

**Building Communism:  
The Young Communist League  
during the Soviet Thaw Period,  
1953-1964**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of DPhil

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(Abstract)

The present study focuses on the activity of the Young Communist League (Komsomol) to promote the communist project during the so-called Thaw period in the Soviet Union (1953-1964). The term 'communist project' describes the complex temporal triangle in which the relevance of the present was rooted in its relationship to the heroic past and the bright future. Young people were supposed to emulate the heroism of previous generations while fighting remnants of the undesired past. This was presented as a precondition for achieving the communist future.

The structure of this study reflects the chronology of the communist project. It analyzes the rhetoric used by the Young Communist League to promote the communist project and explores the strategies used to mobilize youth for building communism. The first chapter focuses on the organizational structure of the Komsomol and assesses its readiness for this task. Despite attempts to strengthen horizontal communication and control, streamline administration and reorganize its structure, the Komsomol remained hierarchal and bureaucratic. The second chapter explores the promotion of past heroism in rituals, social practices and the use of public space. The third chapter is also concerned with the past; it describes the Komsomol's fight against 'remnants of the past', primarily religion and deviant behaviour such as hooliganism, heavy drinking and laziness. The final chapter focuses on the Komsomol's attempts during the Thaw to bring about the future: its efforts in the economy, moral, political and cultural education, and the realm of leisure.

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(Long Abstract)

The present study focuses on the activity of the Young Communist League (*Vsesoiuznyi Leninskii Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi*, known as the VLKSM or Komsomol) to promote the communist project during the so-called Thaw period (1953-1964). The era is of special importance in Soviet history. Not only was it a time of liberalization after Stalin's rigid rule, it also saw a transition from uniform and well-defined Stalinist culture to late socialism, which was distinguished by a huge gap between official and unofficial youth culture. The study explores the Thaw as a transitional period and investigates the extent of its liberal character. It demonstrates that despite the continuity of Stalinist rhetoric, intensified social control replaced Stalinist methods of dealing with deviant behaviour, while ideological imperatives led to increased moral engineering among youth.

The study describes the Komsomol's efforts to prepare itself and its target group, i.e. Soviet youth, for life in communism. The post-war years saw a revival of the idea that the communist future was just around the corner. Its revival culminated in the 1961 Party programme, which promised the onset of communism by the year 1980. According to propaganda, the communist future could only be achieved if young people recalled the heroic deeds of previous Soviet generations. They were supposed to emulate the heroism of their predecessors as they actively engaged in the building of communism. At the same time,

young people were supposed to fight all remnants of the undesired past, such as religion and deviant behaviour (hooliganism, heavy drinking and laziness). Communism could not be reached unless the young generation received a solid moral, political and cultural education, ensuring the creation of the 'new person'. Central to this process was the economy, the foremost arena in which communism was to be built.

In the present study, the term 'communist project' is used to describe the complex temporal triangle in which the relevance of the present is rooted in its relationship to the heroic past and the bright future. The term is inspired by Dietrich Beyrau's idea of the 'Bolshevik project' and Anne Gorsuch's concept of the 'Soviet project' during the 1920s. It is developed here to aid understanding of Thaw-era propaganda, which tried to convince the young generation to believe in the state-endorsed path to the bright future. This study focuses in particular on efforts made by the Komsomol – the only official youth organization – to promote the ideas of the communist project.

The Young Communist League was founded in October 1929. Within the Soviet Union, it was praised as an autonomous organization which existed primarily to assist the Communist Party. Its main areas of responsibility were implementing Party and state policy, providing new personnel for all areas of Soviet life and educating youth 'in the spirit of communism'. Until its dissolution in 1991, the Komsomol was structurally identical to the Party, to which it was subordinated at various administrative levels. Just like the Party, the Komsomol's hierarchal structure was guided by the principle of 'democratic centralism', which prescribed both horizontal and vertical dependence and control. The present study looks at the youth organization's structure, as well as its efforts to prepare the young generation for life in communism.

The sources used in this study mainly comprise official Komsomol documents, youth newspapers and published fictional propaganda. The archival material comes from the regional Party archives of Tatarstan (Central State Archive for the Historical-Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan/*Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Istoriko-Politicheskoi Dokumentatsii Respubliki Tatarstan*, TsGA IPD RT) and the Cheliabinsk region (Unified State Archive of the Cheliabinsk Region/*Ob''edinennyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Cheliabinskoi Oblasti*, OGACHO), as well as the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (*Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii*, RGASPI). As for the regions, the study relies most heavily on material of the regional committees, including protocols of regional conferences and plenary meetings of regional committees, minutes of meetings of the regional bureau, and correspondence between the regional committee and lower-ranking organs. At the central level, protocols of plenary meetings of the Central Committee and its correspondence with the regions were of most interest.

The main print media screened for this study were regional youth newspapers: the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* (until 1956 known as *Stalinskaia Smena*, i.e. Stalin's Generation) and the *Komsomolets Tatarii*. The central youth newspaper, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, was also used. In addition, other printed primary sources were taken into account, such as novels and booklets about the heroism of past or contemporary youth and textbooks on the history of the Komsomol.

Chapter 1 asks explicitly whether the organizational set-up of the Komsomol was 'fit for communism', i.e. whether it provided the functional structures that were considered vital to ensure the transition from socialism to communism. The chapter's findings about the grassroots, local, regional, and central levels of the Komsomol are not at all surprising. They confirm what critical Western commentators claimed decades ago: the youth organization was a bureaucratic bulwark with a clear top-down hierarchy, run by a small elite that pulled all the

strings. Thaw-era efforts to strengthen horizontal communication and make the organization more democratic (allegedly crucial for its participation in building communism) came to nothing. All this might not be surprising, but a more intriguing finding is that this was not due to the efforts of the higher-ranking organs. Rather, the dominance of vertical control and communication was due to the attitude of subordinate Komsomol leaders, who expected guidance, control and clear instructions from their superiors. Leading secretaries at the central and regional levels were quite in favour of giving more responsibility to the lower levels. However, the latter refused to engage in independent decision-making. The common practice of receiving and implementing instructions could not be altered during the Thaw, despite the concentrated encouragement of rhetoric.

This problem also affected the so-called extraordinary bodies, which were established – in line with the goals of the Thaw – to decentralize communication within the Komsomol and enable mass participation. These organs were supposed to involve a huge number of young people in the activities of the Komsomol, shifting responsibility from paid Komsomol workers to voluntary activists. This was supposed to result in a more democratic mode of operation. In fact, it only produced chaos, because no clear dividing line was drawn between the remits of the ordinary and extraordinary organs. Similar chaos ensued from the reorganization of the Komsomol's organizational structure in late 1962. It was split into rural and urban administrations, but the expected benefits – a reduction of bureaucracy and streamlined management – apparently failed to appear. These moves were felt more in rhetoric than in the actual structure; they were quietly reversed when the Thaw period came to an end with Nikita Khrushchev's dismissal in 1964. Similarly, efforts to reform the Komsomol's bureaucracy produced more impact on rhetoric than actual change in processes. Anti-bureaucratic campaigns clearly peaked during the Thaw period, but their content followed the rhetorical patterns of the Stalinist years and was not new at all. It is therefore

hardly surprising that attempts to streamline management within the Komsomol and other areas of public life bore little fruit.

In terms of organizational structure, the Komsomol thus seemed ill-prepared to lead the young generation into the communist future. Nevertheless, Komsomol rhetoric maintained an optimistic tone throughout the years under study and blamed deviations within and outside the Komsomol for obstructing the building of communism. Chapter 2 focuses on the attempts of Komsomol rhetoric to revitalize the heroic past in order to reduce the influence of Western propaganda on contemporary youth. The rhetorical parameters of the heroic past remained basically the same as during Stalinism; there were only some slight alterations in the narrative structure of stories and the types of heroes. Strategies of promoting the heroic past also underwent small changes: holidays were increasingly institutionalized, while the use of public space to commemorate the heroic past in rituals became more and more elaborate. The practice of promoting the heroism of previous generations failed to meet the expectations of media makers in the centre, who wanted Soviet propaganda to be catchier, more appealing and more relevant to the life of the young audience. However, rigid narratives presented stereotypical heroes who were hardly suitable role models for contemporary youth.

Yet boring propaganda was only rarely held responsible for young people's lack of enthusiasm for the communist project. It was more common for the undesired past to be blamed for distracting the minds and energy of youth from building communism. Chapter 3 explores how the Komsomol dealt with deviations from the norm described as remnants of the past, i.e. religion, hooliganism, heavy drinking and laziness. This raises the broader question of how deviant behaviour was supposed to be dealt with during the Thaw. Official guidelines remained vague throughout the period. Komsomol organizations were unsure whether they should name-and-shame wrongdoers, punishing them with harsh action such as exclusion, or integrate culprits into work, thereby re-educating them. The result was constant alternation

between the two options. As a general rule, the Komsomol relied predominantly on rhetoric to combat religion and deviant behaviour. Religious believers, rowdies, and idlers were targeted by campaigns in the press and at Komsomol meetings, but rarely had to endure real punishment or persecution. Their continued existence, however, highlighted shortcomings in the promotion of the communist project, indicating that the Komsomol could not free the young generation from the long shadows of the undesired past.

The Komsomol was equally unsuccessful in completely shielding the young generation from Western influence. This fact was lamented in rhetoric about the readiness of young people to achieve communist society. Chapter 4 studies the propagation of the communist future and the path to it laid out by official rhetoric. A utopian vision of the communist future was promoted throughout Thaw period, but propaganda on this topic peaked in summer 1961, coinciding with discussions about the new Party programme. The programme demonstrated 'scientifically' that there was only one route to happiness: the education of the 'new person' had to be enforced and the Soviet economy boosted. Although the Komsomol had long seized to hold a monopoly position in leisure and youth found new niches and refugium to escape state control, the rhetoric tried to push through a clear and unambiguous notion of the 'new person', who would spend his free time on 'rational leisure', cultural and political education, serving as a model of communist morality. In the economy, young people were supposed to demonstrate their ability to continue the heroism of previous generations. Many campaigns initiated or supported by the Komsomol during the Thaw were formal and outmoded. They contained little to attract youth's attention. Yet the campaigns did always involve a huge number of young people, who were thus exposed to the rhetoric of the communist project. In this area, the project seemed to take a firm shape and play a more or less important role in the everyday work of youth.

By analyzing the rhetoric and practices involved in promoting the communist project, this study reveals what was normal for the majority of Soviet youth during the Thaw period. It paints a picture of the Soviet propaganda landscape and describes the propaganda and campaigning techniques used by the Komsomol. At the same time, it sheds light on the organizational structure of the Young Communist League and its areas of responsibility. The study does not claim to be a comprehensive history of the Komsomol during the Thaw period. Rather, it is a first step towards this goal which provides a firm foundation for further research.

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## Introduction

“We are the new Komsomol” – proudly declared my new neighbour in a Kazan’ student residence, a young Kazakh member of *Nashi*, when I first told him about my research project on the Komsomol. He did not seem bothered by the fact that this comparison is usually drawn by critics of *Nashi* – the youth organization of Vladimir Putin’s “United Russia” party – who attack the closed networks and the rapid career progression achieved by members thanks to their connections to leading party and state officials.<sup>1</sup> In its function as a career ladder, its close ties to the dominant political party and its aim of providing youth with the ‘right’ social and political identity, *Nashi* bears a striking resemblance to the Soviet youth organization, the Komsomol.<sup>2</sup> The latter was officially regarded as the Communist Party’s “fierce resource” and active assistant.<sup>3</sup> Like its contemporary equivalent, the Komsomol was frequently described by critics as a tightly controlled agent of the Party, existing only to brainwash and indoctrinate Soviet youth so they would fulfil the Party’s ambitious economic and social plans.<sup>4</sup>

The success of both youth movements is generally attributed to their strong ideology with a clear interpretation of the past, the present and the future. *Nashi*’s manifesto provides the young generation with a clear picture of the past: the first Soviet generation had the chance to bring about genuine social justice but they ultimately failed, leaving the field to the second

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<sup>1</sup> Sergei Petukhov, “Bez ‘Nashikh’. Esli komsomol nuzhen, nado dat’ ego molodym”, *Ria Novosti*, 6.3.2013 (<http://ria.ru/analytics/20130306/926170669.html>, last accessed on 20.5.2013); Aleksandr Matiash, “Dvizhenie ‘Nashi’ prevrashchaetsia v novyi komsomol”, *Gorod 812*, 11.2.2013 (<http://www.online812.ru/2013/02/11/005/>, last accessed on 20.5.2013).

<sup>2</sup> For example, on *Nashi* see Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova. “Commemorating the Past/Performing the Present. Television Coverage of the Second World War Victory Celebrations and the (De)Construction of Russian Nationhood”, in: *The Post-Soviet Russian Media. Conflicting Signals*, ed. by Birgit Beumers, Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova, London/New York: Routledge, 2009, pp.137-55, here p.153; Douglas R. Buchacek. *NASHA Pravda, NASHE Delo: The Mobilization of the Nashi Generation in Contemporary Russia*, Chapel Hill: M.A. Thesis, 2006, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo aktivista. Spravochnaia knizhka*. Moskva: Molodaia Gvardia, 1961, p.47.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Merle Fainsod. “The Komsomol – Youth under Dictatorship”, in: *How Russia is Ruled*, ed. by Merle Fainsod, Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953, pp.240-61.

generation, the generation of the ‘Great Patriotic War’. This was clearly a heroic generation in *Nashi*’s interpretation of history, unlike the following one, which shaped policy in the post-Stalin era but again failed to build a just society. The present generation therefore has the task of fulfilling hopes for a better future and turning Russia into the “country of our dream”.<sup>5</sup> This current focus on a better future which can only be constructed with the full commitment of young people is reminiscent of the 1960s, as the present study shall explain. Such ideas lay at the core of the Komsomol’s work. The Komsomol was the main promoter of building communism, an idea renewed in 1961 when a fresh programme was agreed and the ‘Moral Code of the Soviet Person’ promulgated. Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev told the XXII Party Congress that communism would be achieved within the near future (by 1980). He described it as a kind of paradise, an abundant society where public transport would be free and deprivation unknown. Khrushchev and other Party leaders regularly referred to the heroism of previous generations and called on young people to eliminate the faults of the past. Proceeding from the heroic and the abject past, young people were urged to continue the heroism of their predecessors and actively engage in building the communist future. The present study refers to these state-sponsored efforts as the ‘communist project’.

Frequently regarded as a period of liberalisation and freedom, the period under study saw major changes in the Soviet legal system, the economy, in cultural and social politics and in the education system. Mass political purges were renounced; the arbitrary uncertainty of the Stalin years was replaced by a degree of legal security, together with a strongly emphasized ethos of public participation.<sup>6</sup> Economic reforms included an increased focus on consumer

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<sup>5</sup> Buchacek. *NASHA Pravda, NASHE Delo*, pp.20-4, quotation p.21; see also the original manifesto *manifest molodezhnogo dvizheniia NASHI* from 2005 at <http://www.nashi.su/manifest> (last accessed on 20.5.2013).

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Miriam Dobson. *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer. Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*, NY, London: Cornell University Press, 2009; Marc Elie. “Unmögliche Rehabilitation. Die Revisionskommissionen 1956 und die Unsicherheiten des Tauwetters”, in: *Osteuropa* 57(2007), 6, pp.369-85;

goods in industrial production, as well as agricultural campaigns to cultivate previously fallow land – the Virgin Lands Campaign – or unpopular crops such as forage maize.<sup>7</sup> In culture, there was a relaxation of censorship and the borders of socialist realism, which had formerly restricted the arts, were broadened. New trends were allowed within music, the arts and literature.<sup>8</sup> With the reform of the pension scheme, the launch of an extensive housing programme, the introduction of the 8-hour working day and reform of the whole education system, the majority of the Soviet people were able to enjoy social benefits.<sup>9</sup> All these measures clearly improved the standard of living and the sense of security in comparison with the period of Stalinism.

Thanks to its atmosphere of freedom and change, the years between 1953 and 1964 became known as the Thaw. This name was borrowed from an eponymous novel by Il'ia Erenburg, published in 1954.<sup>10</sup> The term 'thaw' perfectly reflects the hopes and expectations that were engendered by Khrushchev's reform course. The thaw is considered part of spring, so the metaphor had obvious links to youth in the 'springtime' of life. It evoked the sense of progression to a new world that would be communist and young, while rigid structures and constrictive patterns would break up. The importance of youth in the ideology of the period

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Donald Filtzer. *The Khrushchev Era. De-Stalinisation and the Limits of Reform in the USSR, 1953-1964*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993, pp.12-21.

<sup>7</sup> Stephan Merl. "Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme, 1953-1964", in: *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands, Band 5: 1945-1991. Vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs bis zum Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion*, ed. by Stefan Plaggenborg, Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2002, pp.175-318, here pp.204-37; Filtzer. *The Khrushchev Era*, pp.38-76.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfram Eggeling. *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970: Zwischen Entdogmatisierung und Kontinuität*, Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1994; Karen Laß. *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka: Kulturpolitik in der Sowjetunion (1953-1991)*, Köln: Böhlau, 2002; Dietrich Beyrau and Ivo Bock. *Das Tauwetter und die Folgen. Kultur und Politik in Osteuropa nach 1956*, Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Merl, "Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme", pp.251-63; Lynne Attwood. "Housing in the Khrushchev Era", in: *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Melanie Ilic, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.177-202.

<sup>10</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg. *The Thaw*, London: Harvill, 1955.

means that focusing on youth is an obvious and rewarding strategy for the historian.<sup>11</sup> Yet the communist project was never about the empowerment of youth. Khrushchev's plans for Soviet culture were shaped by strict social discipline and horizontal surveillance. Vertical control and state terror were replaced by social engineering and methods of public shaming and social exclusion.<sup>12</sup>

The present study, informed by the latter line of argument, takes the ideological impetus behind Khrushchev's reforms seriously. It explores the role of the Komsomol in promoting the communist project during this period, emphasizing control and discipline as much as liberation. Based on material from the Komsomol grassroots, district, city and regional committees, the study focuses on two particular regions of the Russian Socialist Republic (RSFSR): the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) on the Middle Volga and the Cheliabinsk region in the Southern Urals. Both regions are typical and special at the same time. The Tatar Republic was traditionally a stronghold of education. It was home to one of the oldest and most prestigious universities of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, the Kazan' State University (KGU). Its capital Kazan', as well as its other cities and rural districts, had been characterized by multi-ethnicity and religious diversity for at least a century. Around half the citizens were of Tatar origin and therefore traditionally of Muslim faith. The other half were Russians and therefore traditionally belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>13</sup> In other respects, the republic was a typical Soviet region: its agriculture

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<sup>11</sup> For similar thoughts, see Juliane Fürst. "The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture and Policy between Stalin and Khrushchev", in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Polly Jones, London: Routledge, 2006, pp.135-53.

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Oleg Kharkhordin. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia. A Study of Practices*, Berkeley et.al.: University of California Press, 1999, pp.279-303; Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?"

<sup>13</sup> Christian Noack. "Tatarstan – Souveränität im souveränen Russland?", in: *Regionalismus und Nationalismus in Russland*, ed. by Andreas Kappeler, Baden-Baden: 1996, pp.57-84; Katharina Uhl and Alexa von Winning. "Erinnern ohne Gedächtnis. Religion und Identität in Tatarstan", in: *Osteuropa* 59(2009), 9, pp.161-73; Hansgerd Göckenjan. "Die Tataren. Eroberer – Händler – Reformen", in: *Republik Tatarstan. Wirtschaftliche Probleme einer Region in der Russischen Föderation*, ed. by Günter Jaehne, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1995, pp.9-32.

was strong and it saw a growing chemical and oil industry emerge during the post-war years, alongside the defence and consumer goods industries.<sup>14</sup>

Tatarstan, as the region is now called, is only a day-trip away from Moscow. The Cheliabinsk region, on the other hand, is located much further from the capital, to the south of the Ural Mountains. Its economy shared the typical Soviet structure of industry and agriculture, but thanks to rich iron ore deposits in the south it quickly developed into the leading metallurgical region of the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> Traditionally regarded as a ‘forge’ of military success, the region not only played a huge role in providing the armaments to defeat Germany in the Second World War; it also hosted parts of the ambitious post-war nuclear programme.<sup>16</sup> The town of Ozersk became the scene of a devastating accident in 1954, when the nuclear plant Mayak imploded, leaving the town and indeed the whole area under a “nuclear footprint” (*atomnyi sled*). The disastrous consequences were a well-kept secret but can be observed to this day.<sup>17</sup>

By choosing these two regions as case studies, the present study aims to shed light on their typical aspects as well as their particularities, thereby generating a broad picture of the Komsomol’s work on the ground. The regions can be used as “a window onto Russia”,

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<sup>14</sup> S.V. Mokitshev and M.V. Nikolaev. “Die Republik Tatarstan – Historische und wirtschaftliche Aspekte”, in: *Republik Tatarstan*, pp.34-41.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley et.al.: University of California Press, 1995, pp.37-71.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Josephson. “Industrial Deserts: Industry, Science and the Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union”, in: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85(2007), 2, pp.294-321; Paul Josephson. “Atomic Powered Communism. Nuclear Culture in the Postwar USSR”, in: *Slavic Review* 55(1996), 2, pp.297-324.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see Vladimir Nikolaevich Novoselov and Vitalii Semenovich Tolstikov. *Atomnyi sled na Urale*, Cheliabinsk: Rifie, 1997; see also Vladimir Nikolaevich Novoselov. *Sozdanie atomnoi promyshlennosti na Urale*, Cheliabinsk: Ural GAFK, 1999; Vitalii Semenovich Tolstikov. *Sotsial'no-ekologicheskie posledstviia razvitiia atomnoi promyshlennosti na Urale (1945-1998gg.)*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii gosudarstvennyi institut iskusstva i kul'tury, 1998; Manfred Quiring, “Atomanlage Majak. Der bestverschwiegene GAU der Geschichte”, in: *Welt online*, 26.9.2007 (<http://www.welt.de/kultur/history/article1213772/Der-bestverschwiegene-GAU-der-Geschichte.html>), last accessed on 9.7.2013).

allowing conclusions to be drawn about the central level.<sup>18</sup> The study does include analysis of policy at the centre, but the case study material is representative of Komsomol organizations on what the Soviets called ‘the periphery’. Such an approach makes it possible to explore the relationship between rhetoric, policy and practice regarding the communist project at the regional and local level. Thus, the study provides evidence of overall processes that were typical for the Komsomol during the Thaw period.

## **The Komsomol**

The Komsomol played a key role in regulating relations between the Soviet state and its young citizens, as it was the only Soviet youth organization from an early stage. The official birth date of the organization is 29 October 1918, when the First Congress of the Komsomol opened in Moscow.<sup>19</sup> The Communist Party claims to have founded the Komsomol, but it was preceded by many different organizations for young workers in Moscow, St Petersburg and some provincial cities. Only during 1917 did the Party get involved in youth policy, thereby implementing a “Bolzhevization” of the youth movement which was henceforth called the Communist Youth League (*Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi*) – or the Komsomol for short.<sup>20</sup>

The Komsomol followed the example of the Party in both its organizational structure and its guiding principle of democratic centralism.<sup>21</sup> In theory, this created equilibrium between the

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Smith-Peter. “How to Write a Region. Local and Regional Historiography”, in: *Kritika* 5(2004), 3, pp.527-42, quotation p.541.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph T. Fisher. *Pattern for Soviet Youth. A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918-1954*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, pp.8-12; Fainsod, “The Komsomol”, pp.283-6.

<sup>20</sup> Matthias Neumann. *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917-1932*, London/New York: Routledge, 2011, p.28, see also *ibid.* pp.17-36; Corinna Kuhr-Korolev. *Gezähmte Helden. Die Formierung der Sowjetjugend 1917-1932*, Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2005, p.10, pp.35-8; Allen Kassof. *The Soviet Youth Program*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965, pp.10-21.

<sup>21</sup> *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuz Moldezhi*. Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1960, pp.13-6; Laszlo Revesz. *Organisierte Jugend. Die Jugendbewegung in der Sowjetunion*, Bern: SOI Verlag, 1972, p.34; Neumann. *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, p.37.

horizontal and the vertical levels of communication. However, it is generally assumed among Western scholars that the Komsomol's hierarchal structure was predominant, while the subordinated organizations were subject to the control of the higher-ranking organs.<sup>22</sup> The present study will question this assumption by revealing that the subordination of the lower levels to the leadership of the higher organs was voluntary: the former constantly sought approval and guidance from the latter as justification for their own decisions.<sup>23</sup> There was the same longing for guidance from the Party organizations, which led to the Komsomol organs being incorporated into the party and state apparatus, under strong Party control.<sup>24</sup> This relationship of dependence was a precondition for the Komsomol's political activity, as "subordination ensured participation".<sup>25</sup> Yet longing for guidance did not necessarily mean total surrender of autonomy: the degree of leeway granted to the local organisations was also important. The present study investigates the extent to which local and regional Komsomol organs of the Thaw period were able to express their own views and the extent to which their opinions merged with the official standpoints of the Komsomol leadership and the Party. The study thus sheds light on the relationship between official rhetoric and individual conviction – a discussion which is at the core of any study on late socialism.<sup>26</sup> It also reflects the communicative patterns within official rhetoric in general.

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<sup>22</sup> For example, see Fainsod, "The Komsomol"; Otto Luchterhandt. "Die Stellung der sowjetischen Jugend und die Rolle des Komsomol im Entscheidungsprozess", in: *Gruppeninteressen und Entscheidungsprozeß in der Sowjetunion*, ed. by Boris Meissner and Georg Brunner, Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975, pp.233-56; Jim Riordan. "The Komsomol", in: *Soviet Youth Culture*, ed. by Jim Riordan, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989, pp.16-44.

<sup>23</sup> See mainly Chapter 1.

<sup>24</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, pp.38-60, pp.68-74; Isabel Tirado. *Young Guard! The Communist Youth League. Petrograd 1917-1920*, New York/London: Greenwood Press, 1988, pp.178-185; Isabel Tirado. "The Socialist Youth Movement in Revolutionary Petrograd", in: *Russian Review* 46(1987), 2, pp.135-55.

<sup>25</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, p.73, pp.8-9.

<sup>26</sup> For example, see Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more. The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton et.al.: Princeton University Press, 2006, pp.1-36.

Right from the start, the Komsomol perceived itself as the “avant-garde of the avant-garde” which would eventually lead the way to communist paradise, fuelled by youth’s romanticism, readiness to combat, zealous enthusiasm and love of adventure. In contrast, the official view set out to constrain this self-image by underlining the importance of discipline, control and subordination to Party rule.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the Komsomol was always preoccupied with discussions about whether it was supposed to be a mass organization that included and disciplined the huge majority of youth, or a small avant-garde from the working class with the task of guiding and organizing young people not enrolled in its own ranks.<sup>28</sup> Closely linked to these discussions was the “‘Spontaneity’/ ‘Consciousness’ Dialectic” which suggested that the untamed and wild nature of individual young people had to be disciplined, while spontaneity had to be converted into conscious control.<sup>29</sup>

The Komsomol’s task was two-fold within this range of traditions. On the one hand, an explicit aim was to mobilize the forces of youth and engender a certain enthusiasm. On the other hand, the Komsomol was supposed to control this zeal and keep it within the framework of the acceptable; to educate youth and raise it in a disciplined spirit. The activities of individual Komsomol organizations were formulated in line with this bimodal perception. Although the focus of Komsomol activity shifted over time, its main tasks remained the same throughout the whole Soviet period. Besides implementing Party and state policies, the Komsomol was to provide a cadre reserve on which the Party could rely to restructure Soviet society en route to communism.<sup>30</sup> It was also supposed to instil young people with Bolshevik

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<sup>27</sup> Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.43-78.

<sup>28</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, pp.63-8.

<sup>29</sup> Katerina Clark. *The Soviet Novel. History as Ritual*, Chicago et.al.: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p.15; see also Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.15-23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.11-2, pp.50-2; Hilary Pilkington. *Russia's Youth and its Culture. A Nation's Constructors and Constructed*, London and NY: Routledge, 1994, pp.56-7; Riordan, “The Komsomol”, pp.25-6; Luchterhandt, “Die Stellung der sowjetischen Jugend”, p.236.

ideology and render them ‘new people’, i.e. examples of the perfect person who combines physical health with a conscious will and a clear communist moral outlook.<sup>31</sup>

Alongside this work in the field of ‘Communist education’, the Komsomol committees were in charge of all areas that might, in the official perception, concern young people at work, in school or university or at leisure.<sup>32</sup> As the significance of free time grew in the post-war period, the Komsomol gradually became more responsible for the organization of leisure activities.<sup>33</sup> The local and regional organizations organized gigs and dance events of jazz, rock ‘n’ roll and rock music.<sup>34</sup> They were involved in building sports facilities, setting up training schedules for young amateur athletes and organizing sports events on a mass scale.<sup>35</sup> The Komsomol thus combined state tasks – the education and socialization of the next generation<sup>36</sup> – with activities which, in Western Europe and the USA, were usually run by youth organizations such as the Scouts, religious groups, sports clubs or voluntary organizations.<sup>37</sup> This remit was ambitious, even when compared against youth movements in other so-called ‘totalitarian states’.

The debates of the early years did not clearly define the Komsomol as either a mass organization or an elite avant-garde association. However, its common practice of admission and steady growth in membership meant that the Komsomol soon became a mass

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<sup>31</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, pp.49-52; Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.14-9, pp.43-52.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo aktivista*, pp.93-4.

<sup>33</sup> On the post-war leisure society, see Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.18-22.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see Sergei I. Zhuk. *Popular Culture, Identity, and Soviet Youth in Dniepropetrovsk, 1959-84*, Pittsburgh: The Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2008, pp.25-9; Sergei I. Zhuk. *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City. The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960-1985*, Washington/Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, pp.75-7.

<sup>35</sup> For example, see James Riordan. *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR*, Cambridge et.al.: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp.168-70, pp.207-12.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see Luchterhandt, “Die Stellung der sowjetischen Jugend”, p.233.

<sup>37</sup> For youth organizations in the Western context, see Martin Radde. *Jugendkultur und Verbandsarbeit. Politische Sozialisation zwischen jugendlicher Bewegung und funktionaler Erstarrung*, Weinheim: Juventa-Verlag, 1988; Brigitte Voland and David Porteous (eds.). *Working with Young People in Europe. What we Can Learn from our Neighbours*, Lyme Regis: Russell House, 2002; Bernhard Schäfers and Albert Scherr. *Jugendsoziologie. Einführung in Grundlagen und Theorien*, Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwissenschaft, 2005.

organization.<sup>38</sup> It had only 22,100 members in 1918, but grew rapidly throughout the following decades and had assembled 18 million members by the late 1950s – 42% of the eligible age group. At the end of the Soviet Union, the Komsomol had more than 40 million members, or almost two thirds of all young people in the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup> Its transformation into a mass organization was also engendered by changes to the membership age. Whereas the initial Komsomol statute (*ustav*) only admitted youngsters aged between 14 and 23, the updated version from 1954 extended the age limit to 28.<sup>40</sup> This upper threshold, however, did not apply to members in leading positions, who were often in their early 30s when they climbed the career ladder which the Komsomol provided.<sup>41</sup> This fact prompted criticism about an ageing leadership, increasingly unable to attract younger members and respond to their demands.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, it indicates the presence of a strong *nomenklatura* within the Komsomol administration, i.e. a group of paid full-time Komsomol workers in leading positions who profited from the access to privileges, information and career prospects offered by the political system.<sup>43</sup>

During the decades of Soviet power, the Komsomol thus became a centralized and bureaucratic organization. This development attracted constant criticism from the early 1920s onwards. In the purges of the 1930s the Komsomol leadership suffered, like the Party leadership, from a wave of arrests and executions. However, the peak of anti-bureaucracy endeavour came during the Thaw period.<sup>44</sup> The idea that the state bureaucracy should be

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<sup>38</sup> On the debates, see Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth*, pp.8-78; on the self-image of “avant-garde of the avant-garde”, see mainly Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.57-60.

<sup>39</sup> For a short overview see Riordan, “The Komsomol”, p.22.

<sup>40</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, p.37; Riordan, “The Komsomol”, pp.21-4.

<sup>41</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>42</sup> Mainly criticism recorded during the 1980s, see *ibid.*, pp.28-31.

<sup>43</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*, pp.38-9, p.51.

<sup>44</sup> For the first years, see mainly *ibid.*, pp.74-9; see also Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, p.37; Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia. Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*, Bloomington et.al.: Indiana University Press, 2000, pp.80-7.

replaced by socially active forces arising from society was reflected in campaigns against bureaucracy that were launched during Khrushchev's years in power. It can also be seen in literature, particularly in Vladimir Dudintsev's novel *Not By Bread Alone*, which openly attacked the bureaucratic structure of the Soviet system.<sup>45</sup> The present study focuses on the fight against bureaucracy within the Komsomol and explores its rhetorical link to the ideas of building communism.

As a mass social organization (*obshchestvennaia organizatsiia*), the Komsomol was supposed to organize Soviet society according to the requirements of the communist society-to-be, thereby taking on the main functions of the state in the area of youth policy. There was a clear distinction between purely executive state organizations such as the Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers and the executive committees of local soviets (*ispolkomy deputatov trudiashchikhsia*), the KGB or the police on the one hand, and mass organizations such as the trade unions, professional organizations (e.g. Writers' Union), women's councils (*zhensovety*) and the Komsomol on the other.<sup>46</sup> The mass organizations were to serve as "transmission belts" which implemented party-state policies among the grassroots.<sup>47</sup> It was predicted that

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<sup>45</sup> Denis Kozlov. "Naming the Social Evil: The Readers of *Novyi Mir* and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, 1956-1959 and Beyond", in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Polly Jones, London: Routledge, 2006, pp.80-99; Dietrich Beyrau and Ivo Bock. "Einleitung", in: *Das Tauwetter und die Folgen. Kultur und Politik in Osteuropa nach 1956*, ed. by Dietrich Beyrau and Ivo Bock, Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1988, pp.7-21; Susanne Schattenberg. "'Democracy' or 'Despotism'? How the Secret Speech Was Translated into Everyday Life", in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, pp.64-79.

<sup>46</sup> Boris Meissner. *Das Verhältnis von Partei und Staat im Sowjetsystem*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982, pp. 37-58; Boris Meissner. "Wandlungen im Herrschaftssystem und Verfassungsrecht der Sowjetunion", in: *Bilanz der Ära Chruschtschow*, ed. by Erik Böttcher, Stuttgart: 1966, pp.141-71; John N. Hazard. *The Soviet System of Government*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp.15-55; see also the introduction in Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (eds.). *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp.1-7 as well as the chapters on women's councils, trade unions and the KGB in this volume. For a similar distinction in regard to religious policy in the post-Stalin period see Bohdan Bociurkiw. "The Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy", in: *Problems of Communism* (1973), May-June, pp.37-51.

<sup>47</sup> Meissner, *Das Verhältnis von Partei und Staat im Sowjetsystem*, pp. 39-40; Meissner, "Wandlungen im Herrschaftssystem und Verfassungsrecht der Sowjetunion", pp. 143-5; Dietrich Beyrau. "Das bolschewistische Projekt als Entwurf und soziale Praxis", in: *Utopie und politische Herrschaft im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, ed. by Wolfgang Hardtwig, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003, pp.13-39; Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod. *How the Soviet Union Is Governed*, Cambridge/Mass. et.al.: Harvard University Press, 1979, pp.29-31; Luchterhandt, "Die Stellung der sowjetischen Jugend und die Rolle des Komsomol im Entscheidungsprozess", p.236.

state organs would wither away in the process of building communism, allowing ‘social’ (*obshchestvennye*) organizations to take over their functions.<sup>48</sup> The Komsomol was singled out as the spearhead of youth participation in public affairs and was expected to replace the state in affairs concerning youth.<sup>49</sup>

The present study explores the Komsomol’s role as a mass organization and its influence on the individual. It follows Oleg Kharkhordin’s argument that pressure on the individual did not decrease after Stalin’s death. Rather, the means of control changed: society replaced state violence as the source of discipline, while social control replaced the vertical grasp on the individual.<sup>50</sup> There was an ideological impetus to the continuous significance of controlling society and youth in particular. From the start, the Soviet state was convinced that building a communist future was impossible without the support of the future generation.<sup>51</sup> As the ideological project experienced a final peak during the Thaw period, so the efforts of the Soviet state to integrate youth into the communist project increased. Interestingly, parallel developments can be observed in the USSR’s Cold War rival, the United States.

## **The Cold War and the Communist Project**

The Cold War constitutes the background to the present study and provides a global dimension to the regional approach adopted here. Where the ideological project is concerned, scholars view the conflict between the Western world and the Eastern bloc less as a “super-power confrontation”<sup>52</sup> and more as “a struggle for the very soul of mankind... a struggle for a

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<sup>48</sup> *Politicheskaia organizatsiia razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva. Pravovye problemy*, Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1976, pp.333-339.

<sup>49</sup> A.N. Atsarkin and Iu.N. Verchenko. *Leninskii Komsomol. Ocherki po Istorii VLKSM*, Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1963, p.787.

<sup>50</sup> Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, pp.297-303; see also Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”.

<sup>51</sup> For the 1920s see Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, p.183.

<sup>52</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok. *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War. From Stalin to Gorbachev*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, p.192; see also Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali.

way of life”.<sup>53</sup> The Cold War has mainly been studied as an economic and technological competition,<sup>54</sup> but the Soviet Union and the United States were each convinced about the superiority of their own way of life and their own path to happiness. Marxism-Leninism in the Khrushchevian interpretation provided clear guidelines for the communist ‘bright future’, while freedom, liberalism, and the promotion of the United States as the model liberal Empire were key concepts in the American ideological project.<sup>55</sup> Although much less explicit, the American project was designed to integrate the population as a whole and particularly youth – the generation that would inherit the future in a non-communist world.<sup>56</sup>

However, the American project’s integrating strength seems to have failed in the context of a youth culture which posed an increasing problem for the state-sponsored project during the 1950s and 1960s. As the CIA appropriately put it, there was a “world-wide phenomenon of restless youth”.<sup>57</sup> The new middle class in the USA became increasingly leisure-oriented and focused on entertainment rather than politics or ideology.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, academic young people flirted with communist ideas in a western interpretation. Both phenomena resulted in decreasing engagement in the American project among the young generation.<sup>59</sup> Soviet youth used similar strategies to elude state pressure and the Soviet state reacted with a similar decree

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*Khrushchev's Cold War. The Inside Story of an American Adversary*, New York/London: W. W. Norton Company, 2006; Joseph Smith. *The Cold War, 1945-1991*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Former US president George H.W. Bush, quoted in Melvyn P. Leffler. *For the Soul of Mankind. The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2007, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.172-77; a good example for an open battlefield in this regard is the American exhibition in Moscow in 1959, see David Caute. *The Dancer Defects. The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp.40-51; Susan E. Reid. “Who Will Beat Whom? Soviet Popular Reception of the American Exhibition in Moscow, 1959”, in: *Kritika* 9(2008), 4, pp.855-904; Susan E. Reid. “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev”, in: *Slavic Review* 61(2002), 2, pp.211-52

<sup>55</sup> Jeremi Suri. *Power and Protest. Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp.131-51; John Patrick Diggins. *The Proud Decades. America in War and Peace, 1941-1960*, New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1989, p.74.

<sup>56</sup> Diggins, *The Proud Decades*, pp.95-176; Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, pp.72-98; Suri, *Power and Protest*, pp.7-15.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Suri, *Power and Protest*, p.129.

<sup>58</sup> Diggins, *The Proud Decades*, pp.177-88; Alan Brinkley. “The Illusion of Unity in Cold War Culture”, in: *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, ed. by Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001, pp.61-73.

<sup>59</sup> Suri, *Power and Protest*, p.127.

of moral panic.<sup>60</sup> Its attempts to shape a coherent and docile youth population were also defeated in the end by new attachment to leisure activities, new patterns of consumption and the emergence of ‘restless youth’.<sup>61</sup> Thus, a study of post-war Soviet youth – even one conducted at a regional and local level – must be seen in the light of global developments.

While the American ideological project was driven by the idea of taking liberal ideals of personal freedom and pluralist democracy to the wider world, the Soviet vision was fuelled by the prospect of the impending construction of communism. The revival of the idea of building communism was an explicit reference to the Leninist spirit of the revolutionary period. In the present study, the term ‘communist project’ describes the efforts undertaken during the Thaw period to bring about communist society within the foreseeable future. By reviving the spirit of the heroic past and simultaneously eliminating traces of the undesired past, the present-day situation was to be reshaped in anticipation of the communist future.<sup>62</sup> It unfolded in a rather complex structure of time, a triangle of three historic periods: the present was only relevant insofar as its significance was derived from one of the “great times”, i.e. the heroic past of the Revolution – and the Great Patriotic War – or the bright communist future.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> On moral panics in both superpowers see Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard. “Introduction: Angels of History, Demons of Culture”, in: *Generations of Youth. Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. by Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard, New York: New York University Press, 1998, pp.1-20; Holger Nehring. “‘Generation’ as a Political Argument in West European Protest Movements during the 1960s”, in: *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. by Stephen Lovell, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp.57-78; Kristin Roth-Ey. “‘Loose Girls’ on the Loose? Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival”, in: *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, pp.75-95.

<sup>61</sup> For example, see Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp. 64-160.

<sup>62</sup> The term is inspired by Dietrich Beyrau’s idea of the ‘Bolshevik project’ (see Beyrau, “Das bolschewistische Projekt als Entwurf und soziale Praxis”) and Anne Gorsuch’s idea of the ‘Soviet project’ during the 1920s (see Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, p.183); Juliane Fürst, Polly Jones, and Susan Morrissey argue that the idea was relaunched in the post-war period, see Juliane Fürst, Polly Jones and Susan Morrissey. “The Relaunch of the Soviet Project, 1945-64. Introduction”, in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 86(2008), 2, pp.201-7.

<sup>63</sup> The idea is borrowed from Katerina Clark’s analysis of socialist realist novels, see Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.39-40; see also Dietrich Beyrau. “Das sowjetische Modell. Über Fiktionen zu den Realitäten”, in: *Arbeiter im Staatssozialismus. Ideologischer Anspruch und soziale Wirklichkeit*, ed. by Peter Hübner, Christoph Kleßmann and Klaus Tenfelde, Köln et.al.: Böhlau, 2005, pp.47-70.

This idea was a driving force throughout the Komsomol's existence and experienced various peaks. At the core lay the idea that the formation of a 'new person' was an absolutely necessary precondition for the building of communism. When youth reached a degree of heroism equal to that of their predecessors, they would supposedly be capable of reshaping their present situation in order to bring about the communist future. Therefore, they would need a clearly defined moral outlook, ranging from the basic ethics of industriousness, honesty and truthfulness to the more specific communist morals of collectivism, internationalism and atheism. The first years of the Soviet regime saw intense discussions about the nature of the 'new person' and how the new society could be achieved. This period can be characterized as "a laboratory of utopian experiments".<sup>64</sup> Only in the 1930s were vague utopian ideas replaced by the Stalinist notion of forceful transformation.<sup>65</sup> During the Second World War and the immediate post-war years, the idea of building communism fell out of use. It was only from 1948 onwards that the media, fiction, movies and Party or Komsomol literature once again began promoting the communist project and made it broadly known throughout the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> The Khrushchev years saw the "death throes of utopia" (*letzte Zuckung der Utopie*)<sup>67</sup> when the resources of the whole country were to be directed towards the ultimate goal of building communism within twenty years. The new Party Programme, adopted in 1961, provided a clear timetable for achieving communist society and promoted a rosy picture of the future: a classless, abundant society governed not by rules or laws but by

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Stites. *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, New York et.al.: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.46.

<sup>65</sup> Stefan Plaggenborg. *Experiment Moderne: Der sowjetische Weg*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 2006; Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*; Katharina Kucher. *Der Gorki-Park: Freizeitkultur im Stalinismus 1928 - 1941*, Köln: Böhlau, 2007, pp.48-68; Klaus Gestwa. "Social und Soul Engineering unter Stalin und Chruschtschow, 1928-1964", in: *Die Ordnung der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Thomas Etzemüller, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2009, pp.241-77.

<sup>66</sup> Klaus Gestwa. *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus. Sowjetische Technik- und Umweltgeschichte, 1948-1967*, München: Oldenbourg, 2010, pp.34-5.

<sup>67</sup> Beyrau, "Das sowjetische Modell", here p.48.

moral consciousness.<sup>68</sup> Although it was much less assiduously promoted after Khrushchev's dismissal in 1964, the project ultimately ended only in 1971, when official propaganda replaced the dynamic rhetoric with the slogan of "developed socialism".<sup>69</sup> Like the American project, the Soviet equivalent had a strong focus on young people, who were praised as "builders of communism"<sup>70</sup> and the generation that was going to "live under communism".<sup>71</sup> Youth was therefore credited with a crucial role in the success of the communist project, which highlighted the Komsomol's key function in educating the young generation.

## Chapter Outline and Theoretical Considerations

The Komsomol actively promoted all three 'time levels' of the communist project. It presented the heroic past as the ultimate model for modern youth. At the same time, it fought against any remnants of the undesired past and its task in the present was to make preparations for the transition to the bright communist future. The structure of the present study reflects this engagement in the communist project. The first chapter on the Komsomol's organizational history provides the socio-cultural background for further analysis and establishes how far Komsomol propaganda went in regard to promoting the idea of building communism. It outlines the normative aspect of the Komsomol's operations and asks to what extent the organization was prepared for its tasks within the communist project. It explores whether the horizontal level of communication was strengthened in relation to the vertical; what role the extraordinary bodies and the anti-bureaucracy campaigns played in

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<sup>68</sup> For a short overview, see Aleksandr A. Fokin. *'Kommunizm ne za gorami'. Obrazy budushchego u vlasti i naseleniia SSSR na rubezhe 1950-1960-kh godov*, Cheliabinsk: Entsiklopediia, 2012, pp.14-77.

<sup>69</sup> Jerome M. Gilison. *The Soviet Image of Utopia*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, pp.96-100, pp.182-185; Dietrich Beyrau. *Intelligenz und Dissens. Die russischen Bildungsschichten in der Sowjetunion 1917 bis 1985*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, pp.196-8; Beyrau, "Das sowjetische Modell".

<sup>70</sup> Quotation *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, Moskva: Politizdat, 1967, p.119; see also Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.44-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, p.142.

decentralizing administration; and whether the reorganization of the organizational structure resulted in the desired purification of administrative processes.

The second chapter focuses on the promotion of the heroic past within the Komsomol organizations. It firstly outlines the rhetorical parameters, exploring the types of heroes and the narratives via which their heroic deeds were presented to the young generation. It then explores the strategies used by Komsomol organizations at all administrative levels to promote the official version of the heroic past. Besides print media and fiction, major strategies included the personalization of history, e.g. through the promotion of memoirs by veterans and the organization of meetings between veterans and schoolchildren; the pursuit of social practices and rituals during holidays and anniversaries; and the use of public space for staging the official version of the heroic past. The third chapter is also concerned with the past, but focuses on the Komsomol's efforts to eliminate traces of the undesired past amongst contemporary youth. It looks at how the Komsomol organizations dealt rhetorically with religious belief and deviant behaviour such as hooliganism, alcohol abuse and laziness. It also explores the strategies chosen by the Komsomol organizations to fight these phenomena in their daily work. The fourth and final chapter provides an overview of the Komsomol's activity in the process of bringing about the communist future. Part of the Komsomol's task was to mobilize youth for active participation in the Soviet economy, which had to be arranged in preparation for the transition to communism. Through their efforts in the economic sphere, the young generation would become worthy 'builders of communism', a process which the Komsomol also encouraged by preparing youth morally and politically for life under communism.

Each chapter describes the content of a particular aspect of the communist project and provides a picture of the rhetorical framework within which the Komsomol organizations

operated in order to promote – or fight – the aspect in question. The analysis in this study draws on central and regional youth newspapers; speeches which were delivered at Komsomol meetings at the local, regional and central levels; and other literature that circulated within the Komsomol, such as reports or guidelines, as well as printed literature that Komsomol members in certain positions were supposed to be familiar with. For certain topics, such as the promotion of the heroic past, fiction and cinema are also taken into consideration, since these texts had a particularly direct impact on young people.

The present study mainly consists of analysis of the language used by the Komsomol. It therefore uses methods of discourse analysis. Broadly defined, a discourse is a primarily linguistic utterance which defines and confines what people – in a certain historical period, in a particular geographic place and in various social groupings – are able to say, think and do. A set of discourses structures the way in which individuals and groups perceive social reality and defines the scope of their action. It also establishes what is ‘true’ in a certain historical situation by drawing a clear line between the utterances accepted and the beyond-acceptable.<sup>72</sup> On this basis, it seems appropriate to apply the term discourse to linguistic utterances within the Komsomol, as they clearly defined how young people during the Thaw period were supposed to think about the contents of the communist project.

However, other narrower definitions – following Michel Foucault – ascribe an almost unlimited power to discourse, which in this reading has sovereignty of interpretation over reality. By using the term ‘discourse’, one risks opening a Pandora’s box and coming under attack from various sections of contemporary historiography.<sup>73</sup> The chapters of this study do

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<sup>72</sup> Philipp Sarasin. *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2003, pp.7-60; Achim Landwehr. *Geschichte des Sagbaren. Einführung in die historische Diskursanalyse*, Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 2001, pp.7-13 and pp.70-83; Jörg Baberowski. *Der Sinn der Geschichte*, München: Beck, 2005, pp.11-30.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. Richard Evans. *In Defence of History*, London: Granta, 1997.

not limit their focus to the rhetorical dimension; they also explore the scope of measures undertaken by Komsomol organizations to promote certain aspects of the communist project. The study thereby broadens its approach beyond a purely discursive analysis and takes into account, for instance, the use of public space and the staging of social practices and rituals.<sup>74</sup>

Rather than the more purist versions of discourse analysis, this study adopts an approach taken from German *Alltagsgeschichte* based on the insight that power becomes effective only insofar as it is experienced, perceived and accepted by those addressed.<sup>75</sup> The study thus attributes more agency to individual actors, who could themselves choose whether they wanted to accept or reject the ideas offered by the Komsomol. It should be emphasised that the present study is unable to reconstruct the degree to which young people actually believed in the contents of the communist project. It draws exclusively on official Komsomol sources and does not comment on the thoughts or doubts which young people might have expressed in their diaries, private letters or in other ego-documents. Other studies, however, which are mainly based on oral history or memoirs, suggest that the rhetoric about the bright future actually had some influence and excited the minds of some young people.<sup>76</sup>

The omnipresence of the Komsomol's heroic rhetoric obliged almost every young person, and certainly those living in big cities, to relate to the communist project and adopt a position, which might range from belief to small doubts to open rejection. The present study focuses on the offer which Soviet rhetoric made to the young generation. Young people acquired a grasp of this rhetoric from the statements that were made in an oral, written or medial form within

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<sup>74</sup> For a similar approach see Alf Lüdtke. "Alltagsgeschichte – ein Bericht von unterwegs", in: *Historische Anthropologie* 11(2003), pp.278-95.

<sup>75</sup> For example, see Alf Lüdtke. "Einleitung: Herrschaft als soziale Praxis", in: *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis. Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien*, ed. by Alf Lüdtke, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991, pp.9-63.

<sup>76</sup> Donald J. Raleigh. *Soviet Baby Boomers. An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp.110-2, p.250; Petr L. Vajl' and Aleksandr A. Genis. *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka*, Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001, pp.13-8.

the Komsomol. Such statements were aimed at both Komsomol members and non-organized youth. The rhetoric analysed here was designed to inform, convince and mobilize for the communist project – goals that are at the core of any rhetorical situation.<sup>77</sup>

Besides discourse and rhetoric, generation is another key concept that features throughout this study and requires some definition. As Juliane Fürst states, the term is rather “fuzzy around the edges” – it is used so abundantly in academia, as well as every-day language, that it has lost its clear analytical definition.<sup>78</sup> Some historians prefer not to use the term at all. However, this study argues that it can be applied fruitfully in the Soviet context. This is not only because the sociological conceptualization of the term is helpful to analysis, but also because of the superabundance of generational tropes within Soviet rhetoric itself.<sup>79</sup>

The use of ‘generation’ in the present study is shaped by sociological considerations going back to the famous essay by Karl Mannheim from 1928. Mannheim introduced the distinction between generational location (*Generationslagerung*), generation as actuality (*Generationszusammenhang*) and generational unit (*Generationseinheit*). People belong to a generational location, not because they are born around the same time in the same cultural surroundings, but because they have the possibility of experiencing the same living conditions and major events. Only when they react to their ‘location’ do they become a generation as actuality. Moreover, it is only when they react in a similar way to each other that they form a generational unit.<sup>80</sup> But it is not only similar experience or similar exposure to a certain event

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<sup>77</sup> On rhetoric, see Karl-Heinz Göttert. *Einführung in die Rhetorik: Grundbegriffe - Geschichte - Rezeption*, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2009, pp.27-8; Gerd Ueding. “Was ist Rhetorik?”, in: *Rhetorik. Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung in die rhetorische Praxis*, ed. by Rouven Soudry, Heidelberg et.al.: C.F.Müller, 2006, pp.13-23.

<sup>78</sup> Juliane Fürst. *Stalin’s Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.7.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, pp.14-6; Matthias Neumann. “‘Youth, It’s Your Turn!’: Generations and the Fate of the Russian Revolution (1917-1932)”, in: *Journal of Social History* 46(2012), 2, pp.273-304.

<sup>80</sup> For a good overview, see Ulrike Jureit. *Generationenforschung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, pp.20-5; Ulrike Jureit. “Generation, Generationalität, Generationenforschung, Version: 1.0”, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* 11.02.2010; Neumann, “‘Youth, It’s Your Turn!’”.

that transforms members of an age cohort – people born at roughly the same time in a clearly defined geographical place – into an actual generation. Common ideas and concepts and a shared vision of the future can also be responsible for generation building.<sup>81</sup> In certain contexts, indeed, such ideas and vision can be primary. Therefore, the term generation is appropriate here, even though young people definitely had different experiences during the Thaw and were exposed to a plurality of events and living conditions, because Soviet propaganda addressed every young person and provided an unambiguous vision of the near future for youth in its entirety.

In Soviet rhetoric, the continuity of generations was crucial for the idea of building communism. Once the generation of revolutionaries had prepared the way, subsequent generations were called upon to follow their example and continue their struggle until the day when communist society was achieved. Therefore, a conflict between generations was unthinkable.<sup>82</sup> This theory, however, did not correspond with Soviet reality, where tensions between generations were frequent – between the active fighters of the Civil War and those who were too young to have taken part in the struggle;<sup>83</sup> or between Second World War veterans and youngsters who had been born too late.<sup>84</sup> During the Thaw period, Soviet propaganda made a huge effort to cover up any tension between the generations and to praise the smooth transition from one generation to another. Generation was usually associated with revolutionary change for the better. The whole of Soviet history – as a sequence of

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.; Kirsten Gerland, Benjamin Möckel and Daniel Ristau, “Die Erwartung. Neue Perspektiven der Generationenforschung”, in: Kirsten Gerland, Benjamin Möckel and Daniel Ristau (eds.). *Generation und Erwartung. Konstruktionen zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2013, pp.9-26.

<sup>82</sup> Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, pp.15-6; Neumann, “‘Youth, It's Your Turn!’”.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.; Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, pp.82-3.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Edele. “Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945 – 1953”, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50(2002), 1, pp.37-61; Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, pp.233-5; Juliane Fürst. “The Importance of Being Stylish: Youth, Culture and Identity in Late Stalinism”, in: *Stalinistische Subjekte. Individuum und System in der Sowjetunion und der Komintern, 1929-1953*, ed. by Brigitte Studer and Heiko Haumann, Zürich: Chronos, 2006, pp.359-75.

generations – was presented as a success story in which the Soviet people were increasingly better off the closer society came to communism.

The communist movement defined itself as young and therefore the group to which the future belonged. Consequently, youth became a symbol for change and was frequently used as a synonym for the young generation.<sup>85</sup> Youth was a metaphor for progress towards the communist future; its integration into the ambitious plans of the Soviet state was an inevitable precondition for the success of the communist project.<sup>86</sup> In the Soviet context it is particularly obvious that youth was always a social and cultural construct, a container onto which philosophers, ideologists and statesmen projected their visions and hopes. Youth is generally the symbol of the future in any society and assembles all the hopes and fears that a community has about its own destiny.<sup>87</sup> During the 1920s, as well as the Thaw period, Soviet experts on youth projected their utopian expectations about the ‘new person’ onto the young generation and ascribed to it the power to implement – or ruin – the communist project.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, youth was a particularly important and delicate topic during the Thaw period. Yet strangely enough, it still awaits a thorough historical study.

## Literature Overview and Sources

While the topic of youth during the early Soviet period and Stalinism is generally well covered by recent research, there is a gap in historiography for the Khrushchev era. Recent research has produced a clear picture of youth’s enthusiasm, anxiety and disillusionment

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<sup>85</sup> Neumann. “‘Youth, It’s Your Turn!’”; see also Stephen Lovell. “Introduction”, in: *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe*, pp.1-18; Stephen Lovell. “Soviet Russia’s Older Generations”, in: *ibid.*, pp.205-26.

<sup>86</sup> Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, p.184; Pilkington, *Russia’s Youth and its Culture*, pp.64-6.

<sup>87</sup> For example, see Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*, pp.7-14; Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.7-9; Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried. “Introduction. Youth, Consumption and Politics in the Age of Radical Change”, in: *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, ed. by Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006, pp.1-35.

<sup>88</sup> For the 1920s, see Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.323-9; for the Thaw, see Gilison, *The Soviet Image of Utopia*, pp.165-80.

during the first decade of Soviet power. In particular, Anne Gorsuch and Corinna Kuhr-Korolev have analyzed how youth was constructed, revealing the unpreparedness of the regime to react to youth's expectations.<sup>89</sup> Their work paints a vivid picture of youth's life-worlds, as does Monica Wellmann's analysis of the everyday life of youth in Moscow during the 1920s.<sup>90</sup> Kuhr-Korolev also contributed to a research project on 'Youth and Violence in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932' and jointly edited a major publication on Soviet youth in the interwar period with Heiko Haumann and Stefan Plaggenborg. Contributions focused on the micro-historical level and emphasized the experience of violence that was virtually universal among young people during the early Soviet period.<sup>91</sup>

The post-war period is less well covered by recent research. Juliane Fürst has conducted the most detailed studies on post-war youth. Her work covers many aspects of urban youth experience between 1945 and 1953 and explores the strained relations between youth and the Soviet state.<sup>92</sup> One of her articles extends to the Thaw period, arguing that no real change took place in regard to youth policy between the rigid methods of Stalinism and the strict social control of the Khrushchev era.<sup>93</sup> Gleb Tsipursky sheds light on youth's deviant behaviour and their focus on leisure, as well as the reaction of the state, Party and Komsomol to phenomena

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<sup>89</sup> Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*; Anne E. Gorsuch. *Flappers and Foxtrotters. Soviet Youth in the Roaring Twenties*, Pittsburgh: Center for Russian & East European studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1994; Anne E. Gorsuch. "Soviet Youth and the Politics of Popular Culture during NEP", in: *Social History* 17(1992), 2, pp.189-201; Kuhr-Korolev. *Gezähmte Helden*.

<sup>90</sup> Monica Wellmann. *Zwischen Militanz, Verzweiflung und Disziplinierung: Jugendliche Lebenswelten in Moskau 1920-1930*, Zürich: Pano-Verlag, 2003.

<sup>91</sup> Corinna Kuhr-Korolev (ed.). *Sowjetjugend 1917-1941. Generation zwischen Revolution und Resignation*, Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 2001.

<sup>92</sup> Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*; Fürst, "The Importance of Being Stylish"; Juliane Fürst. "Friends in Private, Friends in Public. The Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s", in: *Borders of Socialism. Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. by Lewis H. Siegelbaum, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp.229-49; Juliane Fürst. "In Search of Soviet Salvation. Young People Write to the Stalinist Authorities", in: *Contemporary European History* 15(2006), 3, pp.327-45; Juliane Fürst. "Not a Question of Faith. Youth and Religion in the Post-War Years", in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 52(2004), 4, pp.557-70; Juliane Fürst. "Prisoners of the Soviet Self? Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism", in: *Europe-Asia Studies* 54(2002), 3, pp.353-75.

<sup>93</sup> Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?".

such as hooliganism.<sup>94</sup> Otherwise, there is a gap in the landscape of research on the Komsomol and youth during the post-Stalinist period (an area that is not well covered in Fürst's monograph either). Alexei Yurchak's study of the "last Soviet generation" applies an elaborate theoretical framework to explore the "hypernormalization" of Soviet discourse, which in the long run led to the collapse of the Soviet system. In this view, the Komsomol serves as a symbol for the obsolete Soviet system that was unable to react appropriately to the needs of youth.<sup>95</sup> Hilary Pilkington's work on late Soviet youth culture views the Komsomol in a similar way but provides a very useful short overview of the organization's role during the decades after the Second World War.<sup>96</sup>

Analyses of the organizational history of the Komsomol, on the other hand, are rare and focus mainly on the early Soviet period. The most recent work, by Matthias Neumann, outlines the emergence of the organization, summarizes its activity during the Civil War and explores its contribution to the formation of a Soviet mentality amongst youth during the period of Cultural Revolution in the 1920s.<sup>97</sup> Like Isabel Tirado's works on the Komsomol's emergence and its position within the newly founded Soviet state,<sup>98</sup> the study enriches historiography insofar as all previous studies were published before the collapse of the Soviet Union and bore a more or less obvious ideological bias. Soviet scholarship offers a uniform picture of the Komsomol's heroic history and its devotion to the Communist Party. Histories

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<sup>94</sup> Gleb Tsipursky. "Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity. Soviet Youth Newspapers as Agents of Social Control in the Thaw-Era Leisure Campaign", in: *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 49(2008), 4, pp.629-49; Gleb Tsipurskii. "Ulichnyi mir i molodye khuligany v post-stalinskom Sovetskom Soiuze", in: *Molodezhnye ulichnye gruppirovki. Vvedenie v problematiku*, ed. by D. V. Gromov, Moskva: IEA RAN, 2009, pp.73-93; Gleb Tsipursky. "'As a Citizen, I Cannot Ignore These Facts'. Whistleblowing in the Khrushchev Era", in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 58(2010), 1, pp.52-69; Gleb Tsipursky. *Having Fun in the Thaw: Youth Initiative Clubs in the Post-Stalin Years*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more*.

<sup>96</sup> Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*.

<sup>97</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*.

<sup>98</sup> Tirado, *Young Guard!*; Tirado, "The Socialist Youth Movement in Revolutionary Petrograd"; Isabel Tirado. "The Komsomol and Young Peasants. The Dilemma of Rural Expansion, 1921-1925", in: *Slavic Review* 52(1993), 3, pp.460-76; Isabel Tirado. "The Komsomol and the Bright Socialist Future", in: *Sowjetjugend 1917-1941*, pp.217-31.

of both the central<sup>99</sup> and the regional organizations<sup>100</sup> give one-sided praise to sacrifices made by youth for the progress of Soviet history. In contrast, contemporary descriptions of the Komsomol,<sup>101</sup> instructive literature<sup>102</sup> and Soviet studies of the Komsomol's organizational structure<sup>103</sup> only deal with the normative dimension of how the organization was supposed to function in theory.

<sup>99</sup> Atsarkin and Verchenko. *Leninskii Komsomol*; P.R. Sheverdalkin (ed.). *V edinom stroiu. Stranitsy istorii komsomola*, Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1968; A.I. Kamshalova and E.M. Tiazhel'nikov. *Leninskii Komsomol. Ocherki po Istorii VLKSM*, Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1969; Tiazhel'nikov. *Slavnyi put' leninskogo komsomola*, Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1974; J. M. Iljinski. *Geschichte des Leninschen Komsomol*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1983; *Komsomol - Boevoi pomoshchnik partii, 1918-1983*, Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1984.

<sup>100</sup> N.K. Lisovskii. *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii. Komsomol Urala v bor'be za vlast' sovetov*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1958; *Iz istorii Cheliabinskoi oblastnoi komsomol'skoi organizatsii. Daty, tsifry, fakty (v pomoshch' komsomol'skomu aktivistu, propagandistu)*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii obkom VLKSM, 1967; *Koordinaty podviga. Iz istorii Cheliabinskoi oblastnoi komsomol'skoi organizatsii, 1918-1968*, Cheliabinsk: Iuzhno-Ural'skoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1968; *Leninskomu komsomolu 50 let. Delegatu XXII gorodskoi komsomol'skoi konferentsii*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii gorodskoi komitet VLKSM, 1968; G.Ia. Taratonenkov. *Komsomol Urala - boevoi pomoshchnik partii v bor'be za razvitie tiazheloi promyshlennosti v 1959-1965gg. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk*, Sverdlovsk: Ural'skii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1965; *Ocherki po istorii komsomola Tatarii*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1973.

<sup>101</sup> *Molodezh' prishla v trgovliu. Pochin komsomol'tsev Cheliabinskogo univernmaga*. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Torgovloia Literaturny, 1958; *Shagai vpered, komsomol'skoe plemia!*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1958; G. Alekseev. *Rozhdenie velikana. Iz letopisa Cheliabinskoi komsomol'skoi domny*, Cheliabinsk: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1960; E.A. Kotelnikov (ed.) *Udamnye komsomol'skie*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1962; *Krylataia iunost'*, Kazan': Tatarskot Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1963; Iu. Smelianskii and M. Dovgopol. *Beregi chest' rodnogo goroda. Iz opyta raboty komsomol'skogo shtaba i narodnoi druzhiny*, Cheliabinsk: Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1963; *Molodezh' v puti. Iz opyta raboty komsomol'skoi organizatsii Tatarii*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1964; *Komsomol - nashei doblestnoi partii syn*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii obkom VLKSM, 1967; *Operativnye komsomol'skie otriady. Opyt raboty: metodologicheskie sovery, instruksii*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii oblastnoi komitet VLKSM, 1968; Igor Ilyinsky. *What Is the Komsomol*, Moscow: Novosti, 1978.

<sup>102</sup> *Spravochnik sekretaria pervichnoi komsomol'skoi organizatsii*, Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1958; *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuza Moldezh'i*; Sputnik Komsomol'skogo aktivista; "Polozhenie o 'Komsomol'skom Prozhektore' utverzhdenno postanovleniem TsK VLKSM 20 marta 1963 goda", in: *Polozhenie ob organakh partgoskontroliia, gruppakh i postakh codeistviia*, Moskva: Politizdat, 1964, pp.26-31; *O podgotovke i provedenii leninskoi vakhty shkol'nymi komsomol'skimi organizatsiiami*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii dvorets pionerov i shkol'nikov, 1964.

<sup>103</sup> *Komsomol'skaia organizatsiia v shkole. Metodologicheskoe posobie po pedagogike*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut, 1966; S.G. Kudriavtsev. *Organizatorskaia i vospitatel'naia rabota komsomola Tatarii sredi rabochei molodezhi (1959 - mai 1966 gg.)*. *Dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk*, Kazan': Kazanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1967; Iu.P. Petrov. *Stroitel'stvo politorganov, partiinykh i komsomol'skikh organizatsii Armii i Flota (1918-1968)*, Moskva: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1968; *Kompleksnaia programma raboty komsomol'skikh organizatsii sredi molodykh rabochikh*. Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskii oblastnoi komitet VLKSM, 1969; R.V. Beliaev. *Rol' komsomola v razvitii sotsial'noi aktivnosti sel'skogo molodezhi (na materialakh Tatarskoi ASSR)*. *Dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata filosofskikh nauk*, Kazan': Kazan'skii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1970; R.I. Iushkova. *Deiatel'nost' partiinykh i komsomol'skikh organizatsii Urala po vospitaniiu rabochei molodezhi na revoliutsionnykh, boevykh i trudovykh traditsiakh (1959-1965g.g.)*, Sverdlovsk: Ural'skii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1970.

Most of the Western research carried out in the Cold War era followed those normative descriptions and viewed the Komsomol as an institution of totalitarian indoctrination that managed to exert almost total control over its individual members. Merle Fainsod's analysis of the Komsomol developed the idea of indoctrination and thereby set the tone for subsequent studies. Despite its clearly biased view, it provides a good overview of the structure and functioning of the Komsomol.<sup>104</sup> Other studies followed Fainsod's line and analysed the youth organization as a willing assistant of the Party, designed to discipline youth and prepare it for life in a totalitarian regime. The most important book to adopt this approach is Ralph T. Fisher's study about the Komsomol's foundation and early history, which he explored using congress documents.<sup>105</sup> Alan Kassof conducted a detailed study of the indoctrination of Soviet youth, the bureaucratic character of the Komsomol and the rebellious reaction of some young people to this overarching control.<sup>106</sup> Other studies from the context of social or political science view the Komsomol as a contemporary political phenomenon within Soviet society. These studies also highlight the stagnation of the Komsomol, which was mainly due to the increasingly bureaucratic and formal administration within the organization. This state of affairs became increasingly serious in the latter years of the Soviet Union.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, both Soviet and Western Cold War studies on the Komsomol view youth merely as a container, which the party-state could fill with ideas as it wished, thereby shaping young people according to its own blueprint of the 'new person'. Interestingly, this idea was revived by postmodern approaches to the Soviet subject that emerged in the late 1990s and early

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<sup>104</sup> Fainsod, "The Komsomol".

<sup>105</sup> Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth*.

<sup>106</sup> Kassof, *The Soviet Youth Program*.

<sup>107</sup> For example, see Revesz, *Organisierte Jugend*; Luchterhandt, "Die Stellung der sowjetischen Jugend und die Rolle des Komsomol im Entscheidungsprozess"; Riordan, "The Komsomol".

2000s. Despite the “well-earned retirement for totalitarianism”,<sup>108</sup> historians focusing on ‘Soviet subjectivity’ during Stalinism explored how young people shaped themselves in line with the official set of discourses. They looked at diaries, letters and autobiographies of young people who strove to become part of the Stalinist discursive landscape.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the young people once again lost all the agency which the so called revisionists of the 1970s and 1980s had ascribed to them when they viewed youth during Stalinism as exploiting upward social movement.<sup>110</sup> Foucault-inspired approaches even went so far as to refer to young people as “prisoners” – not of physical control, as the totalitarian school claimed, but of Soviet discourse.<sup>111</sup>

In its analysis of Komsomol rhetoric about the communist project, the present study is based on sources which consist mainly of official Komsomol documents. They are held in the regional Party archives of Tatarstan and the Cheliabinsk region and in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (*Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politicheskoi Istorii*, RGASPI). The latter holds the collection of the former all-Union Komsomol archive, whose inventories have the label “M1” to distinguish them from the

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<sup>108</sup> Stephen Kotkin. “1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytic Frameworks”, in: *Journal of Modern History* 70(1998), 2, pp.384-425, here p. 421.

<sup>109</sup> For example, see Jochen Hellbeck. *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*, Cambridge, Mass. et.al.: Harvard University Press, 2006; Jochen Hellbeck. “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul. The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931-9”, in: *Stalinism. New Directions*, ed. by Sheila Fitzpatrick, London/New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.77-116; Jochen Hellbeck. “Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts”, in: *Language and Revolution. Making Modern Political Identities*, ed. by Igal Halfin, London: F. Cass, 2002, pp.135-59; Igal Halfin. *From Darkness to Light. Class, Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000; Igal Halfin. *Terror in my Soul. Communist Autobiographies on Trial*, Cambridge, Mass. et.al.: Harvard University Press, 2003; Igal Halfin. “Stalin’s Purges and the Question of Belief”, in: *Stalinistische Subjekte*, pp.233-51.

<sup>110</sup> For the revisionists’ focus on youth, see mainly Sheila Fitzpatrick. *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1932*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Sheila Fitzpatrick. *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1992; Hans-Henning Schröder. “Upward Social Mobility and Mass Repression. The Communist Party and Soviet Society in the Thirties”, in: *Stalinism: Its Nature and Aftermath. Essays in Honour of Moshe Lewin*, ed. by Nick Lampert and Moshe Lewin, Basingstoke et.al.: Macmillan, 1992, pp.157-83; on the term ‘revisionism’ see Sheila Fitzpatrick. “Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View”, in: *Slavic Review* 67(2008), 3, pp.682-704.

<sup>111</sup> Mainly Fürst, “Prisoners of the Soviet Self? Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism”; see also Natalia Kozlova. “The Diary as Initiation and Rebirth. Reading Everyday Documents for the Early Soviet Era”, in: *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, ed. by Christina Kiaer, Bloomington et.al.: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp.282-98.

holdings of the former Party archive. Two inventories were of great interest, namely *opis 2* and *opis 6*, which were both consulted in depth. *Opis 2* contains records of the plenary meetings of the Central Committee. Some of the keynote speeches, contributions from participants and resolutions of Komsomol congresses are available in a printed version, along with a handful of key resolutions of the CC.<sup>112</sup> The records also contain the statements of other speakers who commented on the official position and reported experiences in lower-ranking organizations, as well as representatives of the Party who had a say and emphasized the official version of the communist project. *Opis 6*, on the other hand, contains correspondence between the “Department of Komsomol Organs” (*Otdel komsomol’skikh organov*) and regional Komsomol committees. It includes their reports, accounts, pleas and letters and sheds light on communication between the centre and the regions.

The bulk of documents on which this study relies come from regional Party archives. The Unified State Archive of the Cheliabinsk Region (*Ob’edinennyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Cheliabinskoi Oblasti*, OGACHO) in Cheliabinsk and the Central State Archive for the Historical-Political Documentation of the Republic of Tatarstan (*Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Istoriko-Politicheskoi Dokumentatsii Respubliki Tatarstan*, TsGA IPD RT) in Kazan’ hold all the material of their respective regional Komsomol committees, most documents of the city and district committees and some material for the grassroots organization. Apart from personal files, all material is accessible and leaves the researcher spoilt for choice. The present study focuses mainly on material of the regional committees, including protocols of regional conferences and plenary meetings of regional committees, minutes of meetings of the regional Bureau and correspondence between the regional committee and the lower-ranking organs. The OGACHO assembles these documents in *opis*

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<sup>112</sup> *Tovarishch Komsomol. Dokumenty s’ezdov, konferentsii i TsK VLKSM, 1918 – 1968*, Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1969.

485 (*obkom komsomola*, i.e. the regional Komsomol committee), *opis* 1467 (*promyshlennyi obkom komsomola*, i.e. the industrial regional Komsomol committee) and *opis* 1468 (*sel'skii obkom komsomola*, i.e. the agricultural regional Komsomol committee). The TsGA IPD RT holds all documents in *opis* 4034 (*obkom komsomola*).

The holdings for the *obkom* were comprehensively screened to get a representative picture of the rhetoric at the regional level. However, the sheer amount of material at the city, district and grassroots levels made it necessary to choose samples which together would provide an accurate impression of the organizations' work. Thus, some inventories of the regional capitals were screened, as well as some from the rural and urban districts. As for the grassroots, only the committees of bigger organizations such as the KGU or the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Factory (MMK) were chosen. In general, the records of the lower-ranking organs were even more schematic and uniform than contributions to the regional and central meetings, where representatives of the grassroots, districts and cities also had their say and thus contributed to the reproduction of rhetoric about the communist project.

Besides archives, the study draws on print media. The regional youth newspapers were comprehensively screened for the years 1953 to 1964. Both the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* (until 1956 known as *Stalinskaia Smena*, i.e. Stalin's Generation) and the *Komsomolets Tatarii* were official organs of regional committees and were published three to four times a week on average, with issues running to four pages. They wrote about topics that reflected the content of the central youth newspaper, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, which was edited by the Central Committee and came out every day. The regional newspapers generally tried to apply stories to the regional context, focusing on regional examples as often as possible. As the present study is interested in the rhetoric from a regional perspective, it refers as often as possible to these regional newspapers. Other printed primary sources that were taken into

account include novels and booklets on the heroism of past or present-day youth, plus textbooks on the history of the Komsomol. Printed documents of the Central Committee and the regional Komsomol organizations were consulted for statistical material and resolutions, as well as to reconstruct the normative dimension and social background.

The obvious problem of this source corpus is its formal character and the formal, standardized language which is used by speakers at meetings and authors of reports. Before perestroika, historians and observers of the Soviet Union struggled with the meaninglessness of official propaganda and they expected to finally get a glance behind the scenes when the Soviet archives were opened as a result of *perestroika* and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This “archival revolution” was supposed to bring to light the ‘truth’ that was allegedly hidden in the archives and could not be reconstructed from official print sources.<sup>113</sup> However, historians had to accept that the administrative language of the archive documents was no different from the official language of published material; the ‘truth’ cannot be easily reconstructed from these formalized documents.<sup>114</sup> The present study equally faces the lack of ‘truth’ in the primary sources and therefore uses the method of discourse analysis and explores how the rhetoric patterns were applied to particular topics. It takes the propaganda seriously, regarding it as an important aspect of Soviet life that shaped and structured the way of thinking. It sheds light on the framework in which young people were able to think, speak, and act during the Thaw period.

This problem is compounded by the assumption that a split occurred at a certain time in the post-war period between an official way of thinking and speaking on the one hand, and

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<sup>113</sup> On the “archival revolution”, see Peter Holquist. “A Tocquevillean ‘Archival Revolution’”. *Archival Change in the Longue Durée*, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51(2003), pp.77-83; Donald J. Raleigh. “Doing Soviet History. The Impact of the Archival Revolution”, in: *Russian Review* 61(2002), 1, pp.16-24.

<sup>114</sup> For example, see Johannes Grützmaker. *Die Baikal-Amur-Magistrale. Vom stalinistischen Lager zum Mobilisierungsprojekt unter Brežnev*, München: Oldenbourg, 2012, pp.34-5.

private, unofficial communication on the other hand.<sup>115</sup> This observation is confirmed by the regional Komsomol rhetoric, in which hyperstandardization can be found alongside colloquial cheeky remarks. Both the standardized and the apparently colloquial styles operate within the limits of the acceptable and both carry a generally affirmative character. As criticism remained within approved boundaries and was equally standardized and institutionalized, it also had an affirmative effect and confirmed the righteousness of the required standards.<sup>116</sup> Both types of utterance shaped how the communist project was promoted. Therefore, the present study is not concerned with establishing the ‘truth’ behind the sources but takes the Komsomol rhetoric seriously and bases its analysis of the communist project on this official corpus of sources.

The whole spectrum of Komsomol rhetoric – i.e. the bulk of utterances which bore a highly standardized and formalized character, as well as the rather colloquial and critical statements – was aimed at a “staged public” (*inszenierte Öffentlichkeit*)<sup>117</sup> and was highly ritualized. Due to their repetition, stylization, formalization, and institutionalization, the stereotypes of the official rhetoric can be interpreted as ritual action which established a canon of values, created order, and brought about integration. This ritualized language – as with any ritual – was predictable and confirmed existing social relations.<sup>118</sup> Another result of the ritualized use of language was the integration of young people into the imaginary world created by propaganda that was so typical for the Soviet Union. By repeating these formal rhetoric patterns, young people publicly confirmed their loyalty to the Soviet belief system and at the same time certain sets of discourses might have shaped their own perception of the world. Being

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<sup>115</sup> For example, see Beyrau, *Intelligenz und Dissens*, p.265; Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p.175.

<sup>116</sup> For example, see Grützmaker, *Die Baikal-Amur-Magistrale*, pp.35-7.

<sup>117</sup> Ralph Jessen. “Diktatorische Herrschaft als kommunikative Praxis. Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von ‘Bürokratie’ und Sprachnormierung in der DDR-Geschichte”, in: *Akten, Eingaben, Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte*, ed. by Alf Lüdtke, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997, pp.57-75, here p.73.

<sup>118</sup> For similar ideas on language in the GDR see Alf Lüdtke. “Sprache und Herrschaft in der DDR. Einleitende Überlegungen”, in: *Akten, Eingaben, Schaufenster*, pp.11-26; Jessen, “Diktatorische Herrschaft als kommunikative Praxis”.

constantly confronted with this standardized propaganda, young people might have integrated parts of it in their own interpretation of Soviet reality.

However, the formal and ritualized character of the language clearly contradicted the avant-garde role ascribed to youth within Soviet society and was at odds with the dynamic content of the communist project which gave the whole Thaw period a supposedly vibrant character.

The present study follows up this ambiguity and identifies the strategies used in official propaganda to mobilize youth, despite this highly standardized and ritualized rhetoric. It thus helps to fill a gap in the historiography on youth and the Komsomol in the Thaw period.

Building on recent research, it explores an area of Soviet youth policy that has hitherto been more or less ignored by historians of the post-Stalin era, who have preferred to focus on the non-conformist potential of the younger generations.

# Chapter 1: Fit for Communism? The Organizational Structure of the Komsomol

To understand the Komsomol's role in propagating the communist project, one must first examine how it functioned as an organization and thereby establish its capacity to initiate and direct such a large-scale campaign. Thaw-era rhetoric envisaged a shift of emphasis from the vertical to the horizontal level in order to decentralize ponderous administrative processes and secure the participation of everyone in society. This chapter investigates the degree to which such rhetoric was reflected in the Komsomol's organizational structure and practice of communication in real life. It explains terminology which features later in this thesis. It also maps out the historical and communicative context in which the official version of the past and the eschatological view of the future were promoted by individuals within the youth organization. This chapter explores a question that was never directly posed in Soviet documents: to what degree the Komsomol from an organizational perspective was fit for building communism.

Answering this question is more difficult than it might seem. In order to outline the social and organizational context in which the communist project was promoted, one has to refer to the same sources and rhetorical patterns that were used to promote the communist project itself. Statements about the Komsomol's functioning and the communist project were made in the same rhetorical context – i.e. during Komsomol meetings or in reports and instructions to the higher or lower administrative levels. Therefore, they followed either the ritual of affirmation or the ritual of criticism.<sup>1</sup> This makes it almost impossible to trace a distinction between the normative and practical levels. The evidence in this chapter paints a picture of how the organization was supposed to function and how its functioning was described and criticized

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<sup>1</sup> See also Grützmacher, *Die Baikal-Amur-Magistrale*, pp.35-7.

by individual actors within the system. Above all, such criticism allows us to reconstruct everyday practice within the Komsomol. At the same time, official printed material sheds light on the normative requirements for the Komsomol's functioning.

Together with other instructive literature, the official VLKSM Charter (*ustav*) provides a clear normative picture of the Komsomol's organizational structure. The "guiding principle" was democratic centralism, which combined the concept of horizontal peer-control with a centralized vertical hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> The central component meant that the youth organs were bound by the decisions of higher-ranking organizations, as well as the decisions of Party and state bodies at the same administrative level.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the democratic component emphasized that all Komsomol members should actively participate in everyday procedures, criticize their peers and take responsibility for their organization. Their delegates were entitled to elect personnel to leading positions in the higher-ranking organs, who in turn were accountable to the elective organs on which they depended.<sup>4</sup>

Democratic centralism had been the predominant principle of the Komsomol since its foundation in October 1918. However, a major theme of Thaw rhetoric was an increased focus on the horizontal level. The key idea was to include the broad masses in politics, thereby giving society the possibility – or at least the illusion – of engaging in political decision-making and mobilizing it for the communist project.<sup>5</sup> Attempts to decentralize and downsize administration were promoted widely. Major changes were initiated to streamline the ponderous Soviet administration and make key areas of the Soviet system more efficient

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<sup>2</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.83-4; Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, p.58; see also *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Moldezhi*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.84-5; *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Moldezhi*, p.16.

<sup>4</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp. 85-6; Revesz, *Organisierte Jugend*, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Yoram Gornitzki. "Party Revivalism and the Death of Stalin", in: *Slavic Review* 54(1995), 1, pp.1-22; Hans-Henning Schröder. "Lebendige Verbindung mit den Massen". Sowjetische Gesellschaftspolitik in der Ära Chrusčev", in: *Vierteljahresschrift für Zeitgeschichte* 34(1986), pp.523-60.

and competitive. The economy was to be decentralized via the *sovnarkhoz* reform of 1957.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the structures of the Party and the Komsomol were to be reorganized to make them less bureaucratic and centralized.<sup>7</sup> Khrushchev's reforms generally pursued the goal of fighting bureaucracy and formalism.<sup>8</sup> Although this had been a regular theme in Soviet rhetoric before Stalin's death, these efforts were now set in the context of attempts to come to terms with the Stalinist past. According to the rhetoric, a major feature of Stalinism was its violation of the democratic principle within the Party and the Komsomol. To restore Leninist principles of legitimacy, bureaucrats were to be removed, along with all relics of Stalinist style in the work of the Komsomol. Such relics, documents said, related mainly to formalism and the tendency to rely on numbers rather than caring about people.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter considers the extent to which these general trends of the Thaw can be seen in the functioning of the Komsomol. It begins by analyzing the Komsomol's organizational structure and patterns of communication between various administrative levels, in order to explore the relationship between the vertical and the horizontal dimensions. Secondly, the chapter focuses on the nature and effectiveness of organs created during the Thaw period to strengthen the horizontal level and to ensure mass participation by all members. The third section of the chapter is concerned with anti-bureaucracy and de-Stalinization campaigns within the Komsomol, while the final section looks at the huge reform of the Komsomol's organizational structure that took place between 1962 and 1964. The guiding question is whether all these efforts resulted in the desired decentralization and shift of emphasis from the vertical to the horizontal level. Was the Komsomol fit for communism, as now defined?

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, pp. 67-70; Merl, "Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme", p.226-37.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Boris Meissner, "Wandlungen im Herrschaftssystem und Verfassungsrecht der Sowjetunion"; Graeme Gill. *The Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Houndmills: MacMillan, 1988, pp.58-69.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Kozlov, "Naming the Social Evil".

<sup>9</sup> Gorlizki, "Party Revivalism and the Death of Stalin".

Using normative primary sources together with reports and criticism about general practice, this final section combines the normative and practical levels of analysis, illustrating the actual impact of the changes championed by Thaw rhetoric.

## **Organizational Structure**

The Komsomol's basic organizational formation was established after 1918 during the first years of its existence and remained unchanged until its dissolution in 1991. It was a perfect copy of the Communist Party's internal structure, which is illustrated in the diagram below (see picture 1).<sup>10</sup> Formally, the highest organ of the All-Soviet Komsomol was its All-Union Congress, which set policy for the whole organization. Its decisions were binding for the subordinate organs.<sup>11</sup> An All-Union Congress had to take place at least once every four years. During the Thaw period this rhythm was followed exactly, with the XII Congress in 1954, the XIII Congress in 1958 and the XIV Komsomol Congress in 1962. In terms of numbers, the first two events each assembled around 1,300 delegates, while the 1962 event – held for the first time in the newly constructed Congress Centre in the Moscow Kremlin – was attended by almost 4,000 people.<sup>12</sup> The delegates were elected at regional Komsomol conferences and were supposed to represent the whole membership of the Union.<sup>13</sup> Thus, besides high-ranking representatives of the regional and district committees, outstanding young workers, students

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<sup>10</sup> Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth*, pp.28-9; Kassof, *The Soviet Youth Program*, p.53; Tirado, *Young Guard!*, pp. 178-85.

<sup>11</sup> Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp. 50-1; Fainsod, "The Komsomol", pp.240-61, p.297; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, p.89.

<sup>12</sup> Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp.58-9.

<sup>13</sup> For example, 52 delegates were elected by the regional conference in Cheliabinsk to attend the XIV Komsomol Congress in 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.61-2; see also *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.90-1.

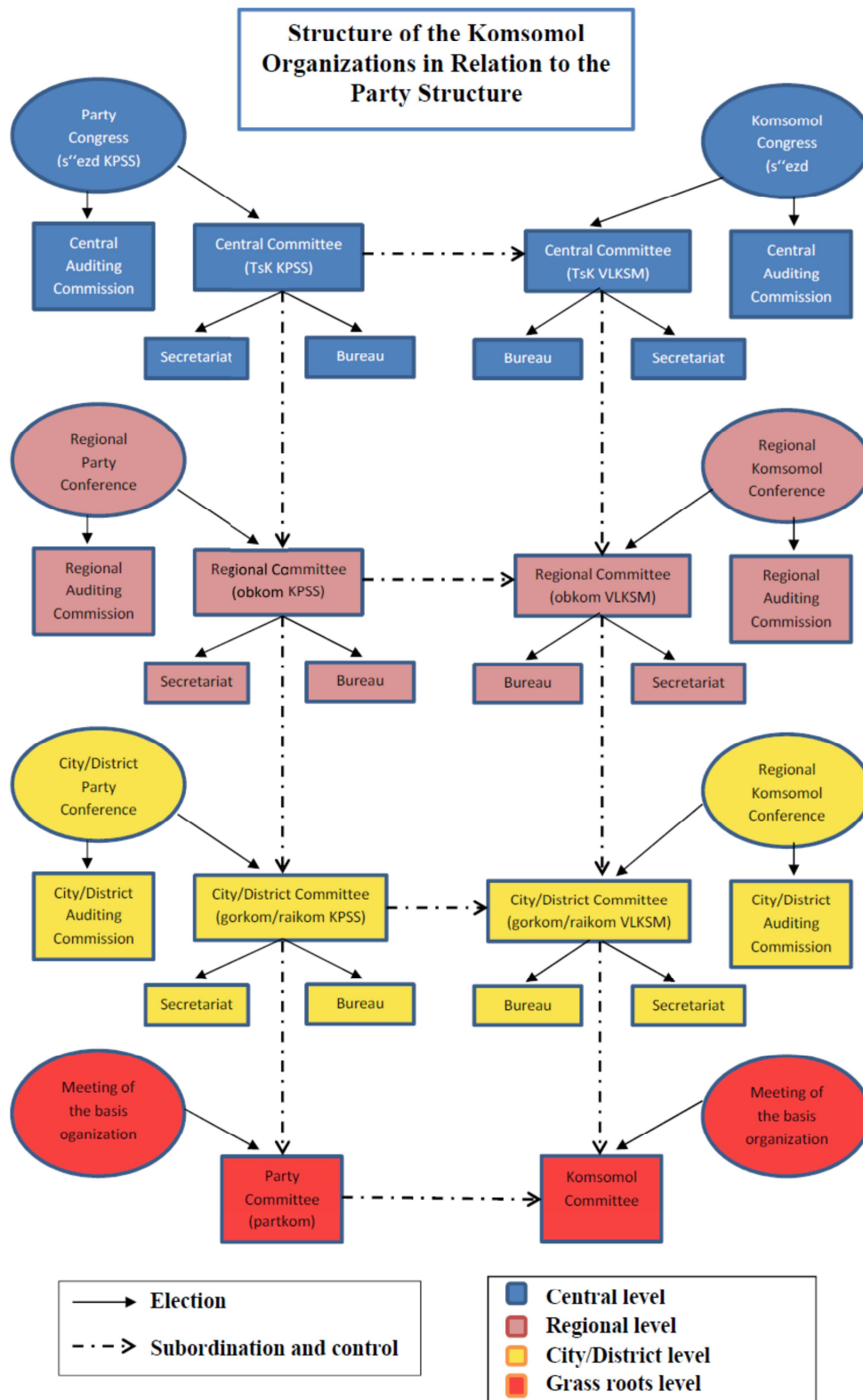
and artists were also sent to the congresses. Upon their return they had to report to Komsomol meetings in the regions.<sup>14</sup>

Mirroring the structure of the Party, the All-Union Komsomol Congress elected a Central Committee (*Tsentral'nyi Komitet VLKSM, TsK VLKSM*) to be the “highest executive body” between Congresses. They also elected a Central Auditing Commission (*Tsentral'naia Revizionnaia Kommissiia*) which was responsible for keeping track of the implementation of decisions and the organization's budget. The Central Committee (CC) was in charge of implementing policy set by the Komsomol Congress, as well as directing the work of subordinate organs. It also represented the Komsomol in dealings with other organizations and institutions and was responsible for the Komsomol newspaper *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and other publications. It had around 150 full members and 70 candidates and generally held two plenary meetings a year.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ilyinsky. *What Is the Komsomol*, pp.50-1; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.82, p.101-2; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.10; TsGA 4034-40-213, p.37.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.52; see also pp. 51-3; Fainsod, “The Komsomol”, p.297; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, p.89; for the plenary meetings see RGASPI M1-6-925, p.44.



Picture 1: Diagram of the Hierarchical Structure of the Komsomol<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See mainly Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp. 50-62; Gill, *The Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet*

During those meetings, the CC elected a bureau (*Biuro*) and a secretariat (*Sekretariat*). The bureau carried out tasks set by the Central Committee during two plenary sessions and was accountable to the CC. The secretariat was an executive organ. Its members, as full-time Komsomol workers, were responsible for different departments: Komsomol organs, work among working youth, propaganda and campaigning, work among rural youth, work among student youth, work among school youth, physical culture and sports, the general department and the administrative department. Although the bureau and the secretariat were separate organs within the hierarchical structure of the Komsomol, their personnel overlapped. According to the *ustav*, all secretaries of the CC were supposed to be members of the bureau of the CC as well.<sup>17</sup>

The organizational structure in the regions reflected that of the Central Committee. A conference was supposed to be held at the regional level at least once every two years. In the regions under study this rhythm was exactly followed throughout the Thaw period.<sup>18</sup> The conference elected members of the regional committee (*oblastnoi komitet, obkom*) for the next election period.<sup>19</sup> Just like the Central Committee, the *obkom* was an executive body but it had significantly fewer members than the Central Committee.<sup>20</sup> They were supposed to organize three plenary meetings (*plenium*) a year, but the two *obkomy* in question usually held eight *plenums* during each election period.<sup>21</sup> As an executive body for the time between plenary meetings, the *obkom* elected a secretariat as well as a bureau. The secretariat of the *obkom* consisted of four full-time salaried regional secretaries – a First Secretary, a Second

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*Union*, pp.30-4, pp.60-9; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp. 83-92; Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth*, pp.28-31.

<sup>17</sup> Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, p. 53; Revesz, *Organisierte Jugend*, pp.34-6; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.89-90.

<sup>18</sup> “O chastnichnykh izmeneniiakh v Ustve VLKSM”, in: *Tovarishch' Komsomol*, pp.215-7.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3152; Postanovlenie XII Cheliabinskoi oblastnoi komsomol'skoi konferentsii ot 7 fevralia 1960 goda, Cheliabinsk: Obkom VLKSM, 1960; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.90-1.

<sup>20</sup> For example, the Cheliabinsk *obkom* elected in 1961 had 88 members, see OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.59-60.

<sup>21</sup> RGASPI M1-6-925, 44.

Secretary, a Secretary for Schools and the Pioneer Organization and a fourth secretary, who in Tatarstan had no specified area of responsibility but in Cheliabinsk was in charge of propaganda and campaigning.<sup>22</sup> There were also around 20 other full-time workers, such as the head of department (*zaveduiushchii otdelom*) and his or her deputies, the head of the general sector, the head of the financial sector as well as various instructors.<sup>23</sup>

As a general rule, the four secretaries were also members of the bureau.<sup>24</sup> The bureau's membership was completed by Komsomol secretaries from city or district committees and the editor or editors of the regional Komsomol newspapers. It had between 9 and 13 members.<sup>25</sup> The bureau met slightly more often than once a month and was responsible for a huge range of tasks: awarding prizes, organizing public events, exclusion and punishment of deviant Komsomol members, etc.<sup>26</sup> It also approved the speech that the First Secretary was to give at the regional Komsomol conference, even offering advice on how to read and pronounce it.<sup>27</sup>

The rural District Committees (*raionnyi komitet, raikom*), the City Committees (*gorodskoi komitet, gorkom*) and their subdivisions and the urban District Committees (*raionnyi komitet, raikom*) all shared the same organizational structure as the central and regional levels. Only the larger city organizations were further divided into district subdivisions, a necessity that arose from the difference in membership numbers. Whereas the Komsomol in big cities had tens of thousands of members, smaller urban units had just a few thousand, which made them exactly the average size for a local organisation (comparable with district size in a big city).<sup>28</sup>

The *gorkomy* and *raikomy* were elected at city or district conferences, which generally met

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<sup>22</sup> TsGA 4034-42-211, pp.1-2; OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.408-9.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3235, pp.17-8, p.367.

<sup>24</sup> Revesz, *Organisierte Jugend*, p.34.

<sup>25</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.409-410; TsGA 4034-42-211, pp.3-4.

<sup>26</sup> For example, see the protocols of the Cheliabinsk bureau meetings in 1956; OGACHO 485-1-2962.

<sup>27</sup> This occurred in the Cheliabinsk bureau in 1906, see OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.7.

<sup>28</sup> The Cheliabinsk Komsomol had between 65,000 and 78,000, see OChAG 485-1-3152, p.4, OGACHO 485-3-8, p.23; for the average numbers which ranged between 2,000 and 8,500 in 1957 and 1958, see OGACHO 485-1-3036; OGACHO 485-1-3164, p.75; TsGA 5361-1-417, p.90.

every two years.<sup>29</sup> They served as the highest executive bodies of the city and regional organizations respectively, like their equivalents at the central and regional level. They also elected city and district committees.

These city and district committees themselves held plenary meetings to set guidelines for further Komsomol work within the district or city, in accordance with instructions from the higher levels. They also elected a secretariat and a bureau.<sup>30</sup> In general, five full-time secretaries were employed in each committee: a first and a second secretary, as well as heads of the school department, the registration department and the organizational department. Additionally, administrative staff such as statisticians and typists worked as full-time employees in the secretariat.<sup>31</sup> Together with other elected Komsomol workers, the secretaries formed the bureau, which was in charge of the everyday business of the committee and made decisions concerning the exclusion and punishment of deviant Komsomol members. It met once every two weeks and its decisions applied only to the grassroots organization in question, not to the whole district or city organization like the decisions of plenary meetings.<sup>32</sup>

The division of labour between the secretariat and the bureau was generally the same at all administrative levels. Besides the organization of conferences, the bureau was generally responsible for taking specific decisions about individuals, groups and subordinate Komsomol organizations. These decisions concerned only the individual or the organization in question and were passed on to them directly. In contrast, the resolutions of plenary meetings

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<sup>29</sup> This was true of the Cheliabinsk and Kazan' city Komsomol conferences (see TsGA 615-6-157, TsGA 615-196; OGACHO 488-8-50; OGACHO 1467-2-15), as well as the District Conference of the Oktiabr'skii District in Tatarstan (TsGA 594-1-339; TsGA 594-1-352) and the District Conference of the Baumanskii urban district in Kazan' (TsGA 181-1-656, TsGA 181-1-692).

<sup>30</sup> For example, see the notes (*stenogramma*) of the plenary meetings of the Kazan' *gorkom* in 1960 and 1961, TsGA 615-6-191; TsGA 615-6-198; see also TsGA 5361-1-336, p.24; RGASPI M1-6-925, p.44.

<sup>31</sup> For example, see TsGA 5361-1-336, pp.104-5.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see the protocols of the Bureau of the Oktiabr'skii District of Tatarstan for 1960, TsGA 594-1-359; see also Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp. 53-4; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.91-2; *Tovarishch' Komsomol*, p.81.

concerned every Komsomol organization in the region. Their implementation was coordinated and overseen by the secretaries. Thus, the bureau can be regarded as the active executive body, taking decisions about particular subjects, whereas the plenary meetings set general guidelines which were monitored by its secretaries. A delegate at a district conference in Kazan' summarized this situation for his *raikom*: "It is essentially only the district bureau of the Komsomol that actually gets any work done."<sup>33</sup>

Only at the grassroots level was the executive body not split into a bureau and a secretariat. The highest body of the grassroots organization (*pervichnaia organizatsiia*) was the meeting of all its members (*obshchee sobranie*). However, rules varied according to the size of the organization. Grassroots organizations could be found on every shop floor, in cultural and educational institutions, offices, in military units as well as in every state farm or any other place where young people were employed or studied. Therefore, the number of members could vary considerably. Organizations often consisted of less than 20 members, particularly in public service, but also in railway maintenance, Soviet institutions of higher education and some smaller enterprises.<sup>34</sup> The number of Komsomol members in most industrial enterprises, as well as most institutions of higher education, was in the thousands.<sup>35</sup> With the permission of the *raikom* or *gorkom*, bigger organizations were allowed to form sub-organizations. Such sub-organizations could be for faculties or years in universities, or for factory workshops and individual farms of a *sovkhoz* or *kolkhoz*. The smallest organizational unit was the Komsomol group, which had to have at least three Komsomol members.<sup>36</sup> The smaller organizations were supposed to hold meetings once a month, whereas the larger organizations had to meet only

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<sup>33</sup> In 1956, see TsGA 5361-1-336, p.45.

<sup>34</sup> There were more than 1,300 small organizations in Tatarstan in 1961, see TsGA 4034-42-207, 35; see also TsGA 4034-42-401, 54; TsGA 4034-42-401, p.54.

<sup>35</sup> The MMK had 4,829 members in 1955 and 7,650 in 1963, see OGACHO 1351-3-1, p.26, OGACHO 1351-3-4, p.38; the ChMZ had over 7,000 members in 1953 and 5,391 in 1963, see (OGACHO 485-1-2566, p.9, OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.38; the KGU had 2,800 members in 1961 and over 4,000 in 1964, see TsGA 6951-1-103, p.11; TsGA 6951-1-115, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, p.93; Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp.54-5.

once every two years.<sup>37</sup> The meetings elected Komsomol Committees for the whole organization and Komsomol bureaus for the sub-organizations, which basically had the same tasks as their equivalents at the district, regional and central levels. If a Komsomol group had less than 20 members, a so-called Komsomol organiser (*komsomol'skii organizator, komsorg*) was elected for one year instead of a bureau, and had to be confirmed by the Komsomol Committee of the grassroots organization.<sup>38</sup>

Some of the larger grassroots organizations had significantly more members than smaller and average-size district organizations. Therefore, they saw themselves as on the same level as the district organizations and demanded the same rights, such as the right to accept new members independently, to expel members and to select and promote Komsomol cadres.<sup>39</sup> In general, organizations with more than 4,000 members were granted those rights,<sup>40</sup> as were certain special grassroots organizations with fewer members, e.g. the four grassroots organizations in Ozersk, a closed town in the North of the Cheliabinsk Region famous for its nuclear reprocessing plant Maiak (which caused a major nuclear incident in 1957).<sup>41</sup> As the Komsomol Central Committee had to approve these rights and the Party Central Committee had to sanction the decision, it was often a long procedure.<sup>42</sup>

It is evident that these large organizations differed hugely from organizations with only 10 to 20 members, which sometimes felt neglected and overshadowed by the large grassroots

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<sup>37</sup> “O chastichnykh izmeniiakh v Ustave VLKSM”, in: *Tovarishch' Komsomol*, p.215.

<sup>38</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.94-5; “O chastichnykh izmeniiakh v Ustave VLKSM”, in *Tovarishch' Komsomol*, p.216; Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp.56-7; RGASPI M1-6-873, 95-6.

<sup>39</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.95-6, see also TsGA 4034-42-406, p.2-3; OGACHO 1468-1-2, 87-8; RGASPI M1-2-459, 19-20.

<sup>40</sup> The KGU, which had slightly more than 4,000 members, received this right in 1964, see TsGA 6951-1-115, p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Although the organizations had less than 3,000 members, they were granted the rights in 1956, see RGASPI M1-6-942, 16-7; for the accident at Maiak see Josephson, “Industrial Deserts”.

<sup>42</sup> For example, in 1963 the CC sent a special brigade to Tatarstan in order to investigate the need to upgrade particular organizations, see TsGA 4034-42-406, p.27, here quotation; *ibid.* pp.1-6; for other examples see OGACHO 1468-1-2, 87-8; OGACHO 1468-1-2, 263.

organizations.<sup>43</sup> Some *raikomy* in Kazan' established special councils (*sovety*) which were supposed to coordinate the work of the small Komsomol organizations, e.g. at educational institutions, railway junctions, commercial organizations and the Kazan' Kremlin.<sup>44</sup>

Komsomol organizations in higher education complained that there was too much control, saying: "Everybody tries to supervise us and questions are asked twice as a result".<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, discussions took place about organizing a city-wide council (*sovet*), which would be directly subordinate to the Komsomol city committee.<sup>46</sup>

This raises the issue of the relationship between the different administrative levels within the Komsomol. If one takes seriously Thaw rhetoric about the Komsomol preparing to build communism, one would expect the grassroots to be the decisive force within the organization. During the Thaw, the grassroots were ascribed a significant role as a "combat assistant"<sup>47</sup> and a "combat collective, full of vitality, with close ties to youth"<sup>48</sup>. They were thought to exert a direct hold over individual members. The idea was that grassroots organizations should form, educate and discipline their members, shape their worldviews and motivate them directly for the task of building communist society.<sup>49</sup> The main focus therefore lay on managing members directly, a task which ranged from recruitment and maintaining contact with non-union youth, to accepting new members into the Komsomol, managing their data, collecting membership fees and eliminating their names from the membership list when they were excluded. It was also the responsibility of grassroots organizations to give individual tasks to new members

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<sup>43</sup> TsGA 615-6-232, pp.26-7.

<sup>44</sup> TsGA 4034-42-401, pp.54-5.

<sup>45</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.109.

<sup>46</sup> This occurred in October 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-406, p.5.

<sup>47</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.112.

<sup>48</sup> RGASPI M1-2-400, p.63.

<sup>49</sup> Ilyinsky. *What Is the Komsomol*, p.56; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, pp.92-3; OGACHO 485-1-3094, 7; OGACHO 485-1-3153, 36; OGACHO 1467-2-4, 32; OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.126.

and control that they were completed.<sup>50</sup> A report on the growth of membership within the Magnitogorsk city organization recognized in 1958 that “young people often judge the Komsomol primarily by the actions of the grassroots organization in which they work, study and live, not only by the glorious deeds of the VLKSM as a whole”.<sup>51</sup> The first secretary of the Central Committee emphasized at a plenary meeting in 1960 that the success of the Komsomol as a whole depended on how decisions taken by the higher-ranking organizations were implemented in the everyday work of grassroots organizations.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this decisive role ascribed to the grassroots, the competences of the lower levels were largely defined and limited by the higher-ranking levels. As this study shall demonstrate, the relationship of dependence was rooted (as in earlier periods of Soviet history)<sup>53</sup> both in the vertical orientation of the Komsomol hierarchy and in the lower levels’ expectation of control and guidance. According to democratic centralism, there were four binding principles that defined the relationship and communication between administrative levels of both the Party and the Komsomol: appointment-by-election in all leading organs from bottom to top (*vybornost’*), discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority (*distsiplina*), periodical accountability to one’s own Komsomol organization (*otchetnost’*) and the binding character of decisions of higher-ranking Komsomol organs (*obiazatel’nost’*).<sup>54</sup> These principles were designed to structure both the vertical and the horizontal levels of communication. This suggests that the leaders of any Komsomol organ were expected to exert control over both the higher-ranking bodies and their own organization. Yet they also faced high expectations about the outcome of their work from the vertical and the horizontal levels.

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<sup>50</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, p.96, see also RGASPI M1-2-459, pp.19-20; TsGA 7425-1-12, p.31; TsGA 7429-1-4, p.6; TsGA 6951-1-12, p.35.

<sup>51</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3094, 7; see also TsGA 4034-42-331, p.65.

<sup>52</sup> RGASPI M1-2-400, pp.61-2; see also OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.128; OGACHO 485-1-3176, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Neumann, *The Communist League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union*.

<sup>54</sup> Revesz, *Organisierte Jugend*, pp.33-4; *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, p.84; *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzza Moldezhni*, p.12.

The first principle, *vybornost'*, was the basis of the Komsomol hierarchy. In theory, those young people fittest for public work were supposed to be promoted to leading positions within the organization. However, Komsomol members from the lower ranking organizations frequently complained that not necessarily the best people were elected but those who had better connections to influential Komsomol or Party leaders.<sup>55</sup> It were the higher Party organs, so the criticism of an anonymous notice at the regional Komsomol conference in Kazan' in 1958, that decided on the election lists, not the Komsomol members. Defending the common practice, a regional Party secretary pointed out that "democracy is always closely linked to discipline; democracy prevails only when it is linked to centralism".<sup>56</sup>

A consequence of this practice was not only that leading Komsomol workers were too old compared to the age group they were supposed to inspire.<sup>57</sup> A huge majority of those promoted to top positions were male, leaving little space for a female cadre to develop. Although the majority of the members were women<sup>58</sup>, only a few were promoted to higher positions. Out of almost 1800 secretaries of Cheliabinsk grassroots organization in 1960, only 530 were female and only a handful of women worked in the leadership of city and regional committees. The secretary of the Komsomol *obkom* who pointed at this evil at a regional plenary meeting did not go further than blaming the low degree of educational work of the Komsomol organizations.<sup>59</sup> The secretary of the Cheliabinsk agricultural *obkom* emphasized that women were equally skilled for leading positions as their male colleagues and quoted an

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<sup>55</sup> Such a case was discussed during a bureau meeting of the Tatar Komsomol *obkom* in 1953, see TsGA 4034-37-5, p.26; for other examples see OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.130-9;

<sup>56</sup> TsGA 4034-40-201, p.132.

<sup>57</sup> So the criticism of a Cheliabinsk Komsomol secretary at an *obkom* bureau meeting in 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.133.

<sup>58</sup> In 1961 more than 121.000 members of the Cheliabinsk regional organization were women and only around 114.000 were men, see the annual statistical report for 1961, OGACHO 485-1-3163, p.1; a similar percentages can be found for the Tatar Republic, see the annual statistical report for 1965, TsGA 4034-42-468, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> OChAGO 485-1-3153, pp.46-7.

example of a kolkhoz where a female secretary managed to mobilize the organization's activity.<sup>60</sup> The first secretary of the Tatar *obkom* confirmed that "our girls often equal men in education, knowledge and in organizational skills, sometimes they excel the so called 'nomenklatura leaders' who see their task only in leading work" and quoted examples of kolkhozes that were led by unqualified men instead of well-educated women.<sup>61</sup> The same degree of criticism came from the Central Committee whose secretaries equally demanded an intensified promotion of female cadres.<sup>62</sup>

The reason for these unequal gender relations, however, cannot merely be found in the low level of educational work. The way how cadres were promoted and the little range that was left for women points at a structural problem of the Komsomol. Careers depended on the ability to create strong and influential networks and those networks were clearly dominated by men. The Komsomol in general can be regarded as a men's organization in which male friendship and patronage often played a more important role than actual organizational skills or ability to leadership. This again points at the conservative character of the Komsomol which becomes obvious not only in its strict hierarchal structure but also in the fact that it was and remained male-dominated throughout the period in question.

In addition to appointment-by-election, accountability was a guiding principle of the Komsomol. Official guidelines prioritized the "periodical accountability of Komsomol organs to their Komsomol organizations",<sup>63</sup> thus emphasizing the horizontal level of control. However, many formal regulations enforced the vertical channel of communication. The lower-ranking organizations had to report frequently on key areas of Komsomol work, such as

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<sup>60</sup> So in 1962, see OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.104.

<sup>61</sup> So in 1963, see TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.38-9.

<sup>62</sup> So the first secretary of the Komsomol CC in 1964, see RGASPI M1-2-459, p.26.

<sup>63</sup> *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Moldezhi*, p.12.

membership numbers; the activities of the Pioneer organization;<sup>64</sup> the number of lectures and talks given within the network of political education; the effectiveness of propaganda in newspapers, posters or on the radio; cultural work; and the propagation of Party and Komsomol decisions.<sup>65</sup> The regional committees forwarded statistical material to the CC, which recorded membership numbers.<sup>66</sup> They also sent reports about their routine activities and major events, achievements and failures in their everyday work, and conferences held in the regions.<sup>67</sup> They gave accounts of their region's economic performance and the Komsomol's role within it, on problems among youth and in Komsomol management, and on the *obkom*'s support for and control of lower-ranking organs. Thus, they transmitted a broad picture of their organization's activity.<sup>68</sup> A formal regulation enforcing the hierarchal stratification of the Komsomol stipulated that lower-ranking organs should present the protocols of their meetings, their work plans and other documents to higher-ranking committees. According to a critical voice in the CC, this practice generated "unnecessary paperwork".<sup>69</sup>

The vertical level was not strengthened by formal regulations alone. Komsomol leaders actively sought the approval of higher-ranking organs, commonly relying on the vertical line of communication rather than addressing issues on a horizontal level. Evidence for this tendency can be seen in the huge number of letters written to superior levels. For example, the Cheliabinsk *obkom* received over 300 letters in 1954 alone, of which almost 250 were answered by the relevant department.<sup>70</sup> Many of the questions addressed to the *obkomy* and the CC were trivial. According to annoyed secretaries, most could better be answered by the

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<sup>64</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2549, pp.1-4.

<sup>65</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, pp.42-9, pp.127-9, pp.137-45, pp.147-57; RGASPI M1-6-839, pp.105-111; RGASPI M1-6-1020, pp.119-125.

<sup>66</sup> For example, see RGASPI M1-6-873, pp.35-8, pp.39-40; RGASPI M1-6-1077, p.186, p.304.

<sup>67</sup> TsGA 4034-37-289, p.2-4; quotation p.4; RGASPI M1-6-850, p.103.

<sup>68</sup> For example, see RGASPI M1-6-873, pp.9-21; RGASPI M1-6-994, pp.217-8; OGACHO 485-1-2576, pp.71-3.

<sup>69</sup> RGASPI M1-6-925, 46; see also *ibid.* pp.45-6; RGASPI M1-6-901, p.22.

<sup>70</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2566, pp.21-2.

questioners themselves.<sup>71</sup> The higher-ranking bodies generally advocated more independent decision-making by the lower levels, admitting that they could not address all issues relevant to youth. The grassroots organizations, on the other hand, offered an appropriate forum for discussing all areas of young people's lives and finding real solutions to individual problems.<sup>72</sup> The lower-ranking organizations agreed that – if applied – a decentralized organization was more effective.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the obligation to report to superior levels, these examples clearly show that the structure of the Komsomol left space for a large degree of horizontal decision-making. The higher-ranking organs actively encouraged their colleagues at subordinate levels to take greater initiative and decide questions more independently. The lower-ranking organs, however, were afraid to make use of this freedom and preferred to rely on approval and support from above. This attitude was certainly strengthened by another principle of democratic centralism, the binding character of the decisions of higher-ranking Komsomol organs (*obiazatel'nost'*). The lower-ranking organizations were expected to follow instructions issued by the executive bodies of higher-ranking Komsomol organizations, which continued to constitute the most substantial stream of vertical communication within the Komsomol. In 1953 alone, the Central Committee wrote almost 60,000 letters to various organizations.<sup>74</sup> A year later, a newly elected secretary of a regional committee in Tatarstan complained about the “storm of paper” which he had encountered in the first weeks of his

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<sup>71</sup> RGASPI M1-6-925, pp.49-50.

<sup>72</sup> The secretary of the Miass *gorkom* in 1963, see OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.59; see also OGACHO 485-1-2555, pp.23-4; RGASPI M1-2-459, pp.19-20.

<sup>73</sup> A representative of a collective farm in the Cheliabinsk Region in 1963, see OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.50.

<sup>74</sup> RGASPI M1-6-925, p.37.

new job.<sup>75</sup> The regional committee either issued the resolutions directly or merely forwarded them from the CC.<sup>76</sup>

The instructions usually gave very detailed orders and specific guidelines. They might contain specific assignments for lower-ranking organs, asking them to focus efforts on certain areas of activity or to supervise particular organizations.<sup>77</sup> The Department for Komsomol Organs at the Central Committee, for example, instructed the Cheliabinsk *obkom* to intervene in the affairs of the Magnitogorsk Komsomol City Committee. The latter, if reports are to be believed, successfully eliminated “the bureaucratic approach” among Komsomol activists in the local metallurgical factory.<sup>78</sup>

The predominance of top-down communication within the Komsomol and the reluctance to rely on horizontal decision-making was also evident in the organization of conferences and meetings in the regions. In the period which immediately followed Stalin’s death, the central level had to decide when and how often conferences of the lower-ranking Komsomol organizations should be held. Even meetings of some grassroots organizations in institutions of higher education had to be approved.<sup>79</sup> Later, the central level only set the framework for Komsomol work in the regions, limiting the number of regional plenary meetings to three per year and city plenary meetings to three to four.<sup>80</sup> At this point, some people called for more independence at the regional level regarding the organization of conferences.<sup>81</sup> However, the practice of seeking the Central Committee’s approval continued throughout the Thaw

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<sup>75</sup> TsGA 4034-37-277, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2554, p.37.

<sup>77</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2549, pp.51-60; RGASPI M1-6-907, p.51-3 and p.61.

<sup>78</sup> See RGASPI M1-6-850, p.103; RGASPI M1-6-873, pp.9-10; for a similar instruction regarding the Cheliabinsk Tractor Factory see RGASPI M1-6-850, pp.104-5.

<sup>79</sup> RGASPI M1-6-850, pp.118-121, p.125.

<sup>80</sup> RGASPI M1-6-925, p.44.

<sup>81</sup> RGASPI M1-6-925, p.50.

period.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the agendas of regional and local Komsomol meetings were framed according to suggestions and instructions from the central level. This can be illustrated by the following example: when the CC planned to hold a meeting in 1963 on educational and ideological work with teenagers, the Cheliabinsk *obkom* decided this topic should be a key subject at a regional plenary meeting; it convened a special informal meeting (*soveshchanie*) involving representatives of all organizations and institutions from the educational and cultural sectors. The topic was also broadly discussed at meetings of city and district committees.<sup>83</sup>

Officially, the main tasks of the regional, city and district committees were to control and supervise the lower-ranking Komsomol organizations. Komsomol workers were expected to show great interest in the activity of the lower-ranking organizations and to control the work of the grassroots organization.<sup>84</sup> This mission led to the following division of labour between the regional and the local levels: major tasks of the city and districts committees included supervising the collection of membership fees;<sup>85</sup> controlling the completion of tasks assigned to individual Komsomol members, secretaries or whole organizations;<sup>86</sup> being informed about the activities of the lower-ranking organizations;<sup>87</sup> giving instructions on current issues and problems and if necessary organizing meetings;<sup>88</sup> detecting and eliminating faults in the everyday work of lower-ranking organizations;<sup>89</sup> and supporting Komsomol committees which were short of qualified staff.<sup>90</sup> The *obkom*'s tasks were similar and consisted of answering letters from Komsomol members and forwarding instructions and material from

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<sup>82</sup> For example, the Tatar *obkom* asked the responsible representative of the Central Committee in 1963 to "allow the holding of the 28<sup>th</sup> regional Komsomol conference" in 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-363, p.35.

<sup>83</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.1; OGACHO 1467-1-2, p.17.

<sup>84</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.131.

<sup>85</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.72

<sup>86</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.131; TsGA 594-1-339, p.7.

<sup>87</sup> TsGA 4034-41-12, pp.32-3.

<sup>88</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2583, pp.39-40.

<sup>89</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2555, pp.34-5.

<sup>90</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2555, pp. 29-30, 34-5.

the central level to the district and city levels.<sup>91</sup> The regional committee was also responsible for training the secretaries and activists of lower-ranking organizations;<sup>92</sup> for organizing seminars and regular meetings for the first and the second secretaries of the city and district committees, propagandists and secretaries of Komsomol organizations in large factories and institutions of higher education.<sup>93</sup>

The lower-ranking organizations deduced from this catalogue of tasks that the higher-ranking organs were not only responsible for supervising and controlling them, but also for everyday assistance.<sup>94</sup> The higher-ranking organizations were held responsible for literally all aspects of young people's lives within the organization.<sup>95</sup> These expectations were shared by the CC, which required the regional committees to be well informed about, and to get involved in, the work of the larger grassroots organizations, monitoring membership levels and the quality of their work. Meanwhile, the city and district committees and the factory committees were in charge of smaller grassroots organizations.<sup>96</sup> The committees received harsh criticism from their superior bodies when they were found to be insufficiently up-to-date about the quality of work in Komsomol organizations within their remit.<sup>97</sup> For example, the committee of the KGU (*Kazanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet*, Kazan' State University) was expected to control and supervise organizational subdivisions, to be informed about what was going on within those organizations, to assist their Komsomol leaders if necessary and to regulate the implementation of decisions taken by the higher Komsomol organs. The committees were

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<sup>91</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2566, pp. 21-2; OGACHO 485-1-2555, p.44-5.

<sup>92</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.98.

<sup>93</sup> For example, see OGACHO 1467-2-4, pp.28-32; TsGA 4034-42-397, 51.

<sup>94</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, 65; OGACHO 485-1-3094, 7; TsGA 7429-1-6, 38-9.

<sup>95</sup> The Cheliabinsk universal department store *Molodezh' prishla v torgovliu*, p.48.

<sup>96</sup> The Cheliabinsk *obkom* in relation to the MMK and the ChMZ; it also organized special training meetings for the secretaries, see RGASPI M1-6-873, pp.9-10.

<sup>97</sup> The Cheliabinsk *obkom* was criticized for being unaware of the poor quality of meetings in the ChMZ, see RGASPI M1-6-873, p.19; the same criticism was voiced by the Cheliabinsk *obkom* about the Magnitogorsk *gorkom* and the factory committee of the MMK regarding particular sub-organizations that were unwilling or unable to organize their basic work, see OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.7; OGACHO 1351-3-1, p.29.

responsible for the academic work and moral behaviour of students, their housing, cultural and sporting leisure activities.<sup>98</sup> When decisions remained ineffective and the higher-ranking bodies showed a lack of care towards the lower levels, the committee was harshly criticized at the organization's conference.<sup>99</sup>

The grassroots organizations frequently complained about the lack of care and assistance they received from the district and city committees. One district secretary described the relationship between the grassroots organizations and their superior city and district committees with the old saying, "the mountain will not come to Mohamed and Mohamed will not come to the mountain". Secretaries regularly failed to visit Komsomol organizations at construction sites or voluntary student brigades.<sup>100</sup> Many Committee members did not even bother to turn up at plenary sessions;<sup>101</sup> no serious consequences were expected even for regular absences. This can be seen in the case of one *raikom* member in Kazan', who declared categorically that he would rather to go to the cafeteria than to the meeting.<sup>102</sup> Other secretaries, however, were unhappy with this state of affairs and preferred, time permitting, to engage more frequently in the work of the lower-ranking organizations.<sup>103</sup>

The higher-ranking organs were generally perceived as passive bodies, whose representatives were lazy, rarely appeared at plenary meetings and showed a complete lack of concern for subordinate Komsomol bodies.<sup>104</sup> Yet this perception was accompanied by some complaints about excessive control and conflicts of competence. A representative of a Cheliabinsk district committee expressed his dissatisfaction at a Bureau meeting of the *obkom* in 1956: "you do

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<sup>98</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, 31; TsGA 6951-1-110, 5.

<sup>99</sup> In 1962, see TsGA 6951-1-105, p.39.

<sup>100</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3090, p.53; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.34.

<sup>101</sup> Thus, only 52 out of 63 members attended the second plenary meeting of the Baumanskii *raikom* in 1960 (TsGA 181-1-642, p.31) and at the fifth plenary meeting of the Kazan'City Committee in 1964 only 250 out of 400 turned up (TsGA 615-6-232, p-45).

<sup>102</sup> TsGA 5361-1-336, p.68.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>104</sup> In a nutshell, OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.8, p.24.

one thing and someone from the higher-ranking organizations says that you have to do something completely different... But after all it is sometimes clearer to us what needs to be done".<sup>105</sup> Higher-ranking committees were criticized for their bad planning, short notice,<sup>106</sup> and for taking over the organization of events which could be organized just as well or better by subordinate organizations. For instance, the representative of a *raikom* in Kazan' blamed the *gorkom* for its half-hearted organization of a parade, arguing that any lower-ranking organization could have done better than driving around a torch in the first secretary's car.<sup>107</sup>

As these examples show, Komsomol activists faced high expectations from both their peers on a horizontal level and the higher-ranking organs on a vertical level. This twofold pressure strengthened the vertical orientation of communication, as both the peers and the higher-ranking organs expected the system to function in a strictly hierarchal way. Visits by higher-ranking committees to subordinate Komsomol organizations also demonstrate the strict top-down principle within the Komsomol. Representatives of the Central Committee made a huge number of visits to the regions of the Soviet Union. According to figures from the mid-1950s, they managed to make around 1,500 visits a year;<sup>108</sup> in 1955 they went on nine official trips to Tatarstan and six to the Cheliabinsk Region.<sup>109</sup> Criticism of their work was limited to the geographical radius, which was described as too narrow, and the assistance rendered, which was described as insufficient.<sup>110</sup>

The *obkomy*, in contrast, were subjected to a huge amount of criticism over their visits to district, city and grassroots organizations. The irregularity of their appearances at the local level was lambasted. Activists at the lower levels, so e.g. a member of a *raikom* Bureau in

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<sup>105</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.129.

<sup>106</sup> TsGA 615-6-157, p.75.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.58.

<sup>108</sup> In 1955 and 1964, see RGASPI M1-6-901, p.102; RGASPI M1-6-1224, pp.1-2.

<sup>109</sup> RGASPI M1-6-901, p.108.

<sup>110</sup> For example, see RGASPI M1-6-901, p.90; RGASPI M1-6-925, 86; RGASPI M1-6-1224, pp.1-2

1956, expressed the “wish that the workers of the regional committee would engage in the work of the Komsomol organization... not only through the records which are sent to them, but by coming more often... they need to become familiar with our district on location and not on the map”.<sup>111</sup> The *obkom* was expected to show some interest in the work of the lower-ranking organizations and to give “ideological directives”<sup>112</sup> instead of “general instructions, which yield little benefit”<sup>113</sup>. Likewise, the attitude of the *obkom* workers during their visits was observed with hostility: a Cheliabinsk *obkom* secretary who spent more time in the local spa than in the city committee during a visit to a provincial town was harshly criticized at the regional Komsomol conference.<sup>114</sup> Other *obkom* workers were mocked for their reluctance to visit rural areas. A milkmaid elected as Komsomol secretary of a *kolkhoz* grassroots organization in Tatarstan described their behaviour at a regional plenary meeting in 1957 as ridiculous, “as though they were scared of getting stuck in the mud”.<sup>115</sup>

Most representatives of the higher-ranking organizations did not visit the grassroots at all, or went only to attend conferences, where they might be attacked for “giving a vague speech” and “saying nothing substantial”.<sup>116</sup> An example from the MMK (*Magnitogorskii Metalurgicheskii Kombinat*, Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works) illustrates this typical situation: the secretary of the factory committee, V. M. Staritskii, who later became the first secretary of the Cheliabinsk Komsomol *obkom*, never bothered to assist the Komsomol group of a workshop even though he knew about its difficult situation. His visit was described as follows: “He was here once, but I would not wish such a visit on your organization.

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<sup>111</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.34.

<sup>112</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.7.

<sup>113</sup> TsGA 4034-37-3, p.36.

<sup>114</sup> In 1960, see OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.19.

<sup>115</sup> TsGA 4034-40-138, p.41.

<sup>116</sup> TsGA 5361-1-336, p.53; see also TsGA 5361-1-422, p.38; TsGA 594-1-339, p.7.

Immediately after his arrival, he called the secretary and without bothering to make any checks or ask us what kind of work would be necessary, he began to give us an earful”.<sup>117</sup>

The secretaries tried to excuse their negligence with ignorance: “why don’t you call up the committee. After all, we don’t know when you are having a meeting.”<sup>118</sup> Others promised to show more presence and some of these efforts had positive results. For instance, at the geological faculty of the KGU the presence of committee members in individual groups was said to have led to greater discipline among rank-and-file members and a more structured working style.<sup>119</sup> Other cases show that the higher-ranking organs were able to render substantive aid to subordinate organizations and help to improve the Komsomol’s work at the lower administrative levels.<sup>120</sup> In one case, the first secretary of the Kazan’ *gorkom* managed to prevent two female Komsomol members from being transported to Chechnya against their will, making arrangements for them to remain in Kazan’.<sup>121</sup>

The available evidence about the structure and methods of communication within the Komsomol provides a picture of an organization which was strictly ordered according to the top-down principle. At its core, the organizational structure was hierarchal and relied on methods of vertical communication. Nevertheless, the binding principles of democratic centralism, as set out in Thaw-era texts, should in theory have given the lower-ranking levels the space to seize more responsibility and decide matters independently. This was not only demanded by official rhetoric, which tried to make the Komsomol organizations fit for communism, but also by individual activists in higher-ranking positions. However, the subordinate levels’ constant expectation that they would get guidance and specific practical

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<sup>117</sup> OGACHO 1351-3-1, p.64.

<sup>118</sup> For example, a committee member of the engineering factory of the Privolzhskii district in Kazan’ in 1957, see TsGA 7425-1-12, p.36.

<sup>119</sup> In 1960, see TsGA 6951-1-94, p.15.

<sup>120</sup> For example, the director of the Chemical Factory in Kazan’ in 1963, see TsGA 4034-42-333, 85.

<sup>121</sup> TsGA 4032-42-196, pp.60-1.

assistance from the higher-ranking bodies prevented the emergence of a higher degree of independence or a shift from the vertical to the horizontal level of decision-making. The regular Komsomol structure therefore remained primarily vertically oriented; it was not able to implement most of the changes demanded by Thaw rhetoric. The arrogant behaviour of some officials from the centre reinforced this tendency: commands went in one direction, petitions and complaints in the other.

### **Extraordinary Organs (*vneshtatnye organy*)**

The Thaw period saw little alteration to the ordinary Komsomol organs. However, it did initiate another form of administration which was widely promoted within the youth organization: the extraordinary organs (*vneshtatnye organy*). These were supposed to support the Komsomol bodies which already existed, in order to bring about “further development of democracy, ensuring the active participation of all members of the public in the administration of public matters”.<sup>122</sup> The Komsomol was to be turned into a genuine representative of the emerging communist society; the extraordinary bodies’ task within this process was to activate public life and help the Komsomol organizations take over key state functions relating to youth policy. They were regarded as heralds of the communist future and their sheer existence demonstrated that “communist self-government was already being implemented everywhere now”.<sup>123</sup> An explicit aim was to involve more voluntary activists in the Komsomol’s work, instead of relying on paid workers.<sup>124</sup> Drawing in a huge number of young people was not only a way to mobilize society for the communist project; it also

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<sup>122</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.118.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.44.

functioned as a form of communist education, which was expected to engender features of the “person of the future” among large swathes of the young generation.<sup>125</sup>

The extraordinary organs were established at the level of city and district committees as additional extraordinary committees or complementary commissions, councils, posts and departments. They were subordinate to the regular Komsomol committees and were expected to support the regular organs in mobilizing and controlling youth. These additional bodies were headed by extraordinary secretaries, inspectors or other unpaid Komsomol activists, who were expected to complement the work of the full-time Komsomol workers.<sup>126</sup> The idea was that unpaid activists should replace paid Komsomol workers in the long run. However, in practice the extraordinary bodies were rather regarded as an additional workforce.<sup>127</sup> In general, the extraordinary organs were supposed to be headed by a balanced mix of educated and working youth;<sup>128</sup> they were directly elected at the grassroots level. The elections to an extraordinary city committee in a town in Tatarstan illustrate the procedure: a special conference of delegates from the grassroots organizations “elected an extraordinary *gorkom* and bureau consisting of representatives from various strata of youth, workers and engineers, physicians and teachers, cultural workers and students”.<sup>129</sup>

Such irregular bodies reached their peak in 1962, when 6,500 secretaries were active in district and city committees all over the RSFSR and 4,500 additional commissions and councils had been founded.<sup>130</sup> The same year, the *obkom* in Tatarstan reported to the Central Committee that 86 extraordinary city and district committees had been elected, while 250

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<sup>125</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.118.

<sup>126</sup> For the various forms see TsGA 4034-42-196, p.118; OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.132-3; OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.24.

<sup>127</sup> OGACHO 1468-2-2, p.112.

<sup>128</sup> RGASPI M1-2-459, p.19.

<sup>129</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.118.

<sup>130</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.130.

extraordinary instructors and almost the same number of commissions were active in the region.<sup>131</sup> Two years later, the number of secretaries had dropped to 67,<sup>132</sup> indicating declining enthusiasm for this form of Komsomol management towards the end of the Thaw period. In the Cheliabinsk Region too, the idea of the *vneshtatnye organy* was met with enthusiasm. In Magnitogorsk alone, three extraordinary secretaries and eight extra departments were established.<sup>133</sup>

The main task of the extraordinary bodies was to mobilize youth's energy for the economy and public work. An extraordinary *raikom* in Tatarstan made 1,500 young workers present "individual plans for participating in the construction of communism" and conducted a raid to expose pupils who refused to attend school.<sup>134</sup> In a rural Tatar district, the extraordinary city committee was able, according to reports, to increase agricultural production by pairing urban Komsomol organizations with agricultural organizations in collective and state farms.<sup>135</sup> All the work of the *vneshtatnye organy* was meant to be based on initiatives emanating from representatives of the Komsomol's active members; they were basically supposed to herald how society would function in communism. Reflecting "Lenin's order that all the Komsomol's work in all its sections should be founded on broad independent activity and initiative", they implemented ideas taken from various grassroots organizations or groups of non-organized youth, always anxious to include as many young people as possible. This work "on a public basis" (i.e. voluntary, unpaid work), carrying out initiatives from the grassroots, strengthened the extraordinary bodies' self-definition as truly communist institutions which

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<sup>131</sup> TsGA 4034-42-322, p.1.

<sup>132</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, p.52.

<sup>133</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.132-3.

<sup>134</sup> TsGA 4034-42-322, p.1.

<sup>135</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.121.

already represented the future shape of society and involved the lion's share of youth in their work.<sup>136</sup>

The *vneshtatnye organy* initiated additional forms of work with the same goals, i.e. to involve as many young people in public work as possible, and to foreshadow how society would function in the communist future. Komsomol organizations at educational institutions established departments for "public professions" (*obshchestvennye professii*), which trained young people for working in public, be it as sports coaches, cultural workers or political propagandists.<sup>137</sup> Other extraordinary subdivisions of the Komsomol organizations were public 'cadres departments' (*obshchestvennye otdely kadrov*). They were in charge of taking care of the needs and wishes of young workers, as well as their ideological and political education.<sup>138</sup>

In fact, the responsibilities of these improvised 'cadres departments' overlapped with those of the regular Komsomol committees and the trade unions, which already had their own, permanent, 'cadres departments'. This might explain why they were not very popular. Extraordinary organs of this type were only established in Tatarstan, not in the Cheliabinsk Region. Even in Tatarstan they only existed in a small number of organizations.<sup>139</sup> Other initiatives, such as the formation of public organizations for leisure activities in the Cheliabinsk Region and an extraordinary department for ideology at a district committee in Kazan', also clashed with tasks already being carried out by the ordinary organs.<sup>140</sup> Reports took care to emphasise that cooperation between regular and 'extraordinary' organs was

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<sup>136</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.130.

<sup>137</sup> See also chapter 3 and RGASPI M1-46-322, pp.27-9.

<sup>138</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.106; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.40.

<sup>139</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.106; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.40; for the trade unions see chapter 2 and Junbae Jo, "Dismantling Stalin's Fortress. Soviet Trade Unions in the Khrushchev Era", in: *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. by Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, London: Routledge, 2009, pp.122-41.

<sup>140</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.80; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.164.

generally smooth and that the ordinary organs would rely on their extraordinary equivalents for problem-solving in their daily work.<sup>141</sup> However, the impracticality of these ‘extraordinary organs’ can be seen in their low level of development, as well as the fact that they were forgotten as soon as Khrushchev had been dismissed. The parallel structure of the regular and irregular bodies left room for many clashes and cases of duplication.

The *vneshtatnye organy* were a decisive step to make the Komsomol of the Thaw period fit for building communism. Not only were they supposed to involve huge numbers of young people in public work, they were also intended to fight bureaucracy and sluggish hierarchies. A clear distinction was drawn between the allegedly inflexible regular Komsomol committees and the extraordinary bodies. The latter based their work on participation by huge numbers of the Komsomol’s active members and would thus be able to focus their attention on small Komsomol organizations and the individual.<sup>142</sup> The bureaucratic style of the paid Komsomol workers was supposed to be replaced by the active work of the extraordinary bodies. A secretary of the Central Committee warned the latter at the Cheliabinsk regional conference in 1961 not to commit the same mistakes as the regular Komsomol leaders: “We have to change the way of working. Today we are not allowed to compete with the *obkom* and *raikomy* in coming up with beautiful phrases; we have to be in the hearts of youth.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the *vneshtatnye organy* were also presented as crucial for “overcoming the consequences of Stalin’s cult of personality and restoring Leninist norms of Party life and principles of collective leadership”.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-196, p.119.

<sup>142</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.119.

<sup>143</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.44.

<sup>144</sup> The keynote speech at the Cheliabinsk regional plenary meeting in 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.130.

## De-Stalinization and Anti-bureaucracy Campaigns

The *vneshtatnye organy* were a short-lived and very limited phenomenon of the Thaw period; they disappeared together with the rhetoric of building communism. However, the motivation for creating them stemmed from the broader context of de-Stalinization and anti-bureaucracy campaigns, which peaked in the years following the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1956 and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress in 1961.<sup>145</sup> In his Secret Speech, Khrushchev claimed that the crimes and excesses of the Stalinist period had left negative traits in the minds of officials in the administration, Party and Komsomol. However, he markedly refrained from condemning the whole period of Stalin's rule. He distinguished between Stalin's achievements on the one hand, such as accomplishing socialism and winning the Second World War, and his criminal deeds on the other hand, such as eliminating the ruling communist elite on unproven charges.<sup>146</sup> This argumentation was continuously repeated by the various propaganda channels which targeted youth. Stalin's image as great revolutionary, mastermind of forced industrialisation and collectivisation and initial follower of Leninist principles was kept intact. However, it was said that he became corrupted by power and developed the harmful cult of personality, which led to "a series of most serious and utterly severe perversions of Party principles and democracy, violations of the revolutionary legality, mass repressions".<sup>147</sup> The first secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, Aleksandr Shelepin, made clear

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<sup>145</sup> For a short overview, see Polly Jones. "From the Secret Speech to the Burial of Stalin. Real and Ideal Responses to De-Stalinization", in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, pp.41-63; Merl, "Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme, 1953-1964", pp.182-203.

<sup>146</sup> Elena Iu. Zubkova. *Russia after the War. Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957*, New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998; Jones, "From the Secret Speech to the Burial of Stalin"; Ian D. Thatcher. "Khrushchev as a Leader", in: *Khrushchev in the Kremlin. Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, ed. by Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.9-25.

<sup>147</sup> RGASPI M1-2-347, pp.65-66; "Pochemu kul't lichnosti chuzhd dukhu marksizma-leninizma", *KP*, 29.3.1956, p.1.

that “the Party criticized Stalin for his deviations, negative qualities and for tolerating serious distortions, not for being a bad communist”.<sup>148</sup>

This distinction was less prominent in regional discussions. The focus was less on Stalin’s personality and more on the disastrous effects of the cult of personality within the ranks of regional and local Komsomol organizations. Only one article in each of the regional youth newspapers dealt with the denunciation of the so-called cult of personality.<sup>149</sup> In contrast, numerous speeches and contributions to Komsomol meetings at the *obkom* level broached the issue of the consequences of Stalinism – in terms of both physical losses and administrative practices within the Komsomol. In particular, after the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress in October 1961, activists were confronted with all aspects of the Stalinist repressions.<sup>150</sup> The First Komsomol Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* gave a detailed account of the unjustified arrests and murders of leading Komsomol activists from the republic during the years in question. He described the atmosphere of this time as “drenched with mistrust, suspicion and bureaucratism”. The results of the personality cult could be seen in the contemporary working style of the Komsomol activists, namely in their “formalism, indifference and disregard for the independence of youth”.<sup>151</sup> In Cheliabinsk, the Party’s representative told Komsomol activists “how dreadfully and to what disastrous effect the cult of personality had impacted on our people and our Party”.<sup>152</sup> But despite the apparent openness on the topic, when someone in the audience asked “how many communists had suffered during the period of the cult of personality in the Cheliabinsk region”, the answer was short and imprecise: “Many suffered”.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> At a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Komsomol in 1957, see RGASPI M1-2-356, p.30.

<sup>149</sup> “O preodolenii kul’ta lichnosti”, *Komsomolets*, 4.7.1956, pp.1-4; “Kul’t lichnosti”, *KT*, 7.2.1962, pp.2-3.

<sup>150</sup> TsGA 4034-42-198, p.5.

<sup>151</sup> TsGA 4034-42-198, pp.43-4.

<sup>152</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.22.

<sup>153</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.72.

In addition to the physical losses inflicted on the Komsomol by Stalinist excesses, the increasing bureaucracy and formalism were also presented as far-reaching consequences of the undesired past. At the central level, Shelepin, then First Secretary of the Komsomol, stated in a speech to a plenary meeting of the CC in 1956 that many faults in the work of Komsomol secretaries stemmed from Stalin's bad influence. He said: "It was exactly during the years of the personality cult that negative methods became ingrained in the Komsomol's work, such as peremptory dictatorial management (*administrirovanie*), bureaucratization of the apparatus... It is no coincidence that malformed (*urodlivye*) phenomena sprouted within the Komsomol, such as covering-up mistakes, palliation (*lakirovanie*) of reality, pomposity (*paradnost'*), making a fuss about nothing (*shumikha*) and whitewashing problems/pulling the wool over people's eyes (*ochkovtiratel'stvo*)... Unfortunately, we have not yet got rid of those deficiencies."<sup>154</sup>

These contentions were repeated in the regional context. Especially after Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956 and after the second assault on the Stalinist past in 1961, young Komsomol leaders were called to "fight resolutely against the reverberations of the past – formalism in work, indifference to people's needs, arrogance and idle talk" – so e.g. the participants of a regional meeting of the active by the first secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* in 1961.<sup>155</sup> The regional Komsomol leaders identified the negative consequences – "blind fanaticism, a lack of faith in one's own strengths, public passivity" – and called for their eradication.<sup>156</sup> This rhetoric prepared the ground for the campaigns against bureaucracy which were an essential aspect of the Thaw period and promoted a critical attitude towards any bureaucratic and

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<sup>154</sup> RGASPI M 1-2-347, p.66.

<sup>155</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.134.

<sup>156</sup> TsGA 4034-42-198, p.43.

administrative behaviour within the Komsomol, as well as in other organizations, institutions and industrial and agricultural units.<sup>157</sup>

A few voices in the regions made the link between de-Stalinization and the fight against bureaucracy explicit. The key note speech of a conference of the Cheliabinsk industrial *obkom* in 1963 argued that the Komsomol could fully engage “in the fight against bureaucracy and red tape, against everybody who slows down our progress”.<sup>158</sup> now that the Party had “decisively put an end to the legacy of the cult of personality”<sup>159</sup>. Bureaucracy and formalism were “echoes of the past”<sup>160</sup> which were criticized in every aspect of Soviet life, but particularly had to be removed from the Komsomol’s work.<sup>161</sup> All Komsomol workers were asked to fight any formalism, “bureaucratic methods” and other “nasty traditions” in their work, as many of them were still inclined to “believe deeply in the power of papers of various sorts” instead of doing independent practical work.<sup>162</sup>

The subordinate organizations blamed the higher levels for producing too many instructions and resolutions, which resulted in “red tape” and hindered their goal of being “the soul of our Komsomol”.<sup>163</sup> The subordinate organizations could not even manage to read them all, let alone act upon them.<sup>164</sup> Besides the sheer number of instructions, the decision-making process of the superior organs was also criticized. The latter preferred to rely on their paid Komsomol workers rather than involving the broad mass of Komsomol activists. They completely

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<sup>157</sup> For recent discussions of this process at a general level in the Thaw years, see Kozlov, “Naming the Social Evil”; Susanne Schattenberg, “‘Democracy’ or ‘Despotism’? How the Secret Speech Was Translated into Everyday Life”, in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, pp.64-79.

<sup>158</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.84.

<sup>159</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.134.

<sup>160</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.134.

<sup>161</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.7-8.

<sup>162</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.360-1; see also OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.95.

<sup>163</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.121.

<sup>164</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.8 or TsGA 4034-37-607, p.57; see also OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.360-1.

ignored the know-how and better insights that were present at the grassroots levels.<sup>165</sup> In 1956, for example, the Tatar *obkom* decided to send a huge number of young agricultural workers into stock-raising without understanding the matter or consulting local Komsomol organizations.<sup>166</sup> In addition, resolutions were written in a general and “superficial” tone. They omitted specific instructions for individual organizations and their particular problems, making them effectively useless.<sup>167</sup>

Despite forwarding a huge number of resolutions to subordinate organizations, the Komsomol committees struggled to control their implementation. Local activists cited examples of Komsomol organizations which had been instructed from above to improve their daily work and show more discipline. Yet everything had remained the same, because no-one had shown more commitment than reading the protocols in order to check for changes.<sup>168</sup> Due to this lack of control, initiatives from the lower levels would often be praised in the papers without necessarily being carried out.<sup>169</sup> The same fate awaited initiatives which were ordered from above without taking into account local particularities and problems. For instance, a rural *raikom* in the Cheliabinsk region instructed *kolkhozy* to form youth brigades for corn cultivation. According to local reports they were working effectively, but when a reporter of the *Komsomolets* checked on-site he learned that they did not exist at all.<sup>170</sup>

In addition, the subordinate organizations had to do a lot of paperwork in order to report on their achievements and failures. They spent hours writing about their achievements and gathering statistical material to be forwarded to the higher-ranking organs. This paperwork

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<sup>165</sup> TsGA 4034-37-2, p.29; TsGA 4034-40-136, p.112 and p.114; OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.129.

<sup>166</sup> TsGA 4034-37-607, pp.34-5 and p. 64.

<sup>167</sup> TsGA 4034-40-201, p.52; see also TsGA 4034-42-447, p.49; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.52; OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.52.

<sup>168</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, pp.95-6; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.41; OGACHO 1467-2-4, pp.154-6.

<sup>169</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447, p.49.

<sup>170</sup> “Nichego polozhitel’ nogo!”, *Komsomolets*, 29.4.1956, p.3.

left them little time for doing actual work. They complained that their task had become churning out words rather than actually engaging in work with youth.<sup>171</sup> A newspaper caricature showed the Komsomol secretary of a factory committee writing an endless series of reports to the *gorkom* and stated that secretaries would “sit from dawn to dusk and prepare reports ... instead of getting any work done” (picture 2).<sup>172</sup> A CC secretary admitted: “we churn out a lot of beautiful words, striking slogans and appeals... but unfortunately do very little.”<sup>173</sup>



Picture 2: “Instead of getting any work done, we sit from dawn to dusk and prepare reports for the *gorkom*” (from the speech of the Komsomol secretary of the Kuibyshev Factory committee, comrade Birial'tsev)<sup>174</sup>

The secretary of the Kazan' city committee pointed out that “the form of composing reports is no form of control”; rather, direct contact between the various administrative levels was necessary in order to guarantee the successful implementation of resolutions.<sup>175</sup> As the foreman of a Magnitogorsk construction site noticed, when figures were gathered by phone or

<sup>171</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.51-2.

<sup>172</sup> “Vместo togo”, *KT*, 17.2.1960, p.2; see also TsGA 4034-40-213, p.36.

<sup>173</sup> At a regional conference in Cheliabinsk in 1963, see OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.53.

<sup>174</sup> “Vместo togo”, *KT*, 17.2.1960, p.2.

<sup>175</sup> So in 1958, see TsGA 4034-40-213, p.36.

letter, there was no proof of their accuracy: “And so we write that we conducted 1,300 lectures, but who can say whether this was really the case or whether the digits just appealed to the correspondent?”<sup>176</sup> The secretaries of the higher-ranking bodies therefore pushed for a return to methods of the revolutionary past, when their predecessors were allegedly able “to take quick decisions” without bureaucratic small talk.<sup>177</sup> Komsomol secretaries criticized their peers for speaking vaguely at meetings instead of reporting specific achievements and failures.<sup>178</sup> Secretaries of the higher-ranking committees promised to react to such criticism. Yet at the same time they defused it by referring to the huge number of instructions they received from above and were obliged to forward, without having the chance to control their implementation.<sup>179</sup> Another excuse was the “lack of elementary culture and discipline” among the subordinate organs, which therefore required close guidance.<sup>180</sup> The subordinate organs would “believe in the supernatural power of paper” and wait for instructions from above, not showing any initiative to work independently.<sup>181</sup> To change this state of affairs, Komsomol activists were urged to use “their own local forces” without waiting for orders and initiatives from above.<sup>182</sup> But despite appropriate training and examples of good initiatives, grassroots secretaries would continue to ask higher-ranking organizations for instructions.<sup>183</sup>

The Thaw period saw attempts to reduce the flood of paperwork. Two Central Committee decisions from 1954 and 1956 were supposed to ensure that Komsomol committees would “engage more in concrete practical matters and do better work regarding the education of youth”.<sup>184</sup> However, instead of reducing bureaucracy, this effort resulted in a tendency to

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<sup>176</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.37.

<sup>177</sup> The Tatar regional secretary in 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-400, p.400.

<sup>178</sup> TsGA 4034-41-12, p.55.

<sup>179</sup> TsGA 4034-40-201, p.140; TsGA 4034-42-401, pp.44-8.

<sup>180</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.51.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.105.

<sup>183</sup> “Za samodeiatel’nost’”, *KT*, 11.1.1956, p.2.

<sup>184</sup> RGASPI M1-6-901, p.22.

replace written reports with phone conversations, oral presentations during plenary or bureau meetings or face-to-face conversations between secretaries of higher-ranking organs and committee members of subordinate organizations.<sup>185</sup> This was supposed to save time, which the responsible secretaries could then use to address more important areas of Komsomol work. Yet written correspondence remained the main form of communication between the administrative levels during the Thaw period, even though some higher-ranking organs reduced their paperwork, sent telegrams or gave instructions by phone instead.<sup>186</sup> It was only in the Brezhnev years that telephone calls and oral conversations began to outnumber written decisions, a development that complicated historical research.<sup>187</sup>

According to Thaw-era criticisms, many Komsomol organizations not only used bureaucratic methods; they also tolerated the “violation of collectivity” and neglected basic Komsomol regulations, such as regular meetings and care for their members.<sup>188</sup> Criticism of a high degree of bureaucracy was common and the key-note speech of a plenary meeting of the Cheliabinsk *obkom*, e.g. accuse particular organizations of being dominated by formalism and leading a “too quiet” life.<sup>189</sup> The Komsomol secretaries bore most of the blame for this deplorable state of affairs. They would often only do their duty, “without being able to introduce a lively, bright and interesting element into the life of the Komsomol organizations”.<sup>190</sup> This bureaucratic leadership model came under criticism and it was thought that “a new type of leader”, closer to youth, was required.<sup>191</sup> Such leaders were expected to command extensive expertise in their work and life, and to be well informed about the needs and moods of

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<sup>185</sup> A call from the Tatar *obkom* to a district secretary, asking for information on the repairs of tractors, see TsGA 4034-37-277, p.5.

<sup>186</sup> TsGA 4034-37-607, p.57.

<sup>187</sup> Nikolai Mitrokhin. “‘Lichnye sviazi’ v apparte TsK KPSS”, in: *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 83(2012), 3.

<sup>188</sup> TsGA 4034-37-3, p.33, see also p.31.

<sup>189</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.381.

<sup>190</sup> “O krasote zhizni”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1957, p.3.

<sup>191</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.134.

youth.<sup>192</sup> They were expected to be highly romantic and enthusiastic, in order to integrate youth into the life of the organization. As an article in the Cheliabinsk youth newspaper pointed out, this was necessary because “only a person on fire can set someone else alight. And anyone who is not on fire is accumulating – that is an iron law”.<sup>193</sup> Individual secretaries who continued to maintain a bureaucratic style of leadership were publicly criticized at Komsomol meetings. A *gorkom* secretary accused members of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* of “bureaucracy in the full sense of the word”, as they would let petitioners wait the whole day in the corridor and instruct the receptionist to pretend that they were absent.<sup>194</sup> Other Komsomol leaders were criticized for not accepting opposing opinions, while the first secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* was accused of being “vain”.<sup>195</sup>

It was rather exceptional for individual Komsomol leaders to be accused of bureaucratic airs, but it was very common for managers in the economy and state institutions to be criticized. Examples of bureaucratic and undisciplined superiors were regularly cited at Komsomol meetings. A secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* spoke about his visit to a factory, where he had found most of the managers drunk. He established that they would skive off quite frequently and address young workers “loutishly”.<sup>196</sup> Criticism was particularly sharp when managers neglected the needs of young workers, disrespected their achievements and did not take their initiatives seriously. The manager of a construction site in Cheliabinsk, for example, apparently ignored all his young workers completely and refrained from organizing any leisure activity for them. He even refused to meet 50 young workers who had come to the site

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<sup>192</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.360-1; “O krasote zhizni”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1957, p.3.

<sup>193</sup> “O krasote zhizni”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1957, p.3; see also OGACHO 1467-2-4, pp.154-6.

<sup>194</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.152.

<sup>195</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.18; see also OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.142.

<sup>196</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2549, pp.11-2; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.10.

as volunteers.<sup>197</sup> Other superiors were criticized for refusing to pay young specialists for the work they had done on pretexts that were not credible.<sup>198</sup>

The newspapers often ran reports about rude officials who completely ignored issues that affected the everyday life of young workers, thereby making life difficult for them. The planners of public transport in Kazan' showed a "heartless attitude to people" in that they did not provide enough buses, so many people chose to walk rather than spending hours queuing.<sup>199</sup> The same "bureaucratic indifference" was encountered by young workers on a construction site in the Cheliabinsk region, where basic services were unsatisfactory. Workers had to wait up to two hours for lunch, which they had to eat with their hands due a lack of cutlery. Some young workers were still living in tents even though autumn was approaching, while the shops did not sell enough bread, let alone warm clothes for the winter.<sup>200</sup> According to such articles, there were many forms of "petty red tape" in everyday Soviet life which needed to be eradicated. For example, directors would not be available to the public, and treatment in hospital was strictly limited by place of residence regardless of where an accident had happened.<sup>201</sup> When young workers argued with a plant manager in Cheliabinsk and tried to stand up for their rights, the bureaucrat would find ways to punish them covertly. He would also react rudely to any suggestion and request. He shouted at a young mother who had to stay at home with her sick child and even made "a blatantly indecent gesture" towards workers who asked him for fair payment.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.116.

<sup>198</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.124 and p.196; TsGA 4034-42-207, p.56; "Shumit movchan", *Komsomolets*, 12.6.1964, p.3.

<sup>199</sup> "Po bumazhke", *KT*, 19.10.1956, p.3.

<sup>200</sup> "Etogo dobrovol'tsy ne zhdali", *Komsomolets*, 19.10.1956, p.2.

<sup>201</sup> "A po kakomu povodu?", *Komsomolets*, 10.8.1962, p.3.

<sup>202</sup> "Shumit movchan", *Komsomolets*, 12.6.1964, p.3.

Even though the Komsomol organizations were called to resist the bureaucratic and sometimes brutal attitude of managers, they were often helpless against the power of arbitrary superiors. Their opinion was not taken into account and decisions made at Komsomol meetings were ignored. One manager stated: “I decide what I want and you can sit until the small hours discussing whatever you like.”<sup>203</sup> The most effective way to deal with stubborn bureaucrats was to use pressure from higher-ranking Party or state organs.<sup>204</sup> When local Komsomol activists at a regional meeting criticized the director of a Kazan’ cinema for her rude behaviour towards young cinema-goers, she was consequently summoned to the Komsomol regional committee, as well as the Party and Komsomol city committees, where “she was seriously reprimanded”. Further consequences were envisaged if she did not show a clear improvement in her behaviour.<sup>205</sup> It sometimes took creative ideas to draw the attention of higher-ranking organs to the bureaucratic attitude of immediate superiors. Young workers at a coke factory in Cheliabinsk had to record the rude outbursts of their boss on tape before their complaint was taken seriously by the factory management. Afterwards, the previously rude superior did not utter any more coarse words.<sup>206</sup>

In many cases, bureaucratic leaders in the Komsomol and in Soviet and economic institutions would try to shirk their responsibility rather than react to criticism directly. One director of a medical institute refused to even enter a discussion when criticized for the poor quality of practical classes.<sup>207</sup> Some bosses went even further. An institute director banned any public criticism of individual lecturers and prohibited the Komsomol from putting up satirical

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<sup>203</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.196; see also OGACHO 485-1-2555, p.26.

<sup>204</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.124 and p.196; OGACHO 485-1-2963, pp.15-6; TsGA 4034-42-207, p.56; “Shumit movchan”, *Komsomolets*, 12.6.1964, p.3.

<sup>205</sup> In 1958, see TsGA 4034-40-201, p.141.

<sup>206</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.214-5.

<sup>207</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.7.

posters in public transport.<sup>208</sup> According to the *Komsomolets Tatarii*, this was a common reaction. When criticized in newspapers, bosses either failed to issue a statement about how they intended to improve their work, or made promises on paper which they would not keep.<sup>209</sup> Some Komsomol leaders openly intimidated anybody who dared to publish critical remarks in newspapers or posters, i.e. they not only ignored criticism, but actively suppressed it.<sup>210</sup> This attitude may well be the major reason why the fight against bureaucracy mainly took place on paper and in contributions to Komsomol meetings.

A specific course of action could only be pursued with the support of higher authorities, so the range of measures taken against formalism and bureaucracy remained very limited. It did not go beyond public criticism of individual or general bureaucratic behaviour. Here again it becomes obvious that the Thaw rhetoric did not correspond to actual changes within the functioning of the Komsomol. Getting rid of bureaucratic methods in work with youth was regarded as a precondition for building communist society, but the practice of the Komsomol in the regions clearly shows that old structures remained intact and young activists were mostly unable to change the rigid system. Criticism of bureaucracy and formalism remained the same throughout the Thaw years; in the end it was integrated into Soviet rhetoric and hence automated (as in the Stalin era). Komsomol activists in the late Soviet period accepted the purely rhetorical fight against bureaucracy as a usual component of their everyday work, just as they accepted the separation of “work with meaning” and “pure pro forma” aspects.<sup>211</sup> The anti-bureaucracy campaigns were certainly an integral part of the Komsomol’s work during the Thaw, but they were ultimately fruitless.

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<sup>208</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.57.

<sup>209</sup> “O faktakh biurkraticheskogo otnosheniia”, *KT*, 8.12.1957, p.1.

<sup>210</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.134.

<sup>211</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more*, p.93-108.

## Reorganization

This section explores yet another desperate attempt to decentralize and streamline the ponderous administration of the Komsomol. The attempt was part of a reorganization of the Party's structure aimed at shifting more responsibility to the lower levels and decentralizing decision-making.<sup>212</sup> This was to be achieved by changing the internal structure, which would no longer follow the territorial-productive principle. The territorial-productive principle had emerged during the early 1930s. It had developed from the organization's original territorial subdivisions, which were then divided by type of productive activity (at the time this was intended to be temporary).<sup>213</sup> Disregarding the two experimental years between 1962 and 1964, the Komsomol and the Party functioned according to this hybrid organizational principle from the 1930s until the end of their existence. The grassroots organizations assembled their members at workplaces or educational institutions, whereas the higher-ranking organs functioned according to the territorial principle, thereby covering all grassroots organizations in a certain district, city or region regardless of the economic sector to which the grassroots organizations belonged.<sup>214</sup>

In the early 1960s, when Khrushchev's dream of building communism in the near future was at its peak, this principle was supposed to be replaced by a structure that would allegedly be more flexible and dynamic. At the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in November 1962 it was decided to create two separate Party organizations, one each for the industrial and agricultural branches of the Party. The second plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Komsomol decided to follow the Party's

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<sup>212</sup> Meissner, "Wandlungen im Herrschaftssystem und Verfassungsrecht der Sowjetunion", pp.151-2.

<sup>213</sup> Ilyinsky, *What Is the Komsomol*, pp.58-61; Revesz, *Organisierte Jugend*, p.33; Meissner, "Wandlungen im Herrschaftssystem und Verfassungsrecht der Sowjetunion", pp.149-50; Schröder. "Upward Social Mobility and Mass Repression".

<sup>214</sup> *Ustav Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Moldezhni*, p.12; *Tovarishch' Komsomol*, pp.87-8; Gill, *The Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, p.61.

example and divide the youth organization into industrial and agricultural branches.<sup>215</sup>

Representatives of the Komsomol from all administrative levels praised this decision. The Komsomol was the “product of the Party” so it “always learnt and learns from the Party in all areas of its activity, including matters relating to the organizational structure of the Komsomol”.<sup>216</sup>

The reform’s inherent potential for decentralization is indicated by the fact that each of the two regions under study dealt with it differently. In both cases, the youth organization imitated changes in the regional Party structure. In the Cheliabinsk Region, the whole Komsomol organization was divided in two separate units, with independent hierarchal structures and separate leadership bodies to administer the industrial and agricultural organizations. In Tatarstan, on the other hand, the Komsomol organization was formally divided into two branches (*otdely*) but effectively remained under the leadership of one single regional committee with subordinate organs at the district, city and local levels.

In late 1962, the plenary meeting of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* decided to establish two organizational bureaus (*orgburo*). These were supposed to outline the new structure of the Komsomol organizations and prepare for conferences at which the new personnel of the leading organs would be elected. The industrial *orgburo* was led by the first secretary of the *obkom*, N.I. Sonnov. Its eight other members were mainly secretaries of the regional and city committees. Meanwhile, the planning body for the agricultural organization consisted of seven members who were mostly *obkom* secretaries and instructors, as well as members of subordinate planning bodies. The members of the *orgburo* were later confirmed to be members of the industrial and agricultural regional committees. It was emphasized that the

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<sup>215</sup> Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, pp.77-81; Merl, “Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme”, pp.247-9; OGACHO 1467-1-17, 23.

<sup>216</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-14, pp.16-7.

old organizational structure would remain in place until the new organs took over. Everyday tasks, such as annual statistical reports or the submission of membership fees, were to be fulfilled regardless of the degree to which the organization in question was affected by the reorganization.<sup>217</sup>

The reforms were wholeheartedly implemented in the Southern Urals and warmly welcomed as “wise decisions of the Party” and “guidelines for combat action”.<sup>218</sup> Yet they had much less impact on the organizational structure in Tatarstan. Although “there were basically two Komsomol organizations, one for agriculture and one for industry”,<sup>219</sup> they were still regarded as “one single regional Komsomol organization” headed by “one single *obkom* VLKSM”.<sup>220</sup> The industrial branch of the Komsomol remained “essentially without changes”.<sup>221</sup> However, the rural structure was reorganized in so-called *kolkhoz-sovkhov* administrations.<sup>222</sup> The regional youth newspaper *Komsomolets Tatarii* barely reacted to the changes and featured only one article which casually mentioned the new structure.<sup>223</sup> The Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets*, in contrast, printed several articles in late 1962 and throughout 1963 describing the content and effect of the reforms.<sup>224</sup>

During the first conference of the agricultural Komsomol organization in the Cheliabinsk Region in 1963, an instructor of the Central Committee praised the establishment of the new bodies as an event of great historic significance, on a level with the foundation of the

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<sup>217</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.334-8, p.371, pp.378-9; “V obkome VLKSM”, *Komsomolets*, 26.12.1962, p.1.

<sup>218</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.58.

<sup>219</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, p.49.

<sup>220</sup> TsGA 4034-42-363, p.2.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>223</sup> “A u vas est’ VOSKh?”, *KT*, 11.10.1963, p.2.

<sup>224</sup> “V obkome VLKSM”, *Komsomolets*, 26.12.1962, p.1; “Predstraivat’sia i rabotat’”, *Komsomolets*, 20.1.1963, p.2; “General’naia rekonstruktsiia”, *Komsomolets*, 25.1.1963, p.2; “Sovet sekretarei”, *Komsomolets*, 14.8.1963, p.3.

Komsomol itself.<sup>225</sup> The need for the reform was explained by the immense growth of the Soviet economy, which a single Party organization could not cope with. Moreover, it was hoped that altering the system of governance would result in Leninist principles of leadership being re-established, as opposed to Stalinist-style dictatorial rule.<sup>226</sup> The most commonly cited reason for the reform was the possibility of concentrating all resources on one area without being distracted by another. A secretary of a small city committee in Tatarstan expressed his optimism, arguing that Komsomol leaders would be able to work more efficiently and become experts in their realm of responsibility thanks to the reform.<sup>227</sup>

The initiators of the reform thus set the ideological tone and promoted the reorganization as a way to really improve how the Komsomol functioned. They traced the reorganization rhetorically back to Lenin and the first secretary of the Tatar *obkom*, for example, presented it as a set of measures which were “steeped in Leninist spirit, Leninist ideas and Leninist wisdom from start to finish”.<sup>228</sup> The aim was “to make a worthy contribution to the common task of building communist society”.<sup>229</sup> Looking at the comments and expectations of regional and local Komsomol activists, it is clear they expected major changes in the everyday work of their organizations, as well as a dynamic boost which would stimulate their activity and shape it in line with the ideological standards of the Thaw.

Besides streamlining the administration, the reform was expected to turn the Komsomol organizations into places where the new citizens of communist society could be successfully educated.<sup>230</sup> The activists who commented on the reorganization expected it to result in an

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<sup>225</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.31.

<sup>226</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.269.

<sup>227</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, p.53.

<sup>228</sup> The First Secretary of the Tatar Komsomol *obkom*, see TsGA 4034-42-331, p.2.

<sup>229</sup> “Sovet sekretarei”, *Komsomolets*, 14.8.1963, p.3; see also “V obkome VLKSM”, *Komsomolets*, 26.12.1962, p.1.

<sup>230</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.18; TsGA 4034-42-363, p.1, p.11.

improved and more straight-forward Komsomol structure, which would “create new opportunities for more solid and systematic management of industry, the building sector and agriculture”.<sup>231</sup> Articles in the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* emphasized that the reform would help the Komsomol organizations “to be closer to production”<sup>232</sup> and that Komsomol activists should “by all means increase the role of Komsomol members in productive processes”<sup>233</sup>. In some organizations the reform was said to have resulted in economic growth. For instance, the production of milk and meat allegedly rose in the Sosnovskii Productive Administration due to the restructuring of the Komsomol; the reduction of formalism and bureaucracy had revived socialist competition, leading to higher production.<sup>234</sup>

Another area in which the reform was supposed to prepare the Komsomol for life under communism was the fight against formal relations between the higher-ranking organs and the young masses. The key-note speaker at the first conference of the agricultural Komsomol organization in Cheliabinsk expressed his hope that this would help to “eliminate the dissipation of energies and the campaign-like character of our work”.<sup>235</sup> The tone was again set by the CC of the Komsomol, whose First Secretary, Sergei Pavlov, stressed the importance of “qualitative changes in ideological work”. In the past Pavlov had suffered from “empty templates and backwardness”, which “to a great extent can be explained by the territorial structure of the leadership of the Komsomol organizations”.<sup>236</sup>

Leading Komsomol activists in the regions repeated this argument. The secretary of a city committee in the Cheliabinsk Region, for example, argued that the essence of the reorganization lay “not in a change of labels and not only in unification according to the

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<sup>231</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-13, p.28; see also TsGA 4034-42-331, p.2.

<sup>232</sup> “General’naia rekonstruktsiia”, *Komsomolets*, 25.1.1963, p.2.

<sup>233</sup> “Peredstraivat’sia i rabotat”, *Komsomolets*, 20.1.1963, p.2.

<sup>234</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.13.

<sup>235</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-17, p.22; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.38.

<sup>236</sup> RGASPI M1-2-439, pp.59-60.

productive principle”.<sup>237</sup> On the contrary, so another voice in Tatarstan, the reorganization was “a determined fight in the name of solidity, efficiency, profundity and quest, against formalism, cheap propaganda and bragging” which still existed in the work of the Komsomol organizations.<sup>238</sup> The regional Komsomol leaders presented the reform as a unique chance to eliminate mistakes in their own working style and leadership, get rid of any formal and atrophied forms of work with youth and thereby achieve a more suitable style for leading contemporary youth and fulfilling their tasks in the communist project.<sup>239</sup> Statements made at the central Komsomol level were less explicit about the roots of the formal and bureaucratic style within the Komsomol hierarchy. However, the message was understood in the regional organizations, where speakers identified Stalin’s personality cult as the major obstacle which had to be overcome in order to prepare the Komsomol for its role in building communism.<sup>240</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Stalin was mentioned, Komsomol activists concurred that a change in leadership style was crucial for the success of building communism and should start within the *obkom*.<sup>241</sup> If the regional committee refrained from issuing dozens of unrealizable resolutions and awarding certificates en masse by post, so two *gorkom* secretaries of the Cheliabinsk Region, its work would become less abstract and more appealing to the lower-ranking Komsomol organizations.<sup>242</sup> Citing Pavlov’s speech, the regional Komsomol leaders emphasized the importance of good, direct and energetic leadership to the success of the reorganization. Substance (*konkretnost’*) was the main quality that was supposed to replace formalism and the tendency to show off among Komsomol leaders.<sup>243</sup> It was emphasized that “not even the most perfectly structured Komsomol organs” could produce the desired results

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<sup>237</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.59.

<sup>238</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, p.5.

<sup>239</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-331, p.54; TsGA 4034-42-363, p.9; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.87.

<sup>240</sup> TsGA 4034-42-363, p.1; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.346.

<sup>241</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.35.

<sup>242</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.10, p.35.

<sup>243</sup> The first secretary of the Cheliabinsk industrial *obkom*, acknowledging his own role in setting an example for good leadership, see OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.29, p.31, p.66.

“if the leadership of the VLKSM committees does not consist of energetic organizers of youth, who are very familiar with industrial or agricultural production, the real economy”.<sup>244</sup> Some criticism was occasionally expressed about continuing formalism,<sup>245</sup> but many Komsomol leaders reported the success of the reform in their organizations. They emphasized that their work was now guided by “more creativity and substantive efficiency”.<sup>246</sup> The regional youth papers followed this point of view.<sup>247</sup> One article illustrated the successful work of the Komsomol organization on a state farm in Tatarstan, showing that non-abstract leadership and organization inevitably led to higher productivity.<sup>248</sup>

The restructuring of the Komsomol’s work, starting at the higher-ranking levels and including most leaders at the subordinate levels, was generally said to have had a huge effect on the grassroots. The tightening of the vertical structure was presented as a key precondition for the smooth implementation of Party and government directives.<sup>249</sup> A major objective of the reform was to “facilitate the mobilization of activity among the Komsomol grassroots organizations, increase their pugnacity and greatly improve their political work”.<sup>250</sup>

Some activists ascribed even more significance to reorganization, as it was also supposed to “light a bright flame”<sup>251</sup> – so a Komsomol secretary of a Cheliabinsk factory organization – when it came to organizing leisure activities. The secretary of a mill factory in Cheliabinsk hoped that the reform would improve the dancing skills of her fellow Komsomol members and prevent them from “dancing like goats” in the future.<sup>252</sup> Komsomol leaders were called upon to understand the reform “in the sense of a restructuring of our Komsomol work with

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<sup>244</sup> TsGA 4034-42-363, p.9; see also OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.291; OGACHO 1468-1-13, pp.40-1.

<sup>245</sup> So e.g. TsGA 615-6-232, p.26.

<sup>246</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.19; see also TsGA 4034-42-397, p.54.

<sup>247</sup> “Sovet sekretarei”, *Komsomolets*, 14.8.1963, p.3.

<sup>248</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.31, p.66; “Po-novomu”, *KT*, 17.2.1963, p.1.

<sup>249</sup> For example, OGACHO 1468-1-13, p.28.

<sup>250</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.291.

<sup>251</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-17, p.6.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

every young worker”.<sup>253</sup> Therefore, they were expected to exert direct influence on young people within their realm of responsibility, in order to increase labour discipline and reduce instances of drinking at work.<sup>254</sup>

The reforms were supposed to “involve the broad mass of young people, the whole league of youth”<sup>255</sup> in the Komsomol’s work, thereby mobilizing them to participate in the communist project and base the Komsomol’s work on the majority of society.<sup>256</sup> Profiling itself as a mass organization, the Komsomol used the reorganization as yet another means to show that it was eligible to participate in the communist project. The reform was supposed to prepare its organizational structure for the tasks ahead. However, the fact that the structural reorganization of the Party and Komsomol was reversed as soon as Khrushchev left office demonstrated the failure of this attempt.

Discussions about reunifying the industrial and agricultural branches of the Komsomol paid no attention to the fact that the initial reorganization had not lived up to expectations and had failed to make the Komsomol fit for the communist project. When the reform was reversed at the turn of 1964–1965, practical and organizational reasons were given. The failure of the project at a basic conceptual level was not acknowledged. The ideological dimension, which had been so crucial in the argumentation two years before, was overlooked almost completely. Instead of praising the prospect of the state and its organs withering away, the new statements now criticized the fact that state organs had lost importance as a consequence of the reform.<sup>257</sup> Using “a strict scientific approach”,<sup>258</sup> the Party and Komsomol leadership concluded that,

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>254</sup> TsGA 4034-42-363, p.9; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.296.

<sup>255</sup> TsGA 4034-42-363, p.2; see also TsGA 615-6-217, p.15; OGACHO 485-1-3219, 354; OGACHO 1468-1-13, p.46.

<sup>256</sup> “Sovet sekretarei”, *Komsomolets*, 14.8.1963, p.3.

<sup>257</sup> The First Secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom*, see OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.8.

<sup>258</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.7.

despite everybody's efforts, the reform had "caused many difficulties and mistakes" and the drawbacks had "begun to outweigh the advantages".<sup>259</sup> The keynote speech at the reunifying plenary meeting of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* stressed the need to get rid of "reforms which were badly thought through, carelessly calculated and virtually untested in advance", while also highlighting the ability of the Party and the Komsomol to transform and adapt to contemporary circumstances.<sup>260</sup>

Opinion in the regions clearly reflected the speech which Sergei Pavlov gave at the plenary meeting of the Komsomol Central Committee on 3 December 1964.<sup>261</sup> Pavlov called for the re-establishment of the territorial-productive principle in the Komsomol's structure and the reunification of the industrial and rural organizations.<sup>262</sup> The Komsomol thus echoed developments in the Party, which underwent reunification in late 1964.<sup>263</sup> The regional committees of the Komsomol were urged to hold reunifying conferences in January and February 1965, where new reunited committees were to be elected.<sup>264</sup> The reunification of the two Komsomol branches in Tatarstan had to wait until March.<sup>265</sup> However, the regional leadership in Cheliabinsk was keener to re-establish the former order. At a meeting of the regional bureau on 16 December 1964, it was decided to hold a reunifying conference the following day.<sup>266</sup> During the conference, another organizational bureau was chosen, which had to prepare a single regional conference for the election of the new and unified regional committee.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.8.

<sup>260</sup> OGACHO *ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>261</sup> RGASPI M1-2-459, p.3.

<sup>262</sup> RGASPI M1-2-457, p.3.

<sup>263</sup> Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, pp.77-81.

<sup>264</sup> RGASPI M1-2-459, p.4; RGASPI M1-2-459, p.28.

<sup>265</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447.

<sup>266</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-5, pp.419-20.

<sup>267</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.1, see also p.11.

The main justification for the reunification was the sharp split in the everyday work of the two Komsomol branches. This divide had “become an involuntary hindrance to the development of close and friendly relations, the exchange of experiences and consistent mutually fruitful conversations between the youth of the city and the youth of the countryside”.<sup>268</sup> The first secretary of the Cheliabinsk industrial *obkom* had claimed that the separation “on no account implied separating rural Komsomol members from Komsomol members in industry”.<sup>269</sup> However, the general picture to which speakers in late 1964 referred was that of two strictly separated organizations. Contacts and relations between them were rather formal. According to an assessment that took place in Cheliabinsk after the two organizations had been reunified, the restructuring “resulted in weaker relations between the working class and the kolkhoz peasantry”.<sup>270</sup>

Outwardly, however, beneficial cooperation had been emphasized between 1962 and 1964. The discussions ranged from aspects of ideological and cultural work,<sup>271</sup> to the work of the “Komsomol projectors”,<sup>272</sup> the international youth movement<sup>273</sup> and organizational questions such as the payment of Komsomol secretaries<sup>274</sup>. At plenary meetings of each branch, the first secretary of the other branch’s committee was present and gave a speech which stressed the good cooperation between the two committees; the first secretary would pass on the regards of his organization to assembled Komsomol members.<sup>275</sup> Yet the ineffectiveness of this formal and merely rhetorical cooperation became the focal point of criticism about the division of the rural and industrial branches in late 1964. Not only had the restructuring

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<sup>268</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.10.

<sup>269</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.29.

<sup>270</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.8.

<sup>271</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3227.

<sup>272</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3231; OGACHO 485-1-3232.

<sup>273</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-1, pp.1-3.

<sup>274</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3228.

<sup>275</sup> The first secretary of the Cheliabinsk agricultural *obkom* at plenary meetings of the industrial *obkom*, see OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.39; OGACHO 1467-2-1, p.72.

underachieved economically and failed to result in improved participation by the Komsomol,<sup>276</sup> it had also created confusing leadership processes, particularly in regard to trade, education, provision of services and healthcare. The key-note speech at the reunifying conference of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* held the reorganized structure responsible for the bad performance of rural Komsomol organizations, in particular, in their cultural work and the organization of sports facilities and events.<sup>277</sup> This failure was partly due to a deterioration in the material supply to rural areas; urban Komsomol organizations had previously supported the cultural activity of their rural counterparts.<sup>278</sup>

The re-reorganization was supposed to focus attention on individual members in various specific aspects of Komsomol work.<sup>279</sup> The key-note speech at the reunifying conference of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* expected the grassroots organizations to become “the centre of the [Komsomol’s] entire work with youth”.<sup>280</sup> But the first reform had caused the number of Komsomol organizations in rural areas to double, resulting in a decline in leadership and internal discipline.<sup>281</sup> Therefore, Komsomol members allegedly welcomed the re-establishment of unity within the Komsomol warmly. A young female teacher from one rural region was happy about the changes and commented on them with the words “come on, let’s merge”.<sup>282</sup>

The rhetoric of fighting formalism and bureaucracy, which had been significant in the introduction of the reform, also figured prominently in discussions about the reunification. The first regional secretaries in both Tatarstan and in Cheliabinsk underlined the importance

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<sup>276</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.11.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., pp.7-10.

<sup>278</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447, p.2.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p.27; OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.14.

<sup>280</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.14.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>282</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447, p.2.

of the reunification, which would result in the “improvement” of their work.<sup>283</sup> Komsomol members were urged to “resolutely expel cheap parade propaganda and bragging, paper shuffling and long-winded to-ing and fro-ing from the work practice of the Komsomol organs”.<sup>284</sup> The fight against formalism, however, figured less prominently at the end of the Thaw period than during the peak of Thaw rhetoric in the early 1960s. Thus, the alternations in the organizational structure of the Komsomol seem to suggest not only a formal change, but a break in the rhetoric about the communist project; they show that Thaw rhetoric was slowly ebbing away at the turn of 1964-1965.

The discussions about the reorganization and reunification of the Komsomol organs show the arbitrariness of Soviet rhetoric. References to basic ideas of the communist project, such as streamlining administration and fighting bureaucracy, could be used to support two totally contradictory points of views. The arbitrary and unstable nature of the rhetoric raises the question of the degree to which it actually affected the work of Komsomol organizations and activists, and the degree to which it merely provided another source of empty phrases.

Looking at the organizational structure and the alterations it underwent during the Thaw period, it is clear that greater significance was attached to promoting the communist project than to actually bringing about changes. All the areas in which the Komsomol’s work was supposed to improve in preparation for its future role in communism remained basically unchanged.

The hierarchal structure was followed just as strictly as before. Attempts to decentralize the administration and strengthen the horizontal level of communication and control were fruitless due to expectations and common practice at lower- and higher-ranking levels. The extraordinary bodies which were introduced to break up the top-down dimension failed to

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p.48; OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.13.

<sup>284</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-3, p.13; see also TsGA 4034-42-447, p.48.

acquire significant influence on the Komsomol's hierarchal structure. Attempts to eliminate formal and bureaucratic attitudes within the organization, as well as in other areas where young people had contact with the Soviet state, did not bring about the expected improvements. Komsomol leaders and managers continued to hide behind empty phrases and disrespect the needs of their subordinates. Equally unsuccessful was the last, radical step to reform the whole organization and make it more efficient and less bureaucratic. The reorganization of the Komsomol was short-lived and was reversed as soon as the Thaw period came to an end with Khrushchev's dismissal in late 1964. The positive effect that had been attributed to the reform was then denied; it seems to have existed only in the manuscripts of speakers at Komsomol meetings.

The reorganization was therefore futile, as were other attempts to strengthen the horizontal level, decentralize the ponderous administration and provide appropriate structures for mass participation by the young generation in the communist project. The subordinate organs expected to be guided and controlled by the higher-ranking bodies and to receive concrete assistance in their everyday work. This shattered the reformers' hopes of strengthening the horizontal level in order to make administration within the Komsomol more decentralized and effective – not to mention democratic. The organizational structure remained just as strictly top-down as it had been during Stalinism. The extraordinary organs were another failed attempt to engender mass participation in the Komsomol's work and decentralize administration. In practice, it soon became clear that they produced chaos, because they often overlapped with the work of regular bodies. Consequently, they were immediately forgotten when the reforms of the Thaw ceased after Khrushchev's dismissal.

The exposure of Stalin's cult of personality was a new phenomenon, but it followed in a long tradition of criticizing highly bureaucratized administration in the Soviet Union. The attempts

described above were supposed to add zest to administrative processes, but they eventually fizzled out and were only pursued formally. Instead of rejuvenating administrative practices through novel ideas, novel ideas became entangled with bureaucratic practices and became routine. The reorganized structure of the Komsomol shared the same destiny as the extraordinary bodies. Neither could bring about clear changes, so they were quickly forgotten after the end of the Thaw period. The Komsomol's top-down structure and bureaucratic style of administration remained dominant throughout the years in question. Thus, the Komsomol was not well prepared to become the main agency in building communist society from an organizational point of view. Despite aiming to spearhead a radically new, rational and efficient approach to bureaucracy, it became sucked into that bureaucracy. In no way was it suitable for building communism of the kind envisaged in political rhetoric. The next chapters shall consider the ideas contained in the rhetoric and how they were propagandized among youth during the Thaw.

## Chapter 2: Promotion of the Heroic Past

Having described the organizational framework within which the communist project was promoted, this thesis shall now focus on the project's content and the strategies employed by the Komsomol to disseminate its ideas amongst youth. Propaganda and campaigning were the main vehicles used to define and promote the rhetoric of the project. The main types of propaganda which the Komsomol used for this purpose were newspapers, speeches (*doklady*), posters, discussion sessions and evenings on certain topics. Political and ideological issues were also discussed in individual Komsomol groups and within the political network run by the Komsomol. As shown in this and subsequent chapters, the communist project in all its dimensions was promoted not only via written and oral propaganda, but also via campaigning, rituals, social practices and the use of public space.

When it came to the historical dimension of the communist project, the main rallying cry of Thaw propaganda was a call for “education based on revolutionary and labour traditions” (*vospitanie na revoliutsionnykh i trudovykh traditsiakh*). As the years passed, the distance separating the life of the young generation from heroic periods of the past became greater. Therefore, celebration of direct personal experience had to be replaced by the propagation of revolutionary traditions inherited from earlier generations. The “art of storytelling” which was applied to promote the heroic past mainly took place on a rhetorical level; it also involved personalizing history and using rituals and public space to stage the official version of history.<sup>1</sup> Young people were supposed to “know and understand well” history,<sup>2</sup> developing a “revolutionary pathos”<sup>3</sup> which would help them to appreciate the achievements of previous generations. The focus lay on imparting a specific official version of the heroic past to the

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<sup>1</sup> On the October Revolution, see Frederick C. Corney. *Telling October. Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, quotation p.201.

<sup>2</sup> TsGA 4034-42-291, p.55; see also TsGA 4034-42-397, pp.116-7; OGACHO 485-1-3228, pp.74-5.

<sup>3</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.16.

younger generation, thereby hardening them (*zakalyvat'*) for their present and future tasks and restoring the heroic attitude of the previous generations.<sup>4</sup>

CC statements set the tone for promoting the heroism of previous generations and their willingness to suffer for the sake of future political and social achievements. It was pointed out that new Komsomol members were too young to have experienced “the rough school of the revolutionary fight and the toughness which fell to the elder generation’s lot”. Many young people were considered spoiled by improved standards of living and overprotective parents. As young people had never experienced any real difficulties in their lives, they would give up when facing the first inconvenience.<sup>5</sup>

Regional speakers picked up this argument. They stated that many young people “could not clearly imagine the living history of the people, their experience of hard fighting and the price paid for the great victories”;<sup>6</sup> having grown up “in warm and cosy conditions, they were not fit for any life-threatening hardship or for overcoming any difficulties”.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, many teenagers would “yield to difficulties” when confronted with the slightest challenge and were reluctant to exchange the advantages of the present-day for the hardships of the revolutionary period.<sup>8</sup> They would show “parasitical tendencies” and would “acquire their rights well, but forget about their duties to society and demand a lot from the state while giving little back”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Iushkova, *Deiatel'nost' partiinykh i komsomol'skikh organizatsii Urala po vospitaniuu rabochei molodezhi na revoliutsionnykh, boevykh i trudovykh traditsiakh*.

<sup>5</sup> First CC secretary A.N. Shelepin, at the XIII Komsomol Congress in 1958, see *XIII s"ezd vsesoiuznogo leninskogo kommunisticheskogo soiuzna moldezhni. Stenograficheskii otchet*. Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1959, pp.29-30; see also Catriona Kelly and Svetlana Sirotinina. “‘Bylo neponiatno i smeshno’. Prazdniki poslednikh desiatiletii sovetskoi vlasti i vospriatie ikh det'mi”, in: *Antropologicheskii Forum* 8(2008), pp.259-99, here p.271.

<sup>6</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.48; see also almost the same statement in TsGA 4034-42-291, p.55.

<sup>7</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.139; see also p.16.

<sup>8</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.139; see also the impressions that the editor of *Komsomolets Tatarii* got in 1964 during conversations with students, see TsGA 4034-42-397, pp.116-7.

<sup>9</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.15.

Therefore, the Komsomol's duty was to emphasize not only past heroism, but also the achievements of the October Revolution in regard to standards of living, the economy and technical progress. Articles in regional youth newspapers praised "the great conquests of the October Revolution"<sup>10</sup> and outlined the improvements in living conditions, nutrition and education that had taken place since 1917.<sup>11</sup> Pre-revolutionary history was seen as a preamble to all this. The first workers' associations in the Russian capitals were portrayed as courageous forerunners of revolution,<sup>12</sup> inevitable due to the oppression and ruthless exploitation of rural and urban toilers before 1917.<sup>13</sup> Eyewitnesses who made presentations to young people supported this interpretation. Describing the dirty and unhygienic Tatar quarter (*sloboda*) of pre-revolutionary Kazan', where the only places of cultural interest were religious institutions, a former Komsomol leader put great emphasis on the enormous changes that the October Revolution had brought about: it had "opened bright and clear paths for youth to build a new life".<sup>14</sup> A Komsomol veteran in Cheliabinsk stressed the same point, saying he wanted the young generation to "know the hell we left behind".<sup>15</sup> Komsomol histories and fiction similarly focused on the difficult situation of youth "under the yoke of the Tsar, the landowners and the capitalists"; they described the "forced labour at capitalist enterprises" which young people had to carry out in order to survive and lamented the fate of those "deprived of the right to education".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Velikie zavoevaniia", *KT*, 5.11.1954, p.2 and *Komsomolets*, 7.11.1954, pp.2-3.

<sup>11</sup> "Khorosho v strane", *KT*, 5.12.1957, p.2; see also e.g. "Rost blagostoianiia", *KT*, 3.4.1953, p.2; "Zabota o blage naroda", *KT*, 5.12.1956, p.2; "Bol'she vnimaniia", *Komsomolets*, 26.11.1953, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> For example, "Odna iz pervykh", *Komsomolets*, 5.1.1954, p.2; "V te dalekie gody", *Komsomolets*, 3.3.1957, p.2.

<sup>13</sup> "Kak zhili", *KT*, 7.10.1955, pp.2-3.

<sup>14</sup> TsGA 4034-40-146, p.6.

<sup>15</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3228, p.75 ; see also "Kazan' kupecheskaia", *KT*, 18.2.1953, pp.2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Atsarkin and Verchenko, *Leninskii Komsomol*, quotations p.11 and p.23 ; see also Lisovskii, *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii*, pp.5-6, quotation p.5 ; Nur Seifi. *Mechty stali byl'iu. Iz vospominanii starogo komsomol'skogo aktivista*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1960, p.5.

Young people were supposed to remember the conquered past in order to appreciate the present and continue revolutionary deeds.<sup>17</sup> A major goal of the Komsomol was to “educate boys and girls according to the traditions of the revolutionary fight... prepare stalwart, highly-educated and hard-working builders of communism”.<sup>18</sup> The memory of the past was supposed to engender the same degree of heroism among youth that was said to have animated their predecessors. However, the latest generation’s aim was not to bring about another revolution, but rather to improve their every-day performance in order to build the communist future.<sup>19</sup>

Four periods of Soviet history featured most prominently in accounts of past heroism: the pre-revolutionary period; the October Revolution and the subsequent Civil War; the years of the first Five-Year Plan and collectivisation; and the Great Patriotic War. Figure 1 shows the distribution of articles relating to the four outlined periods of the heroic past in the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets*. It clearly shows that the war periods were by far the most prominent setting for portraying the heroic past.<sup>20</sup>

The main means used to generate and shape an ideologically correct picture of the past were newspapers, speeches at Komsomol meetings and other material which Komsomol members were expected to be aware of, such as directives from higher administrative levels, textbooks on the history of the Komsomol, fiction and films. Various strategies made the heroic past accessible to Komsomol members, including a focus on different types of heroes in speeches, newspaper articles and fiction; the personalization of history and integration of veteran heroes into the everyday work of the Komsomol organizations; writing and telling the story of the

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<sup>17</sup> “Velikie zavoevaniia Oktiabr’skoi revoliutsii”, *KT*, 5.11.1954, p.2 and *Komsomolets*, 7.11.1954, pp.2-3.

<sup>18</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.38.

<sup>19</sup> For a similar approach to the conservative role of youth in late Stalinism, see Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*, p.16.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see Amir Weiner. *Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, who talks about the ever greater importance of the war from the late 1940s as an alternative force for national belonging.

Komsomol; commemorating the past during holidays and meetings; and using public space and memorials to present the right memory.<sup>21</sup> The newspaper articles varied in style between adventure stories, vivid reports, memories of participants and scientific contributions. Thus, they provided a broad variety of material to grab the readers' attention. This chapter starts out by outlining the content of what was commemorated. It then explores the various strategies used by the Komsomol organizations to propagate and fix this memory among their members.

## **Rhetorical Parameters of the Heroic Past**

The main question about the content of the heroic past is whether and where alterations and shifts of focus appeared to distinguish the official version of the Thaw from the Stalinist version. The latter can be regarded as the classical style of socialist realism, which established the canons for portraying the heroic past. In the tradition of the Stalinist version of socialist realism, protagonists were presented as idealized heroic images, an empty screen onto which a fixed canon of moral qualities and well-known slogans could be projected. Stalinist heroes – created in both socialist realist novels and mass media – embodied the ‘new person’ who was able to build and populate communist society.<sup>22</sup> Their stereotypical virtues mirrored the qualities of Russian saints and old-Russian heroes: they were presented as brave and courageous, strong and determined, dedicated and prepared to make sacrifices for the greater cause – the Revolution, socialism and communism. At the same time, they showed great human warmth and modesty.<sup>23</sup> The depersonalized presentation combined all these virtues

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<sup>21</sup> For a compact overview, see Iushkova, *Deiatel'nost' partiinykh i komsomol'skikh organizatsii Urala po vospitaniiu rabochei molodezhi na revoliutsionnykh, boevykh i trudovykh traditsiakh*; see also RGASPI M1-2-347, pp.52-3; RGASPI M1-2-439, pp.43-4; RGASPI M1-6-945, pp.5-6.

<sup>22</sup> Jay Bergman, “Valerii Chkalov. Soviet Pilot as New Soviet Men”, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 33(1998), pp.135-52; Rainer Gries and Silke Saltjukow, “Von Menschen und Übermenschen. Der ‘Alltag’ und das ‘Außeralltägliche’ der ‘sozialistischen Helden’”, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 17(2002), pp.39-46; for a general approach to heroes in Stalinism see mainly Clark, *The Soviet Novel* and Hans Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch. M. Gorkij und der sowjetische Heldenmythos*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.58-62, p.103; Bergman, “Valerii Chkalov”.

and showed the positive hero not as a real person, but as a prototypical representative of the communist future, a symbolic hero.<sup>24</sup>

There was a clear distinction between the heroes' early careers, which were often unremarkable and typically Soviet, and what happened to make them famous, for example their sacrifice for the greater cause. Given the heroes' ordinary origins and their non-exceptional early careers, young readers were supposed to assume that anybody could rise to superhuman stature if they happened to live at a heroic time such as the Civil War or the building of socialism. An exceptional person could be born in conditions of everyday normality. According to this idea of panheroism, young readers were supposed to identify with the heroes and follow their example.<sup>25</sup> However, this was not facilitated by the schematic description of the characters, which left no place for personal feelings. The traumatic effects of the war on body and soul were completely ignored, while physical pain, fear and despair were just not displayed. Their lack of negative feelings, together with the complete absence of any physical or emotional needs, made the heroes look like what Klaus Gestwa has called "anaemic dummies" (*blutleere Attrappen*), unfit for attracting the young readers' attention.<sup>26</sup>

This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the official version of the past was at odds with the communicative memory which young people encountered in everyday life. Their elder siblings, parents and grandparents had a different view of the past shaped by their personal experiences.<sup>27</sup> This counter-memory made itself felt, for instance, immediately after the Civil War, when the Commission for the Study of the History of the Russian Youth Movement

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<sup>24</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.46-58, p.126.

<sup>25</sup> Gries and Saltjukow, "Von Menschen und Übermenschen"; Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch*, pp.158-9, pp.180-1; Hans Günther. "Der Heldenmythos im sozialistischen Realismus", in: *Traumfabrik Kommunismus - Dream Factory Communism. Die visuelle Kultur der Stalinzeit*, ed. by Boris Groys and Max Hollein, Frankfurt a. M.: Schirn-Kunsthalle, 2004, pp.106-24.

<sup>26</sup> Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, p.355; see also Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*, pp.46-7; Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka*, p.29.

<sup>27</sup> On the memory of the Second World War, see Harald Welzer. "Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit. Geschichte als Arena der Politik", in: *Osteuropa* 55(2005), 4-6, pp.9-18.

(Istmol) collected documents and invited veterans to write their memoirs. Their personal memories did not correspond at all with the official version of the past.<sup>28</sup> Ignored during the years of Stalinism, only during the Thaw period did such counter-narratives get assigned some space in communicative memory in public. There were no signs of the Komsomol rejecting or even revising the existing official narrative. However, the scope for individual doubt within this tangle of different versions of the truth was certainly broad, as “the ontological status of ‘truth’ and the party’s prerogative over it” was challenged by the shocking revelations of Stalin’s crimes.<sup>29</sup>

Reconstructing the existence of a counter-narrative in communicative memory of the Thaw is impossible on the basis of archival sources, but one can certainly observe its impact in cultural memory. Cinematography was occupied with seeking an adequate way to depict key periods of the Soviet past. Films about the Second World War offered a different version of the past which did not match the hitherto practiced representation of the war as a stage for individual and collective heroism.<sup>30</sup> Young directors such as Grigorii Chukhrai, Mikhail Kalatosov, Sergei Bondarchuk and Andrei Tarkovskii applied a more personal perspective to the heroic past, allowing more space for individual feelings and human tragedy. The presentation of the war was humanized and became less heroic but more realistic and accessible to young spectators.<sup>31</sup> Key works include Mikhail Kolotsov’s *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) and Grigorii Chukhrai’s *Ballad of a soldier* (1959), which bring to life the

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<sup>28</sup> Sean Guillory. “The Shattered Self of Komsomol Civil War Memories”, in: *Slavic Review* 71(2012), 3, pp.546-65.

<sup>29</sup> Fürst, Jones and Morrisey, “The Relaunch of the Soviet Project”, p.204.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Detlef Kappapin. “Avantgarde, Agonie und Anpassung. Die ideologischen Grundlagen des sowjetischen Kinos nach 1945”, in: *Leinwand zwischen Tauwetter und Frost. Der osteuropäische Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm im Kalten Krieg*, ed. by Lars Karl, Berlin: Metropol, 2007, pp.21-36; Lars Karl. ‘Von Helden und Menschen...’. *Der Zweite Weltkrieg im sowjetischen Spielfilm und dessen Rezeption in der DDR, 1945-1965*, Tübingen: Universität Tübingen, 2002, pp.107-8.

<sup>31</sup> Josephine Woll. *Real Images. Soviet Cinema and the Thaw*, London and New York: Tauris, 2000, pp.14-99; Nina Tumarkin. *The Living and the Dead. The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*, New York: Basic Books, 1994, pp.111-3.

misery of war for both young men fighting at the front and the civilian population. Kalatsov's film tells the story of a young couple separated by the young man's decision to volunteer at the front. It portrays in depth the sense of shock, helplessness and grief when the girl finds out that her husband was killed.

Besides film directors, makers of the Soviet media landscape also noticed dissatisfaction among youth and expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the "hyper-presence of cult and propaganda". They criticized the dominance of quantity over quality, which was motivated by a desire to conform to Party guidelines rather than respond to the needs and expectations of the audience.<sup>32</sup> After this "rediscovery of the reader" and his demands, Soviet propaganda-makers tried to make newspapers and journals more attractive to readers. They established new formats and founded new journals and newspapers.<sup>33</sup> With regard to literary production, discussions took place about creating heroes who resembled "real-life people" (*zhivye liudi*). Instead of stereotypical and unauthentic depictions, the hero's individuality was to be emphasized, his personal interests and needs were to be respected and the whole range of the heroes' emotional world was to be acknowledged. A general trend of Thaw literature was therefore to replace the unfounded optimism, absence of conflict and whitewash (*lakirovka*) of Stalin-era literature with a focus on the real everyday life of ordinary people and their problems, acknowledging their individual wishes and emotional ups and downs.<sup>34</sup> Some young authors followed these trends. They addressed young peoples' intimate and utterly apolitical feelings and took up taboo topics of the past, such as the Holocaust and the full

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<sup>32</sup> Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, pp.365-70, quotation p.365.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Lovell. *The Russian Reading Revolution. Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, pp.45-7, quotation p.45.

<sup>34</sup> Beyrau and Bock, *Das Tauwetter und die Folgen*, pp.7-21.; Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*; Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, pp.365-70; Dirk Kretzschmar. "Kulturpolitik", in: *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands, Band 5: 1945-1991*, pp.1153-210.

extent of human suffering during the war.<sup>35</sup> Evgenii Evtushenko's famous poem about the massacre of *Babiy Iar* problematized anti-Semitism in Soviet society. The same author did not hesitate to broach the issue of the current leaders' involvement in Stalin's crimes in his poem *Stalin's Successors (Nasledniki Stalina)*.<sup>36</sup> In his novel *Ticket to the Stars (Zvezdnyi Bilet)*, Vasilii Aksenov describes the journey of four teenagers determined to avoid the compulsory routines of adult life.<sup>37</sup>

However, the general aim of Soviet propaganda remained to "construct the space of the political dimension and the common symbolic cosmos, in which all social processes of perception, creation of meaning and action take place".<sup>38</sup> Regarding the heroic past, the intended result of the propaganda efforts was a "hegemonic superimposition of the thinkable and the sayable".<sup>39</sup> With the goal remaining the same – to promote past heroes as role models for present-day youth – it was only the form of representation that was open to change. Official guidelines on the extent of alteration and its limits were, however, never clear to the people most affected, i.e. writers themselves. The official view constantly shifted between the liberal and the conservative camp of Soviet literature.<sup>40</sup> Although he accepted major changes in the field of media, literature and cinematography, Khrushchev nevertheless advocated an optimistic tone in the sense of avoiding detailed depiction of any negative aspect of the Soviet past.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, pp.113-24.

<sup>36</sup> Evgenii Evtushenko. *Nasledniki Stalina*, London: Flegon Press, 1964, pp.3-5, pp.36-8; see also Katharine Hodgson. "'Russia Is Reading Us Once More'. The Rehabilitation of Poetry, 1953-1964", in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, pp.231-49.

<sup>37</sup> Vasilii Aksenov. *A Starry Ticket* London: Putnam, 1962; see also Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*, p.129; Kretschmar, "Kulturpolitik", pp.1161.

<sup>38</sup> Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, p. 367; see also pp.367-78.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.367.

<sup>40</sup> Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*.

<sup>41</sup> Cynthia Hooper. "What Can and Cannot Be Said. Between the Stalinist Past and New Soviet Future", in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 86(2008), 2, pp.306-27.

As Chapter One made clear, Komsomol workers in the regions were highly conservative when it came to administrative practices. One might therefore wonder whether Komsomol rhetoric in the regions lived up to the media makers' expectation of at least a limited shift in representational strategies, or whether it simply replicated the old patterns of socialist realist tradition. Certainly, socialist realism remained the obligatory way of representing all levels of reality, past, present, and future. However, the canons were slightly modified. As discussed in detail below, the cult of the leader had been transformed with the transition from Stalin to Lenin. The narrative structures used to delineate the hero's life were now different. The pantheon altered: some heroes returned from purdah and others disappeared. Regional links became stronger and places familiar to young readers featured prominently within accounts of the heroic past. Nevertheless, the continuity of Stalinist patterns is striking, particularly in the catalogue of virtues attributed to heroes of the past. Just as in the past, the protagonists of articles all displayed a rather uniform set of moral qualities. They combined typical attributes from the socialist realist tradition and the canon of communist morality with virtues of Christian hagiography: modesty, devotion and conscious willpower, humanity, collective spirit and comradeship, courage and determination, the willingness to sacrifice and enthusiasm, as well as a great sense of justice which distinguished them as natural leaders.<sup>42</sup>

These attributes figured prominently in accounts of the heroic past in regional newspapers. Steadfastness was one such obligatory quality; it was illustrated particularly clearly when the papers reported the tortures endured by young heroes at the hands of enemies of the Revolution or the Fatherland. The protagonists' firm will was not broken, even though they were flogged and in some cases had their ears chopped off and their eyes poked out. They would not betray their comrades or give away secrets that might endanger the Revolution or

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<sup>42</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.57-65, pp.100-103; Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch*, p.64.

victory.<sup>43</sup> Young heroes were portrayed as fearless and determined. Courage was the topic of many articles on the heroic past. Examples included reports about the determined and fearless fight of the Muslim unit from Tatarstan against the Whites,<sup>44</sup> and the “bravery” of the fleet in the Pacific Ocean against Japan in 1945.<sup>45</sup> However, courage and determination were not only relevant during war; they were also decisive qualities in peacetime. For example, a young Cheliabinsk aviator had trained relentlessly in order to become an aviator and had overcome the mockery of his friends and the unbelief of his parents, thereby demonstrating his strong will.<sup>46</sup>

According to this message, it was the superior will of the Soviet people and their higher degree of consciousness which explained why hostile forces had been defeated despite their military supremacy.<sup>47</sup> The protagonists’ development reflected the typical dialectic of socialist realism from spontaneity to communist consciousness.<sup>48</sup> The heroes of the past combined their conscious awareness of their duties and their discipline with a certain degree of enthusiasm and self-sacrifice.<sup>49</sup>

Stories on both an individual and mass scale demonstrated the huge extent of willingness to make voluntary sacrifices.<sup>50</sup> A young hero of the Second World War, for example, consciously chose death over giving up her “virgin honour”, thereby defending communist

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<sup>43</sup> For example, “Novye geroi voiny”, *Komsomolets*, 23.9.1962, p.3; “Etot mal’chik”, *Komsomolets*, 27.10.1963, p.2; “Poslednii chas”, *Komsomolets*, 15.7.1964, p.3; for poked out eyes see also “Oni byli pervymi”, *Komsomolets*, 14.11.1958, p.3.

<sup>44</sup> “Navstrechu 40-letiiu”, *KT*, 24.2.1957, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> “Muzhestvo”, *Komsomolets*, 23.2.1958, p.2.

<sup>46</sup> “Syn Urala”, *Komsomolets*, 10.4.1964, p.3.

<sup>47</sup> “Nezabyvaemye dni”, *Komsomolets*, 26.12.1956, pp.3-4; “Za vlast’ sovetov”, *Komsomolets*, 27.1.1957, p.2.

<sup>48</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 15-23.

<sup>49</sup> Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”, pp.135-53.

<sup>50</sup> For example, four young aviators who gave their lives for the fatherland, see “SynUrala”, *Komsomolets*, 10.4.1964, p.3; the comrades of Aleksandr Motrozov allegedly greeted the news that they would be sent to the front with cheers, see “Bessmertnyi podvig”, *Komsomolets*, 9.6.1959, p.3.

morality itself.<sup>51</sup> When the Komsomol *gorkom* in Cheliabinsk organized a tank brigade during the Second World War, the organizers were allegedly overwhelmed by the huge number of volunteers and had a hard time selecting the best.<sup>52</sup> The young heroes would make any sacrifice to defend the Revolution or the Fatherland; they generally “were satisfied – no one complained”; and no-one longed for more comfort either.<sup>53</sup>

Alongside stoicism, modesty was presented as a key quality of the heroes of the past. A Cheliabinsk veteran of the Civil War, for example, claimed that he had only recently learned about his crucial role in securing a major Bolshevik victory.<sup>54</sup> The All-Soviet hero Aleksandr Matrosov, readers were told, did not regard himself worthy of becoming a member of the Komsomol until his grassroots organization decided unanimously to accept him.<sup>55</sup> The representation of war heroes played on virtues that were not unique to Soviet culture (although Soviet culture’s thorough militarisation meant that they were thoroughly ingrained). The stressing of modesty in another context was more characteristically Soviet: accounts of the heroic past demonstrated that everyday tasks were on the same scale of heroism as flashy, prestigious and perilous actions in which young people excelled themselves.

It was stressed that the aim of any heroic deed was to fulfil one’s duty. Heroism was defined broadly; it could range from risking one’s life to simply pushing paper. After spectacularly rescuing his comrade, a young aviator simply stated that he had “fulfilled the duty of a Komsomol member and helped a friend in trouble”.<sup>56</sup> Even shovelling snow could be a heroic deed. Facing severe cold and a snowstorm, a Komsomol group during the Civil War cleared railway tracks and thus secured a supply of coal for the whole of Cheliabinsk region, which

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<sup>51</sup> “Rasskaz o devich’eichesti”, *Komsomolets*, 25.6.1961, p.4.

<sup>52</sup> “V ogne boev”, *Komsomolets*, 22.11.1959, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> An article on young aviators during the WWII, see “Syn Urala”, *Komsomolets*, 10.4.1964, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> “Eto bylo”, *Komsomolets*, 13.12.1957, pp.1, 4.

<sup>55</sup> “Bessmertnyi podvig”, *Komsomolets*, 19.6.1959, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> “Podvig desantnika”, *Komsomolets*, 23.2.1958, p.3.

ultimately contributed to victory.<sup>57</sup> Similarly unspectacular heroism was displayed by the leader of a rural Komsomol organization during the first years of Soviet rule. His daily tasks consisted of organizing meetings and handling paperwork, as well as exposing *kulaks*, speculators and other counterrevolutionary forces.<sup>58</sup>

A model hero of the past would combine all these moral qualities: he would be “brave, determined, principled and forthright in a working-class way”; “his outstanding honesty, modesty and devotion to his class were his characteristic features.”<sup>59</sup> This is something these heroes of the Thaw shared with their predecessors from the era of Stalinism. Continuity can also be clearly seen when looking at fictional accounts of the past, which enjoyed huge popularity during Stalinism as well as the following decade. One example is Fadeev’s novel *Young Guard (Molodaia Gvardiia)*, which features a group of teenage partisans fighting for the Fatherland. Their story was turned into a movie shortly after the end of the war and made the protagonists even more popular among youth.<sup>60</sup> The novel remained in print throughout the Thaw and Brezhnev years; it was regularly covered in Soviet schools.

A still more popular fictitious figure among the Thaw generation was Pavel Korchagin, the protagonist of Nikolai Ostrovskii’s novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*. The author was constantly confused with his literary character. The film adaptation of 1957, newspaper coverage and the Ostrovskii museum in Moscow showed how both Korchagin and Ostrovskii consciously accepted the decline of their bodies caused by their tireless fighting in the Civil War.<sup>61</sup> In the regional newspapers, Korchagin was portrayed as a typical socialist realistic

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<sup>57</sup> “Oni byli pervymi”, *Komsomolets*, 14.11.1958, p.3.

<sup>58</sup> “Rozhdennyi Oktiabrem”, *Komsomolets*, 13.11.1957, pp.2-3; for a similar approach see the series of short stories “1919 god”, *Komsomolets*, 18.5.1958, 21.5.1958, 23.5.1958; “1920 god”, *Komsomolets*, 4.6.1958, p.4, 6.6.1958, p.2; “1921 god”, *Komsomolets*, 3.6.1958, 15.6.1958.

<sup>59</sup> “Nashi geroi”, *Komsomolets*, 17.2.1957, p.4.

<sup>60</sup> Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*, pp.139-56.

<sup>61</sup> Woll, *Real Images*, pp.35-7; Lilya Kaganovsky. “How the Soviet Man Was (Un)Made”, in: *Slavic Review* 63(2004), 3, pp.577-96.

hero who underwent a change from spontaneity to revolutionary consciousness and became less affected by “unnecessary fervour and selfish feelings of jealousy/eagerness”.<sup>62</sup> Both the author and the fictional character remained present in public consciousness. Articles announced a new film about Korchagin, which was shown in cinemas in 1957;<sup>63</sup> they reported the efforts of Ostrovsii’s wife to keep her husband’s memory alive among the young generation;<sup>64</sup> and they printed poems by young workers about Korchagin’s heroism.<sup>65</sup> The Thaw rhetoric was clearly building on Stalinist traditions when it referred to Korchagin as the embodiment of the heroic past and a model for the labour heroism of present-day youth.

Another hero who survived from the Stalin era was the young partisan Zoia Kosmodem’ianskaia, who was tortured by German soldiers but remained loyal to her comrades and Fatherland.<sup>66</sup> Her story was retold in central and regional newspapers, which praised her willingness to sacrifice her own life for the higher cause.<sup>67</sup> As in the case of Pavel Korchagin, the facts of the story remained consistent: there was no rewriting to suit the new cultural setting.<sup>68</sup>

Depictions of the Komsomol itself remained unaltered. The youth organization continued to figure as the main institution engendering discipline and Party-mindedness among youth and providing the necessary platform and organizational framework for their heroism. It was presented as helping young people to fulfil their heroic tasks in industry and agriculture,

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<sup>62</sup> “Nikolai Ostrovskii”, *KT*, 29.9.1954; see also “Vospitatel’ molodezhi”, *Komsomolets*, 26.9.1954, pp.2-3; Günther, “Der Heldenmythos im sozialistischen Realismus”, pp.111-2.

<sup>63</sup> “Zavtra – na ekranakh Kazani”, *KT*, 17.2.1957, p.3; “Novaia vstrecha”, *KT*, 24.2.1957, p.1.

<sup>64</sup> “Kak zhivoi”, *KT*, 27.9.1964, p.1; “Kak zhivoi”, *Komsomolets*, 27.9.1964, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> “Zakaliaetsia stal”, *Komsomolets*, 30.9.1964, p.3.

<sup>66</sup> On Zoia Kosmodem’ianskaia see Juliane Fürst. “Heroes, Lovers, Victims. Partisan Girls during the Great Fatherland War”, in: *Minerva. Quarterly Report on Women and the Military* 18(2000), 3; Rosalinde Sartori. “On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints”, in: *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. by Richard Stites, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp.176-93.

<sup>67</sup> “Tak mir uznal o Zoe”, *KP*, 29.11.1961, p.2; “Nasha Zoia”, *KT*, 28.11.1956, p.2.

<sup>68</sup> This is in the contrast to the story of Pavel Morozov which was constantly being rewritten, see mainly Catriona Kelly. *Comrade Pavlik. The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero*, London: Granta, 2005.

especially during the economic reconstruction after the Civil War and the Second World War. History textbooks about the regional Komsomol organizations emphasized Komsomol members' steadfastness, will, enthusiasm, socialist consciousness and other key virtues of the communist moral code during the Revolution, the Civil War and the Second World War. Such attitudes were allegedly acquired thanks to the organization's good work.<sup>69</sup>

The Komsomol was also described as a reliable partner of the Party.<sup>70</sup> According to accounts, the Party and older communists played a guiding role in the youth organization's emergence.<sup>71</sup> Komsomol and Party rhetoric both emphasized the enormous significance of the youth organization as a public mass organization within the Soviet system;<sup>72</sup> they praised the young generation's sense of duty and heroism in all periods of the heroic past.<sup>73</sup> This relationship was underlined in accounts of the first years of Soviet power in the regions, when younger comrades obeyed the orders of their seniors, knew their place in the system and fulfilled their duties in all circumstances without complaining. The first leader of the Cheliabinsk Komsomol organization was a good example. Following Party orders, he destroyed all treasonable documents before the Whites conquered the city. After the Party leadership was eliminated, he made his own decisions and continued Bolshevik campaigning. Later he realized that his duty was to fight for the Revolution and joined the Red Army.<sup>74</sup> The guiding role ascribed to the Party in accounts of the heroic past underlined the dependence of

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<sup>69</sup> For example, Lisovskii, *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii. Komsomol Urala v bor'be za vlast' sovetov*, pp.48-55; Atsarkin and Verchenko, *Leninskii Komsomol*, pp.66-218, pp.377-454.

<sup>70</sup> Lisovskii, *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii. Komsomol Urala v bor'be za vlast' sovetov*, pp.10-33.; Atsarkin and Verchenko, *Leninskii Komsomol*, pp.132-218, pp.293-376.

<sup>71</sup> The First Komsomol secretary in her speech at the anniversary meeting of the Tatar Komsomol organization in 1958, see TsGA 4034-40-215, p.2; see also Lisovskii, *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii. Komsomol Urala v bor'be za vlast' sovetov*, pp.43-8; another highlighted the fact that the young generation marched side by side with their fathers and elder brothers, see *Shagai vpered, komsomol'skoie plemia!*, Cheliabinsk: Cheliabinskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1958, pp.5-13.

<sup>72</sup> Lisovskii, *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii. Komsomol Urala v bor'be za vlast' sovetov*, pp.10-1; TsGA 4034-40-215, p.2.

<sup>73</sup> For example, TsGA 4034-37-277, pp.152-4; TsGA 4034-42-400, p.6.

<sup>74</sup> "S veroi", *Komsomolets*, 7.4.1957, p.4.

youth on the older generation. As in the Stalinist tradition, the heroes remained well-behaved sons (and daughters) who would not grow up but remained dependent on the leader and the Party as parental figures.<sup>75</sup> In this regard, Soviet rhetoric on heroism remained unchanged during the Thaw period.

Yet there were certainly areas in which the presentation of the past underwent major alterations. In particular, the presentation of the leader changed. Stalin had been closely involved in producing his own cult, primarily for political purposes.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, the Lenin cult only emerged after the leader's death and portrayed him as a model for youth without trying to increase his actual power.<sup>77</sup> Stalin was presented as the unquestioned leader who was almost supernatural in his wisdom and foresight. Remote from ordinary Soviet people, Stalin was depicted as eternal and almost sacred. Therefore, there were almost no accounts of Stalin's childhood and youth.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, biographies and articles about Lenin presented him as an outstanding human being and emphasized his natural leadership qualities and his studiousness, which he had allegedly displayed from early childhood (see picture 1 and 2). He was not only a disciplined, polite, serious and systematic student, but also very competitive and determined in his leisure activity. He proved to be a natural leader, displaying a distinctive sense of justice and fairness. When he grew older, he showed his willpower by graduating in law as an external student; he developed his leadership skills by campaigning among Petersburg youth and propagating social democratic ideology. He even showed a high

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<sup>75</sup> See mainly Günther, "Der Heldenmythos im sozialistischen Realismus", p.117; on the topic of the 'great family' see also Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.114-36; Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch*, pp.160-2.

<sup>76</sup> For example, Sarah Davies. "Stalin and the Making of the Leader Cult in the 1930s", in: *The Leader Cults in Communist Dictatorships. Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by Balazs Apor et.al., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.29-46; Jan Plamper. *The Stalin Cult. A Study in the Alchemy of Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012, pp.119-64.

<sup>77</sup> On the Lenin cult see mainly Benno Ennker. *Die Anfänge des Leninkults in der Sowjetunion*, Köln: Böhlau, 1997; Nina Tumarkin. *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1983.

<sup>78</sup> Davies, "Stalin and the Making of the Leader Cult in the 1930s".

degree of revolutionary consciousness when it came to his free time, which he liked to spend outside the cities: “he was able to relax just as effectively as he studied.”<sup>79</sup>



Picture 1: Lenin as leader<sup>80</sup>



Picture 2: Studious Lenin<sup>81</sup>

Nikita Khrushchev himself pointed out Lenin’s human qualities. In his ‘Secret Speech’ of 1956, he emphasized Lenin’s warmth, love of children, modesty and accessibility.<sup>82</sup> The newspapers followed this characterization, praising the fact that Lenin had been accessible to ordinary workers and “was dear and close to everybody”.<sup>83</sup> His modesty was revealed in the fact that he would insist on waiting until it was his turn to speak at meetings;<sup>84</sup> he would disapprove of soft armchairs and luxurious desks. He claimed to speak French, German and English only “poorly”, being suitably modest about his own achievements, although he wrote and translated philosophical papers and books in all three languages.<sup>85</sup> The number of articles about Stalin decreased significantly in 1953 and dropped to zero in 1956. In contrast, Lenin’s

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<sup>79</sup> “Detskie i iunosheskie gody”, *Komsomolets*, 15.4.1955, pp.2-4; see also e.g. “Nash Il’ich”, *KT*, 21.4.1957, p.1.

<sup>80</sup> *Komsomolets*, 22.4.1959, p.1.

<sup>81</sup> *KT*, 22.4.1956, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, pp.255-60.

<sup>83</sup> “Velikaia chest”, *Komsomolets*, 24.1.1958, p.3; see also “Nezabyvaemye dni”, *Komsomolets*, 27.1.1957, p.2;

“Vot eto chelovek!”, *KP*, 12.3.1960, p.2.

<sup>84</sup> “Oktiabr’ v Moskve”, *Komsomolets*, 4.11.1956, p.2.

<sup>85</sup> “Kak rabotal V.I. Lenin”, *Komsomolets*, 17.4.1959, pp.1-2.

continued significance in the upbringing of youth can be judged by the number of articles dedicated to him, which remained relatively stable throughout the years in question (see figure 4). Cinema and documentary films, as well as a huge number of biographies, helped to promote Lenin as a model for contemporary youth, an outstanding leader and an accessible human being.<sup>86</sup>

A change in the presentation of the heroic past can also be seen in the increased emphasis on links to the regions. Whereas Stalinist myth-making was limited to all-Soviet heroes, the idea of panheroism now covered regional and local heroes too.<sup>87</sup> Articles about all-Soviet heroes now highlighted links to the regions by focusing on episodes which took place in the direct vicinity of readers, such as Bliukher's recapture of Cheliabinsk or Chapaev's victory in the Volga area.<sup>88</sup> The regional context was underlined by the life stories of revolutionaries such as Nikolai Bauman, who was born in Kazan' and became one of the first official martyrs of the Bolshevik movement when he was beaten to death by Tsarist soldiers in 1905.<sup>89</sup>

One famous revolutionary from Cheliabinsk was Samuil Tsvilling, who was involved in events in Petrograd and the Southern Urals. As he lost his life for the revolutionary fight he became an emblem of heroism in the region.<sup>90</sup> The heroic death of Viktor Gepp, a young leader of the city Komsomol organization in the Cheliabinsk region, was also celebrated in

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<sup>86</sup> An index to biographies on Lenin covered the period between 1954 and 1961 and listed 38 titles alone on Lenin's childhood and early adulthood, see *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine. Annotirovannyi ukazatel' knig i zhurnal'nykh statei, 1954-1961 gg.*, ed. by F. N. Kudriavtsev, Moskva: Ministerstvo Kul'tury, 1963; a good example is a three volume edition written by his relatives, friends and acquaintances, see *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine*. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1956-1960.; for the films see mainly Woll, *Real Images*, pp.84-7; "‘‘Ia idu k tebe, tovarishch Lenin’’", *KP*, 14.11.1963, p.4.

<sup>87</sup> For example, see Kelly and Sirotinina, "‘‘Bylo neponiatno i smeshno’’", pp. 269-70.

<sup>88</sup> "‘‘Kavaler ordena No 1’’", *Komsomolets*, 30.10.1963, p.4; "‘‘Narodnyi geroi’’", *KT*, 5.9.1954, p.3.

<sup>89</sup> "‘‘Vydaiushchiisia proletarskii revoliutsioner’’", *KT*, 30.10.1955, p.3; see also Orlando Figes. *A People's Tragedy. The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp.198-9.

<sup>90</sup> "‘‘Nashi geroi revoliutsii’’", *Komsomolets*, 13.2.1957, p.4.

newspaper articles<sup>91</sup> and printed stories.<sup>92</sup> Gepp had reportedly undermined Kolchak's reign. He was also the protagonist of an episode in a historical novel about the Civil War, published in 1964.<sup>93</sup>

Another hero with a strong regional link was the Tatar poet Musa Dzhaliil'. Dzhaliil' not only figured as a martyr in the fight against fascism, he was also a focal point for Tatar national identity. When Dzhaliil' was reaccepted into the Soviet heroic pantheon after being accused of treason and disloyalty in the post-war years, the Tatar people re-entered the Soviet community.<sup>94</sup> Two articles in 1954 prepared the ground for honouring Dzhaliil', both as a poet whose "body... one may kill, but (whose) poems are immortal", and as a war hero who endured torture to defend the Fatherland.<sup>95</sup> His heroism was propagated among Tatar youth in further newspaper articles,<sup>96</sup> as well as publications and biographies, a theatre production and a newly composed opera.<sup>97</sup> Articles featured reports from eyewitnesses of his death or statements by his friends about his character; he was described according to the prototypical pattern of a Soviet martyr.<sup>98</sup> This phenomenon has more to do with a new accommodation of nationalism than regionalism. Being Tatar was ascribed increasing importance in terms of nationality rather than regional identity.<sup>99</sup>

While regional heroes were reappearing, another group of heroes, the labour heroes, left the Soviet pantheon. The lack of focus on production seems surprising at first glance given the

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<sup>91</sup> "Ukhodili komsomol'tsy", *Komsomolets*, 18.10.1957, p.2; "Etot mal'chik", *Komsomolets*, 27.10.1963, p.2; "Poslednii chas", *Komsomolets*, 15.7.1964, p.3.

<sup>92</sup> Lisovskii, *Molodye boitsy revoliutsii. Komsomol Urala v bor'be za vlast' sovetov*, pp.48-50.

<sup>93</sup> "Poslednii chas", *Komsomolets*, 15.7.1964, p.3.

<sup>94</sup> Jan Plamper and Ilshat Gimadeev. "Tatarstan. Mythos um Musa Dzalil'. Projektionsfläche für Identität", in: *Osteuropa* 57(2007), 12, pp.97-116.

<sup>95</sup> "Podvig poeta", *KT*, 27.1.1954, p.3; see also "Musa Dzhaliil'", *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> For example, see "Sila pravdy", *KT*, 26.4.1957, p.2; "Geroi ne umiraiut", in: *KT*, 26.8.1959, p.3.

<sup>97</sup> "Kritika i bibliografiia: Novaia kniga o Muse Dzhaliile", *KT*, 21.7.1957, p.4; "Spektakl' o geroe", *KT*, 25.12.1957, p.3; "Opera o Muse Dzhaliile", *KT*, 12.4.1957, p.4.

<sup>98</sup> For example, see "Rasskazyvaet spodvizhnik", *KT*, 30.7.1958, p.2; "Moi vstrechi s Dzhaliilem", *KT*, 30.8.1959, p.3; "Eshche odno svidetel'tvo", *KT*, 23.8.1964, pp.2-3.

<sup>99</sup> Plamper and Gimadeev, "Tatarstan. Mythos um Musa Dzalil'."; Nikolai Mitrokhin. *Russkaia Partiia. Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR 1953-1985 gody*, Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2003.

everyday life of young readers, not to mention the enhanced emphasis on ‘labour education’ under Khrushchev. However, the disappearance of the labour hero was no doubt a consequence of harsh criticism which targeted the protagonist of production novels as a “superhero (*sverkhgeroj*) remote from everyday life” (*lebensfremden ‘Überhelden’*).<sup>100</sup> In the rare cases when propaganda touched upon productive heroism, it always created a strong link to the present-day life of youth. For instance, young people were reminded to continue the work of the founders of Magnitogorsk,<sup>101</sup> or other participants in the forced industrialization and collectivization of the early 1930s.<sup>102</sup> This was in line with the Khrushchev-era renewal of *grands projets*, such as ‘construction sites of communism’ or the Virgin Soil campaigns.

Besides alterations to the representation of the leader and the Soviet pantheon, the most striking change in the transition from Stalinist to Thaw rhetoric was the introduction of a new narrative structure and new psychological traits. Although protagonists were still generally presented as faultless prototypical heroes, some articles depicted them as ordinary young people with the typical faults of their age group. When the mother of a young aviator who had died during the Second World War visited his school, she compared the students to her son. Besides mentioning his “courageous and determined face” and strong body, she also noticed a boy who was “just as fidgety” as her son.<sup>103</sup> Nikolai Ostrovskii’s wife favoured a realistic presentation of the positive hero and a stronger focus on his individuality and personal needs. She disapproved strongly of worshipping her husband as “a granite monument of

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<sup>100</sup> Quotations see Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, p.355; see also Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*, pp.46-7; Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka*, p.29.

<sup>101</sup> “Gorod komsomol’skoi iunosti”, *Komsomolets*, 6.7.1955, p.3; see also P.S. Grishchenko. *Krovnoe delo komsomola. Ob uchastii komsomol'tsev i molodezhi Magnitogiu metallurgicheskogo kombinata v bor'be za tekhnicheskii progress*, Cheliabinsk: Knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1960.

<sup>102</sup> “1931 god”, *Komsomolets*, 10.9.1958, pp.2-3.

<sup>103</sup> “Syn Urala”, *Komsomolets*, 10.4.1963, p.3.

steadfastness, courage and will”; she wanted her husband to “become understandable, accessible and closer”.<sup>104</sup>

Newspaper stories about heroes now began to feature personal stories about individuals or small groups, giving a lot of space to eyewitnesses of events. Eyewitnesses had other opportunities to tell their stories too: they might publish their memoirs,<sup>105</sup> or give speeches at Komsomol meetings. Such speeches might describe the heroic deeds of individual Komsomol organizations during the Civil War, or important events in the revolutionary movement such as the meeting of the Kazan’ Soviet of Worker, Soldier and Peasant Deputies which marked the beginning of the Revolution in Tatarstan.<sup>106</sup> A common feature of these stories and accounts was an approach to past events that was more personal and immediate than in the Stalin era; they addressed young readers directly on a very emotional level.

Two articles in the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* highlighted both continuity and innovations in the presentation of the heroic past. The first article was published just before Revolution Day in 1956. It told the story of an eyewitness to the revolutionary events in Moscow and the Civil War.<sup>107</sup> It started out in the middle of events, on an October night in 1917 when the Moscow Soviet of People’s Deputies was under fire from counterrevolutionary troops. Describing the battle, the author reflected briefly on the finality of death, but instantly put it into perspective: the fight for a better life justified individual sacrifices and even the loss of life. Besides the heroes’ willingness to risk their physical integrity for the communist future,<sup>108</sup> the article highlighted their enthusiasm as a characteristic feature of the revolutionary generation. The protagonist and all the young people around him voluntarily engaged in the communist cause

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<sup>104</sup> “Kak zhivoi”, *Komsomolets*, 27.9.1964, p.1; “Kak zhivoi”, *KT*, 27.9.1964, p.1.

<sup>105</sup> Seifi, *Mechty stali byl’iu. Iz vospominanii starogo komsomol’skogo aktivista*.

<sup>105</sup> TsGA 4034-40-201, pp.96-100.

<sup>106</sup> TsGA 4034-40-146, pp.6-10; TsGA 4034-40-201, pp.96-100.

<sup>107</sup> “Oktiabr’ v Moskve”, *Komsomolets*, 4.11.1956, p.2.

<sup>108</sup> Kaganovsky, “How the Soviet Man Was (Un)Made”.

and displayed a high degree of discipline. In exchange, they gained the trust of the Party and were assigned important tasks. After defeating the counterrevolution, the young hero was entrusted with an ultimatum to the Whites and was elected as a deputy to the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

The second article, published on Victory Day 1955, gave a detached description of heroism during the Second World War.<sup>109</sup> By outlining the stories of three well-known Soviet youth heroes who had given up their lives for the Fatherland – the aviator Viktor Talalikhin, the infantry soldier Alexander Matrosov and the partisan girl Zoia Kosmodemianskaia – the article covered all the groups of youth which had been directly involved in the war effort. It also praised the “labour heroism” of young people in the rear, who “exemplarily fulfilled their patriotic duty” to the same extent as their peers on the front. It presented economic efforts during the war as a continuous battle for increased production which continued right up to the present-day, calling on contemporary youth to emulate these heroic deeds.

Regional youth newspapers applied similar strategies to make history more personal. They provided a forum for eyewitnesses to tell individual stories about important historic events and printed personalized accounts of the past. In 1957, three participants of the Revolution visited Kazan’ and the *Komsomolets Tatarii* published short stories about their heroic deeds.<sup>110</sup> A former Cheliabinsk factory worker established a clearer link to the regional context when he recalled in detail a speech which Lenin had given at the factory, celebrating the leader’s modesty, simplicity and rhetorical talent.<sup>111</sup> An elderly lady retold her biography: thanks to the Revolution she had managed to escape poverty, participated actively in the

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<sup>109</sup> “Velikii podvig”, *Komsomolets*, 8.5.1955, p.3.

<sup>110</sup> “Navstrechu 40-letiiu velikogo Oktiabria”, *KT*, 27.1.1957, pp.1-2.

<sup>111</sup> “Velikaia chest’”, *Komsomolets*, 24.1.1958, p.3.

reconstruction of the economy and propagated the possibilities of reshaping society.<sup>112</sup> Even though such examples did not touch upon world-shaking events, they nevertheless recalled the heroic past in a local context and highlighted the everyday heroism of ordinary people.

Although there were slight changes in stories' narrative structure and the representation of heroes, the progressive and reforming efforts of media-makers in the centre remained largely unheard out in Cheliabinsk and Kazakhstan. The quantity of articles, literary texts and other Komsomol material prevailed over quality, a state of affairs that had been typical of Stalinism.<sup>113</sup> However, literary texts, press reports and other types of propaganda were not the only resources for promoting the heroic past. There were also various strategies associated with what was known in Soviet culture as 'agitation' (campaigning). The following section assesses the extent of change in these strategies.

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<sup>112</sup> "Dobrye dela ne zabyvaiutsia", *Komsomolets*, 20.11.1964, p.2; for a similar report see "Slovo starogo kommunista", *Komsomolets*, 1.5.1958, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> For example, Bruno Kalnins. *Der sowjetische Propagandastaats: Das System und die Mittel der Massenbeeinflussung in der Sowjetunion*, Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1956, p. 233.

## Strategies for Promoting the Heroic Past

### Personalizing History

One striking continuity between Stalinist and Khrushchev-era traditions of remembering the past was the fact that celebrations of holidays focused on and around the centre. Press reports concerning the two major Soviet holidays – May Day and Revolution Day in early November – portrayed the Soviet people, both in Moscow and the regions, as a festive community celebrating the same memorable events and fostering the same traditions. The press thereby created the myth of a homogenous Soviet people whose united spirit had brought about the Revolution, starting in the centre and spreading like a spark to the regions.<sup>114</sup> This was clearly a Stalinist pattern which survived until and through the Thaw period.<sup>115</sup>

More characteristic of the Thaw era was the strong emphasis on regional and local memory at ceremonial meetings. When Party and Komsomol chairmen made speeches at these occasions, it was common for them to summarize the heroic past of the local youth organization.<sup>116</sup> In Tatarstan, for example, the first regional Komsomol secretary referred to specific situations such as the fight against Kolchak. He named famous regional heroes such as Musa Dzhaliil' and even gave supposedly exact figures for the proportion of regional young people who had taken part in major historic events: “73% of the membership of the Komsomol organization in Tatarstan fought against the German fascist aggressors on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War”.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> For example, “Oktiabr' v Moskve”, *Komosmolets*, 4.11.1956, p.2.

<sup>115</sup> Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, pp.108-17.

<sup>116</sup> The Tatar Komsomol Chairman Beliaev in 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-400, p.6; the Tatar Party Chairman Kuznetsov in 1954, see TsGA 4034-37-277, pp.152-4.

<sup>117</sup> TsGA 4034-42-400, p.7.

A common way of propagating the heroic narrative of the Komsomol's past was the appearance of veterans at meetings at all administrative levels. Veterans' personal accounts about crucial events in local or regional history created a direct link between the past and the present-day audience. A Komsomol veteran, for example, told the Tatar regional conference in 1958 about his participation in the founding meeting of the first Komsomol organization in 1919, which had taken place in the same hall.<sup>118</sup> Personalized accounts usually started with a dramatic depiction of the miserable living conditions before the Revolution, outlined the great sacrifice made by the young generation during the Civil War and drew the young audience's attention to the huge changes achieved by the Revolution and the construction of the Soviet state. The Komsomol's role in focusing the energy of youth on the immediate tasks of the day was emphasized.<sup>119</sup> The heroism was also brought down to the local level. Komsomol veterans commonly gave accounts about the history of their urban district, plant or kolkhoz.<sup>120</sup> One veteran spoke about the first meeting of the Kazan' *gorkom* during the Civil War, where the first members had "received their Komsomol card... and the next day they left for the front".<sup>121</sup>

In the late 1950s, the integration of veterans into the Komsomol's daily work took place on a case-by-case basis and mainly consisted of anniversary speeches. In the early 1960s, however, it assumed a more structured form. So-called Veteran Unions (*soveti veteranov*) were founded, providing an organizational framework for the veterans' participation in the Komsomol's work. Their task was to "tell and show youth on the basis of personal experience

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<sup>118</sup> TsGA 4034-40-201, pp.96-100.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Nur Seifi (the author of the memorial book on the Komsomol history) at a meeting of Komsomol active members in 1918, see TsGA 4034-40-215, p.27; TsGA 4034-40-215, pp.2-5; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.129.

<sup>120</sup> The former Komsomol chairman of the Kazan' fur plant in 1957, describing the development of the New Tatar *Sloboda* and the factory, see TsGA 4034-40-146, pp.6-10.

<sup>121</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, pp.140-1.

how the older generation had fought for freedom and independence”.<sup>122</sup> Although the first groups emerged around the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Komsomol in 1958, it was only five years later that a network of *sovety veteranov* was established in both the regions under study.<sup>123</sup>

The *sovety* at the regional level were attached to the Komsomol *obkom*. They organized groups in cities and rural districts, which were part of Komsomol committees. The groups consisted of veterans of the two wars (Civil and Great Patriotic), former Komsomol members, current Komsomol leaders and Army representatives. The regional Union in Cheliabinsk had 15 to 25 members in 1963, while the city branches had between 10 and 15 members.<sup>124</sup> These unions seem to have provided a platform for veterans to organize themselves in a Soviet institution at the regional and local level, a possibility which the Soviet Committee of War Veterans (*Sovetskii komitet veteranov voiny*, SKVV) had refused them.<sup>125</sup>

Their members’ main activities were giving speeches and lectures at youth evenings, on radio and on television; helping school committees to create exhibitions; and organizing excursions and war games at memorial places. The “labour veterans”, “old communists”, and “war veterans” assisted Komsomol committees with their daily tasks, such as presenting new members with membership cards. They were also involved in organizing exhibitions and picture archives.<sup>126</sup> They helped to prepare young men for military service and kept in contact with recruits in the Red Army in order to stimulate their pride in serving the country and

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<sup>122</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-4, pp.320-3, quotation p.323.

<sup>123</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, p.37; OGACHO 1467-1-4, pp.320-3; “Vstrechatrekhpokolenii”, *KT*, 25.10.1963, p.2.

<sup>124</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, pp.62-3, p.23; TsGA 4034-42-196, p.157; TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.67-8; OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.25-7; OGACHO 485-1-3228, p.74.

<sup>125</sup> Mark Edele. *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War. A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp.153-75.

<sup>126</sup> Quotations see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.112; see also footnote above.

emulating the heroism of previous generations. The veterans' soviets also participated in the solemn celebration of military holidays such as "Artillery Day" or "Victory Day".<sup>127</sup>

Although the youth newspapers as well as leading Komsomol workers, so e.g. the key-note speaker at the first conference of the Cheliabinsk agricultural Komsomol organization in 1963, criticized the veterans unions' work,<sup>128</sup> the *sovety veteranov* generally seem to have functioned smoothly. The papers praised the veterans' contribution in encouraging historic awareness among the young generation.<sup>129</sup> The cooperation, judging from the Komsomol's own reports, resulted in benefits for both sides. For a start, the veterans helped to make history more understandable and accessible for young people.<sup>130</sup> The involvement of pensioners in Komsomol work also provided the pensioners themselves with meaningful activities and occupations.<sup>131</sup> In return for the veterans' contribution to their moral education programmes, some Komsomol groups helped the veterans; some even looked after bedridden and invalid veterans in so-called 'invalid houses' (*dom invalidov*).<sup>132</sup>

Encounters between the generations were also represented on stage. A play based on Ostrovskii's "How the Steel Was Tempered" was performed in the Cheliabinsk Playhouse in 1963. Its main idea was a meeting between Korchagin's generation and the generation of the 1960s. By showing the many similarities between "fighters for exactly the same cause" from different eras, the performance was supposed to propagate the discourses of the heroic past and urge present-day youth to follow the example of the older generation.<sup>133</sup> A play about the Revolution and the Civil War that was staged at the same Playhouse in 1957 also highlighted

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<sup>127</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-4, pp.320-3; TsGA 4034-42-340, pp.13-4.

<sup>128</sup> For example, "Khranite pamiat' o geroiakh", *Komsomolets*, 25.5.1958, p.3; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.66, see also OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.4; TsGA 4034-40-136, p.24.

<sup>129</sup> For example, "Neischerpaema leninskaia tema", *Komsomolets*, 22.4.1964, p.3; "Vstrecha pokolenii", *KT*, 20.7.1962, p.1.

<sup>130</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.106.

<sup>131</sup> A veteran joked about being busy with Komsomol work for a whole day, see TsGA 4034-40-201, pp.98-9.

<sup>132</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.62.

<sup>133</sup> "Vstrecha pokolenii", *Komsomolets*, 27.10.1963, p.4.

this tie between the generations and tried to evoke similar emotions among the audience.

Personal encounters might provoke “anger against the enemies of the Fatherland, pain for the dying revolutionary warriors, anxiety for the outcome of the battles and delight about the final victory”.<sup>134</sup>

## Rituals and Social Practices

Personalizing history was a rather new way of commemorating the heroic past within the Komsomol, but other strategies were more traditional. Social practices and rituals had long played a key role in celebrating historic events.<sup>135</sup> Throughout the Thaw period they continued to create a structure for understanding Soviet history.<sup>136</sup> Although they were not an ‘action’ as such, rituals and practices were a practical means of communication; they complemented the representation of social reality set out in official discourse about the past and helped to shape certain patterns of interpretation.<sup>137</sup> A ritual is a “stylized, repetitive social activity which, through the use of symbolism, expresses and defines social relations”, at the same time offering routinized patterns of interpretation.<sup>138</sup>

The use of rituals, social practices and public space can be traced back to earlier periods of Soviet history. Rituals were an integral part of Stalinist culture,<sup>139</sup> but their content changed

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<sup>134</sup> “Dykhanie Revoliutsii”, *Komsomolets*, 11.12.1957, p.4.

<sup>135</sup> Malte Rolf. “Constructing a Soviet Time. Bolshevik Festivals and Their Rivals during the First Five-Year Plan. A Study of the Central Black Earth Region”, in: *Kritika* 1(2000), 3, pp.447-73; Malte Rolf. *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006.

<sup>136</sup> Ute Daniel. *Kompendium Kulturgeschichte. Theorien, Praxis, Schlüsselwörter*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001, pp.171-2; Wolfgang Kaschuba. “Öffentliche Kultur. Kommunikation, Deutung und Bedeutung”, in: *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften, Band 1*, ed. by Friedrich Jaeger, Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004, pp.128-38.

<sup>137</sup> For example, see Alf Lüdtkke. “Sprache und Herrschaft in der DDR”; Karl H. Hörning. “Kultur als Praxis”, in: *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften, Band 1*, pp.139-51; Kaschuba, “Öffentliche Kultur. Kommunikation, Deutung und Bedeutung”.

<sup>138</sup> Christel Lane. *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp.3-12, quotation p.11; Doris Kolesch. “Rollen, Rituale und Inszenierungen”, in: *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften, Band 2: Paradigmen und Disziplinen*, pp.277-92.

<sup>139</sup> For example, see Getty, Arch. “Samokritika Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-1938”, in: *Russian Review* 58(1999), pp.49-70.

during the Thaw period. The celebration of rites of passage was emphasized and by the end of the period, more and more Komsomol organizations were making use of public spaces to mark these events in young people's lives. It was only during the following decade that these rituals were established as common practice.<sup>140</sup> In the post-Stalin era, as opposed to the 1930s and 1940s, there was a high degree of convergence between rituals and everyday practice, since the transcendent dimension was missing completely.<sup>141</sup>

Due to their performative character, rituals and social practices left space for creative implementation and interpretation.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, they were embedded in a fixed set of discourses which were promoted by mainly text-based strategies, as discussed above. Even performative speech acts such as oral presentations and contributions to Komsomol meetings were printed and made available within the Komsomol. This characteristic logocentrism of Soviet culture can be regarded as an attempt to fix meaning by constantly repeating a clear and narrow set of rhetorical truths, thereby limiting the scope for individual interpretation.<sup>143</sup> It is hard to establish the degree to which rituals and social practices actually shaped the young people's outlook and their understanding of history. By participating, the individual Komsomol member publicly demonstrated that he or she accepted the norms of the

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<sup>140</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, p.3; David E. Powell. *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union. A Study of Mass Persuasion*, Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press, 1975, pp.66-84.

<sup>141</sup> Dietrich Harth and Axel Michaels. "Grundlagen des SFB 619 Ritualdynamik. Soziokulturelle Prozesse in historischer und kulturvergleichender Perspektive", in: *Forum Ritualdynamik* 1(2003), pp.1-65, here mainly pp.14-5.

<sup>142</sup> Felicia Hughes-Freeland. "Introduction", in: *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. by Felicia Hughes-Freeland, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp.1-28; Kertzer, "Ritual, Politik und Macht"; Fischer-Lichte, "Performance, Inszenierung, Ritual"; Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, pp.9-11.

<sup>143</sup> For the significance of the written word in the Soviet context see Beyrau, *Intelligenz und Dissens*, pp.231-2; on the "logocentric" Soviet historiography which was "fixed to the text", see Karl Schlögel. "Utopie als Notstandsdenken . Einige Überlegungen zur Diskussion über Utopie und Sowjetkommunismus", in: *Utopie und politische Herrschaft im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit*, ed. by Wolfgang Hardtwig, München: Oldenbourg, 2003, pp.77-96, here p.88.

community. Formal acceptance, however, does not allow any final conclusions to be drawn about belief or political conviction.<sup>144</sup>

Soviet holidays and celebrations provided the most visible place for ritual in the Soviet context in relation to remembering the past. Although holidays in the post-Stalin period increasingly lost their public meaning and gradually became privatized,<sup>145</sup> the significance ascribed to them within official discourse remained unchanged. Holidays still functioned as “schools of Soviet identity”. As they were celebrated, a fixed version of the past was passed on in the form of an officially defined cultural memory.<sup>146</sup>

A direct link to the past can be seen in the location of major Komsomol celebrations. Historically significant places such as memorials were used to stage holidays and also to solemnly mark rites of passage, e.g. accepting new members or seeing off recruits to the Red Army. Meetings and conferences, other occasions for ritual practice within the Komsomol, frequently took place in historic assembly rooms. They often coincided with commemorative days of the Komsomol, the Party or the whole country, such as Lenin’s birthday, the anniversary of the Komsomol, May Day or Revolution Day.

The major role of holidays was to transmit an official and uniform version of cultural memory. However, their celebration always created a more or less direct link to the present social, political and economic situation and gave an outlook on the future as well.<sup>147</sup> For example, articles about the Second World War emphasized that not only had military strength increased since the war, the Soviet economic performance had also been impressive and

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<sup>144</sup> Rappaport, “Ritual und performative Sprache”; Yurchak, *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more*, pp.16-7 and 24-9; see also Jan Plamper. “Cultural Production, Cultural Consumption. Post-Stalin Hybrids”, in: *Kritika* 6(2005), 4, pp.755-62, here p. 761.

<sup>145</sup> For example, see Kelly and Sirotinina, “Bylo neponiatno i smeshno”; Klaus Roth. “Alltag und Festtag im sozialistischen und postsozialistischen Europa”, in: *Feste, Feiern, Rituale im östlichen Europa. Studien zur sozialistischen und postsozialistischen Festkultur*, ed. by Klaus Roth, Berlin: LIT, 2008, pp.11-29.

<sup>146</sup> Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, pp.7-16, p.345.

<sup>147</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, p.153; Rolf, “Constructing a Soviet Time”, p.470.

paved the way to a prosperous future.<sup>148</sup> Thus prepared, the Soviet people were said to “look calmly to the future and approach with confident steps the happiness of the whole of humankind – communism”.<sup>149</sup>

The link to the present and future is also obvious in the preparations which the Komsomol organizations undertook for certain jubilee dates, such as the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution and the 40<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> birthdays of the Komsomol. Weeks and months before the holiday, young people started to prepare so-called “labour gifts” (*trudovye podarki*).

Proceeding from Lenin’s statement that “the best way to celebrate the anniversary of the great Revolution is to focus all attention on its unresolved tasks”,<sup>150</sup> young workers were asked to “greet every holiday with new labour victories”.<sup>151</sup> Young workers committed themselves to higher production norms or to fulfilling the usual norms ahead of schedule.<sup>152</sup> In addition, socialist competitions were announced, in which various working brigades or shifts competed to achieve the highest production norms.<sup>153</sup> Other ‘labour gifts’ included promoting cuts in production costs and coming up with suggestions for how to rationalize certain production processes.<sup>154</sup> In preparation for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution, for example, over

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<sup>148</sup> For example, see “Istoricheskaia pobeda”, *KT*, 9.5.1958, p.2; see also “Prazdnik pobedy”, *Komsomolets*, 9.5.1953, p.1; “Velikaia pobeda”, *Komsomolets*, 9.5.1954, p.2; “Eta slava – naveka!”, *KT*, 8.5.1959, p.1; “Segodnia – Den’ Pobedy”, *KT*, 9.5.1962, p.2.

<sup>149</sup> “Istoricheskaia pobeda”, *KT*, 9.5.1958, p.2; see also “Prazdnik pobedy”, *Komsomolets*, 9.5.1953, p.1; “Velikaia pobeda”, *Komsomolets*, 9.5.1954, p.2; “Eta slava – naveka!”, *KT*, 8.5.1959, p.1; “Segodnia – Den’ Pobedy”, *KT*, 9.5.1962, p.2.

<sup>150</sup> “Oktiabria dostoinuiu vstrechu!”, *KT*, 6.2.1957, p.1.

<sup>151</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.26.

<sup>152</sup> See OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.2, p.116; OGACHO 485-1-3090, p.50; “Chem ty vstrechaesh’ godovshchinu Oktiabria?”, *KT*, 5.10.1956, p.1; “Prinimai, rodina, nashi podarki!”, *Komsomolets*, 26.10.1958, p.1; “Slavnomu iubileiu – dostoinuiu vstrechu”, *Komsomolets*, 20.3.1964, p.1.

<sup>153</sup> See OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.5, p.112; “My gotovimsia k prazdniku”, *Komsomolets*, 12.9.1958, p.1; “Prinimai, rodina, nashi podarki!”, *Komsomolets*, 26.10.1958, p.1.

<sup>154</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.5; see also “Dostoino vstretim sorokoletnie komsomola”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1957, p.2.

8,000 suggestions were submitted in the Cheliabinsk Region, allegedly resulting in enormous savings.<sup>155</sup>

Other ‘labour gifts’ could involve following up initiatives to build apartment blocks and cultural facilities, or working voluntarily at various construction sites throughout the regions.<sup>156</sup> The Cheliabinsk regional organization proudly summed up the new buildings which had been erected to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution as follows:

“33 village clubs, 3 Kolkhoz palaces of culture, 2 gyms and a wide-screen cinema.”<sup>157</sup>

Komsomol organizations in schools or non-productive workplaces like department stores mainly rendered their ‘labour gifts’ by collecting scrap metal or waste paper.<sup>158</sup> Another kind of ‘labour gift’ used to mark important dates in Soviet history were initiatives to improve cities, towns and villages by planting trees and shrubberies.<sup>159</sup> This ritual of giving seems to be the expression of a particular understanding of state legitimization. In this reading, it was the Soviet state which provided the framework in which labour heroism and labour gifts were possible; therefore, the gifts symbolized the people’s gratefulness to the state. This ritual giving seems to have remained more or less unchanged since the Stalinist tradition. The only alteration was that it was no longer Stalin, but the Soviet state which was considered responsible for the good living and working conditions.<sup>160</sup>

Besides gesturing symbolically towards past, present, and future, the actions taken by the Komsomol organizations in preparation for state holidays and anniversaries extended the duration of the celebrations and celebrated the Soviet collective spirit. Articles in youth

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<sup>155</sup> “Prinimai, rodina, nashi podarki!”, *Komsomolets*, 26.10.1958, p.1.

<sup>156</sup> See OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.97; “Dostoino vstretim sorokoletnie komsomola”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1957, p.2; “My gotovimsia k prazdniku”, *Komsomolets*, 12.9.1958, p.1.

<sup>157</sup> “Prinimai, rodina, nashi podarki!”, *Komsomolets*, 26.10.1958, p.1.

<sup>158</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.2; OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.97.

<sup>159</sup> “Chem ty vstrechaesh’ godovshchinu Oktiabria?”, *KT*, 5.10.1956, p.1; see also “Nashi podarki”, *Komsomolets*, 14.9.1958, p.1; “Prinimai, rodina, nashi podarki!”, *Komsomolets*, 26.10.1958, p.1.

<sup>160</sup> For the Stalinist tradition see Jeffrey Brooks. *Thank you, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp.83-105.

newspapers started to create a festive atmosphere long before the actual holiday. In their coverage of the celebrations, they extended the holiday well beyond the festive acts themselves.<sup>161</sup> The unity of the Soviet people in their endeavour to celebrate important holidays was also emphasized by underlining close links to other regions and Moscow. Thus, Komsomol organizations in Sverdlovsk, the major city in the Urals, or in Moscow, the centre of the Soviet Union, launched initiatives for national and Union-wide socialist competitions. Organizations in the regions willingly took them up, thereby strengthening a sense of belonging to the huge Soviet community.<sup>162</sup>

Moscow provided the model for celebrations in the regions. Preparations and the actual staging of ceremonies followed a strict pattern, originating in the centre.<sup>163</sup> This is obvious from coverage of the most important holidays – May Day and Revolution Day<sup>164</sup> – in the regional press. The papers usually started with a leading article the day before the holiday, which emphasized the significance of the historic event for the present and the future. The day after the holiday, they published articles which precisely described the sequence of events during the parade and the demonstrations in Moscow, followed by very similar depictions of the celebrations in the regions, mainly in the regional capitals. This manner of representation remained basically unchanged throughout the whole Thaw period.<sup>165</sup> Coverage of the festivity around Revolution Day in *Komsomolets Tatarii* in 1959 serves as a typical example. An

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<sup>161</sup> This idea can be found in Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, pp.121-9.

<sup>162</sup> “Oktiabria dostoinuiu vstrechu!”, *KT*, 6.2.1957, p.1; “Dostoino vstretim sorokoletnie komsomola”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1957, p.2; Malte Rolf uses the term “festive community” to describe this unity, see Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, p.120.

<sup>163</sup> See Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, p.159; Kelly and Sirotinina, “Bylo neponiatno i smeshno”, p.266; Rolf, *Das sowjetische Massenfest*, pp.108-17.

<sup>164</sup> Although changes in the red calendar occurred frequently, 1<sup>st</sup> May and 7<sup>th</sup> November remained the most important political holidays throughout the Soviet period, see Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, p.154; Kelly and Sirotinina, “Bylo neponiatno i smeshno”.

<sup>165</sup> See articles for 1953 and 1963, “Strana na kanune prazdnika”, *KT*, 4.11.1953, p.1; “Parad i demonstratsiia”, *KT*, 10.11.1953, p.4; “Prazdnichnaia demonstratsiia v Kazani”, *KT*, 10.11.1953, p.4; “Ot shturma Zimnego – k shturme kosmosa!”, *KT*, 6.11.1963, p.1; “Voennyi parad”, *KT*, 10.11.1963, p.1; “Likuet solnetchnyi Tatarstan”, *KT*, 10.11.1963, pp.2-3.

opening article the day before the holiday emphasized the importance of the revolutionary events of October 1917 for social and political achievements since then. It praised the “unequalled achievements of the Soviet people” in the economy and in building communist society. After describing the clearly outlined path to the communist future which the Soviet people were just about to take, the article emphasized the importance of the Party’s leading role for past as well as future development of the Soviet Union.<sup>166</sup> This emphasis followed reports about demonstrations in Moscow, during which “the workers of the capital demonstrated their unity with the Communist Party”.<sup>167</sup>

The people’s unwavering support for the Soviet leadership’s ambitious plans on the way to communism was constantly emphasized in articles, which invariably stated that participants in the demonstrations were uniformly happy and content. “Festively dressed, cheerful young men and women” assembled in central Kazan’ to celebrate Revolution Day; they sang “joyful songs about peace and the beloved Fatherland, about creative labour and human happiness”.<sup>168</sup> Celebrations of the Revolution in the regions lacked the military parade of the centre, although sometimes graduates of a military school opened the event as a kind of compensation.<sup>169</sup> The regions, however, seemed to make the link between the past, present and future more explicit. Past achievements and the present fight for communism were represented by a crowd of demonstrators carrying a huge number of banners and flags. The crowd welcomed the future represented by schoolchildren, who, as *Komsomolets Tatarii* put it in 1959, “seemed to bring the scent of spring to the square”. In this case, the schoolchildren carried models of space shuttles, demonstrating that it would be their generation’s task to

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<sup>166</sup> “Solntse Oktiabria”, *KT*, 6.11.1959, p.1.

<sup>167</sup> “Parad i demonstratsiia”, *KT*, 10.11.1959, p.1.

<sup>168</sup> “Prazdnik mira”, *KT*, 10.11.1959, p.2.

<sup>169</sup> In Kazan’ in 1958, see “Prazdnichnaia demonstratsiia v Kazani”, *KT*, 12.11.1958, p.2.

accomplish the great achievements which had been started by the past and present generations.<sup>170</sup>

Komsomol members mainly participated in such ceremonies as part of their work or study collective or provided their own columns within the parade. The Komsomol organizations themselves were not involved in preparing and staging the centrally planned celebration sequence. The holidays were, however, used as an occasion to propagate the official version of the past, while giving members “a big labour and political boost”.<sup>171</sup> For example, female members of an artistic circle in a hall of residence in the Cheliabinsk Region used the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution as an opportunity to produce an embroidered panel on the topic “The October Revolution was a gift for our Fatherland”. While they were busy with this, their male colleagues were repairing all the radio sets in the hall. The photography circle contributed by preparing a “book of labour gifts from youth in honour of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary”. Some Komsomol organizations set out to embellish their factory, planted trees and shrubberies, or built and repaired sports facilities.<sup>172</sup>

Whereas the Komsomol played a rather passive role in state holidays, it was, of course, the main organizer of genuine youth and Komsomol holidays. On key dates such as the celebration of the Komsomol’s birthday or Lenin’s birthday – whose name the Komsomol bore – ceremonial meetings were organized by the *obkom* and members from right across the region attended. When the Tatar organization celebrated its anniversary in 1957, the Regional Committee called a celebratory meeting in the Playhouse, to which “representatives of all three generations of our glorious Komsomol” were invited. The meeting opened with the Soviet anthem and a speech by the First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the

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<sup>170</sup> “Prazdnik mira”, *KT*, 10.11.1959, p.2.

<sup>171</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.1.

<sup>172</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.117.

Komsomol, who highlighted the huge achievements of the Komsomol in the past and called on the present generation to follow previous examples of heroism. Speeches by the First Party Secretary and representatives of various heroic periods in the Soviet past were followed by a concert of amateur groups.<sup>173</sup> In July 1964, the Tatar Regional Committee organized a huge meeting on Liberty Square in central Kazan' to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day when the organization had adopted Lenin's name. The First Secretary welcomed the assembled young people and emphasized Lenin's significance for the youth organization.<sup>174</sup>

In the 1960s, individual Komsomol organizations also ran photo competitions as a popular way of marking significant dates in the Komsomol's past. This was in keeping with the general enthusiasm for promoting photography during this period. In October 1962, the Cheliabinsk City Committee announced a competition on the topic "value the honour of the young builder of communism".<sup>175</sup> A similar photo competition was organised for the whole region in April 1964 in honour of the day when the Komsomol had assumed Lenin's name, 40 years earlier. Covering various aspects of contemporary daily life – "labour, science, arts, sports, studies and leisure" – the contest linked the heroic past to the present day.<sup>176</sup> The published prize-winning pictures emphasized the heroism of the present-day generation and highlighted its connection to the communist future. One picture showed a young couple on their way "to the East", i.e. to participate in the Virgin Lands Campaign (picture 3a); other pictures portrayed young people as the future of the country, studying for exams (picture 3b) and longing to be grown-up athletes (picture 3c); another picture makes the link to the future explicit, showing young competitors in a race who cross the finish line under a banner bearing the slogan "communism – our aim" (picture 3d).

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<sup>173</sup> TsGA, 4034-40-146, first quotation p.1; "Komsomol Tatarii otmechaetsvoi den' rozhdeniia", *KT*, 17.7.1957, p.1, here second quotation.

<sup>174</sup> TsGA 4034-42-400, p.0.

<sup>175</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.297.

<sup>176</sup> "Fotokonkurs", *Komsomolets*, 8.4.1964, p.4.



Picture 3a<sup>177</sup>



Picture 3b<sup>178</sup>



Picture 3c<sup>179</sup>



Picture 3d<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> *Komsomolets*, 3.6.1964, p.4.

<sup>179</sup> *Komsomolets*, 26.8.1964, p.4.

<sup>180</sup> *Komsomolets*, 8.5.1964, p.4.

Individual Komsomol organizations conceived particular ways of marking significant dates in the history of the youth organization, always adhering to the parameters of official remembrance strategies. To celebrate the 41<sup>st</sup> birthday of the Komsomol, young workers at a factory in Cheliabinsk staged a play about the Civil War in the factory club. The actors identified with their roles to such a degree that they even heroically continued the performance when one of them was accidentally injured by a bullet. Thus, the border between the present and the past was rendered permeable: young people were urged to copy past heroism and “feel like fighters when working at their machines on the production line, as well as when on stage in the clubs”.<sup>181</sup> The Komsomol organization of a Cheliabinsk school found a particularly original way of remembering the heroic past. The students organized a ceremony, during which they lit colourful rockets and torches. Then they “held a minute’s silence in memory of those who had given their life for our happiness”, sang a revolutionary Komsomol song and held a competition between the choirs of the classes.<sup>182</sup>

A common way to mark Komsomol anniversaries and events connected to the life of Lenin was to organize relays (*estafeta*) and parades. This was a literal interpretation of the governing metaphor discussed earlier, the *estafeta pokolenii* (‘relay race of generations’), which depicted young people as the inheritors of communist tradition. During the summer of 1964, the Kazan’ *gorkom* organized a relay through the city to celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city Komsomol organization, as well as a festive parade to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day when the Komsomol had assumed Lenin’s name.<sup>183</sup> Kazan’ and Tatarstan were home to many places where Lenin had spent time in childhood, studied and become a revolutionary. This explains why more celebrations are recorded as taking place in this region than in

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<sup>181</sup> “41 god VLKSM”, *Komosmolets*, 30.10.1959, p.2.

<sup>182</sup> “Prazdnik komsomola”, *Komosmolets*, 1.11.1963, p.2.

<sup>183</sup> TsGA 4034-42-401, pp.27-8; see also for Cheliabinsk “Slavomu iubileiu – dostoinuiu vstrechu”, *Komsomolets*, 20.3.1964, p.1.

Cheliabinsk. The Komsomol organization of the KGU used this potential to stage a lengthy celebration of the so-called “Lenin days” (*leninskie dni*) around Lenin’s birthday on 22 April. The festivities included a sports festival, the so-called *Leninskaia estafeta*, in which athletes from the university, other colleges of the city, factories, agricultural districts and other regions participated. It opened with a parade of all participants through the city centre and finished after the sports events with an “evening of friendship”.<sup>184</sup>

The Lenin days were also used to boost propaganda and campaigning among rural and urban youth. So-called *agitbrigady* (campaigning brigades) set out for the countryside and factories within the city in order to give ‘Lenin readings’ (*leninskie chteniia*).<sup>185</sup> Similar efforts were made for other commemorative days connected with Lenin, such as his speech to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Komsomol Congress in 1920 or his expulsion from Kazan’ university, which was said to mark the start of his revolutionary career. The KGU Komsomol organization used the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the latter date as an occasion to organize a ceremonial march of all students, who “walked to the Lenin museum carrying flags and slogans, followed by columns of an orchestra”. They were greeted by Komsomol and Party secretaries and by old Bolsheviks who had witnessed some of Lenin’s speeches themselves.<sup>186</sup>

A common social practice employed within the Komsomol to commemorate holidays connected with Lenin was to organize voluntary work on a Saturday or Sunday. These so called *subbotniki* and *voskresniki* were supposed to familiarize present-day youth with the heroic past,<sup>187</sup> an objective dating back to Lenin himself.<sup>188</sup> His birthday in April was the main occasion for organizing voluntary work, such as tidying up and embellishing public

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<sup>184</sup> TsGA 6951-1-112, p.3.

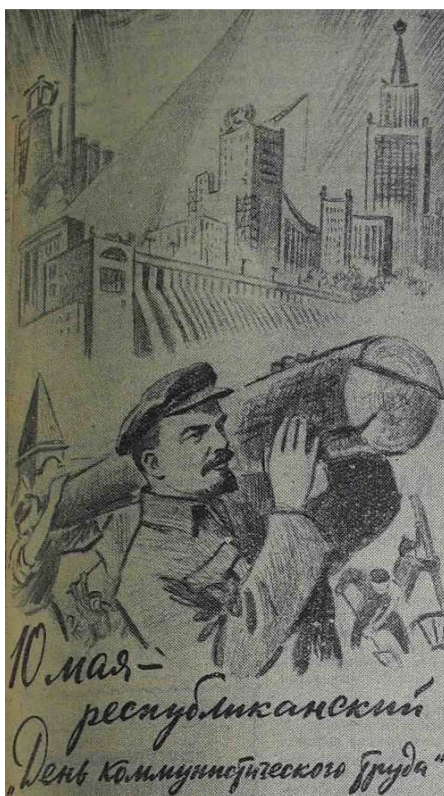
<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> TsGA 6951-1-112, p.3; see also OGACHO 485-1-3155, pp.167-8.

<sup>187</sup> The First Secretary of the Central Committee in 1962, RGASPI M1-46-322, p.29.

<sup>188</sup> Quoted in “Shkola kommunisticheskogo vospitaniia mass”, *KT* 10.5.1957, p.1.

spaces. At the same time, elements of the heroic past connected to Lenin's biography were recalled.<sup>189</sup> The first Soviet *subbotnik* was often mentioned: it took place on the Moscow-Kazan' railway line in May 1919 and Lenin himself allegedly participated. Pictures of Lenin, e.g. carrying a trunk, visually emphasized the link between the heroic past and present heroism (picture 4).<sup>190</sup> The *subbotniki* and *voskresniki* were social practices that involved large numbers of youth. More than 200,000 young people took part in the republic-wide *voskresnik* in Tatarstan in April 1958,<sup>191</sup> while over 30,000 young people did voluntary work in Cheliabinsk in 1963.<sup>192</sup>



Picture 4: "10 May. Republic-wide 'Day of Communist Labour'"<sup>193</sup>

<sup>189</sup> See TsGA 6951-1-112, pp.2-3; OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.168.

<sup>190</sup> "Dostoino oznamenuem", *KT*, 26.4.1959, p.1; see also "Muzhaet gvardiia novatorov", *Komsomolets*, 10.5.1959, p.2; "Vot by poradovalsia Il'ich", *KT*, 21.4.1961, p.2.

<sup>191</sup> "Okolo 200,000 iunoshei i devushek", *KT* 25.4.1958, p.1.

<sup>192</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.5.

<sup>193</sup> "Dostoinoo znamenuem", *KT*, 26.4.1959, p.1.

Some Komsomol organizations used socialist competitions and other social practices to remember specific events of the heroic past.<sup>194</sup> Around Nikolai Ostrovskii's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1964, a competition between young working brigades in the Cheliabinsk Region drew a direct link to the official version of the Soviet past by giving the winning brigade the honour of carrying Ostrovskii's name.<sup>195</sup> The few social practices in the economic sphere referred less directly to the official version of the heroic past, but young people were likely to understand the hints that were made, given the overwhelming omnipresence of Soviet rhetoric. A more explicit link was constructed by Komsomol activists who demanded a clearer and simpler style for the holding of meetings and for Komsomol work in general. For example, in 1964 the First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* recalled the working style of the revolutionary period and asked for "short resolutions to be adopted, as in the years of the Revolution and the Civil War".<sup>196</sup> Komsomol speakers stressed that although the tasks had changed – the main focus now lay on building communism – the Komsomol organizations still had to work with the same degree of discipline and enthusiasm as previous generations.<sup>197</sup>

Even the regular meetings that were a core aspect of ordinary Komsomol work were meant to be jazzed up with ways of remembering the heroic past. The central Komsomol leadership required that the regular procedure of the meetings should involve the ritual of singing of "revolutionary songs, with which Lenin and our fathers took the old world by storm and created the socialist state".<sup>198</sup> This demand was taken up by regional secretaries, who hoped the ritual would improve the meetings. Meetings were sometimes "so dull that one wants to cry"; they were remembered by attendees not for their form or content but merely for the fact

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<sup>194</sup> For example, OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.24-5, p. 136; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.30-2; RGASPI M1-6-943, p.105, p.147.

<sup>195</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3231, pp.46-57.

<sup>196</sup> TsGA 4034-42-400, p.400.

<sup>197</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.52; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.133.

<sup>198</sup> RGASPI M1-2-439, p.43.

that “one could smoke to one’s heart’s content”. The Komsomol leadership also suggested singing revolutionary songs at Komsomol evenings, dance events and “everywhere where youth gathers”.<sup>199</sup> Some young people were eager to follow this call, but complained that the repertoire of revolutionary songs was too limited and did not offer the desired variety. At the same time, the propagation of new songs was too slow and the young singers were offered no opportunity to learn them and integrate them into their repertoire.<sup>200</sup>

Like songs, symbols were an integral but contested part of Komsomol rituals and social practices. They played an important role in establishing a symbolic order and thus engendering the internalization of common norms and official discourses on the heroic past.<sup>201</sup> Symbols like red banners, badges and medals were crucial for commemorating the heroic past. Banners functioned as “a symbol of Komsomol members’ honour and combat unity”.<sup>202</sup> They represented the presence of past heroes in assemblies, “embodying the blood of those who fought for the happiness of the people”.<sup>203</sup> Their significance was highlighted during meetings, where the question of how to protect the banners was discussed. When one bureau member proposed to keep a banner in the safe, the regional Party secretary just stated: “Of course, we will not station militia around the banner, but we have to keep the banner safe”.<sup>204</sup> Komsomol members were criticized for not taking enough pictures in front of red banners.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.60.

<sup>200</sup> A district secretary from the Cheliabinsk Region in 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, 82-3; also a discussion at the end of a plenary meeting of the Tatar *obkom* in 1957, see TsGA 4034-40-138, pp.105-6.

<sup>201</sup> Harth and Michaels, “Grundlagen des SFB 619 Ritualdynamik”, p.16; Kertzer, “Ritual, Politik und Macht”, pp.366-70; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.191-207.

<sup>202</sup> *Sputnik Komsomol'skogo Aktivista*, p.88.

<sup>203</sup> The First Secretary of the CC in 1964, see RGASPI M1-2-439, p.43; see also the First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* who literally repeated Pavlov’s words in early 1964 and the first secretary of the agricultural regional Komsomol organization in Cheliabinsk, see TsGA 4034-42-397, p.36; OGACHO 1468-1-2, pp.295-6.

<sup>204</sup> Quotation OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.80; see also OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.130.

<sup>205</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.132.

Similar importance was ascribed to the Komsomol badge. It was supposed to be an honour for each Komsomol member to wear it.<sup>206</sup> The majority of members were, however, reluctant to display it on their chests. This prompted veterans and higher-ranking Komsomol leaders to express criticism of the Komsomol's invisibility in the public space: "Those who belong body and soul to the Komsomol are not ashamed of wearing the badge with the silhouette of the great leader of the Revolution on their chests. Only those who are not yet worthy of the high title of Leninist Komsomol do not wear this badge."<sup>207</sup> According to a plan set out in materials from Cheliabinsk from 1963, the badges were to be integrated into the Komsomol's initiation rite. The presentation of the Komsomol badge to new members, preferably by a veteran of a heroic period of the Soviet past, was intended to remind Komsomol novices of the inheritance and duty which they were accepting by entering the organization.<sup>208</sup>

A similar symbolic link to the heroic past can be found in medals which were presented to individual Komsomol members, organizations or the whole Komsomol at the all-Union level. Speakers at conferences and meetings frequently mentioned the five medals which the Komsomol had received for its heroic deeds during the wars and on the labour fronts since 1917.<sup>209</sup> Newspaper articles used them to illustrate the heroic past of the organization in a condensed form (see picture 5). The First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* described the medals as a tribute to the Komsomol's "devoted allegiance and loyalty to the Party and the people".<sup>210</sup> They were supposed to evoke pride among contemporary youth who were part of this heroic organization, motivating them to continue their ancestors' heroic deeds and

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<sup>206</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.295.

<sup>207</sup> The First Secretary of the Cheliabinsk industrial *obkom* in 1963, see OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.61; see also the account of a delegate at the regional conference in Cheliabinsk in 1960, see OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.9.

<sup>208</sup> A description of the rite in a town in the Cheliabinsk Region in 1963, see OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.25-7.

<sup>209</sup> The Komsomol was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for heroism during the Civil War (1928), Order of the Red Banner of Labour for participation in forced industrialization and collectivization (1931), Order of Lenin for heroism during the Second World War (1945), Order of Lenin for merits in the field of communist education and participation in socialist construction (1948), and Order of Lenin for participation in the Virgin Land Campaign (1956); see Irina A. Filipova. *Stranitsy istorii komsomola*, Cheliabinsk: Fakel, 2003, pp.7-10.

<sup>210</sup> So in 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-400, p.6.

devotion to Marxism-Leninism.<sup>211</sup> Despite the huge significance attributed to medals, one ‘Hero of the Soviet Union’ complained about the inadequate attention paid to them in public life. When his medal for military heroism failed to give him access to the VIP stand during the parades, he was deeply offended and insisted that youth should be brought up aware “of the heroic deeds of Soviet warriors”.<sup>212</sup>



Picture 5: Medals of the All-Union Communist Youth Union<sup>213</sup>

### **Projecting the Heroic Past on Urban Space**

Besides personalizing history and using rituals and social practices, the Komsomol relied on one more strategy to promote the official version of the heroic past: spatial relations. The presentation of the heroic past depended on real locations; history became manifest in places which had been the scene of historic events. Recent historiography has produced an extensive literature on ‘socialist spaces’, focusing on space and its use for social and cultural constructs

<sup>211</sup> For example, TsGA 4034-40-215, pp.2-5; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.62; OGACHO 1468-1-14, p.5.

<sup>212</sup> TsGA 4034-42-340, quotation p.14, see also p.17.

<sup>213</sup> *Komsomolets*, 26.10.1958, p.1.

in the Soviet context.<sup>214</sup> Streets, places and factories in the contemporary urban landscape were named as sites of historic events. For example, the KGU was mentioned positively as the “centre of revolutionary events in Kazan”;<sup>215</sup> a statue of young Lenin built in front of the University’s main building in 1954 made the link between past and present explicit.<sup>216</sup>

A fundamental role in exploiting the spatial dimension was played by city, village, factory or Komsomol organizations, which had the task of increasing young people’s awareness of Soviet history and shaping their perception of the past in line with the official discourses. An exhibition about the history of the Cheliabinsk Tractor Factory (*Chelabinskii Traktornyi Zavod*, ChTZ) on its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1963 was aimed mainly at a young audience, which was expected to become familiar with the factory’s history. Besides explaining different steps in the development of the manufacturing process, the exhibition organizers also held evenings at which older workers gave accounts of their production heroism during crucial periods of Soviet history.<sup>217</sup>

Vital in this type of propaganda work was the role of institutions dedicated to the local past, such as museums, which of course had their own Party and Komsomol organisations. Their important remit included conducting outreach activities with schoolchildren and young people. When the regional Komsomol organization celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1958, the Tatar State Museum decided to organize an exhibition about the heroic past of the all-Union and Tatar Komsomol organizations: “This exhibition will illuminate the whole path of the glorious Komsomol: the first youth unions in 1917 and the military heroic deeds of Komsomol members in the years of the Civil War; the outstanding work of the Komsomol in

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<sup>214</sup> For example, see David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds.). *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, Oxford/New York: Berg, 2002.

<sup>215</sup> Quotations in “Kazan’ v oktiabre 1905 goda”, *KT*, 4.11.1955, p.2.

<sup>216</sup> For the Lenin statue see “Po nashei respublike”, *KT*, 8.9.1954, p.1-2.

<sup>217</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.62.

the years of the first Five-Year Plan and its unequalled fight in the days of the Great Patriotic War; youth's work in the post-war period and the life of present-day Komsomol."<sup>218</sup> Five years later, the Museum organized another exhibition about the history of the regional Komsomol organization "from the conquest of the Winter Palace to the conquest of the Cosmos" which was publicized in posters, newspapers and documents.<sup>219</sup> To involve as many young people as possible in the presentation of the heroic past, Komsomol members were asked to help in collecting "material which reflects our youth's current life, work and studies".<sup>220</sup>

Such temporary displays about the Komsomol's past were institutionalized and made permanent towards the end of the Thaw period in so-called Museums of Komsomol Glory (*Muzei Komsomol'skoi slavy*). One museum was founded in Cheliabinsk in August 1964 and was permanently situated in the building of the Komsomol *gorkom*. Alongside showcases presenting heroic periods from the Komsomol's history, the head of the museum, who had been a Komsomol member herself in the 1920s, gave oral accounts of historic events when she had taken part directly in the 'relay-race of generations'. She would "not only talk of the past, what she had experienced and known – she also passed on the heroic baton of the fathers to the children".<sup>221</sup> Also in Kazan', the First Komsomol Secretary called for a similar museum to be organized in 1963; at the same time he asked the Komsomol organizations to set up a museum in honour of Musa Dzhaliil'. When visiting the museum, the young generation should, it was argued, become familiar with the heroic life and death of the poet. Young writers were supposed to "learn high patriotism from the outstanding poet" in this museum.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> "Etapy bol'shogo puti", *KT*, 29.10.1963, pp.4-5

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.40.

<sup>221</sup> "Dlia kogo sozdali muzei?", *Komsomolets*, 4.11.1964, p.4.

<sup>222</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.31.

The museums were believed to exert a particular influence on the behaviour and attitude of young people. Naturally, this was particularly true of the Lenin museums in Kazan’:

“Hundreds and thousands of Kazan’ residents and tourists from all corners of the country and from abroad... take an oath when they come out of the museum to follow the example of Il’ich in their work, life and studies”.<sup>223</sup> The museum’s actual popularity, however, was open to question. Some working collectives made a habit of visiting the museum after their *subbotnik* work – such as workers from a factory in Kazan’. However, the district secretary of the Soviet District in Kazan’ had to admit that the museums about Lenin were not attended frequently enough by young visitors. He therefore considered making them more attractive by using them as locations for regular social practices of the Komsomol organizations, such as the presentation of Komsomol membership cards. Students were supposed to prepare stories about Lenin’s heroic deeds and tell them to children and youngsters.<sup>224</sup>

The Komsomol organization of the KGU organized trips to the ‘Lenin Room’ (*Leninskaia komnata*) for all new students, in order to instil them with a sense of pride and responsibility as members of the historic institution.<sup>225</sup> In cities like Cheliabinsk, without links to the great leader’s life, no such historic sites were at hand. Therefore, Komsomol organizations had to rely on monuments to promote the official version of the heroic past through spatial configurations. Monuments were often used as a stage for various social practices in the Soviet ‘Red Calendar’. They were often erected at sites of historical events, marking them as special focal points of memory. In Zlatoust in the Cheliabinsk Region, for example, a prominent cast iron sculpture towered above the city and obtrusively indicated the location of a battle between the White Guards and the Red Army.<sup>226</sup> Demands were often made to admit

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p.66.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p.66-7.

<sup>225</sup> TsGA 6951-1-112, p.2.

<sup>226</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.61.

new members at major monuments, but throughout the Thaw period this remained an ideal of Komsomol leaders rather than an actual habit.<sup>227</sup>

However, there were some examples of monuments being effectively used to represent the official version of the past. The Komsomol *gorkom* in Miass in the Cheliabinsk region successfully organized the presentation of membership cards to new members at monuments in the city commemorating heroes of the past.<sup>228</sup> Another monument in a village in the Cheliabinsk Region, dedicated to Bolshevik fighters who were killed by counter-revolutionaries, was frequently used to commemorate heroic deeds of the Civil War: Pioneers and young people assembled and laid wreaths at the monument twice a year.<sup>229</sup> Regular meetings also took place on Victory Day at monuments to heroes of the Second World War. For instance, various delegations laid wreaths at a monument in Cheliabinsk, while an orchestra played the funeral march and veterans recalled their participation in key events of the war such as the battle of Brest or the Blockade of Leningrad.<sup>230</sup>

Another symbolic location was the *Orlenok* monument close to the children's park *Aloe Pole* in central Cheliabinsk. It was mainly used for admitting children into the Pioneer organization.<sup>231</sup> It was erected in 1958 in memory of young heroes from the South Urals who had fought and died for the Revolution during the Civil War.<sup>232</sup> The chosen metaphorical figure – a young eagle-like fighter – had great symbolic meaning in Soviet culture. Based on Maksim Gorkii's allegory of the falcon, the petrel and other birds, the high-flying and courageous eagle became the symbol of aviators in the mid-1930s and was praised in the

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<sup>227</sup> The First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* in January 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-397, p.36; see also OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.25-7; OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.296.

<sup>228</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.27.

<sup>229</sup> "Ne legenda", *Komsomolets*, 28.4.1963, p.2; "Pamiatnik neizvestnomykh geroiu", *Komsomolets*, 21.6.1963, p.4.

<sup>230</sup> "U pamiatnika geroiu", *Komsomolets*, 12.5.1957, p.4.

<sup>231</sup> For example, see OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.61.

<sup>232</sup> *Vremia, iunosti prikazhi. 80-letiiu Leninskogo komsomola posveshchaetsia*, Cheliabinsk: Oktiabr', 1998, pp.69-71; *Komsomol - moia sud'ba. 90-letiiu Cheliabinskoi oblastnoi komsomol'skoi organizatsii posviashchaetsia*, Cheliabinsk: ID "Guberniia", 2008, pp.194-7.

well-known song *Orlenok* of 1936, which linked this Icarus topic to the young and courageous heroes of the Civil War.<sup>233</sup> *Orlenok* was still popular during the Thaw and was included in a Komsomol songbook printed in the Cheliabinsk region.<sup>234</sup> When the monument to the ‘small eagle’ was solemnly inaugurated on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Komsomol in October 1958, “the famous song about the ‘Orlenok’ rang out as if spontaneously”.<sup>235</sup>

The Komsomol organizations commonly used the unveiling of new monuments as a stage for recalling the heroic past. Representatives of the heroic past were present and symbolized the link between generations. When a monument to the Cheliabinsk revolutionary Samuil Tsvilling was solemnly opened in 1957, an old Bolshevik and companion of the hero was just as important in the ceremony as the district Komsomol secretary and a schoolgirl.<sup>236</sup> A monument erected to “the young fighters for Soviet power” by the City Committee of the South Ural town of Zlatoust was inaugurated in 1963 in the presence of veterans, Party and Komsomol members and youth. The speakers reminded the audience about the heroes and their deeds and expressed the hope that the monument would “become a memorial for many, many young fighters for public happiness!”<sup>237</sup>

The Komsomol organizations were not just supposed to use the monuments for commemorating the heroic past. It also fell within their duty to collect funds for the erection of new monuments and the maintenance of existing ones. It was mainly the bigger organizations that were able to initiate the erection of monuments. The Komsomol organization of the Soviet District in Cheliabinsk, for example, collected funds to build a

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<sup>233</sup> For example, see Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch*, pp.34-9, pp. 155-62.

<sup>234</sup> *Komsomol'skii pesennik*, Emanzhelkinsk: Emanzhelinskii gorodskoi komitet VLKSM, 1963; see also *Tvoi, komsomolets, pesni. Sbornik pesen*. Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1975.

<sup>235</sup> *Vremia, iunosti prikazhi*, p.71.

<sup>236</sup> “Pamiatnik soldatu revoliutsii”, *Komsomolets*, 11.11.1957, p.4.

<sup>237</sup> “Pamiatniki”, *Komsomolets*, 31.7.1963, p.3.

monument in the city centre which was dedicated to the Ural revolutionary, Tsvilling.<sup>238</sup> The city organization in Zlatoust managed to raise enough money through voluntary work to erect a monument “dedicated to the young fighters for Soviet power”.<sup>239</sup> In this area, the Komsomol in the Cheliabinsk region was more successful than its counterpart in Tatarstan, perhaps because Kazan’, as a historic city, was subject to tighter regulations on its existing environment. From 1958 the Kazan’ city committee had planned to build a monument at the entrance to Gorky Park, to commemorate the heroic deeds of the Tatar Komsomol during the Civil War. However, the project was put on ice for several years. It was only in 1963 that the Komsomol organization in the city resumed the project and inaugurated the monument – a statue of a dying young man, desperately stretching his right arm for help.<sup>240</sup>

The question of maintaining monuments and the graves of Soviet heroes was particularly salient at two points in the Thaw period – 1956 and 1963. In September 1956 the bureau of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* compiled lists of all the monuments relating to the pre- and post-revolutionary periods. The lists stated each monument’s location, gave a short description and provided a report on its condition, identifying maintenance work which needed to be carried out on the monument or its surrounding territory.<sup>241</sup> The following month, an article in the *Komsomolets* drew readers’ attention to the heroic story of a Bolshevik battalion in a village, which had tipped the scales during battles against the Czech Legion with huge personal sacrifices. According to the article, the monument erected in their honour was “maintained in an unsatisfactory state: it is surrounded by a weathered wooden fence and weeds are growing everywhere in the small garden”. The article called on the Komsomol organization of the

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<sup>238</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.42; “Pamiatnik soldatu revoliutsii”, *Komsomolets*, 11.11.1957, p.4.

<sup>239</sup> “V Zlatouste”, *Komsomolets*, 23.10.1964, p.1.

<sup>240</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.29, 68; V.V. Kuz'min, Iu.I. Smykov and A.Kh. Khalikov. *Kazan'. Putevoditel'*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1977, pp.117-9.

<sup>241</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2962, pp.86, pp.91-3.

village to immediately put things right, as “these people who gave their lives for our happy present day deserve to have their memory honoured by the young generation”.<sup>242</sup>

The topic of maintenance was taken up during a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Party in June 1963, at which the head of the ideological commission, Leonid Fedorovich Il'ichev, urged the Komsomol to “take over the noble care of monuments to military glory”. Both the Tatar and Cheliabinsk regional committees reacted to this demand and asked subordinate Komsomol organizations “to take all monuments into their care”.<sup>243</sup> The First Secretary of the Cheliabinsk industrial *obkom* highlighted the example of a monument to heroes of the Civil War in Zlatoust, which was in a bad state. He pointed the finger at the city Komsomol organization, which had simply accepted the poor state of affairs.<sup>244</sup> Early results of this campaign could be observed in one of Tatarstan’s oil-producing districts, where the Komsomol directed operation “Star” (*Zvezda*) to uncover local and regional heroes and find their graves, in order to plant flowers and other decorations there and inform the whole village about their heroic deeds.<sup>245</sup>

The Komsomol organizations were also urged to embellish streets and squares which bore the names of people, locations or institutions connected to the heroic past. For example, the objection was voiced that in Komsomol Street in Kazan’, “nothing reminds us of the Komsomol apart from the street sign”. Therefore, the *obkom* secretary asked the city and district organizations to clean up the area and render it “a proper Komsomol space”.<sup>246</sup> He also complained that city planners’ efforts to name streets after figures of the past had come to nothing, while young people did not know the origin of the names of their own streets. He

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<sup>242</sup> “Etot pamiatik”, *Komsomolets*, 3.10.1956, p.3; for another example see “U pamiatnika geroia”, *Komsomolets*, 12.5.1957, p.4.

<sup>243</sup> Quotations OGACHO 1468-1-2, 296, p.7; see also TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.29-30.

<sup>244</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.61-2.

<sup>245</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, p.36.

<sup>246</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.29-30.

proposed that subordinate organizations should organize street parties to celebrate the birthdays of heroes and set up small museums in their memory.<sup>247</sup> However, the request that every young person should be aware of traces of the heroic past was, in the event, followed up only in 1973 when a guidebook to the street names of Kazan' was published.<sup>248</sup>

Young people were also expected to show an awareness of historic events and figures when it came to using public space for leisure or solemn parades. The fact that youth were generally ill-informed about the history of their locality was criticised as part of a nationwide drive to re-establish 'local studies' (*kraevedenie*), which had been suppressed in the late 1930s.<sup>249</sup> The First Secretary of the Tatar Komsomol *obkom* explicitly urged all Komsomol members of his regional organization to actively use public space to draw young people's attention to the heroic past. He suggested organizing parades (*manifestatsii*) through city districts or villages after voluntary work and initiation ceremonies. Besides increasing young people's awareness of local history, such use of space would "unite Komsomol members and create pride in their organization, raising the Komsomol organization's authority in the eyes of the public, as well as everyone's responsibility for the further work and life of the organization and for the common cause".<sup>250</sup> An article in the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* also made specific proposals about how to use space to commemorate a particular aspect of the heroic past: it described the route of 18<sup>th</sup> century insurgent Pugachev through Cheliabinsk Region and proposed various itineraries for walking in the footsteps of this alleged pioneer of the Revolution.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.30-1.

<sup>248</sup> V. Belokopytov and N. Shevchenko. *Ikh imenami nazvany ulitsy Kazani*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1973.

<sup>249</sup> So the head of the agricultural regional trade union (председатель сельского облпрофсовета) of the Cheliabinsk Region in 1963, see OGACHO 485-1-3228, p.13; on *kraevedenie* see e.g. Emily Johnson. *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study itself. The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006; Victoria Donovan. *Nestolichnaya kul'tura. Regional and National Identity in post-1961 Russian Culture*, Oxford: University of Oxford, 2011.

<sup>250</sup> In 1964, see TsGA 4034-42-401, p.28.

<sup>251</sup> "Po pugachevskim mestam", *Komsomolets*, 16.5.1954, p.4.

This regional use of public space is in line with the Soviet spatial understanding. Soviet leaders were “convinced of the spatiality of the social” and used spatial formation to prove that society was mouldable to their own blueprint of a communist future.<sup>252</sup> This becomes evident in major construction projects throughout Soviet history: the city of Magnitogorsk in the South Ural steppe was built almost overnight at the end of the 1920s and became one of the biggest steel-producing centres in the country;<sup>253</sup> hydro-electric power stations were presented as construction sites of communism and formed a bridge between Stalinist mobilization and the utopian dynamism of youth during the Thaw;<sup>254</sup> the Virgin Land campaign mobilized thousands of young people to cultivate wasteland in southern Russia and Kazakhstan during the 1950s;<sup>255</sup> and the Baikal-Amur Main Line was the last project to mobilize youth for simultaneously constructing a railway line and building communism.<sup>256</sup>

This chapter has explored the content of official discourse about the heroic past. It has concluded that the way past heroism was presented did not undergo major changes during the Thaw period, despite attempts by media makers in the centre to make propaganda more dynamic and true-to-life. Heroes were portrayed in the same stereotypical patterns as during Stalinism. Although some minor alterations can be observed in the narrative structure and the types of heroes, the overall picture is one of strong continuity between Stalinism and the Thaw in the presentation of the heroic past to the young generation. The strategies used by the Komsomol to promote this official version of history continued many elements of the Stalinist

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<sup>252</sup> Klaus Gestwa. “Technik als Kultur der Zukunft. Der Kult um die ‘Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus’”, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30(2004), pp.37-73, here p.43.

<sup>253</sup> Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley et.al.: University of California Press, 1995.

<sup>254</sup> Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*.

<sup>255</sup> See below chapter 4; see also Michaela Pohl. “Women and Girls in the Virgin Land”, in: *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Melanie Ilic, Susan E. Reid and Lynne Attwood, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.52-74; Michaela Pohl. “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages’: Ethnic Relations and Soviet Identity in the Virgin Lands”, in: *Peopling the Russian Periphery. Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. by Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland, London and New York: Routledge, 2007, pp.238-61.

<sup>256</sup> Grützmacher, *Die Baikal-Amur-Magistrale*.

tradition. Propaganda was mainly transmitted in newspapers, speeches and discussion panels, as well as some more interesting formats such as question-and-answer evenings or Komsomol Wednesdays. Apart from propaganda, rituals were designed to recall the heroic past. The rituals revived practices of the early Soviet period, such as *subbotniki* and *voskresniki*. They also established new ways of marking major events in the lives of young people. New forms of commemoration were developed during the Thaw, such as the personalization of history. The importance ascribed to public space basically remained the same and the Komsomol integrated public space into its remembrance practices.

Major changes can be observed in the institutionalization of rituals and the use of space. At the beginning of the Thaw, practices of remembering the heroic past and using public space to do so were rather random and subject to individual interpretation. However, their form and content were increasingly fixed towards the end of the period. The same process can be observed in rituals and social practices, which became increasingly normalized. This marks the Thaw as a transitional period, when major changes took place in the fixation of meaning and social practices relating to remembrance of the heroic past. The next chapter follows up the question of change or continuity within Komsomol rhetoric and Komsomol strategies for promoting the ideas of the communist project. It explores how the Komsomol dealt with undesired remains of the past, particularly religion and deviant behaviour; it asks whether practices differed significantly from Stalinist times.

## Chapter 3: The Undesired Past. The Fight against Religion and Deviant Behaviour

The discourses of the Thaw clearly distinguished between positive and negative aspects of history. Propaganda drew a clear line between the heroic past, associated particularly with revolutionary struggle, and the bad capitalist past. According to Soviet rhetoric, even young people who had been born long after the Revolution were still exposed to so-called “remnants of the past” (*perezhitki proshlogo*).<sup>1</sup> As Hilary Pilkington has argued, the notion of youth as “victims of Western influence” was added to the fear of shadows of the undesired past.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the fear of the West, Thaw rhetoric still emphasized that traces of the undesired past had to be eliminated from the thoughts and actions of Soviet people. One of the Komsomol’s major tasks was to “clear the remnants of capitalism from the minds of backward youths”.<sup>3</sup> This chapter explores the Komsomol’s role in dealing with phenomena of the undesired past, i.e. religious belief and deviant behaviour such as hooliganism, alcohol abuse and laziness. Campaigns on these issues were typical of the Thaw and were by no means limited to the young generation.<sup>4</sup> Yet their success was considered crucial and their focus clearly lay on children, youth and young adults because morality among youth was regarded a necessary precondition for the transition to communism.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tovarishch' Komsomol, Tom II: 1941-1968*, p.246.

<sup>2</sup> Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.64-7, here 64.

<sup>3</sup> “Za boevuiu antireligioznuiu propaganda”, *KT*, 4.8.1954, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see John Anderson. *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Brian Lapierre. *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2012.

## The Fight against Religion

Belief in a higher being was described as “the most persistent and vivid remnant of capitalism”<sup>5</sup> within Soviet society and the “eradication of religious prejudices”<sup>6</sup> was always a key aim of the Party and the Komsomol. From the start, Soviet anti-religious policy had two components. On the one hand, religious belief was to be replaced by an atheist worldview via propaganda and persuasion. On the other hand, religious institutions – mainly the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) but also other religious organizations – were to be controlled as subversive forces. Their adherents were subject to repression and their buildings were destroyed or remodelled. The goal was to deprive religion of its popular and material foundations, ultimately eradicating religion from the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

After the outbreaks of violence against religious organizations that occurred during the Civil War and the early 1920s, there was a relatively quiet period in church-state relations, when Soviet anti-religious policy revolved around propagandistic strategies and atheist education.<sup>8</sup> This changed during the first Five-Year-Plan and the forceful restructuring of Soviet society and culture, particularly when the Decree on Religious Organisations came into force in April 1929. Religious institutions experienced a new wave of violence and saw drastic reductions in their personnel and resources. The remaining congregations came under strict state control.<sup>9</sup> The Second World War brought a noticeable relaxation in anti-religious policy, but of an instrumental kind. Under the concordat brokered by Stalin with the Orthodox clergy in

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<sup>5</sup> “Bol’she nastupatel’nosti v antireligioznoi propagande”, *Komsomolets*, 20.10.1954, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> For example, “Protiv religioznykh predrassudkov”, *Pravda*, 21.8.1959, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Daniel Peris. *Storming the Heavens. The Soviet League of the Militant Godless*, Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 1998, pp.19-46; William B. Husband. *'Godless Communists'. Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000, pp.36-68.

<sup>8</sup> For the early period see M.V. Shkarovskii. *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v XX veke*, Moskva: Veche, 2010, pp.60-93; for the peaceful period between 1923 and 1928 and the propagandistic efforts see *ibid.*, pp.93-118; Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, pp. 69-98.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see D.V. Pospelovskii. *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v XX veke*, Moskva: Respublika, 1995, pp.119-82; Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v XX veke*, pp.118-28.

1943, religious representatives were permitted to mobilize people for the war effort. Direct repression was abandoned and responsibility for religious congregations shifted from the NKVD to the newly founded Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC). Atheist propaganda almost came to a standstill and religious believers got more freedom to spread their message.<sup>10</sup>

This peaceful coexistence of religion and socialism continued throughout the last years of Stalin's rule, although attitudes hardened from the late 1940s. It was mainly Khrushchev's personal antipathy towards religion which led to the launch of a campaign against religious practice in July 1954.<sup>11</sup> This antireligious campaign only lasted about 100 days, but it heralded more intensive and longer lasting campaigns against religion between 1958 and 1964.<sup>12</sup> The new anti-religious policy could be seen in practice as well as in discourse. Action against religion was mainly overseen by newly created state bodies, which were given the task of dealing with and controlling religious congregations. New laws complicated the routine of believers and faith communities; meanwhile, mosques and other places of worship were closed or converted into secular buildings.<sup>13</sup> Rhetorical campaigns against religion were even

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<sup>10</sup> Tat'iana A. Chumachenko. *Church and State in Soviet Russia. Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*, Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 2002, pp.19-25; Pospelovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v XX veke*, pp.183-93; Philip Walters. "A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy", in: *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. by Sabrina Petra Ramet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.3-30; John Anderson. "The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy", in: *Soviet Studies* 43(1991), 4, pp.689-710; M.V. Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' pri Staline i Khrushcheve. Gosudarstvenno-tserkovnye otnosheniia v SSSR v 1939-1964 godakh*, Moskva: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor'e, 1999, pp.195-216.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.7-12; Valerii Alekseev. *Shturm nebes otmienaietsia? Kriticheskie ocherki po istorii bor'by s religiei v SSSR*, Moskva: Izdat. Tsentr Rossiia Molodaia, 1992, pp.209-14.

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia*, pp. 128-36; Joan Delaney Grossman. "Khrushchev's Anti-Religious Policy and the Campaign of 1954", in: *Soviet Studies* 24(1973), pp.374-86; Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp.39-40.

<sup>13</sup> For a short overview see Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.23-9; Anderson, "The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy"; Nathaniel Davis. "The Number of Orthodox Churches before and after the Khrushchev Antireligious Drive", in: *Slavic Review* 50(1991), 3, pp.612-20; for a detailed study on Tatarstan see Katharina Uhl. *Antireligiöse Politik im*

more energetic. The topic of radical atheism (*voinstvuyushchii ateizm*) filled pages of the Soviet press, had a well-established place in the education system and was frequently discussed by lecturers and speakers within the system of political education.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Rhetorical Spectrum of the Fight against Religion**

The promotion of an atheist worldview during the Khrushchev era essentially followed the model of the 1920s, when the League of the Godless had used print media, lectures, demonstrations and other types of propaganda to convince the Soviet people of the stupidity of religion and the superiority of an enlightened outlook on earthly life.<sup>15</sup> The Society for the Distribution of Political and Scientific Knowledge, in short *Znanie* (Knowledge), regarded itself as the direct successor of the League. It organized training for atheist activists, held numerous lectures and evenings for the general public and published journals, books, booklets and propaganda textbooks.<sup>16</sup> Atheism was taught from a very young age during the Thaw. It was an integral part of the educative philosophy of the Young Pioneers, as well as the Soviet curriculum in all types of schools.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the Komsomol's efforts to eradicate religious belief and practices among youth were embedded in an all-encompassing network of anti-religious actors, including the Party, Komsomol and Young Pioneers; trade unions; public organizations such as *Znanie*; state actors such as the councils; and the education system.<sup>18</sup>

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*Tatarstan der Tauwetterzeit, 1958-1964*, Tübingen: Tübingen University, 2008, pp.58-68; Almaz Ibragimov et al. *Religion in Kazan. History, Memory, Present*, Tübingen: Geschichtswerkstatt Europa, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp.39-64, 85-103; Uhl, *Antireligiöse Politik im Tatarstan der Tauwetterzeit, 1958-1964*, p.72.

<sup>15</sup> On the early attempts see mainly Husband, 'Godless Communists'; Peris, *Storming the Heavens*.

<sup>16</sup> For the League see *ibid.*, for its successor see in particular pp.222-3; see also Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*; Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.48-51.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Froggatt. "Renouncing Dogma, Teaching Utopia. Science in Schools under Khrushchev", in: *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, pp.250-66; Michael Froggatt. *Science in Propaganda and Popular Culture in the USSR under Khrushchëv (1953-1964)*, Oxford: Oxford University, 2006; Catriona Kelly. *Children's World. Growing up in Russia, 1890-1991*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, pp.534-5.

<sup>18</sup> See for a short overview see Bohdan Bociurkiw. "The Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy", in: *Problems of Communism* (1973), May-June, pp.37-51.

Although the general background to anti-religious work was consistent, the issue of religion was treated differently in the two regions under study. The most noticeable difference was that atheistic campaigns were more prominent in official discourse in Tatarstan than in the Cheliabinsk region. Publications about religion in regional youth newspapers between 1953 and 1964 demonstrate this difference clearly. The Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* published 34 articles, whereas its counterpart in Tatarstan published 63 (table 1). The distribution of the articles also illustrates the course of Soviet anti-religious policy during the Thaw period. An initial peak in 1954 was followed by a decreasing number of articles until 1958, when a new wave started, which faded away in the mid-1960s.<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, these figures have to be used with some caution, as a number of factors may have contributed to the regional variation – different levels of social and economic development, different cultural traditions, or indeed sheer randomness in written records. Yet the material is still of interest and suggests, at the very least, that regional leaders were committed (to varying degrees) to appearing to follow instructions.

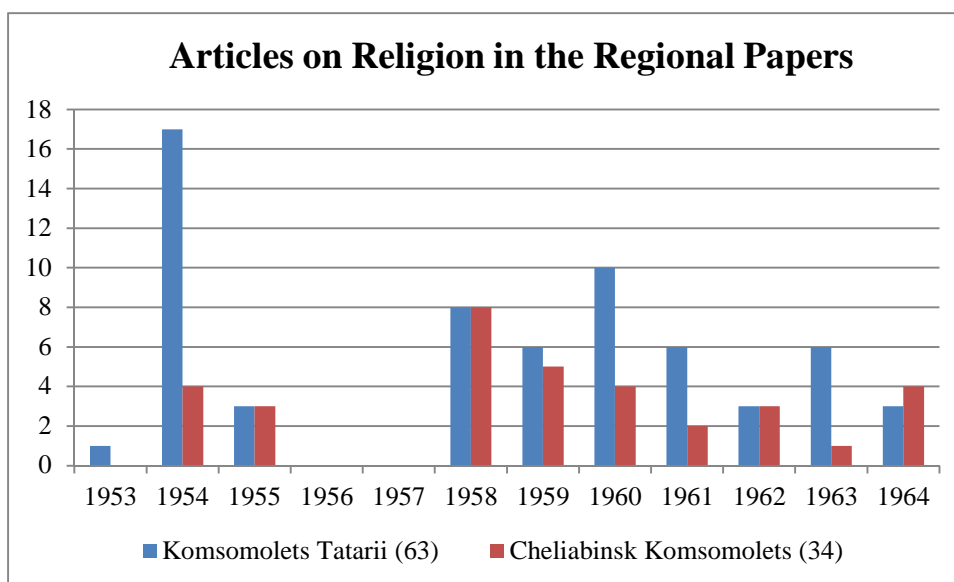


Figure 1: Articles on religion in the regional youth newspapers

<sup>19</sup> This finding for the regional context corresponds with findings for the central press; see Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, p.90.

At the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, Khrushchev set the tone for the campaigns when he complained about the high degree of religiosity among Soviet youth and asked the Komsomol to fight it actively.<sup>20</sup> The Central Committee reacted in 1957. Khrushchev's ideas remained within the framework of traditional anti-religious measures. They entailed the involvement of well-trained and motivated people in atheist propaganda; using planetariums and museums, theatre, radio and television to organize discussions and lectures; and exposing religion as swindle through physical and chemical experiments.<sup>21</sup> Party and Komsomol leaders, following Khrushchev's example, harped on about the harmful consequences of religion's influence on youth. They called on regional and local Komsomol organizations to regard it as "a matter of honour... to put an end such disgraceful phenomena". Every single Komsomol member was supposed to act as "a militant fighter against religion" and use the "atheist weapon" to help young believers free themselves from religion.<sup>22</sup>

Komsomol activists in the regions took up this message. For example, the first secretary of the Tatar *obkom* impressed upon his fellow Komsomol activists that atheist propaganda should be "a steady and crucial constitutive part of all their work in the area of communist education", not just "temporary campaigns".<sup>23</sup> In the centre, an uncomfortable question sometimes arose: how had religious congregations – particularly the ROC – managed to regain their strength since the outbreak of the Second World War?<sup>24</sup> However, the rhetoric in the regions generally refrained from blaming the Stalinist years directly. In the first post-Stalinist years, the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* only once mentioned the origins of the ROC's

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<sup>20</sup> Alekseev, *Shturm nebes otmeniaetsia?*, pp.214-9.

<sup>21</sup> RGASPI M1-2-356, pp.105-6.

<sup>22</sup> The First Secretary of the Central Committee in 1963, see RGASPI M1-2-439, p.46; the First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* repeated his speech word by word, see TsGA 4034-42-339, p.34.

<sup>23</sup> The First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* in 1959, see TsGA 4034-41-12, pp.26-7.

<sup>24</sup> The First Secretary of the CC who draw a clear line between the good Leninist past and the bad Stalinist past, see RGASPI M1-2-439, p.46; see also Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.12-3.

wealth and influence on youth. It did not blame Stalinism, but rather a lack of effort in anti-religious work on the part of the Komsomol.<sup>25</sup>

Komsomol members were informed about the degree of religiosity in the regions. In the Cheliabinsk Region, the topic was only discussed in depth in 1963. However, the Tatar regional organization received detailed information about religious practices and festival celebrations throughout the years under study. The key-note speech at a general meeting of the Tatar Komsomol active in 1958 gave concrete examples of young people and Komsomol members who had celebrated religious festivals or observed religious practices. It also named and shamed individual districts which had a particularly high number of religious youth.<sup>26</sup>

From the early 1960s, Komsomol activists had firm figures at their disposal about religious practices such as baptisms, circumcisions, weddings and funerals. This gave them evidence of the high level of religiosity amongst youth. For example, in Tatarstan in 1964, over 40% of new-born children were baptized or circumcised; 6% of marriages were performed in the presence of a priest, mullah or other religious dignitary.<sup>27</sup> The figures for the Cheliabinsk Region show that only around 20% of newborns were baptized in 1963.<sup>28</sup>

When religious rites and festivals were celebrated with the approval or even participation of Komsomol activists, this caused outrage among officials in Tatarstan and led to the naming and shaming of those concerned at official meetings.<sup>29</sup> For instance, speakers at the Tatar regional conference, as well as the *Komsomolets Tatarii*, reported that three Komsomol secretaries from one village had got married in church within one year. They called for the

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<sup>25</sup> “Bol’she nastupatel’nosti”, *Komsomolets*, 20.10.1954; the *Komsomolets Tatarii* followed this argumentation, see “Chego my zhdem”, *KT*, 11.4.1954, p.3; “Zaboevuiuantireligioznuiu propagandu”, *KT*, 4.8.1954, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.21.

<sup>27</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, 37-8; a similar number can be found for 1961, see TsGA 4034-42-207, pp.30-1.

<sup>28</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.56; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.70; for other examples on religiosity in both regions see TsGA 4034-42-339, p.36; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.38; OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.69-71.

<sup>29</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, pp.18-9; TsGA 4034-41-12, pp.26-7.

local Komsomol organization to organize civil wedding ceremonies and send their activists to the “school for atheists” which had opened in the district capital. Komsomol leaders were supposed to set examples for all young people, so officials said the secretaries should be subjected to a more severe punishment than simply losing their posts and being excluded from the Komsomol.<sup>30</sup> In a separate case, a young and successful athlete returned her membership card in protest against the Komsomol’s anti-religious policy, causing an embarrassing situation for the city committee in Chistopol’ (Tatarstan). They had solemnly given her sporting awards and praised her as an exemplary young communist, unaware of the fact that she was an open believer and had baptized her child.<sup>31</sup>

Komsomol rhetoric frequently cited examples of young people who had turned into religious fanatics, in order to underline the strong impact that religion still had on the young generation and emphasize its danger. In 1959 the first secretary of the Tatar Party organization spoke about three young men who had started a career in the ROC. He argued that this had only happened because “religious activists work quite actively and try to tear youth away from public and Komsomol life”.<sup>32</sup> Komsomol rhetoric commonly asserted that religious congregations had modernized their methods and messages in order to influence a broader group of youth. The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, was accused of seducing youth via such modernized strategies.<sup>33</sup> Priests’ attempts to reach youth in a contemporary way allegedly included praying to modern melodies and organizing sewing circles or even football teams.<sup>34</sup> Sectarians (i.e. evangelical Christians, such as Baptists or Adventists) were said to

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<sup>30</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.38-9; “RabyBozhii”, *KT*, 25.11.1959, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.34-7.

<sup>32</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.255-6.

<sup>33</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-40-136, pp.18-9; for the Catholic Church in Western Europe and the USA see “V tenii katolicheskogo kresta”, *KP*, 27.2.1957, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Some statements made during the 14<sup>th</sup> Komsomol Congress in 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3221, 108-9; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.69.

have particularly active and dangerous recruitment techniques, which resulted in increasing numbers of young people joining their ranks.<sup>35</sup>

The only way to neutralise this harmful shadow of the past was to improve the Komsomol's anti-religious policy and secure access to every single young person.<sup>36</sup> Speakers at regional meetings commonly criticised local Komsomol secretaries for “treating religion neutrally”<sup>37</sup> or in an “appeasing” (*primirencheskoe*) manner.<sup>38</sup> Examples allegedly showed that religion could only spread when the Komsomol relaxed its educational efforts among youth.<sup>39</sup>

Activists were constantly reminded to take their task seriously, instead of assuming that religion would wither away by itself as a phenomenon of the past.<sup>40</sup> On the contrary, it was still inflicting “serious harm on the cause of communist education of the adolescent generation”.<sup>41</sup> Despite the small number of churches, mosques and houses of prayer compared to the huge pre-1917 numbers,<sup>42</sup> and despite the Soviet Union's scientific and cultural achievements, “it was wrong to comfort oneself with the thought that all believers were old people”.<sup>43</sup>

Fighting this particular ‘remnant of the past’ was portrayed as a key task of the Komsomol,<sup>44</sup> because religion was held to pose a danger to all areas of the contemporary Soviet state: economy, society and the physical and moral integrity of the individual. Religious workers would not only refuse to work during religious festivals, but were said to get drunk and

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<sup>35</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.42-3; TsGA 4034-42-339, p.36.

<sup>36</sup> For example, OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.68.

<sup>37</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.18.

<sup>38</sup> Ts TsGA 4034-41-9, p.38.

<sup>39</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, 18.

<sup>40</sup> For example, RGASPI M1-2-439, p.47.

<sup>41</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, p.39.

<sup>42</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.31; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.37.

<sup>43</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.69; also, in 1963 the first secretary of the Tatar Komsomol *obkom* shamed a rural secretary who ignored all signs of religiousness among youth because she thought religion would die out by itself, see TsGA 4034-42-339, p.35.

<sup>44</sup> For a ‘call to arms’ see OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.156.

indulge in hooliganism and crime.<sup>45</sup> Muslim *Kolkhoz* workers were said to steal property from state farms “as there is nothing written in the Koran about *kolkhozes*”.<sup>46</sup> Religious holidays, mainly the Muslim festival after Ramadan, *kurban-bairam*, were allegedly often celebrated during the sowing or harvesting periods, thus distracting believers from their work.<sup>47</sup> The ‘floating’ dates of these festivals made it more difficult for the authorities and public institutions to deal with them. Propaganda also declared that the cycle of agricultural work in some areas was driven by religious rites rather than scientific knowledge, which reduced agricultural productivity.<sup>48</sup>

Religion was also said to be bad for society because it fuelled people’s ignorance, uncertainty and fears in order to reinforce exploitative social structures. According to Lenin, religion and coercion were two ways of sustaining the capitalist order and tranquilizing the lower classes. Religious belief was still used by the exploiting classes in non-socialist countries. Although the Revolution had rendered these functions unnecessary, even in Russia religion held believers “in a state of passivity and contemplation”.<sup>49</sup> Religious remnants from the past were also said to promote outdated gender relations. Calling for a fight against “feudal-upper-class relics” (*feodal’no-barskimi perezhitkami*),<sup>50</sup> newspapers sharply criticised outdated practices such as arranged marriages and the general limitations on women’s rights in Muslim areas.<sup>51</sup> Religious rites were blamed for underpinning gender inequality. Marriage in all religions was said to “highlight the servile position of women in family and society in the name of God”,<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.21; “O sushchnosti islama”, *KT*, 20.10.1954, p.3; see also Kelly and Sirotinina, “Bylo neponiatno i smeshno”, pp.262-3; Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp.66-7.

<sup>46</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.45.

<sup>47</sup> TsGA 4034-42-427, p.28; see also “Religiia meshaet stroit’ kommunizm”, *KT*, 24.5.1959, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> “O reaktsionnoisushchnosti”, *KT*, 5.1.1955, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> “Tsepi, skovyvaiushchie dushu”, *KT*, 17.9.1958, pp.2-3; see also “O vrede religioznykh perezhitkov”, *KT*, 4.6.1954, p.2; “O sushchnosti islama”, *KT*, 20.10.1954, p.3.

<sup>50</sup> “Traditsiiam – dorogu, perezhitkam – boi!”, *KP*, 25.11.1960, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> For example, see “I moleben pet”, *KT*, 9.5.1958, p.3; “O pozornykh perezhitkakh”, *KT*, 8.9.1954, p.3.

<sup>52</sup> “Religioznye obriady”, *KT*, 6.8.1954, p.3.

consolidating women's subordination under male dominance.<sup>53</sup> Islam would generally limit women to their role within the family household, depriving them of a good education and the right to choose their own paths in life.<sup>54</sup> Komsomol leaders were criticized when they used the argument that "it's not Central Asia here", as well as for ignoring "scornful attitudes towards women" and arranged marriages.<sup>55</sup>

Propaganda also presented religious belief as inimical to participation in the rational collective. It argued that religion would constrain individual freedom, prevent believers from becoming active members of society and isolate them.<sup>56</sup> A young believer would become a passive and patient sufferer, who would not "fight against real shortcomings in his life".<sup>57</sup> Soviet society would suffer from the loss of these young people's energy.<sup>58</sup> A major problem was that religious parents would separate their children from society, not allowing them to become Pioneer or Komsomol members, participate in public work or social networks, read books, go to theatre or cinema, or listen to the radio.<sup>59</sup> On the one hand, propaganda depicted the life of religious children as dreadful, demanding that "joy be returned to (their) childhood".<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, articles argued that children had to be protected as they were indispensable to future society; distracting them from their public duties was "a crime against the future".<sup>61</sup> In some cases, so-called people's courts (*narodnye sudy*) deprived religious

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<sup>53</sup> For example, "Tsepi", *KT*, 17.9.1958, pp.2-3.

<sup>54</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.45.

<sup>55</sup> The First Secretary of the Tatar Komsomol organization in 1963, see TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.37-8.

<sup>56</sup> "O sushchnosti islama", *KT*, 20.10.1954, p.3.

<sup>57</sup> Quotation in "Tsepi", *KT*, 17.9.1958, pp.2-3; see also "Resheniia plenuma", *KT*, 17.7.1963, pp.2-3.

<sup>58</sup> "Bozh'ei tropoi", *Komsomolets*, 12.4.1959, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> For example, "Chego my zhdem ot raikoma", *KT*, 11.4.1954, p.3; "Religiia meshaet stroit' kommunizm", *KT*, 24.5.1959, p.3; "Za nee nuzhno borot'sia", *Komsomolets*, 6.9.1959, p.2; "V tenetakh religii", *KT*, 29.3.1963, p.3.

<sup>60</sup> "Lide i Gene nadovernut' radost' detstvy", *KT*, 20.3.1960, p.4; see also "Kto vstupit za nikh detstvo", *Komsomolets*, 25.3.1960, p.4.

<sup>61</sup> "Prestuplenie pered budushchim", *KP*, 27.1.1963, p.4.

parents of their right to custody of their children, in order to protect the children from the damage which religion could do to them and to society.<sup>62</sup>

A common argument against religion was that it could have serious consequences for physical and mental health. Muslim rites such as the circumcision of new-born babies were reported to have caused two deaths in the Cheliabinsk region in 1960.<sup>63</sup> Pilgrimages and fasting for Ramadan were also presented as harmful. As believers of all religions would regard diseases as God's punishment, they would try to cure them with holy water and prayers instead of accepting professional help.<sup>64</sup> Some rites of sects would "result in the believers' madness and insanity".<sup>65</sup>

All of these arguments were familiar from anti-religious work throughout the country.<sup>66</sup> Equally common were attempts to present religious morality as "diametrically contrary"<sup>67</sup> to the communist way of life, which was shaped by a strong work ethic. The communist attitude to work was characterized by the slogan "he who does not work shall not eat either"; constructive work was viewed as an expression of individual freedom. In contrast, religion was said to regard work as God's punishment, which would prevent the salvation of one's soul.<sup>68</sup> Religious leaders would lead a "parasitic life"<sup>69</sup> and consciously take advantage of believers' naivety, ignorance and fears in order to "live at the cost of others".<sup>70</sup> Newspapers

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<sup>62</sup> "U Very budet detstvo!", *KT*, 18.5.1960, p.3; "V tenetakh religii", *KT*, 29.3.1963, p.3; see also Uhl, *Antireligiöse Politik im Tatarstan der Tauwetterzeit*, pp.70-1.

<sup>63</sup> The first secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* at the regional conference in 1960, see OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.45.

<sup>64</sup> For quotation see "O sushchnosti islama", *KT*, 20.10.1954, p.3; see also "Religiia meshaet stroit' kommunizm", *KT*, 24.5.1959, p.3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> For example, see Alexander Panchenko. "Popular Orthodoxy' and Identity in Twentieth-Century Russia. Ideology, Consumption and Competition", in: *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp.321-40.

<sup>67</sup> "Moral'nyi kodeks", *KT*, 9.1.1963, pp.2-3; see also I. Ashirov. *Moral' kommunisticheskaja i moral' religioznaia*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1962.

<sup>68</sup> "Moral'nykodeks", *KT*, 9.1.1963, pp.2-3.

<sup>69</sup> Quotation "Kak ia stal ateistom", *KP* 24.3.1957, pp.2-3.

<sup>70</sup> "Poshli mne", *KT*, 15.3.1961, p.3.

published stories of idle men and women who wanted to have an easier life and decided, like the Old Believer deacon in Kazan', to exploit members of their congregation and convince them to provide financial support.<sup>71</sup> Other stories featured young men who tried to avoid military service and all sorts of useful work, in order to "live a drone's life".<sup>72</sup> Religious leaders were characterized as morally corrupt, not only because of their workshy lifestyle, but also because of their hypocrisy: they preached chastity and moderation while leading a life of luxury and indulging in lust and forbidden cohabitation. A former monk described the deceitfulness of monastic life: "lunch was like in a sanatorium" every day and the higher someone was in the hierarchy, the better food they received. Sometimes lurid accusations of sexual laxity were made. The abbot and the bishop of Astrakhan were said to have mistresses whom they supported with donations from believers. Meanwhile, the deputy abbot was said to be interested in seducing boys.<sup>73</sup>

Religion would, it was argued, inhibit the individual "from actively fighting for his rights and a better future".<sup>74</sup> This future would be communist and it was made to sound almost like paradise. At the same time, it was explicitly distinguished from any religious idea of afterlife.<sup>75</sup> It was emphasized that the Soviet people would "not live for the sake of a paradise in heaven, but for the sake of communism on Earth".<sup>76</sup> A determined course of action against religion was presented as a vital precondition for achieving communism, as the present generation's moral outlook and determination would play a decisive role in securing the

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<sup>71</sup> "Otets d'iakon sbrasyvaet masku", *KT*, 21.8.1960, p.3; for a similar story on the leader of the Pentecostal sect see "'Sviatoie' semeistvo", *KT*, 23.7.1958, p.3.

<sup>72</sup> "Poshli mne", *KT*, 15.3.1961, p.3.

<sup>73</sup> "Deianiia sviatykh ottsov'", *KP*, 13.8.1959, p.3.

<sup>74</sup> "Tsepi", *KT*, 17.9.1958, pp.2-3; see also "O vrede religioznykh perezhitkov", *KT*, 4.6.1954, p.2; "Religioznye obriady", *KT*, 6.8.1954, p.3; for the idea that sects which had supported the Whites in the Civil War until the present being against attempts to secure a better future, see "Pod maskoi religii", *Komsomolets*, 18.7.1958, p.3.

<sup>75</sup> *Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Adopted by the 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U., October 31, 1961*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, p.127; see also Richard T. De George. *The New Marxism. Soviet and East European Marxism since 1956*, New York: Pegasus, 1968, p.57.

<sup>76</sup> OGACHo 1468-1-1, p.68.

communist future.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, instilling an atheist and “scientific worldview, free of religious mysticism” in the young generation was essential in the education of the new communist person.<sup>78</sup> Religion would only distract young people from being dedicated builders of communism.<sup>79</sup> Its “anti-humanitarian character”<sup>80</sup> and “anti-scientific worldview” would “hinder the building of communism”<sup>81</sup> and “undermine... belief in our bright future”.<sup>82</sup>

Besides emphasizing the clash between religion and the building of communism, Soviet rhetoric also underlined the incompatibility of religion with modern Soviet beliefs and practices. Religious customs and beliefs were contrasted with recent scientific and technical achievements. The Middle Ages were often the associative domain of religion, whereas the conquest of the cosmos was a trope for Soviet progress.<sup>83</sup> Superstition and soothsaying were presented as outdated phenomena, closely connected to religious belief. Articles described and ridiculed popular beliefs, such as a fear of black cats or fortune-telling, stressing that only social and natural sciences could make credible statements about the future. Quoting Lenin, it was emphasized that “a miraculous prophecy is a fairy tale. But a scientific prophecy is a fact”. The “control figures for developing the national economy of the Soviet Union”, which were integral in Soviet economic planning, were presented as the only true predictors of the Soviet future.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> TsGA 4034-42-427, p.29; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.108; “Za boevuiu antireligioznuuiu propaganda”, *KT*, 4.8.1954, p.1; Alekseev, *Shturm nebes otmeniaetsia?*, pp.222-5.

<sup>78</sup> “Moral’nyi kodeks”, *KT*, 9.1.1963, pp.2-3; see also TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.38-9; OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.108-9.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see “O vrede religioznykh perezhitkov”, *KT*, 4.6.1954, p.2; “Ne zabyvat’”, *KT*, 6.7.1958, p.1.

<sup>80</sup> “Moral’nyi kodeks”, *KT*, 9.1.1963, pp.2-3.

<sup>81</sup> “Religiia meshaet stroit’ kommunizm”, *KT*, 24.5.1959, p.3; see also Uhl, *Antireligiöse Politik im Tatarstan der Tauwetterzeit, 1958-1964*, pp.45-6.

<sup>82</sup> RGASPI M1-2-439, p.47.

<sup>83</sup> For example, the First Secretary of the Central Committee in 1959, see RGASPI M1-2-376, p.80; see also “Za monastyrskoi stenoi”, *KP*, 13.12.1958, p.3; “Pod maskoi religii”, *Komsomolets*, 18.7.1958, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Quotation in “O nauchnykh predvideniakh”, *KT*, 17.12.1958, p.4; see also “Chernaia koshka”, *KT*, 6.3.1960, p.4.

Propaganda against religion also strove to demonstrate that Soviet technology, science and rationality had superseded religious superstition and belief in miracles. A caricature in the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* from 1959 illustrated this feeling of superiority. A biblical God the Father marvelled at a Soviet rocket while holding a project outline of the “flying Adam” in his hands, which had clearly been surpassed by Soviet technology (Picture 1).<sup>85</sup> Scientific articles explained the secret of life, exposing religious explanations as superstition and deliberate deception of believers.<sup>86</sup> The press demonstrated that rumours of miracle-working icons, miraculous healings and the wondrous effect of “holy places” were sheer swindle and found scientific explanations for them.<sup>87</sup> Medical explanations were given for quick healings, using the latest findings of neuroscience, chemistry, and biochemistry.<sup>88</sup>



Picture 1: “Flying Adam (Project)”<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> “Bozh’ei tropoi”, *Komsomolets*, 12.4.1959, p.3.

<sup>86</sup> “Khimii i ‘chudesa’ religii”, *KT*, 2.3.1958, p.3; see also “Chudesa bez chudes”, *KT*, 26.4.1963, pp.2-3.

<sup>87</sup> For example, “‘Chudotvornye’ ikony”, *KP*, 7.1.1960, p.3; “‘Tserkov’ pod otkrytomnebo”, *KP*, 12.10.1960, p.3.

<sup>88</sup> “Vozmozhno li ‘chudo’?”, *KP*, 29.11.1963, p.4.

<sup>89</sup> “Bozh’ei tropoi”, *Komsomolets*, 12.4.1959, p.3.

Soviet rhetoric provided the impulse for a new assault on religion which made reference to the past, present and future. Campaigns were launched, reviving the anti-religious practices of the early Soviet period. By referring to Lenin, they attempted to resurrect the dynamism and vigour which had allegedly prevailed during the heroic past but had been lost in the final years of Stalin's rule.<sup>90</sup> Religion was clearly characterized as a phenomenon of the undesirable past, diametrically contrary to communist morality and inconsistent with the modern worldview which Soviet youth needed in order to build communist society.

### **Anti-religious Practices within the Komsomol**

Despite the prominence of the fight against religion within the rhetoric of the communist project, the majority of Komsomol activists seem to have been relaxed about the endless calls to take action in this area. They ignored the immediate danger to the present and the communist future which religion allegedly posed as a 'remnant of the past'. They tried to blame their passivity on a lack of qualified activists.<sup>91</sup> However, this was not accepted as an excuse for limited anti-religious work, because special training possibilities were available for interested young people. So-called "schools for atheists" or "universities of scientific atheism" at the Komsomol *gorkomy*, *raikomy* or grassroots organizations taught young people to give lectures, organize evenings and readers' conferences and lead individual work with believers.<sup>92</sup> In Tatarstan, for example, the first "evening university for atheism" opened its doors in October 1959. It trained 100 atheist lecturers in the first academic year and 250 the year after.<sup>93</sup> Public institutions such as clubs, libraries and culture houses (*dom kul'tury*) organized so-called "atheist clubs" to prepare youth for anti-religious campaigning.

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<sup>90</sup> For example, see Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.12-20; Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia*, p.186; Dimitry Pospelovsky. *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Anti-Religious Policies*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987, p.82.

<sup>91</sup> "Ateisty?", *KT*, 14.12.1962, p.3.

<sup>92</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, p.37; see also Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp.61-2.

<sup>93</sup> TsGA 15-44-246, p.43; TsGA 15-43-12/1, p.9.

Furthermore, some Komsomol organizations introduced a special section focusing on anti-religious work, or organized seminars for future atheist lecturers.<sup>94</sup>

Lectures were the most common form of public engagement in which the newly trained activists engaged. Lectures were supposed to expose the harmfulness of religion and demonstrate that the very idea of a higher being existing was ridiculous. Lectures on anti-religious topics used the latest findings from the natural sciences to explain the origins of the earth and human beings, unmasking alleged religious miracles. They were part of the programme of the “system of political education”, the so-called *politset*, which Party and Komsomol members could attend, as could interested members of the public.<sup>95</sup> However, religion was given less attention than other topics such as economic theory. Consequently, the Komsomol organizations were frequently criticized for neglecting the topic in their propaganda work.<sup>96</sup>

Other propaganda formats were more popular than classical lectures. These included topical evenings, “question and answer evenings”, theoretical conferences, readers’ conferences, radio transmissions, and cinema performances combined with a theoretical lecture, so-called *kinolektsii*.<sup>97</sup> “Question and answer evenings” offered young audiences the chance to ask experts about their personal concerns relating to certain aspects of religion or atheism. During an evening about “Islam in Kazan”, its emergence and nature”, specialists who had come from as far afield as Ufa and Moscow used chemical experiments, conjuring tricks and medical evidence to show that ‘miracles’ and superstitious phenomena were scientifically

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<sup>94</sup> For example, OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.71; TsGA 4034-42-361, p.42; for the atheist clubs see also Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, p.57.

<sup>95</sup> For a short overview see Gayle Durham Hollander. *Soviet Political Indoctrination. Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda Since Stalin*, New York: Praeger, 1972, pp.145-51.

<sup>96</sup> Uhl, *Antireligiöse Politik im Tatarstan der Tauwetterzeit*, p.34; TsGA 4034-40-136, p.19; OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.28.

<sup>97</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.42; “Osvobozhdat’ dushi”, *KT*, 17.7.1963, pp.2-3.

explicable. In the end, an anti-religious film was shown.<sup>98</sup> A rather more artistic format was found for such evenings in Cheliabinsk, which included presentations, humorous pieces and poems.<sup>99</sup> The regional committee in Tatarstan created campaign brigades which would use a mobile cinema system to show popular scientific movies.<sup>100</sup> Such events offered a broader variety of strategies for the promotion of an atheist worldview than the classical format of lectures.<sup>101</sup>

Anti-religious campaigning was reliant on adequately detailed campaign material, which was basically unavailable during the short and sudden assault on religion in 1954. Such material only began to be published in sufficient quantities at the end of the 1950s, when anti-religious propaganda became almost institutionalized within the Soviet propaganda landscape.<sup>102</sup> The main producer of anti-religious propaganda was the society *Znanie*, which launched the monthly journal “Science and Religion” (*Nauka i religiia*) in 1959.<sup>103</sup> Komsomol newspapers also published material on anti-religious topics in special columns. For example, from 1963 *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* published stories about religious dropouts and the Komsomol's fight against religion in a column titled “Reason against Religion”, which cited scientific evidence against religion.<sup>104</sup> The Tatar youth newspapers introduced a similar column, the “Tribune of the Atheist” (*Tribuna ateista*), around the same time.<sup>105</sup>

Local Komsomol organizations were encouraged to cooperate with higher-ranking Komsomol organs and other public organizations, such as the Communist Party, *Znanie* and cultural

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<sup>98</sup> “Vecher ‘chudes’”, *KT*, 8.3.1959, p.4; for a similar evening see also “Ideiateizma”, *KT*, 2.3.1960, p.3.

<sup>99</sup> “Iunyeateisty”, *Komsomolets*, 11.3.1964, p.3.

<sup>100</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.43.

<sup>101</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.68.

<sup>102</sup> TsGA 4034-37-277, p.6; Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.38-45.

<sup>103</sup> “Boevoeoruzhie”, *KT*, 30.12.1959, p.2; see also *ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>104</sup> “Razum protiv religii”, *KP*, 22.11.1963, p.4.

<sup>105</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.44.

institutions, to produce written anti-religious material.<sup>106</sup> They were also urged to use clubs and palaces of culture to stage amateur spectacles, shows and thematic evenings on anti-religious topics.<sup>107</sup> Libraries held readers' conferences on anti-religious theoretical literature and fiction; they also organized exhibitions about atheist literature. For instance, such an exhibition took place in Cheliabinsk under the title "Religion – the enemy of science and progress".<sup>108</sup>

The major difficulty facing the Komsomol organizations was that "scientific-atheist propaganda... often (did) not reach believers".<sup>109</sup> It was often the case that propagandists ended up "proving to non-believers in two-hour lectures that there (was) no God".<sup>110</sup> In order to reach their target group, activists first had to establish the extent of religiosity among youth and gather information about individual young believers.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, the ideal atheist propagandist was not only a good lecturer, but also focused on individual work with young believers.<sup>112</sup> The atheist circle of Kazan' State University trained young people for this task. Its members attended weekly training sessions and established contact with believers, before gradually trying to lead them back to the correct – i.e. Soviet – way of life.<sup>113</sup>

Besides convincing young people of the danger and pointlessness of religion in the context of Soviet modernity, the Komsomol also promoted alternative Soviet festivals and the celebration of life-circle events.<sup>114</sup> Party, Komsomol and state resolutions took a firm course of action against religious ceremonies, while newspapers publicized the "new rites". The aim

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<sup>106</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.44; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.131; "Ateistov nado učit'!", *KT*, 17.6.1964, p.3.

<sup>107</sup> "V bor'be", *Komosmolets*, 19.11.1954, p.3; "Osvobozhdat' dushi", *KT*, 17.7.1963, pp.2-3.

<sup>108</sup> "Nauchno-ateisticheskoi propagande", *Komosmolets*, 27.5.1955, p.2; see also "V bor'be", *Komosmolets*, 19.11.1954, p.3.

<sup>109</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.44.

<sup>110</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.70.

<sup>111</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.44.

<sup>112</sup> "Osvobozhdat' dushi", *KT*, 17.7.1963, pp.2-3; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.68; TsGA 4034-42-427, p.27.

<sup>113</sup> "My – v otvete za kazhdogo", *KT*, 10.1.1964, pp.2-3.

<sup>114</sup> Alekseev, *Shturm nebes otmeniaetsia?*, pp.227-8.

was to replace the religious structure of time with a new set of practices, symbolically charged with political and ideological meaning rather than religious meaning.<sup>115</sup> These efforts were first observed in the Baltic States, where secular rites were launched to replace the Lutheran Confirmation.<sup>116</sup> The centre followed this example. It urged Komsomol organizations to arrange rites around key events in people's lives, such as coming of age, graduation, obtaining a certain qualification, starting work in a certain profession, weddings, the birth of children and death.<sup>117</sup>

Some attempts were made to establish the presentation of passports as a coming-of-age ritual.<sup>118</sup> However, initiation into the Komsomol remained the main rite of passage during the Thaw period. It was still under discussion and subject to fluctuations in individual or local taste during this period. Not until the early 1980s did it become an institutionalized celebration.<sup>119</sup> The format in which new Komsomol members were welcomed during the Thaw period could vary substantially. In some places, new members were wholeheartedly accepted and immediately received assignments to integrate them into Komsomol work. Other organizations accepted new members formally, then immediately proceeded to forget about them.<sup>120</sup> The remote geographical situation of some grassroots organizations in rural areas made it especially problematic to organize special events.<sup>121</sup> Differences can also be seen at a diachronic level. In the years immediately after Stalin's death, it was common practice to question applicants about details of the Komsomol's history and its statute.<sup>122</sup> In

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp.226-7; Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, p.66; Kelly and Sirotina, "Bylo neponiatno i smeshno'. Prazdniki poslednikh desiatiletii sovetskoi vlasti i vospriiatie ikh det'mi", p.268.

<sup>116</sup> "Prazdnik sovershennoletii", *KP*, 23.3.1958, p.3; see also Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, pp.45-6.

<sup>117</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.148-9; RGASPI M1-2-376, pp.70-1.

<sup>118</sup> See mainly Al'bert Baiburin. "Rituals of Identity. The Soviet Passport", in: *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, pp.91-110.

<sup>119</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.90-1.

<sup>120</sup> For example, see "O tekh, kto vstupaet", *Komsomolets*, 27.4.1958, p.2.

<sup>121</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, p.68; see also p.80.

<sup>122</sup> For example, see "Vstuplenie v zhizn'", *Komsomolets*, 12.9.1954, p.2.

contrast, ceremonies later in the Thaw period were more festive and emotional.<sup>123</sup> However, most celebrations took place “under ordinary conditions, dull and uninteresting”, as even official reports admitted.<sup>124</sup>

The Komsomol statute stated that a new member could only be accepted provisionally by the grassroots organization, as the decision required confirmation from the bureau of the district or city committee. The grassroots therefore held higher-ranking officials responsible for making the initiation an event that would be “remembered for life”.<sup>125</sup> Some organizations apparently reacted to demands to make the previously formal and boring initiation ceremony more interesting by introducing games, concerts, and dancing in the presence of “old communists”, parents, teachers, and work colleagues.<sup>126</sup> At some celebrations, representatives of the heroic past welcomed new members. Elsewhere, mass events were organized for several hundreds of newly admitted members at monuments or in clubs and palaces of culture.<sup>127</sup> Such big gatherings were often connected to important events, such as Party or Komsomol congresses, or they revolved around a theme such as “he who does not work shall not eat either”; “Komsomol members during the Great Patriotic War”; or “Komsomol members at the great construction sites of communism”.<sup>128</sup>

A typical reception would see new members being presented with their membership cards and receiving specific assignments.<sup>129</sup> Secretaries of the grassroots organizations or the district committees were supposed to contrive an assignment, supervise its implementation and

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<sup>123</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.215; “Rozhdenie traditsii”, *Komsomolets*, 13.8.1958, pp.2-3.

<sup>124</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.148.

<sup>125</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.34; see also OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.384-5.

<sup>126</sup> TsGA 4034-42-401, pp.62-3, pp.134-5; OGACHO 485-1-3153, pp.34-5; OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.384-5; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.42.

<sup>127</sup> “Ty vystupil”, *KT*, 18.8.1961, p.3; “Rozhdenie traditsii”, *Komsomolets*, 13.8.1958, pp.2-3; “Torzhestvennyi priem”, *Komsomolets*, 28.10.1960, p.1; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.27; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.349.

<sup>128</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.356-7, p.358 and pp.366-7.

<sup>129</sup> “Torzhestvennyi priem”, *Komsomolets*, 28.10.1960, p.1.

provide active support if necessary.<sup>130</sup> Tasks could range from voluntary and cultural work, such as joining an amateur performing group or participating in a *voskresnik*, to political and ideological work, e.g. joining a group of lecturers or researching the history of the member's own Komsomol organization. Some new members were asked to participate in exerting social control, attend meetings of a comrade court (*tovarishcheskii sud*) or stand guard at night.<sup>131</sup> The assignments were supposed to show the new members their responsibility for the organization and for society in general, fully initiating them into the Komsomol and the adult world.<sup>132</sup>

Acceptance into the Komsomol was certainly the most widespread rite of passage for coming-of-age. Others – such as leaving school, admission to institutions of higher education and the presentation of passports – remained rather spontaneous and irregular throughout the Thaw period.<sup>133</sup> However, the custom of seeing off new recruits to the Soviet Army and welcoming them back into the work collective after their service did gradually become widely established. The format of this celebration was still open to discussion and individual or local taste; only in the post-Khrushchev era did it start to follow a fixed celebratory pattern.<sup>134</sup> In the regions, the Komsomol focused mainly on preparing young recruits for service and welcoming young workers into the work collective. In most cases, the celebratory character of these rites of passage was ignored. During the years studied, only a few festive events for recruits were held in Tatarstan and the Cheliabinsk region.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.36; on the topos of responsibility see also e.g. OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.149.

<sup>131</sup> TsGA 4034-42-401, pp.131-2; OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.133-4.

<sup>132</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.36; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.133.

<sup>133</sup> For one example of the initiation of students, see a detailed report on annual ceremonies for new students at the KGU from 1963, TsGA 6951-1-112, p.2; see also Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.96-102; Baiburin, "Rituals of Identity".

<sup>134</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.105-7; R.K. Urazmanova. *Sovremennye obriady tatarskogo naroda. Istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie*, Kazan': Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1984, pp.23-31.

<sup>135</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447, pp.38-9; see also Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.110-120; TsGA 4034-42-447, p.39; Urazmanova, *Sovremennye obriady tatarskogo naroda*, pp.49-52.

The next big step in young people's lives, getting married and starting a family, was supposed to be marked by a 'Komsomol wedding' (*komsomol'skaia svad'ba*). It was supposed to further anchor the young people in the social and moral context of Soviet society. It also functioned as yet another way to fight religious influence and replace religious rites of passage.<sup>136</sup> According to a landmark article published in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* in 1957, a typical ceremony provided a high degree of solemnity (*torzhestvennost'*), which was created by accessories such as presents, flowers, a wedding cake and a programme of musical interludes and dance music. The presence of Komsomol leaders, Party leaders and other public figures was supposed to represent society, showing that the wedding was a public rather than a private matter.<sup>137</sup>

A new campaign started in 1957 and 1958 against the "mess of marriages and deaths (being) registered at the same table". "Good wedding rites" were promoted, which could adopt traditional elements because "there is nothing religious in that".<sup>138</sup> This followed attempts in the 1920s to establish 'Komsomol weddings' as the only marriage ritual.<sup>139</sup> The intensity with which the rites were promoted in 1957–1958 was new,<sup>140</sup> but afterwards it soon faded.<sup>141</sup> Articles presented young spouses as exemplary workers, active participants in public life,<sup>142</sup> and models of the 'new people' who were prepared to collectivize their private life, disregarding their individual feelings.<sup>143</sup> Apart from speeches and congratulations delivered

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<sup>136</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.74-5; Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, pp.74-5.

<sup>137</sup> "U nas komsomol'skaia svad'ba", *KP*, 11.7.1957, p.2; see also RGASPI M1-2-356, p.105 or the keynote speech of the First CC Secretary at the XIII Komsomol Congress in 1958, see *XIII s'ezd vsesoiuznogo leninskogo kommunisticheskogo soiuzna moldezhni. Stenograficheskii otchet*. Moskva: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1959, pp.37-8.

<sup>138</sup> The First Secretary of the Tatar *obkom* at a meeting of Komsomol active members on Victory Day 1958, see TsGA 4034-40-213, p.20.

<sup>139</sup> For example, see Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, pp.90-3; Husband, 'Godless Communists', pp.87-99.

<sup>140</sup> "Mnogo schast'ia", *KT*, 20.3.1957, p.1; "Dozhit' vam", *KT*, 1.1.1958, p.2; "Belyi svet", *KT*, 7.2.1958, p.2; "Idet komsomol'skaia svad'ba", *KT*, 21.2.1958, p.4; "Im vetit schast'ia zvezda", *Komsomolets*, 2.4.1958, p.4.

<sup>141</sup> "Dobro pozhalovat'", *Komsomolets*, 20.4.1960, p.4; "U nas sostoialas' svad'ba", *Komsomolets*, 17.2.1961, p.3; "Kakie oni schastlivye", *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, p.4.

<sup>142</sup> See additional to the articles TsGA 4034-42-447, p.38.

<sup>143</sup> RGASPI M1-2-356, p.105.

by official guests, the ceremonial programme consisted of traditional customs – a waltz and other classical dances, a wedding cake, presents and flowers. The *gor'ko* (bitter) toast, which was a sign for the newly-weds to kiss, remained in use and provided a strong link to traditional wedding practices.<sup>144</sup>

One question debated is whether the newly created or revived traditions became institutionalized during the Thaw period. Alexei Yurchak suggests that Soviet rituals and language underwent a process of normalization and “hyper-normalization” from the late 1950s and early 1960s. Earlier works on rituals also propose this periodization.<sup>145</sup> An examination of records of the wedding rite, the most common tradition revived by the Soviet Union, reveals the Thaw to be a transitional period when things were still in flux. Various elements were tried out for the new or newly revived rituals. Some became common practices, while others were forgotten. For example, wedding palaces became the usual location for ceremonies after the first one opened in Leningrad in 1959. Other rites of passage, such as the registration of children, copied this practice.<sup>146</sup> However, some ideas were more short-lived, such as gardens of “family happiness” where newly-weds could plant a tree as a symbol of their love;<sup>147</sup> building living space for newly-weds,<sup>148</sup> and organizing evenings for newly-weds, during which they were informed, as future parents, about health issues, nutrition and educational questions.<sup>149</sup>

When looking at traditional folk festivals, it also becomes clear that the Thaw era can be regarded as a transitional period, when the routines of the late Soviet Union were launched

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<sup>144</sup> For example, “Dozhit’ vam”, *KT*, 1.1.1958, p.2; “Dvoretz brakosochetaniia”, *Komsomolets*, 11.11.1959, p.3.

<sup>145</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more*, pp.36-80, pp.283-4; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.3-4.

<sup>146</sup> “Dvoretz brakosochetaniia”, *Komsomolets*, 11.11.1959, p.3; see also Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*, p.47; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.74-5; on the “baby palaces” see pp.69-70.

<sup>147</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, pp.208-9.

<sup>148</sup> “Svoimi rukami”, *KT*, 8.9.1957, pp.1-2.

<sup>149</sup> “U nas komsomol’skaia svad’ba”, *KP*, 11.7.1957, p.2; “Vecher molodozhenov”, *KT*, 27.2.1957, p.1.

and shaped but not yet fixed. Most festivals were initiated or revived during the Thaw period, but became established practice only in later years. Like the new-style (but traditionally-flavoured) weddings, festivals in the style of Russian or Tatar folklore, such as the Tatar *sabantui*, were promoted as alternatives to seasonal religious festivals like Christmas or Easter. The revival and continuation of these traditional practices corresponded with official guidelines, which stated that the new Soviet rites should be “*narodnyi* in terms of content, mass scale and form”.<sup>150</sup> In the tradition of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization), official propaganda channels were keen to revive these traditional festivals, which had been introduced in the 1920s but were then banned from the Stalinist festive calendar.<sup>151</sup> The Komsomol played an active role in this revival, as it helped to plan and organize the celebrations.

New Year had been a publicly accepted holiday since the early years of the Soviet regime. It had replaced Christmas, while retaining some traditional key elements such as the Christmas tree (*elka*), Father Christmas (*ded moroz*) and presents for children.<sup>152</sup> New Year celebrations followed a very uniform pattern and almost always included a ball with dance, music, costumes and masks.<sup>153</sup> Individual Komsomol organizations, however, still implemented creative and unusual ideas. One organization involved all Komsomol members in preparations for the celebration: some members produced presents, others sewed costumes, prepared a room for the ball, or built a sledge hill.<sup>154</sup> Vendors at the department store in Cheliabinsk were

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<sup>150</sup> “Pogovorim o prazdnikakh”, *KP*, 2.2.1958, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society*, pp.130-2; on *korenizatsiia* see Terry Martin. “An Affirmative Action Empire. The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism”, in: *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. by Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.67-90; see also “Pogovorim o prazdnikakh”, *KP*, 2.2.1958, p.3.

<sup>152</sup> Elena V. Dushechkina. *Russkaia elka. Istoriia, mifologiia, literatura*, Sankt Peterburg: Norint, 2002; Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.137-9.

<sup>153</sup> See “Prazdnichnaia Kazan’”, *KT*, 31.12.1954, p.1; “Posle novogodnego vechera”, *KT*, 1.1.1956, p.2; “Veselo vstretili Novyi god”, *Komsomolets*, 5.1.1958, p.4.

<sup>154</sup> In the Cheliabinsk region in 1958, see OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.56.

dressed as Snow White (*snegurochka*) or Father Christmas and invited potential customers into the shop.<sup>155</sup>

New Year was celebrated by all peoples of the Soviet Union. In Russia, another typical holiday was Seeing-off Winter (*provody zimy*), a reworking of the traditional Shrovetide (*maslenitsa*) which resembled the Western carnival tradition. It was promoted from the mid-1960s, but became popular only in the years following the Thaw.<sup>156</sup> This holiday was celebrated with sports contests, concerts and traditional Russian pancakes (*bliny*).<sup>157</sup> Another allegedly Slavic holiday was the Festival of the Birch (*berezka*). Celebration of *berezka* resumed (or perhaps began) in the mid-1960s, replacing Whitsun, which had religious connotations.<sup>158</sup> *Berezka* celebrations appear to have been rare. Sources in Cheliabinsk and Tatarstan contain only one reference to *berezka* at a kolkhoz in Tatarstan, where Komsomol members prepared a celebration for the whole village, announced the results of spring work in the fields and organized concerts and dances until late in the night.<sup>159</sup>

A traditional folk holiday in the Tatar context was *Sabantui*, a festival to celebrate spring sowing at the end of June. Although it was officially a labour holiday, it became more and more a “holiday of the Tatar people”,<sup>160</sup> which was celebrated by all citizens of the Tatar Republic. Every village and town in the ethnically Tatar areas had their own festivals. The biggest celebrations, however, took place in the parks of Kazan’, where thousands of people participated in traditional Tatar competitions, such as the battle of the sashes or the Tatar

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<sup>155</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.98.

<sup>156</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.132-4.

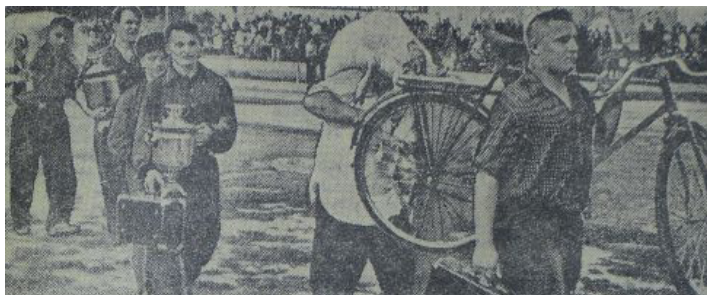
<sup>157</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.56.

<sup>158</sup> Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, pp.134-5.

<sup>159</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447, p.38.

<sup>160</sup> “Saban-tui”, *KT*, 26.6.1957, p.1.

fight, as well as classical sports contests, such as running or high jump. Concerts, dances and fireworks framed the celebrations until late in the night.<sup>161</sup>



Picture 2 and 3: Celebration of *Sabantui* in Tatarstan<sup>162</sup>

The revival of these pagan and pre-modern traditions seems odd given that religion was consistently presented as a danger to the communist modernizing project. Perhaps because of this incongruity, or because their “folkloric” roots were rather questionable, the ‘folklore style’ festivals were far less popular than rites of passage. The latter were better suited to highlighting the anti-modern character of religion and the danger it posed to the communist project. At the same time, they were more attractive to youth, as they provided clear markers between the phases of life.

Even celebrations of ‘life-phase’ type festivals only became formalised in later years, so Komsomol activists during the Thaw still had a relatively high degree of freedom when organizing these events. Administrators sometimes complained that this resulted in total passivity towards conducting such celebrations within the Komsomol. However, some evidence suggests that this freedom, plus the enjoyment which youth derived from the extraordinary nature of the events, made the festivals a much more appealing element in the

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<sup>161</sup> For example, see “Saban-tui”, *KT*, 30.6.1954, p.4; “Saban-tui”, *KT*, 27.6.1956, p.2; “Saban-tui”, *KT*, 26.6.1957, p.1; “Chudesnyi ty”, *KT*, 24.6.1959, p.4.

<sup>162</sup> “Saban-tui – prazdnik tatarskogo naroda”, *KT*, 26.6.1957, p.1; “Chudesnyi ty, nash prazdnik Saban-tui”, *KT*, 24.6.1959, p.4.

fight against religion than the lectures and other verbal propaganda used by the Komsomol to promote an atheist worldview.

Yet overall, the fight against religion remained lifeless and rigid throughout the Thaw period. It failed to live up to the incessant references to the dynamism of the original anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s. Quite different in character was the fight against another “remnant of the past”, deviant behaviour. This was a struggle in which some young people were much keener to participate.

### **Deviant Behaviour: Hooliganism, Alcohol Abuse and Laziness**

Among youth, hooliganism, heavy drinking and the tendency to lead an idle life were the biggest ‘thorns in the flesh’ of Soviet rhetoric. From an ideological point of view, the continuing existence of these problems was difficult to explain, as contemporary Soviet society had “no social basis for these outdated phenomena”.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, they were characterized as highly dangerous remnants of the past.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, they were portrayed as resulting from a growing Western influence – a paradigm that was valid from the mid-1930s until the years of perestroika.<sup>165</sup> Hooliganism, drinking and idleness were blamed on “the ideology and morality of imperialism”. Citations of crime rates from US cities emphasized the negative consequences of capitalism, which created a “society dominated by the ‘dog eat dog’ principle”.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, discussions about hooliganism, alcohol abuse and laziness in the regions tended to trace the origin of these phenomena to the undesired past, which was still making itself felt among a small minority of youth. Deviant behaviour among

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<sup>163</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3093, p.24; see also TsGA 4034-42-292, pp.52-3; Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.64-71.

<sup>164</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, pp.66-7; see also TsGA 4034-40-138, p.77; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.70; OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.49; Sheila Fitzpatrick. “Social Parasites. How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism”, in: *Cahiers du monde russe* 47(2006), 1-2, pp.377-408.

<sup>165</sup> Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.64-117.

<sup>166</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.92.

the young generation was sometimes linked to religion; religious festivals were presented as occasions for young people to drink and start a row.<sup>167</sup> As shown above, religious adherents were often accused of social parasitism. Rhetorically, the phenomena of hooliganism and deviant behaviour were treated the same way.

### **The Rhetorical Spectrum of the Fight against Deviant Behaviour**

Building communism and “forming the new person with communist qualities” required the complete eradication of all undesired phenomena of the past. “The remains of the damned past in the consciousness of some parts of youth” became “unbearable” in the Thaw period, when the communist future and its inhabitants had begun to take shape.<sup>168</sup> People possessing these characteristics of the past would hinder the building of communism.<sup>169</sup> After the 13<sup>th</sup> Komsomol Congress in 1958, local and regional activists often quoted Khrushchev’s statement that “we will not take a hooligan with us into communism; we will have to part from him here, in socialism”.<sup>170</sup> These strictures were replicated in the regions; the incompatibility of deviant behaviour such as hooliganism and parasitism with the communist future was regularly highlighted.<sup>171</sup>

Soviet rhetoric characterized alcohol abuse, along with other forms of deviant behaviour, as an obstacle on the path to communism.<sup>172</sup> Trying to encourage *kul’turnost’* (culture), Komsomol rhetoric mainly focused on an outward display of communist morality. It lamented the continuing existence of “people who sometimes behave loutishly towards girls, use foul language and break the norms of communist morality”.<sup>173</sup> The approach to alcohol was more

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<sup>167</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.21.

<sup>168</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.135-6; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.71.

<sup>169</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.43; see also OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.137; OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp. 226-7.

<sup>170</sup> Quotations see TsGA 181-1-642, p. 27; see also TsGA 4034-40-214, p.36.

<sup>171</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.61-2; OGACHO 1468-1-14, 10; TsGA 4034-42-292, pp.52-3.

<sup>172</sup> “Vrednyi perezhitok proshlogo”, *Komsomolets* 12.9.1954, p.2.

<sup>173</sup> The first secretary of the Central Committee at a plenary meeting in 1957, see RGASPI M1-2-356, p.90.

aggressive. A first campaign took place in 1954, followed by a second one in 1958. Both stressed that excessive drinking was outmoded and had “no social grounds” in modern society. Drinking was portrayed as a major risk to the health of the individual and society as well, because it went hand in hand with hooliganism.<sup>174</sup> Heavy drinking could result in riots and crimes – as in the case of a young man in Kazan’, who got drunk and started a knife fight during a dance evening.<sup>175</sup> It also damaged the economy by reducing workers’ productivity.<sup>176</sup> Komsomol rhetoric criticized the high consumption of alcohol among young people, who would allegedly “drink at mass meetings and dances, at home and in shops, after exams and on paydays”.<sup>177</sup> Komsomol members were asked to “celebrate without wine”<sup>178</sup> and examples of successful ‘dry’ parties were quoted.<sup>179</sup> However, the first secretary of the Central Committee put fighting and drinking into perspective. He quoted the Russian proverb that “there is a monster in every family” and presented drinking as almost a Russian tradition, which was supposedly followed by everybody in their youth.<sup>180</sup>

Vivid discussions unfolded within Komsomol rhetoric about how to constrain these ‘deviant’ phenomena. They reflected general debates during the Thaw period about how to deal with deviant behaviour and criminality. The Thaw period perpetuated the ambivalent attitudes of the Stalinist era, which shifted perpetually between advocating tough action – social exclusion and public shaming – and the use of social engineering to ‘re-forge’ young people.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> For example, see “Alkogol”, *KT*, 4.8.1954, p.3; “K chemu privodit alkogolizm”, *KT*, 20.8.1954, p.2; “Nikotin i alkogol”, *KT*, 9.7.1958, p.4; “Chelovek rozhdetsia vnov”, *KT*, 16.11.1958, p.2; “Chelovek bez zavrashnego dnia”, *KT*, 23.9.1960, p.2; see also Stephen White. *Russia Goes Dry. Alcohol, State and Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>175</sup> “Borot’sia za cheloveka!”, *KT*, 12.2.1961, p.2.

<sup>176</sup> “Kto vodku liubit”, *KT*, 4.5.1960, p.4.

<sup>177</sup> The first Tatar secretary in 1961, see TsGA 4034-42-207, 29; for more examples see OGACHO 1467-1-1, pp.65-6; TsGA 4034-42-292, p.121.

<sup>178</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.68.

<sup>179</sup> The Cheliabinsk regional Party secretary at a plenary meeting in 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.62-3.

<sup>180</sup> RGASPI M1-2-356, pp.90-1.

<sup>181</sup> Miriam Dobson. “Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*”, in: *Slavic Review* 64(2005), 3, pp.580-600; Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in*

However, the Thaw also saw the notion of social engineering expand to include moral engineering. It was argued that society as a whole should be moulded via moral engineering according to a particular utopian blueprint. At the same time, the individual was to be transformed in line with the principles of communist morality.<sup>182</sup> Debates on how to deal with deviant behaviour constantly shifted between social exclusion on the one hand, and inclusion, social and moral engineering on the other. Some voices within Komsomol rhetoric imagined society as a “train towards communism”, which had to depart without the remnants of the undesired past if it ever wanted to reach the promised land of the communist future.<sup>183</sup> Others preferred the idea of re-educating offenders, thereby welcoming them back into the community of ‘builders of communism’.

Those who favoured education above isolation were mainly found at the regional level. They often blamed inappropriate behaviour on objective reasons, such as the harsh living conditions of young workers and the poor range of leisure activities available.<sup>184</sup> Instead of holding young offenders responsible for their crimes, Komsomol rhetoric tended to blame parents, educators and work collectives for failing to set a good example for young people.<sup>185</sup> They also pointed the finger at incompetent plant managers and lazy chairmen of workers’ clubs for failing to establish a broad variety of cultured leisure activities.<sup>186</sup> This point of view was supported by crime statistics. Almost all young offenders lacked a solid general and political education, had been neglected by public bodies and by the Komsomol, and did not participate

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*Russia*, pp.297-303; for Stalinism see e.g. Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.64-5; Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, pp.167-81.

<sup>182</sup> John Gooding. *Socialism in Russia. Lenin and his Legacy, 1890-1991*, Basingstoke et.al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p.162.

<sup>183</sup> For this metaphor, see Petr L. Vajl' and Aleksandr A. Genis. *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka*, Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001, p.18; see also Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”.

<sup>184</sup> “Pochemu”, *KT*, 15.1.1956, p.2.

<sup>185</sup> “Chtoby ne rosli tuneiadtsami”, *Komsomolets*, 29.1.1961, p.2; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.131; OGACHO 485-1-3227, pp.21-2.

<sup>186</sup> “Delo vsei obshchestvennosti”, *KT*, 8.10.1954, p.2; “Chtoby ne rosli tuneiadtsami”, *Komsomolets*, 29.1.1961, p.2; “Pochta Iun Korkina”, *KT*, 17.1.1960, p.2; “Khuliganstvu i vypivke”, *KT*, 29.8.1962, p.3.

in public life or sport.<sup>187</sup> The Komsomol was generally held responsible for tolerating this poor state of affairs and activists were urged to take determined action to improve the organization of spare time.<sup>188</sup> When a young worker was murdered in a dormitory in Cheliabinsk, the regional youth newspaper accused the Komsomol organizations of failing to arrange appropriate leisure activities. The offender and his friends were described as “good guys in principle, with good characters”.<sup>189</sup>

Komsomol activists were encouraged to follow the example of a Red Army commander who gave away his own shoes during the Civil War to make up for a theft among his men, because he blamed himself for failing to educate them as good communists.<sup>190</sup> Komsomol leaders were held responsible for failing to eliminate faults among youth. Just as defective industrial production had to be put right by workers, “defects” (*brak*) in educational work had to be repaired by the Komsomol organizations.<sup>191</sup> The term *brak* was applied, in particular, to young people who received prison sentences. It was argued that the Komsomol should study the reasons for the high ‘defect’ rate and take particular care of offenders. The latter had been deprived a proper communist upbringing, so were now isolated from society.<sup>192</sup> As there would be no penal system under communism, convicts had to be reintegrated in society.<sup>193</sup> As

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<sup>187</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.165; OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.82-3; OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.109-110; RGASPI M1-2-400, p.60.

<sup>188</sup> “Khuliganstvu i vypivke”, *KT*, 29.8.1962, p.3.

<sup>189</sup> “Kto vinovat?”, *Komsomolets*, 4.7.1962, pp.2-3.

<sup>190</sup> “Borot’sia s khuliganstvom”, *KT*, 30.10.1957, p.3.

<sup>191</sup> Komsomol activists from the ChMZ in 1961 and 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.64-65 and OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.42.

<sup>192</sup> The *obkom* secretary in 1963, see OGACHO 485-1-3093, pp.30-2 and the director of the political department for work with convicts in 1958, see OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.19; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.130-1; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.41-2.

<sup>193</sup> The first Cheliabinsk regional secretary in 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.77; see also OGACHO 485-1-3219, 45-6, 1962; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.30.

the main agent in this process, the Komsomol was supposed to involve the general public in discussions about individual misdeeds and how to eradicate them.<sup>194</sup>

The public also played a prominent role in social exclusion, the alternative approach to deviant behaviour. Here, the task of public opinion was to rigorously reject any inappropriate behaviour which might result from the undesired past, distinguishing between useful and useless elements. To use the metaphor of the modern state as a gardener, the healthy cohort of young people had to be integrated into society, while the undesired cohort had to be excluded.<sup>195</sup> Proponents of this strict course of action asked Komsomol organizations to reject the soft approach. Komsomol secretaries were criticized for showing sympathy to drinkers and hooligans when they should rather have applied a harsh course of action.<sup>196</sup> Some activists went even further and emphasized that Soviet society, in its desire to build communism, could not tolerate the existence of hooligans, drinkers and parasites.<sup>197</sup>

Hardliners highlighted the incompatibility of phenomena from the undesired past with the progressiveness of modern Soviet society. They argued that youth should “illuminate the streets and houses of our city with Komsomol light, so that no hidden mould can escape in the dark corners”.<sup>198</sup> Characterizing hooligans and idlers as “moral monsters who had lost all appearance of humanity”,<sup>199</sup> they verbally excluded them from healthy Soviet society. The hardliners called for an intolerant course of action which would offer a clear choice to

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<sup>194</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3152, pp.47-8; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.30; “Viktor Pudikov”, *KT*, 8.2.1959, p.3.

<sup>195</sup> For example, see Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, pp.297-303; Zygmunt Bauman. *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991; Jörg Baberowski. “Diktaturen der Eindeutigkeit. Ambivalenz und Gewalt im Zarenreich und in der frühen Sowjetunion”, in: *Moderne Zeiten? Krieg, Revolution und Gewalt im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Jörg Baberowski, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, pp.37-59; for a contemporary argumentation see “Pust’ zemlia gorit”, *KT*, 13.12.1959, p.1.

<sup>196</sup> In 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.165; for the demand for a harsher course see also OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.158-9; OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.43.

<sup>197</sup> “Chtob zemlia”, *Komsomolets*, 3.8.1958, pp.1+3; see also OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.11.

<sup>198</sup> “Net, eto ne sluchainost’!”, *KT*, 13.6.1962, p.2.

<sup>199</sup> “Oni predstanut pered sudom”, *Komsomolets*, 29.8.1956, p.4.

wrongdoers: “either you work with us or you get out of our way”.<sup>200</sup> Young offenders were characterized pejoratively as “morons” (*debily*).<sup>201</sup> Some voices even called for the physical isolation of “corrupt elements”. They demanded that wrongdoers be “moved out of the city territory”<sup>202</sup>; citing the case of Finland, where theft was allegedly punished with the amputation of fingers or hands, they demanded stricter punishment for petty-theft.<sup>203</sup>

From these controversial statements in Komsomol rhetoric, it is clear that two attitudes to deviant behaviour coexisted – an integrative approach and a call for the social exclusion of wrongdoers. Neither approach clearly won the upper hand during the Thaw period. This uncertainty was reflected in legislation. Two laws on hooliganism and social parasitism tried to define a rather harsh official position.<sup>204</sup> The 1956 law on hooliganism allowed the police to give a great number of people shorter sentences, while narrowing the scope of acceptable public behaviour.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, the law’s effectiveness as a preventative measure was questioned at Komsomol meetings, because “the legal propaganda (was) set up very poorly”.<sup>206</sup> Indeed, discussions about the hooliganism law took much less space in regional newspapers than debates about the bill against parasitism, which was first discussed in 1957 before finally being adopted in the early 1960s. It suggested resettling people who had been without employment for three to four months or longer from the cities to special settlements. The actual effect of the statute was not great in terms of numbers – only 20,000 people were

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<sup>200</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.41.

<sup>201</sup> The representative of the Cheliabinsk Writers’ Union in 1963, see OGACHO 485-1-3227, pp.13-4.

<sup>202</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3093, p.10.

<sup>203</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.124.

<sup>204</sup> Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”, here pp.139-40.

<sup>205</sup> Brian Lapierre. “Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale. The Campaign against Petty Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1956-1964”, in: *Cahier du monde russe* 47(2006), 1-2, pp.349-75 and Brian Lapierre. “Dealing with Social Disorders that Should Not Exist. The Khrushchev-Era Soft Line on Petty Crime and the Struggle against Hooliganism in Soviet Russia during the Thaw”, in: *Russian History* 36(2009), 2, pp.183-200.

<sup>206</sup> The director of the political department for the work with convicts in 1963, see OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.19.

exiled in the first year throughout the entire Soviet Union – but the accompanying press campaigns drew considerable attention to the topic and had a menacing air.<sup>207</sup>

The discussions pointed out that the laws were only temporary, because the state would wither away with the onset of communism and public bodies would take over state functions. Public institutions such as comrade courts and voluntary brigades therefore felt entitled to take action to maintain public order; this caused frequent rivalries with state bodies.<sup>208</sup> Press campaigns called for public support for the police, demanding that public and administrative actions go hand in hand.<sup>209</sup> As a sort of a compromise, the laws were praised as a means to effectively impose public will on deviant individuals. Whereas a paterfamilias had previously been able to beat up his wife without facing prosecution, the law on hooliganism now allowed legal action, thus protecting Soviet citizens from all such hooligans.<sup>210</sup> The law on parasitism was supposed to give public institutions a decisive means of effectively fighting parasitism.<sup>211</sup>

The implementation of these laws suggested that a rigorous course of action was officially favoured. However, conciliatory voices were sometimes heard and Komsomol leaders often seemed uncertain about how to deal with deviant behaviour. Their explicit questions about what to do with wrongdoers within their organizations often remained unanswered; the proposed solutions were as vague and ambivalent as the rhetoric itself. Young workers in Cheliabinsk asked the readers of *Komsomolets* how to deal with their lazy workmates and suggested that public pressure might not be enough. Letters to the editor highlighted the need

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<sup>207</sup> Fitzpatrick, “Social Parasites”.

<sup>208</sup> Yoram Gorlizki. “Delegalization in Russia. Soviet Comrades' Courts in Retrospective”, in: *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 46(1998), 3, pp.403-25; Yoram Gorlizki. “Policing Post-Stalin Society. The *militiia* and Public Order under Khrushchev”, in: *Cahiers du Monde russe* 44(2003), 2-3, pp.465-80.

<sup>209</sup> For example, “Povedem reshitel’ nuiu bor’bu”, *KT*, 28.8.1957, p.2; “Molodezh’”, *KT*, 16.8.1961, p.2; “O raspoiasavshikhsia khuliganakh”, *KT*, 5.10.1955, p.3.

<sup>210</sup> “Est’ li uprava na khuligana?”, *Komsomolets*, 27.2.1963, p.3.

<sup>211</sup> “Tuneiadsam – besposhchadniui voinu!”, *KT*, 24.9.1961, p.3.

to educate and support youth, as well as the need to exclude wrongdoers from society.<sup>212</sup>

Another article offered no definite solution for a situation where three young men had rioted in a rural club.<sup>213</sup> Official statements gave vague advice.<sup>214</sup> An example is the answer of the First Secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* to an anonymous note asking directly what to do with wrongdoers: “we must punish those who disturb us... but educate, educate again and re-educate on the other hand”.<sup>215</sup>

Ultimately, Komsomol activists were unsure whether to deal with deviant behaviour by excluding the wrongdoers or by re-educating them within their own ranks. It was argued “that the Komsomol has no place for such people”<sup>216</sup> and that the organization should “take the most decisive action, even so far as exclusion from the ranks of the VLKSM”.<sup>217</sup> In general, punishment for laziness and indiscipline was much stricter than for hooliganism. In one case, a “severe reprimand” was considered too strict as a punishment for acts of hooliganism;<sup>218</sup> a young worker who started a row at his workplace while drunk was put under the protection of his Komsomol organization rather than being excluded.<sup>219</sup> It was often the lower-ranking organizations that called for the exclusion of hooligans, whereas the regional committees reduced this sentence to a mere reprimand, which had to be reported in the membership booklet.<sup>220</sup> A stricter approach, including exclusion, was adopted against young people who had left their assigned workplace without permission,<sup>221</sup> and those who did not show the

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<sup>212</sup> “Obo vsem – nachistotu”, *Komsomolets*, 12.8.1960, p.3; “Kto ne rabotaet, tot ne est!”, *Komsomolets*, 7.9.1960, p.3.

<sup>213</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.89; “Troie pered sudom”, *Komsomolets*, 15.8.1956, pp.2-3.

<sup>214</sup> “Rekordmen”, *Komsomolets*, 28.1.1962, p.3.

<sup>215</sup> In 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.78.

<sup>216</sup> The result of a similar discussion between the same regional secretaries two weeks later, see OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.32.

<sup>217</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, 382.

<sup>218</sup> A discussion in the Cheliabinsk *obkom* in January 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2963, pp.20-1.

<sup>219</sup> TsGA 4034-40-151, p.89.

<sup>220</sup> Two cases in 1953 and in 1957, see OGACHO 485-1-2547, p.77; OGACHO 485-1-2973, p.2.

<sup>221</sup> For example, a young worker in 1957 who returned to his hometown instead of staying at the construction site where he was supposed to work, see 485-1-2973, p. 13; see also OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.134.

required discipline at work.<sup>222</sup> The tone generally seemed to be harsher if Komsomol activists were involved; they had to be removed from their posts if they were passive or irresponsible.<sup>223</sup>

### **Practices of Fighting Deviant Behaviour**

The decisive force in the fight against hooliganism and laziness was the general public (*obshchestvennost'*). Its lack of commitment was frequently named as one reason for the continued existence of deviant behaviour. Insufficient collective control, the absence of individual work and neglect by the Komsomol organizations were identified as the major reasons for rising crime rates.<sup>224</sup> The “power of public opinion”<sup>225</sup> was supposed to create “an atmosphere of intolerance”.<sup>226</sup> It was supposed to develop a “feeling of personal responsibility towards the collective”, encouraging young people to subordinate their individual feelings to the needs of society.<sup>227</sup>

Local examples demonstrated the significance of public opinion. When two hooligans disturbed a dance evening in a village club, the whole collective took a threatening attitude and managed to get rid of the perpetrators.<sup>228</sup> Other examples explored the lack of public determination in cases where a small number of troublemakers had managed to ruin a whole event. This was described as especially embarrassing when it occurred at an organized discussion “about the moral character of the builders of communism”: Komsomol activists called the police instead of mobilizing *obshchestvennost'*, thereby relying on state organs

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<sup>222</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2973, pp.70-71; OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.131-2.

<sup>223</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.204; see also OGACHO 485-1-2973, pp.52-59; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.131.

<sup>224</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.109-110.

<sup>225</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.295.

<sup>226</sup> The keynote speech at an *obkom* plenary meeting in 1963, see OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.59; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.143; OGACHO 485-1-3175, p.123; OGACHO 485-1-3220, pp.27-8.

<sup>227</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.26.

<sup>228</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, pp.294-5.

rather than society.<sup>229</sup> Responding to such failures, representatives of the revolutionary past emphasized the decisive role allegedly played by public opinion in their youth, when young people would not swear or be obviously drunk.<sup>230</sup>

The public could be involved in the fight against deviant behaviour as a critical and intolerant audience or in a more active role, by participating in voluntary Komsomol brigades and assisting groups of *militia*.<sup>231</sup> A major element in this fight was naming and shaming, with the public as the target group. On the one hand, the public was supposed to be physically present at comrade court trials or workers' assemblies, where they were both audience and judges of individual behaviour. On the other hand, they were supposed to be reached via the satirical press and poster announcements. Public shaming rhetorically excluded hooligans and idlers from society. Hooliganism was characterized as an alien phenomenon in Soviet society, because it presented an immediate threat to public order. Social parasitism, on the other hand, was clearly excluded from healthy society, as individual idlers were named and ridiculed.

Speakers at meetings often cited individual cases of hooliganism and petty crime, in order to show that these phenomena of the past still posed a threat to Soviet society. Komsomol meetings were informed about crimes committed by young people, such as a murder during a dance evening, prostitution organized by young men in Kazan',<sup>232</sup> or organized raids and spontaneous assaults on students committed by students of a Cheliabinsk technical college.<sup>233</sup> Newspapers followed up these stories and reported individual cases of hooliganism, in which the wrongdoers were depicted as revolting examples of leftovers from the undesired past. The

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<sup>229</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.83; for more examples see also OGACHO 1468-1-2, pp.294-5.

<sup>230</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.63-6.

<sup>231</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.160; TsGA 4034-37-607, p.74; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.24.

<sup>232</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.256-8.

<sup>233</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.143.

stories mentioned football hooligans;<sup>234</sup> a Moscow student who had terrorized his fellow students; rioting and heavy drinking;<sup>235</sup> young men who had assaulted girls and defenceless passers-by;<sup>236</sup> and even murder in broad daylight.<sup>237</sup>

Statistics were used to illustrate the danger that hooliganism and heavy drinking posed to Soviet society.<sup>238</sup> The Central Committee of the Komsomol noticed a rise in petty crime and disturbance of the public order. It identified individual regions which had particularly high crime rates, including the Cheliabinsk region.<sup>239</sup> Figures from the regions confirmed this view. Throughout the Thaw period, Komsomol activists were confronted with rising cases of crime and hooliganism. Their attention was drawn to the fact that young people of Komsomol age figured most prominently among the wrongdoers.<sup>240</sup> Speakers listed different sorts of crime in which young people were involved: “38% (were sentenced)... for theft and embezzlement of socialist property, 25%... for hooliganism, 15% for murder and deliberate stabbing with serious wounds, 6%... for rape”.<sup>241</sup>

In fact, the main reason for the significant rise in the number of wrongdoers was the 1956 law on hooliganism, which had redefined ‘hooliganism’ and turned many small offences into crimes.<sup>242</sup> Discussions about hooliganism within the Komsomol ignored this fact. They also exaggerated the rise in crime, in order to stress the threat which hooliganism posed to the communist project and Soviet society. In general, it was emphasized that the Komsomol

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<sup>234</sup> “Khuligany”, *KT*, 21.10.1956, p.4.

<sup>235</sup> “Khuligan i student”, *KT*, 7.9.1960, p.3.

<sup>236</sup> “Net, eto ne sluchainost’!”, *KT*, 13.6.1962, p.2; “Osuditeikh, liudi”, *Komsomolets*, 27.6.1962, p.3.

<sup>237</sup> “Tragediia”, *KT*, 14.9.1962, pp.2-3.

<sup>238</sup> For example, see Gleb Tsipurskii. “Ulichnyi mir i molodyi khuligany v post-stalinskom Sovetskom Soiuze”, in: *Molodezhnye ulichnye gruppirovki. Vvedenie v problematiku*, ed. by D. V. Gromov, Moskva: IEA RAN, 2009, pp.73-93; Lapierre, “Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale”.

<sup>239</sup> RGASPI M1-2-347, pp.51-2; RGASPI M1-6-1088, p.95.

<sup>240</sup> For 1952 and 1953 see OGACHO 485-1-2549, pp.13-5; for 1954 see OGACHO 485-1-2554, p.37; for 1956 see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.130; for 1960 and 1961 see OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.82-3, OGACHO 485-1-3220, pp.27-8 and OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.35; for numbers for 1958 in Tatarstan see TsGA 4034-40-214, pp.26-7.

<sup>241</sup> In 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.43.

<sup>242</sup> Lapierre, “Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale”.

should be active in the struggle against wrongdoers, cooperate with the *militia*,<sup>243</sup> reinforce public control over individual behaviour<sup>244</sup> and improve educational work.<sup>245</sup> However, the Cheliabinsk Party secretary put things into perspective when he stated that “criminality is not growing in our region. We have just started to keep better records”.<sup>246</sup>

In rhetoric, parasitism was not presented as a danger. Rather, rhetoric ridiculed individual idlers to make parasitism seem like a temporary aberration, not a systemic defect. This interpretation was also conveyed by the fact that public shaming happened mainly in regional papers, local notices and posters. One typical story described how a young man at a *kolkhoz* in the Cheliabinsk region decided to stay at home after a serious illness, instead of returning to work. He thus “risked falling in love with laziness” and became a parasite, living a sad and unfulfilled life without ideals and goals.<sup>247</sup> Another story featured the son of a Kazan’ professor who was spoiled by his parents and lived on their money, without studying or doing any useful work. The article portrayed him as abusing his parents’ good will, demanding a high standard of living without being willing to lift a finger to contribute to the family’s income.<sup>248</sup>

Naming and shaming idlers could also happen visually. Regional papers sometimes showed named photos of young people who were allegedly refusing to work.<sup>249</sup> This method was more effectively applied at the local level, where satirical notices and public posters made young idlers or hooligans seem ridiculous to their friends and workmates. At an exhibition in Cheliabinsk in 1961, pictures of young idlers were displayed for participants at a conference

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<sup>243</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.130.

<sup>244</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3220, pp.27-8; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.35.

<sup>245</sup> TsGA 4034-40-214, pp.26-7.

<sup>246</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.66.

<sup>247</sup> “Issledovanie”, *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, pp.2-3; for similar stories see e.g. “Tuneiadishko”, *KT*, 19.12.1961, p.8; “Tuneiadtsam”, *Komsomolets*, 14.9.1960, p.3.

<sup>248</sup> “Dumai, Igor”, *KT*, 26.10.1960, p.2.

<sup>249</sup> “A eto lodyri”, *Komsomolets*, 22.8.1956, p.3.

on the topic “He who does not work does not eat”.<sup>250</sup> Public notices and satirical journals, similar to *Krokodil* but with smaller print-runs, were created by some Komsomol groups and work units.<sup>251</sup> Satirical showcases were erected in public places like Bauman Street, Kazan’s central street, where young wrongdoers were shamed in front of the whole city.<sup>252</sup> This method was allegedly highly effective. When a locally well-known thief was publicly ridiculed in a satirical poster on Bauman Street, this “healthy man, with a weight no less than 90 kilos, came and cried like a child”. He allegedly corrected his behaviour immediately afterwards.<sup>253</sup> Generally, satirical remarks were said to have a positive effect on the wrongdoers. A *raikom* secretary from the Cheliabinsk region said he had “recovered from some individual mistakes” after being criticized in the regional youth newspaper.<sup>254</sup>

Comrade courts provided a particularly important format for public shaming. Comrade courts had been propagated by Khrushchev at the XXI Party Congress. They granted laymen the right to try and punish members of their working or housing collectives for misbehaviour, thereby fulfilling legal tasks which had hitherto been strictly limited to the jurisdiction of the state. The number of comrade courts increased steadily during the Thaw period, reaching around 90,000 in the RSFSR by 1964.<sup>255</sup> The Komsomol was not the main body responsible for the courts, but its members were asked to engage in them<sup>256</sup> and organize separate comrade courts, in order to emphasize the public’s crucial role in counteracting deviant

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<sup>250</sup> “Gorit zemlia”, *Komsomolets*, 22.2.1961, p.3.

<sup>251</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2555, p.37; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.113; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.118; TsGA 4034-42-196, p.45.

<sup>252</sup> TsGA 4034-40-201, p.74.

<sup>253</sup> According to the *gorkom* secretary, see TsGA 4034-42-198, p.48.

<sup>254</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.177.

<sup>255</sup> Gorlizki, “Delegalization in Russia”.

<sup>256</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2553, pp.104-5.

behaviour.<sup>257</sup> Some organizations set up independent “‘Komsomol courts of honor’ and ‘Komsomol courts of intolerance’”, although these appear to have been a minority.<sup>258</sup>

The *Komsomolets Tatarii* reported on a typical comrade court which took place in Gorkii Park, Kazan’, in summer 1961. Witnesses gave details about the lives of the two accused parasites, a young man and an older woman. While their “petty, dirty and empty” lives were discussed publicly, the audience was emotionally engaged and individual listeners expressed their outrage. The audience functioned as the judge and set the sentence for the two idlers: to find work within a certain period of time, otherwise they would be “removed from the city as parasitic elements”.<sup>259</sup>

Other voices, however, criticized these methods for being “aimed merely at isolating the infringer rather than preventing the emergence of crime”. They called for an individual approach to each young troublemaker.<sup>260</sup> They suggested naming good examples instead of shaming wrongdoers, stressing that it was important to “observe a reasonable framework for the output of satirical print”. Satire should “not be allowed to portray human beings as donkeys or goats”,<sup>261</sup> or present wrongdoers as “contorted figures and deformed physiognomies”.<sup>262</sup> The collective was supposed to pay attention to every individual and exert a high level of control, showing its “ability to have a patient and persistent influence”.<sup>263</sup> A lack of individual work and interest in the individual was said to lead to higher crime rates, social parasitism and hooliganism.<sup>264</sup> At Komsomol meetings, speakers told stories about youngsters who had been neglected by the collective. For example, a young worker at a

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<sup>257</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.215.

<sup>258</sup> In Miass, see OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.25.

<sup>259</sup> “Net im vkhoda”, *KT*, 16.6.1961, p.3.

<sup>260</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.82-3; see also OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.109.

<sup>261</sup> The first secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom*, see OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.57.

<sup>262</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.83.

<sup>263</sup> TsGA 181-1-673, p. 35; see also TsGA 4034-42-196, p.45.

<sup>264</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.158; OGACHO 485-1-2963, pp.57-8.

Cheliabinsk plant joined the Komsomol, but no-one talked to him or checked his living conditions and leisure activities; he became a drunkard and committed small acts of hooliganism because of the lack of individual work.<sup>265</sup>

Many sources urged the Komsomol organizations to intensify their focus on the individual. A Central Committee secretary suggested tracking down every *tuneiadets* (parasite) individually: 696 parasites were well-known to the Komsomol; they could easily be visited at home by the 800 people present for work.<sup>266</sup> Komsomol activists were encouraged to engage in individual work rather than hoping the *militsia* and courts would resolve the problem. Based on the number of Komsomol, Party and state workers, it was calculated that each activist had to “influence two people, take the hand of two people and tell them not to do any misdeed”.<sup>267</sup> This optimism was supported by reports of successes through work with individual wrongdoers.<sup>268</sup>

The most popular way of fighting deviant behaviour stemming from “remnants of the past” was probably to involve Komsomol members and young people in voluntary brigades. Brigades could be Komsomol-run groups, such as “Komsomol patrols” (*komsomol'skie patruli*), Komsomol military headquarters (*komsomol'skii shtab*) or Komsomol operative units (*komsomolskie operativnye otriady*); general people’s friendship units (*narodnye druzhiny*); or “brigades of co-operation with the police” (*brigady sodeistviia militsii*).<sup>269</sup> As their names indicate, these groups used highly militarized language and exerted physical strength to

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<sup>265</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.58-9; see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.149 for a similar story on a medical student who led a parasitic way of life due to the neglect of his Komsomol organization.

<sup>266</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.140.

<sup>267</sup> A regional Party secretary, see OGACHO 485-1-3093, pp.26-7, quotation p.27; for a similar calculation of a Central Committee secretary see OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.43-4.

<sup>268</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.24; OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.79.

<sup>269</sup> Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”, pp.143-6; Nikolai Mitrokhin. *Russkaia Partii. Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR 1953-1985 gody*, Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2003, pp. 270-1.

intimidate wrongdoers and regain control over public space.<sup>270</sup> According to a leaflet about the role of Komsomol patrols (1,500 copies of which were distributed throughout Tatarstan in 1956), the patrols had to consist of 3-5 young people and were subordinate to higher-ranking Komsomol patrols and the police.<sup>271</sup> In practice, however, most were subordinate only to the Komsomol hierarchy, which enabled them to target groups that usually fell beyond the radar of the *militisia*, such as idlers and young people who favoured Western style attire, so called *stiliagi* (see chapter 4).<sup>272</sup>

The leaflet defined the groups' broad range of tasks. These included ensuring "exemplary order" in public spaces by arresting troublemakers and bringing them to headquarters or a police station; preventing begging, rough sleeping, speculation, gambling and public drinking; educating children and youngsters, ensuring they were home before 9 pm; ensuring that people behaved in traffic and on public transport; and preventing crime on the streets.<sup>273</sup> The Komsomol-run groups were a rather new institution which had to be built up gradually after the 14<sup>th</sup> Komsomol Congress under the supervision of the *gorkomy*, *raikomy* and committees of grassroots organizations. However, the *narodnye druzhiny* were a well-established form of social control, consisting of Party, Komsomol and administrative workers.<sup>274</sup>

The brigades were first promoted in 1955 by a letter from the Central Committee. Thereafter, they rapidly became popular.<sup>275</sup> Komsomol directives urged young people to support their work, thereby creating an intolerant climate for deviant behaviour.<sup>276</sup> Contemporary rhetoric presented them as an overwhelming success. In 1956 the Komsomol committee of a Kazan'

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<sup>270</sup> Mitrokhin, *Russkaia Partiia*, pp.271-2; Lapierre, "Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale", p.359; Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?".

<sup>271</sup> TsGA 4034-40-101, p.142.

<sup>272</sup> Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?".

<sup>273</sup> TsGA 4034-40-101, p.142.

<sup>274</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.71; TsGA 4034-42-361, pp.92-3.

<sup>275</sup> Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?".

<sup>276</sup> For example, see "Chtob zemlia", *Komsomolets*, 3.8.1958, pp.1+3; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.160.

factory still had to call on “militarized guards” to maintain public order at a dance evening in their club,<sup>277</sup> but the voluntary brigades were soon supposed to be ready to take over this task. With 70,000 members in 1961 and 123,000 a year later, the *druzhiny* in Tatarstan became a “huge army”. About half the members in the 2,500 brigades were Komsomol members.<sup>278</sup> In the Cheliabinsk region there were fewer brigades and volunteers – only 290 brigades with 38,000 members, which sent out around 3,000 people daily to patrol streets and public places in the early 1960s.<sup>279</sup> Nevertheless, the topic enjoyed more popularity and local and regional speakers promoted the success of their brigades at Komsomol meetings.<sup>280</sup>

Alongside the *narodnye druzhiny* and the Komsomol-run groups, special voluntary brigades were formed within the police. These *Brigady Sodeistviia Militsii* (BSM) were joined by motivated Komsomol members, who were praised as heroes “in the fight against criminal offences, in bringing about public order”. Particularly high achievers were rewarded with military ranks.<sup>281</sup> Members of the BSM were responsible for “establishing public order in places of leisure, public transport, streets and other urban and rural places”.<sup>282</sup> They also had to check traffic and make sure that public transport ran smoothly.<sup>283</sup> As a joint institution involving the state-run police and the public, the BSM were celebrated as “the prototype of how the *militia* should be under communism”.<sup>284</sup>

The brigades – the Komsomol-run units, *narodnye druzhiny* and the BSM – not only provided a vision of the communist future; they also referred to the revolutionary past. They portrayed

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<sup>277</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.29.

<sup>278</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.170; see also TsGA 4034-42-292, p.536; TsGA 4034-42-291, pp.70-1; TsGA 4034-42-361, p.92.

<sup>279</sup> “... beri ego zadushu!”, *Komsomolets*, 2.6.1961, p.4; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.158.

<sup>280</sup> For example, delegates from technical schools in 1957 and 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.11 and p.113; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.256; see also TsGA 4034-42-291, p.70.

<sup>281</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-4, pp.312-3.

<sup>282</sup> TsGA 4034-40-214, p.27.

<sup>283</sup> TsGA 4034-40-288, p.6.

<sup>284</sup> TsGA 4034-40-214, p.27.

“steadfast Feliks E. Dzerzhinskii” (Felix Dzerzhinsky, the first head of the Soviet security police) as a model for members.<sup>285</sup> Their concept of heroism seemed to derive from the past and the future.<sup>286</sup> Descriptions of their daily work emphasized heroism. Brigades were described as “an army of... voluntary educators”<sup>287</sup> with all the attributes of good revolutionaries: they were modest and conscientious, “courageous, determined and honest” and would bravely endure any weather conditions.<sup>288</sup> They were allegedly well-informed about events and moods in their city; “the hand of a *druzhinnik*, like the hand of a doctor” was said to lie “on the pulse of urban life”.<sup>289</sup>

The main work of the brigades was to patrol public places in the evening and at night, in order to remove any disturbing elements such as hooligans, drunks, children and minors, *stiliagi* or loosely dressed girls and idlers.<sup>290</sup> They were primarily active at weekends, during holidays and on paydays – all traditional occasions for drinking in Russian culture.<sup>291</sup> In some cases the Komsomol brigades followed their own system and just had to notify the *militia* patrols and directors of the institution where they patrolled.<sup>292</sup> Sometimes, however, they worked closely with the police and the voluntary brigades and developed a joint plan of action.<sup>293</sup> Some *druzhiny* focused on working with youngsters at their homes and provided leisure activities,<sup>294</sup> while others conducted inspections in public transport to punish fare evaders.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> “Tak povelela sovest’ kommunista”, *Komsomolets*, 24.2.1963, p.2; see also “... beri ego za dushu!”, *Komsomolets*, 2.6.1961, p.4.

<sup>286</sup> TsGA 4034-42-361, p.92.

<sup>287</sup> “... beri ego za dushu!”, *Komsomolets*, 2.6.1961, p.4.

<sup>288</sup> “Tak povelela sovest’ kommunista”, *Komsomolets*, 24.2.1963, p.2; see also “Khuliganstvu chtob i brani”, *KT*, 10.3.1957, pp.1-2; “Ne budet poshchady khuliganam!”, *KT*, 3.8.1956, p.3.

<sup>289</sup> “... beri ego za dushu!”, *Komsomolets*, 2.6.1961, p.4.

<sup>290</sup> TsGA 594-1-339, p.7; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.29.

<sup>291</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.30; OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.48; TsGA 4034-40-288, p.21.

<sup>292</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.48; OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.61; “Posle semi vechera”, *Komsomolets*, 13.1.1956, p.2.

<sup>293</sup> TsGA 4034-40-288, p.21; OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.30; “Ne budet poshchady khuliganam!”, *KT*, 3.8.1956, p.3.

<sup>294</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, p.38.

<sup>295</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, pp.74-5.

The way that brigades dealt with wrongdoers could vary greatly. On the one hand, the volunteers were supposed to educate and help the wrongdoers reintegrate into Soviet society, following the slogan “once you have a hooligan by the hand, take him by his soul too”.<sup>296</sup> A Komsomol brigade in Kazan’ took eight homeless teenagers under its wings, aiding their academic and social achievements.<sup>297</sup> On the other hand, public shaming was common: the general public was involved; parents, employers or working collectives were informed; cases were publicly discussed at Komsomol meetings; and action was taken to ridicule the wrongdoers publicly.<sup>298</sup> The volunteers took pictures of drunken or rioting youth, which they displayed in public places or in satirical notices. One patrol also recorded the hooligans’ statements, producing footage to show before screenings at the cinema.<sup>299</sup>

Voluntary brigades occasionally became violent when dealing with hooligans. Their nightly work exposed them to the danger of being seriously hurt or killed; the Cheliabinsk Party secretary even proposed arming the brigades.<sup>300</sup> Some patrols engaged enthusiastically in physical fighting and brute force. This was a major reason why the voluntary bodies saw a reduction in their authority shortly after Khrushchev’s dismissal.<sup>301</sup> In some cases there was little difference between the hooligans and the volunteers, when the latter were drunk and therefore prone to be violent.<sup>302</sup> Whenever brigade members picked up wrongdoers, they brought them either to the Komsomol headquarters or to the police station. According to official reports, the Komsomol volunteers then started a talk with the troublemaker “which

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<sup>296</sup> “... beri ego za dushu!”, *Komsomolets*, 2.6.1961, p.4.

<sup>297</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.43; for another example see TsGA 4034-42-291, pp. 70-1.

<sup>298</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3093, p.20.

<sup>299</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3155, 30; OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.48; OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.61; “... beri ego zadushu!”, *Komsomolets*, 2.6.1961, p.4.

<sup>300</sup> In 1962, see OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.79.

<sup>301</sup> “Esli prestupniki v svedeteliakh...”, *Komsomolets*, 25.10.1959, p.4; see also Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”.

<sup>302</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3093, pp.21-2; TsGA 4034-42-361, 99; “Tak povelela sovest’ kommunista”, *Komsomolets*, 24.2.1963, p.2.

was not one of the nicest” so that “he quickly came to his senses”.<sup>303</sup> Memories of brigade members, however, suggest that physical violence also played a crucial role in dealing with offenders.<sup>304</sup> One article describing a “battle with the hooligans and rowdies” hinted in this direction,<sup>305</sup> and the idea is supported by other secondary work.<sup>306</sup>

When blamed by the Central Committee for tolerating too many cases of open violence, a Tatar *obkom* secretary admitted to “single cases when a Komsomol patrol had exceeded its authority”. He gave assurances that “the guilty people would be held responsible”.<sup>307</sup> At the same time, the brigades were criticized for being too soft and passive; a problem which mainly arose in Tatarstan. Some members would “look at their duty with disrespect and disregard”;<sup>308</sup> they avoided places where confrontations might occur.<sup>309</sup> Even if they witnessed deviant phenomena in broad daylight, they would not react but quietly walk by, not daring to take action.<sup>310</sup> Excuses offered to explain this situation included practical problems, such as the lack of suitable facilities,<sup>311</sup> or inappropriate training for the *druzhiniki* which caused them to misunderstand their tasks and over- or underestimate their authority.<sup>312</sup>

This uncertainty about how to deal with deviant behaviour was in tune with the rhetoric of the Thaw. Komsomol rhetoric praised the success of the voluntary brigades: their drastic action was believed to account for the alleged fall in the crime rate and fewer instances of

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<sup>303</sup> “Posle semi vechera”, *Komsomolets*, 13.1.1956, p.2; see also OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.30.

<sup>304</sup> The former *obkom* secretary Leont’ev Mikhailovich Rabchenok in an interview on the 9.12.2011; see also “Ne budet poshchady khuliganam!”, *KT*, 3.8.1956, p.3.

<sup>305</sup> “Ne budet poshchady khuliganam!”, *KT*, 3.8.1956, p.3.

<sup>306</sup> Mainly Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”.

<sup>307</sup> TsGA 4034-40-150, p.71.

<sup>308</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.67.

<sup>309</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.30.

<sup>310</sup> A member of a brigade in central Kazan’, see TsGA 4034-40-151, pp.101-2.

<sup>311</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.64.

<sup>312</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.536; TsGA 4034-42-361, p.100.

hooliganism.<sup>313</sup> Other methods employed by the Komsomol to fight deviant behaviour were designed to open the eyes of wrongdoers and lead them onto the ‘right’ path; such methods included naming-and-shaming campaigns and the assignment of individual work tasks. All the evidence presented above suggests that Komsomol members themselves suffered little from uncertainty. They were much more attracted by rigorous courses of action, which allowed them to draw a clear line between good and bad and gave them the opportunity to get actively involved in brigades, comrade courts and public shaming, including the production of satirical notices.

Recent historiography has challenged claims that the Thaw period constituted a radical break with the Stalinist past.<sup>314</sup> Despite its superficially liberal character, the Khrushchev era had much in common with the Stalinist period, as this chapter has confirmed. The Komsomol’s engagement in anti-religious policy provides evidence that a “tough line” was favoured; it therefore suggests continuity from the Stalinist past rather than a clear break. Discursive patterns also remained basically the same. The rhetoric used to denigrate religion and demonize deviant behaviour continued to characterize these phenomena as outdated and anti-modern. It tried to show that they posed a major danger to the current generation, as well to the building of communism.

The fight against phenomena from the undesired past demonstrates not only the continuity of Stalinist rhetoric and practices, but also the great importance ascribed to the mobilization of society during the Thaw. Methods of naming and shaming young believers or hooligans always involved the general public, which was supposed to exclude dissenters from official discourse. Individual work with religious youth or young offenders was ultimately intended to

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<sup>313</sup> “Molodezh’ na strazhe”, *KT*, 16.8.1961, p.2; TsGA 4034-40-150, p.71; “Khuliganstvu chtob i brani”, *KT*, 10.3.1957, pp.1-2; TsGA 4034-40-288, pp.2-3, p.21.

<sup>314</sup> For example, Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”; Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, pp.297-303.

mobilize members of society to engage in public matters. Moreover, comrade courts and voluntary brigades were presented as prototypes of the law and policing institutions that would exist in communist society, when the public was supposed to take over tasks which had hitherto been the responsibility of the state. Generally, it seems that the fight against deviant behaviour offered young people more interesting and numerous possibilities to get involved than the hackneyed fight against religion. Komsomol members engaged in the former more wholeheartedly. They showed some creativity and developed new methods to exclude wrongdoers, as well as to re-educate them and reintegrate them into society. The fight against undesired remnants of the past mobilized some sections of the young generation. It therefore prepared the ground for building communism, not only by eliminating resistance to the communist project, but also by educating and mobilizing youth. The next chapter explores the mobilizing power of the Komsomol and looks at its attempts to prepare youth, as well as the economy, for the transition to communism.

## **Chapter 4. Thaw-era Youth and the Building of Communism**

According to the ideology of the communist project, young people were supposed to emulate the heroism of their predecessors, eliminate all remnants of the undesired past and prepare both themselves and the Soviet Union's social-economic structures for entering the final stage of communism. These imperatives are hugely important for understanding the Thaw period, yet they have scarcely been mentioned in previous scholarship.<sup>1</sup> This chapter therefore investigates the steps which the Komsomol was expected to take to prepare the youth of the Thaw for the transition to communism. The chapter starts by establishing how the communist future was presented to the young generation, assessing the degree of readiness which official rhetoric ascribed to young people. It then describes the measures taken by the Komsomol organizations to prepare youth for its crucial tasks within the communist project. The chapter addresses the Komsomol's role in forming the 'new person' via political, cultural and moral education, as well as leisure. Finally, the Komsomol's contribution within the economy is also discussed.

### **Thaw-era Youth and the Communist Future**

The new Party Programme of 1961 outlined exactly how communism was to be achieved; it can therefore be read as a detailed timetable for the future. Besides providing precise economic planning figures, it also described how social relations would change in line with economic development and the qualities that 'new people' would display once communism arrived.<sup>2</sup> Public discussion of the Party Programme in summer 1961 gave fresh impetus to the idea of building communism among the Soviet public. The programme was first presented in

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<sup>1</sup> There is only one recent study focusing on the third Party Programme and its ideological significance, see Aleksandr A. Fokin. *'Kommunizm ne za gorami'. Obrazy budushchego u vlasti i naseleniia SSSR na rubezhe 1950-1960-kh godov*, Cheliabinsk: Entsiklopediia, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> See mainly *ibid.*, pp.54-77.

a *Pravda* editorial at the end of July, which was reprinted in regional papers and discussed in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*.<sup>3</sup> When the programme was finally adopted in autumn 1961, it was extensively discussed at meetings by the Komsomol in the regions. Discussions focused on the great challenge posed by implementation of the programme to youth in general and the Komsomol in particular. Rhetoric instructed the Soviet people to increase economic output, thereby creating the material-technical foundation for communism – a task regarded as “grandiose but honourable”.<sup>4</sup> In addition, rhetoric called for active engagement in the education of the younger generation. It was emphasized that the programme would concern young people most of all.<sup>5</sup>

Soviet commentators praised the programme for being so concrete and definite that the plan for the coming two decades was simply incapable of failing.<sup>6</sup> The Soviet public was told that the plan would continue the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin and would follow the same theoretical principles as the two earlier programmes. This claim allowed Khrushchev to make his own mark at a theoretical level. It also reflected the programme's status as a statement of scientifically proven theory based on Marxism-Leninism, “the only true doctrine on the development of human society”.<sup>7</sup> The programme's “scientific” rather than speculative character was emphasized through references to the technical, cultural and economic achievements of the Soviet Union, which had been regarded as fantastic and utopian before the Revolution, yet had been implemented thanks to the hard work of the Soviet people.<sup>8</sup> Use

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see “Velikaia programma”, *Komsomolets*, 2.8.1961, pp.1-2; “My kommunizmu derzhim put'”, *KP*, 3.8.1961, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> A foreman at the MMK in 1950, see OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.50.

<sup>5</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.364; OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.135.

<sup>6</sup> “Velikaia programma”, *Komsomolets*, 2.8.1961, pp.1-2; “Tsel' iasna”, *Komsomolets*, 3.11.1961, p.1; TsGA 4034-42-198, pp.5-7.

<sup>7</sup> “Kontury budushchego”, *Komsomlets*, 25.8.1961, p.2; see also “Velikaia programma”, *Komsomolets*, 2.8.1961, pp.1-2; Alexander Titov. “The Central Committee Apparatus under Khr”, in: *Khrushchev in the Kremlin. Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-64*, ed. by Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, London: Routledge, 2011, pp.41-60.

<sup>8</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.159, see also “Skazku sdelat' byl'iu”, *Komsomolets*, 1.1.1956, p.3.

of verbal conventions and pictorial language underlined the programme's infallibility: the first page of the *Komsomolets* showed four young workers photographed at a construction site, looking confidently at the programme and equally confidently at the future (picture 1).<sup>9</sup> Another illustration equally confident young people, combined to build the communist future (picture 2).<sup>10</sup>



Picture 1



Picture 2

The programme was certainly loyal in Marxist-Leninist terms, but it was also innovative. To underline the exceptional nature of the new programme, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress was portrayed as an event of great historic significance. The 13 days of the Party meeting were

<sup>9</sup> "Osushchestvlenie programmy KPSS", *Komsomolets*, 4.8.1961, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> "Idet s'ezd stroitelei kommunizma", *Komsomolets*, 18.10.1961, p.1.

said to have “left an indelible mark on the history of mankind”, a reference to John Reed’s history of the October Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World*.<sup>11</sup> Just like the events and outcome of the Revolution, the work of the Party Congress and the programme would “never fade from the memory of mankind”;<sup>12</sup> “many generations of people (would) consult this programme again and again”.<sup>13</sup> Delegates at regional meetings were urged “to speak about their impressions from the Congress” and emphasize the honour they felt at being part of the historical event.<sup>14</sup>

Generally, Komsomol rhetoric focused more on how to achieve communism than describing what actually awaited youth in the future. It presented discipline and a strong work ethic as indispensable for building the new society.<sup>15</sup> As the success of the project depended entirely on the endeavours of youth, propagandists were urged to emphasize that “communism (would) not come by itself and quite a lot difficulties must be overcome to bring about its victory”.<sup>16</sup> Khrushchev had pointed out that “goods don’t fall from the skies”, so youth had to maintain a consistently high level of performance if communism were to be attained.<sup>17</sup> The key-note speech at a plenary meeting of the Cheliabinsk Komsomol *obkom* in 1960 for example stressed that there was no room for idleness in the Soviet paradise: “in communism, there will be no life in the grand style, where laziness and idleness prevail, but a life of work and labour, a cultural and interesting life”.<sup>18</sup> Speakers in the regions explained that communism was not about “hurrying to press buttons and running into free restaurants”,<sup>19</sup> as some propagandists had allegedly suggested. Such propagandists were criticized for

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<sup>11</sup> A Tatar *gorkom* secretary, see TsGA 4034-42-196, p.151.

<sup>12</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.135.

<sup>13</sup> TsGA 4034-42-198, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.14-28.

<sup>15</sup> TsGA 4034-42-333, p.32.

<sup>16</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.14; see also OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.145.

<sup>17</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, 2; see also OGACHO 485-1-3090, p.62.

<sup>18</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, p.87.

<sup>19</sup> In both regions, see TsGA 4034-42-291, pp.54-5; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.105.

presenting the communist future as a paradise with inexhaustible material goods for every citizen; they had wrongly put the emphasis on “distribution ‘according to needs’” instead of working according to ability.<sup>20</sup>

The programme itself outlined the shape of communist society only in a very abstract way; it was far from giving “an outline and living picture of communist society”.<sup>21</sup> The regional youth newspapers were thus left to fill the longed-for future with content. According to *Komsomolets*, the building of communism had already advanced so far that it could now be defined in concrete terms. Whereas Marx and Engels had been unable to give any description at all, and Lenin had focused mainly on how to achieve communism, the new programme was able to define the communist future clearly as “a classless social order with unified national ownership of the means of production”, “a highly organized society of free and conscious workers, in which society’s self-government is affirmed”.<sup>22</sup>

Some features of modern Soviet life were said to anticipate communist society, demonstrating that communism could be attained. The increasingly shortened working day, free education and health care and a growing network of free social institutions were all presented as heralds of the communist future.<sup>23</sup> This favourable situation would improve even further with the onset of communism. It was predicted that workers in 1980 would have twice as much leisure time, enjoy free cultural and social services, earn 3.5 times as much as they had earned in 1961, and live in better houses and flats.<sup>24</sup> When discussing how society would change under communism, the newspapers agreed that the last remnants of the class system would

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<sup>20</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.45; see also OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.105.

<sup>21</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.79-80.

<sup>22</sup> “Chto takoe kommunizm”, *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, p.2-3; “Svetloe budushchee chelovechestva”, *Komsomolets*, 4.8.1961, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> “Kontury budushchego”, *Komsomlets*, 25.8.1961, p.2; “Chto takoe kommunizm”, *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, pp.2-3.

<sup>24</sup> “Kontury budushchego”, *Komsomlets*, 25.8.1961, p.2; “Chto takoe kommunizm”, *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, pp.2-3; “Eto budet tak”, *Komsomolets*, 23.5.1962, pp.2-3.

disappear; differences would be eliminated between cities and the countryside and between physical and intellectual work; the level of education would generally be high among the whole of Soviet society.<sup>25</sup> The new relationship between society and the state in communism was discussed in the newspapers too: the withering away of the state was presented as a precondition for “communist self-government”.<sup>26</sup>

Huge attention was paid to economic development. Precise numbers were given, which predicted a rapid rise in industrial and agricultural production over the two coming decades.<sup>27</sup> This positive development would be possible thanks to the efforts of the Soviet people and technical progress. Articles explored the effect of self-regulating and thinking machines; the consequences of advanced electrification of industrial and agricultural procedures; the possibilities of nuclear energy, oil and gas as alternatives to coal; and the advantage of new methods in trade.<sup>28</sup> Experts predicted rapid progress in the car industry, where vehicles were supposed to become faster, more reliable and comfortable.<sup>29</sup> The idea of a high tempo was generally linked to the communist future, as well as technology and progress – the main dynamics of Soviet modernity.<sup>30</sup> Only by speeding up the pace of progress could the final step in Soviet modernity, communism, be achieved. To show the feasibility of rapid growth, speakers at Komsomol meetings emphasized how quickly particular branches of regional industry had grown in recent years, focusing mainly on branches which were regarded as highly modernized with a promising future, such as the oil and chemical industry.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “Chto takoe kommunizm”, *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, p.2-3; “Eto budet tak”, *Komsomolets*, 23.5.1962, pp.2-3.

<sup>26</sup> “Eto budet tak”, *Komsomolets*, 23.5.1962, pp.2-3; see also “Gosudarstvo i kommunizm”, *Komsomolets*, 1.12.1961, pp.1-2; “Gosudarstvo”, *Komsomolets*, 14.2.1962, p.2.

<sup>27</sup> “Tatariia, god 1980-i”, *KT*, 19.12.1961, p.2; “Chto takoe kommunizm”, *Komsomolets*, 17.11.1961, pp.2-3.

<sup>28</sup> “Kontury budushchego”, *Komsomlets*, 25.8.1961, p.2; “Razgovor”, *Komsomolets*, 8.10.1961, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> “Puteshestviem po dorogam 1980 goda”, *Komsomolets*, 13.9.1963, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> For example, see Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, pp.14-7, pp.312-321.

<sup>31</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.9-10; TsGA 4034-42-128, p.67; TsGA 4034-42-333, p.121; TsGA 4034-42-333, p.15.

The rapid pace of growth was also symbolically demonstrated in the construction of new cities like Nizhnekamsk and new hydroelectric plants like Zainsk, both located in Tatarstan. They were praised as “our Komsomol’sk-na-Amure, our Magnitogorsk and our DneproGES”, references to construction sites of the heroic past where young people had demonstrated their personal qualities and the feasibility of building socialism. Now it was the young generation’s destiny to follow suit and show that it was ready to achieve communism by constructing these facilities on former “bare ground”.<sup>32</sup> As major construction sites, so-called “sites of communism”<sup>33</sup>, they represented a microcosm of Soviet society, which was said to be eager to build the communist future. Young people from all parts of the country would dominate the workforce at the sites and would be united by their desire to engage in the project.<sup>34</sup> The construction sites would be “a living embodiment” of the idea of building communism; a place where young people would “build communism in miniature”.<sup>35</sup>

The conquest of outer space provided an even clearer and more impressive demonstration of the communist future. In summer 1961, Iurii Gagarin and German Titov performed the first manned space flights, thereby demonstrating that the Soviet people – and Soviet youth above all – could accomplish exploits that had previously been considered unfeasible, even fantastic. The events received broad media coverage and newspapers dedicated a huge number of pages to the young cosmic heroes.<sup>36</sup> Gagarin was the first Soviet superstar – a unique phenomenon in the Soviet Union at that time, comparable only with the stardom of Hollywood actors and actresses.<sup>37</sup> Yet despite the thoroughly modern resonance of space travel, the cosmic heroism

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<sup>32</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, pp.115-6.

<sup>33</sup> See mainly Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, pp.22-6.

<sup>34</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, p.78.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149.

<sup>36</sup> For example, “Chelovek v kosmose!”, *KP*, 13.4.1961, p.1; “12 apreliia 1961”, *KT*, 14.4.1961, p.4; “Pervyi kosmonavt”, *Komsomolets*, 14.4.1961, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> Klaus Gestwa. “‘Kolumbus des Kosmos’. Der Kult um Jurij Gagarin”, in: *Osteuropa* 59(2009), 10, pp.121-51; Andrew L. Jenks. *The Cosmonaut who Couldn't Stop Smiling. The Life and Legend of Yuri Gagarin*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012, pp.3-26.

was presented in a way which went back to Stalinist culture and the aviator cult.<sup>38</sup> In both the aviator cult and the cosmos cult, the idea of the “aggrandisement”<sup>39</sup> of the individual was predominant. This Nietzschean idea of the formation of the “new person” was now transferred from the aviators to the cosmonauts. They were presented as embodying the qualities of the new communist population.<sup>40</sup>

The media portrayed the cosmonauts as loving their profession, thereby demonstrating a new relationship to work. They lived according to the moral code and displayed the qualities of builders of communism.<sup>41</sup> Gagarin was presented as modest, playing down his own role in the space flight and giving all the credit to the Soviet people. He was also quoted saying that he never felt alone during his flight, but was certain of the support of his friends and all the Soviet people, thereby celebrating the moral values of collectivism and friendship.<sup>42</sup> Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman to leave Earth, and her male colleague Valerii Bytkovskii were shown as eager athletes, as well as diligent students.<sup>43</sup> When the crew members of the space shuttle “Voskhod” had a chat with Khrushchev during their flight in 1964, they emphasised their collective spirit and their deep friendship within the crew.<sup>44</sup> According to propaganda, it was their truly communist morality which enabled them to accomplish almost fantastic exploits that capitalist countries could only dream of.<sup>45</sup>

The heroes of the cosmos cult were presented as role models because they were ordinary Soviet people, little different from their young admirers. Gagarin, for example, had peasant origins and enjoyed rapid career progression thanks to his talents and hard work as an officer

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<sup>38</sup> Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch*, p.7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.155-74; Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.125-7.

<sup>41</sup> For example, “Pered novymi startami”, *KP*, 4.10.1961, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> “Iurii Gagarin rasskazyvaet”, *Komsomolets*, 16.4.1961, p.2.

<sup>43</sup> “Triumf v kosmose”, *KT*, 18.6.1962, pp.2-3; “Novye sovetskie zvezdy”, *Komsomolets*, 19.6.1963, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> “Schastlivogo prizemleniia”, *KP*, 13.10.1964, p.1.

<sup>45</sup> Trevor Rockwell. “The Molding of the Rising Generation. Soviet Propaganda and the Hero-Myth of Jurii Gagarin”, in: *Past Imperfect* 12(2006), pp.1-34.

in the Soviet air force.<sup>46</sup> The newspapers depicted him as an average Soviet young man who shared the joys of life with the people of his generation. He was able to combine his role as a caring husband and loving father with the fame of a Soviet hero.<sup>47</sup> Valentina Tereshkova, too, held two roles. Propaganda emphasised her role as an ordinary wife and mother, at the same time celebrating her as a cosmic hero with all desirable moral qualities.<sup>48</sup> In addition, she was praised for her heroic work within the earthly stratosphere – at the construction site of the Krasnoiarsk hydroelectric power station.<sup>49</sup> It was suggested that every young person was likely to become a hero in the heroic atmosphere of building communism, as long as their moral outlook matched the demands of communist morality.

Media coverage of the young conquerors of the cosmos presented them as being tightly integrated within the “great family” of the Soviet people. Just like the aviators of the 1930s, the cosmonauts were confined to the role of obedient children who looked up to their caring and demanding father, the leader of Party and State, and felt deeply attached to their symbolic mother, who might be either the Communist Party or the *rodina* (motherland).<sup>50</sup> Khrushchev, who adopted the role of a father figure towards the young cosmonauts, openly demonstrated his care for their well-being during their space flights. In 1964, for example, he talked to the crew of the space ship “Voskhod”, enquired after their health and wished them success in their mission.<sup>51</sup> Propaganda emphasised that the cosmonauts had grown up within the Komsomol organizations. They did their heroic deeds as “protégés of the Leninist

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<sup>46</sup> Gerhard Kowalski. “Der ‘Rote Kolumbus’. Jurij Gagarin, der sowjetische Kosmosheld”, in: *Sozialistische Helden. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Propagandafiguren in Osteuropa und der DDR*, ed. by Rainer Gries and Silke Satjukow, Berlin: Links, 2002, pp.71-83; Jenks, *The Cosmonaut who Couldn't Stop Smiling*, pp.27-50.

<sup>47</sup> “Doroga k zvezdam”, *KP*, 13.4.1961, p.4.

<sup>48</sup> Sue Bridger. “The Cold War and the Cosmos. Valentina Tereshkova and the First Women's Space Flight”, in: *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Melanie Ilic, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.222-37; see also “Triumf v kosmose”, *KT*, 18.6.1962, pp.2-3; “Zemnoe schast'e”, *KP*, 5.11.1963, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> RGASPI M1-2-442, p.171.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp.114-35; Günther, *Der sozialistische Übermensch*, pp.158-64; for the cosmonauts see RGASPI M1-2-439, pp.64-5; TsGA 4034-42-341, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> “Schastlivogo prizemleniia”, *KP*, 13.10.1964, p.1.

Komsomol”,<sup>52</sup> representing the youth organization and defining its relationship with the Communist Party. Most of the cosmonauts had already become members of the KPSS before their space flights. Only Bykovskii had not; in his case, he “flew to the cosmos as a Komsomol member but returned to Earth as a member of our great Party of communists”.<sup>53</sup> He thereby symbolically left his youth behind and became a worthy member of the mother-like Communist Party.

The cosmonauts also served as outstanding examples for their brothers and sisters within the Komsomol and for Soviet youth in general. Although their space flights constituted unique and previously unheard-of exploits, they were likened to the heroism displayed by the young generation in everyday work.<sup>54</sup> The second man in space, German Titov, reminded Soviet youth that “the peaceful exploration of outer space stands alongside many, many other deeds undertaken within the project of the new Party programme”.<sup>55</sup> Gagarin also stressed the similarity between the work of the cosmonauts and the work of ordinary young people, asking the latter to strive in their everyday labour to bring communist society closer.<sup>56</sup> This portrayal of the cosmonauts thus defined them as outstanding examples, which the young generation of the Thaw period was urged to emulate in order to succeed in building communism. At the same time, they were ordinary young people, dutiful children and outstanding models of communist morality.

The Soviet conquest of the cosmos, following the launch of the first Earth-orbiting satellite “Sputnik” in 1957, reinforced the impression that the bright future was within the young generation’s grasp. If members of the great Soviet family could leave Earth and fly towards

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<sup>52</sup> RGASPI M1-2-442, p.148.

<sup>53</sup> The first secretary of the CC, see *ibid.*, pp.148-9; see also “K novym startam!”, *KP*, 12.4.1964, p.1.

<sup>54</sup> On the comparison between heroic achievements and ordinary work, see Chapter One.

<sup>55</sup> “Pered novym startami”, *KP*, 4.10.1961, p.1; see also RGASPI, M1-2-442, pp.154-5.

<sup>56</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.38.

the stars, then communism had to be right next door, given the technical superiority of Soviet science and society. Cosmos and communism became synonyms, joint symbols of the Soviet ability to render feasible that which had seemed impossible. This was illustrated in science fiction, a boom genre of the day, which portrayed communism and space flights as ordinary everyday routine. Komsomol rhetoric also made an effort to link cosmos and communism.<sup>57</sup>

One speaker in the regions referred to Greek mythology to make his point. Mankind had been dreaming of communism just as Icarus had dreamed of flying – both in vain. Yet now the Soviet people had overcome gravity and sent a man into outer space, the “dream of communism” would also “now become reality”;<sup>58</sup> the Soviet people would be “on the great march towards communism”.<sup>59</sup> The technical expertise demonstrated during the conquest of the cosmos would contribute a great deal to the implementation of the new Party programme.<sup>60</sup>

Propaganda seized on the opportunity to disprove critical voices in the West, which had previously mocked Soviet attempts to build communism and been highly sceptical about the strength of Soviet technology. One article quoted from American and British newspapers, showing in detail how wrong they had been in their doubts about Soviet technology.<sup>61</sup> The pace of economic development within the Soviet Union was described as tremendously high, easily surpassing that of the USA. The accomplishments of Soviet technology in space provided yet more evidence for the superiority of socialism over capitalism.<sup>62</sup> The achievements in the cosmos were celebrated as “a new victory of Soviet science and

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<sup>57</sup> On science fiction see Patrick Major. “Future Perfect? Communist Science Fiction in the Cold War”, in: *Across the Blocs. Cold War Cultural and Social History*, ed. by Patrick Major and Rana Mitter, London: Frank Cass, 2004, pp.71-96.

<sup>58</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, p.66.

<sup>59</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.2.

<sup>60</sup> “K novym startam!”, *KP*, 12.4.1964, p.1.

<sup>61</sup> “S kosmicheskom uskoreniiem”, *KP*, 5.8.1961, p.3.

<sup>62</sup> “Privychnyi temp”, *KP*, 21.4.1961, p.2.

technology” and “proof of (their) gigantic growth and superiority”.<sup>63</sup> The subtext of this praise was that building communism would be the next practical task, now that the Soviet people had reached such high economic and technical standards, overtaking the capitalist countries and even flying to the stars. The “kitchen debates” of the late 1950s, when the Americans had proclaimed *their* superiority, were now overlooked: the Americans might have better food-mixers, but the Soviet Union had won the fight for space.

Komsomol propaganda also explicitly linked the achievements in space with the communist future. It evoked a strong sense of continuity from the revolutionary past to the present day, “from Aurora to Vostok”.<sup>64</sup> Both the Revolution and the space flights were described as preludes to a new era. The revolution had brought about the classless society of socialism, while success in the cosmos would inevitably result in communist society.<sup>65</sup> The young generation was ascribed a decisive role in both.<sup>66</sup> Khrushchev explicitly compared the generation of Bykovskii and Tereshkova to earlier Soviet generations, whose heroic deeds had to be continued and completed.<sup>67</sup>

The link between the conquest of space and the communist future was illustrated in pictures which accompanied articles in the regional and central newspapers. The visual language of the pictures was clear. Its quintessence can be found in a *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* caricature from summer 1961: the Party programme, representing the idea of building communism, is raising the Soviet Union to the stars, i.e. to communism. Meanwhile, the capitalists,

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<sup>63</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.91 and OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.5 of insertion; see also OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.72.

<sup>64</sup> “Ot ‘Avrory’ – do ‘Vostoka’”, *KP*, 10.11.1962, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> “Oktiabr'skaia Revoliutsiia”, *KP*, 21.4.1961, p.1.

<sup>66</sup> “Polet v budushchee”, *KP*, 4.1.1959, p.1.

<sup>67</sup> RGASPI M1-2-439, p.64.

imperialists and militarists are left behind and can only rail and swear; they are unable to keep up with Soviet progress towards the bright future (picture 3).<sup>68</sup>



Picture 3: “Programme of the Communist Party”

The newspapers provided numerous similar illustrations over the years, thereby visually emphasizing the close connection between cosmos and communism. The rocket became a symbol of the transition to the bright communist future, while the cosmonaut represented the young generation, whose task it was to work hard for the achievement of communism. Various illustrations in the regional papers showed spaceships flying to the stars from either Moscow or huge industrial complexes. The stars symbolized communism as the ultimate goal

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<sup>68</sup> “S kosmicheskom uskoreniem”, *KP*, 5.8.1961, p.3.

of all mankind.<sup>69</sup> The builders of communism were not only represented by cosmonauts: one illustration shows a Soviet worker who steps forward to the stars with determination. He uses spaceships as steps towards the stars, i.e. the bright future of communism.<sup>70</sup>

The newspapers also showed the sequence of generations. One illustration in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* showed Lenin against the background of a starry sky and a shiny rocket, which carries upwards a flag bearing Soviet symbols and the year 1959. Beneath the sky, the ship "Aurora" is depicted and the year 1917 can be read. The picture clearly showed that the present generation – again symbolized by rockets – could reach the communist future, but it was Lenin who had shown the way. The bright future was thus connected to achievements of the past (picture 4).<sup>71</sup> A similar illustration can be found in one of the regional papers. In the foreground, a young man resolutely steers a ship called USSR in the direction shown by Lenin. The latter points upwards towards the rays of a bright sun, which symbolize communism. In the background, revolutionary guards march in the same direction (picture 5).<sup>72</sup> The continuity between the generations of the heroic past and the generation of builders of communism was clearly illustrated in a caricature, which showed a soldier from the legendary "Aurora" passing on a wooden baton to a young man in a spaceship (picture 6).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For example, "Nam stroit' kommunizm", *KT*, 27.9.1961, p.1; "V kommunizm nas partiia vedet!", *KT*, 15.10.1961, p.1; "Strana moia v 1960-m", *KP*, 30.12.1960, p.1.

<sup>70</sup> "Novyi moguchii pryzhok v kosmos", *KP*, 6.10.1959, p.1.

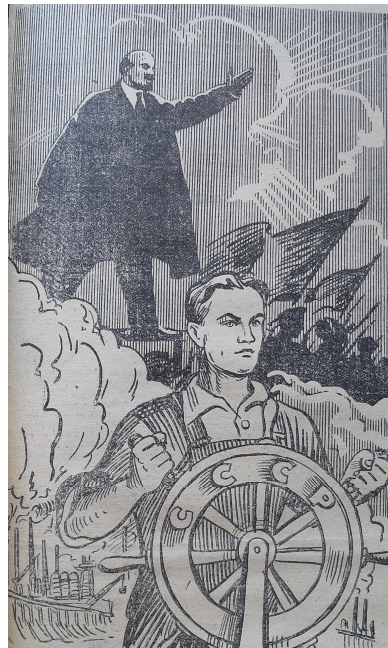
<sup>71</sup> "Plakat M. Kuznetsova", *KP*, 6.11.1959, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> "K kommunizmu!", *Komsomolets*, 3.12.1958, p.1.

<sup>73</sup> "Estafeta", *Komsomolets*, 7.11.1962, p.4.



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6

When emphasizing the shared goal of the generations, Komsomol rhetoric nevertheless made clear that there was a huge difference between them. The young generation was in a privileged situation, not only because it had the prospect of living in communism, but because of the living conditions which previous generations had fought to achieve. Young people enjoyed higher living standards than any previous Soviet generation. Even in comparison to their contemporaries in the West, they had a huge number of privileges and a significantly greater sense of social security. They “were born, grew up and began their working life in conditions when socialism had already prevailed”; therefore, “free education..., free medical care, holidays and a shortened working day for teenagers” had become natural to them.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.138.

Technical achievements and economic progress also lay behind the young generation's privileged position. "Splendid victories in all areas of the national economy"<sup>75</sup> were celebrated proudly, as were the achievements of Soviet technology and science.<sup>76</sup> Recent years had "demonstrated to the whole world the superiority of our [=Soviet] science and technology, as well as the heroism of our Soviet people".<sup>77</sup> Official discourse constantly emphasized that the Thaw generation lived in a "wonderful and splendid time" and therefore looked to the future with optimism.<sup>78</sup> Komsomol rhetoric celebrated the young generation as people who could live the dream of countless previous generations – the dream of living in a just society.<sup>79</sup> Both the key-note speakers at regional meetings of the Cheliabinsk and the Tatar *obkom* in 1962 used the same expression when stressing that "communism had long ago ceased to be a dream; it had become reality".<sup>80</sup>

Because of this privilege, young people were expected to join the Party and the state in their endeavours to build communism.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, Soviet propagandists admitted that the young generation would not always engage whole-heartedly in this project. As an excuse, it was often said that young people were ignorant of the harsh circumstances in which previous Soviet generations had fought for the life which the young generation now enjoyed.<sup>82</sup> They would only ever know an easy life "in cushy conditions".<sup>83</sup> As a result, many young people

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<sup>75</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.9-10; see also TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.9-10.

<sup>76</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.36; see also TsGA 6951-1-105, p.4.

<sup>77</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.72; see also TsGA 594-1-352, p.7; TsGA 594-1-359, pp.2-3; TsGA 6951-1-94, p.3; OGACHO 1351-2-20, p.3.

<sup>78</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.39; see also OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.3.

<sup>79</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, 2, p.42; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.135.

<sup>80</sup> So literally TsGA 4034-42-291, p.54; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.105; see also OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.26.

<sup>81</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-2, p.78.

<sup>82</sup> TsGA 615-6-232, pp. 42-3; OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.106-7; TsGA 4034-42-291, p.55; TsGA 4034-42-292, p.48.

<sup>83</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.15; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.139.

suffered from “a contemptuous attitude to physical work and were ready to sponge off others”.<sup>84</sup>

Another explanation given for young people’s lack of consistent interest in the communist project was their passive and apolitical attitude. The liberal camp of Soviet literature was mainly blamed for this. Reading Boris Pasternak, Konstantin Simonov, Evgenii Evtushenko or Vasilii Aksenov allegedly turned young people into nihilists, who would doubt state and Party policy.<sup>85</sup> These works were accused of “throwing a shadow on our reality” and spreading “a spirit of pessimism and uncertainty”.<sup>86</sup> Komsomol leaders in the regions joined the general criticism of Pasternak, Simonov and Dudintsev in March 1957,<sup>87</sup> accusing them of “attempting to slander our people”.<sup>88</sup> Aksenov and Evtushenko were criticized in late 1962 and 1963;<sup>89</sup> their readers were warned that “showing the truth of life does not equate to gathering the rubbish which also exists. This is not socialist realism”.<sup>90</sup>

The impact of such literature could allegedly be observed in the young people who radically criticized the Soviet system and regarded recent achievements as mere propaganda, aimed at motivating workers to perform better in their jobs.<sup>91</sup> The danger did not come only from Soviet literary output. Komsomol rhetoric suggested that Western propaganda, which circulated within the Soviet Union and exploited the revelation of Stalin’s personality cult to unsettle youth’s belief in communism, exerted the same negative effect on Soviet youth.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.91-2.

<sup>85</sup> Vladislav Zubok. *Zhivago's Children. The Last Russian Intelligentsia*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009, pp.168-76, p.220; for the regions see OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.140-1.

<sup>86</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.140; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.71.

<sup>87</sup> Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka*, pp.53-62; Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*, pp.114-6.

<sup>88</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.140.

<sup>89</sup> For example, see Eggeling, *Die Sowjetische Literaturpolitik zwischen 1953 und 1970*, pp.155-61; Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka*, pp.129-71.

<sup>90</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.71.

<sup>91</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.140; OGACHO 485-1-3227, p.71.

<sup>92</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.140.

Propaganda of this kind was described as “a perfidious and highly dangerous enemy” because of the high number of printed texts and radio broadcasts which spread doubt and panic among the Soviet population.<sup>93</sup> It could “weaken the militant spirit of the upcoming generation and paralyze its will to fight for communism”,<sup>94</sup> causing a “split in the unity of the young communist movement”.<sup>95</sup> Like related messages in Soviet-produced literature, bourgeois propaganda would denigrate Soviet achievements, poisoning Soviet youth with pessimism and exaggerated individualism, thus making young people indifferent and passive towards the communist project.<sup>96</sup>

Referring to the keynote speech of a CC plenary meeting,<sup>97</sup> the Komsomol in the regions obediently tried to expose the ‘lies’ of bourgeois propaganda. Speakers slammed it as “advertising for a false bourgeois freedom”,<sup>98</sup> stressing that the very structure of capitalism deprived the individual of all human rights: “the right to think, the right to work and the right to study”.<sup>99</sup> Soviet commentators argued that the West’s much-vaunted freedom of speech was a lie: newspapers and publishing houses belonged to capitalists, who allegedly censored the content of printed output.<sup>100</sup> Many young people fell for the tricks of bourgeois ideology, as they were allegedly unaware of everyday problems faced by youth in the USA, such as the high cost of education and health care, racism and the enormous unemployment rate.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.163; see also p.58; TsGA 4034-42-292, p.116; on Western broadcasting see Yale Richmond. *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003, pp.184-5; A. Ross Johnson. *Cold War Broadcasting. Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012.

<sup>94</sup> TsGA 4034-42-291, p.56.

<sup>95</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.33.

<sup>96</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.6; TsGA 4034-42-111, p.89.

<sup>97</sup> In 1963, see RGASPI M1-2-439, p.45.

<sup>98</sup> TsGA 4034-42-291, p.56; see also OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.108.

<sup>99</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.106; TsGA 4034-42-291, p.56; see also TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.126-7.

<sup>100</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, pp.48-50.

<sup>101</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.32; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.139; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.67.

All of this was widespread in the central press too. However, it is notable that commentators in the regions – where Western press reports and Western goods were considerably less likely to circulate than in Moscow, Leningrad or the Baltic States – cited plenty of local examples to demonstrate the negative effect of Western influence on young people. The latter, it was claimed, would believe rumours about the abolition of holidays; they would publish anti-Soviet leaflets, or collect secret intelligence in exchange for citizenship in a Western country. Individuals would also try to leave the country via the American or Pakistani embassies, or get visas through random acquaintances from Western countries.<sup>102</sup>

In fact, actions of this kind remained exceptional. But contact with the West and Western culture increased significantly throughout the period. The scope of encounters between the Soviet Union and the United States broadened at various levels, including science, entertainment and tourism.<sup>103</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> International Youth Festival in 1957 was the biggest international event during the Thaw period, bringing more than 30,000 participants from over 130 countries to Moscow.<sup>104</sup> It was part of a large-scale programme of the Soviet and U.S. governments to improve cultural relations.<sup>105</sup>

In the regions, however, such attempts to improve the cultural climate between the superpowers were interpreted exclusively as a Western strategy to influence Soviet young

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<sup>102</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.59; TsGA 4034-42-292, pp.116-8; TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.32-3.

<sup>103</sup> See the recent special issue of *Osteuropa* 59(2009), issue 10 on “Cooperation Despite Confrontations. Science and Technology in the Cold War”, in particular the introduction (Klaus Gestwa and Stefan Rohdewald. “Verflechtungsstudien. Naturwissenschaft und Technik im Kalten Krieg”, in: *Osteuropa* 59(2009), 10, pp.5-14); see also Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, pp.21-122; Anne E. Gorsuch. “Time Travelers. Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe”, in: *Turizm. The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. by Anne E. Gorsuch, Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 2006, pp.205-26; Shawn Salmon. “Marketing Socialism. Inturist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s”, in: *Turizm. The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, pp.186-204.

<sup>104</sup> Frederick S. Starr. *Red and Hot. The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union. 1917-1980*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp.248-51; Kristin Roth-Ey. “‘Loose Girls’ on the Loose? Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival”, in: *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Melanie Ilic, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.75-95; Pia Koivunen. “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival. Propagating a new, peaceful image of the Soviet Union”, in: *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, pp.46-65.

<sup>105</sup> Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, pp.14-20.

people and thereby alienate them from Party and state.<sup>106</sup> Komsomol activists in Cheliabinsk, for instance, criticized the large numbers of Western tourists in the Soviet Union and the many journeys which Soviet citizens were making abroad.<sup>107</sup> They were also unhappy about regular correspondence between Soviet and Western pen-friends and the growing popularity of Western cinema and literature.<sup>108</sup> Komsomol activists were always supposed to have good answers to difficult questions about Soviet reality, so as not to leave youth in any doubt.<sup>109</sup> In order to win this “psychological war” with the West,<sup>110</sup> Komsomol organizations at all administrative levels were urged to improve their political and cultural work and inform youth about the ‘truth’ of Soviet life. At the same time, they were asked to ensure that fewer Western films were shown in Soviet cinemas.<sup>111</sup>

The threat which Western cultural products allegedly posed to the communist project featured in discussions about Western music, style and fashion. The central Komsomol leadership condemned passivity and indifference about Soviet achievements and the communist project as “the product of ideological sabotage by the West”.<sup>112</sup> It blamed Western influence for bad taste among young people in regard to haircuts, clothes and dances.<sup>113</sup> Although the official attitude to jazz music varied throughout the Thaw period,<sup>114</sup> it was generally viewed as suspicious, as were rock ‘n’ roll, twist, swing and related dance and music styles. They were constantly regarded as a danger to the Party’s hegemony. Only in the Brezhnev years did

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<sup>106</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.85; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.66.

<sup>107</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-292, p.48; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.28.

<sup>108</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.118; OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.85.

<sup>109</sup> TsGA 615-6-157, p. 95.

<sup>110</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.124.

<sup>111</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.32-3; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.28; OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.85.

<sup>112</sup> RGASPI M1-2-439, p.46.

<sup>113</sup> RGASPI M1-2-356, pp.99-100.

<sup>114</sup> Cauter. *The Dancer Defects*, pp.441-56; Starr, *Red and Hot*, pp.240-258; Nikita S. Khrushchev. *On Culture. A Full Text with Notes on Ehrenburg, Evtushenko, Sholokhov, Painting, Jazz, Cinema, Composers etc.*, London: Encounter, 1963, p.30.

Western popular music become ensconced in the Soviet repertoire.<sup>115</sup> There was nothing new in this, of course. A “dance craze” had seized youth in the immediate post-war period. By the late 1940s, Western music was starting to be understood as a challenge to official youth policy, alongside the phenomenon of following fashion.<sup>116</sup>

The *stiliagi*, as official Soviet rhetoric described those who favoured Western-style attire, were mainly urban male youngsters, who wore long jackets with broad shoulders, narrow trousers and thick-soled shoes. They had long hair and used a distinctive language influenced by American English. A *stiliaga* called Boris would become Bob, while Ivan would be called John by his friends, who would hang out on ‘Broadway’, as they named Gor’kii Street in Moscow.<sup>117</sup> The youngsters’ external appearance was not the main problem. It was quite disturbing that *stiliachestvo* developed in the uncontrolled world of dark dance floors, dim night bars and black markets. However, the main threat came from their open rejection of everything connected to politics and the public sphere, together with the emphasis they put on leisure, light entertainment and private interests.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, young people were seen as threatened by pessimistic tendencies in literature; they were “victims of western influence”<sup>119</sup> who risked being distracted from their true task, i.e. building communism. Yet Komsomol rhetoric did not just depict youth as ungrateful and spoiled, passive and nihilist, or seduced by Western propaganda; it simultaneously praised their heroism and willingness to face the tasks ahead. The rhetoric thus followed the rules on criticism and self-criticism which had been a common form of communication within the

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<sup>115</sup> Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, pp.206-8; Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, p.457.

<sup>116</sup> Fürst, “The Importance of Being Stylish”, quotation p.211; see also Starr, *Red and Hot*, pp.236-242.

<sup>117</sup> Starr, *Red and Hot*, pp.237-8; Mark Edele. “Strange Young Men in Stalin’s Moscow. The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945 – 1953”, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50(2002), 1, pp.37-61; Fürst, “The Importance of Being Stylish”; Yurchak, *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more*, pp.193-4; Monica Rütters. “The Moscow Gorky Street in Late Stalinism”, in: *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. by Juliane Fürst, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp.247-68.

<sup>118</sup> Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*, pp.200-1.

<sup>119</sup> Also Pilkington, *Russia’s Youth and its Culture*, p.64.

Party and the Komsomol since the early Soviet years.<sup>120</sup> Representatives of contemporary youth defended their generation, arguing that they would show the same degree of heroism as previous generations.<sup>121</sup> These statements echoed the many voices which celebrated the Thaw generation as “wonderful youth”.<sup>122</sup> Young people of the Thaw had the “particular happiness” of being “the elect amongst all generations of Soviet people” to participate in the building of communism.<sup>123</sup> Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the young generation would implement the communist project and bear the major burden of bringing about communism.<sup>124</sup> When *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* carried out a poll in 1961 asking “What do you think about your generation?”, the majority of respondents supported this optimistic view.<sup>125</sup>

Youth newspapers and speakers at Komsomol meetings would cite examples of “heroes of our time”,<sup>126</sup> whom one could “meet in any corner of our country and in the most diverse areas of activity”.<sup>127</sup> Young women who combined labour heroism with a high degree of commitment to their families were fulsomely praised.<sup>128</sup> Heroism could also be achieved by giving a huge number of lectures on political topics.<sup>129</sup> A representative from a construction site in Tatarstan created a sense of immediacy when describing a recent telephone call from

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<sup>120</sup> Lorenz Erren. *'Selbstkritik' und Schuldbekennntnis. Kommunikation und Herrschaft unter Stalin (1917-1953)*, München: Oldenbourg, 2008, pp.93-133.

<sup>121</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.9; see also TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.133-4.

<sup>122</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.157.

<sup>123</sup> First quotation TsGA 594-1-359, p.85; second quotation OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.40; see also TsGA 594-1-352, p. 17-8; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.282; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.296; OGACHO 1351-3-4, p.9.

<sup>124</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.51; OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.91.

<sup>125</sup> “Chto vy думаete o svoem pokolenii?”, *KP*, 6.1.1961, 11.1.1961; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, pp.34-5; for the detailed outline and result of the study see Boris A. Grushin. *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia*, Moskva: Progress-Traditsiia, 2001, pp.159-222; generally on these sociological surveys see Steven L. Solnick. *Stealing the State. Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998, pp.79-84.

<sup>126</sup> For example, see “Geroi nashego vremeni”, *Komsomolets*, 18.11.1959, p.2; TsGA 95-37-37, p.200.

<sup>127</sup> TsGA 4034-42-333, p.14; see also TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.16-7; TsGA 7467-1-3, p.32; OGACHO 1467-2-4, p.12.

<sup>128</sup> For example, see TsGA 181-1-705, p.27; OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.172-3.

<sup>129</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.44-5.

his workmates, who were fulfilling their duties despite the “snowstorm” and “strong wind”.<sup>130</sup> This sort of heroism would later become material for myth-making and putting contemporary youth on the same level as heroes of the past.<sup>131</sup> Youth’s “beauty and grandeur”<sup>132</sup> was praised; it was pointed out that the great majority of young people would actively engage in the communist project.<sup>133</sup> Senior communists and veterans supported this point of view, praising the “golden..., highly qualified, cultured... and militant youth”.<sup>134</sup> They stated that “the enthusiasm which youth shows nowadays has never been shown before”.<sup>135</sup>

Again and again, it was emphasized that the young generation was continuing the heroism of its predecessors and was “a worthy successor of the old guard”.<sup>136</sup> Khrushchev had produced a catchy illustration of the sequence of generations at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress, which was frequently cited in the regions: “We, the people from the older generation, took up the baton (*estafeta*) from Marx, Engels and Lenin... And we hand this baton over to you, the young generation, at the construction of communism”.<sup>137</sup> The metaphor neatly captured the Khrushchev era’s fetish for sport, as well as suggesting a relationship that did not subordinate the younger generation wholly to the older generation (the “relay” can only succeed if *all* participants give their best). Representatives of previous generations referred to this *estafeta pokolenii*, the “relay race” of generations, when encouraging youth to engage in the

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<sup>130</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, pp.81-6.

<sup>131</sup> TsGA 4034-42-397, pp.132-3.

<sup>132</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.7.

<sup>133</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.49; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.72-3 and pp.132-3.

<sup>134</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.15.

<sup>135</sup> A veteran, see OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.133.

<sup>136</sup> TsGA 4034-37-458, pp.59-60; see also TsGA 4034-42-291, p.56; TsGA 4034-42-196, p.157; TsGA 4034-42-339, p.99 and p.128; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.90.

<sup>137</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.136-7; OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.18; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.141; TsGA 4034-42-400, p.38.

communist project and to formulate the Komsomol's particular tasks within the project.<sup>138</sup> It was emphasized that "a great deal" depended on the Komsomol and its activists.<sup>139</sup>

Representatives of the young generation in the regions picked up the rhetoric about their privileged historic position, expressing both delight and pride.<sup>140</sup> Later generations would "envy the current generation, which has the honour of seizing the first heights of communism in hard years which are full of strenuous work".<sup>141</sup> Speakers at regional meetings emphasized that the future was within the grasp of the young generation, which could already "see the wide horizons of communism".<sup>142</sup> Newspapers elaborated on this point, stating that "the future is nearby"<sup>143</sup> and "we will live even better and more pleasantly!"<sup>144</sup> Komsomol rhetoric claimed that these propagandistic efforts were not in vain and that Soviet youth would whole-heartedly believe in the success of the communist project.<sup>145</sup> They would embrace the new programme "as our own programme, as the primary task of our entire life"<sup>146</sup> and would regard building communism as their most important aim. Every individual young person would ask "what he can do to create this wonderful society"<sup>147</sup> and would happily accept all difficulties and demands that came with the task.<sup>148</sup>

The Komsomol's objectives were defined by the new Party programme. It identified three areas in which change had to happen in order for Soviet society to enter communism within the next twenty years. The main precondition was "the creation of the material-technical

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<sup>138</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.156-7.

<sup>139</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3228, pp.70-1.

<sup>140</sup> For example, a brigadier from a brigade of communist work in Kazan', see TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.100-1; see also TsGA 4034-42-196, p.133; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.385.

<sup>141</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.9.

<sup>142</sup> TsGA 4034-42-198, p.64; see also TsGA 4034-42-447, p.79; OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.60-1.

<sup>143</sup> "Budushchee – riadom", *KP*, 5.12.1963, p.1; see also "Prekrasno tvoe zavtra", *Komsomolets*, 15.3.1954, p.1.

<sup>144</sup> "Budem zhit' eshche luchshe i krashe!", *KP*, 6.5.1960, p.6.

<sup>145</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.79-80; "Razgovor", *Komsomolets*, 8.10.1961, p.2.

<sup>146</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.97; see also TsGA 4034-42-196, p.87; "Osushchestvlenie programmy KPSS", *Komsomolets*, 4.8.1961, p.1.

<sup>147</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, 63; see also "Nam zhit' v kommunizme", *KT*, 15.9.1961, pp.1-2.

<sup>148</sup> "Tsel' iasna", *Komsomolets*, 3.11.1961, p.1.

foundation”. The Soviet Union was supposed to overtake the USA in industrial and food production; these economic advances would make the Soviet Union an affluent society with a formerly inconceivable high standard of living. Economic development was to be accompanied by changes in social relations and in the personality of all Soviet citizens, who had to be shaped in line with the demands of communist morality.<sup>149</sup> The Komsomol was handed a leading role in all these processes. However, its main task was to promote a moral outlook among young people that was appropriate for the future citizens of communist society. This reflected the fact that the Komsomol dealt with an age group experiencing socialization and education.<sup>150</sup> Accordingly, the discussion which follows looks first at how the Komsomol attempted to instil communist morality – through leisure, as well as explicit political and cultural education. Afterwards, the Komsomol’s role in the economy is considered.

## **Educating Youth: Communist Morality, Political Education, Cultural Education, and Leisure**

### **Communist Morality**

At the core of the Komsomol’s educational efforts lay the goal of forming “the all-round developed person of communist society”,<sup>151</sup> who was supposed to be “politically educated, comprehensively informed and an active builder of communism”.<sup>152</sup> The ‘builders of communism’ were supposed to behave according to a clearly defined set of morals, which distinguished them from people in capitalist or socialist societies and helped them to acquire

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<sup>149</sup> See *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuzza*, pp.66-81; see also Fokin, *Kommunizm ne za gorami*, pp.35-7; for the regions see OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.37; see also OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.106-7; OGACHO 1467-2-4, p.112.

<sup>150</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.51.

<sup>151</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.28.

<sup>152</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.52.

the moral qualities of the new communist person.<sup>153</sup> This vision was codified for the first time in the “Moral Code of the Builders of Communism”, which was part of the 1961 Party programme.<sup>154</sup> It made clear that moral engineering, not just social engineering, was a central concept of the Thaw period.<sup>155</sup> The future was only open to “those who live according to the moral code of the builders of the bright communist tomorrow”.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the Komsomol’s task was to promote the formation of the new person, as a vital precondition for building communism. It had to “make the norms of the moral code guides for life, the personal convictions of all Soviet people”.<sup>157</sup>

The qualities which lay at the heart of communist morality were, upon closer inspection, not new at all. They closely resembled the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, although they were slightly adapted to Soviet ideas. The first item of the moral code defined “devotion to the cause of communism” as central, a precondition for fulfilling the other eleven principles of the code.<sup>158</sup> General moral qualities like honesty, truthfulness and sincerity figured prominently in the moral discourse as character traits which the new person should possess. Being truthful was defined as being self-critical and keeping one’s word. Pavel Korchagin was cited as the perfect model for honesty, because he had enough courage to admit his faults. The same article presented Stalin as a model of truthfulness,<sup>159</sup> but this does not alter the fact that newspapers throughout the Thaw period asked their young readers to be honest and

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<sup>153</sup> On the historic background see Richard Stites. *Revolutionary Dreams. Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, New York et.al.: Oxford University Press, 1989; Halfin, *From Darkness to Light*; Stefan Plaggenborg. *Revolutionskultur. Menschenbilder und kulturelle Praxis in Sowjetrußland zwischen Oktoberrevolution und Stalinismus*, Köln et.al: Böhlau, 1996.

<sup>154</sup> *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*a, pp.119-20.

<sup>155</sup> For example, see Gooding, *Socialism in Russia*, pp.156-66.

<sup>156</sup> “Chelovek cheloveku – drug, tovarishch, brat”, *Komsomolets*, 15.12.1961, p.1.

<sup>157</sup> TsGA 4034-42-333, p.35; see also TsGA 4034-42-291, p.49; OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.41; RGASPI M1-2-376, p.67.

<sup>158</sup> *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*a, p.119; see also Richard T. De George. *Soviet Ethics and Morality*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969, pp.83-98.

<sup>159</sup> “Byt’ chestnym i pravdivym”, *Komsomolets*, 13.7.1955, p.1.

sincere.<sup>160</sup> Modesty was described as a genuine socialist virtue. It was a precondition for collective spirit, because being modest meant “to think less about one’s own glory and more about the essence of the cause and the benefit for the fatherland”.<sup>161</sup>

Modesty was closely linked to another key virtue of communist morality, the principle of “collectivism and comradely mutual assistance”.<sup>162</sup> Marxist-Leninist theory defined humans as social beings who fulfilled themselves through relationships with others and society; they only achieve full humanity through active participation in the production process. This meant that individual freedom could exist only in society. Individual desires were supposed to merge harmoniously with public interests or – if this did not happen – be subordinated to the collective will.<sup>163</sup> Referring to the early Soviet period and the idea of “private life withering away”,<sup>164</sup> the moral discourse of the Thaw period promoted strict public control over private life, which was supposed to be replaced by a collective attitude.<sup>165</sup> Soviet society was “founded on the unity of private and public interests”, so public property became “sacred” and “the source of personal happiness”.<sup>166</sup> The slogan “one for all, all for one” reflected collectivism’s precedence over private matters; it was part of the moral code and was promoted by newspaper articles in the regions.<sup>167</sup> Komsomol activists were urged to take action against “conservative views” which might lead to private matters becoming too

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<sup>160</sup> For example, “Chestnoe komsomol’skoe”, *KP*, 12.1.1958, p.3; “‘Iskrennost’”, *KP*, 11.9.1963, p.2.

<sup>161</sup> “Skromnost’ ukrashaet cheloveka”, *Komsomolets*, 29.6.1955, p.1; see also “O skromnosti”, *Komsomolets*, 21.11.1954, p.1.

<sup>162</sup> *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, p.120.

<sup>163</sup> De George, *The New Marxism*, pp.57-65.

<sup>164</sup> Evgenii Bershtein. “‘The Withering of Private Life’. Walter Benjamin in Moscow”, in: *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia. Taking the Revolution Inside*, ed. by Christina Kiaer, Bloomington et.al.: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp.217-29.

<sup>165</sup> Deborah A. Field. *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchevs Russia*, New York: Lang, 2007, pp.1-25.

<sup>166</sup> “‘Moe’ i ‘nashe’”, *KT*, 18.9.1959, p.2.

<sup>167</sup> “Odin – za vsekh, vse – za odnogo”, *Komsomolets*, 4.12.1960, p.2; “Odin za vsekh – vse za odnogo”, *KT*, 22.9.1961, p.1; for more examples on collective spirit see “‘Lichnoe delo’”, *Komsomolets*, 28.2.1964, p.3; “‘Tovarishchestvo nado tsenit’”, *KP*, 2.8.1958, p.4; “‘Lichnoe delo?’”, *KP*, 22.1.1959, p.3; “‘Derzha i vzyamaia drug druga’”, *KP*, 13.10.1961, p.3.

important.<sup>168</sup> Some examples of selfish young people were cited,<sup>169</sup> but it was emphasized that the majority of Soviet youth were already highly aware of public matters and had a collective, comradely spirit. This fact allegedly inspired admiration among Western observers.<sup>170</sup>

According to rhetoric, the Soviet people had converted the centuries-old motto “man is a wolf to man” into “man is a friend, comrade and brother to man”.<sup>171</sup> Friendship had replaced hostility and become the basis for building communism. This development could be observed throughout Soviet society: in *narodnye druzhiny*, whose members tried to turn hooligans and other troublemakers into friends rather than enemies; in collectives, where members lived together in deep friendship and camaraderie; and in individual young people, who criticized their best friends publicly in order to get them back on the straight and narrow.<sup>172</sup>

The significance ascribed to collective spirit and friendship was closely connected to the importance of “love for the socialist fatherland”, which required a high degree of patriotism.<sup>173</sup> Voices in the regions emphasized that the Komsomol had to educate youth “in the spirit of Soviet patriotism”<sup>174</sup> and “devotion to our fatherland”.<sup>175</sup> Young people were urged to “stand up at the first summons to defend the achievements of the socialist revolution with their chest”.<sup>176</sup> Despite cuts in the defence budget, Komsomol speakers declared that

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<sup>168</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.366-7.

<sup>169</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.292.

<sup>170</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, pp.25-6; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.56.

<sup>171</sup> The slogan of the moral code, see *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*, p.120.

<sup>172</sup> “Chelovek cheloveku”, *KT*, 13.9.1961, p.1; “Moral’nyi kodeks”, *KT*, 15.10.1961, p.4; “Druzhba”, *KT*, 13.7.1962, p.2; “Ne khochu poteriat’ druga”, *Komsomolets*, 15.12.1961, pp.2-3.

<sup>173</sup> *Programma Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*, p.119.

<sup>174</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.137; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.59.

<sup>175</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-2, p.12.

<sup>176</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.63.

young people were prepared to defend the country if necessary, as “the Komsomol was born with a rifle in its hands” and was determined to continue to “hold it firmly”.<sup>177</sup>

At the same time, Komsomol rhetoric sought to instil in youth a feeling of solidarity with other socialist countries and the international working class. Official discourse emphasized how important it was to “educate youth in the spirit of socialist internationalism”, thus establishing a direct link to the 1920s, when this was a key issue in Soviet politics.<sup>178</sup>

Komsomol organizations held so-called “friendship evenings”, at which young people were told about the traditions and everyday life of neighbouring peoples and other socialist countries. Besides working within multi-ethnic collectives, some young people also bonded with youth in Western countries when corresponding with them by mail.<sup>179</sup>

The Komsomol was handed a key role in promulgating the moral code among youth. Its main task in this area was “to develop, form and affirm the qualities and features of a person of the communist future amongst the young people living today”.<sup>180</sup> The Komsomol accepted this task of training young workers “theoretically and practically”, or (in the time-honoured Soviet phrase), “forging iron”.<sup>181</sup> Komsomol rhetoric advocated a twofold approach. On the one hand, there was propaganda about moral qualities, in which individual models of moral integrity were promoted. On the other hand, the Komsomol was supposed to practically integrate young people into ways of life that would foster the moral outlook appropriate for communism.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.130; see also OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.12.

<sup>178</sup> *Tovarishch' komsomol*, p.275.

<sup>179</sup> TsGA 4034-42-291, pp.60-1; TsGA 4034-42-322, p.20; “Moral’nyi kodeks”, *KT*, 15.10.1961, p.4.

<sup>180</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.43.

<sup>181</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.193.

<sup>182</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.108-9.

Unsurprisingly, the propaganda aspect was dominant: Komsomol rhetoric put an emphasis on organizing the propaganda of communist morality. The only way in which the Komsomol practically educated young people about moral questions was to integrate them into brigades of communist work, which were supposed to anticipate the life and moral qualities of communist society.<sup>183</sup> However, public meetings, evenings, conferences, seminars and discussions figured much more prominently as means of promoting communist morality. They were intertwined with political education, the second important area of the Komsomol's educational activity.

### **Political Education**

Like the Communist Party, the Komsomol ran its own "system of political education" (*set' politicheskogo prosveshcheniia*) in which Komsomol members and youth were instructed about political, economic and ideological issues. This work was regarded a necessary precondition for building communism. The Komsomol's task was to get the great majority of youth involved in the system. Within this system, a propagandist became "a fighter and organizer of the contemporary struggle for the bright future".<sup>184</sup>

Ideological work was ascribed huge significance in mobilizing youth to actively engage in the production process.<sup>185</sup> It was supposed to strengthen young people's awareness of the importance of high production levels,<sup>186</sup> while making them more organized and disciplined within the production process.<sup>187</sup> A high level of ideological consciousness would also prevent amoral and deviant behaviour. A lack of ideological education was blamed for "all

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<sup>183</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-322, p.26, p.38; "Moral'nyi kodeks", *KT*, 12.8.1962, p.2.

<sup>184</sup> The keynote speech, see TsGA 4034-42-291, p.50; see also TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.47-8.

<sup>185</sup> TsGA 4034-42-333, p.52; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.5.

<sup>186</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.104.

<sup>187</sup> The Party secretary, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.15.

possible amoral acts”<sup>188</sup> and “numerous violations of public order”.<sup>189</sup> A common reaction was therefore to send propagandists and lecturers out into the countryside. When young people at a *kolkhoz* in Tatarstan got drunk and ended up in a mass fist fight, the *obkom* sent some of its staff to give lectures on anti-religious topics and “the moral outlook of the young Soviet person”.<sup>190</sup> A similar course of action was taken after a rape at a Cheliabinsk *kolkhoz*.<sup>191</sup>

Political education was also intended to prepare youth for “ideological attacks from the imperialist bourgeoisie”, which could result in passivity and nihilism, as well as hooliganism and amoral behaviour.<sup>192</sup> If the Komsomol allowed the level of political knowledge and ideological awareness to fall, or if its activists failed to give correct and convincing answers to critical questions, then “provocative anti-Soviet rumours and insinuations” would spread among youth, distracting them from the task of building communism.<sup>193</sup> It was argued that “if we do not give youth a political education, someone else will do it”.<sup>194</sup>

Therefore, the Komsomol’s task was not only to organize and maintain its own system of political education, but also to mobilize youth to attend lessons in the political schools and the circles (*kruzhki*) of Komsomol and Party networks. In the Cheliabinsk region, the number of *kruzhki* grew throughout the period under study from around 2,000 to over 3,000.<sup>195</sup>

Meanwhile, the number of participants remained relatively stable: in the Tatar Komsomol

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<sup>188</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.54.

<sup>189</sup> TsGA 4034-37-458, p.10; see also *ibid.* pp.10-1; TsGA 4034-37-277, p.57; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.48, p.54.

<sup>190</sup> TsGA 4034-37-43, pp.29-30.

<sup>191</sup> TsGA 4034-37-45, pp.71-2.

<sup>192</sup> The keynote speech, see TsGA 4034-40-213, p.16; see also TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.95-6; OGACHO 485-1-2549, p.15.

<sup>193</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.140-1.

<sup>194</sup> The head of agitprop of the regional Party committee, see OGACHO 485-1-3093, p.26.

<sup>195</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.43; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.137; similar numbers can be found for Tatarstan, see TsGA 4034-41-12, p.23.

system it varied between 110,000 and 120,000 during the years under study.<sup>196</sup> Speakers at conferences in the early Thaw period often gave the exact numbers of lectures, conferences and other events which had taken place within the political education system.<sup>197</sup> This practice of “making a fuss about numbers” came in for criticism during anti-bureaucracy campaigns in 1961.<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, Komsomol speakers defensively gave the names of popular courses and lectures and described successful formats of political education.<sup>199</sup>

As for the content of Komsomol political education, in the years that immediately followed Stalin’s death a large number of students studied the biographies of Stalin and Lenin or the history of the communist movement according to Stalin’s *History of the CPSU*.<sup>200</sup> They were only surpassed in number by students of political economy. A large number of students were enrolled in basic political *kruzhki* and political schools.<sup>201</sup> Later years predictably saw Stalin fading into the background; the former leader was now overshadowed by *kruzhki* promoting the building of communism.<sup>202</sup> At the same time, basic tasks like propagating congress and conference materials and teaching the core tenets of Marxism-Leninism remained the main focus of the Komsomol’s political education system.

More than 63,000 students were involved in these theoretical study groups in Tatarstan in 1963.<sup>203</sup> However, many more young people had to study the resolutions of Party and Komsomol conferences in depth. Studying these materials was regarded as crucial in the struggle “to correctly understand the tasks which currently face our Party and all the Soviet

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<sup>196</sup> TsGA 4034-37-3, p.27; TsGA 4034-41-18, pp.7-8; TsGA 4034-42-196, p.38.

<sup>197</sup> For example, in 1954 TsGA 4034-37-278, pp.26-7; in 1959 TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.33-4.

<sup>198</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.381.

<sup>199</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.29, p.77; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.31-3.

<sup>200</sup> On this textbook, see Arup Banerji. *Writing History in the Soviet Union. Making the Past Work*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2008, pp.143-4.

<sup>201</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2571, p.2.

<sup>202</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.77; OGACHO 485-1-3179 p.79; OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.104.

<sup>203</sup> TsGA 4034-42-339, p.46.

people”.<sup>204</sup> Above all, the new Party programme of 1961 and the decision of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress to build communism within 20 years were promoted widely among youth. Komsomol organizations were supposed to “use all forms of propaganda, campaigning and cultural-educational work – lectures, political *kruzhki*, seminars, discussions, theoretical conferences, question and answer evenings, oral journals, meetings with delegates, Party and other leaders”.<sup>205</sup> They were also urged to involve cinemas, libraries, clubs, newspapers and the radio in the promotion of the new Party programme.<sup>206</sup> The programme of the political *kruzhki*, however, also featured materials from other Party and Komsomol meetings before and after the 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress.<sup>207</sup>

Once again, there were many practical problems in organizing this training on the ground. The preparation of lecturers and campaigners was a major issue. A special “school of lecturers and propagandists” opened in Kazan’ in 1959, allowing students to qualify as teachers in the Komsomol’s political network.<sup>208</sup> However, the training was generally criticized. The higher-ranking organs would not take responsibility for organizing training courses and refused to take care of inexperienced lecturers.<sup>209</sup> Young lecturers were not only unprepared for teaching, they also lacked the ideological maturity that was necessary to make young people believe in the success of communism.<sup>210</sup> Therefore, campaigners would “allow presentation of the material to be oversimplified and vulgarized”. A gap formed between theory and practice, which was said to lead directly to a lack of interest on the part of the young audience.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.32.

<sup>205</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.100; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, pp.64-5.

<sup>206</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.79.

<sup>207</sup> TsGA 4034-37-459, p.21; TsGA 4034-42-196, p.38; OGACHO 485-1-2545, pp.7-12; OGACHO 485-1-2962, pp.189-190, pp.196-8.

<sup>208</sup> TsGA 4034-42-116, p.26.

<sup>209</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, p.25; OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.127-8; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.139; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.65.

<sup>210</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.45; OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.104-5.

<sup>211</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, p.24; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.120.

Besides incompetent lecturers, the lack of success was also blamed on faults in content and structural problems. Regarding the content of lectures, a major difficulty was low motivation at the lower organizational levels to engage in political education. Out in the countryside, the Komsomol's network would only become active when absolutely necessary, for instance, during agricultural peak times.<sup>212</sup> The organizations would often do the political work “pro forma” in order to fulfil the quota of lectures they were supposed to organize, rather than paying attention to the interests of the young audience.<sup>213</sup> Only in rare cases would the lecturers adapt the style and content of their presentations to the level of education and the social and cultural background of the audience.<sup>214</sup> In order to combat these problems, an emphasis was put on discussions in which everybody could voice their opinion, instead of lectures and presentations during which the audience remained passive.<sup>215</sup>

Yet boring and highly theoretical lessons were the order of the day within the Komsomol's education system. Lecturers were constantly criticized for working “in isolation from the life of youth” and for ignoring the practical side of young people's reality.<sup>216</sup> They would rather quote examples from the “distant past” than engage with the everyday problems of their audience:<sup>217</sup> “some propagandists (would) talk about everything during the lessons, in general phrases, but they (would) not be able to give advice on conducting a courtship”.<sup>218</sup> The tendency to use “general phraseology and phrases learnt by heart from textbooks” combined

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<sup>212</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.27.

<sup>213</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.19; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.27; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.381.

<sup>214</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.25; TsGA 4034-42-333, p.37; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.27; OGACHO 485-1-3153, pp.182-92.

<sup>215</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.172; TsGA 4034-42-198, pp.31-3; see also OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.100.

<sup>216</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.103; see also OGACHO 485-1-2583, p.23; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.45; TsGA 4034-37-2, p.18; TsGA 4034-37-2, p.21; TsGA 4034-37-3, p.31.

<sup>217</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.170; see also *ibid.* P. 172; TsGA 4034-37-278, p.114.

<sup>218</sup> TsGA 4034-37-607, p.22.

with a “dogmatic approach to teaching Marxist-Leninist theory”, resulting in a passive and indifferent attitude among the audience.<sup>219</sup>

In addition, structural problems were held responsible for the low popularity of the political education system. Lessons were organized chaotically and lecturers arrived unprepared.<sup>220</sup>

Some observers saw significant improvements in the Komsomol’s education system thanks to more practical approaches.<sup>221</sup> However, discipline was just as low among students as it was

among teachers. Often, a huge proportion of students would skip classes and some

organizations would try to tackle the declining interest of young people by forcing them into

classes. This fact was explained by other structural problems, mainly the lack of interesting

material.<sup>222</sup> The organizations involved in planning the lectures and seminars complained

about a lack of literature and textbooks on certain topics, such as religion<sup>223</sup> or the history of

the Komsomol.<sup>224</sup> If the organizations had material at their disposal, it was often years out of

date and had lost all its value for teaching purposes.<sup>225</sup> The organizations were frequently

forced to start the academic year without a curriculum, because study plans would arrive late

at the local level.<sup>226</sup> Other problems, such as inadequate premises for holding classes or

duplication of educational provision in the Party and Komsomol systems, were blamed for

low attendances within the political system.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Quotations see TsGA 4034-40-214, p.37 and TsGA 4034-37-278, p.26; see also TsGA 4034-40-214, p.38; TsGA 4034-41-9, p.34; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.114.

<sup>220</sup> TsGA 4034-37-607, p.22; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.65.

<sup>221</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.77.

<sup>222</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, pp.25-6; OGACHO 485-1-2545, p.27-8; OGACHO 485-1-2555, p.52.

<sup>223</sup> TsGA 4034-37-277, p.6.

<sup>224</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.67; TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.167-8.

<sup>225</sup> TsGA 4034-41-90, p.90; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.41.

<sup>226</sup> TsGA 4034-37-45, p.8; OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.158.

<sup>227</sup> TsGA 4034-37-45, pp.5-6; TsGA 4034-40-136, p.67.

As a result, activists conceded, some young people even questioned the political *kruzhki*'s right to exist.<sup>228</sup> 'Boring lectures' and the entire education system could generate doubt and sometimes evoked a negative attitude towards political education in general. Yet despite the Komsomol's many failings in this area, the system nevertheless had access to a huge number of young people who were supposed to be prepared for life in communist society. This was a source of pride in propaganda, despite all the anxiety about results.

### **Cultural Education and Leisure**

Komsomol activity in the area of culture and leisure had the same objective as explicit political education: to make the young generation fit for communism. The aim was to educate youth culturally and politically, familiarizing them with a 'way of life' (*byt*) appropriate for the future inhabitants of communist society and strengthening them physically. Entertainment was certainly the driving force behind youth's involvement in this area, but it was a minor concern in official discussions. The Komsomol's cultural activity could range from shows to theatre performances, from discussions to dance evenings. Behind its efforts stood the concept of *kul'turnost'*, a relic of revolutionary and Stalinist tradition. Culture meant cultural politics, a kind of civilizing mission among the backward Soviet population; it entailed instilling a 'cultured' (*kul'turnyi*) outlook in external appearance, behaviour and thought. Soviet people were thus supposed to be prepared for life in socialism and eventually in communism.<sup>229</sup> Even after Stalin's death, *kul'turnost'* remained a dividing line between those who were worthy to live in communism and those who had to be left behind.<sup>230</sup> The main aims of cultural education were to make the majority of youth familiar with cultural products, such as books,

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<sup>228</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.119.

<sup>229</sup> See Vadim Volkov. *The Concept of Kul'turnost'. Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process*, London et.al.: Routledge, 2000; Catriona Kelly and Vadim Volkov. "Directed Desires. *Kul'turnost'* and Consumption", in: *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881 - 1940*, ed. by Catriona Kelly, Oxford et.al.: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp.291-329; Kucher, *Der Gorki-Park*, pp.48-68.

<sup>230</sup> Dobson, "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization".

films, plays and the arts, thereby developing their understanding of good taste and beauty.<sup>231</sup>

This would not only make them cultured enough to enter communism; it would also have positive effects on their political education.<sup>232</sup>

Both regions had an appropriate infrastructure for the Komsomol's cultural work: five or six theatres, hundreds of workers' and rural clubs, palaces of culture, cinemas and libraries.<sup>233</sup> In the course of the Thaw period, the Komsomol organizations became more and more involved in the construction of cultural facilities. The first secretary at the Tatar regional conference in 1954 only prompted ironic laughter when he responded optimistically to a question about when the opera house in Kazan' would finally be ready.<sup>234</sup> In contrast, his Cheliabinsk counterpart could confidently announce in 1963 that the Komsomol would start building a youth theatre if state organizations failed to do anything about it.<sup>235</sup> During its "campaign for culture" in the late 1950s, the Tatar Komsomol organization built 265 clubs and 164 libraries and "reading huts", thereby greatly improving the density of cultural facilities in the region.<sup>236</sup>

Libraries had a twofold task within the Soviet cultural landscape. On the one hand, they were supposed to increase the availability of books (and direct readers to books of the greatest value). On the other hand, they provided space for events.<sup>237</sup> Komsomol rhetoric emphasized the significance of literature for the moral outlook of youth, pointing out that "every new book... improves the worldview, raises the consciousness and helps the reader to understand

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<sup>231</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, p.102; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.252; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.20-1.

<sup>232</sup> The keynote speech at a plenary meeting of Tatar *obkom* in 1960, see TsGA 4034-42-111, p.102.

<sup>233</sup> The numbers were roughly the same for both regions for the year 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.144; TsGA 4034-37-607, p.59.

<sup>234</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, p.156.

<sup>235</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.42-3.

<sup>236</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, p.39.

<sup>237</sup> On the role of the library in moulding readers, see Evgeny Dobrenko. *The Making of the State Reader. Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

what is happening in the country at a deeper level”.<sup>238</sup> Therefore, the Komsomol was supposed to disseminate literature and transform its members into “book bearers” who spread literary works among young readers.<sup>239</sup> Libraries were usually run by paid cultural workers, but another task of the Komsomol was to support them in organizing cultural and ideological work.<sup>240</sup> Events that were organized in libraries had various formats, including readers’ conferences, informal chats, lectures, evenings on special subjects, debates and exhibitions.<sup>241</sup> They covered a huge variety of topics ranging from agricultural problems to moral issues, such as “how do you picture the person of the future”.<sup>242</sup>

Cinemas also were regarded as “a powerful weapon for education”. Documentary and popular films were not only supposed to entertain young spectators, but also “spiritually enrich them and inspire them for new exploits”.<sup>243</sup> The growing popularity of American movies was therefore regarded as “very dangerous” and it was seen as a “tragedy” that cinemas had to serve the demands of spectators, their funding depending on the audience’s preferences.<sup>244</sup> Western movies were shown more frequently than films with a clear ideological orientation.<sup>245</sup> As with criticism of ‘Western infiltration’ generally, anxiety about this development was greater on the Soviet periphery than in the centre. Voices in the regions asked for more movies about the heroic past, i.e. the Civil or the Second World War.<sup>246</sup> They

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<sup>238</sup> The responsible directors for cinema in a district of Cheliabinsk, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.54; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.132.

<sup>239</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, pp.67-8; see also OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.154.

<sup>240</sup> The keynote speech, in TsGA 4034-42-292, p.36; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, pp.67-8.

<sup>241</sup> The director of the book market in a district of Cheliabinsk, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.164-5.

<sup>242</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, pp.67-8; see also TsGA 4034-42-236, pp.19-29.

<sup>243</sup> The head of the Cheliabinsk cinema network, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.14-5.

<sup>244</sup> The director of a Cheliabinsk cinema, see OGACHO 485-1-3227, pp.46-7.

<sup>245</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.38; OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.85.

<sup>246</sup> TsGA 4034-42-340, p.26; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.61.

criticized the negative representation of Komsomol workers, who were generally portrayed as “oafs” or “buffoons”.<sup>247</sup>

Besides this criticism about content, Komsomol activists in the regions were quick to point out shortcomings in the cinematic material provided to the population. Especially in the first years after Stalin’s death, there were neither enough films nor the appropriate facilities to show them. Some rural cinemas screened their movies in cowsheds.<sup>248</sup> However, the Soviet cinema industry managed to overcome this shortage during the 1950s and speakers at Komsomol meetings were satisfied with the result.<sup>249</sup> The only criticism that remained was that movies would arrive very late in the rural districts. This was explained by the fact that even major cities in the regions had to wait months to get new blockbusters.<sup>250</sup>

When choosing films, the Komsomol organizations tried to make a balanced selection of instructive, educational and entertaining movies. Documentary films could give instructions about agricultural topics or industrial production.<sup>251</sup> Together with feature films, they could also focus on ideological education, exploring the heroic past and heroism among contemporary youth.<sup>252</sup> To fully exploit the educational potential of cinema, the Komsomol organizations were urged not only to engage in the selection of films shown to youth, but also to organize lectures and discussions about films.<sup>253</sup>

Some activists were concerned that film evenings might not be sufficiently educational. It was common for clubs and palaces of culture to be criticized for limiting their activity to showing films and organizing dance evenings, instead of staging events involving political or

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<sup>247</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, p.49, p.56.

<sup>248</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, p.30; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.37; OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.39-40.

<sup>249</sup> For the Soviet development, see Woll. *Real Images*, pp.XII-XIV; for the regions, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.14-8; OGACHO 485-1-3224, pp.14-5.

<sup>250</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.18.

<sup>251</sup> TsGA 4034-42-158, pp.34-5; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.16.

<sup>252</sup> TsGA 4034-37-43, p.16; TsGA 4034-37-610, p.153, p.160.

<sup>253</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.17.

ideological education.<sup>254</sup> Now that Soviet society was supposed to take over a huge share of the state's responsibilities, clubs and palaces had to alter their appearance. Whereas young people used to see them as "permanent and respectable premises" with paid workers and a fixed budget, they now had to be "primarily places where young people could gather according to their various interests". Rather than relying on paid workers, the Komsomol organizations were urged to take on more responsibility themselves.<sup>255</sup>

Activities in clubs included a huge variety of events, ranging from dances to evenings about political and cultural topics. Some evenings there were dances and classical ballroom dancing; others evenings there were discussions about various issues relating to the right way to live.<sup>256</sup>

One evening organized by the *gorkom* of a town in the Cheliabinsk region celebrated the opening of the 14<sup>th</sup> Komsomol Congress in 1962. It combined various activities, featuring speeches and the presentation of awards to winners of socialist competitions, as well as a concert, games, dances and a torch-lit procession to round off the day.<sup>257</sup> Some Komsomol organizations in the Cheliabinsk region launched "young Wednesdays", which combined lectures on certain political or ideological topics with performances by amateur groups, films or dances.<sup>258</sup> Other organizations conducted regular meetings, such as the "club of the young builders of communism" or the "friendship club", which featured discussions, lectures and meetings with members of communist work brigades, artists and writers.<sup>259</sup> Talks on particular topics were aimed at certain groups of youth: newly-weds would attend "young spouses" or "young family" evenings; teenage girls were supposed to be interested in discussing the latest trends with fashion designers; teenage boys would listen to lectures on

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<sup>254</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, pp.29-30, pp.33-4; OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.55.

<sup>255</sup> The keynote speech of a plenary meeting of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* in 1960, see OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.173; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.67.

<sup>256</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.103.

<sup>257</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.254.

<sup>258</sup> In 1960, see OGACHO 485-1-3153, pp.184-5, and 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.309-10.

<sup>259</sup> The Komsomol committee of a factory in Kazan', see TsGA 4034-42-111, p.112.

“satellites of the Earth”.<sup>260</sup> As this last case indicates, perceptions of gender relations smacked more of the 1940s than the 1920s.

However, the main focus lay on events with a political or ideological objective, or aimed at cultural education. To make them more interesting, lectures, discussions and question-and-answer evenings were often enhanced by music, theatrical performances, exhibitions, games or meetings with famous athletes or artists.<sup>261</sup> Clubs and palaces of culture engaged in cultural education when they provided space for amateur groups to rehearse and perform. They also provided space for so called “universities of culture” (*universitety kul'tury*), an invention of the Thaw. Universities of culture were clubs which young people could join “in order to raise their cultural level”.<sup>262</sup> After the idea gained a foothold in the regions in 1958, they steadily grew in number: from two in the first year, to 63 in Tatarstan by 1960 and 22 in the Cheliabinsk region.<sup>263</sup> Amateur performing arts involved a large number of young people; they included musical performances as well as plays and shows. Both the regions under study had a huge number of groups, with more than 3,000 in Tatarstan and almost 4,000 in the Cheliabinsk region.<sup>264</sup>

However, criticism about the Komsomol's work in the area of culture was often heard. In some places, the regional and city committees were criticized for not organizing festivals. The grassroots were accused of selecting young artists according to the following criteria: “Do you sing? I sing when I am drunk. OK, you'll sing at the festival”.<sup>265</sup> Another criticism was that local Komsomol organizations would rely on paid cultural workers instead of actively encouraging the work of amateur performing groups; they would tolerate a “campaign-like

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<sup>260</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, pp.184-5; OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.55.

<sup>261</sup> TsGA 4034-42-292, p.33; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.80; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.250.

<sup>262</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.7.

<sup>263</sup> TsGA 4034-41-12, p.28; TsGA 4034-42-111, p.103; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p. 46.

<sup>264</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.17-8; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.105.

<sup>265</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.87; see also TsGA 4034-37-45, pp.29-30.

character in their work”. This sense of regimentation was partly explained by the very limited repertoire of songs and plays.<sup>266</sup> Another excuse put forward for less than stellar performances was the lack of trained cultural workers and insufficient support for professional performers and cultural organizers from theatres and conservatoires.<sup>267</sup>

Criticism of this kind was also directed at the clubs in general. Local activists complained frequently about the leaders of particular clubs or groups, which would often be headed by “a totally random person” who had no interest in cultural work at all and lacked the appropriate training.<sup>268</sup> Other clubs struggled with the fact that there were no trained musicians or directors who could organize amateur performing groups or compose an interesting and varied programme.<sup>269</sup> This situation was explained by a lack of commitment on the part of the Komsomol organizations, as well as the deplorable state of repair of many clubs.<sup>270</sup> A common point of criticism was that many clubs were housed in inadequate buildings and were barely heated.<sup>271</sup> In rural areas, many settlements had no club of their own so events had to be staged “in small sheds where the *sovkhos* cattle lived”.<sup>272</sup>

The Komsomol’s efforts in the cultural realm reflected general ideas about free time in official discourse. Leisure and work were seen as two sides of the same coin, which helped to form the characteristics of the ‘new person’. Therefore “very rational and effective organization of free time” was indispensable.<sup>273</sup> Free time had become an increasingly salient topic during the post-war period throughout Europe due to shortened working days; a

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<sup>266</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.105; see also p.87.

<sup>267</sup> TsGA 4034-37-458, p.30; OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.6-7.

<sup>268</sup> The keynote speech at a plenary meeting of the Cheliabinsk rural *obkom* in 1963, see OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.311.

<sup>269</sup> TsGA 4034-41-12, p.35; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.45, p.64.

<sup>270</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2583, p.24.

<sup>271</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.32-3, p.41.

<sup>272</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.37; see also *ibid.*, pp.88-9.

<sup>273</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.87-8; see also Kucher, *Der Gorki-Park*, pp.39-40; David Crowley and Susan E. Reid. “Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism?”, in: *Pleasures in Socialism. Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010, pp.3-51, here p.34.

development which precipitated the transformation of societies into leisure societies. When the shorter working week was introduced in 1960, Soviet society also took this route and it received the same criticism as in the West.<sup>274</sup>

In the Soviet context, leisure was mainly seen as a means of education. Consequently, the “privatization” of Soviet life which occurred during the Thaw period – i.e. greater absorption with family life and personal interests – provoked deep concern.<sup>275</sup> One of the first tasks of the newly founded Institute of Public Opinion was to investigate the leisure patterns of youth, establish their interests and preferences, and assess the Komsomol’s success in this area.<sup>276</sup> The increased leisure time which young people had at their disposal was not supposed to be wasted on “empty pastimes”.<sup>277</sup> Rather, it was supposed to be “used as productively as possible to improve one’s knowledge, or for studies”.<sup>278</sup> Ideally, young people would fill their free time with collective activity within the Komsomol.<sup>279</sup> If they were insufficiently occupied, it was thought they might get involved in undesirable activity such as drinking, hooliganism and idleness.<sup>280</sup>

Therefore, representatives of grassroots organizations constantly reported on their efforts to keep youth not just occupied, but profitably occupied.<sup>281</sup> The Komsomol had a wide-ranging

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<sup>274</sup> Axel Schildt. *Moderne Zeiten. Freizeit, Massenmedien und 'Zeitgeist' in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre*, Hamburg: Christians, 1995, pp. 363-84; Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.18-22; on the shortened working day in the Soviet Union see John Bushnell. “Urban Leisure Culture in Post-Stalin Russia. Stability as a Social Problem?”, in: *Soviet Society and Culture. Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham*, ed. by Terry Thompson and Richard Sheldon, London: Westview, 1988, pp.58-86; Merl, “Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme”, p.252.

<sup>275</sup> Vladimir Shlapentokh. *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People. Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia*, New York et.al.: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp.227-9; Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchevs Russia*, pp.99-103.

<sup>276</sup> TsGA 4034-42-449, pp.30-1; on the Institute see Boris A. Grushin. “Institut obshchestvennogo mneniia ‘Komsomol'skoi pravdy’”, in: *Monitoring Obshchestvennogo Mneniia* 63(2003), 1, pp.60-74; for the study on leisure see Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia*, pp.431-508.

<sup>277</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, p.87.

<sup>278</sup> The leader of the Regional Economic Council, see TsGA 4034-41-9, p.168.

<sup>279</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.16; TsGA 4034-42-111, p.111.

<sup>280</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.129; OGACHO 1467-1-1, pp.85-6.

<sup>281</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.255-6; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.20; TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.91-3.

role in providing rational leisure activities for youth. It arranged one-off gatherings, such as youth festivals and sports tournaments; it also organized regular events, such as youth evenings, cinema sessions and theatre performances. Whatever the event, educating youth politically and culturally and transmitting a fixed version of communist morality was at least as important as providing entertainment. However, as the following examples illustrate, the emphasis on political, cultural or moral education was more pronounced during some forms of leisure than others.

The idea of organizing youth festivals at a local and regional level was inspired by the 7<sup>th</sup> International Youth Festival, which was held in Moscow in July 1957. The festivals clearly had a political aim. The explicit goal of the 1957 event was to showcase the changes that had taken place since Stalin's death, thereby convincing both foreign guests and Soviet visitors of the Soviet system's superiority over capitalism. However, propagandists found the results of the Festival rather disappointing. Soviet youngsters were, it turned out, insufficiently prepared in a moral sense to face 'capitalist propaganda'. They were deeply impressed by Western music, dance styles, fashion and the general way of life which they encountered for the first time at the festival.<sup>282</sup> This was despite all the Komsomol's efforts to prevent such a development: it had ideologically instructed delegates from the regions and selected them carefully. Every city and district secretary from the Tatar Komsomol organization was allowed to join. However, the Cheliabinsk delegation consisted only of "truly worthy representatives of our glorious generation"; ideally they were people who had participated in a heroic event.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Koivunen, "The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival"; see also Roth-Ey, "'Loose Girls' on the Loose?".

<sup>283</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.102; TsGA 4034-40-136, p.92.

Just like the 6<sup>th</sup> International Festival in Moscow,<sup>284</sup> the 8<sup>th</sup> International Youth Festival, held in 1962 in Helsinki, was used as an occasion to organize events at the regional and local level. These events included youth evenings, sports competitions and discussions of foreign books and films. The 7<sup>th</sup> youth festival, held in Vienna in 1959, was not mentioned in the sources studied.<sup>285</sup> One major impact of the international festivals was an initiative to organize separate youth festivals in the regions. In early 1956, the regional committees in both Tatarstan and the Cheliabinsk region started to plan their first festival.<sup>286</sup> The festival in Tatarstan was organized in three rounds. The first round was run by grassroots organizations in agriculture and industry; it comprised public events: “open-air merrymaking, youth balls, carnivals, evenings of amateur performing arts and sports competitions”. The second round took place in districts and cities; it saw competitions between amateur performing groups, musicians and athletes. The winners were allowed to perform and compete at the republican festival, which was held in May 1957 in Kazan’.<sup>287</sup>

The division of festivals into various rounds allowed for a huge number of participants at the local level. The districts and towns prepared their own festivals and would use them as an occasion to build and repair sports and leisure facilities. They were also used to promote the official version of the heroic past via meetings with ‘old Bolsheviks’ and visits to museums and scenes of heroic events. Additionally, young people could visit a carnival with games and dancing.<sup>288</sup> A typical festival would start with a parade involving all the participants. There would then be sports competitions, games and a dance evening; it would include competitions for the best amateur performing groups and a ceremonial presentation of prizes to the

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<sup>284</sup> On the history of the festivals, see Denise Wesenberg. *Unter 'operativer Kontrolle'. Die X. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten 1973 in Ost-Berlin*, Erfurt: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Thüringen, 2007, pp.5-8.

<sup>285</sup> TsGA 4034-42-291, p.64.

<sup>286</sup> TsGA 4034-37-610, pp.155-6; OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.19.

<sup>287</sup> TsGA 4034-37-610, pp.173-4.

<sup>288</sup> For example, during the Tatar festival for young workers in the oil industry in 1956, see TsGA 4034-37-607, pp.25-6.

winners.<sup>289</sup> After reaching a peak in 1957, the festivals then declined, but they had a considerable impact in their early years.

Physical education and sports were also regarded crucial in the education of the ‘new person’. The Komsomol became increasingly involved in them during the Thaw period. The idea of physically strengthening youth as a crucial element in the education of the ‘new person’ can be traced back to the early twentieth century. It reached its peak under Stalinism, with the rallies of the “Be Prepared for Labour and Defence” movement (BGTO) on Red Square.<sup>290</sup> Of primary importance was youth’s participation in sport on a mass scale, rather than spectator sports. The latter were more an unintended by-product than an educational strategy in themselves.<sup>291</sup> Sports were believed to have huge socializing significance within Soviet pedagogy. They facilitated “the formation of a harmonious personality”, contributing to youth’s “political, moral, mental and aesthetic education” and the development of “physical capabilities”.<sup>292</sup> Regional and local Komsomol activists focused mainly on the latter aspect, stressing that only physical education would result in “excellent health and real bodily toughness”.<sup>293</sup> The builders of communism had to be “not only spiritually, but also physically beautiful”.<sup>294</sup> Additionally, sport would develop young people’s collective feelings and comradeship.<sup>295</sup> Therefore, Komsomol organizations at all levels were asked to engage in this

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<sup>289</sup> For the description of festivals in grassroots, districts and cities in the Cheliabinsk region in 1956 and 1957, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.83-4; pp.90-1; p.103; OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.57.

<sup>290</sup> For example, see Malte Rolf. “Die schönen Körper des Kommunismus. Sportparaden in der Sowjetunion der dreißiger Jahre”, in: *Sport zwischen Ost und West. Beiträge zur Sportgeschichte Osteuropas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Arié Malz, Stefan Rohdewald and Stefan Wiederkehr, Osnabrück: Fibre, 2007, pp.309-26; James Riordan. *Sport in Soviet Society. Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR*, Cambridge et.al.: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp.120-52; see also Catriona Kelly. “The Education of the Will. Advice Literature, Zakal, and Manliness in Early-Twentieth-Century Russia”, in: *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Rebecca Friedman and Dan Healey, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp.131-51.

<sup>291</sup> For example, see Robert Edelman. *Serious Fun. A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp.VII-XIII.

<sup>292</sup> The sport sociologist N.I. Ponomarev in 1973, see Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, p.6.

<sup>293</sup> TsGA 4034-42-333, p.45.

<sup>294</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.112; see also OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.274.

<sup>295</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.116-7.

area and make sports activities available on a mass scale,<sup>296</sup> even though industrial managers warned that physical education should not be carried out at the expense of successful industrial production.<sup>297</sup>

The Komsomol got the chance to play a more important role when the sports administration was restructured on a territorial basis in 1957.<sup>298</sup> Previously, the sports organizations had been the only deciding force. Now, other public organizations, such as the Komsomol and the Trade Unions, became more involved in decision-making and were given their own individual areas of responsibility.<sup>299</sup> As in the pre-war years, activists were still urged to improve their cooperation with DOSAAF (the Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy) and get more involved in paramilitary training.<sup>300</sup> They were also frequently told to oversee the success of youth in meeting the requirements of the GTO (Ready for Labour and Defence),<sup>301</sup> and to prepare young men for service in the Red Army.<sup>302</sup>

As non-military disciplines had grown in popularity,<sup>303</sup> the Komsomol tried to provide an extensive network of facilities for youth in the cities as well as the countryside. The initial state of affairs was rather poor and continued to be criticized throughout the early and mid-1950s. Sports collectives were far from including the broad masses as required. Particularly in the countryside, the situation was compared unfavourably to the Virgin Land Campaign (of which more later). It was said that only a small proportion of young people were being reached by the paltry efforts to organize sports. If a larger number of young people did happen

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<sup>296</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, p.237; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.35; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.275.

<sup>297</sup> The head of the Cheliabinsk Party department for heavy industry in 1953, see OGACHO 485-1-2555, pp.74-5.

<sup>298</sup> Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, pp.168-70.

<sup>299</sup> The head of the Tatar Sports Society, see TsGA 4034-42-291, pp.72-4; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.115; OGACHO 485-1-3224, pp.35-6.

<sup>300</sup> For example, the head of DOSAAF in Tatarstan, see TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.184-190; see also OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.70-3; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.70.

<sup>301</sup> For example, TsGA 4034-42-196, pp.48-50; OGACHO 485-1-2549, p.61; OGACHO 485-1-3155, pp.28-9.

<sup>302</sup> For example, the head of the political department of the regional military commissariat in Cheliabinsk, see OGACHO 485-1-3171, pp.24-6; see also e.g. TsGA 4034-40-213, pp.52-3.

<sup>303</sup> Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth*, pp.105-6; Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, pp.171-7, pp.288-92.

to be reached, this happened accidentally and without regularity.<sup>304</sup> Most of the money assigned to sport was spent on elite sport,<sup>305</sup> so the poor performances of top squads in Soviet competitions attracted all the more criticism.<sup>306</sup> Chairmen of sports societies were criticized for their formal attitude to work with youth, which was sometimes blamed on the appointment of random people who were no athletes themselves and had no interest in sports.<sup>307</sup>

The biggest problem of all was that the “material foundation (was) rather small”. This made it hard to develop physical education and shape the ‘new person’, as pointed out in 1956 by the future First Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee, Evgenii M. Tiazhel’nikov, who was an enthusiastic athlete himself.<sup>308</sup> At the grassroots or district levels, representatives complained about a shortage of sports equipment, which made their work almost impossible.<sup>309</sup> When higher-ranking organs got involved and provided material, it was sometimes useless. For example, a sports organization at a Cheliabinsk *sovkhos* received 400 pairs of pants instead of sports gear.<sup>310</sup> Both the *obkom* and the regional sports society refused to take responsibility and asked the athletes to obtain their own material.<sup>311</sup> Even if individual athletes or collectives were prepared to purchase the necessary articles, they could not do so because there was a shortage of sports shops in the regions and a lack of sports articles and clothes in general.<sup>312</sup> Here too, the *obkomy* refused to take responsibility and pointed instead to commercial organizations.<sup>313</sup> The latter blamed the lack of material on the irresponsibility

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<sup>304</sup> The head of the Tatar Sports Society, see TsGA 4034-41-9, p.237; see also TsGA 4034-37-2, p.22; TsGA 4034-37-32, p.38; OGACHO 485-1-2583, pp.25-6.

<sup>305</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.146.

<sup>306</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, p.31.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.109-110; OGACHO 485-1-2559, p.7.

<sup>308</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.175.

<sup>309</sup> TsGA 4034-37-278, p.132; TsGA 4034-41-12, pp.28-9; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.33.

<sup>310</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.7.

<sup>311</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.38; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.7.

<sup>312</sup> TsGA 4034-37-607, pp.41-2; TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.90-1; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.47.

<sup>313</sup> The first secretary of the Cheliabinsk *obkom*, see OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.332.

of sports collectives, which would tolerate the fact that “sports articles disappeared off to people’s homes” and could not be trusted with any material.<sup>314</sup>

The situation seems to have slowly changed after the reorganization of the sports administration in 1957. Historians of Soviet sport claim that most young people got involved in one sport or another during the 1960s and this is supported by examples from the regions.<sup>315</sup> Speakers at Komsomol meetings quoted figures which confirmed that “the sports movement has a mass character”<sup>316</sup> and “sports have become integrated in the everyday life of our boys and girls”.<sup>317</sup> The Komsomol played a major part in this development: it improved its cooperation with other organizations involved in physical education;<sup>318</sup> it also took a leading role in building sports facilities such as swimming-pools, stadiums and pitches for volleyball, football and basketball.<sup>319</sup> There was special activity in preparation for festivals or other mass events, such as “‘days of health’, ‘golden autumn’ parades” and sports festivals, for which facilities were repaired, renewed or built from scratch.<sup>320</sup>

## **Creating the Material-Technical Foundation of Communism: Mobilization in the Economy**

Communist education and sport were all very well for building relationships and contributing to social order, but the Soviet leadership also had pragmatic aims. It was committed to nurturing the “military-industrial block”, which needed new generations of workers. The economy was praised as the key area in which the fight for the communist future had to be

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<sup>314</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-1, pp.69-70.

<sup>315</sup> Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, pp.183-5.

<sup>316</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.310; for figures see e.g. OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.36-7; OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.82.

<sup>317</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.117.

<sup>318</sup> The keynote speech, see OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.84.

<sup>319</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.48; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.39-40; see also an information sheet about the organization of leisure in a town in the Cheliabinsk region in 1958, OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.56.

<sup>320</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.235-6; see also TsGA 4034-42-361, pp.17-9; OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.106-7.

fought. Komsomol rhetoric stressed the interdependence between rapid growth in industrial and agricultural production and the scheduled building of communism.<sup>321</sup> Economic issues received a lot of attention from the Komsomol; contributions about economic achievements outnumbered contributions on any other aspect of Komsomol work. Regional and local activists boasted about their successful production figures, comparing them against other Soviet regions, capitalist countries or pre-revolutionary production.<sup>322</sup> In general, production figures and statistics filled a huge proportion of Komsomol documents. Local and regional activists spent hours reporting achievements as well as failures. This is not surprising for an ideology that put the economy at the core of its utopian dreams and a society that regarded itself as highly modernized.<sup>323</sup> However, these reports were as repetitive as the numbers were questionable. The discussion here will not pay detailed attention to the endless statements about the Komsomol's role in industry and agriculture.<sup>324</sup> Rather, it will focus on two large-scale campaigns in which the Komsomol played a leading role – the Virgin Land Campaign and the Construction Sites of Communism; it will also consider Komsomol-run campaigns within the Soviet economy.

The Virgin Soil campaign was launched in early 1954 as part of Khrushchev's ambitious plans to make Soviet agriculture more efficient and prepare it for overtaking the US in terms of per capita production.<sup>325</sup> It mobilized hundreds of thousands of young people to conduct agricultural work in remote areas (*tselina*) of the Soviet Union. Komsomol rhetoric presented the Komsomol's heroism as a continuation of the older generations' heroic deeds; the Virgin Soil campaign was likened to the first *subbotniki*, the construction of Magnitogorsk and other

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<sup>321</sup> For example TsGA 4034-41-9, p.96; TsGA 4034-42-114, pp.63-4; OGACHO 1468-1-14, pp.17-8.

<sup>322</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.71-3; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.14; TsGA 4034-41-18, p.12.

<sup>323</sup> For example, see Gestwa, "Social und Soul Engineering unter Stalin und Chruschtschow, 1928-1964"; Gilison, *The Soviet Image of Utopia*, pp.123-9.

<sup>324</sup> For example, a special plenary meeting in Magnitogorsk in 1956 focused on tasks in the economy, see 485-1-2965; for ritualized reports on the Komsomol's participation in industry and agriculture see keynote speeches and reports from the regional conferences and plenary meetings.

<sup>325</sup> For a short overview, see Merl, "Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme", pp.212-26.

prestigious projects of the first Five-Year Plan.<sup>326</sup> Therefore, the youth organization was rewarded with its fifth Order of Lenin<sup>327</sup> and young individuals who had proven themselves to be “true communists” received medals and decorations.<sup>328</sup> *Tselina* regions that achieved a huge increase in harvest were also rewarded with the Order of Lenin.<sup>329</sup>

Western scholars have looked mainly at “the cultivation of wild and fallow lands”<sup>330</sup> in Kazakhstan and Western Siberia.<sup>331</sup> However, rural Komsomol organizations used the momentum of the Virgin Land Campaign to motivate young workers to join agriculture in their regions, arguing that the regions needed the support of skilled workers equally desperately.<sup>332</sup> The Komsomol committees struggled to settle youth permanently in the countryside. Although there were some examples of individuals, school classes and graduates who stayed in agriculture,<sup>333</sup> the majority of young people opted either to live in the cities, or to follow the Komsomol’s call to other areas.<sup>334</sup> Komsomol activists therefore tried to add a certain sense of heroism to agricultural work at home, raising it to the same level as fighting in the Civil War or the Second World War. Young people who were willing to stay in rural areas were celebrated as “examples of labour heroism and enthusiasm”.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> TsGA 4034-42-333, pp.14-5; “Oni budut podnimat’”, *KT*, 21.2.1954, p.2; “Tselinnye zemli”, *Komsomolets*, 23.2.1954, p.1; “Na novye zemli”, *Komsomolets*, 25.2.1954, p.1.

<sup>327</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-40-215, pp.5-7.

<sup>328</sup> TsGA 4034-42-291, p.6; “Devich’ia spetsial’nost’”, *KT*, 6.1.1957, p.2; “S novymi salami”, *KT*, 29.1.1956, p.3.

<sup>329</sup> TsGA 4034-40-215, pp.34-5.

<sup>330</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-40-215, p.8.

<sup>331</sup> For example, see Pohl, “Women and Girls in the Virgin Land”; Pohl, “The ‘Planet of One Hundred Languages’”; Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, pp.41-9.

<sup>332</sup> For example, the decision of the Tatar regional bureau in 1956, see TsGA 4034-37-61, p.217; see also “Zastavim tselinnye zemli”, *Komsomolets*, 21.2.1954, pp.1-2.

<sup>333</sup> For example, a school class in 1959, see OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.84; see also OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.12; TsGA 4034-42-290, p.74.

<sup>334</sup> For example, a *sovkhos* director summarizing the situation in 1963, see OGACHO 485-1-3228, pp.59-60; see also TsGA 4034-42-333, p.71.

<sup>335</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.180-1; see also *ibid.*, p.68; OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.35.

The Virgin Soil campaigns had lost most of their drive by 1960, when the production figures became too low to be promoted whole-heartedly.<sup>336</sup> They were, however, seamlessly continued by campaigns to mobilize youth to work at construction sites.<sup>337</sup> These efforts followed a similar pattern and underwent the same change in geographical range. An appeal by the Party and Council of Ministers invited youth to work at construction sites in Siberia, the Far East and the Donbass in 1956.<sup>338</sup> This appeal was then used in regional propaganda to encourage young people to join local building works, e.g. at housing projects or railway links. It was argued that the same level of romance could be found there as in the Virgin Lands.<sup>339</sup>

It appears that the mobilization of youth for building works in Tatarstan and the Cheliabinsk region was rather successful.<sup>340</sup> The same can be said for mobilization beyond the young people's local area. Many were, it seems, genuinely enthusiastic about the prospect of adventure and romance in beautiful areas. They wrote highly emotional applications, in which they outlined their willingness to face difficulties and contribute to the increasing level of productivity.<sup>341</sup> The regional committees received more applications for the Virgin Lands than they could deal with. The Tatar *obkom* received 2,000 applications in the first year of the campaign and was only able to send 362 volunteers initially.<sup>342</sup> The volunteers selected from Tatarstan were mainly sent to *tselina* regions outside their own republic, such as Siberia and

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<sup>336</sup> For example, see "Women and Girls in the Virgin Land"; Pohl, "The 'Planet of One Hundred Languages'"; Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, pp.41-9.

<sup>337</sup> TsGA 6951-1-112, pp.5-7; see also TsGA 4034-37-607, pp.8-9 and pp.48-9; TsGA 4034-42-339, p.14; "Ikh zhdet planety tselina!", *KT*, 7.7.1963, p.1; "Zdravstvui, zemlia tselinnaia!", *Komsomolets*, 15.7.1964, pp.1-3.

<sup>338</sup> RGASPI M1-2-353, p.48; TsGA 4034-40-213, p.4.

<sup>339</sup> "Na novostroiki Iuzhnogo Urala", *Komsomolets*, 30.5.1956, p.1.

<sup>340</sup> For example, 1,000 young people stayed in Tatarstan to build chemical plants in 1959, see TsGA 4034-41-18, p.3.

<sup>341</sup> For example, a letter from graduates from a school in Tatarstan which was quoted at the 13<sup>th</sup> Komsomol Congress in 1958, see TsGA 4034-40-213, p.8; also numbers from building sites show this popularity: Bratsk attracted over 25,000 young people in 1956 only, see Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, p.453.

<sup>342</sup> TsGA 4034-37-607, p.49; in 1961 4,000 young people were sent out of 10,000 applicants, see TsGA 4034-42-198, p.13; for 1956-57 see TsGA 4034-37-607, pp.8-9.

Kazakhstan.<sup>343</sup> Volunteers from the Cheliabinsk region, on the other hand, were mainly recruited to cultivate *tselina* in their own region, a task which 3,000 young people tackled in 1956 and 3,500 in 1958.<sup>344</sup> The numbers for the construction sites were quite similar; the Tatar *obkom* sent 5,000 young people in 1957.<sup>345</sup> Volunteers to both campaigns fell into two groups: those who were prepared to stay long-term and those – mainly students – who saw the campaigns as a good way to spend their summer holidays in an extraordinary, romantic and adventurous setting.<sup>346</sup> This latter attitude became widespread among the volunteers of the 1960s, who were mainly students participating in harvest or construction work.<sup>347</sup>

Young people's eagerness was praised in the local newspapers, which reported about individual young workers or working collectives who would not think twice about starting a new life in the unknown harshness of the Russian steppe.<sup>348</sup> They also reported stories from building sites where young qualified workers were using their knowledge to accelerate the rate of construction.<sup>349</sup> There was, however, a striking difference between the propaganda and actual circumstances. The newspapers reported friendly farewell evenings staged by the sending organizations<sup>350</sup> and warm welcoming scenes at the *tselina*,<sup>351</sup> but young people were often disappointed when they arrived at their destinations. One manager of a plant receiving

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<sup>343</sup> TsGA 4034-40-215, pp.8-9; TsGA 4034-37-607, pp.48-9; TsGA 4034-42-292, p.7.

<sup>344</sup> For these numbers see OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.121 and OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.38; see also OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.105; OGACHO 485-1-3175, pp.17-8; "Tselinnye zemli", *Komsomolets*, 18.3.1954, p.2; "Poezhaite na novye zemli!", *Komsomolets*, 2.3.1954, p.1.

<sup>345</sup> TsGA 4034-40-136, p.3; around 2,500 volunteers were sent to special projects in the region and in Kazakhstan in 1959, see TsGA 4034-41-18, p.3.

<sup>346</sup> For the *tselina* see TsGA 5361-1-336, pp.2-3; TsGA 4034-40-201, p.111; for the construction sites see TsGA 6951-1-112, pp.5-7.

<sup>347</sup> "Vas zhdu v tseline", *Komsomolets*, 22.7.1960, p.2; V.P. Iakovlev, "Shkola trudovogo vospitaniia", in: *V edinom stroiu. Stranitsy istorii komsomola*, ed. by P.R. Sheverdalkin, Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1968, pp.98-103; Solnick, *Stealing the State*, pp.113-5.

<sup>348</sup> "Zastavim tselinnye zemli", *Komsomolets*, 21.2.1954, p.1-2; "Oni budut podnimat'", *KT*, 21.2.1954, p.2; "Edut parni na tselinu...", *KT*, 31.7.1960, p.1.

<sup>349</sup> For example, see "Chem trudnei, tem interesnee", *Komsomolets*, 7.10.1960, p.2.

<sup>350</sup> "Poezd idet na Altai", *KT*, 10.3.1954, p.1.

<sup>351</sup> "Ulitsa Cheliabinskaiia", *Komsomolets*, 11.3.1955, p.3; "Pervyi god", *Komsomolets*, 13.3.1955, p.2; "Molodye dobrovol'tsy", *Komsomolets*, 27.7.1960, p.1.

volunteers did not bother to welcome them at all.<sup>352</sup> A general point of criticism was that managers, as well as higher-ranking Komsomol organs, were unwilling to help youth settle in the *tselina*, making misunderstandings and mess-ups likely.<sup>353</sup>

Secondary literature on the *tselina* has generally argued that young settlers and builders regularly had to put up with primitive housing, food shortages and conflicts between the various groups of newcomers.<sup>354</sup> This picture can be confirmed for the regions under study. In one *tselina* district in the Cheliabinsk Region, for instance, young people lived in chilly dormitories where the supply of drinking water was not guaranteed; they could only afford potatoes for their daily diet and sometimes there was no food at all in the shops and cafés.<sup>355</sup> Volunteers who were sent to fallow lands in Tatarstan found the receiving organizations completely unprepared to house them and supply them with food and appropriate facilities.<sup>356</sup> The supply situation was equally poor at construction sites, where there was a lack of food and consumer goods due to mismanagement and bureaucracy.<sup>357</sup> Newspapers interpreted this deplorable state of affairs as a difficult trial which would harden youth, making the *tselina* a romantic and heroic adventure.<sup>358</sup> However, many young volunteers were unwilling to put up with this low standard of living; they left their appointed workplace so that only a small proportion stayed in the long run.<sup>359</sup> When explaining this embarrassing turnover, Komsomol

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<sup>352</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.116.

<sup>353</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.14; TsGA 4034-42-397, p.162; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.8.

<sup>354</sup> Pohl, "The 'Planet of One Hundred Languages'"; Pohl, "Women and Girls in the Virgin Land"; Gestwa, *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus*, pp.462-71.

<sup>355</sup> The report of the *raikom* of the district in question to the *obkom* in 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.58.

<sup>356</sup> In critical remarks from the regions collected by the Central Committee in 1956, see RGASPI M1-6-925, p.83.

<sup>357</sup> RGASPI M1-2-353, p.63.

<sup>358</sup> For example, see "Pervyi god", *Komsomolets*, 13.3.1955, p.2.

<sup>359</sup> An example of a young man who had left the *tselina* in 1954, see OGACHO 485-1-2554, p.28; in the district mentioned above out of 2,000 volunteers only 300 stayed, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.58.

officials blamed the poor selection of volunteers. Allegedly, they sometimes seemed to consist mainly of “swindler, drinkers, bandits and criminals”.<sup>360</sup>

Besides conducting all-Soviet campaigns, the Komsomol also developed and implemented many locally-based initiatives which were intended to increase production. The Komsomol therefore played a huge part in activating and improving the daily economic life of the Soviet Union.<sup>361</sup> Young people were urged to put forward ideas about how to rationalize the production process and improve the quality of goods.<sup>362</sup> Despite some complaints about “conservatism” among managers<sup>363</sup>, Komsomol organizations were able to organize “competitions for innovators and inventors” and see practical propositions implemented in the production process.<sup>364</sup> In order to save resources, young people were supposed to economize with national property and use it rationally.<sup>365</sup> At some factories, Komsomol committees organized special brigades to reduce costs. Komsomol members would take upon themselves the obligation to save building materials, for example, or find other ways to save money.<sup>366</sup> Young workers also promised to produce more than the norm or complete work before the deadline.<sup>367</sup> Grassroots and district organizations frequently reported their achievements to the higher-ranking Komsomol organs, quoting exact figures and dates and boasting about their ability to meet tough targets.<sup>368</sup> This was in line with official rhetoric, which required young

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<sup>360</sup> RGASPI M1-2-353, pp.352-3.

<sup>361</sup> G.Ia. Taratonenkov. Komsomol Urala - boevoi pomoshchnik partii v bor'be za razvitie tiazheloi promyshlennosti v 1959-1965gg. Avtoreferat dis. na soisk. uchen. step. kand. ist. nauk, Sverdlovsk: Ural'skii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1965.

<sup>362</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.5; TsGA 4034-42-128, pp.15-9; TsGA 4034-40-201, p.140.

<sup>363</sup> A young dairy farmer, see TsGA 4034-40-138, p.52.

<sup>364</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.112; see also OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.13.

<sup>365</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, p.12.

<sup>366</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.5-7; TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.10-1.

<sup>367</sup> In a report, see TsGA 4034-41-18, pp.2-3.

<sup>368</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-144, pp.18-9; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.9; OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.79-80; OGACHO 485-1-3230, pp.19-21.

workers to have specific obligations for which they should feel personally responsible.<sup>369</sup> The Tatar Komsomol organization, for instance, launched an initiative called “personal contributions to the building of communism” in 1961.<sup>370</sup> Party Congresses and historic anniversaries, such as celebrations to mark the Komsomol’s 40<sup>th</sup> year of existence in 1958, served as popular dates for taking on or completing obligations.<sup>371</sup> Some Komsomol organizations drew up detailed plans for the participation of youth not only in production, but also in publicly useful work, such as planting trees, extending their knowledge and becoming good sportsmen.<sup>372</sup> Collecting scrap metal was a popular obligation, particularly for Komsomol organizations in schools and further education.<sup>373</sup> The committees would organize special events, such as a “month of collecting scrap metal” or competitions between the organizations in the region.<sup>374</sup> The Central Committee organized a Union-wide competition for scrap metal collection, which the Cheliabinsk Region managed to win in 1962.<sup>375</sup>

Another Komsomol strategy to mobilize youth in the economy was to publicly announce so-called labour gifts (*trudovye podarki*) to mark the occasion of Party or Komsomol congresses or the anniversary of historic events.<sup>376</sup> Young people were urged to remember these events by “working as people used to work in those days”,<sup>377</sup> over-fulfilling work norms or fulfilling them before the deadline.<sup>378</sup> The 22<sup>nd</sup> Party Congress was the main occasion for promising labour gifts.<sup>379</sup> However, other events, including anniversaries of Stalin’s death, the 40<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> TsGA 4034-37-2, p.14; TsGA 4034-42-198, p.55; OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.58.

<sup>370</sup> TsGA 4034-42-196, p.109, p.136; TsGA 4034-42-291, p.8.

<sup>371</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, pp.24-5.

<sup>372</sup> For example, the Cheliabinsk *gorkom* in 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.88, or the factory committee of the MMK in 1963, see OGACHO 485-1-3230, pp.19-21.

<sup>373</sup> TsGA 4034-42-144; OGACHO 485-1-3171, p.72; OGACHO 1467-1-4, p.21.

<sup>374</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.169; OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.224; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.38.

<sup>375</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3221, p.89.

<sup>376</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.179.

<sup>377</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-1, p.63.

<sup>378</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3090, p.50.

<sup>379</sup> For example, see TsGA 4034-42-196, p.11; TsGA 4034-42-207, pp.11-6; OGACHO 485-1-3175, p.24, p.89; OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.3, p.11, p.76.

anniversary of the Komsomol and the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, gave Komsomol speakers the opportunity to publicly announce that obligations had been taken on and met.<sup>380</sup> Preparing labour gifts was a demonstration of youth's willingness to accomplish heroic deeds, as well as a way to prepare them for labour and *byt* in communist society.<sup>381</sup>

The same effect was expected from a Komsomol initiative to take responsibility for certain prestigious sites, which often became "Komsomol shock-work building sites" (*komsomol'skie udarnye stroiki*). The Tatar and Cheliabinsk Komsomol organizations both took charge (*shefstvo*) of building projects which were very characteristic of regional industries. The Tatar organization was responsible for "the most important facilities in the oil, chemical and energy industries".<sup>382</sup> For its part, the Cheliabinsk Komsomol was in charge of building sites in the metallurgical and construction industries.<sup>383</sup> The Tatar Komsomol organization had taken charge of 27 building sites by 1961,<sup>384</sup> including the two newly planned towns, Nizhnekamsk and Dzhailil', and the thermal power station (*GRES*) in Zainsk.<sup>385</sup> The latter was intended to become the biggest energy supplier in Tatarstan and the biggest power station of its kind in Europe.<sup>386</sup> The blast furnace at the ChMZ (Cheliabinsk Metallurgic Factory) was included in the list of "All-Soviet Komsomol impact building sites" because it was under the *shefstvo* of the Cheliabinsk Komsomol organization.<sup>387</sup> Another prestigious project in the region was the completion of the Bukhara-Ural power line. This project embraced many regions and republics of the Soviet Union and became an "all-Union Komsomol impact building site" in

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<sup>380</sup> For 1953, see OGACHO 485-1-2558, pp.17-8, pp.41-2; for 1956 see TsGA 4034-37-458, p.18; "Davaite sorevnovat'sia!", *Komsomolets*, 12.1.1958, p.1.

<sup>381</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.129-30, p.299.

<sup>382</sup> TsGA 4034-42-207, p.17.

<sup>383</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3175, pp.100-1; OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.8; OGACHO 485-1-3221, pp.91-2; RGASPI M1-6-1088, p.91.

<sup>384</sup> The keynote speech at a meeting of the regional active in 1961, see TsGA 4034-42-198, pp.9-11.

<sup>385</sup> A list of sites in 1962, see TsGA 4034-42-291, p.18.

<sup>386</sup> TsGA 4034-42-331, p.58; "Zainskaia – komsomol'skaia udarnaia stroika semiletki", *KT*, 8.2.1961, p.3.

<sup>387</sup> A representative of the site TsGA 4034-42-119, p.26; see also "Zainskaia – komsomol'skaia udarnaia stroika semiletki", *KT*, 8.2.1961, p.3; "Vyzov molodykh", *Komsomolets*, 5.1.1958, p.1; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.37.

1963.<sup>388</sup> The Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* dedicated many articles to this construction site and a special Komsomol meeting was organized, which underlined not only the heroism of the young volunteers but also the significance of the project for the energy supply of the whole country.<sup>389</sup>

Press coverage of young people's involvement at Komsomol-run construction sites described their heroism in a schematic way, which closely resembled the presentation of the heroic past. Young people were said to be prepared to sacrifice their own needs to the greater good, leaving behind a cosy life in order to actively participate in the building works. They were uniformly shown as modest, indeed casual, about their own achievements.<sup>390</sup> Their heroism revolved around routine everyday work at the building sites, which was "full of trouble, difficulties, labour victories and labour joys".<sup>391</sup> In report after report, the construction sites were described as an arena where ordinary young people could accomplish heroic deeds and where they could toughen themselves up.<sup>392</sup> At the same time, they were a "school of communist education" where young people prepared themselves for life in communism.<sup>393</sup> The education acquired by individual builders was a benefit just as prominent as the actual economic value of the constructions sites.<sup>394</sup>

Similar in focus were attempts to organize socialist competition and identify the best workers within a working unit (*udarniki truda*). These movements were first established in the late 1920s and reached a peak in the Stakhanov movement – a typical phenomenon of high Stalinism, as it featured individual, almost superhuman heroism. Socialist competition during

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<sup>388</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-4, pp.89-90; see also OGACHO 1467-1-5, p.29.

<sup>389</sup> "Den' na trasse Bukhara – Ural", *Komsomolets*, 6.6.1962, p.1; "Na trasse Bukhara-Ural", *Komsomolets*, 31.8.1962, p.2; "Druzhiba, doroga i skorost'", *Komsomolets*, 3.10.1962, p.2; OGACHO 1467-1-5, p.50.

<sup>390</sup> For two good examples see "Riadovoi armii stroitelei", *Komsomolets*, 15.6.1958, p.1; "Luchshaia na svete'", *Komsomolets*, 18.3.1959, p.3.

<sup>391</sup> "Trudnoe obiazatel'stvo", *Komsomolets*, 19.10.1960, p.1.

<sup>392</sup> "Molodye cheliabinskii domnostroiteli", *Komsomolets*, 27.4.1958, p.1.

<sup>393</sup> Quotation OGACHO 1467-1-5, p.31; see also OGACHO 1467-2-4, p.47; OGACHO 485-1-3176, pp.85-6.

<sup>394</sup> "Stroitel', družnee za delo veris'!", *KT*, 18.4.1956, p.1; OGACHO 485-1-3175, p.101.

the Thaw was therefore a revival, not an invention of a new institution, just like many social institutions of the Khrushchev era.<sup>395</sup> It was expected to strengthen the collective spirit<sup>396</sup> and prepare members of competing work units for their life in communism. They would learn to feel responsible for their production, improve their labour discipline and productivity, and increase their political activity.<sup>397</sup> In practice, however, negligence and mistakes were common. Often, young workers would not even know that they were competing. The rules were unclear, so it sometimes turned out comically when referees had to decide “which chicken is from the Komsomol and which is without Party membership”.<sup>398</sup> Socialist competition was often merely “formal”: it involved assembling figures and allocating places without any exchange of experience or advice from the winners.<sup>399</sup>

The competitions embraced huge numbers of young workers – perhaps another reason why “formalism” was rife. Among the 27,000 Komsomol members who worked in industrial enterprises in Kazan’ in 1958, more than 20,000 of them held the title of *udarniki*.<sup>400</sup> Komsomol committees organized competitions at all administrative levels. The Komsomol organizations of individual plants would compete against other plants, for instance, to achieve the highest degree of cleanliness at the workplace.<sup>401</sup> Smaller grassroots organizations and Komsomol groups could enter competitions for the best performance in bringing in the harvest, or the most economic use of resources, for example.<sup>402</sup> There were also region-wide

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<sup>395</sup> For example, see R.W. Davies and Oleg Khlevnyuk. “Stakhanovism and the Soviet Economy”, in: *Europe-Asia Studies* 54(2002), 6, pp.867-903.

<sup>396</sup> A district secretary from Magnitogorsk at a regional plenary meeting in 1960, see OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.96.

<sup>397</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.28, p.61.

<sup>398</sup> An instructor from the CC at a meeting of the Cheliabinsk rural *obkom* in 1963, see OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.33; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.61.

<sup>399</sup> In 1959, see TsGA 4034-41-9, p.206; see also “Vse zavisit ot nas”, *Komsomolets*, 15.2.1963, p.1.

<sup>400</sup> TsGA 4034-40-213, p.34.

<sup>401</sup> For example, between two Cheliabinsk factories in 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.58; see also OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.5.

<sup>402</sup> For example, see OGACHO 485-1-3155, p.137; OGACHO 485-1-3152, p.38; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.30; “Imeni shestoi piatiletki”, *Komsomolets*, 6.4.1956, p.2.

competitions, such as an initiative of the Cheliabinsk *obkom* to plant greenery in towns and villages.<sup>403</sup> In addition, the Cheliabinsk region competed against neighbouring Sverdlovsk region in collecting scrap metal, cattle breeding and bringing in the harvest.<sup>404</sup> Awards for the best individuals or groups tended to be certificates and titles such as “epic hero of the spring sowing”, “hero of the grain front”<sup>405</sup>, “brigade in honour of the sixth Five-Year Plan”,<sup>406</sup> or “Ural jack-of-all-trades”.<sup>407</sup> In 1956, some winners received an invitation to the first regional youth festival in Cheliabinsk.<sup>408</sup>

Socialist competitions to mobilize youth for higher production experienced a peak around the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, but they soon became outdated and considered an “unnecessary, conservative matter”.<sup>409</sup> They seem to have been replaced by “competitions for communist labour”, in which work collectives competed to obtain the title of ‘brigades of communist work’ (*brigady kommunisticheskogo truda*).<sup>410</sup> This movement was initiated by a Moscow youth brigade and it was officially announced by Khrushchev at the 21<sup>st</sup> Party Congress.<sup>411</sup> It quickly turned into a mass movement: in mid-1959 there were almost 1,500 youth brigades and over 4,000 individuals participating in Tatarstan.<sup>412</sup> The number of young people involved in the competition grew significantly until the end of the Thaw period. There were 270,000 participants in Tatarstan, among whom 70,000 belonged to successful brigades.<sup>413</sup> In

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<sup>403</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2962, pp.2-4.

<sup>404</sup> In 1956, see OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.80.

<sup>405</sup> TsGA 4034-42-447, p.47.

<sup>406</sup> “Imeni shestoi piatiletki”, *Komsomolets*, 6.4.1956, p.2.

<sup>407</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-4, p.136.

<sup>408</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2962, p.4.

<sup>409</sup> The first Cheliabinsk *obkom* secretary at a meeting in 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.121.

<sup>410</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3228, pp.8-9.

<sup>411</sup> “TsK VLKSM odobril dvizhenie”, *KT*, 26.11.1958, pp.1-2; TsGA 4034-40-214, pp.9-10; TsGA 4034-41-47, p.9.

<sup>412</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-4, 82; TsGA 4034-41-47, p.4.

<sup>413</sup> In 1963, see TsGA 4034-42-333, p.32.

Cheliabinsk there were 668,000 participants, among whom 80,000 obtained the title “shock-worker of communist labour”.<sup>414</sup>

Komsomol rhetoric positioned the movement at the interface between the heroic past and the communist future. It emphasized that the movement would smooth the transition by “lighting the way to the future like a floodlight”.<sup>415</sup> It motivated young workers to “follow the example of their elders... and learn how to live and work in a communist way”.<sup>416</sup> An article in the Cheliabinsk *Komsomolets* emphasized the pivotal function of this movement by linking the brigades at a Magnitogorsk blast furnace directly to the past – when socialism was built and the victory over Nazi-Germany was won – and the future. It defined their task “now, at the threshold of communism” to “speed up the arrival of tomorrow”.<sup>417</sup> Komsomol rhetoric generally described the brigades as “scouts of the future”<sup>418</sup> and presented them as a place where young people could prepare themselves for the communist future. The brigades’ style of work would anticipate life and work in communism and members would “live, work and study in a communist way”.<sup>419</sup> This meant that brigade members would already have characteristics of the ‘new person’, a “conscious, communist attitude to work”. They would do everything to increase production and contribute to building the material-technical foundation of communism.<sup>420</sup>

The movement’s focus lay not only on moral education but also on social control. The *byt* of the brigade members, their level of education and their conduct outside the workplace became

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<sup>414</sup> OGACHO 1467-2-4, p.83.

<sup>415</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.71; see also OGACHO 1467-2-4, pp.82-3.

<sup>416</sup> An appeal to all young workers in Tatarstan in 1959, see TsGA 4034-41-47, p.12; see also “Bud’ udarnikom”, *KT*, 6.3.1959, p.3; “Zhit’ i rabotat’ po-kommunisticheski”, *KT*, 13.3.1959, p.1.

<sup>417</sup> “Liudi zavtrashnego dnia”, *Komsomolets*, 3.12.1958, p.2-3.

<sup>418</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3153, p.176; OGACHO 485-1-3094, p.71.

<sup>419</sup> TsGA 4034-42-163, pp.47-8; see also TsGA 4034-41-9, p.99; TsGA 4034-41-12, p.10; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.148; OGACHO 1467-2-4, p.104.

<sup>420</sup> TsGA 4034-42-111, pp.36-7; see also TsGA 4034-42-114, p.39; TsGA 4034-42-333, p.35; OGACHO 1467-2-4, p.91.

as important as their performance in production. Successful competitors of communist work would be obliged to promise to reach a certain level of education and “behave well in everyday life, be cultured at work and at home”.<sup>421</sup> The collective would ideally get involved in the private lives of its colleagues, in order to instil high moral standards. This endeavour could be limited to supporting workers in their search for accommodation, for example, building houses for newly-weds.<sup>422</sup> But some brigades would also make sure that members’ private lives matched their own ideas of propriety. For instance, a young couple might be forced to register their marriage instead of living together unmarried.<sup>423</sup>

In their emphasis on the moral education of youth, the ‘brigades of communist work’ resembled another form of Komsomol participation in the economy: ensuring tidiness and accuracy at the workplace. Komsomol organizations formed so-called “Komsomol control posts” (*kontrol’nye komsomol’skie posty*) and “raid brigades” (*reidovye brigady*), which monitored tidiness of workplaces and procedures, as well as the economic use of resources.<sup>424</sup> The control posts passed the results of their raids on to the Party leadership, as well as the management, who in turn were supposed to make improvements. Members of the posts would use methods of social control to bring about change. They conducted individual work and publicly shamed workers or whole brigades that had tolerated mess at the workplace or accepted a low performance in production. The pressure of *obshchestvennost’* was mobilized by exposing the culprits publicly, in satirical posters or by awarding a messy brigade with a “live pig” bearing the slogan “You’ll find me where the filth is”.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> The leader of a youth brigade reporting to the Cheliabinsk *obkom* in 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.139.

<sup>422</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, pp.139-40; “Ne po shnurochku”, *Komsomolets*, 28.8.1959, pp.2-3.

<sup>423</sup> The *gorkom* secretary of Cheliabinsk’s neighbouring city Kopeisk at a meeting of the Komsomol active in 1961, see OGACHO 485-1-3176, p.3.

<sup>424</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3174, p.80; see also OGACHO 485-1-3094, pp.19-20; TsGA 4034-41-9, pp.12-3.

<sup>425</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2964, 7-8; see also *ibid.*, pp.2-3.

The Komsomol control posts only had a short life. They were replaced by units of the “light cavalry” (*legkaia kavaleriia*), an initiative from the 1920s and 1930s which was revived after the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. It had essentially the same tasks as the control posts.<sup>426</sup> Both these control movements were integrated and institutionalized in so-called “Komsomol searchlight” (*komsomol'skii prozhektor*) units that were established from spring 1962.<sup>427</sup> The groups were formed at regional, district and factory levels and reported to the respective Komsomol committee.<sup>428</sup> Higher-ranking Komsomol organs were supposed to take charge of the “floodlights”, support them and publish the results of their raids.<sup>429</sup> According to one report from a Kazan’ factory, both the Party committee and the plant management approved of the groups’ work and supported them by issuing orders.<sup>430</sup>

Their first objective was to increase production and improve its quality. The groups would report to the trade unions or the management about “careless leaders and workers who are accustomed to work in the old way”.<sup>431</sup> The general aim was to use new techniques and rationalize the work flow, in order to reduce defective production and use working time effectively.<sup>432</sup> *Komsomol'skii prozhektor* in the countryside was mainly concerned with “revealing production reserves” and getting rid of defects in daily work.<sup>433</sup> Their second main objective was to instil communist morality among the young generation and “raise boys and girls with a sense of personal duty to the collective and the ability to subordinate personal

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<sup>426</sup> TsGA 4034-40-138, p.74; TsGA 4034-37-607, p.5; TsGA 4034-37-611, p.86; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.363; for articles in the *KT* see “*Legkaia kavaleriia*”, *KT*, 6.4.1956, p.1; “*V pokhod*”, *KT*, 11.5.1956, p.1; see also A. A. Slezin. “*Ogosudarstvlenie komsomola. Neodnoznachnost' posledstvii*”, in: *Iurisdicheskii mir* (2006), 9, pp.75-8.

<sup>427</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3219, pp.363-4; OGACHO 485-1-3180, p.1; TsGA 4034-42-300, p.4.

<sup>428</sup> TsGA 4034-42-300, p.4; OGACHO 1468-2-2, p.112.

<sup>429</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, pp.56-7.

<sup>430</sup> In 1962, see TsGA 4034-42-300, pp.22-3.

<sup>431</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3179, p.46.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46, p.138; OGACHO 485-1-3180, p.1.

<sup>433</sup> OGACHO 1468-1-2, p.99; see also OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.13.

interests to the interests of the collective”.<sup>434</sup> To maintain “labour and production discipline”, the *komsomol'skij prozhektor* targeted truants, drinkers, hooligans and idlers, displaying their photographs to publicly shame them.<sup>435</sup>

The Komsomol's diverse forms of participation in the economy demonstrate its two crucial goals. It made a huge effort to create the material-technical foundation of communism by mobilizing young people for economic projects and campaigns. At the same time, it strove to educate the “builders of communism”. Economic campaigns offered “unique opportunities to form the new person through work”<sup>436</sup> and were “wonderful schools of education”.<sup>437</sup> Referring to Lenin's statement that a young person only “becomes a real communist” through labour,<sup>438</sup> speakers in the regions emphasized the significance of participating in the economy to the education of youth.<sup>439</sup>

Given that the Komsomol was an educational and socializing institution, it is not surprising that its economic efforts focused on educating and mobilizing youth. This focus is obvious in the work of Komsomol organizations at all administrative levels in the realms of moral and political education, culture and leisure. The Komsomol was involved in all leisure activities that were open to young people during the Thaw – excluding the increasingly private forms of leisure which developed in the post-war period, the so-called *kampanii*.<sup>440</sup> It was the main organization to arrange amateur theatre and cinema performances, informative evenings and parties for young people; it provided space for any kind of performance or youth gathering. It was also involved in sports and physical education, thereby occupying all public areas of

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<sup>434</sup> OGACHO 1467-1-3, p.57.

<sup>435</sup> OGACHO 485-1-3180, p.3; see also OGACHO 1467-1-1, pp.59-60; OGACHO 1468-1-1, p.45.

<sup>436</sup> TsGA 4034-41-9, p.98; see also TsGA 4034-40-213, p.16.

<sup>437</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.116; see also TsGA 4034-42-292, pp.7-8.

<sup>438</sup> TsGA 4034-40-215, pp.5-7; TsGA 4034-42-291, pp.5-6.

<sup>439</sup> OGACHO 485-1-2961, p.22, pp.199-200; OGACHO 485-1-2963, p.145; OGACHO 485-1-3219, p.41.

<sup>440</sup> For example, see Fürst, “Friends in Private, Friends in Public”; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, pp.185-9.

youth's leisure activity. As many critical voices in the West pointed out during the Cold War,<sup>441</sup> the Komsomol's work in this area was definitely focused on educating youth, not entertaining them. This can be seen in discussions about the events, as well as the events' content. Above all, the events pursued an ideological and political goal.

It is ultimately hard to say whether the Komsomol's engagement in the economy and the realm of leisure was successful. Its main achievement was the mobilization of youth for various economic, social and cultural campaigns; it also managed to be active in every possible area of young people's lives – always with a strong educational goal. Sources produced during the Thaw (which, after all, anticipated that communism would not arrive for another 15 years) cannot answer the question of whether the Komsomol's efforts successfully prepared the young generation to enter communist society. Posing such a question seems somehow futile, given the utopian character of the whole communist project. Nevertheless, it is informative to trace the rhetoric of the Komsomol organizations, which took ideology seriously and structured all their activity around it. Rather than looking at how the Komsomol's activities in the realm of building communism were perceived, we are on safer ground if we consider how campaigns and their results were praised or criticized within the administrative hierarchy of the Komsomol. At the very least, this clearly indicates how the authorities thought their policies were going down with young people.

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<sup>441</sup> For typical examples see Fainsod, "The Komsomol"; Kalnins, *Der sowjetische Propagandastaal*, pp.104-15; Kassof, *The Soviet Youth Program*, pp.1-9.

## Conclusion

In many respects, the Komsomol resembles the contemporary Russian youth organization *Nashi*. Although *Nashi* recruits only a small proportion of young Russians, it plays a key role in launching their careers in the economy, politics or the state bureaucracy – much like the Young Communist League used to do. Both organizations represent a state ideology and promote an unambiguous vision of the future. While *Nashi* sees Russia's future in nationalist colours, the Komsomol drew a clear picture of the communist future, which was described as an abundant society populated by rational and happy 'new people'. The idea that the communist future was only a hair's breadth away culminated in the 1961 Party programme, which promised the onset of communism by the year 1980. Alongside positive models such as cosmonauts, who served as examples for young people to emulate, Soviet propaganda also provided young people with negative material as a warning to guide their reflections and behaviour.

This thesis has studied the Komsomol's activity in promoting the communist project and assessed the organization's success in preparing both itself and Soviet youth for life in communism. The term 'communist project' reflects how Thaw-era youth were portrayed in propaganda. They were depicted as responsible for bringing about the communist future by engaging actively in economic development, as well as by educating themselves and their peers politically, culturally and morally. A necessary precondition was the eradication of phenomena of the undesired past, such as religious belief and deviant behaviour (mainly hooliganism, heavy drinking and laziness). Propaganda conveyed the idea that youth had to emulate the heroic deeds of previous Soviet generations to make the transition to communism possible. Thus, in Thaw-era rhetoric the relevance of the present was rooted in its relationship to the heroic past and the bright future.

This rhetoric and its expression in action, social practices, and rituals have been scrutinized in the present study, alongside the organizational structure of the Komsomol. Two regions were chosen as case studies to assess the functioning of the Komsomol within the Soviet system, both of which were not previously studied. These regions differed in many ways, thereby covering the diversity present in the Soviet Union during the Thaw period. By assembling material from these two regions, the present study has shed light on the top-down communication within this organization and on the relationship between centre and periphery in the Soviet Union. The two regions dealt differently with different challenges, but combining and comparing this information allows broader conclusions and provides the essence of what was typical about the Komsomol's functioning during this period.

An example of the fruitfulness of this combinatory approach is the re-organization of the Komsomol organs in 1962. Both regions followed the model of the respective Party organizations: the Tatar Komsomol created different branches but kept one central leading body responsible for the whole organization in the republic, whereas the Cheliabinsk organization was split in two separate bodies, an agricultural and an industrial organization, without a unifying central organ. The different approaches that the two regions took in response to the central requirements show the variety of options that were available to regional Party and Komsomol bodies throughout the Soviet Union. The chosen regions therefore can be regarded as typical examples of Soviet regions. The same is true for the different intensities with which the two regional Komsomol organizations dealt with religion. Islam and Russian Orthodoxy played a more important role in the TASSR due to the long history of dual religiosity in the region and the regional Komsomol had to pay more attention to 'fighting' this phenomenon. The Cheliabinsk Komsomol, on the other hand, had less immediate pressure to focus on anti-religious propaganda, which resulted in a more tolerant

attitude – a fact that earned them some severe criticism. These two approaches present the range that was available for the Komsomol to treat religious belief during the Thaw period and therefore again show that the two regions are typical examples for the Soviet periphery.

The focus on the local and regional organizations shows what was typical for the Komsomol on all administrative levels and sheds light on the periphery-centre relations and the hierarchical operation of Soviet bureaucracy within the Komsomol. The findings are not typical for the regions but for the Soviet Komsomol in general, although they reveal some peculiarities of the region, providing the range as well as the limits of activities and approaches. The bureaucratic procedures in the everyday work of the youth organization are typical for any Soviet institution of that time and reflect the internal functioning of the Communist Party. A similarity with the adults' organization can also be found in the predominant male character of the Komsomol, whose career paths as well as decision-making processes were dominated by men. The latter aspect figured less prominently in the attempts to prepare the Komsomol for the transition to communism – although according to the new Party Programme, equality between men and women was a precondition for entering the communist society.

It seems logical that the Komsomol, the organization of the generation that was supposed to live in this new society, was the first to be made fit for communism. However, the present study has shown that efforts in this direction remained inadequate throughout the Thaw period. Attempts to strengthen horizontal communication and thereby make the organization more democratic came to nothing. However, this was not due to the efforts of the higher-ranking organs. In fact, the dominance of vertical communication and control stemmed from the attitude of subordinate Komsomol leaders, who expected guidance, control and clear instructions from the superior levels and complained vigorously when they did not get them.

Leading secretaries at the central and regional levels were generally in favour of giving more responsibility to the lower levels, but the latter refused to engage in independent decision-making. The established practice of receiving and implementing instructions could not be altered during the Thaw, despite the new rhetoric and attempts to provide practical encouragement to new administrative structures.

One key instance of an attempt to create new structures was the establishment of so-called extraordinary bodies. They perfectly fitted the goals of the Thaw, i.e. to decentralize communication within the organization and enable mass participation. They were supposed to integrate a huge number of young people into the activities of the Komsomol, in order to shift responsibility from paid Komsomol workers to voluntary activists. This was supposed to result in a more democratic mode of operation, but ultimately it only produced chaos, because the responsibilities of the ordinary and extraordinary organs were not clearly distinguished. A similar degree of chaos was produced when a reorganization of the Komsomol's organizational structure was initiated in late 1962. The division into rural and urban administrations failed to generate the expected effects, such as a reduction of bureaucracy and more streamlined management. The reforms had more traction in rhetoric than in actual practice. They disappeared silently when the Thaw period came to an end with the dismissal of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964.

Rhetorical impact exceeded real change in the realm of the Komsomol's bureaucratic processes too. Anti-bureaucratic campaigns peaked during the Thaw period, yet their content followed the rhetorical patterns of the Stalinist years and was not new at all. The only new element was the notion of de-Stalinization, which was pinned to the fight against excessive bureaucracy. However, attempts to streamline management within the Komsomol and in other areas of public life were not very successful; the problem of bureaucracy remained ever

present in Soviet discourse but it was never solved. Indeed, even today *Nashi* is proclaiming the need to reduce bureaucracy and corruption among Russian officials.

Although the Komsomol seemed ill-prepared to lead the young generation into the communist future given its organizational structure, the rhetoric promoting the communist project tried to compensate for this failure. It maintained an optimistic tone, blaming intolerable deviations within and outside the Komsomol for slowing down the process of building communism. The rhetorical parameters of the heroic past basically remained the same as during Stalinism, with only some slight alterations in the narrative structure of the stories and the types of heroes. The practice of promoting the heroism of previous generations seemed at odds with the expectations of media makers in the centre, who wanted Soviet propaganda to become catchy, appealing to youth and more relevant to the lives of the young audience. Similarly, strategies to promote the heroic past changed little. Commemorative holidays became increasingly institutionalized, while use of public space for rituals to remember the heroic past became increasingly uniform, but this did not make the promotion of past heroism any more attractive to the young generation. Instead, the rigid narrative patterns presented stereotypical heroes who were hardly suitable role models for contemporary youth. It is little wonder that by the mid-1960s many Soviet young people were more attached to the Beatles than to heroes from their own country.

However, the fact that propaganda often bored and alienated young people was scarcely recognized by the people who wrote and disseminated it. Only in rare cases was the inadequacy of propaganda held responsible for youth's lack of enthusiasm for the communist project. Rather, Western influence and remnants of the undesired past were blamed for distracting youth's minds and energy from building communism. Therefore, the Komsomol was charged with the task of fighting these phenomena. Religious belief was singled out as a

major obstacle preventing youth from engaging whole-heartedly in the fight for a bright future. Komsomol rhetoric made clear that it was totally incompatible with both communist morality and the path towards the happy life of communism. The two regions showed varying degrees of commitment to the fight against religion – the Komsomol organizations in Tatarstan dedicated much more time and energy to it than their equivalents in the Cheliabinsk region. In each place, however, the Komsomol organizations made attempts to both exclude believers from society and to help them reintegrate. Their measures ranged from ridiculing believers in newspapers and at public meetings, to individual work with believers and other attempts to ‘convince’ them of the backwardness of religion.

This raises the broader issue of how deviant behaviour was supposed to be dealt with during the Thaw. Official guidelines remained vague throughout the period: Komsomol organizations were unsure whether they should rhetorically name and shame wrongdoers and take even harsher action such as exclusion, or integrate culprits into work in order to re-educate them. The result was constant alternation between the two options. As a general rule, the Komsomol relied predominantly on rhetoric to combat both religion and deviant behaviour. Religious believers, rowdies, and idlers were targeted by campaigns in the press and at Komsomol meetings, but rarely had to endure real punishment or persecution.

The same zigzagging between exclusion and integration was found in the Komsomol’s approach to deviant behaviour. When dealing with hooliganism, alcohol abuse and laziness, parts of the youth organization were reconciling and opted to re-educate wrongdoers, leading them gently back to the right track. Other parts, however, took a hard line and tried to socially exclude hooligans, drinkers and idlers, naming and shaming them publicly in order to ridicule them. The Komsomol’s engagement thus ranged from educational work to organizing posters and meetings at which individuals were accused. Members also actively participated in

comrade courts which dealt publicly with individual wrongdoers, and voluntary brigades which often reacted violently to the harsh conditions they encountered in public places.

Leaving aside the question of whether these measures were successful in reducing religiosity and deviant behaviour among youth, they certainly resulted in a high level of mobilization.

Mass mobilization was presented as a precondition for the transition to communism, which depended on the young generation getting actively engaged in building the new society. A utopian vision of the communist future was promoted throughout the Thaw period, but propaganda on this topic peaked in summer 1961, coinciding with discussions about the new Party programme. The programme demonstrated 'scientifically' that there was only one route to happiness: the education of the 'new person' had to be enforced and the Soviet economy boosted. The Komsomol had long ceased to hold a monopoly position in leisure, as young people found new niches and refuges to escape state control. However, the rhetoric tried to push through a clear and unambiguous version of the 'new person' who would spend his free time on 'rational leisure', cultural and political education, serving as a model of communist morality.

The Komsomol therefore attempted to educate youth accordingly. For example, it maintained a political education network, provided facilities and organizational structures for cultural work and promoted communist morality via all possible means of propaganda and campaigning. The economy, too, was regarded as a 'school of communism' because labour was considered an ideal means of education. It provided an arena in which young people's activity and enthusiasm could unfold as they emulated the heroism of their predecessors.

Many campaigns initiated or supported by the Komsomol during the Thaw were formal and outmoded. They contained little to attract youth's attention. Yet the campaigns did always involve a huge number of young people, who were thus exposed to the rhetoric of the

communist project. In this area, the project seemed to take a firm shape and play a more or less important role in the everyday work of youth. The evidence suggests that many young people were enthusiastic about participating in the building of communism, although it is impossible to tell the extent to which this translated into actual political commitment.

The rhetoric of the communist project was thus part of everyday normality for huge numbers of young people, not only during economic campaigns, but also during celebrations of alternative holidays, rites of passage and commemorative events. This was true regardless of whether they were Komsomol members. Although they might remain indifferent towards the idea of building communism, they were still constantly exposed to the propaganda – at work, within the education system and during their leisure time. Even those who opted out or fell out of the system were confronted with the ideas of the communist project, as they became propaganda targets. Religious believers, rowdies, or young people who admired Western fashion and music were classified as undesired categories and were subject to public shaming or individual work.

The present study follows up this ambiguity and identifies the strategies used in official propaganda to mobilize youth, despite this highly standardized and ritualized rhetoric. It thus helps to fill a gap in the historiography on youth and the Komsomol in the Thaw period. Building on recent research, it explores an area of Soviet youth policy that has hitherto been more or less ignored by historians of the post-Stalin era, who have preferred to focus on the non-conformist potential of the younger generations. Although these sources are absent from the provincial archives visited for this study, the regional approach made it possible to write the story of everyday life under the authoritarian Soviet regime – something expected from

Eastern European historiography, as recently expressed during the Baberowski-Hildermeier debate about the end of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the present study is not just a story of failure; it is a story of the everyday life of millions of people who were young during the Thaw era – those born between the late 1930s and the late 1940s, known as *shestidesiatniki* or baby-boomers.<sup>2</sup> The rhetoric of the communist project was omnipresent, so every young person had to adopt a position towards it: they might reject the ideas, look at them cynically, view them as a burden to which one must pay lip service, or whole-heartedly embrace them. From the evidence in this thesis, we cannot know how young people ‘actually’ felt about the new policies and what they ‘really’ thought about the prospect of entering communist society. However, the thesis has revealed the political and social platform presented to youth by the rhetoric of the communist project, along with the strategies which were supposed to instil the ideas of the communist project in the mind of each individual young person. The question of belief and disbelief in the communist project is a different but no less interesting story which awaits further research.

By telling the story of the official Soviet youth movement and its “propaganda war”, the present study has touched upon many important issues in contemporary historiography about Soviet history and global youth. A striking similarity emerges between Western countries and the Eastern Bloc when looking at post-war youth: states felt that they were losing control over young people. The Western states saw their youth distracted by consumerism, sexual revolutions and left-wing ideas.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet state – including the Komsomol, as the long arm

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<sup>1</sup> See mainly Jörg Baberowski, “Criticism as Crisis, or why the Soviet Union still Collapsed”, in: *Journal of Modern European History*, 9(2011), pp.148-66; Jörg Baberowski, “‘Badly Said Is Badly Lied’. Reply to my critics”, in: *Journal of Modern European History*, 10(2012), pp.19-23.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Vajl' and Genis, *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka*; Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers*.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Beth Bailey. “From Panty Raids to Revolution. Youth and Authority, 1950-1970”, in: *Generations of Youth*, pp.187-204; Paolo Capuzzo. “Youth Cultures and Consumption in Contemporary Europe”, in: *Contemporary European History* 10(2001), 1, pp.155-70; Arthur Marwick. “Youth Culture and the Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties”, in: *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*, pp.39-58.

of Soviet youth policy – faced growing competition to the communist project. This competition came not only from Western cultural products that were increasingly spilling over the Iron Curtain, but also from the privatization of life and the retreat into the private sphere which accompanied the Soviet Union’s own policies of re-housing the population in family apartments and encouraging consumer spending. Public space certainly remained very important in the lives of young people, but the rising number of private apartments, the newly designed residential districts (*mikroraiony*) and the increasing importance of peer groups offered young people more and more opportunities to spend their free time outside the control of the state or the Komsomol.<sup>4</sup>

States on both sides of the Iron Curtain were shaken by this loss of control as they saw their young generations, the embodiment of their future and prosperity, distracted by supposedly trivial phenomena. The alienation of youth was considered particularly disastrous in the Soviet Union, where ideology was more radical and demanded that every young citizen believe absolutely in the correctness of the future envisaged by the state. The theoretical impossibility of the young generation alienating itself from the ideas of the communist project made it difficult to address the loss of control over youth. This fact is reflected in Komsomol sources, which hardly ever mention it as a substantial problem of youth policy.

This silence was also due to the role played by youth in Soviet society. According to the “relay race of generations” (*estafeta pokolenii*), young people were supposed to continue the heroism of previous generations to achieve the communist future. The general function ascribed to the young generation remained the same throughout Soviet history, i.e. they were to be the torch-bearers of a bright future. However, there were slight alterations in terms of the role’s attractiveness. Whereas the first generation of Soviet youth had fought in the Civil

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture*, pp.76-85.

War and thus contributed greatly to the success of the Revolution, the following generation was supposed to stabilize this success through hard and steady work – a role far less appealing to young people longing for heroism and change.<sup>5</sup> A similarly conservative role was ascribed to the immediate post-war generation, who were supposed to preserve their predecessors' revolutionary achievements but were denied any contribution of their own to the course of history.<sup>6</sup>

Compared to late Stalinism, the Thaw offered a far more dynamic and attractive role to the young generation. It was their task to introduce the social changes which would bring all the revolutionary endeavours of previous generations to their ultimate conclusion – communism. In this regard, youth was a perfect metaphor for the Thaw period, which promised to bring radical change and huge improvements comparable only with the changes of the Revolution in 1917. However, this role was clearly defined by official rhetoric: although it promised dynamism, it followed strict patterns set by the state. This state-controlled change made the official picture of the young generation slightly more dynamic than before, but it was not appealing enough to fully integrate youth into the state-sponsored communist project.

This problem can also be linked to the language of the propaganda, which had a highly ritualized character. Young people encountered the rhetoric of the communist project mainly in the form of performative speech acts, during meetings, conferences, or festivals or they read the fixed versions of this performative language written down and printed in circulating leaflets, newspaper articles, or guidelines. This mass of spoken and written texts, which was investigated in the present study, contributed to a growing standardization of language and its solidification in ideological expressions. The latter increasingly lost their meaning the more often they were repeated. Due to this repetition and the strictly fixed settings in which they

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<sup>5</sup> See mainly Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*; Kuhr-Korolev, *Gezähmte Helden*, pp.323-4.

<sup>6</sup> Recently, Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*.

were used, the standardized ideological expressions led to the ritualization of language. This phenomenon can be observed at all levels of communication within the Komsomol as well as in other Soviet organizations and institutions. This makes it tremendously difficult for historians to explain how the standardized, ritualized language related to the actual reality of Soviet life – in the present case the reality of young people in provincial Russia.

However, there are definite conclusions to be drawn from a case study on ritualized language within the regional youth organizations. Firstly, the way in which Komsomol members in general and rising youth leaders in particular made use of this language demonstrates the high degree of conformity amongst Soviet youth. “Speaking Bolshevik”, i.e. appropriating this language and using it for their own aims, seems to have been the precondition for success within the Soviet system. Careers depended on the degree to which young people were able to reproduce the discourses provided by the Party or by the higher levels within the Komsomol. This was not only the case for political careers in Party or state institutions but publicly showing conformity with the prevailing patterns of language became important for any career path chosen within the Soviet system. Secondly, the standardized language of the Komsomol sources shows that the Komsomol was clearly part of the Soviet bureaucracy despite its outspoken attempts to fight any red tape within its own ranks. This image of a bureaucratic bulwark that the present study presented clearly does not go together with the idea of youth as the avant-garde of change as it was promoted during the Thaw. Instead, the Komsomol can be regarded as a bureaucratic world in its own right that provides clear career paths for people taking over clear roles and performing them in clearly defined discursive settings.

Another dimension that can be explored by focusing on Soviet propaganda is the clear distinction that is often made between the Stalinist era and the Thaw period. Looking at propaganda that was used within the Komsomol to spread among huge parts of Soviet youth,

the present study has shown that the content and language of propaganda largely remained rooted in outdated – mainly Stalinist – traditions. Efforts to make fiction and films more realistic and true-to-life lay at the core of Thaw-era cultural policy. However, practice in the regions showed that the general rhetorical concepts of the communist project remained monotonous and had become almost frozen. Phrases were repeated in newspapers and by speakers at Komsomol meetings, while leitmotifs of Stalinism remained predominant during the Thaw. This repetitiveness seems to rather match the character of the Brezhnev era, which was characterized by its ‘timelessness’ and went down in history as the ‘era of stagnation’. At the same time, the continuity in propaganda style casts doubt on the assumption that Stalin’s death can be regarded as a border between two periods. Rather, it supports the recent idea that late Stalinism and the Khrushchev era have more in common than it seems at first glance.<sup>7</sup>

For a long time it has been common practice to regard the Thaw as a period of radical liberalization, and this is certainly true in some areas. But where youth and the promotion of the communist project are concerned, this assumption has been challenged by recent research. In particular, Oleg Kharkhordin and Juliane Fürst have emphasized the continuity of social control and peer pressure.<sup>8</sup> The present study has demonstrated that while rhetorical patterns closely mirrored the Stalinist tradition, approaches to dealing with undesired phenomena shifted after Stalin’s death. Punishment lost much of its severity and deviant behaviour was addressed in a much more ambiguous manner than in previous years. There seemed to be no institutionalized “right recourse” and Komsomol organizations shifted between policies of social exclusion and re-education.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”; Fürst, Jones and Morrisey, “The Relaunch of the Soviet Project”.

<sup>8</sup> Kharkhordin. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*; Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring?”.

In this sense, the present study argues that the Thaw period should be seen as an era of transition, during which many practices were in flux; they reached a more coherent form only during the years of Brezhnev's leadership. This is evident not only in approaches to deviant behaviour, but also in the celebration of holidays and personal milestones. During the Thaw, individual Komsomol organizations still had a lot of freedom in arranging these festivities and innovations were welcome. However, the late 1960s and 1970s saw the institutionalization of holidays, which fixed their meaning as well as the content of the celebrations. Something else which points to the period's transitional character is the zigzag course taken by the Komsomol as it sought an adequate organizational structure; this zig-zagging only ended with Khrushchev's dismissal.

Thus, the Thaw period was undoubtedly more dynamic than the following years of Brezhnev's rule, which are usually referred to as the 'era of stagnation'. Although recent research has shed more light on the dynamics of the Brezhnev period and challenged the 'stagnation' paradigm,<sup>9</sup> it was certainly a time when meanings and practices became fixed; the *zeitgeist* was shaped by 'hypernormalization' and, according to contemporaries, endless boredom.<sup>10</sup> It can be argued that the dynamism of the Thaw was mainly due to the strong impact of the ideological project of building communism.

The revitalization of ideological impetus during the Thaw can be regarded as the "death throes of utopia" (*letzte Zuckung der Utopie*).<sup>11</sup> It certainly left its mark on the period and gave it an energetic, even exciting, character. At first, the dearth of real solutions was barely noticed in the exhilarating chaos of the first real discussions to take place since the early 1930s. Later, it became much more significant. The loss of an inspiring idea to enthuse the

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see Belge, Boris and Martin Deuerlein (eds.), *Ein goldenes Zeitalter der Stagnation? Perspektiven auf die sowjetische Ordnung der Breznev-Ära*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck (forthcoming early 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Slightly exaggerated by Yurchak, *Everything Was forever, until it Was no more*.

<sup>11</sup> Beyrau, "Das sowjetische Modell", here p.48.

minds of young people became critical in the following years of 'developed socialism'. One can speculate that it may ultimately have contributed to the disintegration of the Soviet system. During the 1960s, the revival of the communist project was certainly the driving utopian force behind Soviet modernization. In due course, both the communist project and modernization ended up together on the scrapheap of history, when further attempts to reinvigorate ideology during Gorbachev's perestroika proved unable to stop the Soviet system disintegrating.

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