stoker department
>
> 4) There is no soap
>
> 5) There are no protective railings on the stairs
>
> Reporting on the above, we ask you to adopt suitable measures to eliminate these problems immediately."[157]

The Sanitary Commission made regular reports to the factory and was concerned not only of the safety of the workplace but also the cleanliness of workers and working conditions. This is a result of the rapid spread of disease during the Civil War, most notably typhus. With workers living and working together so closely a sudden outbreak had the ability to shut the factory down

[155] Weissman, 'Origins of Soviet health administration', pp. 97; 103; 106-107
[156] TsANO f.552, op.1, d.18, 'V Prezidiuma Obshche-Zavoda Komitet' (October, 1918)
[157] TsANO f.552, op.1, d.26, 'Reports of the Sanitary Commission of the General Factory Committee' (11th January,1919)

in a matter of weeks.[158] There was a cholera outbreak in the factory in October 1918 and barracks were hastily assembled by the Factory Committee to isolate those affected from healthy workers.[159] There was also a typhus outbreak in Sormovo two months later in December 1918 and the local Bolsheviks worked with factory organisations in an attempt to stop the spread of the disease. This again was an immediate reaction to the problem and there was not much planning involved, as the Sormovo Bolsheviks complained:

> 'The housing for typhoid patients is more like a barn than a hospital: there is draught, snow and smoke. Funds are available from the Department of Health but are not quite sufficient. Money was spent on medical equipment and medicines, which are now limited.'[160]

The shortage of both medical supplies and wages to support sick workers were a repeated concern of the local Bolsheviks and the General Factory Committee. *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* warned that the outbreak of Spanish Flu in Niznhii Novgorod in November 1918 would strain the resources of health insurance:

> 'The citywide health insurance has come to pay huge sums for the sick, who are currently in quarantine, since it has paid for the missed days of work to workers. If this epidemic increases health insurance will be very difficult to obtain for all those affected. The cause of the disease is not precisely defined and medical treatment is difficult, in addition to the difficulty in detecting symptoms.'[161]

The local Bolsheviks therefore worked with factory organisations in a deparate attempt to stop the rapid spread of disease during the Civil War. There was concern from both local government and factory organisations about the cost of the spread of a disease and the effect it would have on work productivity

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[158] See Appendix: Image 16.
[159] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.18, 'The Control Commission reporting to General Factory Committee' (9th October, 1918)
[160] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.27, 'General Meeting of Sormovo Bolsheviks' (3rd December, 1918)
[161] 'Ispanskaia bolezn' i bol'nichnaia kassa', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (2nd November, 1918); see Appendix: Image 14

during the Civil War.[162] The language used in the description of the fear of disease, by both the state and factory organisations, also suggests that they implicitly blamed workers themselves for the disease, for failing to keep satisfactory levels of sanitation. The Spanish flu outbreak was referred to as a 'plague' and typhus was linked explicitly by the Control Commission in Sormovo factory to the cramped housing conditions of Sormovo workers. The report implores that better housing is needed for Sormovo workers and worker housing was referred to as a 'nest of typhus'. Words like, 'slum', 'nest' and 'basements' not only implied that worker conditions were poor but that also that workers were unclean and more susceptible to disease, words that were strikingly similar to Victorian social reformers in Britain.[163] A prominent focus of *Narkompros* was the prevention of diseases, so money that may have been spent on developing new medical equipment was diverted to programmes in hygiene for the masses.[164] The first Commissar for Health Dr Nikolai Aleksandrovich Semashko stated the goal of *Narkomzdrav* was 'free and widely accessible medical help, together with an increase in quality, and the elimination of unsanitary and harmful living and working conditions of workers.'[165]

Sanitation became an important part of the Soviet mission of cultural transformation and the new state initiated a wide programme of 'sanitary enlightenment' propaganda. In an attempt to stem the rise of epidemics doctors and health officials preached the importance of hand washing and domestic cleanliness. Films were produced to promote cleanliness and hygiene, for example the 'Asiatic Guest' (*Aziatskaia Gost'ia*) was a short film produced in 1919 promoting the preventative measures to be taken against cholera.[166]

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[162] For early Soviet Health Insurance see, S. Ewig, 'The Science and Politics of Soviet Insurance Medicine' in Solomon and Hutchinson (ed.), *Health and society in revolutionary Russia,* pp.69-96

[163] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.27, 'General Meeting of Sormovo Bolsheviks' (3rd December, 1918); The British social reformer Charles Booth described the poor in London as, 'dirty children and most evil drunken looking women.', London School of Economics BOOTH/B/357, 'C. Booth, 'Notebook: Police District 18 [Somers Town and Camden Town], District 20 [Hampstead], District 21 [Marylebone (Christchurch to St John)]' (London, 1898)

[164] Rosenberg, *Bolshevik visions: First phase of the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia (Part One),* p.128

[165] N.A. Semashko, 'The tasks of public health in Soviet Russia', in Rosenberg, *Bolshevik visions: First phase of the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia (Part One),* p.130

[166] Taylor, 'The birth of the Soviet Cinema', p.194; *Aziatskaia Gost'ia* (1919)

Soviet health propaganda went much further than this. Publications issued by *Narkomzdrav* instructed Soviet citizens in minute detail how to clean their bodies, clothes and bed linens.[167] There was a sustained campaign against what the state termed 'social diseases', which included tuberculosis, venereal diseases and alcoholism. In a similar way to other European states during this period, sanitation policy had a practical purpose to maintain a healthy population in a time of rising epidemics and the hygienic propaganda, particularly aimed at the Red Army to keep soldiers free of disease in a time of Civil War.[168] The concept of a 'social disease' was implicitly a means of social control of the 'lower classes'.[169] However, in early Soviet Russia these 'diseases' were explicitly linked to the old bourgeois way of life which needed to be destroyed. An article in *Pravda* made a virulent attack on 'bourgeois civilisation':

> 'The bourgeoisie are now silent [living in exile] and their "civilisation" is a corruption, a vile disease... Bourgeois "culture" bloomed from the basis of the Imperialist war. Hunger, crime, syphilis and consumption were celebrated as a magnificent feast, it was the spiritual poisoning of people.'[170]

The curbing of sexual diseases became a significant focus of the Soviet's crackdown on 'social diseases'. It was reminiscent of the language of 'moral panic' used by the intelligentsia, scientists and pseudo scientists during the rapid industrialisation of the late nineteenth century, in an attempt to control the urbanisation of the cities. The debate about the spread of venereal diseases was formulated on the late Imperial method of distinguishing between venereal and non-venereal transmission of syphilis. Urban areas were often blamed for spreading venereal syphilis, whereas the countryside was portrayed as

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[167] D.L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist values: Cultural norms of Soviet modernity, 1917-1941* (Cornell, 2003) pp.15,18

[168] Weissman, 'Origins of Soviet health administration', p.107

[169] See Engelstein, 'Morality and the wooden spoon: Russian doctors view syphilis, social class, and sexual behavior , 1890-1905', pp. 169-208; These ideas were not unique to Russia but were a European phenomenon, where since the nineteenth century political leaders, social reformed and industrialists sought to eradicate 'social' diseases to mould a healthy and productive workforce and 'morally' uplift the masses, Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values Cultural norms of Soviet modernity, 1917-1941* p.16

[170] 'Goroda Uzhasa', *Pravda* (1 August, 1918)

spreading syphilis through lack of sanitation and ignorance about personal hygiene.[171] The spread of venereal diseases reached an epidemic status during the first decade of Soviet rule, so as an extension of *agitprop* sanitary enlightenment spread across Russia through museum exhibitions, journals, lectures, courses and popular educational materials in factories, schools, clubs and cafes.[172] Adverts promoting the prevention of syphilis and advertisements for sexual health clinics became ubiquitous in national and local press.[173] Posters were also used as a way to convey information in a simple uncomplicated manner and were one of the most accessible pieces of Soviet sanitary propaganda. Bernstein's study of sexual enlightenment posters in the 1920s reveals how they were framed in the typical *lubok* (a cheap popular colourful print) style of juxtapositions of good and evil and often used religious imagery to portray the evils of venereal disease. She reveals how men were depicted more frequently than women in these posters and the male image was 'normative and neutral' whereas the image of women portrayed particular female health concerns. At best the female comes across as marginalised, and at worst she is seen as a threat to young healthy men through the transmission of sexual diseases and by distracting men from the important work of building socialism.[174]

The medical and sexual discourse about women changed during the Civil War period. The Bolsheviks came to power with a clear ideology of sexual freedom. The prominent female Bolshevik Alexandra Kollonati wrote extensively on the need for the loosening of traditional family roles and sexual monogamy. She argued in *The Family and the Communist State* (1920) that women should not look for support from their husbands: 'A woman should

[171] S.Gross Solomon, 'Innocence and sexuality in Soviet medical discourse' in R. Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.121-122; L. Engelstein, 'Syphilis, historical and actual: Cultural geography of a disease', *Review of Infectious Diseases*, 8 (1986), 1036-1048

[172] Bernstein, 'Envisioning health in Revolutionary Russia: The politics of gender in sexual-enlightenment posters of the 1920s', pp.192-194

[173] For example, see 'Venerolicheskii Kabinet', *Izvestiia* (11th September 1918)

[174] Bernstein, 'Envisioning health in revolutionary Russia: The politics of gender in sexual-enlightenment posters of the 1920s', pp.196, 198-199

learn to look for support from somewhere else, to look for it and find it not from men, but from the collective, from the state.'[175]

She argued that the nuclear family was a bourgeois method of control of women. Therefore, the loosening of family ties through the communal upbringing of children would free women from patriarchal bonds. A few weeks after the seizure of power, the Bolsheviks created new radical legislation, again the first of its kind in Europe, which challenged the traditional ideology of the family. Divorce laws were relaxed, church weddings were no longer recognised and abortions were legalised.[176] The Bolshevik discourse and legislation about sexual equality and freedom was one of the most progressive actions of the Soviet state. However, this open discourse about sexuality and gender began to change during the Civil War.

One of the significant aspects to Bolshevik policy on female reproductive and sexual rights was the concern about how any new policy would affect the economy. The Health Commissariat decreed in 1920 that women would receive eight weeks of maternity leave (heavy industry) or six weeks (mental labour) and released them from any forms of labour conscription during that time.[177] In Sormovo, discussions in 1920 about maternity leave were framed in economic terms:

> 'Maternity leave allows people to constantly play a falsehood. There will now be a procedure where the female worker will take a receipt and wait in a queue for maternity leave.'

This suggests that the factory management thought some women were lying about being pregnant in order to receive maternity leave. They declared that maternity leave was only to be given to women who had worked 'uninterruptedly' in the factory over a certain period of time and it was referred to as a 'drainage' of labour.[178]

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[175] A. Kollantai, 'The Family and the Communist State' (1920), in Rosenberg (ed.), *Bolshevik visions: First phase of the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia,* p.67
[176] G. Carelton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia* (Pittsburgh, 2005), p.3
[177] Wood, *The baba and the comrade: Gender and politics in revolutionary Russia*, p.110
[178] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Meetings of the board of the Sormovo department of the allocation of labour, (4th August, 1920); Also see S. Badcock, 'Women, protest, and revolution:

Prostitution was also seen as a threat to the new socio-economic order from women because it removed individuals from production through disease, exploitation and uncontrolled sexual activity.[179] There was a close interconnection between economic and medical discourses about women. Mothers were viewed as producers and decisions about childbearing and childrearing were placed firmly in the public domain.[180] The discourse about prostitutes changed during the Civil War from victims of circumstance to shirking from labour and therefore punishable by law.[181]

When abortion was legalised in 1920, it was never recognised as a woman's right but as an economic necessity. The decree shaped the legalisation of abortion as a necessary evil in a Soviet society that did not have the adequate maternity clinics and day care centres to offer mothers. It was portrayed as a conflict between work and motherhood. The notion of gender equality was not part of a sustained re-thinking of gender roles but was part of Soviet economic and political discourse.[182] In the lead up to the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919, Kollontai pushed for a statement of intention to abolish the bourgeois family and a general commitment to female equality but this was turned down by Lenin.[183] Just a year before, Kollontai and Lenin had taken part in the First Congress of Women's Workers. Yet, even then Kollontai recollected that Lenin spoke about women purely in economic and political terms. Their 'rights' were referred to in reference to the survival, and their economic and political responsibility towards, the Soviet state, because they were members of that state:

> 'We must mould the female working masses into a solid bulwark of Soviet power against counter-revolution. Each woman must understand

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Soldiers' wives in Russia during 1917', *International Review of Social History*, 49 (2004), 47-70

[179] Wood, *The baba and the comrade: Gender and politics in revolutionary Russia*, p.111

[180] J. Hyer, 'Managing the female organisim: Doctors and the medicalization of women's paid work in Soviet Russia during the 1920s', in Marsh (ed.), *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, p.113

[181] E. Waters, 'Victim or villain: Prostitution in post-revolutionary Russia' in L. Edmondson (ed.) *Women and society in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, 1992), p.168

[182] Atwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for identity: The 'New Man' and the 'New Woman', p.275

[183] B. Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist: The life of Alexandra Kollontai* (Bloomington, 1979), pp.159-160

> that, in fighting for Soviet power, she is fighting for her own rights and for those of her children.'[184]

Most Soviet health propaganda emphasised the role of women in establishing a clean and hygienic home and lifestyle to benefit male workers. The domestic sphere was still viewed as a female domain and domestic propaganda was aimed at them.[185] The new communal houses in urban centres meant diseases like typhus could spread rapidly and Housing Co-operatives viewed it as vital that housewives receive education about cleaning their communal homes.[186] When it served the state, their propaganda focused on women's contribution to the workforce and at other times it eulogised the importance of motherhood.[187]

The continuation of traditional gender roles was reinforced through the imagery and propaganda about the New Soviet Man. The depiction of the new male Soviet identity in propaganda sought to create new moral codes and provide role models for the construction of *proletkul't*. There was a specific focus on the physical aspect of human development in this propaganda. The New Soviet man was to be physically strong and was compared in terms of the strength of the machine in the factory.[188] The physical-culture movement was a sustained movement in the early 1920s that focused upon young men to create a healthy body and lifestyle. One of the main aims of this movement was to keep young men away from engaging in dangerous and non-collective behaviours such as masturbation and promiscuous sex.[189] Soviet physical culture included organised sport, physical education, gymnastics and other outdoor pursuits. These events sought to organise and politicise leisure activities and unite them with the ideal of productiveness and efficiency in the

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[184]A. Kollontai, 'V.I. Lenin and the First Congress of Women Workers', (1919) in A. Kollontai, *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Reminiscences. 1900-1922* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 221-223.
[185] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*, p.23
[186] L. Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia: Private Life in a Public Space* (Manchester, 2010), p.65
[187] Atwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for identity: The 'New Man' and the 'New Woman', p.275
[188] T. Clark, 'The 'new man's' body: A motif in early Soviet Culture', in M. Cullerne Brown and B. Taylor (ed.), *Art of the Soviets: Painting, sculpture and architecture in a one-party state, 1917-1922* (Manchester, 1993), pp.33-34
[189] Bernstein, 'Envisioning health in revolutionary Russia: The politics of gender in sexual-enlightenment posters of the 1920s', p.199; J. Riordan, *Sport in Soviet society: The development of sport and physical education in Russia and the USSR* (Cambridge, 1977); S. Grant, 'The politics and organization of physical culture in the USSR during the 1920s', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 89 (2011), 494-515

workplace. Sportsmen were included in military parades and sports pageants were a routine part of Soviet life.[190] The iconography of the worker, specifically the blacksmith, and the soldier as Bolshevik male heroes were transformed into archetype figures in early Soviet Russia representing strength and hard work. There were no female counterparts to these archetypes and few images of women appeared in Soviet political art before 1920. A female version of the blacksmith image did not emerge until 1920 and although she is a replica of the male worker, she is presented as his assistant. The female worker derived her heroic status from her association with the male worker, it reinforced the notion that men led in the workplace and will lead the building of a socialist Russia.[191] Mothers and families were not viewed as representatives of their class, nor as saviours of the revolution.[192]

The almost exclusive focus on male workers in Soviet propaganda and statistical data ignored traditional 'female' industries and the presence of women in the workforce. The pattern of mobilisation and demobilisation of men during the prolonged period of war in 1914 meant that women took up a substantial portion of the workforce across Russia. However, there is very little suggestion of a female presence in Sormovo in sources from the early Soviet period. Despite being at the mercy of the all-male factory administration and factory organisations, women were not a silent or submissive presence in the Sormovo workforce. In a report of the plans May Day celebrations in 1918 women workers were a significant presence in the march:

> 'The order of the march shall be children, members of the board, the party organisation who will be followed by women workers then male workers and the army.'[193]

Women workers organised under the national movement of the Womens Bureau (*Zhenotdel*) were also vocal when Krupskaya arrived on the *Red Star*

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[190] Clark, 'The 'new man's' body: A motif in early Soviet Culture', p.40

[191] V.E. Bonnell, *Iconography of power: Soviet political posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley, 1997), p.66, 23

[192] E.Waters, 'The female form in Soviet political iconography, 1917-1932', in B. Evans Clemets, B.A. Engel and C.D. Worobec (ed.), *Russia's women: Accommodation, resistance, transformation* (Berkeley, 1970), p.235

[193] 'Poryadok Shestviia 1-go Maia'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (1st May, 1918)

in Sormovo. They urged her to assist in the organisation of a children's home in Sormovo:

> 'The Bureau of Women in Sormovo appealed to Krupskaya-Ulyanova in a memo to ask her [to] assist in allowing the use one of the factory buildings for an orphanage. After the adoption of Krupskaya-Ulyanova's measures *Nizhgubispolkom* [Political Committee of Nizhegorod Region] received directions from Lenin for a strictly impartial and accurate description of factory housing and the funding available for an orphanage.'[194]

The *Zhenotdel* movement mobilised women workers to become advocates on their own behalf. Women delegates were sent to Moscow to gain the political experience that would enable them to become more active in their local soviets. This movement attracted 30,000 women by 1922 and created a political opportunity for women where there had not been one before.[195] However, the self-education movement and state sponsored cultural movement also implicitly barred women from their courses. The educational course offered to Sormovo workers in 1920 was aimed at the most 'skilled workers' with a basic educational level in maths.[196] This would have certainly been an exclusively male group in the metalworking industry. Also, the living and working conditions changed little for women after 1917. Koenker reveals that workplace misogyny and sexual harassment continued into the Soviet period, despite official calls for it to end.[197] In Sormovo there was a demand by the Trade Union of Workers and Employees for male workers to desist in 'crude language' towards women because it was feared the 'language was not only irritating to female workers but one day could cause an explosion in the workplace.'[198] There is little evidence to suggest this was enforced and their concern for sexual harassment was again framed in economic terms as

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[194] 'Activities of the Sormovo Soviet' (5 July 1919), in M. Lyubovikov, Nechaev, M. Shniprov (eds.), *1917-1920 Chronicle of the revolutionary events in Gorky region* (Gorky, 1932), pp.247-248

[195] B.A. Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000* (Cambridge, 2004), p.143

[196] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, School Instructions, (15th September, 1920)

[197] Koenker, 'Men against women on the shop floor in early Soviet Russia: Gender and class in the socialist workplace', p.1439

[198] GOPANO, f.4527, op.1, d.5, Reports from the Board of the Trade Union of Workers and Employees in Sormovo (6th March, 1918)

disrupting labour productivity. Women remained a vulnerable group in the Sormovo workforce and the Soviet workforce as a whole. Many had lost husbands or sons during World War One or the Civil War which left women working for wages all day and then scrounging for food or fuel by night.[199] For female workers, the gender divide in the metalworking industry and other industries continued after 1917.[200] The rights of women also continued to be considered secondary to those of men.

The Militarisation of Culture

The Soviet state's attempt to regulate activities in the private sphere was part of a changing cultural policy during the Civil War where the balance between persuasion and repression tipped in favour of the latter. Lenin's tolerance for open party debates on cultural policy began to reduce by mid-1918, as prominent impendent cultural thinkers like Bogdanov began to be chastised and independent organisations were shut down. By 1920, there was political crackdown on the freedom of cinema, art, theatre and literature both in the centre and in localities. In its place, a masculine, militarised culture based on strength and labour and loyalty to the state took a prominence in Soviet cultural policy.

As a result of the increasingly militarised atmosphere of the Civil War, Soviet ideology reinforced and glorified masculinity.[201] The economic policy of War Communism was a form of social and political control. The majority of metalworkers were male and their importance to the war effort meant they were deemed as more important citizens than women workers. The association between masculinity and heroism was solidified during the Civil War period and grew stronger when the fighting and economic crises worsened.[202] 'Shock Groups' (labour armies) were officially established in 1920 in an attempt to re-build Russian infrastructure after the devastation of war. In all, 27 factories

[199] Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*, p.144
[200] For the gender divide in the cotton industry see C. Ward, 'Languages of trade or a language of class? Work culture in Russian cotton mills in the 1920s' in Seigelbaum and Suny (ed.), *Making workers Soviet: Power, class and identity* (Ithaca, 1994), pp.206-207
[201] Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*, p.145
[202] K. Petrone, 'Masculinity and heroism in Imperial and Soviet military- patriotic cultures' in Evans Clements, Friedman and Healey (ed.), *Russian masculinities in history and culture* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.190

were selected for shock work based on their technology and equipment and they were given adequate supplies of fuel, labour and foodstuffs.[203] These workers were hailed as the pinnacle of Soviet workers and the ideology of heroic shock work continued to become Stakhanovism in the Stalinist period. This ideology is what Sanborn terms the 'nationalisation of masculinity', where the ideals of health, strength, hardiness and dexterity that were held in high esteem during the Tsarist period formed the crux of the Soviet identity.[204]

The mobilisation of labour was a policy intimately linked to the political beliefs of Trotsky, who sought not only the militarisation of labour but of Soviet society as a whole. He believed that only through the rationalisation of society would a true *proletkul't* form, arguing that 'the roots of morals lie in production'.[205] McClelland argues that Trotsky was just as utopian as Bogdanov or Lunacharsky in his conception of Soviet culture but advocated an extremely centralised vision of Soviet advancement.[206] Trotsky's ideas gradually gained ground in Soviet thinking and crushed the limited freedom of cultural expression allowed under *Narkompros* and *Proletkul't*. After the brief abolition of theatre censorship by the Provisional Government, the Soviet state pursued a cultural policy that entailed the subjugation of all theatres to the state. Lunacharsky promoted the freedom of proletarian theatre, he wrote many plays himself. However, the establishment of the Theatre Soviet in 1918 meant all theatres became accountable to the state and in August 1919 all theatres were nationalised.[207]

Furthermore, in 1920 the Soviet state embarked on the centralisation and militarisation of the education system. The Main Committee for Vocational Technical Education (*Glavprofobr*) was established which came into direct conflict with the ideals and policies of Lunacharsky and

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[203] Malle, *The economic organization of War Communism, 1918-1921*, p.482
[204] J. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian nation: Military conscription, total war, and mass politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, 2003), p.139
[205] Trotsky, 'Habits and custom', p.29
[206] McClelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik policy: The proletarian culture debate', p.406
[207] M. Frame, 'Russian theater and the crisis of war and revolution, 1914-1922', in Frame (ed.), *Russian culture in war and revolution, 1914-1922: Book 1. Popular culture, the Arts, and institutions*, pp. 270-271, 273

Narkompros.[208] *Narkompros* was forced to share jurisdiction with the expanding network of vocational schools established by *Glavprofobr,* which admitted students under seventeen years of age who had not completed nine years of education. This challenged the higher education system established by *Narkmpros,* which focused on academic and vocational development. *Glavprofobr* then proposed to modify the polytechnical education at secondary schools. The ideals of Lunacharsky for the Soviet education system to develop a well rounded academic individual were directly challenged by *Glavprofobr* which proposed to make secondary education nothing more than a factory apprenticeship.[209]

Proletkul't's policy of rapid and radical cultural transformation also came under criticism from the party. The independence of the cultural movement ended when in 1920 it was brought under the control of *Narkompros* and the Adult Education Divisions around the country. The reason for the party's hostility towards *Proletkul't* was that many deemed the organisation a distraction from the serious social responsibilities of workers during the Civil War.[210] The ideas of the Militarisation of Labour were applied to the educational and cultural sphere where *Glavprofobr* subordinated education to the immediate needs of the economy and students deemed as important to the economy were militarised. Engineering and medical students were subject to accelerated courses and deemed to be under 'academic obligation'.[211] The Soviet state was beginning to tighten its control over not only institutions and organisations but over individuals.

In the workplace the needs of the economy for higher production levels and a punctual workforce became an integral part of the identity of the New Soviet Man. During War Communism absenteeism grew to an alarming rate. In Moscow, absenteeism reached 50% of enrolled workers in September 1920. The food rationing system meant that the incentives for raising productivity disappeared and illness, shortage of food and the movement of skilled workers

[208] McClelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik policy: The proletarian culture debate', p.421
[209] Holmes, *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, p.20
[210] Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia*, p.198
[211] Mc Clelland., 'Bolshevik approaches to Higher Education, 1917-1921', p.827

to the Red Army affected labour productivity.[212] In September 1918, the centre sent a strongly worded circular to the heads of departments and workshops in Sormovo telling them to monitor absenteeism and make a note of the addresses of absentees. The circular then informed Sormovo factory:

> 'The list of the truants and their addresses will be forwarded to the Military -Technical Committee to make a decision and bring them to justice under the law of war, because from September 5th of this year [1918] Sormovo plant is considered to be mobilised and militarised.'[213]

In January 1919, the Sormovo factory board resolved that a worker would be punished if they were more than fifteen minutes late. It stated that 'work will begin at 6:45am, workers must be in a position to start work at 7am, allowing them 15 minutes grace only'. If a worker was late for work then the Board proposed 'appropriate sanctions.' Furthermore, if a worker was absent for more than three days he was 'considered to be a deserter'.[214] These workplace violations were not just treated as workplace issues but were used as social labels to indicate a betrayal of the Soviet state. Labour discipline was viewed as of vital importance to the success of the Soviet state during Civil War and was closely tied into Soviet identity. Some Sormovo workers took on this new emphasis on labour discipline and productivity by partaking in *Subbotniki* (voluntary Saturday work) to emulate the masculine heroism of the shock workers.[215] It was linked to the campaign for self betterment by the state and some workers, which is reflected in the minutes of a conference of workshop delegates of the Sormovo plant in 1918:

> 'Due to the difficult economic situation the workers need to have an honest attitude and have a duty to be professional, our general well being is wholly dependent upon this. The current situation requires each worker to take an active part in the building of a new life ... By the will of the revolution and the power of our circumstances we are now

[212] Malle estimates that 15% of the Red Army were metal workers, Malle, *The economic organization of War Communism, 1918-1921*, p.482
[213] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.18, Circular: Addresses for taking account of employees and workers (28th September, 1918)
[214] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.26, Sormovo Factory Board report (11th January, 1919)
[215] The provision of 6 working days was introduced in Sormovo in May 1919: TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.23, Meetings of the Presidium of the General Factory Commitee (23rd May, 1919)

> are the manufacturers of all values, and must then direct the owners of these values. We must do everything at our disposal to create economic strength and prosperity of our economy. We must do everything.'

The new role of Trade Unions was to ensure strict labour and comradely discipline and to combat 'parasites' in violation of this labour discipline in the workplace.[216] The focus was not just upon workers improving production in the factory but reflected a deeper concern for the transformation of worker attitudes towards building a new socialist society. It represented a militarised culture of labour based upon labour discipline and loyalty to the state. It was social control that stretched into the private sphere of the mind and attitude of workers.

One of the practical ways the Soviet state tried to instil this militarised version of worker identity was through youth organisations. *Komsomol* (All-Union Leninist Young Communist League) was an organisation which set up youth clubs all over Russia, which were usually associated with a factory.[217] They emulated the Red Army and Red Guards that were organised on a factory level. Sormovo organised a Red Guard unit after the Kornilov affair in late summer 1917, which began with 300 members and undertook 'protection' of the factory and cultural and educational work.[218] In a similar way, the *Komsomol* focused both upon organised literature and drama circles that were reminiscent of *Proletkul't* and practical experience and labour. They were referred to as the 'young guard' in popular songs during the Civil War and promoted the values of strength and discipline as the Red Guards did in the factory.[219]

The exclusively male Pioneer movement expanded upon these values and the young pioneer was to be the model of strength. Every day he was to rise early, clean himself thoroughly and do gymnastics. He was also to refrain

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[216] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.48, Minutes of a conference of workshop delegates of Sormovo plant (16th November, 1918)
[217] A.E. Gorsuch, *Youth In revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, bohemians, delinquents* (Bloomington, 2000), p.57; M. Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917-1932* (Abingdon, 2011)
[218] *Krasnoe Znamia* (26th February, 1918)
[219] Gorsuch, *Youth In revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, bohemians, delinquents*, p.59

from smoking, drinking and spitting on the floor.[220] A campaign for cultured speech was launched in the 1920s specifically aimed at young people in education or *Komsomol,* which aimed at not only clean speech but also grammatical correctness. It was hoped that not only a new generation would speak Russian correctly, without vulgarities, but that the masses would adopt a wide variety of cultural practices from clean fingernails, having a basic knowledge of biology to carrying out trade union activities efficiently.[221] This reveals how far the Soviet cultural policy interfered in the private sphere of ordinary Russians in the early Soviet period. There was an intersection of cultural, political, economic and personal policies which were linked not only to intimate personal activities but to a new collective mindset in order to build a socialist state.

There was a *Komsomol* organisation and youth communist organisation in Sormovo, called the Union of Youth, which had regular conferences and commented on political matters, physical education and self-education.[222] The activities of the organisation were intimately linked to creating a new political culture based on education, political loyalty and military values. In 1919, the members of the Sormovo Union of Youth participated in military training led by military specialists. *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* reported:

> 'Aware of the gravity of the Civil War, the Sormovo Union of Youth recognised the need to familiarise its members with the military sciences, to prepare workers to shoot in the Red Army."[223]

This was drastically different to the language of cultural organisations like *Proletkul't,* which emphasised spontaneous development of culture. Organisations like *Komsomol* were strict militarised programmes directly

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[220] Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian nation: Military conscription, total war, and mass politics, 1905-1925*, p.140

[221] S.A. Smith, 'The social meanings of swearing: Workers and bad language in late Imperial and early Soviet Russia', *Past & Present*, 160 (1998), pp.192-194; L. Trotsky, 'The stuggle for cultured speech' in *The problems of everyday life*: *And other writings on culture and science*, pp.52-57

[222] GOPANO, f.1855, op.1, d.1a, Minutes of meetings of Sormovo District and non-partisan Youth Conference (7th October, 1920); GOPANO, f.1, op.1, d.434, Committee of the Union of Communist Youth (17th February,1919) see Appendix: Image 15 for sormovo's komsomol organisation

[223] 'Voennoe obuchenie chlenov soiuza molodezhi', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (7th December, 1919)

linked not to the social benefit of the individual but to the state. The young members of the Union of Youth in Sormovo were to be 'the most conscious part of the working youth that sees and understands the needs of young workers.'[224] They were the prototype New Soviet Men that would not only change the value of their fellow youth members but also question and challenge older generations of family and workers.

Promoting temperance was a particular focus of Soviet youth organisations. After 1917, the Soviet state kept the 'dry law', introduced by the Imperial Government in August 1914. Therefore, the alcohol industry was nationalised and all alcohol was the property of the state. Despite this, during the Civil War there was a dramatic increase in the production and consumption of alcohol, through the production of moonshine and sale on the black market.[225]

The Pioneers and *Komsomol* organised large groups of children to agitate against excessive drinking. *Komsomol* promoted the idea of *novyi byt* (new way of life) through their clean living. It was hoped that by stigmatising 'bad habits' as 'old' or 'bourgeois' the *Komsomol* could keep young and old workers away from drinking.[226] They placed themselves outside of the factory gates on payday carrying placards that read 'we demand sober parents!'[227] In a similar way to how Kanatchikov renounced alcohol as a path to his 'self enlightenment' in the pre-revolutionary period, the Communist youth organisations viewed alcoholism as a bar to labour productivity. This was viewed not only as harmful to the workplace but as fundamentally un-Soviet.

There were both national and local campaigns against alcoholism. In addition to a Sobriety Organisation in Sormovo, there were several campaigns to discourage alcohol consumption by the state. One campaign by the

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[224] 'No vsei rabochei molodezhi N. Novgoroda, Sormova, Molitovki, Myzi i Bora', *Nizhegorodskii Kommuna* (23rd October, 1919)

[225] H. Stone, 'The Soviet Government and moonshine, 1917-1929', *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 27 (1986), p.360

[226] M. Neumann, 'Revolutionising mind and soul? Soviet youth and cultural campaigns during the New Economic Policy (1921-8)', *Social History*, 3 (2008), p.248

[227] K. Transchel, *Under the influence: Working class drinking, temperance and cultural revolution in Russia, 1895-1932* (Pittsburgh, 2006), p.95; Phillips, 'Message in a bottle: working-class culture and the struggle for revolutionary legitimacy, 1900-1929', pp.30-31

Department of Social Security in Nizhnii Novgorod was led by young workers against the perceived 'problem of drinking' in various factories in the local area.[228] Nationally, there was sustained propaganda from the state about the dangers of drinking and the need for a sober workforce, through national campaigns and striking posters.[229] Promoting sobriety was one of the most sustained cultural campaigns of the Soviet Union. The dual technique of using national state propaganda and local campaigns against alcoholism was the aspect of *agitprop* that was most critical of native worker culture after 1917.[230] For workers, drinking alcohol represented not only a workplace ritual and an important aspect of public celebration but an important personal choice and a core part of their leisure time. The effectiveness of these temperance campaigns did not extend much further than the Red Army and *Komsomol*. The campaign continued into the NEP period and beyond but the spectre of alcoholism haunted the Soviet Union for years to come.[231]

The temperance movement of the Soviet state was very similar to the campaigns of liberals and socialists before 1917, by promoting sobriety through leaflets and posters, in addition to local campaigns. The difference was that the Soviet temperance campaign was framed as a collective problem which needed to be solved not for the benefit of the individual but for the benefit of the state. This is symptomatic of the change in the cultural mission which was changed and shaped by the economic and political needs of the state during the Civil War. This did not mean that the Bolsheviks abandoned the rhetoric of the cultural advancement of the Soviet worker. Rather the state's vision of *proletkul't* was masculinised and centralised. The values of physical strength, cleanliness (including sexually), labour discipline and temperance were not only upheld as positive attributes but became the foundation blocs of

[228]GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.27, Tasks of the Soviet (December, 1918)

[229] For example, an advertisement for a Sobriety Club in Danilovsky region in Moscow 'Po Rainom', *Pravda*, (17th April, 1918); see Appendix: Image 17.

[230] J.Hatch, 'Hangouts and hangovers: State, class and culture in Moscow's Workers' Club Movement, 1925-1928', *The Russian Review*, 53 (1994), 97-117; For pre 1917 worker drinking culture see: P. Herlihy, 'Joy of the Rus': Rites and rituals of Russian drinking', *The Russian Review*, 50 (1991),131-147

[231] For the problem of alcoholism post 1921 see: P. Gooderham, 'The Komsomol and Worker Youth: The inculcation of 'communist values' in Leningrad during NEP', *Soviet Studies*, 34 (1982), 506–528; W.D. Connor, 'Alcohol and Soviet society', *Slavic Review*, 30 (1971), 570-588; S.White, *Russia goes dry: Alcohol, state and society* (Cambridge, 1996)

a Soviet identity. The masculinisation of Soviet culture meant that the early Soviet rhetoric of gender equality was not only abandoned but the female body and male body became essentially nationalised.

Conclusion

The educational and cultural policies of the Soviet state in the years 1917-1921 began as a genuine attempt to create an entirely new worker culture that would not only economically, politically and culturally benefit the individual but the state in return. *Proletkul't* funded cultural activitites spread all over Russia after 1917 and offered many new cultural and educational opportunities to workers like those in Sormovo. These cultural opportunities and the radical educational reforms of *Narkompros* would have had a significant impact upon the educational progression of ordinary workers all over Russia.

In 1917, the ideology of Bolshevik cultural policy was shaped by the diverse cultural thoughts and works of Lunacharsky, Bogdanov and Mayakovsky and the rhetoric of decentralisation and spontaneity. However by 1921, the desperate need for increased economic productivity and political loyalty meant that state cultural policies became little more than the co-opting of the population into state building. Cultural policies became a method of cultural, social and political control. The new Soviet state did use and adapt many cultural policies and practices from the late Imperial period, especially liberal notions of 'rational recreation', but this was transformed into a centralised, masculinised and militarised culture. Whereas the aim of liberal cultural policies was the cultural transformation of the individual, which then in turn would economically benefit the state by the creation of educated workers, the Soviet state began to view the purpose of cultural and educational transformation solely as state building. This ideology was spurred on not only by an enduring conceptualisation of native worker culture as backward but by the repeated economic, social and political crises of the Civil War. The centralisation of Soviet cultural policy is exemplified in Sormovo where the rapid expansion of cultural activities by the state and *Proletkul't* after 1917 was transformed into a culture of subservience both in the workplace and wider society. This subservience extended beyond the body into the thoughts, attitudes and overall mindset of workers, in ways liberal reformers would not

have imagined. It was symptomatic of the wider tightening of political control and growing interference of the state in the private sphere during the Civil War and after 1921. Yet, it was also a core part of Bolshevik ideology before 1917. The paternalistic cultural Bolshevik ideology never truly left any room for grassroots initiative to create *proletkul't.* By 1921, the ideology of Soviet cultural transformation was equivalent to the political conformity of the body and mind of Russian workers.

5. Language and Practice: Finding Enemies and Shaping Workers in Early Soviet Russia

Introduction

This chapter will explore how the Bolsheviks framed their opposition both ideologically and practically from 1917-1921. The first section will discuss how the early Soviet state ideologically constructed opposition to the state through language and discourse. The Bolsheviks seized power based on a Marxist and Leninist discourse that they were a workers' party and that the 'bourgeoisie' were the enemies of workers and the workers' state. The Civil War was framed as a war of class antagonisms that not only portrayed the Whites, who were former generals and Tsarist officials, but any opposition to the state as bourgeois enemies. This meant that the moderate socialists, who were from the same social origin as many Bolsheviks, were framed not only as bourgeois in birth but bourgeois in mind and thought because they opposed the Soviet state and therefore by extension the workers' state. Smith argues that the Bolsheviks 'monopolised revolutionary discourse' during the Civil War. This meant that it was extremely difficult for moderate socialists to frame a political alternative to the Soviet state without being labelled as bourgeois and grouped together with the White generals.[232]

The Bolsheviks in Sormovo faced an ideological dilemma when they encountered opposition from workers there. According to Soviet ideology, metalworkers were one of the most highly skilled and 'advanced' Russian workers, yet their labour protest continued after 1917. Initially, the Bolsheviks used deferent language towards Sormovo workers in an attempt to persuade them to vote for them in the local soviet elections and end labour protest. Moderate socialists were used as political and economic scapegoats, not only at fault for socio-economic problems caused by Bolshevik policy and the conditions of the Civil War but also for 'duping' the Sormovo workers into striking in an attempt to overthrow the Soviet state. By allying themselves with vague worker demands, and more importantly workers' social origin, the Sormovo Bolshevik party did not so much create a distinct identity for their

[232]Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, pp.xiv-xv

party and policies but claimed they represented workers and the moderate socialists did not.

After the closure of the Constituent Assembly and the emergence of concerted moderate socialist opposition in 1918, there was a shift in the central state's discourse about opposition, this was also reflected in the shift in cultural discourse. After economic centralisation and the Militarisation of Labour, ordinary workplace infractions were deemed political actions and indicative of acting against the state. The Bolshevik policy of persuasion in Sormovo was transformed into repression and the definition of enemy (*vrag*) became increasingly fluid and all encompassing. The distinction between a class enemy, a political enemy and a dissident became blurred and came to signify not a distinct group of people, or even political views, but loyalty to the state through hard work and obedience to factory and political hierarchy. In a similar way to the state's changing discourse of *proletkul't,* the fluidity of language about opposition changed from a specific aim of rooting out political opposition to creating a society of conforming citizens co-opted into building a socialist state.

The second section will discuss the state mechanisms and policies that accompanied this shift in discourse during the Civil War. It will explore how the Soviet state attempted to understand workers and then tried to shape them. Firstly, the Bolsheviks routinely used information gathering through surveillance to try and understand the opinions and grievances of workers in Russia. Despite the relatively small size of the Bolshevik party in Sormovo, they seemed consistently aware of the 'moods' and grievances of workers there, which they reported back to the provincial Bolshevik party and the centre. The Bolsheviks initially used techniques of co-operation and co-option in Sormovo factory by infiltrating factory committees and used 'active' workers, who were members of the party, in an attempt to gain the support of other workers. However, as the discourse about opposition became more fluid Soviet state surveillance in the workplace also became more coercive and indiscriminate. Violence and the threat of economic coercion were ubiquitous in Civil War Russia both inside and outside the workplace. The Bolsheviks utilised different methods of coercion that relied on the forcible co-option of

workers into the state infrastructure and the threat of repression for workplace infractions to ensure labour activism would not disrupt the production of munitions in Sormovo. Surveillance was used not as an attempt to 'know' workers but to control them.

This change in discourse, policy and practice was part of an increasingly repressive centralised state. This shift was a key feature of the Civil War and resulted from the context of repeated economic crises, an unstable political system and continued fighting. However, Bolshevik ideology was also a crucial factor in the utilisation of violent repression in dealing with opposition. Marxist discourse was integral to Bolshevik political discussion and during the Civil War embedded a millenarian worldview where everything and everyone was subsumed to the interests of the state and the building of a utopian socialist future. It was the context of the continuing revolutionary situation *and* Bolshevik ideology which made the Civil War period a formative experience for the Soviet state, especially in its treatment of opposition.

Enemies of the State: Discourses about Opposition

Marx had repeatedly emphasised how the bourgeoisie were the traditional enemies of the working class, who sought to exploit them at any cost. The bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie were defined in economic terms as a broad middle class that encompassed a range of occupations in industrially advanced nations like England and Germany. The proletariat were defined as the class who gained a livelihood solely from the sale of their labour, whilst the bourgeois were the owners, and exploiters, of the means of production and employers of wage labour.[233] In addition to the ideological 'class' enemy, the Bolsheviks faced very real political opposition from the moderate socialists who remained in Russia attempting to win over local soviets, military opposition from the Whites and later SRs, Mensheviks and 'greens' and labour activism from workers and peasants. Chapter 3 explored the Soviet state's social categorisation of Soviet society and the overlapping and changing definitions of bourgeoisie, *sluzhashchie* and *rabochii.* This chapter will further

[233]T. Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford, 1983), p.54; F. Engels 'Principles of Communism' in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow, 1971), p.79

examine how these terms changed during the Civil War to become a tool for economic and social control, regardless of social class categories. After 1917 the language about opposition expanded from 'bourgeoisie' and strict class terms to incorporate any person who was deemed to oppose the state. It was used alongside vague social labels like enemy and saboteur, which not only emphasised the crime of social origin or action but of mindset, intent and loyalty.

The Class Enemy or the Political Enemy?

The Marxist categorisation of 'bourgeoisie' initially shaped Soviet discourse and policy about opposition to the Bolsheviks. Though in Soviet sources there is a clear distinction between worker and employee, in reality white-collar workers blended into factory life before and after 1917.[234] However, it was the privileged jobs that many of these white collar workers held that made them ideal scapegoats for economic and political problems, in Sormovo and around Russia. The Bolsheviks utilised this discourse when it suited them to use it. On the one hand, Lenin argued that one man management was preferable to worker control in nationalised industries, and on the other hand, he stoked up worker ambivalence towards management.[235] There was a wave of attacks and forcible arrests against management, senior officials, engineers and technicians by workers in 1917 and after.[236] Furthermore, in the metal industry, and other skilled industries, there was a long history of ambivalence between skilled workers and foremen.[237] This is exemplified in a General Factory Committee meeting in Sormovo in March 1919 where the salaries of 'senior staff' were criticised:

> 'The rates of technical staff are setting them apart from metalworkers' tariff rates and limits must be approved. The Factory Board must take steps to stop the illegal rates of technical staff.... The salaries of the

[234] D. Orlovsky, 'The hidden Class: White-collar workers in the Soviet 1920s', pp. 244; 222
[235] Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories, 1917-1918*, p.241
[236] For example, H. Kuromiya, 'Donbas miners in war, revolution and Civil War' in Seigelbaum and Suny (ed.), *Making workers Soviet: Power, class and identity*, p.144
[237] Smith, 'Workers against foremen in St Petersburg, 1905-1917'

> senior staff are in excess of those of the conciliation court, this is considered illegal.'[238]

The rise in power of the factory committee movement in 1917, in the control of factory production, meant that factory committee meetings about issues of factory hierarchy and pay were common in early Soviet Russia.[239] The Bolsheviks paid lip service to the notion of workers' control for a brief period after 1917, which gave the factory committee movement more authority and legitimacy. The white-collar workers and especially the factory management were repeatedly blamed for production problems and shortage of pay in the early Soviet period. Shortages in the factory and especially shortages in workers' pay were portrayed by Bolsheviks, and often by factory organisations, as a result not of the economic crisis but management and higher level workers hiding money. This discourse was strikingly similar to the state endorsed discourse about peasantry hiding grain as an explanation for food shortages. In March 1918, the director of Sormovo Metalworks Khrenikov was arrested and fined. The charges against him detailed that he had failed to pay the workers their wages:

> 'The arrest of the Director of Sormovo Plant Krenikov was reported. This was due to his failure to pay a fine imposed by the administrative management of the factory totalling one thousand roubles. He also failed to pay the workers, thereby depriving them of their livelihood.' [240]

Krenhikov's initial fine was for supposedly lying to the factory administration about the amount of money that he needed to pay bills, a contractor and workers. The nature of his public arrest was a propaganda piece for local Bolsheviks who suggested that Khrenikov was willingly withholding money from hardworking metalworkers and not that the factory was facing dire financial issues. It allowed them to portray the shortage of money in Sormovo factory as a result of at best bourgeois incompetence and at worst a bourgeois

[238] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.23, Meetings of the presidium of the General-Factory Committee of Sormovo Government workers (23rd March, 1919)
[239] T.F. Remington, 'The Factory Committees and workers' control' in *Building socialism in Bolshevik Russia: Ideology and industrial organization, 1917-1921* (Pittsburgh, 1984), 23-48
[240] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (21st March, 1918)

attempt to overthrow the Soviet regime, not as the result of national Bolshevik policies. Any protest by Khrenikov or the technical staff against their treatment by the Factory Committee or local Bolsheviks could be denounced as bourgeois selfishness and an example of their outdated and exploitative attitudes.

The onset of the Civil War immediately after the Bolsheviks seized power catalysed the Bolsheviks to extend the definition of 'bourgeois' and 'enemies of the state.' The Bolsheviks capitalised on the narrow conservatism and close association of the White generals to the excesses of Tsarism. In Soviet propaganda it was repeatedly emphasised how the Tsarist generals were not only enemies of the Soviet state but the people themselves. They were the 'sons of landowners' only too willing to reinstate Tsarist social order. The Civil War was portrayed as a fight of good against evil, life or death with either an outcome of the success of the peoples' state or a return to an absolute monarchy or military dictatorship. Lenin urged the Russian people to understand that:

> 'The alternative is either Kolchak and Denikin or Soviet power, the power (dictatorship) of the workers. There is no middle course; there can be no middle course.'[241]

The link between the Whites and the failures and autocracy of Tsarism cemented the Bolshevik revolutionary discourse that potrayed the Civil War as not a war over Russian state power but a class war of the Russian people against their exploiters. This ability to establish a dominant revolutionary discourse, Smith argues, is one of the main reasons why the Bolsheviks managed to secure state power during the Civil War.[242]

The power of the Bolshevik discourse of 'class war' is revealed in the Soviet state's ability to portray the moderate socialist opposition as enemies of the people, despite their enduring support in the provinces. Many of the White

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[241] V.I Lenin, 'All Out For the Fight Against Denikin!' (July 1919), *Collected Works*, volume 29, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1972), 436-455

[242] Smith, *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*; For the influence of discourse see Foucault and Sheridan, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*

generals and former Tsarist officials were in a weak position after the collapse of Tsarism and many fled abroad.[243] However, many members of the Right SRs and Mensheviks remained after October, in an attempt to overthrow Bolshevik power, by winning decisive victories in the local soviets and the Constituent Assembly. The results of the Constituent Assembly revealed a large base of support for the SRs in Russia and many remained even after the closure of the Assembly in January 1918, after its one-day existence, to try and gain support from the Russian people for a democratic election. The forcible closure of the democratic assembly united many moderate socialists against the Bolsheviks. The subsequent horrors of the Civil War also meant it came to represent a missed opportunity, an unrealised democratic alternative to the Soviet regime.[244] It was significantly more difficult for the Bolsheviks to frame the moderate socialists, who had the support of the majority of the Russian people, as enemies of the people. They supported the re-opening of the Constituent Assembly, long-awaited democratic elections and local soviet power. Both the Left SRs and Right SRs were still succeeding in many provincial soviet elections in the spring of 1918.[245]

In Sormovo, the local Bolsheviks were consistently concerned about traditional worker support for the SR party, which was reflected in soviet votes. The disorganised local Bolshevik party attempted to win over Sormovo worker support from the SRs by running a negative propaganda campaign against the moderate socialists. They were condemned as apologists for the bourgeoisie and fooling workers into thinking they represented them. In a resolution about the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, which was published in *Krasnoe Znamia*, the local Bolsheviks proclaimed that:

> '1) The October Revolution has meant that power has passed from the hands of the bourgeois into the workers' and soldiers' hands. The

[243] V.N. Brovkin, *Behind the front lines of the Civil War: Political parties and social movements in Russia, 1918-1922* (Princeton, 1994), p.11
[244] L.G. Protasov, 'The All-Russian Constituent Assembly and the democratic alternative: Two Views of the problem', in R.A. Wade (ed.), *Revolutionary Russia: New approaches* (New York, 2004), p.244; Protasov, *Vserossiyskoe Uchreditel'noe Sobranie: Istoriia Rozhdeniia i Gibeli*
[245] Brovkin, *Behind the front lines of the Civil War: Political parties and social movements in Russia, 1918-1922*, p.14

> Revolution has changed the position of the country dramatically from a bourgeois-democratic revolution to a socialist one.
>
> 2) The Constituent Assembly is an organ of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.
>
> 3) The power of this social revolution must only be in the hands of the working people and no one else.'

In their political discourse about opposition, the Bolsheviks not only associated the moderate socialists as 'bourgeois' but attempted to portray the Constituent Assembly and democracy as a concept as 'an organ of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.' Menshevik and SR opposition to the closure of the Constituent Assembly was described as the 'cry of an old moneylender for the safety of their stolen money'.[246]

Nationally, the moderate socialists ridiculed the Bolsheviks' attempts to portray the Constituent Assembly as unrepresentative of the will of the people. The short-lived Menshevik newspaper *Svobodnaia Zhizn'* challenged the assertion that the workers supported the Bolsheviks. The paper created a fake dialogue between a young Menshevik called Shipov (thorn) and an old Bolshevik called Lovtsov (hunter), who work in the machine shop in Sormovo factory. At a meeting held in the workers club the Menshevik asks the Bolshevik what happened with the Constituent Assembly and the flustered Bolshevik cannot answer the question, nor seems to understand what is going on:

> 'Lovtsov: 'What is this all about'- repeats the Bolshevik
>
> Shipov: 'What's this meeting about you mean?'
>
> Lovtsov: 'Yes, why? Is it the Constituent Assembly: what is it, tell me?''

The Menshevik then plays a trick on the Bolshevik in order to prove that Bolsheviks do not represent all workers but themselves. After asking if he will

[246] 'Resolution of the General Meeting of the Sormovo organization RSDLP(b) the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly', *Krasnoe Znamia* (18th January, 1918)

partake in the strike in the factory, Lovtsov states that he needs the money and will not. Shipov then offers Lovtsov the money he would be earning in a day asking again if he would partake in the strike and he agrees. The meeting erupts in laughter and Shipov declares:

> 'Oh you, even you a Bolshevik! Yes they are of little red and the red banner is ready to be sold. Bolsheviks have no conviction; they recruit boys into the guard and are not worth a penny!'[247]

Yet after the forcible closure of the moderate socialist press in Sormovo and nationwide in early 1918, it was significantly harder for the Mensheviks and SRs to create an alternative vision for a political system in Russia or ridicule the Bolsheviks. The national Soviet discourse about moderate socialists and the Constituent Assembly tied in with the language used against the Whites to depict them as one common enemy against the workers' state by associating them with the Tsarist regime. *Pravda* reported on an article by the 'workers paper' *Znamia Truda* in June 1918. It denounced the Constituent Assembly by claiming that 'all honest revolutionaries' could see that 'the Constituent Assembly would play a role in ... the full restoration of the rule of the bourgeoisie, together with the monarchy.'[248] After the murder of Chernov, the Bolsheviks attempted to promote calm in the Sormovo workforce by framing the local Mensheviks and SRs, who were enraged by Chernov's murder, as 'defenders of the bourgeoisie [who] still have the opportunity to fool the head [of] worker comrades'.[249]

The Bolsheviks in Sormovo created a discourse that the moderate socialist bloc was trying to dupe Sormovo metalworkers into supporting their outdated and bourgeois policies. The workers needed to be patient and hardworking in order for the country to progress to socialism and not be fooled by the false promises of a democracy by the 'bourgeoisie.' Bolshevik cultural ideology stated that the bourgeoisie were not only the dominant economic class but also had a cultural monopoly and dominant ideology before the October Revolution. Therefore, the workers needed to enlighten themselves

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[247] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Svobodnaia Zhizn*' (28th January, 1918)
[248] 'Obzor Pechati', *Pravda* (16th May, 1918)
[249] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (20th February, 1918)

and ignore bourgeois attempts to interrupt economic life. In January 1918, the Bolsheviks organised a series of lectures on the danger of the bourgeoisie, which was described as their urgent 'responsibility' to workers in Sormovo because of the threat the bourgeoisie posed to workers' rule:

> 'There needs to be not one lecture but a series of them on the subject of the challenge of the bourgeoisie. The mortal struggle of the current moment and the struggle against capitalism and the old regime, every word needs to be explained to them so the workers can accept the challenge against the bourgeoisie.'[250]

After many unpopular managers across Russia had been dismissed or arrested by workers, the Bolsheviks used the moderate socialists as new scapegoats for labour unrest in Sormovo. This meant that the Bolsheviks could avoid directly condemning the Sormovo metalworkers, whom they needed support from, but also made clear that labour protest was unacceptable. In a report about a day-long strike in Sormovo the Bolshevik Worker Department stated an appeal must be urgently issued to workers. This was a serious, if short, strike that resulted in a riot and the shooting dead of two workers. The report stated:

> '[There was] a gathering of about 1,000 people from the machine shop at 8 o'clock. Groups of individual workers then began moving towards the power station which was guarded by about six people. They managed to barricade the fuel station but caught a hail of stones from the workers. The besieging of the power station meant that shots were fired from the guards which resulted in two deaths and several injuries.'

This report blamed the action of workers solely on the activities of the Mensheviks and SRs inside and outside of the factory. The report stated that the appeal issued to workers should 'specify the treacherous work of the Mensheviks and the SRs and the consequences of the strike that could have led to the total collapse of the economic life of the plant'.[251] A different publicised

[250] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (27th January, 1918)
[251] GOPANO f.34, op.1, d.13, Minutes of the meeting of active workers (left fractions) about the strike in Sormovo (June, 1918)

report of the strike and the attack on the power station explained the cause of the strike more specifically as a:

> ‘Protest against the arrest of the counter-revolutionary action of the worker Upovalov, who worked in the cast-iron foundry. The strikers from that workshop were joined by the machine shop. The strikers began to call for a stop to all work and called a strike of workers and other shops, but no one else joined them.’[252]

Whether this was the genuine cause of the strike or whether it was related to the shortage of fuel in the factory, which was stored in the power station, what is revealed from these reports is that the Bolsheviks were fearful of Sormovo workers. This publicised report of the 1918 strike suggests that even if many Sormovo workers did not have particular Menshevik loyalties they did not support a fellow worker being arrested and being deemed a ‘counter revolutionary.’ The Sormovo Bolsheviks continued to use the scapegoating of moderate socialists in the press as an explanation for labour activism. This was an attempt to create a discourse, based on the use of social labels, to convey them as traitors and enemies of the workers.

During another strike in Sormovo in 1918, the Bolsheviks publicly accused Mensheviks of infiltrating certain workshops in Sormovo factory and persuading them to be violent during a strike:

> ‘The Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries have long inserted themselves in Sormovo to agitate against the Bolsheviks and Left SRs.
>
> They enjoy all the difficulties that the country is going through, and excite the workers against the Soviet government policy, and, more recently, against the dictatorship of the proletariat.
>
> There are food difficulties, now passing through a number of provinces, this served for the Mensheviks and Right SRs to create an accusation against the Bolsheviks. "Now, they say, they promised bread, but rather

[252] ‘Sormovskaia Zhizn’’, *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (29th June, 1918)

> they have taken it", they said, although they are keeping silent about the general causes of the present temporary difficulties.
>
> The workers alarm was caused by the Mensheviks and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. In some shops the violence was perpetrated against workers. This strike is subordination... In short, they [Mensheviks and Right SRs] acted as enemies of the proletariat, the enemies of the people, like true Whites.'

The main accusation is that the moderate socialists were maliciously tricking workers into labour activism in order to disrupt the economy. In Bolshevik local press, Sormovo workers were given no agency in the narrative of labour activism. They were portrayed as puppets being manipulated by the moderate socialists. The Bolsheviks called the Mensheviks and Right SRs 'wolves in sheep's clothing' who would prey on workers in Sormovo factory to get them to commit 'crime[s] against the revolution'. It ended with an evocative warning for the workers of Sormovo:

> 'Every hour on strike is a crime against the revolution, a betrayal of the proletariat, the promotion of counter-revolutionaries. Strike with the bourgeoisie and they will tighten the noose around the neck of the proletariat, on its own neck.'[253]

The workers themselves were not publicly blamed for the strike, as this would have raised ideological questions about the nature of the Soviet state being a workers regime and representing workers in Sormovo. The SRs and Mensheviks were directly blamed for trying to prevent the establishment of a workers state in Russia. The repeated economic crises throughout Russia during the Civil War were blamed on the sabotage of moderate socialists, attempting to destroy not only the Soviet state but workers' power.[254] In Soviet discourse labour activism was depicted as disruptive, not only to the Soviet state but to the lives of workers themselves, because the state and the worker

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[253]'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (18th May, 1918)

[254] The peasantry were also blamed for food shortages. The food policy of War Communism was framed around a Marxist-Leninist notion of class struggle in the villages: see Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, society and revolutionary culture in Saratov, 1917-1922*, p.329; Malle, *The economic organisation of War Communism, 1918-1921*, p.329

were one. An enemy of the state in Soviet revolutionary discourse was an enemy of the worker and a friend of the bourgeoisie.

The Enemy Within

The Bolsheviks attempted various discursive techniques not only to blame economic problems on the moderate socialists but to elicit the support of Sormovo workers for Soviet policies. The negative discourse created about the moderate socialists in early Soviet Russia was used alongside deferent language towards workers. Bolshevik meetings and rallies often started with long exaltations on the role and importance of Sormovo workers in the working-class movement. For example, most of the speeches for Sormovo workers on the *Red Star* began with an acknowledgement of the 'role of Sormovo workers in the revolutionary movement', both in 1905 and in 1917.[255] In their propaganda, the Bolsheviks praised the importance of Sormovo metalworkers in the labour movement before 1917 because of their persistent labour activism, although they tended to ignore labour activism that continued after 1917.

Their reports on the meetings and rallies in *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* always emphasised how the Bolsheviks had the support of Sormovo workers. Even before the revolution in Petrograd, it reported how a factory meeting in Sormovo unanimously supported a Bolshevik resolution.[256] After the Revolution, they created a narrative that Sormovo workers unanimously supported the Revolution and the Bolshevik party. In November 1917, *Internationale* reported a rally held by the Bolsheviks was attended by 'more than five thousand workers' in Sormovo. A resolution was accepted that stated: 'Our fraternal greetings [were sent] to fellow soldiers and insurgent forces' along with the promise to keep the 'unbreakable alliance of the workers, soldiers and peasants' against counter-revolutionary forces.[257] The Bolsheviks always identified themselves with the Sormovo workers, with their aims and social origin. They appropriated vague worker demands from 1917

[255] For example Krupskaya's speech to Sormovo workers began with an acknowledgement of the 'revolutionary' role of Sormovo workers both in Sormovo and in Petrograd 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna* (8th July, 1919)
[256] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (1st Septmeber, 1917)
[257] 'Rabochii Zhizn'', *Internationale* (3rd November, 1917)

and forged them as their own policies. Also in November 1917, the Bolsheviks reported that in a general meeting of Sormovo workers a resolution was passed stating that:

> 'The general meeting of Sormovo workers, in the amount of up to two thousand people, passed a resolution, which states that the main current disaster is the imperialist war. The compromising policy of the Mensheviks and SRs exacerbate Russian devastation and are leading the country to a standstill, and leads the revolution to its death. Further demands are: the transfer of all power in the centre to the Soviets, an immediate armistice on all fronts, workers' control over production, transfer land to the peasants without compensation, etc.' [258]

This Bolshevik identification with worker demands of an end to war and worker control not only presented the local party as the workers' party but also questioned the integrity of the moderate socialists in Sormovo. The Mensheviks and SRs had taken part in the Provisional Government in 1917 and were guilty by association with the government's failure to end the war and its attempts to end the spontaneity of the factory committee movement.[259] The Sormovo Bolsheviks also appropriated the traditional SR policy of the transferring of all land to the peasantry. One of the pillars of the SR campaign in 1917 was their revolutionary agrarian programme. This called for the socialisation of land, which meant the permanent expropriation of all farmland for use by rural 'toilers', importantly without compensation to the owners.[260] After the mass spontaneous land takeovers in 1917 the Soviet state accepted the SR policy in its entirety straight after the revolution, mainly because they could not stop the continuing mass re-distribution already taking place. Before the onset of War Communism the Decree on Land in October 1917 declared that there would be an abolition of private property and the redistribution of

[258] 'Dvizhenie Sormovo', *Internationale* (4th November, 1917)
[259]For anti-war feeling in the provinces in 1917 see: : D. Raleigh, Revolutionary Politics in Provincial Russia: 'The Tsaritsyn "Republic" in 1917', *Slavic Review*, 40 (1981), pp. 199-200
[260] Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The first year of Soviet rule in Petrograd*, p.67; M. Perrie, *The agrarian policy of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party, from its origins through the revolution of 1905-1907* (Cambridge, 1976)

land amongst the peasantry, crucially without compensation.[261] The Bolshevik discourse about opposition not only questioned the personal integrity of the moderate socialists but questioned the integrity of the policies and demands they did not like, such as the Constituent Assembly, and appropriated the policies they needed to survive.

By framing their discourse about opposition, the Bolsheviks also framed a discourse about their own identity. Many SRs and Mensheviks had a similar social origin to the leading Bolsheviks. In 1920, 25% of the Bolshevik party members declared their social origin as *sluzhashchie.*[262] In the Central Committee, the majority of the members were members of the Bolshevik party before 1917, either in the rank and file or as leaders.[263] In Lane's study of Bolshevik membership before 1917, he reveals that most members were from the 'upper strata.' Few were or had been manual labourers, which was similar to Menshevik membership before 1917.[264] This changed significantly during 1917 when a rapid radicalisation of politics meant the rank and file Bolshevik membership expanded dramatically, to include many cadres of workers and soldiers.[265] Mosse argues that the composition of the Central Committee changed during the 1920s from an 'old' to a 'new' Bolshevik group, made up of members from the lower class with a lower level of education.[266] However, the Bolshevik elite still remained; ultimately the newer worker and soldier members of the Bolshevik party from 1917 may have gained positions in factory committees but did not gain leadership positions in the party elite in the

[261] Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922*, pp. 139-145
[262]Orlovsky, 'State building in the Civil War era: The role of the lower-middle Strata', p.200
[263] E. Mawdsley states that the majority of the Bolshevik elite were men who had joined the party before 1905, E. Mawdsley, 'Makers of the Soviet Union revisited: The Bolshevik CC elite in the revolutionary Period', *Revolutionary Russia*, 8 (1995), p.203
[264] E. Mawdsley and S. White, *The Soviet elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and its members, 1917-1991* (Oxford, 2000), p.10; D. Lane, *The roots of Russian Communism: A social and historical study of Russian Social- Democracy 1898–1907* (London, 1975), p.21
[265] R. Service, *The Bolshevik party in revolution: A study in organisational change, 1917-1923* (London, 1979), pp.42-46; W. Chase and J.A. Getty, 'The Moscow Bolshevik Cadres of 1917: A prosopographic analysis', *Russian History/ Histoire Russe*, 5 (1978), 84-105
[266] W.E. Mosse, 'Makers of the Soviet Union', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 47 (1968), p.146

early Soviet period, Mawdsley argues that 'the top elite remained a closed one'.[267]

Despite this generally middle class, and by their own definition 'bourgeois', composition of the Bolshevik elite, Bolshevik propaganda portrayed the party elite as working class, or at least vanguards of the working class, and the moderate socialists as bourgeois. The Bolsheviks formulated their identity of personal members of the party and as a state only in reference to their relationship to workers. Their identity was based on what the moderate socialists were not. The moderate socialists were bourgeois and the Bolsheviks were not, the bourgeoisie exploited workers and the Bolsheviks did not.[268] Bolshevik propaganda used the dual technique of accusing the moderate socialists of harbouring bourgeois attitudes and implicitly creating a negative identification of themselves opposed to this.

After 1917, the Bolsheviks displayed, both publicly and privately, optimism in winning the support of Sormovo workers. In a public meeting in February 1918, the local Bolsheviks attempted to appeal to 'radical' metalworkers in Sormovo by announcing the Bolsheviks' unequivocal support for the workers revolution in Germany. Their resolution declared:

> 'We Sormovo workers gathered at a rally on 24th February in a public meeting, after listening to several speakers on the current situation we agreed:
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> 1) In the face of the current enemy invasion of the German imperialists and obvious counter-revolutionary activities of our bourgeoisie all revolutionaries must be united.'[269]

[267]Mawdsley, 'Makers of the Soviet Union revisited: The Bolshevik CC elite in the Revolutionary Period', p.203; also see L. Cook, 'Collegiality' in the People's Commissariats 1917-20', *Revolutionary Russia*, 26 (2013), 1-31

[268] For the persistence of the Soviet us/them identification see S. Davies, ''Us against Them': Social Identity in Soviet Russia, 1934-41', *Russian Review*, 56 (1997)

[269] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok*, (26th February, 1918); For Bolshevik and worker celebrations of the German Revolution 1918 see G. Albert, 'German October is approaching: Internationalism, activists and the Soviet State in 1923', *Revolutionary Russia*, 24 (2011), pp.117-118

Here the Bolsheviks presented themselves as Sormovo workers, with the same demands and grievances as Sormovo workers. The resolution of Sormovo Bolsheviks was depicted as a resolution of 'we Sormovo workers.' The local Bolsheviks identified themselves as workers and as the party of the workers, who represented their views and their best interests. The Bolsheviks did not create a distinct identity for themselves because they were the self-appointed workers' party and the voice of the proletariat. The image of the Bolshevik party was the party of socialism, the workers in Russia and the proletariat worldwide.[270]

When labour protest continued in Sormovo throughout the Civil War period, the deferent language towards workers began to change. The automatic identification of Sormovo workers with the state began to shift to a discourse where workers had to prove their loyalty to the state. The language used against moderate socialists also often implored workers to act as 'true' workers and ignore the bourgeois attempts of the Mensheviks and SRs to induce labour disruption. In response to the continuing food crisis in Sormovo the Bolsheviks urged the workers to continue the revolutionary fight:

> 'The interests of the stomach in Sormovo have apparently begun to drown out the interests of the spirit.... You should have enough courage and common sense to say that with the impending counter-revolution, the working class must fight tirelessly.'[271]

This is an explicit criticism of Sormovo workers, which accused them of not having the 'spirit' that a Soviet working class should have. This state discourse suggested that workers were not in a privileged position by default of their occupation but they needed to do everything they could to ensure the survival of the Soviet state. Social origin and economic occupation were not enough, it was the mindset and intention of the individual and their willingness to work which distinguished an ally from an enemy.[272] Their language about opposition and the ideological framework behind it shifted away from the question of

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[270] See Smith, 'Introduction' in *Captives of revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, pp. xi-xx

[271] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (8th August, 1918)

[272] See Fitzpatrick 'Ascribing class: The consciousness of social identity in Soviet Russia', p.745

what can the Soviet state provide for workers to what the workers needed to do for the Soviet state.

A distinct language about opposition was created, with terms like enemy (*vrag*), semi-proletarian, sabotage and bourgeois systematically employed to criticise not only the acts of the 'dissenters' but used to question their social origin and role within the Soviet state. This focus on the intent of the individual was a key part of the proto show trials of the Bolshevik elite. Proto show trials of former party members would reveal not their defence but their guilt and apology for their 'crimes'. The difference between the Bolsheviks' policy on 'enemies' inside the party and outside, was the argument that the party members should have known better. Whereas the unenlightened worker could have been seduced by the bourgeoisie, the party members were educated and familiar with the revolutionary theory of Marxism and Leninism and therefore had betrayed the party and the working class.[273]

The Bolsheviks' discourse about striking workers in Sormovo was to deny them their identity as a worker. A 'real' worker would not have been duped by the bourgeoisie to protest against the state, it would have been an act of self-sabotage. The Bolsheviks' response to the metalworkers' strike in 1919, during which workers demanded a more regular food supply into the factory, was to 'educate the uneducated elements and [the] implementation of the Board of Labour Discipline.' Their justification for this was that there were 'counter-revolutionary elements' within the factory, including some workers themselves, who were to be arrested.[274] In May 1918, the Bolsheviks created a commission to combat 'counter-revolution and 'sabotage' (*Cheka*) in Sormovo factory.[275] The moderate socialist opposition were not named as the cause of 'sabotage' in the factory; instead the loyalty of the metalworkers was questioned. The deference the Bolsheviks had for the Sormovo workers' tradition of labour activism was also questioned. On a visit from Moscow,

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[273] I. Halfin, *Intimate enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik opposition, 1918-1928* (Pittsburgh, 2007) pp.1-4, 13, 19

[274]GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.61, Sormovo region RKP(b) Material from the Commission to investigate the strike in Sormovo (26th March, 1919)

[275] 'Party Life': Protocol of the Sormovo organisation RSDLP (29th May, 1918) in M. Lubovnikov, I. Nechaiev, M. Shinopov (ed.), *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsioniksobitii v gorkovskom krai*, p. 144

Sokolniki (Moscow member of the Central Committee) came to speak to Sormovo workers. He criticised the apathy of Sormovo workers in the current moment:

> ‘This is events of the moment are so surprising in Sormovo because - in the words of the speaker [Sokolniki] - in the 1905 revolution, they [Sormovo workers] were in the front ranks of the fighters for the freedom of the working class.’

Later in the meeting L.M. Kaganovich (the chairman of the Nizhegorod Provincial Bolshevik party) lamented how the Sormovo workers were indifferent to the struggles of the Soviet state, because they had not organised a food squad to help solve the food supply crisis in the factory:

> ‘At the same meeting Kaganovich stated that the bread supply issue and the food crisis posed a number of questions for the Sormovich: "What have you done Sormovich for the production of bread?" Have you organised at least one grocery squad? They sent you 15 thousand puds, did you at least send one unit to the front to fight the Czechoslovaks to win the Volga bread?’ No, you did not do anything!" In conclusion, Kaganovich strongly encouraged Sormovo workers to awaken their senses, from their indifference.’[276]

This is a vitriolic attack on the Sormovo workers from a representative of the provincial Bolshevik party. He implied that Sormovo workers had taken all the gains from the revolution without giving anything back. The use of the suffix ‘ich’ to describe Sormovo workers was especially patronising. The implication from this was their entitlement to privileged rations as metalworkers in a nationalised factory was not given to them because they were entitled to it as workers but they had to earn it. The deferent language used by Sokolniki about the revolutionary tradition of Sormovo was used against Sormovo workers as an example of how they had failed the workers regime, by failing to organise a factory requisition squad, or join the Red Army.

[276] *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (3rd Septmeber, 1918)

By the end of 1918, Bolshevik language and discourse had changed towards the skilled metalworkers in Sormovo. The Bolshevik organisation in Nizhegorod province had little respect for Sormovo workers who supported the SRs and had a privileged food supply. In December 1918, the provincial party declared that Bolsheviks were to be sent into Sormovo workshops:

> 'In order to raise productivity at the Sormovo plant and eliminate anti-Soviet speeches, that took place in certain departments.... the workshops have a very urgent need to be cleansed from the kulak elements infiltrating into the plant.'[277]

In another party conference in Nizhegorod, the traditional Sormovo support for the SRs was explained as the large presence of 'semi-proletarian' workers in the factory.[278] In an identical way to how the Bolsheviks labelled the moderate socialists as 'bourgeois', striking workers in Sormovo were dismissed as peasant-workers, although many of the skilled metalworkers would have worked in the factory since becoming a child apprentice. The striking workers in Sormovo were not 'workers' or socialists in Bolshevik propaganda. They were not only represented as un-proletariat, because of their lack of support for the state's policies, but they also became an enemy of the state, both practically and ideologically.

State discourse about opposition changed significantly during the Civil War. The use of labels as a means of distinguishing the opposition had no base in reality but was used to shape Bolshevik revolutionary discourse. Labels became a means of distinguishing the state's allies from enemies, which could encompass factory managers, the Whites, the moderate socialists and even workers. The Bolsheviks imposed these identities on their opposition which came to encompass not only political opposition but ordinary Russians too. The initial optimism of the Bolsheviks in Sormovo in attempting to persuade them to support their party is evidenced through their deferent language towards them. As the state became increasingly threatened by military fighting

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[277] 'Protocol of Nizhegorod Gubkoma' (18th December, 1918) in Lubovnikov, Nechaiev and Shinopov (ed.), *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsioniksobitii v gorkovskom krai*, p. 192

[278] RGASPI, f.60, op.2 d.5, From the minutes of the meeting of the Moscow District's Third Party Conference on the state of the party organisations in the Nizhegorod province (8th December, 1917)

and economic crises, workers were no longer given the privilege of state support because of the virtue of their socio-economic position. The central and local organs of the state continued to identify themselves with workers but workers were labelled Soviet workers only if they conformed to the Soviet discourse of what a worker should be. They were given a dichotomous choice to work with the Bolsheviks or against them.

Mechanisms of Coercion: Creating the 'workers'' state

Parallel to the evolution of the Bolshevik revolutionary discourse was the evolution of the state infrastructure. The intervention state policies into the private sphere, seen in Chapter 4, was symptomatic of progressively interventionist and coercive state mechanisms. One of the main features of the interventionist Soviet state was the use of information gathering through surveillance. The Bolshevik party in Sormovo used surveillance of Sormovo workers throughout the Civil War and were constantly aware and concerned about the 'moods' of the workers there, which they reported to the provincial Bolshevik party. This in turn shaped discourse about the Bolsheviks and Sormovo workers. In a similar way to the aims of the data collection of the TsSU, the aim of this surveillance was not to 'know' workers but to control them. The Soviet framework for interacting with workers turned coercive once the Bolsheviks had destroyed their internal and external opposition and had engaged in a rapid centralisation and militarisation of society. Surveillance became a tool for controlling workers and instilling behavioural norms and gathered information was used to shape Bolshevik discourse and policy.

The state utilised coercion in different ways to control workers during the Civil War. Initially, the Bolsheviks had hoped to co-operate with Sormovo workers by infiltrating factory committees and co-opting 'active' workers, who were members of the Bolshevik party, into agitating on a workshop level. As strikes and labour activism continued in Sormovo, the interaction between Bolsheviks and workers turned repressive. The extraordinary circumstances of the Civil War, and the encroaching front line in the Volga region, catalysed the Bolsheviks to use violent, repressive measures to coerce workers into obedience. The shortage of food in Sormovo meant that the Bolsheviks could use the threat of withdrawal of food rations as a way of punishing striking

workers and as a 'shock' nationalised factory workplace infractions were deemed as political acts. The co-option of workers into state mechanisms became forced when workers were used as an integral part of state surveillance and violence, as part of factory Red Guards or Cheka. Travelling agitation and show trials also cemented behavioural norms so other members of the workforce were utilised for spotting any signs of 'disobedience.' Then there was the threat of violence and actual violence which erupted in Sormovo and across Russia. More frequently striking workers were shot during labour protests and labelled counter-revolutionary by the local Bolsheviks. Repression came in many forms during the Civil War. Bolshevik repression was forged from the socio-economic crises of the Civil War, Bolshevik ideology and the fear of the local Bolsheviks of the Sormovo workers, of their labour activism, ingrained support for the SRs and their integral role in the production of munitions for the Civil War.

Surveillance

In Holquist's definition of surveillance he refers to information gathering as 'that which observes the population's attitudes, in aggregate, for political purposes'.[279] This means that information gathering was not just a tool used by the state in an attempt to understand the moods of the population but it had a further aim to shape those moods. The s*vodki* were summaries of popular moods by state organs, including the police, which were frequently used in the Soviet Union. In the post-revolutionary period, s*vodki* were used by the central and local governments to inform the Bolsheviks about the thoughts, feelings and opinions of the population, which in turn informed their policies and their attempts to converse with the population. They reveal that ordinary people in Soviet Russia did not have uniform views and were not afraid to criticise the new Soviet state.[280] During the Civil War, the state's systematic use of

[279] I agree with Peter Holquist's assessment that the purpose of Soviet surveillance was 'not of reporting the population's collective mood but of managing and shaping it': P. Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik surveillance in its pan European context', *The Journal of Modern History*, 69 (1997), p.419

[280] For example, S. Davies, describes the aim of her book as to 'release' the dissonant voices of Stalinist Russia 'and allow them to speak for themselves', *Popular opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, propaganda and dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge, 1997) p.1; V. Izmozik, *Glaza i ushi rezhima: Gosudarstvennyi politicheskii kontrol' za naseleniem Sovetskoi Rossii v 1918-1928 godakh* (St Petersburg, 1995); P. Holquist

labelling to define opposition was mirrored by the indiscriminate and widespread nature of Soviet surveillance, which was used to monitor not only opposition but ordinary civilians. Although the mechanisms of surveillance had been created by the Tsarist state, the ideology and aims behind mass surveillance were completely different.[281] The Bolsheviks used surveillance in an expanded and intensified way which not only used party members as information gatherers but used workers themselves, in order to create an atmosphere of fear.

The early Soviet state was by no means unique in its surveillance and information gathering. It needs to be understood within a bigger European context of total mobilisation and the interference of states in the private sphere of ordinary civilians during World War One. Most surveillance systems in the early twentieth century featured summaries of popular moods of the population based on intercepted letters and accounts of overheard conversations.[282] There was state surveillance in Russia before 1914 but this usually involved the state and police attempting to uncover 'enemies'. As early as the mid-nineteenth century Tsarist police launched surveillance of the urban labour force in an attempt to uncover any revolutionary sentiment and opened and read the letters of suspected revolutionaries.[283] As Holquist argues, the difference between this type of surveillance and the institutionalised and bureaucratised surveillance that emerged after 1914 was that the surveillance was no longer focused on alleged enemies of the state or a certain group of people: its reach was widespread and was aimed at the entire population. During a time of total war, there was obviously concern about information about the front being sent from soldiers back to their loved ones but there was a deeper concern about the mood of both soldiers and ordinary civilians by the state.

'Anti-Soviet Svodki from the Civil War: Surveillance as a shared feature of Russian political culture', *The Russian Review*, 56 (1997), 445-450; C. Kiaer and E. Naiman (ed.), *Everyday life in early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution inside* (Bloomington, 2006); S. Kotkin, *Magnetic mountain: Stalinism as a civilization* (Berkeley, 1995)

[281] For Surveillance and discourse of the 'enemy' in late Imperial Russia see, W.C. Fuller, *The Foe Within: Fantasies of treason and the end of Imperial Russia* (Ithaca, 2006)

[282] Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik surveillance in Its pan European Context', p.416

[283] R.E. Zelnik, *Labor and Society in Tsarist Russia: The factory workers of St Petersburg, 1855-1870* (Stanford, 1971), p.26; Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik surveillance in Its pan European Context', p.422

Therefore, by the time of the October Revolution not only the Tsarist regime but most of the major states at war in Europe engaged in institutionalised mass surveillance of their populations. However, it was not only states that engaged in surveillance for political purposes. Although the Bolsheviks were a small party, separated from the bigger RSDLP in the early twentieth century, the surveillance and infiltration of factories was one of their most sustained campaigns. They did not have the bureaucratic structures of the Tsarist police and were an underground organisation so instead relied on secretly placing party members in individual workshops in factories. This was not only for agitational purposes but to continually report back on the moods and any revolutionary sentiments of the workers there. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Sormovo the small RSDLP presence there attempted to win the support of workers through agitation and surveillance. A 'chronicler of the working-class movement' in Sormovo described how:

> 'In Nizhnii Novgorod the circle of Social Democrats bound itself with many factories, mills, and among its members raised the issue of the need for practical activity amongst workers.' [284]

The SDs engaged both in 'practical activity' which was mainly agitational work and they also monitored the shifting moods of the workers there, which were passed on to the local RSDLP and even exiled revolutionaries abroad. Gorky's portrayal of Sormovo factory in *Mat'* reveals the technique of the SDs in trying to convert workers to become party members, so they could engage in agitation and mood surveillance in one factory. Zalomov is a worker at Sormovo factory who becomes an active member of the RSDLP and meets with his local organisation at his house to discuss their agitation, how the mood of workers was at the moment and how it was likely to progress or change.[285] This small scale agitation and surveillance remained a core part of RSDLP and then Bolshevik policy up until 1917.

The Bolsheviks capitalised on their presence in major factories in Petrograd in Moscow during the war and especially in 1917. During the rise in

[284] V.T Illarionova, *Materialy po istorii Revoliuzionnovo Dvizheniia*
[285] Gorky, *Mother*, p.189

industrial action in 1916, the Bolsheviks proved themselves to be well aware of the mood of workers enraged by rising prices and food shortages in Petrograd and targeted their propaganda at workers in factories affected and soldiers in nearby garrisons.[286] In 1917, the Bolsheviks' seized upon workers' extreme dissatisfaction and desperation in the midst of an economic and political crisis and many workers became active party members. They had Bolshevik members well placed within the factory to seize upon opportunities to become members of factory committees. By August 1917 in Petrograd, with the exceptions of the Printers' and Paper Workers' Unions, the Bolsheviks held majorities in the executives of all Petrograd's industrial unions.[287]

The rise in membership numbers in Sormovo throughout 1917 made the Bolsheviks confident:

> 'Our Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Committee has been revitalised. Recent developments in connection with the Kornilov adventure opened to us, the Bolsheviks, a wide field of activity. We do not have access to some areas, as well as some plants but our organisation is winning.'[288]

This suggests that some 'areas' or workshops were more prone to support the Bolsheviks in Sormovo than others. Or Bolsheviks had more of a presence in some workshops than others, although even by 1917 their numbers were still negligible. The Sormovo Bolsheviks were well aware that the moderate socialists continued to have a presence in Sormovo factory after 1917, especially in certain workshops. Murphy's study of the Hammer and Sickle factory in Moscow reveals how in 1917 the SR, Menshevik and Bolshevik infiltration of the factory with 'talented' members fought for the support of workers there. Some party cells in workshops reported that workers' inclination for striking was favourable whilst in other workshops the mood was

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[286] Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the factories, 1917-1918*, p.51
[287] Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power*, p.221
[288] RGASPI, f.60, op.1, d.8, Letter from the Nizhegorodskaia regional committee RSDRP(b) to Moscow Oblast bureau RSDRP(b) about the growing influence of the Bolsheviks after the Kornilov revolt (9th September, 1917)

reported as ambiguous or negative.[289] The link between workshop support for the Bolsheviks and labour activism can be partially explained by the level of skill of the workers in the workshop and *tsekhovschina*. The more skilled workers generally engaged in strike action more and were the first to support the Bolsheviks in 1917. However, this is not a broad or universal explanation because it did not apply at all in Sormovo, nor many other provincial industrial areas.[290]

After the October Revolution, Bolshevik surveillance in Sormovo factory in 1917-1918 remained low level. Information was gathered and then passed on to the provincial committee meeting of the Bolshevik party in Nizhegorod province. The surveillance reports from the factory during the first couple of years of Soviet rule in Sormovo reveal not only the continued labour activism of Sormovo workers and their unwillingness to support the Bolsheviks but also the persistent fear of the Bolsheviks there who knew they could not rely on the support of the workers there. By 1919, the continued labour activism of Sormovo workers was a source of extreme concern not just for the Sormovo Bolsheviks but the regional committee. During a strike in May 1919, the Nizhegorod regional committee established a commission to investigate which workers started the strike and demanded that the Sormovo Bolsheviks report on the situation inside the factory daily for the foreseeable future:

> 'In connection with the riots that took place at the Sormovo factory due to the spreading of provocative rumours, the Presidium of the Executive Committee has decided to propose that a Commission is sent to the factory to find out those responsible comrades who partook in the

[289] Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory*, p.56

[290] This includes the skilled workers in industrial towns of Tula and Izhevsk: Smith, *Captives of revolution: the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p.26; Retish, 'The Izhevsk Revolt of 1918: The fateful clash of revolutionary coalitions, paramilitarism and Bolshevik power', p.303

riots; Sormovskii Soviet must inform us daily about the situation at the plant.'[291]

The committee had been told that the strike was caused by 'provocative' rumours stemming from the moderate socialists infiltrated into the factory. The aim of this intensified surveillance was to root out the workers, or SR members, that started this rumour and also keep constantly vigilant of any anti-Bolshevik sentiment in the factory. This was especially vital during a time of Civil War, when any stoppage only added to the economic chaos throughout Russia. The focus and tone of early Soviet *svodki* differed significantly to Tsarist and Provisional Government *svodki* about labour activism. In a report on the demands of workers in strikes in Nizhnii Novgorod factories in March 1917 the language is matter of fact. The new local Provisional Government representatives attempted to deal with labour problems on a situational basis in Nizhnii Novgorod. The demands of workers in the Fel'zer factory in Nizhnii Novgrorod are reported as:

1) ' 8- hour working day
2) The abolition of overtime
3) Time off for festive periods
4) A collective agreement
5) Wage increase
6) Payment of wages according to daily work not hourly
7) Payment for sick days
8) Military pay increase for all
9) Holidays are paid for a full day's work
10) If work is undertaken for more than 6 days in a week, must receive a passbook.'[292]

The demands of the workers were accompanied with a possible solution to the problem which included a meeting with the Board of Workers' Deputies in an

[291] Protocol of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of Nizhegorod Province (31st May 1919) in Lubovnikov, Nechaiev and Shinopov (ed.), *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsionik sobitii v gorkovskom krai*, p.236

[292] TsANO, f.146, op.1, d.29 The s*vodki* of the requirements for working entrepreneurs (March, 1917)

attempt to settle disputes. Compared to the language used in early Soviet *svodki* in Sormovo and Nizhnii Novgorod, there is no threat of violence or the surveillance of all workers. There is no discourse created about who is to blame and a genuine attempt to try and solve the labour dispute peacefully. Early Soviet *svodki* took on a frenzied form during the Civil War. The private reports of Sormovo Bolsheviks reveal the pressure they were under trying to maintain production in the factory, stop moderate socialist opposition and stem labour activism of the workers.

The Soviet state harnessed the Tsarist template for information gathering and began monitoring workers' moods on a much wider and systematic scale than the Tsarist regime ever had. The Bolsheviks mobilised state resources in Sormovo to expand their formerly underground and clandestine surveillance operations. The context of the Civil War meant that Bolsheviks began a concerted attempt to root out their 'enemies'. Although the Sormovo Bolsheviks initially worked with the moderate socialists in the soviet, in the first year of Soviet rule, they kept their party and individual members under constant surveillance and used this information to place obstacles in their path. Although the local Bolsheviks were tolerant of their Menshevik rivals in Saratov, after they dropped their demand for the re-convening of the Constituent Assembly by October 1918, the Bolsheviks used surveillance to dismantle the Menshevik party there. They refused to circulate their newspapers in 1919, after the Menshevik party was temporarily legalised, and by April they had arrested prominent Menshevik members.[293] The Sormovo Bolsheviks were also constantly aware of any activities of the moderate socialists both inside and outside the factory. They knew that many of the workers in Sormovo supported the SRs before and after 1917 and tried urgently to 'paralyse the Menshevik and SR agitation in workshops and rallies'.[294] When the soviet split in two in April 1918 the Bolsheviks knew exactly what the moderate socialists were planning and were always one step ahead of them. This is exemplified by the occupation of the planned workers'

[293] Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, society and revolutionary culture in Saratov, 1917-1922*, p.164
[294] Protokol Sormovskii Komitet RSDRP(b) (17th March 1918) in Lubovnikov, Nechaiev and Shinopov (ed.), *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsionik sobitii v gorkovskom krai* p.132

conference in 1918, with the use of 10 Cheka units and Latvian riflemen from Moscow.[295]

The goal of Soviet surveillance in Sormovo went far beyond trying to gain support from workers for the Bolsheviks in an area dominated by the SRs. The local Bolsheviks listened to perceived worker concerns and grievances and then used this information to inform their discourse about their own party and their opposition. One of the areas where the local Bolsheviks were most attuned to worker grievances was the causes of strikes in Sormovo. The Bolsheviks mobilised the support of 'active workers', who were Bolshevik party members within Sormovo factory, to report on the origins of, and reasons behind, a strike. One example of a report of the activity of Bolshevik workers in Sormovo in 1918 reveals that they worked closely with the Bolsheviks:

'The commission reported in the fight against counter-revolution, sabotage and speculation. It was decided to transfer the work of the commission to rooting out particular workers.' [296]

The co-opting of Bolshevik workers into state surveillance reveals the indiscriminate nature of this surveillance of workers by other workers. Bolshevik workers targeted individual workers who were deemed to be 'counter-revolutionary' but they also monitored the moods of the workforce in general. These reports were periodic and the workers also met on a regional level with the aim to stop labour activism in a period of economic crisis and food shortages. In this report, the economic crime of speculation is connected directly to the political crime of counter-revolution. This was also a part of the expanding discourse and indiscriminate nature of Bolshevik coercion during the Civil War.

It was not the mechanism of Bolshevik surveillance that made it exceptional in the European context but how they used this information to inform a revolutionary discourse for the economic, social and political coercion of groups and individuals. The information was used against

[295] Smith, *Captives of revolution: the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik dictatorship, 1918-1923*, p. 63; *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (11th June, 1918)
[296] *Volskaia Kommuna* (2nd July, 1918)

moderate socialists in an attempt to anticipate their political moves but it was also used against workers. The gathering of information about workers' moods was not an end in itself. The Bolsheviks in Sormovo understood many workers' grievances but their aim was not to address these grievances but to forge them as their own grievances and create a discourse about what it meant to be a Soviet worker. In contrast to other European states, the conflict continued in Russia for another three years. In the context of civil war 'extraordinary' powers of surveillance were justified by the Bolsheviks to ensure vigilance in the workplace for the good not of the Bolshevik state but of the workers state.

Co-operation, Co-option and Coercion

The Bolsheviks went much further than using surveillance to shape their revolutionary discourse. They used the information gathered about workers 'moods' in an attempt to shape those moods. This was done firstly through co-operation with workers inside the factory and co-option of workers into state mechanisms. This gradually turned into a more coercive relationship between the local and central state organs and workers. After 1917, the Bolsheviks in Sormovo attempted to co-operate with Sormovo workers by trying to get elected into factory organisations and working with factory boards. However, this did not stop the labour activism of Sormovo workers. The information gathered from surveillance was then used for coercive purposes. The Bolsheviks utilised economic and violent coercion in an attempt to win the Civil War and ensure the pacification of Sormovo workers but it was also an integral part of their ideology. The use of violence by state organs and ordinary people was normalised in the early Soviet period. If Sormovo workers would not be persuaded to become the embodiment of Soviet workers then they were to be forced to do so.

Rather than destroying established power structures or engaging in a violent takeover in 1917 the Sormovo Bolsheviks began by working within existing power structures and attempted to gain support of the workers there, whilst also trying to run an effective local government. This was another area of contestation for the Bolsheviks, as the factory organisations were also dominated by moderate socialists. The Sormovo Bolsheviks continued to half-

heartedly co-operate with factory organisations in the workplace, just as they had to co-operate with the moderate socialists in the soviet. They attempted to get elected onto the factory committee so they could make decisions about the logistics of the factory. The factory committee was the link between the party, trade unions and the everyday life of workers. They organised commissions, cultural affairs, unemployment funds, food supply and the implementation of Soviet policies.[297] In 1917, the Bolsheviks were concerned that the moderate socialists in Sormovo, who were better funded and had more support, would convince the workers to vote for them in elections. In March 1918, in a meeting of Sormovo Bolsheviks they promptly organised a workshop meeting in Sormovo factory, in an attempt to convince workers to vote for them in the upcoming re-elections to the factory board.[298] If the elections did not go their way the Bolsheviks attempted to challenge the result or undermine their opponents. In *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* the Bolsheviks reported an 'incoherent and muddled speech' of the Sormovo Menshevik Voroinchev in a general meeting of employees of the plant.[299] In January 1918, the Bolsheviks openly called on workers to disrupt elections of the Factory Board:

> 'If the new [factory] board sympathises with the Mensheviks and Right SRs then maybe ... we can have a thought towards disrupting the election results?'[300]

The Soviet state also initially continued to work within factory structures that had been established in 1917. There was an attempt to listen to workers grievances in 1917-1918 when factory organisations, with some Bolshevik members, acted as an intermediary between workers and the state. The conciliation courts in Sormovo were composed of twenty members, ten representatives from employers and ten from workers and employees. These 'courts' listened to workers' disputes either with each other or with a member of the factory hierarchy. The issue aimed to be settled within twenty four hours

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[297] Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian printers and Soviet socialism, 1918-1930,* p.63
[298] Protokol Sormovskii Komitet RSDRP(b) (17th March 1918) in Lubovnikov, Nechaiev and Shinopov (ed.), *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsionik sobitii v gorkovskom krai* p.132
[299] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (9th March, 1918)
[300] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn'', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (27th January, 1918)

or a commission of inquiry was established. One important issue brought to mediation was unemployment benefit, which was also settled in the Labour Exchanges, which also acted as a mediator between workers and the state.[301] Throughout the Civil War, the Soviet state subordinated these factory organisations to the state and integrated state control with the factory hierarchy.[302] The Sormovo Bolsheviks refused to tolerate the moderate socialists' presence in factory organisations. The prominent local Bolshevik Kuznetsov declared in 1919 that many of the factory departments were 'beyond the influence of the Communist Party' because in six of the workshops the chairmen 'were SR maximalists and left SRs' and could no longer be co-operated with without Bolshevik control.[303]

The Soviet bureaucracy expanded significantly during the Civil War at the expense of the workplace democracy that was experimented with in 1917, through workers control. Organs of the factory and collective democracy such as soviets, workers inspection and management were all subordinated to militaristic state authority.[304] Furthermore, organisations such as the Worker and Peasants Inspectorate which began as an organisation to investigate workplace conditions also became under the control of the state. It emerged from the Civil War limited to organising participation in state affairs and training cadres for administrative work.[305]

Retish asserts that there was an understanding between the peasants in Viatka province and the Bolsheviks there because the Soviet state relied on peasants accommodating their lifestyle to the 'soviet experience' in order for it to work.[306] This suggests that the Soviet state relied on the co-operation of peasants and workers in order for their state organisations to run effectively. In

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[301] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.3, The position of the conciliation court at Sormovo plant (January, 1918); GOPANO, f. 4527, op.1, d.5, Factory Committee Meeting (1st March, 1918)
[302] T.F. Remington, 'The Rationalisation of State Kontrol'' in Koenker, Rosenberg and Suny (ed.), *Party, state, and society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in social history*, p. 210; G.J. Gill., *The origins of the Stalinist political system* (Cambridge, 1990)
[303] Protocol of the Nizgubkoma RKP(b) (12th February 1919), in M. Lubovnikov, I. Nechaiev, M. Shinopov., *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsioniksobitii v gorkovskom krai*, p.206
[304] Pirani, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat, 1920-1924: Soviet Workers and the new Communist elite*, pp.8-9
[305] E.A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia: The rise and fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920-1934* (London, 1987), p.35
[306] Retish, *Russia's peasants in revolution and civil war: Citizenship, identity, and the creation of the Soviet state, 1914-1922*, p.1

Sormovo the Bolsheviks clearly listened to and understood many worker grievances, because of their surveillance of Sormovo factory and participation in factory organisations. However, the example of the Bolsheviks attempting to improve the efficiency of their food provisioning is a rare one during the Civil War. Unlike the reports of the Provisional Government, in Nizhnii Novgrorod there was no concerted attempt to address worker grievances. There are many more examples where the Bolsheviks were informed of worker opinions and grievances and either reacted harshly through militaristic labour discipline or used it to inform their political discourse either about worker support for their party or how the moderate socialists betrayed the working class. The Bolshevik ideology of vanguardism and the circumstances of the Civil War meant that the flirtation with workers democracy and participation in the factory hierarchy was a short term policy of necessity brought on by the spontaneous factory takeovers of 1917.

The co-operation of local Bolsheviks with factory organisations turned into a coercive relationship by late 1918. One of the turning points in Sormovo, of the Bolsheviks' strategy of responding to opposition, was the closure of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918. Before 1918, the Bolsheviks declared in rallies and in the local press that they would not work with those who did not recognise the October Revolution. As soon as November 1917, the Sormovo Bolshevik Sergushev read out a Bolshevik resolution to other members:

> 'There will be no reconciliation and agreements with all those groups and parties whose task it is to disrupt the gains of October, and whose favourite tactic is policy agreements with all of the counter-revolutionary forces.'[307]

This discourse was a part of the institutionalisation of the notion of 'enemy of the people.' There were attacks on liberals when in November 1917 Lenin

[307] GOPANO, f.34, op.1, d.9, From the minutes of the general meeting of members of the Sormovo Party organization RSDLP(b) on the current moment (11th November, 1917); Mikhail Sergeivich Sergushev was a member of the Bolshevik party in Nizhnii Novgorod since 1904 and became secretary of the Sormovo committee of the Bolshevik party in 1917 and from 1917-1919 was the head of Nizhegoroskaia Provincial Committee of the RSDLP(b), Golub (ed.), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia,* p.467

declared that all members of the Constitutional Democrats were considered outlaws and were to be arrested and bought in front of a revolutionary court.[308] However, despite a revolutionary discourse against moderate socialists there was limited armed repression or violence of socialist opposition until mid-1918.

The whole trajectory of the Soviet state was transformed by the party's general acceptance of the extreme centralisation policies of War Communism in mid-1918, which set in motion a clampdown on opposition.[309] The Bolsheviks justified the harsh laws of centralisation in reference to the life and death struggle of the Civil War and the defence of the Soviet state. Wartime emergency measures became normalised.[310] There was a systematic attempt to rigidly centralise not only economic structures but control workers themselves. The principle of 'shock control' that had been used during the Civil War was intensified after the war was effectively over. By the second half of 1920 the number of metalwork plants designated as 'shock' work rose from 12 to 240 and by the end of 1920 there were 1,716 shock enterprises in Russia.[311] Lenin's haphazard economic policies were tightened and extended. Despite the opposition to the policy of one-man management in 1919 by the end of 1920 only 25% of Russian enterprises still maintained collegiate management.[312] Surveillance also continued after the Civil War and was expanded in the 1920's by the OGPU. Finkel argues that after Kronstadt the Bolsheviks had a sense of urgency about the struggle against enemies on the internal front. The 'revolutionary legality' of coercion and mass surveillance was continually legalised.[313] Although the Soviet state could claim that terror and repression

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[308] S. Courtois (et al), J. Murphy and M. Kramer (trans.), *The black book of communism: Crimes, terror, repression* (Cambridge, 1999), p.55

[309] R.V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Harvard, 1965), p.93

[310] Holquist, *Making War, forging Revolution: Russia's continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921*, p.144

[311] S. Pirani, 'Class clashes with party: Politics in Moscow between the Civil War and the New Economic Policy, *Historical Materialism*, 11 (2003), p.82

[312] R. Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in power: A study of Moscow during the Civil War, 1918-1921*(Basingstoke, 1988), p.80

[313] S. Finkel, 'An intensification of vigilance: Recent perspectives on the insitutional history of the Soviet security apparatus in the 1920s', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 5 (2004), pp.302-303; for activities of surveillance and repression after 1921 also see Kotkin, *Magnetic mountain: Stalinism as a civilization*; V. Semystiaha and M. D. Olynyk, 'The role and place of secret collaborators in the informational activity of the GPU-NKVD in the 1920s and 1930s (On the basis of materials of the Donbass Region)', *Cahiers du Monde russe*,

was a condition of the Civil War, Lenin and many high level Bolsheviks, notably Trotsky, believed before 1917, and certainly afterwards, that coercion and violence were necessary to the building of socialism.[314] This adoption of a wartime institution to 'ordinary' circumstances after the introduction of N.E.P. reveals the Civil War utopian mentality of Lenin. Lenin viewed the revolution as a life and death struggle and even before the Civil War began viewed revolutionary terror as vital to the success of the revolution. In the Third All-Russan Congress of Soviets in January 1918, he declared 'not a single problem of the class struggle has ever been solved in history except by violence.'[315]

The financial crisis in Sormovo, and the increasing number of unemployment in the factory, meant to some extent some workers were dispensable and could be threatened with job losses. After the strike, caused by the food shortage, in 1919 the Bolsheviks threatened the removal of striking workers. They promised to:

> 'Take measures against the 'counter revolutionary' elements in the plant. There will be dismissals and members of other party organisations will be removed from the [Metalworkers'] Union, with the consent of the Union.'[316]

Managers and factory committees were also told they needed to be vigilant of workers and ensure production levels increased and labour discipline was enforced. In connection with the 'adoption of measures to raise productivity' in Sormovo, the factory committee was instructed to introduce 'the regulation of labour and [a] proper working environment with factory labour discipline.'[317]

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42 (2001), 231-244; D.R. Shearer, 'Social disorder, mass repression, and the NKVD during the 1930s', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 42 (2001), 505-534

[314] See for example, L. Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism: A reply to Karl Kautsky* (London, 1975)

[315] L.D. Gerson., *The Secret Police in Lenin's Russia* (Philadelphia, 1976), pp.132-3; For Lenin's views before 1917 see I. Getzler, 'Lenin's Conception of Revolution As Civil War', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 74 (1996), 464-472

[316] GOPANO f.34, op.1, d.61, Sormovo region RKP(b)Material from the Commission to investigate the strike in Sormovo (26th March, 1919)

[317] TsANO, f.552, op.1, d.23, Meeting of the presidium of the General Factory Committee of Sormovsky government workers (23rd May, 1919)

This was part of a wider discourse and practice of Red Terror in early Soviet Russia, where coercion and violence was normalised in theory and practice, and became a part of everyday life.[318] The official declaration of Red Terror as a Soviet policy was made on 5th September 1918, after the assassination of the head of Petrograd Cheka Moisei Uritskii and an attempted assassination of Lenin. It was a period of brutal terror as official state policy against perceived enemies of the Soviet state. War Communism standardised the language of 'class war' in the countryside that was both a result of Bolshevik ideology of armed struggle and as a result of the dire food shortages during the Civil War.[319] The state infrastructure also became more centralised and coercive. Cheka was established less than two months after the October Revolution and undertook not only mass surveillance of the Russian population but coercion and repression. Significantly, it was declared that the operations of Cheka would not be interrupted and no governmental agency would have a veto power over measures employed by it. This represented a different strain of surveillance and repression of the Bolsheviks. There was a tight control on information dissemination within Cheka and its bureaucracy expanded rapidly in the next two years with its budget increasing more than 2,000% from July 1918- December 1919.[320] It spread across provinces and districts of Russia creating fear and intimidation. Repression and mass surveillance were declared 'extraordinary' by the Bolsheviks, in reference to the Civil War.

Cheka was established as a non-permanent body to combat counterrevolution and sabotage during the Civil War, with broad and vague definitions.[321] The activities of Cheka and mass secret surveillance by the Bolsheviks were most prominent in the centre and regions that were near, or on a frontline, during the Civil War. In Izhevsk the Red Army and Cheka were

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[318] See A.B. Retish, 'Controlling revolution: Understandings of violence through the Rural Soviet Courts, 1917–1923', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65 (2013), 1789-1806

[319] J. Ryan, *Lenin's terror: The ideological origins of early Soviet state violence* (London, 2012), p.11;101; Also see Lih, *Bread and authority in Russia, 1914-1921*; S. Karsch, 'Voronezh: Revolutionary violence and the Bolshevik victory',

[320] J. Bone, 'Soviet controls on the circulation of information in the 1920s and 1930s', *Cahiers du monde Russe*, 40 (1999), p.68; Gerson, *The Secret Police in Lenin's Russia*, pp. 3,28,38

[321] Finkel, 'An intensification of vigilance: Recent perspectives on the insitutional history of the Soviet security apparatus in the 1920s', p.299

used to investigate and intimidate workers and veterans of the war. After the open rebellion of veteran soldiers in 1918, and the establishment of a short-lived anti-Bolshevik regime, the Bolshevik Red Army reacted harshly.[322] Izhevsk was a town in Viatka province that was very close to the front line of the Whites during the Civil War, keeping a constant eye on the population of Izhevsk was deemed necessary to win the Civil War. Sormovo was an area that did not face immediate danger during the Civil War, as it was not in immediate proximity to any major front lines, and a local Cheka was not established there until 1919.[323] Furthermore, in Nizhegorod province only three Cheka members were used for supervisory duties, whilst 60 employees were in the economic department, dealing with confiscated goods, often taking a slice for themselves.[324]

The Bolsheviks made sure to have an ideological foundation for their repressive policies. On a national level the labour unrest in Sormovo was mirrored elsewhere. Trotsky's role as Commissar for Transport saw martial law implemented on the railways to an extreme extent and soon after in May 1920 martial law was declared in twenty cities including Nizhnii Novgorod. Local authorities were told to intensify production for the war effort by any means possible. This harsh discipline that accompanied the Militarisation of Labour led to an increase in industrial unrest in 1920.[325] Together with the lack of regular food supply and perceived excesses in the party bureaucracy, the Bolsheviks faced serious grassroots opposition. The Metalworkers' Union conference in February 1921 accused the Soviet state of inequalities in the food ration system and called for a replacement of the rationing system as a whole by a tax in kind, one of the first sustained calls to do so.[326] The Kronstadt revolt in 1921 also threatened to topple the Soviet state, with the sailors' calls for a second workers' revolution. Their demand for an end to privileged rations and free elections to the Soviet resonated with workers in

[322] Retish, 'The Izhevsk Revolt of 1918: The fateful clash of revolutionary coalitions, paramilitarism and Bolshevik power'
[323] Protokol Sormovskii Organazatsii RSDRP(b) (29th May 1919) in Lubovnikov, I. Nechaiev, M. Shinopov (ed.), *1917-1920: Kronika revolutsionik sobitii v gorkovskom krai,* p.144
[324] Gerson, *The Secret Police in Lenin's Russia* (Philadelphia, 1976), p.66
[325] Aves, *Workers against Lenin: Labour protest and the Bolshevik dictatorship*, p.33
[326] Pirani, 'Class clashes with party: Politics in Moscow between the Civil War and the New Economic Policy,', pp.93-98

Petrograd.[327] The Bolsheviks dealt with popular protest in 1920 not only with forceful suppression but with an authoritarian discourse to accompany it. The demands of the metalworkers were dismissed as blocking the advance towards socialism and the Kronstadt revolt was dismissed as a counter-revolution led by a White general.[328]

This use of discourse, to justify the practice of violence, was a key Bolshevik policy. Not only did the state engage in violent practices but also called on ordinary Russians to do so. Just as Kaganovich had urged the Sormovo workers to establish an armed requisition squad, Lenin encouraged the notion of 'social revenge' amongst ordinary Russians, which was a legitimisation of violence. The language of 'class war' during the Civil War encouraged workers to act against 'bourgeois' managers and steal food from the 'kulak' peasantry. In *Izvestiia,* Lenin called upon ordinary Russians to commit 'mass terror' against the bourgeoisie.[329] The establishment of Cheka in Sormovo factory was also a part of this strategy to create fear, not only amongst the political 'enemies to the state' but all workers and peasants. Therefore, an integral part to the state's coercive infrastructure was the co-opting of ordinary Russians into it.

In addition to *Cheka*, the establishment of Red Guards in factories was a method of surveillance and coercion. The Red Guards were a voluntary organisation. In Sormovo they numbered only 250 by December 1917, compared to an estimated 5,000 members of the Red Guard in the Vyborg district in Petrograd in late 1917.[330] Most Red Guards were armed and could offer effective resistance to labour activism within factories and any political opposition to the Bolsheviks. Murphy reveals how Red Guards were called upon to disperse meetings of the Left SRs within the Hammer and Sickle Metalworks in 1918. During the strike in Sormovo in June 1918, it was Red Guards that fired on the group of workers protesting the arrest of a Menshevik

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[327] P. Avrich, *Kronstadt, 1921* (Princeton, 1970), p.78
[328] Pirani, 'Class clashes with party: Politics in Moscow between the Civil War and the New Economic Policy', p.118; Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed, Trotsky: 1879-1921,* p.511
[329] *Izvestiia* (30th July, 1918)
[330] GOPANO, f.1, op.1, d.5 Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Party Conference (16th December 1917); R.A.Wade, *Red guards and workers' militias in the Russian Revolution* (Stanford, 1984), pp.158

worker.[331] In May 1918, several Sormovo workers were reportedly hunted down and killed by local peasants, who wrongly believed them to be a requisition squad of Red Guards. This allowed the Bolsheviks to create a discourse of country versus town with little reference to the food crisis and ensured swift retribution by the shooting of the suspected 'mob'.[332] Ordinary workers and peasants were incorporated into Bolshevik infrastructure to not only fight for its survival but to ensure a set of norms of conformity were being kept on a factory level. Although the number of Red Guards in Sormovo was few, it ensured that ordinary workers could be used to spy on their fellow workers and be relied on to counter labour protest. It also created a discourse and practical policy of finding 'enemies' who were not just political organisations but anybody deemed to be working against the state. Even the Red Guards were not safe from suspicion by the local Bolsheviks because of fears of 'Menshevik influence' within its members.[333]

In a broader way, the Bolsheviks harnessed the infrastructure of *agitprop* to instill behavioural norms and fear in ordinary people. Like the spread of *proletkul't,* agitation trials travelled all over Russia. They created a popular entertainment for ordinary Russians, whilst simultaneously demonstrating the role and power of the state and its intolerance for opposition. The main focus of the mock trials was on moral and social wrongdoing, rather than actual crimes against the law, and served as an education for workers.[334] These mock trials and the high-level show trials of Bolshevik opposition in the centre, served to show the Russian population the nature and expectations of the Soviet state. They involved ordinary people in the proceedings and would educate them about the revolution's expectations of them.[335] This was also reflected in the legal system where the intent and mindset of the individual was taken into consideration. This often resulted in a

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[331] Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Class struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory*, p.159; *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok* (29th June, 1918) and (5th July, 1918)
[332] 'Sormovskaia Zhizn', *Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii Listok* (28th May, 1918); (17th May, 1918); (21st May, 1918)
[333] Third Nizhnii Novgorod Provincial Party Conference, *Krasnoe Znamia* (26th February, 1918)
[334] E. Wood, *Performing justice: Agitation trials in early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca, 2005), pp.1,6
[335] M. Rendle, 'Defining the 'political' crime: Revolutionary tribunals in early Soviet Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies,* 65 (2013), p.1773

judgement based on a moral and emotional, not legal, template about the expectations of individuals in the Soviet state, contrasted against a notion of deviance.[336] It cemented an authoritative discourse that it was not only actions that mattered as a member of the Soviet state but intentions and most importantly their attitudes towards the state and socialism.[337]

The limited co-operation of Bolsheviks with 'opposition' within and outside the workplace was therefore short-lived. In Sormovo, the Bolsheviks were a minority party with fewer members than the SRs and with little support from Sormovo workers. The negative revolutionary discourse about the moderate socialists in late 1917 did not persuade the majority of Sormovo workers to support the Bolsheviks. After the closure of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, the Soviet state intensified their negative propaganda campaign against the moderate socialists and used it as a justification for repression of their party organisations. The intensification of the Civil War in 1918, and continued fighting after 1917, was certainly a main contributing factor to the Soviet state's institutionalisation of coercion and violence after mid-1918. The 'extraordinary' circumstances of the Civil War were used to justify coercive state policies in Soviet discourse. The continued fighting also set Russia apart from many European countries after 1918 and was a reason that the Bolshevik surveillance mechanisms expanded into the 1920s. However, the emergence of a totalitarian state in 1921 cannot solely be attributed to the circumstances of the Civil War. Holquist does not give enough credence to how violence and coercion were integral to Bolshevik ideology, much before 1917. The legitimisation of violence by the state was something that was unique to the Soviet state in the European context. The co-option of ordinary Russians into state mechanisms of surveillance and coercion during the Civil War was a formative policy of the Soviet state, which continued to shape the infrastructure of the Soviet Union after 1921.

[336]P. Vasilyev, 'Revolutionary conscience, remorse and resentment: Emotions and early Soviet criminal law, 1917–22', *Historical Research*, 90 (2017), 117-133
[337] Halfin, *Intimate enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik opposition, 1918-1928*

Conclusion

The period 1917-1921 provides an insight into a party that was not only fighting for political survival from internal and external enemies but also attempting to transform Russian society. The Soviet state emerged from the Civil War not only as victors but with a revolutionary discourse which cemented the identity not only of their opposition but of themselves as a party and as a state. The Whites had been defeated and all other socialist parties, who had commanded a majority of support from the population in 1917, had been dismantled. The Bolsheviks had control of the press by mid-1918 and spoke directly to Sormovo workers through newspapers about the identity of the opposition, of the workers themselves and the state. The identification of the party and state with undefined worker interests meant that discourse about the identity of workers was defined not by social origin but the needs of the 'workers' state.' During the Civil War, the Bolsheviks in Sormovo did not disassociate themselves with the workers there but publicly questioned in local newspapers whether the workers were true Soviet workers because they were not acting in the interests of the state. The fluidity of the discourse of 'enemies of the state' and 'enemies of the people' was legitimised by the state and used indiscriminately to justify economic, social and violent coercion not only against political opposition but against ordinary workers and peasants too. This revolutionary discourse was more than just a justification for the harsh militaristic policies of the state during the Civil War. It was indicative of the Soviet mindset and utopian thinking where violence was an integral part of the revolutionary struggle.

The Soviet state utilised different forms of coercion during the Civil War. In Sormovo, surveillance of worker grievances was only used to inform the party about the 'moods' of workers or used against them when the Bolsheviks reacted harshly to strikes. The expansion of the Soviet bureaucracy into the factory meant that factory organisations no longer represented the workers but the state. Furthermore, the state formally and informally co-opted workers into working within state mechanisms. Using workers, voluntarily or forcibly, in Soviet coercive organisations, like the Red Guards, meant that surveillance expanded beyond party members and the police and into the

workplace. The state also informally co-opted Russians into state surveillance through travelling agitation trials and a revolutionary discourse about dissent. This created an atmosphere of fear in early Soviet Russia and it was this unique blend of revolutionary language and coercive practices during the Civil War that shaped Bolshevik discourse about their opposition, which continued well beyond 1921.

Conclusion

The period 1917-1921 provides a snapshot into the inception of the Soviet state and the intense tension between ideology and practice. Over four years the state was transformed from a weak party with little local support to a centralised, coercive and interventionist state. The study of Sormovo workers reveals how ordinary workers responded not only to Bolshevik policies but to a revolutionary discourse in a period of socio-economic and political upheaval.

The Bolshevik elite had decades before 1917 to formulate a theoretical socialist society in Russia. The proliferation of writings from Lenin, Lunacharksy and Bogdanov, from the late nineteenth century, reveals the utopian mindset of the future Soviet leaders. These utopias focused not only on the ideals of the first socialist state, but of its people too. This is most evident in theories of *proletkul't* and the cultural transformation of workers. The Bolsheviks seized power in 1917 with an ingrained sense of what needed to be achieved for socialism to survive in Russia. The party was composed of many intellectuals, each with differing theories on how the Russian population could be transformed, before or after a revolution. Before 1917, these disagreements were merely theoretical and were openly tolerated. However, after October the differing views of Bolshevik leaders resulted in diverse utopian theories and policies.

The context of the Civil War did not end the ideals of the Bolshevik leaders but accelerated them. The political fight for survival meant that the cultural transformation and the rooting out of enemies was demmed an urgent task, in order for the state to survive. It also intensified the theoretical disagreements within the Bolshevik party. The Soviet revolutionary discourse, which portrayed the Civil War as a revolutionary class war, was intimately shaped both by the context of the Civil War but also by pre-exisiting Bolshevik ideology from before 1917. The changing ideology behind, and mechanisms of, Bolshevik cultural policy reveals conflicting practical and ideological motivations in the formulation of policies in the early Soviet state.

The core tenets of Marxist-Bolshevik ideology about workers remained rigid but aspects of Bolshevik discourse about workers was changed and shaped by the practical necessities of the Civil War. The belief that workers' culture was backward and needed transforming was an assumption that did not change during this period. This was a clear

continuation of late Imperial liberal discourse but the mechanisms used to enact Bolshevik policies were completely different. The intensification of Soviet cultural policy is evidenced by the reach of *agitprop* and cultural courses. Travelling theatre, cinema and even leading Bolsheviks themselves reached nearly every corner of Russia, in order to get the state's message across to the masses. This was a discourse that was not up for negotiation and was shaped by the intensification of fighting and economic crises during the Civil War. Soviet cultural policy was transformed during the Civil War from Lunacharsky's rhetoric about a de-centralised and spontaneous educational transformation of the masses, to a Trotskyist militarised, centralised cultural reform based on economic gains and loyalty to the state. This change in discourse was reflected in policy changes, when the de-centralised educational reforms of Lunacharsky were transformed into a centralised educational and cultural policy based on improving production in the workplace. The utopianism about cultural transformation of the masses did not decline during this period but the discourse and policies about cultural transformation were shaped by the Civil War.

This intensification of the revolutionary discourse is also evident in Bolshevik language and policy in response to opposition and 'deviant' behaviour in the early Soviet state. Marxism offered a framework for defining opposition to the state based on socio-economic categories. The Marxist-Leninist socio-economic categorisation of Russian society remained a persistent feature of the Soviet official language and discourse throughout this period but the categorisations became increasingly fluid and indiscriminate. The ideological conceptualisation of workers in Soviet statistical data was used to shape discriminatory policies. The relative 'worth' of some members of Soviet society over others was not inherent and the socio-economic categories were far from rigid. The Soviet state became increasingly less reliant on statistical data in the formulation of policies and started using vague socio-economic labels to justify repressive and interventionist measures. Members of Soviet society that were included in these categories shifted from 1917-1921 and the gap between state ideology and the reality of Civil War Soviet society dramatically widened. The reality of social dislocation caused by seven years of constant warfare meant that these Marxist socio-economic categories were redundant. The economic crises that accompanied the Civil War also meant that the Soviet state became economically and socially interventionist within individual factories and created a discourse where workers, the same workers who were categorised as proletariat, were demonised for utilising labour activism, which Bolsheviks had consistently supported and encouraged before 1917.

By 1921, instead of discourse informing policy, policy began to shape the discourse of the state, based on which members of society were deemed the most valuable to the state. The metalworkers of Sormovo remained both ideologically important as members of the proletariat and also had vital worth to the state, by producing munitions during the Civil War. However, the ideological assumptions of the Soviet state had changed from what the state should do for the worker to what the worker should do for the state. If Sormovo workers were not going to act according to their ascribed identities as 'conscious' workers then they were to be deemed 'enemies of the state'.

The case study of Sormovo Metalworks during the Civil War reveals how the tension between language and practice was openly exposed on a local scale. The relationship between the local Bolsheviks and Sormovo workers was not only shaped by Bolshevik ideology and the context of the Civil War but also the specificity of Sormovo's local conditions, and its workforce. The confidence and tradition of labour activism of Sormovo workers before 1917 shaped not only the dynamics of factory life but local politics too. The relationship between Sormovo workers and factory management and local government was different to other larger urban areas, for example in Moscow and Petrograd, because of the economic importance of Sormovo Metalworks situated in a largely rural province. After October 1917, the policies of the local Bolsheviks were shaped by their attempts to win the support of Sormovo workers. This reflected the national state policies of limited co-operation with moderate socialists in the local soviets and the rhetoric supporting the factory committee movement and the spontaneous factory takeovers of 1917. However, it also reflects the weak position of the Bolsheviks in Sormovo in 1917. They were not in a position to openly challenge the moderate socialists in the soviet, nor the Sormovo workers who continued to go on strike after October.

When the Soviet state's discourse and socio-economic policy became increasingly coercive, this gave the local Bolsheviks the means and justification for increasingly coercive and repressive policies, inside and outside the factory. A local case study can reveal not only the local conditions and local relationships but the relationship between centre and locality. The Bolsheviks in Sormovo utilised the state's revolutionary discourse and interventionist centralised economic and social policies as a way to subdue Sormovo workers, especially after the nationalisation of the factory in mid-1918. The local Bolsheviks would not have been able to effectively crush the labour activism of Sormovo workers without help from the centre. This changing discourse and policies was a direct result of the economic crisis and

food shortages in Sormovo and the state's revolutionary discourse, which provided a justification for these harsh economic policies.

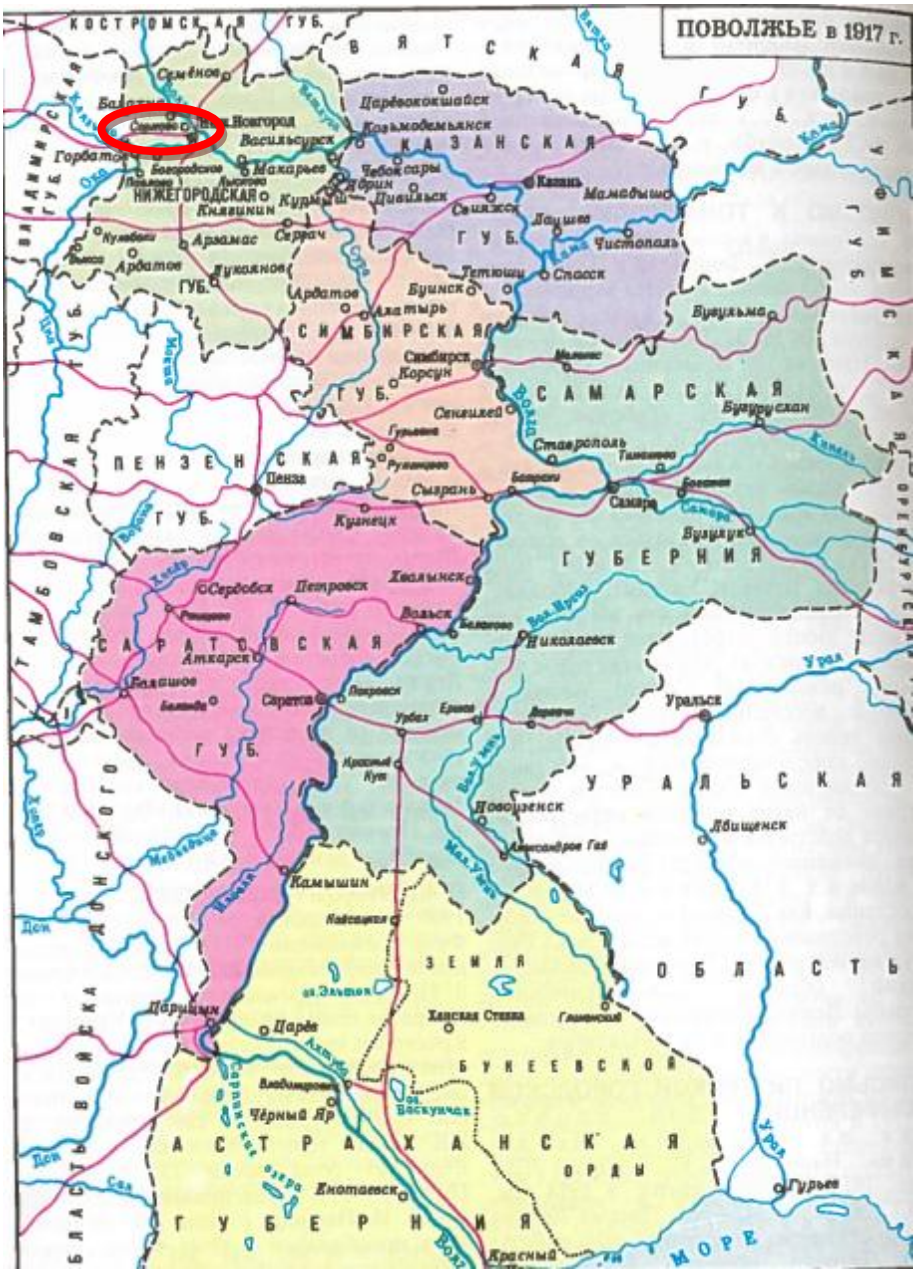
Using a case study of a metalworking factory during the Civil War, therefore reveals the intricacies and devastating effects of the increasingly repressive nature of the Soviet state during this period. However, the in depth study of Sormovo factory also illuminates how Sormovo workers had the ability to challenge state discourse and even policies during the Civil War. Despite the progressively coercive policies of the Soviet central and local government Sormovo workers continued to exert their identity based on *teskhovschina* and their perceived rights as skilled metalworkers in Nizhegorod province. In the face of repressive measures, Sormovo workers continued to use their shared socio-economic interests as a basis for continued labour activism, in 1918 and even 1919. Sormovo workers had the ability to challenge, subvert or assimilate Soviet ascribed identities. They continued to use their ascribed identity as skilled workers to demand regular and even privileged food rations; this was a result both from their shared socio-economic experience and Soviet discourse about the importance of skilled workers. They also utilised new cultural opportunities, such as art classes and theatre shows, but this did not mean they unquestionably assimilated the state's cultural propaganda.

A case study of the Civil War period reveals a complex and nuanced picture of Civil War Russia. The Soviet state did become a coercive and repressive state by 1921 and did create an overarching revolutionary discourse but this does not take into account the multifaceted factors that made up the self-identification of Sormovo workers. Sormovo factory records and local Bolshevik correspondence reveal the chasm between high politics and grassroots politics in the first years of the Soviet state. These sources challenge Soviet historiography of Sormovo workers, which states they supported Bolsheviks before 1917 and the Soviet state after 1917. It also questions Bolshevik rhetoric that claimed that labour activism after 1917 was a result of 'semi-proletarian' elements within the factory. The composition of Sormovo workers did change as a result of World War One and the Civil War but their shared socio-economic experience inside the factory and in the province continued to define not only their social identity but their relationships with the factory hierarchy, local Bolsheviks and the state. This is not to argue that Sormovo workers only acted according to their 'class' identity, or that they acted as a homogenous group. There was many conflicts and splits within the factory based on many factors, including gender and skill level. However, class, defined as a shared socio-economic experience, was still a meaningful part of

the multiple identities of Sormovo workers and continued to shape their experience of and reaction to conditions of the Civil War.

This four year period of economic chaos and war irreversibly shaped the trajectory of the Soviet state. It witnessed a growing interference of the state in public and private spheres and increasing repression replacing persuasion of deviant behaviour. The importance of Bolshevik ideology cannot be underestimated. State ideological discourse continued to inform policy throughout this period but it was infused and permanently affected by the situational context of the Civil War. Furthermore, case studies during the Civil War can reveal how the specificity of local area informed Bolshevik discourse and policy in this period and how ordinary workers had the ability to subvert and challenge both.

Appendix



Map 1. The Volga Region of Russia in 1917[623]

Sormovo is situated to the north west of Nizhnii Novgorod town, in Nizhegorod province.

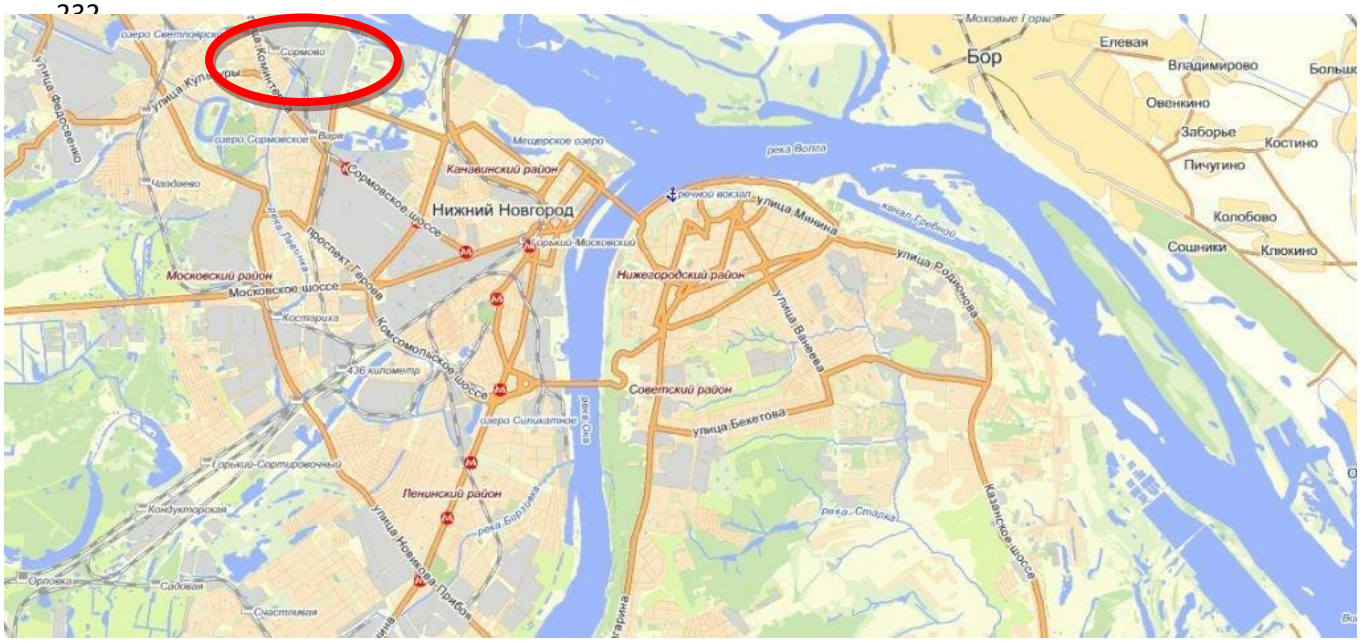
[623] P.A. Golub, I.E. Korabliev, M.E. Kuznetsov and I.I. Fignater, I.I (ed.), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1987), p.404



Map 2. Nizhegorod Province[624]

This modern map of Nizhegorod province, clearly labels *Красное Сормово,* (Red Sormovo), the factory still remains a source of pride for the province.

[624] Map of Nizhnii Novgrorod [http://www.nemiga.info/karta/rossiya/nizhegorodskaya-oblast-karta.htm] Accessed (24/04/17)



Map 3. The meeting of the River Volga and Oka, in Nizhegorod province[625]

This map shows how the situation of Sormovo Metalworks was ideal for the transportation of goods along the Rivers Oka and Volga.



Image 1. A group of Sormovo workers c.1898[626]

[625] New GPS Map of Nizhegorodskii Oblast in 2010 [http://downloadgps.ru/ozi/9365-novaya-gps-karta-nizhegorodskoj-oblasti-dlya-oziexplorer-i-smartcomgps-za-2010-g.html] Accessed (24/04/17)

[626] Parusov and Shul'pin (ed.), *100 let zavoda "Krasnoe Sormovo" imeni A.A. Zhdanova (1849-1949)*, p. 79

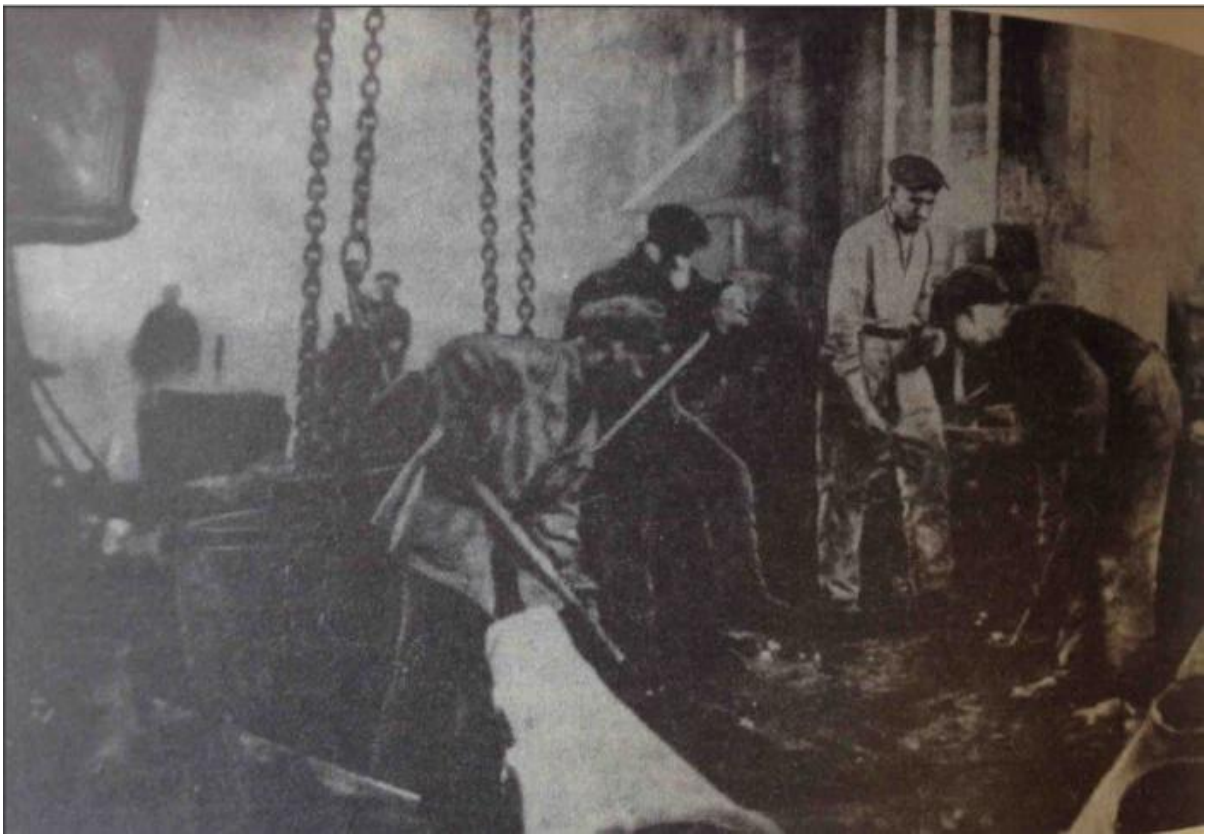


Image 2. Sormovo workers in the foundry workshop, 1923[627]

[627] V.A. Kazakov, *Revoliutsei Prizvannye: Ocherki ob ychastnikakh revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Nizhnegorodskoi Gubernii, vstupivshchikh v partiiu v 1917 godu* (Gorky, 1987), p.142

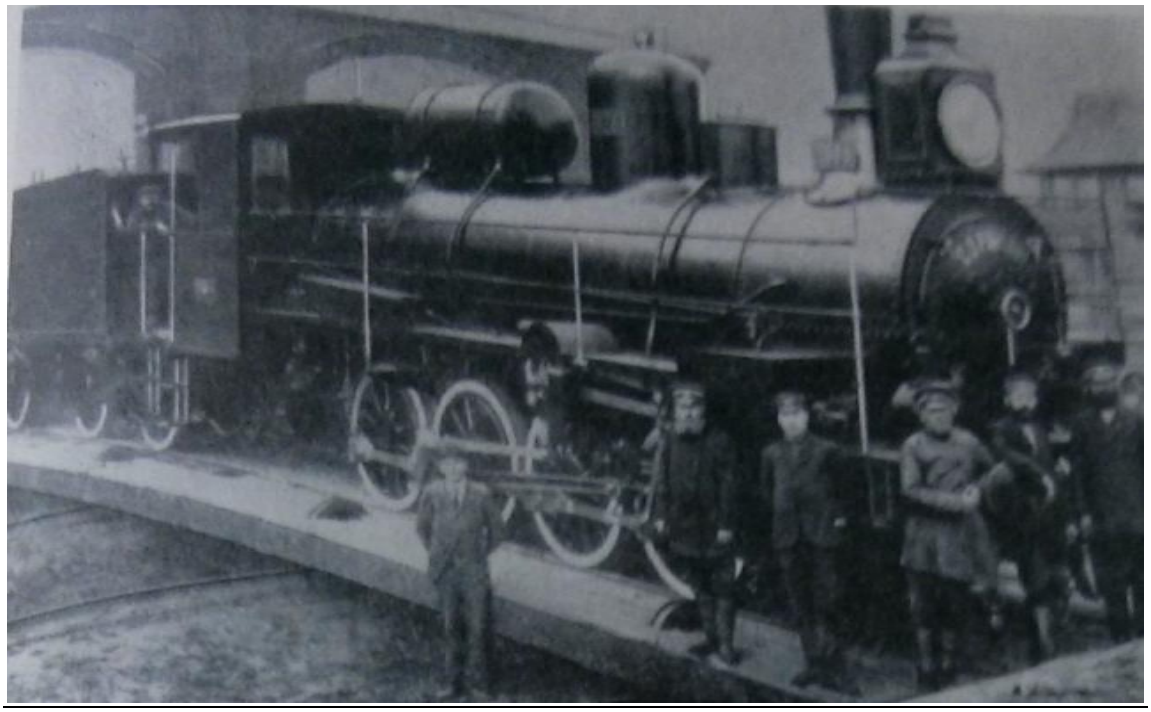


Image 3. A photograph of the 'thousandth locomotive' produced in Sormovo factory, dated 1905[628]



Image 4. Members of Sormovo Factory Committee, 1917[629]

[628] Fadeev, *Istoriia Krasnogo Sormova*, p.129
[629] Parusov and Shul'pin (ed.), *100 let zavoda "Krasnoe Sormovo" imeni A.A. Zhdanova (1849-1949)*, p.234



Image 5. The spontaneous march, which included Sormovo workers, to 'liberate political prisoners' from Nizhegoroskii prison, 1 March 1917[630]

[630] I.Z Borisova, A.P. Verov, A.F. Zhuravlev, V.A. Kazakov, A.D. Klopov, L.V. Sokolov, V.P. Fadeev (ed.), *Soldaty Leninskoi Gvardii: Ocherki ob uchastinakh revoliutsonnogo dvizheniia v Nizhegoroskoi gubernii* (Gorky, 1977), p.220



Image 6. Pytor Andreyivich Zamalov (1877-1955)[631]

Pytor Zamalov was a member of the RSDLP party, originally in Kursk Province. He moved to Sormovo where he was pivotal in the organisation of the 1902 protest. He was sentenced to life long exile after an impassioned speech in court, helped by Gorky. He escaped exile and participated in the 1905 revolution in Moscow. After the February Revolution he returned to Kursk and organised a soviet there.[632]

[631] Parusov and Shul'pin (ed.), *100 let zavoda "Krasnoe Sormovo" imeni A.A. Zhdanova (1849-1949)*, p.101
[632] Golub (ed), *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialistcheskaia revoliutsiia: entsiklopediia*, p.172



Image 7. Maxim Gorky (Alexei Maximovich Peshkov), 1868-1936, visiting Sormovo factory, 1920s[633]

Maxim Gorky was born in Nizhnii Novgorod (later named Gorky, after himself) in 1868. He was orphaned at an early age and his autobiographical depictions of his childhood poverty in *My Childhood* and *My Apprenticeship* put himself and Nizhnii Novgorod on Russia's cultural map. He began writing for *Nizhegorodskii Listok* in 1895 and became more involved with the RSDLP and radical political work. He had a long interest in Sormovo workers, distributing leaflets and hosting meetings there and wrote about Sormovo workers in M*at'*.[634]

[633] Parusov and Shul'pin (ed.), *100 let zavoda "Krasnoe Sormovo" imeni A.A. Zhdanova (1849-1949)*, p.317
[634] T. Yedlin, 'Maxim Gorky: His early revolutionary activity and his involvement in the Revolution of 1905', *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 17 (1975), pp. 77, 80, 84, 87



Image 8. Mayakovsky poster from 1920 promoting hard work, 'each truancy is a joy for the enemy. A hero of labor is a blow for the bourgeoisie'[635]

[635] Poster taken from *Fotostrana* [https://fotostrana.ru/public/post/237760/719738269/] Accessed (16/04/17)



Image 9. Organised celebration of the first anniversary of the Revolution, in Moscow, October 1918[636]

[636] V. Tolstoy, I. Bibikova and C. Cooke (ed.), *Street art of the Revolution: Festivals and celebrations in Russia, 1918-1933* (London, 1990), p.63

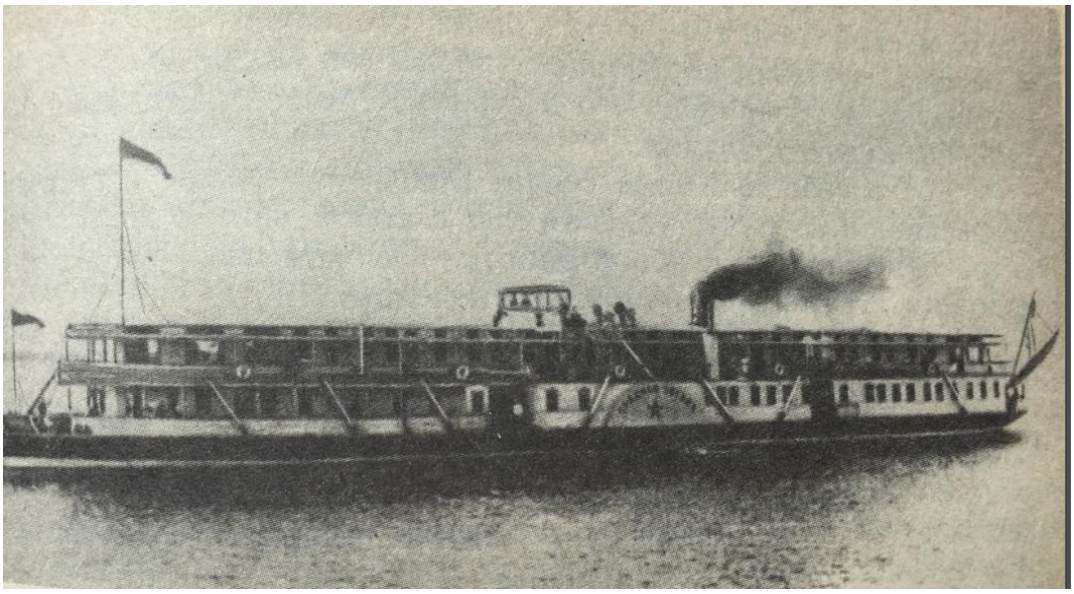


Image 10. The propaganda ship *Red Star* (*Krasnaia Zvezda*) sailing on the Volga[637]



Image 11. The *Red Star* in 1919[638]

[637] I.Z. Borisova, V.I. Zhmachinskii, V.A. Kazakov, and E.A. Paulkin (ed.), *Revoliutsei Prizvannye: Ocherki ob uchastinakh revoliutsonnogo dvizheniia v Nizhegoroskoi gubernii, vstupivshikh v partiiu v 1917 gody* (Gorky, 1987), p.73

[638] S.White, *The Bolshevik poster* (New Haven, 1988), p.23



Image 12. Demonstration in Nizhnii Novgrorod, in October 1917[639]

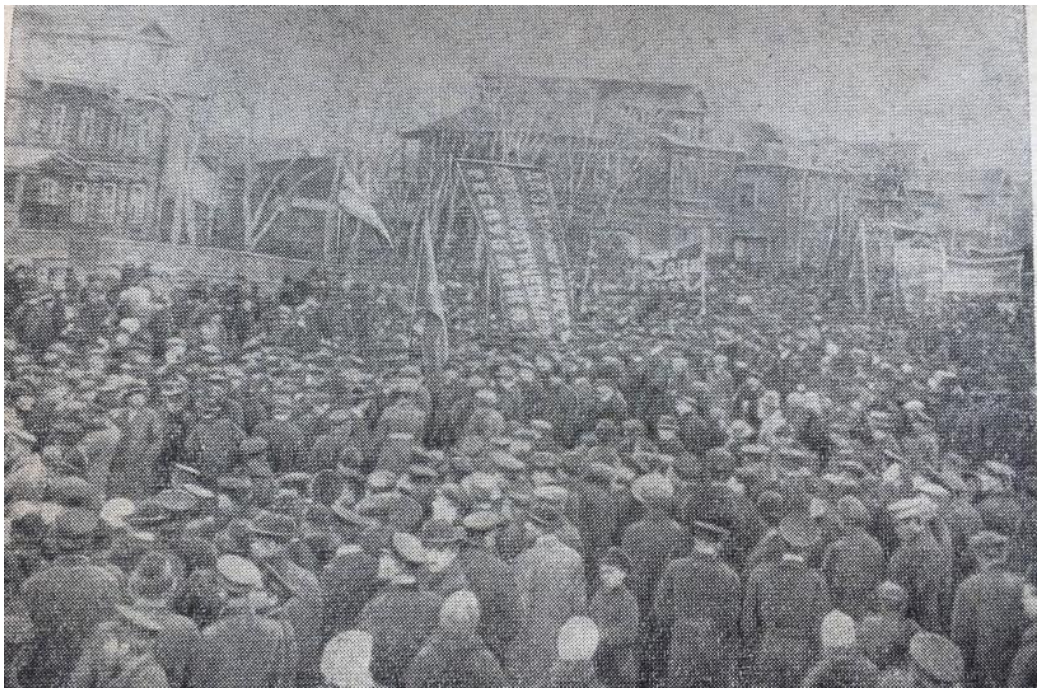


Image 13. Demonstration in Sormovo, May Day 1917[640]

[639] Borisova (ed.), *Soldaty Leninskoi Gvardii: Ocherki ob uchastinakh revoliutsonnogo dvizheniia v Nizhegoroskoi gubernii*, p.15
[640] Borisova (ed.), *Soldaty Leninskoi Gvardii: Ocherki ob uchastinakh revoliutsonnogo dvizheniia v Nizhegoroskoi gubernii*, p.120

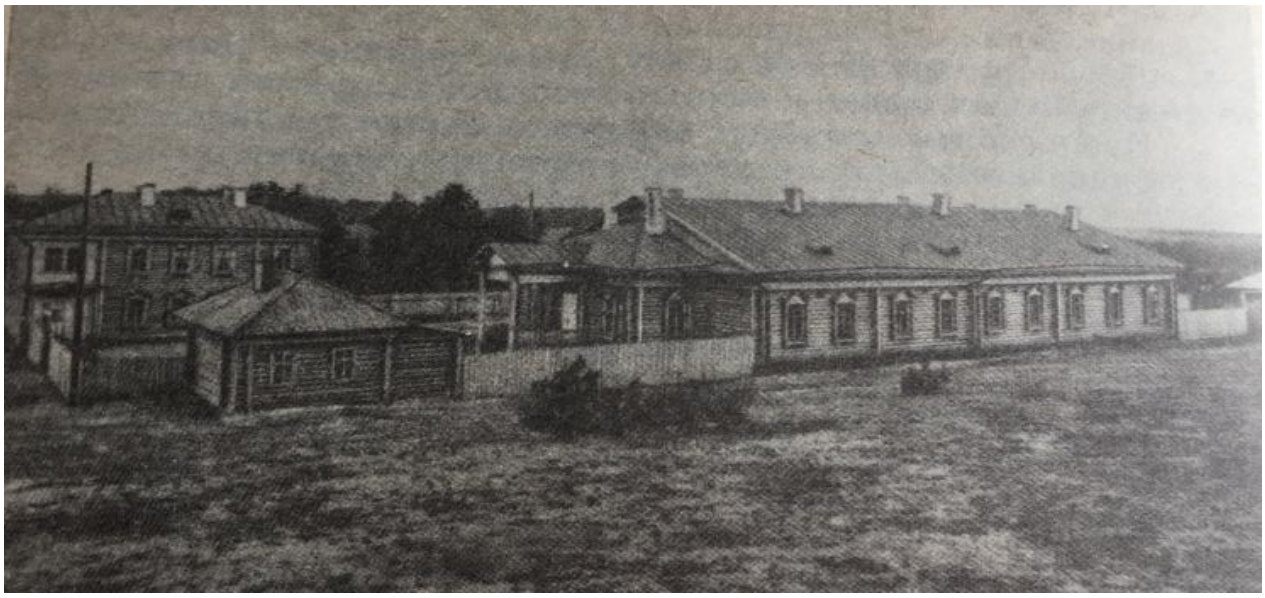


Image 14. The Zemstvo hospital in Sormovo[641]



Image 16. Communal worker housing in Sormovo, 1928[642]

[641] Borisova (ed.), *Revoliutsei Prizvannye: Ocherki ob uchastinakh revoliutsonnogo dvizheniia v Nizhegoroskoi gubernii, vstupivshikh v partiiu v 1917 gody*, p.164
[642] Fadeev, *Istoriia Krasnogo Sormova*, p.318



Image 17. Striking anti-alcohol poster designed by A. Mosin in 1958. The caption reads 'And they said, that we were pigs...'[643]

[643]Poster taken from *Istoriia Mirov: Elektronnyi Zhurnal* [https://www.historyworlds.ru/gallery/raznye-temy-iz-istorii/sssr1/cccp-plakat/10692-a-esche-govoryat-chto-my-svini.-1958-g..html] Accessed (17/04/17)

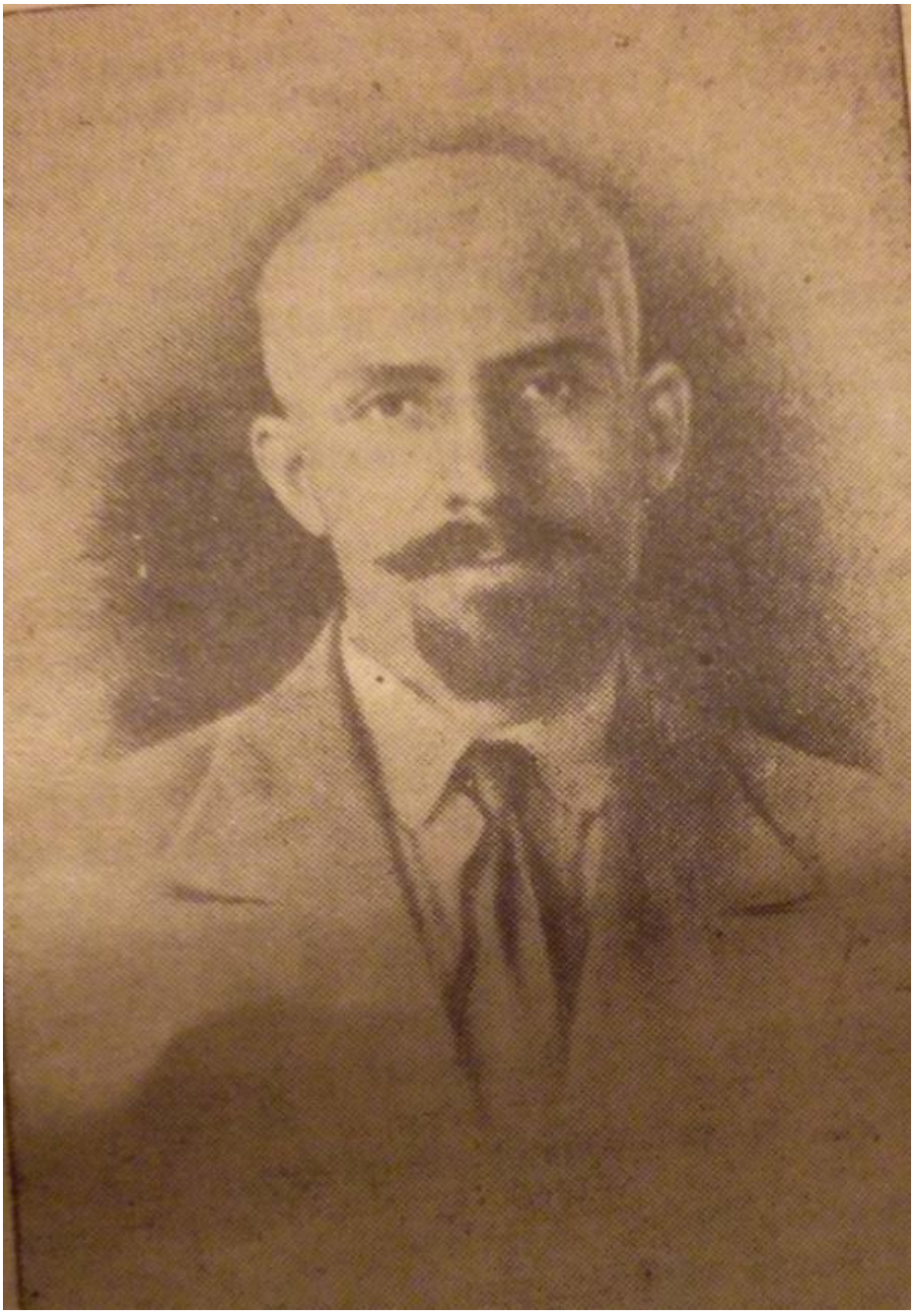


Image 18. L.M. Kaganovich, President of *Nizgubkoma* RKP(b) (Provincial Communist Party), 1918[644]

[644] N. Nechaev, *Dokumenty Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Sotsialinicheskoi Revoliutsii v Nizhegoroskoi Gubernii* (Gorky, 1945), p.131



Image 19. M.S. Sergushev, was the secretary of *Nizgubkoma*, RKP(b), 1918[645]

[645] Borisova (ed.), *Soldaty Leninskoi Gvardii: Ocherki ob uchastinakh revoliutsonnogo dvizheniia v Nizhegoroskoi gubernii*, p.275

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f.34: Sormovskii raionnyi komitet KP RSFSR, g. N. Novgorod, Nizhegorodskaia oblast

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Nizhegorodskaia Kommuna

Pravda

Proletarskaia Kul'tura

Proletary

Rabochii i Krestianskii Nizhegorodskii listok

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Svobodniia Zhizn'

Technika: Organ VSNKh

Vestnik Metallista: Organ Vremmnavo Tsentral'navo Komiteta Vserossickavo Soyuza Rabochikh-Metallistov

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