

## 1. TERRITORIALITY AND SPACES OF POWER

### *1-1. The Ideological Machinery: Communist Education and Its Agents*

All spheres of life in the Soviet Union were under the control of the party-state machinery (*apparat*), organised in a hierarchical system of power under the leadership of the CPSU on the territorial level. Which local actors then controlled and shaped the construction of Soviet spatial identity? Since the identity of New Soviet Man (NSM) was to be based on the communist ideology, it was the local party organisations who were responsible for disseminating the main narratives related to the education of the masses. Membership in the Communist Party was absolutely essential for any career beyond a certain level. As a consequence, the overall number of party members in the Soviet Union rose from 6.3 million (DeWitt 1961: 533) in 1947 to some 17 million in the early 1980s (Vert 1994: 462). In Karelia, there existed 1500 primary party organisations in 1949/50, with a total number of 17,200 members (one and a half times more than in 1940). Between January 1956 and January 1966, the Party accepted 18,000 new members, or candidates (Vavulinskaia 2001: 669 and 675). In 1979, there were 1245 primary communist organisations, 864 shop (*tsekhovykh*) cell and 735 party cells, accounting for over 39,000 members and candidates (*Leninskaiia Pravda*, 19 January 1979). In 1985, the Karelian Communist Party counted more than 43,000 members. The number of party members was thus increasing until the very last years of the Party's history (Maksimov 1987: 256 and 258).

In Sortavala, the Party's town committee (*gorkom*) was established in July 1940 and continued its activities until 1991, except for the short period of war between August 1941 and June 1944. Its secretaries and bureau members were confirmed in 1944 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic (KFSSR). In early 1945, a meeting of the town's communists elected the plenum and the bureau. Due to administrative changes, the committee was later twice renamed into 'district committee' (*Sortavalskii raikom*), between November 1954 and December 1962 and, again, between January 1965 and December 1970.

The *gorkom* was organised into several departments: general services (*obshchii otdel*), administrative organs, propaganda and agitation, ideology, industry and transportation, military, and cadres. Archival documents clearly show the leading role of the *gorkom* in local affairs, whose members thus formed the local political elite (Kop'ev 2003: 48–51). As the local branch of the CPSU it was 'a leading force' of the society, whose main tasks included the 'selection and promotion of cadres who were able to carry out the Party's decisions, ideological and political work aimed at educating the masses in the communist worldview etc.' (see among others Fedoseev 1985; Kniazhev and Nikishov 1987).

In early 1948, 1335 persons held top-level positions in the state machinery and the so-called public organisations (trade unions etc.) of Soviet Karelia. The nomenklatura on the municipal and district level (*gorkom* and *raikom*) was composed of 7150 positions. During the 1950s and 1960s, personnel for the nomenklatura continued to be selected along the same principles. However, at the oblast level (*obkom*), the number of positions declined from 1700 in 1952 to only 480 in 1961 (Vavulinskaia 2001: 670).

In Sortavala, the local nomenklatura was established in 1944, right after the Soviets arrived in town. It included positions on the local party committee (*gorkom*), which numbered about seventy members: the directors of the most important local establishments, several ordinary workers, members of the intelligentsia and party members. Heads of departments held permanent positions. The bureau counted about ten people. Members of the leading bodies in the local party branch were elected at an annual party conference. *Krasnoe Znamia* [The Red Banner]; hereafter referred to as *KZ*), the local newspaper published in Soviet times, informed about these conferences, producing short accounts of communist leaders' reports on their work, discussions of the main report and final resolutions. Usually, a visiting speaker from the *obkom* of the Karelian Republic intervened at the conference (e.g. *KZ*, 28 November 1978 and 25 November 1980).

The local political elite also included members of state institutions. These were organised along similar hierarchical principles and their activities took place under the guidance of the CPSU. The main local body was the town council (*soviet*), represented by its executive committee in daily affairs. While the party was responsible for general leadership, the executive committee controlled all issues of socio-economic development. As far as Soviet identity construction is concerned, the local party branch was therefore in overall control and members of the state nomenklatura were tasked with relaying and implementing party directives. The documents issued by the council thus form a major source for the present investigation.

The earliest documents date back to autumn 1944, after Soviet troops arrived in town. It was then that the Soviet state bodies were established. The executive committee consisted of five members: the secretary of the town committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), or VKP(b); the head of the NKVD's municipal branch; the head of the NKGB's municipal and district branch; and the chair of the district's executive committee (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/2, l. 7).

In December 1947, elections for the local administrative bodies took place. In 1948, five permanent commissions were created: Budget, Education, Trade, Communal Services and Housing, Public Health. In 1949, seven commissions were added to help with reconstruction and the attribution of housing funds (Comsods). Moreover, the town council decided to create fourteen street committees (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. l. 36 and 38), which mostly dealt with applications and complaints made by residents (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. l. 39). In the official discourse, so-called electors' mandates were seen as evidence for the democratic nature of Soviet society. In practice, they were suggestions to improve the functioning of schools, hospitals, cultural and educational institutions, as well as of commercial and municipal establishments (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 7/249, l. 19 and 20). However, this form of participation was severely hampered by the bureaucratic system supposed to implement them, and efforts by ordinary local residents were thus generally doomed to fail.

The leading position of party members in the administrative bodies was a main characteristic of the communist system. In January 1950, for example, twenty-four of the thirty-seven members of Sortavala's town council were members of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 7/250). Similarly, in February 1951, ten out of eleven members of the executive committee were party members (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 9/372, l. 8).

The Soviet understanding of the difference between capitalist and socialist democracies is clearly manifest in local documents and newspaper narratives. Socialist democracy, proclaimed to be the democracy of the working people (*trudiashchiesia*), 'is fulfilled through the representation of people in the state-power bodies—soviets [i.e. councils; A. I.], as well as by participation of citizens in electoral meetings, working collectives, as members of trade unions and other public organisations' (Maksimov 1987: 264). It was also argued that wide participation of the masses in the management of the state would allow for the regular renewal of councils. In Soviet Karelia, one out of three citizens was participating in council activities according to official data from the first half of the 1980s (*ibid.*). There were fifteen raion councils, thirteen town councils, two *raion* councils in urban-type areas, 150 rural councils and 43 settlement councils. In 1987, the republic's local councils had over 7000 elected members. Their executive bodies took the form of permanent commissions (*postoiannye komissii*) whose titles and tasks corresponded to those of the main social and economic sectors. In other words, they were responsible for the executive management of whole sectors of the economy and of social welfare. In the late 1980s, the region thus counted over 1300 such commissions, composed of some 6000 local council members (Maksimov 1987: 267). Another feature of socialist democracy were the so-called public self-governing organisations (*obshchestvennye samodeiatel'nye organizatsii*),<sup>3</sup> of which there were more than ten thousand, including comrades' courts, voluntary people's patrols, groups of peoples' control, housing and street committees, parents' committees at schools and women's councils. In late 1987, more than 100,000 activists were reported to participate in their activities. Foremost among these organisations were the trade unions, tasked with 'socialist competition,' taking care of working people's needs, as well as improving labour discipline and productivity. In 1986, the trade unions of Soviet Karelia, whose organisation resembled that of the party and the councils, had over 425,000 members (Maksimov 1987: 268).

The coexistence of the nomenklatura's power and of propaganda proclaiming the democratic nature of Soviet society is an indication of the dual reality of the system which accounts for one of the major contradictions in Soviet man's identity: he or she was supposed to be a 'master of life' whose every step was under the control of the political elite. The publicly declared 'power of the people' became a utopian slogan under the conditions of total control by the ruling Communist Party. The Soviet system was vulnerable in terms of sharing real political power with the people, because this could lead to the loss of power and control over the society. Although all communist leaders were sensitive to this issue during certain periods, such as the Thaw and the perestroika, they tried to push reforms aimed at democratisation.

The attempts made by Gorbachev and other leaders of the perestroika to renew ideological views were, however, hampered by Soviet bureaucratic traditions. Indeed, these new approaches strongly contradicted earlier methods used by the Party, which

---

3 Formally these organisations could be associated with NGOs, but is reluctant to keep this term here because of absent of civil society in the former USSR. These organisations appear to have been to a large extent controlled and influenced by the Communist Party or the state.

now appeared to be antiquated. One instance of the obsolescence of ideological propaganda is the destiny of wall newspapers produced in competition by factories and similar establishments with the aim of educating the masses. In January 1986, Sortavala's local newspaper commented with sadness that wall newspapers at the railway engine depot, which had been famous not only in town but throughout the entire republic, no longer interested people: 'Nobody wants to write, nobody wants to read' (KZ, 21 January 1986).

To sum up, in Soviet times, methods of communist socialisation (*vospitanie*) have been undergoing significant transformations. But their main goal has always been the construction of an ideological identity in accordance with tasks defined by the political elite. Ideological education, starting in early childhood, was meant to enable Soviet man to become a reliable part of the Soviet political and societal system. The media played a key role in this process by transmitting core communist values to the local community. These values were implanted in the local sense of place. The spatial imagination of Sortavalans in Soviet times combined these enforced representations of Soviet values with meanings produced in the pre-Soviet past.<sup>4</sup>

### ***1-2. Political Discourses in the Late Stalin and Early Post-Stalin Years***

The framework of political institutions related to identity construction, described in the preceding section, operated by reproducing a meta-narrative shaped by the central political elite. Soviet official discourse reflected the geopolitical imagination of this elite and its strategy for building communism: from World Revolution to Socialism in One Country. During the Cold War, the ambitions of a global superpower were expressed in a discourse of nation-building communism and of support for all pro-socialist, or pro-Soviet, and revolutionary forces in the world. In terms of internal identity, Marxist-Leninist ideas of constructing a new society with a new kind of human being had, since the times of the early Bolsheviks, prevailed in the official discourse. Soviet symbols and rituals, as well as, more generally, ideological propaganda, served as instruments to inculcate Soviet citizens with a new societal consciousness. In Sortavala, the new authorities from the very beginning began to popularise Soviet symbols and traditions, above all the celebration of the October Revolution's anniversary on 7 November. On 1 November 1944, the chairman of the town council and the head of the NKVD's town branch thus actively participated in passing a resolution in favour of 'preparing the celebration of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution,' which included a recommendation to all directors of local establishments to hoist flags on buildings (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/2, l. 6). In the sense of geographical theories of place-making, these celebrations and similar public manifestations can therefore be seen as contributing to processes that produce locality.

Soviet public narratives as a form of identity construction also included a mythologised past. Soviet history since the October Revolution was perceived through the

---

4 *Kraevedenie* lessons that were the key-instrument in this work had been taught already in the pre-revolutionary Russia in the beginning of XX century. But in the Soviet school it became an element of ideological socialisation (*vospitanie*) in process of teaching on/ or learning of locality.

lens of Stalin's writings. A personality cult had been established where Stalin figured, next to Lenin, as one of the sacred leaders of the Bolsheviks. In the 1950s, a bust of Lenin was thus erected on the grounds of Sortavala's military hospital.<sup>5</sup> It can be added that there is another statue of Lenin in the area—in Värtsilä in front of the VMZ metal-lurgic factory. Another important task of the ideological education of the masses was to stress the exemplary role of heroes from the Great Patriotic War. On 2 February 1945, the town's executive committee passed a resolution to establish a municipal commission to promote and protect the memory of these war heroes (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/5, l. 1). Historical memorialising was therefore a key element of public place-making in Soviet times.

The grand narratives of the centrally produced Soviet ideology were to be reproduced on the regional and local levels through communist organisations, notably the Komsomol,<sup>6</sup> schools and the mass media. Children, for example, received their first lessons of communist ideology in nursery schools. In March 1945, during a meeting of the executive body of Sortavala's town council, it was noted that this kind of work with children would have to be strengthened (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/8, l. 12). The spatio-temporal life experience of Sortavalans was thus profoundly shaped by the reproduction of social relations in Soviet society and, above all, by mechanisms designed for their ideological and political education.

The Pioneer organisation, for older children, was responsible for communist education in schools. A July 1945 meeting of the executive committee of the town council thus dealt with creating a House of Pioneers and a Komsomol Club in Sortavala (NA RK, f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/88, l. 32). Other forms of propaganda and political socialisation were targeted at the adult population. A widespread element of this was *Krasnyi ugolok* [Red Corner], a separate room in factories and other establishments, where posters, portraits of political leaders, self-made wall newspapers presenting political news and other objects were exhibited and equipment for lectures, amateur shows and film projections were stored. A report by the town's department for culture and public enlightenment addressed to the town authorities noted, for example, that Red Corners would 'have to become the centres of mass agitation work among workers' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/8, l. 16). Another report on the activities of this department stressed the task 'to use lectures for propaganda, as a tool for mobilising the masses in the struggle for the fulfilment and over-fulfilment of Stalin's Fourth Five-Year Plan.'

The Red Corners in factories should be centres of mass agitation work among workers (*agitatsionno-massovoi raboty sredi rabochikh*). Film shows during election campaigns should be one of the foremost methods of ideological education (f. R-2003, op. 1, d. 2/88, l. 16 and 18).

---

5 In 2010, local communists moved the statue to the town centre.

6 The Komsomol (short for Vsesoiuznyi Leninskii Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi), or All-Union Leninist Young Communist League was established in 1918, was the Soviet Union's youth organisation for 14-to-28-year-olds, created to help the older generation of communists with the construction of the new society and to prepare young people to become members of the CPSU.

Communist rhetoric and slogans occupied a central place in the socialisation (*vospitanie*) of the masses.<sup>7</sup> In the early years after the war, Sortavala represented a particular challenge in this regard. The narrative constitution of an identity in a highly diverse community of migrants called for differentiation of its various component groups and for control over newcomers. In the 1940s, Stalin's suspicious attitude towards Soviet citizens who had come under foreign influence (through captivity or occupation) thus led to the decision that children who had lived in occupied territories should be registered and educated separately (*provodit's nimi rabotu po vospitaniuu otdel'no*) (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/6, l. 8)—a perfect illustration of Stalinist fears of difference that might endanger identity construction.

Communist educational work (*vospitatel'naia rabota*) already started at pre-school age. In 1945, when there was only a single nursery school in Sortavala, the executive committee, in a resolution from 28 March 1945, evoked the task 'to enforce educational work with children and to enlist parents to control and participate in pre-school education' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/8, l. 12). The local political elite mainly expected nursery schools to help local residents identify with the Soviet people and adopt the values of communist society at a very early age.

For schoolchildren, the main institution of communist education and propaganda was the Pioneer organisation. As early as June 1945, a decision was taken to establish a network of Pioneer camps, where eighty Young Pioneers would spend their summer holidays (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/13, l. 2). In July, the executive committee passed a resolution that called for the creation of a House of Pioneers and a Komsomol Club in town: 'Taking into account the number of schools and FZO [schools for vocational training; A. I.] and consequently the necessity of organising the leisure time of young people, we decide to allocate for these purposes the building on the corner of Kirov Street and Ogorodnaia Street (former Prayer House).' And: 'A space for establishing the House of Pioneers is necessary for the ideological education of the students in town' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/16, l. 3 and d. 2/88, l. 32).

Despite these measures, the town's political elite criticised the political activities and the ideological work of those responsible as lacking efficiency. In a chapter dedicated to 'political and ideological work,' a report by the town council's Department for Communal Services noted: 'Political discussions, lectures, collective readings of newspapers do not take place; wall newspapers are not being published; there is no collective watching of films' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/88, l. 20). Similarly, it was reported that factory cadres did not show enough interest in this kind of work. This suggests that everyday practices related to the creation of NSM continued to suffer from the same handicaps in the 1940s as in the 1930s, a situation which recently published literature

---

7 Whereas *obrazovanie* means formal education in the sense of becoming proficient in a discipline and refers to the knowledge transmitted by educational institutions, *vospitanie*, or socialisation, more generally, refers to upbringing (in the family, at school, in the army or a labour collective) in moral, political, ideological and cultural terms. The most radical division between the two can be found in the pedagogical works of Anton Makarenko (Frolov 2006: 12).

has seen ‘a sign of symbolic instability of the social order in Soviet Russia’ (Oushakine 2004: 406). Obviously, the massive transformation of social conditions, especially if the specific situation of Sortavala is taken into account, had still not produced a discursive basis on which the regime could build symbolically. This can probably be related to the shift that occurred in a number of classic Soviet writings on NSM (e.g. in Maxim Gorky’s journalistic texts) from the normative to the performative and the procedural. NSM was understood as an active man capable of producing enough objective evidence to be recognised as such (ibid.). The above quote precisely demonstrates the ways in which the elite forced local actors to behave.

Educational work was considered a key instrument in producing NSM within the Stalinist framework of building Socialism in One Country. In the official discourse of the time, there was no significant distinction between the activities of the so-called ‘institutions of culture and public enlightenment’ (Houses of Culture and clubs) on the one hand and ideological structures on the other. Archival documents from 1951/52 offer evidence of critical views, such as that of a chairman of the town’s permanent commission for culture and public enlightenment:

Can we be satisfied with the work on culture and public enlightenment? No, because wall newspapers as a weapon of visual agitation work and propaganda for the communist education of workers are not being used. Boards of honour, boards with indicators of labour achievements in factories, slogans and posters are missing or are left hanging for a long time. This practice just devalues the idea of visual agitation work. Propagating political knowledge is a duty for every factory leader, engineer, technician, trade union leader etc. (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 11/375, l. 25–28).

In the official discourse, mythologised Soviet man identified with a person living in the most just and freest society of the world. In February 1946, for instance, *KZ* informed readers about the forthcoming elections to the Supreme Soviet, describing them as ‘elections based on the most democratic constitution in the world.’ The paper noted that party organisations had allotted tasks to hundreds of agitators from the party, the Komsomol and the non-party intelligentsia, opened propaganda centres and organised mass and political activities. Agitators from the railway depot in particular were reported to have held 365 debates in which some five thousand electors participated. The working people of the town were said to have nominated Josef Stalin and several other members of the central and the Republic’s government as candidates for the Supreme Soviet (*KZ*, 5 January 1946).

One of the methods of shaping the Soviet political system consisted in promoting ‘good examples.’ Successful activities of local actors were meant to spread to other territories of the KASSR. After the XXI Congress of the CPSU (27 January – 5 February 1959) had adopted yet another programme for the full-scale construction of communism, the Karelian government, in December 1959, adopted a resolution on the work of permanent commissions in local councils and recommended to all local authorities to follow the experience of the councils of the Sortavala and Prionezhskii [Petrozavodsk; A. I.] districts, as the political and public activities developed there were held to be shining examples for other local councils. In Sortavala’s case, this referred to the following characteristics: 1. regularly convening council sessions; 2. establishing

working permanent commissions; and 3. exemplary working methods of deputies (f. R-2203, d. 25/727, l. 5–13).

Official documents show that in the Soviet bureaucratic system the deputies of the permanent commissions and their volunteer assistants were rather executors of orders than decision-making political actors. An official in charge reporting on activities during 1949 thus stated at a meeting of the executive committee that

Our analysis shows that the work of deputies has been unsatisfactory. No commission is dealing with issues whose implementation has been mandated by the electors in their plans. There is no body of voluntary activists. The organisation of work is chaotic and lacks planning. Meetings of the commissions take place irregularly. Not often enough and, to be honest, there is a lack of initiative.

The commissions have not raised any questions before the executive committee. Can it really be true that the activity of the organisations under their control do not suffer from any shortcomings? The commissions are indifferent to the results of their work. Their only activity consists in producing formal reports (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 7/249, l. 32–34).

The Khrushchev period brought a revival of early Bolshevik utopian ideas. As already noted, Khrushchev's basic understanding of communism as a developed society that could be built in the near future led to conceptual reformulations in Soviet identity politics. In particular this meant a revision of the until then dominant Stalinist discourse that had emphasised a rigorous us-versus-them dichotomy. In terms of international policy, the new discourse shifted the accent from Socialism in One Country to prospects of a global victory of communism. This spatial imagination based on the ideological views might explain the international policy of the USSR, in particular, active support for pro-communist regimes in the Third World. Newspaper articles from *KZ* show that the mass media, which had been institutional agents of Stalinism until the mid-1950s, became relays for the new dominant discourse. The intelligentsia, which was intensely involved in public activities, was being given the opportunity to more freely express their view. Although censorship still played a crucial role in a closed border town such as Sortavala, the local media began to reflect much more openly everyday practices. Local actors were able to publicly admit the existence of contradictions or shortcomings in socialist society, a process in which letters written by readers played a significant role.

### ***1-3. Public Narratives during the Thaw and the Era of Stagnation***

The Thaw brought a major socio-economic sea change to Soviet society, notably remarkable reforms of the territorial and administrative setup. The most visible changes on the local level concerned the rural areas around Sortavala, which benefitted from the so-called 'enlargement of rural settlements' policy (see below). Spatial changes in urban territories included the building of a growing number of cheaply built housing estates with five storeys, so-called *khrushchevkas*, which offered small flats to people who had until then be housed in communal flats or barracks. In Sortavala, a number of tower blocks were being erected right in the historical centre of the town. Along with new approaches to territorialisation and spatial planning came social and economic



improvements (Baron 2007). Salaries in particular were increased compared to Stalin's times. At the same time, the period saw several chaotic and little-discussed reforms that have led historians to speak of a contradictory period.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the institutions of Soviet identity production were enlarged and developed. One such institution was the so-called 'comrades' courts,' based on Soviet ideas about the educational role of labour collectives.<sup>8</sup> Those who defied discipline or deviated from the moral norms of socialist society were brought before a court composed of elected members from their labour collective to be fined or to be transferred to a regular court of justice.

Documents of the commission for socialist law and public order show that the town council controlled and discussed the activities of these courts, set up at local establishments. The commission also checked compliance with labour laws. According to a report conserved in the archives, the commission's activity was based on the Proposal Concerning Permanent Commissions adopted by the presidium of the KASSR's Supreme Soviet on 7 July 1960, and on the resolution On the Violation of Labour Laws in Factories, adopted on 24 December 1963 by the KASSR's Council of Ministers and the presidium of the trade unions' regional council. Its tasks included supervising the legal conformity of local organisations (both councils and economic establishments), monitoring compliance with labour laws on the councils' territory, assisting voluntary brigades and comrades' courts, and dealing with applications, complaints and letters with suggestions submitted by citizens (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 38/935, l. 73 and 75).

However, there is evidence that the work of these commissions was not as effective as expected. In May 1964, a deputy of the Sortavala town council, in a report on the activity of the permanent commission for socialist law and public order in Värtsilä, thus stated that the commission had only met once during the last 18 months, in early 1963, for its founding session, and that no other meeting had been convened to deal with other questions (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 41/967, l. 26).

The Brezhnev era, too, introduced new methods to promote NSM identity, articulated in the discourse on 'complex education.' Typical of the ideological education of young people in labour and educational collectives were the Lenin Lesson (*Leninskii urok*) and the Lenin Pass (*Leninskii zacet*), both going back to an initiative taken by leaders of Leningrad's large Komsomol organisations. Their goal was based on an individual approach to achieve a complex (ideological, scientific, aesthetic, physical, etc.) education. In Oleg Kharkhordin's words, 'the public ritual of the Lenin Pass included the institutionalised adoption of annual obligations for self-improvement. These obligations were to be written down on a standard print form, called "the composite personal plan" (*lichnyi kompleksnyi plan*), according to the three main dimensions of personal development: moral, labour and intellectual. Some versions of these plans

---

8 Comrades' courts were seen as part of a Russian tradition where a peasant's commune was responsible for the personal worldviews, moral behaviour and economic activity of its members. A Soviet labour collective was similarly accountable for the behaviour of its members. With the arrival of the perestroika, these courts were no longer taken seriously and became a frequent target of criticism in the media and particular in satirical films.

included “military-patriotic” and “aesthetic” dimensions as well’ (Kharkhordin 1999: 246). Lenin Lessons were used to discuss certain texts of Lenin in the presence of long-standing party members or veterans of the Second World War (ibid.: 332).

In Sortavala, a territory on the edge of the socialist homeland, these socio-political rituals, aimed at socialising people through Soviet rites of passage, played a special role in producing locality. In February 1970, the chairman of Sortavala’s executive committee claimed in a report read during a meeting of the town council that

all the Komsomol organisations in town take part in the Lenin Pass. As a discussion at the *gorono* [municipal department for public enlightenment (*Gorodskoi otdel narodnogo obrazovaniia*); A. I.] held in December 1969 has shown, the ideological education of older students still does not refer to the Lenin theme as central for these purposes. The Lenin Pass is a report for school children about their main duty—studies. Students also report about participating in socially valuable activities of a Komsomol collective. The students report about their successes in learning Lenin’s theoretical legacy. This learning is related to both obligatory studies required by the school curriculum and additional work planned by a Komsomol group.

Class teachers (*klassnye rukovoditeli*) do not fully realise in their activity that bourgeois propaganda uses all kinds of ways and methods to provoke ideological instability among young people (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 58/1180, l. 19, 20, 40 and 41).

The chairman particularly criticised teachers of secondary schools for ‘weak scientific content and the low level of communist ideology.’ He suggested that in order to turn communist ideas into ‘a weapon of ideological struggle for schoolchildren,’ they should take these ideas more to their hearts, feel them deeply (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 58/1180, l. 35). In addition to official narratives and propaganda clichés, he also mentioned real challenges in the process of raising young children. He thus referred to trends of the late 1960s and early 1970s of increasing incomes, which not only had led to changes in living standards but also to transformations in the public’s mentality and outlook. ‘What we see is a kind of inflation of materialist values with a certain category of teenagers. Expenses for children are growing faster than parents’ incomes. The real income of workers and employees has increased two and a half times over the last twenty years. Meanwhile, expenses for an eighth-grade schoolboy have increased three to three and a half times and up to five times for a ninth- or tenth-grade schoolgirl?’ (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 58/1180, l. 36) His report also noted the formalism and boredom of activities organised by the Young Pioneers. Already in 1970, officials responsible for education mentioned that the ‘content and methods of activities of the Pioneer organisations as well as their events are monotonous. Therefore the Pioneers don’t care for them’ (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 58/1180, l. 42).

This insight did, however, not lead to changes in the methods of NSM identity-shaping. As a solution, the subsequent resolution recommended to organise study sessions to explain and propagate materials from the CPSU Congress. It was also suggested to arrange for regular conferences on Marxist-Leninist theory, to hold meetings about the political situation and to supply schools with visual agitation material. Schoolchildren should be encouraged to participate in public activities outside school. For these purposes it was recommended to set up two-stage reviews (*smotr*) for the

activities of Pioneer detachments and regiments (*druzhina*), aimed at fulfilling the mandates defined by the Congress (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 66/1250, l. 23).

In the late 1970s, yet another dominant discourse emphasised the need for ‘a complex approach to the development of the personality’ (*kompleksnyi podkhod k vospitaniiu*), which had been formulated by the XXV Congress of the CPSU in 1976. The core of this new concept consisted in advocating the combination of ideological-political education with labour and moral education of the masses as well as the elaboration of specific approaches for different social groups. It was intended to give labour collectives a greater role in the implementation of these new plans of shaping socialist identity. All these new theoretical visions reflected and supported a trend in the development of Marxist-Leninist theory during the second half of the 1970s towards a concept of ‘developed socialism.’ Soviet commentators interpreted this as a transition from the earlier goal of communist education to create a harmonious personality towards one more adapted to the conditions prevailing in a developed socialist society.

In the local context of Sortavala, *KZ* launched a section entitled ‘Lenin Lesson Continues.’ Local leaders used newspaper space to report on their activity, and articles tried to link Sortavala’s community to the theme of the ‘new unity of the people.’ Indeed, the media played a remarkable role in placing Sortavala into the framework of this new Soviet national identity, all under the leadership of the CPSU. The committee secretary of the primary Komsomol organisation at a local sewing factory thus wrote in June 1978 that in accordance with the decisions taken by the XVIII Congress of the VLKSM, a Lenin Lesson should be held under the banner ‘Always with the Party, Always with the People’ in every Komsomol organisation. Party headquarters set the agenda for Komsomol members: themes for speeches, presentations, papers and room designs. Participants of such events watched the film *The Story of a Communist* (*Povest’ o kommunizme*) and discussed Brezhnev’s memoirs *The Small Land* (*Malaia Zemlia*) and *The Revival* (*Vozrozhdenie*). A propagandist lecturer told his audience about Brezhnev’s efforts to ‘ensure world peace’ (*KZ*, 17 June 1978).

During the Brezhnev years, modernised Soviet society was still seen as the goal of communist propaganda, the main instrument of political education. In the narratives studied, any positive changes and achievements in Soviet society were attributed to the leadership of the Communist Party. Official speeches always started with expressions of gratefulness to the central government, as in the following speech by the local hospital’s medical director held during a session of the town council in 1969.

Comrades, deputies!

All efforts of our Party and of the Soviet government are aimed at transforming the life of the Soviet people in the sense of the founders of scientific communism as well as of our leader and teacher V. I. Lenin. Everything for Mankind, All in the Name of Mankind, this is the motto of our glorious Communist Party (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 54/1133, l. 2).

The quote shows that the main Soviet narratives of political agitation work were a corner stone of the entire system of the education of the masses. After the early years of the Thaw, characterised by the de-institutionalisation of Stalinism, the Brezhnev period

witnessed the institutionalisation of both a new dominant discourse and its competitors (Hopf 2002, 18). A crucial social factor during this period was the continuing role of the intelligentsia as an agent of the discourse of difference. Cinema, literature and theatre presented alternatives to the Stalinist model of Soviet identity which became known to the world outside the Soviet Union.

On the periphery, such as in Sortavala, the dominant discourse prevailed. Local media reproduced the grand narrative promoted by the political elite. The town's party committee, as the main political agency, continued to practice methods typical of NSM identity production in previous decades. In 1978, for instance, the committee regularly held 'conferences on methodology' for political agitators and educators. One of its members, responsible for political propaganda, gave a presentation on 'The rhetoric of political agitation in labour collectives and ways to improve it.' The KGB's local representative lectured on an 'Explanation of the foreign policy of the CPSU as one of the main directions of mass agitation work' during the same conference (KZ, 24 June 1978).

Theoretically, the terms of building a communist society were being revised in the Brezhnev years. In contrast to Khrushchev's promise of the final victory of communism within the present generation's lifetime, this goal was now to be achieved in a more distant future. Implicitly, this meant that the new type of human being associated with it also faced an uncertain future. The soviets were still seen as 'schools of Soviet democracy' and instruments through which NSM was to be educated. Sortavala's local media reflected this political rhetoric of democracy. In 1971, the town council adopted a resolution On the Work of the Executive Committee of the Town Council of the People's Deputies of Sortavala that called upon the executive committee of all local councils 'to safeguard the democratic principles in their work and to give greater importance to their sessions.' It was also recommended that the permanent commissions and the deputies should make greater efforts (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 62/1222, l. 57). Permanent commissions would have to create a community of social interaction, in the sense explained by David Harvey (Harvey 2000: 194). Public activities meant the involvement of local actors in producing a sense of place. However, the Soviet political system did not favour such efforts. The studied documents show contradictions between meanings, ideas, projects and practices.

Soviet political power and the state authorities were working within a framework of spatial hierarchy. Efforts to improve mechanisms of local economic management led the regional political elite to introduce administrative changes. According to David Harvey's (ibid.) argument about the social production of place, such processes of territorialisation are a result of socio-political action. In the early 1970s, Sortavala's administrative boundaries were extended and included henceforth two settlement (*poselok*) and four rural (*selo*) councils.<sup>9</sup> Official narratives of this changing political identity

---

9 In fact, Sortavala experienced several administrative changes in its post-war history. In October 1959, Sortavala, until then directly attached to the regional government of the Republic, was merged with two neighbouring territories of North Ladoga, Lahdenpohja and Pitkäranta, and given the status of a district. This reorganisation was reversed in the early 1970s.

were couched in the phraseology of political rhetoric and legal regulations. The participation of ordinary citizens in the permanent commissions was seen as an approval of socialist democracy.

Another element of this narrative of Soviet political identity were the so-called 'mandates of electors.' The archival material consulted contains tens and even hundreds of such mandates, most of them attached to regular plans for local socio-economic development. In the official discourse, these mandates manifested the democratic nature of the Soviet political system. This rhetoric ignored the absolute power of the CPSU and interpreted the participation of the public and of public organisations in the management of society as one of the main achievements of socialism, thus contributing to shape local identity.

Everyday practices in Sortavala show that these mandates served as instruments to solve socio-economic issues on the local level. The local authorities appealed to the residents' management of socio-economic sectors to improve the low level of trade, the poor quality of public services, poor living conditions, problems encountered in the agricultural sector and other issues. The permanent commissions of the town council arranged meetings in the rural areas surrounding Sortavala to address such questions as the asphaltting of streets, improvements of housing or production shortages in agriculture. In 1972, for instance, a permanent commission reported 'serious shortcomings in cattle-rearing,' noting the poor conditions of cattle-yards and problems with cattle-feeding in the *sovkhos* The Bolshevik (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 67/1260, l. 57).

In the official Soviet discourse, Soviet man was proclaimed a master of life. In reality, involvement of the public in political affairs was largely rhetorical. Even the local nomenklatura had to work within the strictly defined limits imposed by decisions that the party hierarchy had taken. This was even more true of ordinary citizens who acted as volunteers or activists.

During the preparation of a new constitution in the late 1970s, the central power organised so-called 'public debates' of the project, a political manifestation of the identity shifts marked by the new dominant discourse of developed socialism (*razvitoi sotsializm*). While this public debate certainly did not have any impact on the constitutional project defined by the central political elite, it produced renewed interest in the foundations of the Soviet system, particularly through a new vision of the nationalities policy. The draft for the new constitution stated the existence of a new societal unity of the Soviet people, and its ideas were seen as an example for the elaboration of constitutions for the Soviet republics. In Soviet Karelia, the local media contributed to the debate mainly by reproducing the official rhetoric that emphasised the political role of the central Soviet power for development in the region. In an article titled 'We Believe in the Great Future,' an engineer technologist working at the printing house in Sortavala thus wrote:

It is with great interest and approval that the workers of Sortavala are looking at the project of a new constitution for the KASSR, convinced of the glorious path covered by our Karelia together with the entire Soviet people. We see how the work and daily lives of the people have changed. The cultural level of people has risen. An illiterate population on the peripheral area of former Tsarist Russia has been turned into the most avid readers of the world (KZ, 25 May 1978).

Here, Karelia is seen as an integral part of the USSR, its development depending on that of the entire Union. Official narratives often ignored political and economic self-development of the region. The public debate was reduced to a wholesome approval of the new constitution, never raising any real regional or local issues. The shaping of a regional identity was subordinated to the project of constructing a national identity, proof that All-Soviet socio-political processes dominated place-making in Sortavala.

#### ***1-4. Discursive Shifts in the Perestroika Rhetoric***

Gorbachev's reformist discourse was yet another attempt to improve the socialist project. But his new approach to building a Soviet national identity not only referred to Marxism-Leninism but also to universal human values. The policy of glasnost marked the beginning of the de-institutionalisation of NSM. The media received greater freedom to report on problems confronting the Soviet economy and, later on, press freedom extended to political matters. Lastly, the new discourse on Soviet identity was closely tied to Gorbachev's rethinking of foreign policy.

The democratisation characteristic of the perestroika resulted in the involvement of new actors in public life. It was held that the election campaign of spring 1989 for the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union (then the supreme legislative body) should ensure the participation of people from a 'wide democratic social basis.' As a consequence, a new rule stipulated, for example, that a third of the deputies should be elected as representatives of public organisations, such as the Communist Party, Komsomol and the trade unions. This was a radical departure from practices common in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The political rhetoric of the late 1980s also created new forms of 'newspeak.' Newspaper articles were full of new slogans such as the headline 'Perestroika is the Call of Our Time' (*velenie vremeni*). The following quote from a report shows how the secretaries of Sortavala's primary party organisations, during a seminar in June 1986, discussed the way perestroika should affect their organisations:

Acceleration (*uskorenie*) [of social and economic development; A. I.] and perestroika should guide our life and work today. We should direct labour collectives to implement the general policy the Party is pursuing (*general'naia liniia partii*). We should implement acceleration right now in a course of perestroika (*KZ*, 17 June 1986).

Gorbachev and the central elite had indeed called for changes in conducting the work of the Party and of other political organisations. However, the latter had neither the experience nor the will to make independent decisions. They faced uncertainty how to carry out their work on the local level, because until then they had always waited for orders from above.

Numerous examples from the local media illustrate the disorientation perestroika caused in the minds of local Komsomol leaders. One of them admitted how misled political actors were in their attempts to rethink political work. In an article, the first secretary of the town's Komsomol committee noted that the persons in charge of the committee's apparatus did not themselves understand how to break up entrenched views (*lomka ukorenivshikhsia vzgliadov*). At the same time, the author claimed, these tasks required the perfection of work style, forms and methods at the Komsomol (*KZ*,

20 March 1986). Obviously, during the late stages of perestroika, the institutional framework of NSM construction was gradually disappearing because its agents felt completely directionless.

Public narratives were transformed in accordance with the new dominant discourse. As a result, the Komsomol organisations tested new methods of Soviet identity construction. In an article titled 'Perestroika Should Not Be Faked' (*Perestroika, a ne podstroika nad nee*), the secretary of a Komsomol primary organisation at the local furniture and ski combine recognised socio-political certification (*obshchestvenno-politicheskaia ottestatsiia*) as one of these methods, that would allow for an 'effective way to increase the activity of Komsomol members and other young people.' According to the certification procedure, every participant had to carry out Lenin tasks that is specific public work and acceleration targeting the social and economic development of his or her establishment (*KZ*, 17 June 1986). The new narratives, rituals and social practices represented socialisation methods for young people in the local community at this stage of societal development, and it was through these forms of public activities that locality was being reproduced.

All the while, political discourse in the late Soviet period still focussed on improving the system by perfecting existing political institutions. In the late 1980s, the CPSU proclaimed a new course of increasing the political power of councils. The CPSU's Nineteenth Party Conference declared that 'the key direction of political reform is safeguarding the sovereignty of the soviets of people's deputies as a foundation for the socialist state and self-government in this country.'

In contrast to earlier Soviet practice, the narrative constitution of political identity during the late perestroika years brought not only formal but real democratisation to the electoral system, since it was now possible for the first time in Soviet history to choose between several candidates. Pre-election meetings in 1989, which were to nominate candidates for the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union, demonstrated that 'unanimity' was no longer on the agenda. *KZ* commented with enthusiasm on one such meeting taking place at the biggest local factory, SMLK:

There was no unanimous vote during the appointment of candidates. Three candidates have been proposed and discussed at the meeting: Aleksandr S. Dziublik, the director of SMLK; V. Zeziulin, a deputy director, and Vladimir S. Stepanov, the first secretary of the Party's regional committee (*obkom*).

This time, speeches concerning Stepanov were not only positive and laudatory. Many speakers adopted a critical attitude towards him, mentioning problems in the retail sector and shortages of consumer goods for the population. Some participants opposed his candidature. Thus, the long period of formal attitudes and indifference of the electors towards the constitution of state bodies has become a thing of the past. It has been replaced by a conscious approach and active participation in elections on this new basis (*KZ*, 24 January 1989).

Soviet political narratives were indeed dramatically reconfigured during the later years of the perestroika. In the late 1980s, old and new approaches, views and traditions coexisted at the micro-level of political life, too. During pre-election meetings in 1989, for example, the SMLK collective supported the candidature of Vladimir S.

Stepanov, whereas the collective of the *sovkhos* The Bolshevik discussed two candidates, Stepanov and Aleksandr E. Iudov, the leader of a local tenants brigade, and, after a 'democratic discussion,' nominated both men (*KZ*, 3 January 1989). In terms of spatial identity-construction, this meant that local interests and perspectives were now being taken into consideration in political discussions and practices.

Gorbachev and those members of the political elite who supported him wanted to use people's activism to inject enthusiasm into the traditional institutional framework: the Party, the Komsomol and other public organisations. But their plan failed in the end, because these institutions were not ready and there was no real will to change their forms of activity and their methods. A newspaper article titled 'Perestroika in the Komsomol: More Questions than Answers' illustrates this dramatic change in Soviet biographical narratives through the words of an ordinary Komsomol member:

I remember, as schoolchildren and students, we did not like apparatchiks. We could not say this loudly and openly at meetings, but we condemned them among ourselves. We condemned them for their haughtiness and moralism. In the course of perestroika, this haughty view is disappearing. The plenum of the VLKSM's town committee has claimed a new approach: now apparatchiks and ordinary Komsomol members are working together. However, these new norms are hardly implemented in practical work. Komsomol apparatchiks discredit themselves because of their inactivity and unprincipled behaviour (*KZ*, 4 January 1989).

The work of several secretaries of Sortavala's primary Komsomol organisations was criticised in similar terms. Over the last two years, one author noted, five members of the town's Komsomol committee had been expelled from the Party, four of them secretaries of a primary organisation. Therefore, the Komsomol was losing its authority and prestige.

The institutions responsible for NSM identity construction began to lose their importance. The overall number of Komsomol members in the country dropped from 42,000 to 36,000, and the trend continued. In Sortavala, Komsomol organisations lost four hundred members in the late 1980s. Fifteen members were expelled. The female author of the above quoted report attempted to answer the question why Komsomol organisations lost members and found that those who had been asked argued that nobody could give them a reason why they should become a member of the Komsomol (*ibid.*).

Many Komsomol members 'voted' in favour of a permission to 'freely leave' the Komsomol. Political institutions were thus losing their capacity to influence and even initiate people's activities. Their powers gradually shifted towards other political actors, most often informal networks.

In the late 1980s, the local political space experienced dramatic changes. Some local political activists began to believe that the system could be changed and started to criticise the local authorities for their incompetence to carry out their duties. Thus, Aleksandr Iudov, who had finally been elected deputy to the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union, critically pointed out that most electors' mandates (almost 90 per cent) had a 'local character,' that is addressed local needs. In his view, this meant that local councils, or soviets, were therefore unable to fulfil people's primary needs. This clearly represents a shift in the socio-political representation of locality and sense of place.



Political discourse during the later years of perestroika emphasised the importance of grassroots-level political life. In his article 'A Lesson of Democracy,' Aleksandr Iudov stated that as a people's deputy he would work towards the elaboration of a law on local self-government, in which local authorities would be allocated a real share of power. Electors in turn should obtain the right to control councils (*KZ*, 23 March 1989). This statement, made by a local political newcomer, shows a good understanding of what was still a key problem of political life in Russia, namely that local communities continued to lack real power. It also demonstrates that political discourse and media narratives of the late Soviet era were already attempting to shape local territorial identity in new ways.

The deterioration of the social and economic situation resulted in the public adopting a largely negative attitude towards state institutions. In the local context of Sortavala, this political trend reached its apogee in December 1990, when the town council met for its fourth annual session. In his report, V. E. Bogdanov, the chairman of the council, noted the town's grim situation: 'People are not sure whether the work of the local authorities has taken the right direction.' He pointed out that the situation in town depended on 'the tense and uncertain situation of the country as a whole,' explaining that communal services were heavily constrained because of lacking fuel supplies and that the local construction sector was facing increasing problems (*KZ*, 5 January 1991).

In the early 1990s, critical opinions of the political institutions, unheard of in previous decades, became common currency. Deputies were highly critical of the work done by the council's chairman and presidium. As a result of this debate, a decision was taken to abolish the executive committee—a truly historical event. For the first time, deputies openly expressed distrust of the council's leadership, similarly to what was happening on the national level in Moscow. In an interview about the IV Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union, Iudov noted that the Congress has raised the question of lack of confidence in the President of the Soviet Union and that he himself had supported a no-confidence vote, which had however failed to obtain a majority (*KZ*, 16 January 1991).

In practice, the heated debates in the town council ended in changes of the local political personnel. Valery A. Var'ia, a former administration head of the town council, replaced V. E. Dovbnia as chairman of the executive committee. But in a speech made after his election, he pointed out that a decision to abolish the committee would be unconstitutional in the KASSR.

The early 1990s also brought the most visible changes to public narratives. The very foundations of Soviet political rhetoric were being questioned in public debates. During the last months of the Soviet period, in late 1990 and early 1991, the media shifted the focus of their attention towards events in former Soviet national republics. In January 1991, *KZ* reported on the military operations in Lithuania, where Soviet tanks appeared in the streets of Vilnius and a landing force attacked the offices of the republic's radio and TV station and its TV tower, killing Lithuanian civilians in the process. At the centre of the public debate in Sortavala's local newspaper was an article written by one of its readers, 'The (Soviet) Empire Hits Back,' of a clearly anti-Soviet

and anti-Communist character, whose publication obviously was made possible with the support of the newspaper's editorial board. Follow-up articles written by other readers offer evidence, that the publication had found a broad echo within the local community. A group of local residents thus voiced their opinion that the military operations in Lithuania were a threat to 'democracy and freedom' and that 'the future of the country today depends on all of us' (*KZ*, 17 January 1991).

Other local residents, however, supported the central government's policy of 'defending Soviet power' and argued that this was the only way to maintain public order in the Lithuanian republic. So did the local party organisations, which strongly opposed the anti-Soviet views expressed in the pages of the local newspaper. A meeting of the party committee at the SMLK in January 1991 discussing the 'attitude of communists towards the events in Lithuania' thus was reported to have 'condemned the precipitate publication of articles such as the one written by Comrade Kemov,' the author of the initial article. The bureau of the town's party committee was reported to have organised a broader debate of the issue, in which representatives of Sortavala's sixty-five party organisations as well as several military officers, outraged by these anti-military publications, had participated and condemned these anti-Soviet and anti-Communist articles.

In contrast to this, numerous deputies of Sortavala's town council supported the right of the Lithuanian people to decide on its independence, clear evidence that Soviet official discourse was increasingly being overshadowed by new discourses, exemplified by the following reports of speeches made by two deputies.

Already three or four years ago, it was possible to take a decision on Lithuania's independence. At the time the central government could have done it in a bloodless manner. It is hard to believe what is happening now! There is no way to communicate with people through the army. The order to let the combined forces of the militia and the army patrol the streets rings in the last act of the perestroika show. The Army has been turned into an All-Union gendarme (*KZ*, 9 February 1991).

I think it is impossible to use the Army to solve civil issues. It is the right of the Republic of Lithuania and its people to decide whether they should be part of the USSR or not. Moscow should not concern itself with this issue. Only Vilnius, the Lithuanian parliament and the entire population of the republic may decide this (question). My attitude towards the events in Latvia is the same. I believe that Moscow, the Soviet Ministry of Defence and the entire central government, including the President, can be blamed for the bloody events in the Baltic republics (*KZ*, 9 February 1991).

A third deputy even went as far as declaring: 'I believe a dictatorship is coming.' In fact, he predicted only what was going to happen a few months later, in August 1991: 'We are only half a step away from seeing tanks appear in our streets. We are not far from savage reprisals against deputies and ordinary citizens. Our only hope are the people. It is necessary to struggle against a dictatorship' (*ibid.*).

An analysis of the rhetoric deployed in local newspaper articles shows that freedom of speech reached its apogee during the latest stage of the perestroika. On the local level, this period witnessed the most intense criticism of government when compared to both earlier decades and the post-Soviet years of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Parts of the population no longer identified themselves with the official Soviet worldview,

reproducing instead anti-Soviet views of the national press and other national media. Ideological rhetoric in the late 1980s had been contradictory: Soviet ‘newspeak’ was still obligatory, while glasnost led to reformulations of the official language. Thus, in 1986, the secretary of a primary party organisation at a secondary school in Värtsilä wrote an article titled ‘To Raise Patriots of the Homeland’ in which she explained:

Mass public and political events are one form of counter-propaganda. These events make it possible to raise Soviet patriotism among students. We have organised such events, for example a meeting under the banner ‘A Planet without Wars for the Children of the World!’ The event included a competition for producing political posters and the singing of political, military and patriotic songs. Several circles were formed, such as ‘Our Lenin’s Komsomol,’ ‘The Law of Komsomol Life’ and ‘An Introduction for Young People into Communist Morality.’ Communist teachers run these circles. We are looking for new ways to influence the souls of children (KZ, 15 March 1986).

Another article headlined ‘The Celebration of the Pioneer Organisation’ informed readers of the local newspaper that the town’s Young Pioneers were celebrating the anniversary of a Pioneer organisation named after Lenin. Students from every school reported the results of their work. According to the article, Pioneer detachments from Secondary School No. 1 had a rich experience of Pioneer self-administration. Pioneer activities took place outside school as well, such as participation in the Revolutionary March. The newspaper reminded readers that the Pioneer movement had received its directions at the XXVII Congress of the CPSU (KZ, 25 January 1986). This shows that Soviet rituals of representing locality were still common during the early years of perestroika.

Media narratives of the period contained frequent references to everyday life and the individual lives of people, as well as to family and gender values. Significant attention was also being paid to leisure time activities. Discussions about fashion, music and other interests of young people became quite typical for the period. Soviet identity was not seen as the only model of identity. Values perceived as Western made their appearance in the local newspaper, whereas subjects that were obligatory in earlier decades started to disappear. The KZ issue of 22 April 1986 made no mention of the anniversary of Lenin’s birthday, publishing instead an entire page discussing youth culture. Biographical narratives changed as well in these years, as can be seen from the following comment by a 15-year-old girl, reacting to a letter written by another girl:

Imagine a 17-year-old girl who does not like discos and prefers attending a hobby circle (*kruzhok*) instead! She doesn’t like this kind of music. But what does she really want? *Kalinka-Malinka*? [‘Cranberry-Raspberry,’ a reference to the popular nineteenth-century folksong ‘Kalinka’; A. I.] Another reader wrote that boys wearing filets in their hair are imitating Western punks... This is not true. This style has nothing to do with punks. I wear the same filet because it’s fashionable. If you do not believe me, just have a look at *The Fashion* magazine (KZ, 22 April 1986).

This is obviously a critique of clichés that could be found in traditional public narratives of Soviet identity. Young people were bored by dull formal Soviet norms and no longer identified with Soviet values. An interest in Western culture that had long been confined to a tiny social underground suddenly found its way into mainstream media. The subculture appeared in headlines: ‘We Are Waiting for Changes.’ Referring

to a hit by the rock band Kino, the article suggested that a club for young people be created in Sortavala (*KZ*, 5 June 1986). In an article titled 'Punks from Our Town,' the journalist Vladimir Mokienko criticised the Komsomol organisations for offering only formalism and boredom and attempted to win over youngsters to 'our' side:

The behaviour of those rock fans who dress and have hair styles like punks is provocative and aggressive. They are getting drunk and then pay a visit to Helylä and get into fights over there. They make money by selling tapes with rock music and fashionable clothes. They try to be different from the 'grey mass.' But these attempts are clumsy and misplaced. Their membership in the Komsomol is limited to paying their dues. The Komsomol organisations offer them only meetings with a boring agenda or *subbotnik* [voluntary community service on Saturdays; A. I.].

These teenagers have no interest in real business during leisure times. What about the following idea: we have to win them over to our side? We ought to find a business for them. Then they will not be punks anymore, they will be ordinary boys. (*KZ*, 17 May 1986)

Criticism of Western mass culture was an essential part of Soviet public narratives. However, Komsomol organisations had, for instance, been attempting to integrate the disco movement into their activities since the late 1970s. As Soviet pop music could not offer good dance music for clubs, disc-jockeys mainly played recordings of Western music. For Komsomol activists, disco-clubs were a means of involving young people in contemporary music culture and informing them about the latest trends in show business. Disc-jockeys were seen as working hand in hand with the Komsomol to take care of the moral and aesthetic education of the young. As Western pop music was at the same time completely absent from TV channels and magazines, this conveyed something of an informal character to discotheques run by the Komsomol, thus bringing a new impetus to the creation of locality and its meanings through expanding spatial imagination. These grassroots-level alternatives to official cultural initiatives can therefore be interpreted as forerunners of identifications prevalent during the perestroika years.

To sum up, the NSM promoted by CPSU ideologues was an archetypal personality with political, moral and other qualities that were thought to become dominant among all citizens of the USSR. For this to happen, all particular identities (ethnic, gender, social, territorial, etc.) would have to be reshaped to achieve this homogeneous Soviet identity. Communist education based on Marxist-Leninist ideology was to be the main tool employed. According to the official public narrative, stated for example in the first Soviet constitution, a society without antagonist class interests had already been built in the 1930s. Class struggle could only exist in capitalist countries. The state border therefore symbolised a fault line of the struggle that opposed two radically different worlds. As a border town, Sortavala was in the vanguard of this struggle, and its geographical position was one of the main socio-political facets that contributed to its sense of place during the post-war decades, until this spatial identity dramatically changed in the late perestroika years.

Politically, all Soviet citizens ought to have identified themselves with the Communist Party's policies. Articulating and reproducing the official discourses and nar-

ratives produced by the political elite at the highest level was obligatory during the entire Soviet period. At the same time, the educational and cultural development of the population increasingly came to be seen as contradictory with the shortcomings of the country's socio-economic system. Propaganda which stressed the achievements of socialism was confronted with dissatisfaction about the lack of consumer goods in the shops, the low quality of services etc. To many young people, the Western way of life looked more attractive. The more liberal the regime became, the more these contradictions in public narratives and social practices became apparent.

As shown above, the erosion of the Stalinist model of NSM began right after the tyrant's death. Nonetheless, the ambition of creating a new kind of human being was not abandoned. The more recent concept of developed socialism, prevalent in the late 1970s, characteristically produced a discourse that emphasised the new historical social unity of the Soviet people, whose creation was stated to be a new stage in constructing NSM. To implement this goal of creating a communist society, the CPSU defined three main fields of indispensable societal improvement: politics, economics and human personality. Changes of the latter were to be achieved through 'complex education,' a concept specific of the late 1960s and 1970s.

All these ideological mechanisms were only gradually disappearing in the late 1980s, at the height of perestroika. The political rhetoric of local actors in Sortavala echoed the situation in the rest of the Soviet Union. Many residents no longer identified themselves with the Party's policies, some of them even adopting an anti-Soviet stance. While the Communist Party continued to promote its discourse in the media, new forms of political representation were emerging. The formerly monolithic Soviet identity produced in official discourses became a sort of hybrid identity that included both old and new components.

## **2. PATRIOTIC EDUCATION, PARAMILITARY TRAINING AND PEOPLE'S PATROLS: DEFENDING THE SOCIALIST MOTHERLAND**

Military themes were a key element of Soviet identity politics and place-making in Sortavala. Military discourses and practices were, of course, present in many spheres of Soviet everyday life, but were even more obvious in a garrison town located near the Soviet state border, where people wearing the uniform of the Soviet Army or the Border Troops were a common feature of the urban landscape.<sup>10</sup> A division of the 6th Army was stationed in Sortavala<sup>11</sup> and only left in 2001 (*Ladoga*, 2 March 2001; Izotov

---

10 A source of particular interest is the weblog run by former border guards that have served in the North Ladoga area during the Soviet post-war period (see: URL Odnoklassniki.ru web-page 'My iz Sortavala'/'We are from Sortavala'). Its users often publish photographs showing them in uniform.

11 The 6th Army (see e.g. Feskov et al. eds. 2004) was a part of Leningrad Military District (1960–1998). Headquarter of the Army located in Petrozavodsk before it was finally disbanded in a course of the Military reform in 1998 (Boiko, *Karelia* 4.04.2002). The 6th Army listed the 111th Motor Rifle Division, of which the 185th Motorised Rifle Regiment stationed in Sortavala, and several other military units stationed in Lahdenpohja.