

At the Intersections of Nations, Diasporas, and Modernities: North
American Finns in the Soviet Union in the 1930s

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Abstract

In the early 1930s, approximately seven thousand North American Finns, many of whom were born in Canada and the United States, left for Soviet Karelia, an autonomous republic in north-western Russia, bordering on Finland. Through the case study of the Karelian fever (a term by which North American Finnish migration to Soviet Karelia is now known), this work analyzes processes of identity construction at individual, regional, and national levels. My argument is that transnational migrant labour became a means by which diasporic, regional, and national leaders defined and redefined the cultural and political borders of their imagined communities. Whereas the movement of people was physically and psychologically transnational, national and diasporic imaginaries on both sides of the Atlantic were engaged in a perpetual effort to include, and in other instances reject, the cultural, social, economic, and political memberships of these migrants in their communities. The study focuses on a specific community, but transcends geographical boundaries in a period of less than a decade and shows a vibrant, tumultuous historical process of identity formation, both structural and subjective.

In addition to analytical frameworks of nation and diaspora, my work looks at immigrant lives in dissimilar and competing versions of modernity, western capitalism and Soviet socialism. Finns on the move across the Atlantic in the 1920s and the 1930s were transnational agents, who by virtue of their mobility infused elements of western modernization into the Soviet society. As a result, these Finnish migrants who moved across land and sea borders in search of a social, economic, and political haven, became embroiled in the process of modern nation-state construction, but also found themselves within a larger, global contest of alternative modernities, that is between competing notions of what the new subject of the modern nation-state should look like. What follows is a multi-sited ethnographic analysis of the way immigrants' ethnic

identities were forged, and contested in different social contexts and varying levels of scale. In other words, what were the ways by which social spaces such as diasporas (locally), nations (regionally), and modernities (globally) were culturally produced.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overarching Argument

In the early 1930s, approximately seven thousand North American Finns, many of whom were born in Canada and the United States, left for Soviet Karelia, an autonomous republic in northwestern Russia, bordering on Finland. Through the case study of the Karelian fever (a term by which North American Finnish migration to Soviet Karelia is now known), this work analyzes processes of identity construction at individual, organizational, regional, and national levels. My argument is that transnational migrant labor – a subaltern force consisting primarily of nuclear and extended family units on the move in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in search of economic and social security – became a means by which diasporic, regional, and national leaders defined and redefined the cultural and political borders of their imagined communities. Whereas the movement of people was physically and psychologically transnational, national and diasporic imaginaries on both sides of the Atlantic were engaged in a perpetual effort to include, and in other instances reject, the cultural, social, economic, and political memberships of these migrants in their communities. While my study focuses on a specific community, it nonetheless transcends geographical and ethnic boundaries in a period of less than a decade and shows a vibrant, tumultuous historical process of identity formation both structural and subjective.

That said the process of identity construction through the theoretical prisms of imagined communities,¹ imagined geographies,² and imagined futures,³ is not the only focus of this

¹ On the concept of imagined communities, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1991.

² The concept of imagined geographies was developed based on the works of Edward Said, particularly his critique of Orientalism. See, Edward Said, *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 1995.

dissertation. Given that the migratory group and pattern under scrutiny involves analysis of socio-political and cultural discourses of nations outside the western hemisphere, i.e. the Soviet Union, my work looks at immigrant lives in different nation-states, but also in dissimilar and competing versions of modernity, western capitalism and Soviet socialism. The migratory group under investigation – Finns on the move between Canada, the United States, Finland, and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and the 1930s – were transnational agents, who by virtue of their mobility infused elements of western modernization into the Soviet society. As a result, these Finnish migrants who moved across land and sea borders in search of a social, economic, and political haven, became embroiled in the process of modern nation-state construction, but also found themselves within a larger, global contest of alternative modernities, that is between competing notions of what the new subject of the modern nation-state should look like. What follows then is a multi-sited ethnographic analysis of the way immigrants’ ethnic identities were forged, and contested in different social contexts and varying levels of scale. In other words, what were the ways by which social spaces such as diasporas (locally), nations (regionally), and modernities (globally) were culturally produced.

Immigration Historiography

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, a transatlantic movement of previously unseen proportions took place between the European continent and the New World. From 1815 to 1930 about 54 million people left the Old World for the United States, Canada, South America, and Australia.⁴ This transnational movement consisting primarily of peasants and wage workers

³ On imagined futures see Alan Simmons, “Immigration Policy: Imagined Futures”, *Immigrant Canada: Demographic, Economic and Social Challenges*, eds., Shiva Halli and Leo Driedger. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

⁴ Dudley Baines and Economic History Society, *Emigration from Europe, 1815-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

coincided with the rise of modern states, and particularly modern nation-states. In this period, when governments across the Atlantic were engaged in active nation-building, a process involving delineation of the state's political, economic and social contours, the relationship between the state and the individual was taking on new forms. New institutions of power, in particular in the fields of education and culture, aimed to "discipline" the states' new subjects. Imperial and subsequently national imaginaries began to compete with each other by promoting seemingly universal meanings and versions of the modern state and the modern subject. In this context, migrants between Europe and the Americas, who were constantly on the move, became subjects of contention between different visions of nations and modernities. Making headway between national imaginaries and alternative modernities, migrants became agents of change, local to global, but at the same time were subjectified by the regional, national, and imperial conceptions of nations and modernities.

Historiography on North American, or rather transatlantic, migration, as it is known today, has changed significantly in the past fifty years. In many ways the literature on themes of immigration and ethnicity in the North American context has shifted in concert with conceptual and rhetorical changes in the field of social sciences in general. From the 1930s to the 1960s the so-called national building school produced writers who glorified immigration to North America as a flight of desperate and destitute people from the decay that befell the failed European states, and their ascent to the land with a progressive, free, democratic, egalitarian, and in essence, exceptional American society. Perhaps the most celebrated and later the most criticized work⁵ was Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted*. For Handlin, immigrants were desperate, needy, and obedient workers, who constructed cultural institutions against the strange world.

⁵ See Rudolph Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted", *Journal of American History* 5 (December 1964): 404-417.

This historiographical orientation, heavily influenced by political history and the place of the great men in it, gave way in the 1970s and the 1980s to a new wave of historians, practicing in the fields of social and cultural history. Preoccupied with narratives from below, exploring the histories of the subaltern groups in society, such as workers, women, and racial and ethnic minorities, scholars in the field of immigration and ethnicity began to look at the local, rather than the national, at the culture of everyday life, rather than the high culture of the elites.⁶ Although such literature contributed invaluable to the field, nonetheless, the term *immigration* in the North American context still implied a static state of affairs, where it was assumed immigrants never left the New World (or at least did not desire to do so), unless deemed by the state totally unfit for society and were deported to their place of origin.⁷

It was only in the early 1990s that transnational cultural and social history came to complement, as well as challenge national-centered historiographies. Transnational history, although discussed by such historians as Marc Bloch as early as 1928, became a primary target of historical analysis only with the changing international political situation in the late 20th century. In particular, it was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of globalization which

⁶ Discussion of ethnicity and class see, John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*. Bloomington. Indiana University Press, 1985; Roberto Perin and Franc Sturino, eds., *Arrangiarsi: the Italian Immigration Experience in Canada*. Montreal: Guernica, 1989. Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. McGill-Queens University Press, 1992; Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers 1896-1994*. Toronto: M&S, 1995. Discussion on ethnicity and gender see, Varpu Lindstrom, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada*. Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1988; Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994; Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity and Gender in the Labor Movement of Toronto, 1930-1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

⁷ A discussion on Canada's immigration policy throughout the 20th century see, Gerald Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism*. McGill-Queens University Press, 1977; Reg Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987; Barbara Roberts. *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935*. University of Ottawa Press, 1988; Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

prompted some historians to query the effectiveness of nation-states as frameworks of analysis.⁸

In North America, first attempts at transnational and transatlantic immigration history were represented in the writings of Bruno Ramirez, Dirk Hoerder, Walter Nugent, and Rudolph Vecoli.⁹ This transnational approach, although not novel on many levels,¹⁰ revealed a pattern that involved perpetual migration across the Atlantic, rather than one-way immigration, and as a result questioned the whole issue of exceptionalism of American nation-states.

The advent of post-colonial studies, partly based on the works of Frantz Fanon and Jacques Derrida, took critical analysis in the social sciences and humanities to a different level. It emphasized that academics could not examine the dominant (colonial, imperial) and the subaltern knowledge independently, because such an approach inevitably perpetuated these homogeneous entities.¹¹ Instead of colonial-local vertical and horizontal relations, the emphasis now lay with hybrid socio-cultural spaces. Hybridity, which came to stress authenticity in forms of ambiguity, recently became one of the most potent challenges to colonialism, and a mantle for post-colonial academic discourses.¹² In turn, theoretical concepts of “hybridization” made inroads into the field of immigration studies in North America and shifted some of the focus on the migrant’s cultural mixed identity rather than on forces of assimilation. Thus, in addition to

⁸ Ian Tyrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

⁹ See Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy*. Oxford University Press, 1991; Dirk Hoerder, *People on the Move: Migration, Acculturation, and Ethnic Interaction in Europe and North America*. Providence, 1993; Walter Nugent, *The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1914*. Indiana University Press, 1992; Rudolph Vecoli and Suzanne Sinke, *A Century of European Migrations, 1830-1930*. Urbana, 1991.

¹⁰ See Nancy Fonner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York’s Two Great Waves of Immigration*. Yale University Press, 2000, who argues that transnational movement of people and ideas has not changed in the past century or so, but what did change was the technology and the pace with which people now could travel and exchange ideas.

¹¹ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994; Edward Said, *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1978; Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak”, in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds., Carry Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. University of Illinois Press, 1988.

¹² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 113.

exploring the transnational nature of migratory patterns and everyday life, researchers began to re-discover migrants' transcultural, or hybrid identity.¹³

Engaged in post-modern analysis, migration historians have also begun to look at the way the nation-state not simply “oppressed” or exploited the immigrant, but rather how the immigrant, as well as the society at large, were managed through the application of bureaucratic procedures and categories. The advent of modernity, described by many as the rise of liberal democracy and industrial capitalism, can also be seen through the method of social interventionism “by which state officials and nongovernmental professionals sought to reshape their societies in accordance with scientific and aesthetic forms”.¹⁴ Social interventionism, as argued by many theorists, became the defining aspect of modernity.¹⁵ Franca Iacovetta's recent work *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* is reflective of the post-modern literature in that it attempts to examine the way dominant bourgeois and Cold War ideologies, transmitted by the “gatekeepers” – state officials, as well as nongovernmental organizations run by middle class individuals – shaped the immigrant experience, as well as public attitudes towards newcomers.¹⁶

In this equation of transnationalism, post-colonial studies, and modernity, the migrant as a transnational agent comes to play a pivotal role in the history of modern nation-states, and, by

¹³ See Nancy Green, “The Comparative Method and Post-structural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13,4 Summer 1994; *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World*, eds Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.

¹⁴ David Lloyd Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet modernity, 1917-1941*, (Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 7.

¹⁵ See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.; Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. N.Y, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991.

¹⁶ Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2006.

extension, in the construction of alternative modernities.¹⁷ Given the role of the immigrant as a “stranger” who is a person present yet unfamiliar, the society’s undecidable¹⁸ who constantly threatens its borders, he/she becomes an agent of change, a transmitter of ideas, capital, and experience, a local actor, who imposes transformation on national and global scales, while simultaneously being shaped and reshaped by social, cultural, and political forces. While himself/herself an agent of metamorphosis, an immigrant is always, whether willingly or not, at the forefront of national building projects, valued for the necessary economic contributions he/she makes to the host country.

Agency and structure cannot be conceived of as separate from one another, and as a result the immigrant’s identity, whether real or perceived, is often used by the dominant groups in the society to delineate the contours of what they perceive to be the social, cultural, and political norms of that entity. An immigrant’s identity in the public mind is often bestowed with negative imageries. As it is only through “crystallizing and solidifying what they are not, or what they do not wish to be,” can the dominant groups in society assert “what they are, what they want to be, and what they want to be thought as being.”¹⁹ In other words, the creation of the ‘stranger’ – the outsider, or the ‘enemy’, helps to create and define the ‘insider’ or the ‘friends’ in a society.

Karelian Fever Historiography

Until recently the Karelian fever received scant attention in scholarly research. With the exception of Reino Kero’s 1983 monograph²⁰ in the Finnish language, there were but a few

¹⁷ For a discussion on alternative modernities, see *Alternative Modernities*. Edited by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar. Duke University Press, 2001; Bill Ashcroft, “Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-Colonial”, *ARIEL – A Review of International English Literature*, vol 40, no. 3, pp. 81-105.

¹⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, (Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

²⁰ Reino Kero, *Neuvosto-Karjalaa rakentamassa: Pohjois-Amerikan suomalaiset tekniikan tuojina 1930-luvun Neuvosto-Karjalassa* [Building Soviet Karelia: North American Finns as the Introducers of New Technologies in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s] (Helsinki: SHS, 1983).

memoirs in Finland and North America on the subject.²¹ In the Soviet Union, a few related academic articles appeared in the 1960s.²² However, written in the Soviet historical paradigm, they viewed immigration of North American Finns to Soviet Karelia in terms of world proletarian solidarity with the USSR, and failed to address other central features of the movement, let alone provide a discussion about the tragic fate of the immigrants.²³

It was only in the late 1980s, when social and political changes were sweeping the Soviet Union that people in Karelia began to speak on themes previously considered taboo in the public realm. Varpu Lindstrom, a Canadian academic and one of the pioneer researchers in the field, recalled that on her trip to Soviet Karelia in 1989, she heard a story of a man whose grandfather witnessed the shooting of several men by NKVD (People Commissariat of Internal Affairs) agents in the late 1930s, but kept the story a secret within the family. Fifty years later his grandson decided to share this story, which led to the uncovering of a mass grave at Sandarmoch, where many of the bodies found were those of North American Finnish immigrants.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of previously restricted archives, research on the topic was launched on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁴ However, it was only in the

²¹ See Kaarlo Tuomi, "The Karelian Fever of the Early 1930s: A Personal Memoir," *Finnish Americana*. Vol. 3 (1980), 61–75; Christer Boucht, *Karjala kutsuu* [Karelia calls] (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1988); Sylvia Hokkanen, and Laurence Hokkanen with Anita Middleton, *Karelia: A Finnish-American Couple in Stalin's Russia, 1934–1941* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1991); Ernesti Komulainen, *A Grave in Karelia* (New York: Braun Brumfield, 1995).

²² Andrei Andriainen, "Zamechatelnyi primer internatsionalnoi solidarnosti [A formidable example of international solidarity]," *Voprosy istorii KPSS* [Problems of history of the CPSU] (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press, 1968), 87–101; Andrei Andriainen, "Dvizheniie proletarskoi solidarnosti zarubezhnykh finskikh trudiashchikhsia s Sovetskoi Kareliei [Movement of proletarian solidarity between Finnish workers abroad and Soviet Karelia]," in *50 let Sovetskoi Karelii* [Fifty years of Soviet Karelia] (Petrozavodsk: Karelia, 1969), 180–198.

²³ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, Golubev, Alexey and Irina Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado: Finnish Immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s*. University of Manitoba Press, 2014.

²⁴ On early accounts of the Karelian fever see Varpu Linstrom and Borje Vahamaki, "Ethnicity Twice Removed: North American Finns in Soviet Karelia," *Finnish Americana*, vol 9 (1992), pp. 14-20; Alexis Pogorelskin, "New Perspectives on Karelian Fever: The Recruitment of North American Finns to Karelia in the Early 1930s", *Journal of Finnish Studies*, vol.1, no. 3 (1997), pp. 165-178; Michael Gelb, "Karelian Fever: The Finnish Immigrant Community During Stalin's Purges", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol.45, no.6 (1993), pp. 1091-1116; Auvo Kostiaainen,

2000s that research assumed an international character, born in the collaborative initiatives among scholars in Canada, the United States, Finland, and Russia. By sharing invaluable information and experience, academics approached the topic through an international perspective, which allowed them to delve into domains of global, national, regional and local histories, through the case study of the Karelian fever.²⁵

However, the majority of these accounts, in tandem with the broader trend within immigration and ethnic history, are still being written in the context of national historiographies with powerful celebratory and filiopietistic narratives. Historians' ethnic background, political views and ideological creeds often dictate the nature of their work. North American Finnish migration to the Soviet Union is treated as a fiasco, given its tragic outcome and the high rate of return. Researchers in the west tend to analyze these "extraordinary" immigrants' lives against the "backwardness" of Soviet society. Two refreshing accounts of the Karelian fever are recent works by Nick Baron, "Constructing Immigrant Identities in Stalinist Russia", and by Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala *In Search of Socialist Eldorado*. Baron argues that the structural approach to studying the Karelian fever and its preoccupation with climate and landscape is outdated given that it provides an account of a tale structured in binary oppositions: "the honesty

"The Finns of Soviet Karelia as a Target of Stalin's Terror", *Ethnic and National Issue in Russian and East European History*. Selected Papers from the Fifth Congress of Central and East European Studies. Warsaw 1995, edited by John Morrison, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 214-219. Mayme Sevander, *Red Exodus: Finnish American Emigration to Russia*. Duluth: Oscat, 1993. Mayme Sevander, *They Took My Father: A Story of Idealism and Betrayal* (Minneapolis: Pfeiffer-Hamilton, 1991). И.Р. Такала "В поисках Ельдорадо: Североамериканские Финны в Довоенной Карелии." [In Search of Eldorado: North American Finns in Interwar Karelia] *Вопросы Истории Европейского Севера: Международный сборник научных статей*. Петрозаводск 1991.

²⁵ Cooperation began in 2004 in Thunder Bay, Canada, followed by a conference in Eskilstuna, Sweden in 2006, and Petrozavodsk, Russia in 2008. It produced three collections, which became an important contribution in the field: Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin (eds.), *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era* (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2004); Ilya Solomeshch and Irina Takala (eds.), *North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s* (Petrozavodsk, Petrozavodsk State University Press, 2008); Markku Kangaspuro and Samira Saramo (eds.), *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, a special double issue of *Journal of Finnish Studies*, vol. 15, No. 1&2 (November, 2011).

of the immigrants versus the corruption and thievery of the native Russians, industry versus idleness, cleanliness versus dirt, organization versus chaos, self-assertion versus subjugation of the self, ultimately democracy versus tyranny.”²⁶ These accounts lapse into simplistic determinism, which at times are racist and clearly demonstrate writers’ prejudice on the subject.²⁷ In turn, Golubev and Takala’s work is a balanced account of migrants’ everyday experiences in this Soviet border region with a long history of cross-border contact and conflicts, characterized by the interconnectedness of local ethnicities, cultures, and bureaucracies.²⁸

So far, researchers in the field approached the Karelian fever from national and diasporic perspectives. Researchers in the west lament the exodus as a tragedy, while Russian academics note the invaluable contributions immigrants made to Soviet Karelian economy and culture. A common theme that unites all researchers is the question of the causes of migration. Were those immigrants ardent socialists given the fact that they chose the Soviet Union as their new home? Was Karelia’s proximity to Finland an important factor in immigrants’ decisions to move? Or was it the Great Depression in the west and the availability of work in the Soviet Union that made migration an attractive option for American and Canadian workers and their families? Although a balanced answer will account for the majority of historiographical versions, economic factors were most important in making several thousand immigrants relocate to a different country, continent, and live under an alternative form of political and economic governance.

²⁶ Nick Baron, “Constructing Immigrant Identities in Stalinist Russia” *Explorations in Theory and Practice* *Integrating: Journal of Dialogic Anthropology*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2000.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Golubev, Alexey and Irina Takala, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado: Finnish Immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s*.

Accounting for its causes, Lindstrom explains the Karelian fever primarily in economic²⁹ terms. She stresses that the Great Depression had severe economic and socio-political repercussions on the immigrant communities. In particular, it negatively affected those Finnish immigrants who arrived on the eve of the economic depression in the 1920s. Immigrants from this cohort were first to be laid off work and the last to get rehired.³⁰ They were also the first to sail off to Karelia. The economic turmoil led to increased unemployment, poverty, nativist intolerance and, thus, a general sense of vulnerability and despair among new settlers.³¹ Lindstrom concludes that by the early 1930s, driven by economic insecurities and persecuted by the state for association with communist organizations, many Canadian Finns found migration to Karelia an attractive change of scenery.

Other writers emphasize ideological forces as the stimulus for the out migration. Mayme Sevander, who immigrated to Karelia with her parents at a young age, and whose father was one of the leading recruiters of American Finns to Karelia, has consistently stressed in her books that the ideology of utopian communism and North American Finnish roots in communist and socialist organizations were the primary factors that propelled the Karelian exodus. Essentially, Sevander suggests that Finns' decisions to emigrate were dictated by the prospects of socialism in Karelia rather than by availability of gainful employment.³² In defense of her argument Sevander mentions several wealthy individuals, who despite their relative socio-economic

²⁹ On economic causes of migration see, Evgeny Efremkin, Карельский проект или карельская лихорадка? ('Karelian Project or Karelian Fever?'), [Ученые записки Петрозаводского Государственного Университета] (*Academic Notes of Petrozavodsk State University: Social Sciences and Humanities*), N.3 (95) October 2008. The rise and decline of the Karelian fever coincided with the advent and passing of the Great Depression in North America.

³⁰ Varpu Lindstrom, "The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression" in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*, edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin, (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004), p. 17.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mayme Sevander, *Skitaltsi (Wanderers)*, (Petrozavodsk: PetrGU, 2006).

security in North America, nonetheless, opted for a new life in the first workers' state.³³ In her book *Skitaltsi* she attributes the Karelian fever to what she terms "ideological fanaticism."³⁴

Oiva Saarinen, an expert on Finnish settlements in the Sudbury area in Northern Ontario, considers specific regional factors that accelerated the emigration flow. For example, Aato Pitkanen, the hero of Lindstrom's *Letters From Karelia* project³⁵, was impelled to leave by the alleged murder of two Canadian Finnish union leaders in Thunder Bay in 1929. Saarinen stresses that causes of the Karelian fever are to be found in the mixture of economic and ideological paradigms that affected Finnish Canadian workers. He suggests that Canadian Finns were not exposed to radicalism by simple communist or socialist agitation, but rather that radicalization occurred in response to the inhumane working condition these immigrants faced during the Great Depression.³⁶ In other words, ideology served merely to reinforce and rationalize radicalism, otherwise created by harsh working conditions and fostered by the economic crisis.

Scholars in the field also tend to stress the centrality of culture and nationalism in the Karelian exodus. Susan Harris points out that those new Finnish immigrants were never able to understand the American concept of the individual vis-à-vis the group.³⁷ Harris describes Finns as trees on a hill that stand separately, but whose roots are interwoven beneath the earth. In other words, writes Harris, "Finns as a people were more important than any individual within the group."³⁸ As a result, many Finns sensed that the American dream evaded them. Socialism and

³³ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Directed by Kelly Saxberg *Letters from Karelia*, a documentary about an idealistic Finn who went to Soviet Karelia is based largely on Varpu Lindstrom's research on the Karelian fever.

³⁶ Oiva Saarinen and Gerry Tapper, "Sudbury in the Great Depression: The Tumultuous Years" in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*, edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin, (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004), p. 55.

³⁷ Susan Harris, *Nilo's Journey: Finnish American Migration to the Soviet Union in the 1930s*, (M.A. Thesis, Norwich University, April 2000), p. 246.

³⁸ Ibid.

cultural group identity better fitted their needs. Finns felt rejected by America. At the same time, ethnic pride and national identity lay at the heart of invitation to Karelia. Karelia's leaders, Edward Gylling and Kustaa Rovio made an offer that many North American Finns could not refuse.³⁹ Irina Takala writes that for North American Finns Karelia was almost Finland, almost home. Thus, she suggests, "continuing the search for the lost paradise was utterly natural for those who had previously tried to find it but failed."⁴⁰ America simply could not replace the motherland, especially in times of economic crisis.⁴¹

For Borje Vahamaki, North American Finns were driven to leave for Karelia for a multitude of reasons.⁴² Many left because of discrimination in the labor force and political persecution. Others were captivated by communist ideological fanaticism and strove to build a workers' paradise in the Soviet Union. Yet others felt that the "land of opportunity" failed them, and they undertook a quest for their fortune elsewhere. Geographical and cultural proximity to Finland, as well as a share in the stocks of the first workers' state were the factors that appealed to depression-stricken Canadian and American Finns.

Alexis Pogorelskin points out that the Soviet executive decision to officially recruit North American Finns for labor and settlement in Karelia had a more profound impact on the patterns of migration than did any of the North American domestic push factors. Pogorelskin argues that three major groups were highly interested in recruiting North American Finns to work and settle in Karelia. First, there were Kremlin leaders who, following the launch of Stalin's first Five-Year

³⁹ Susan Harris quotes Alexis Pogorelskin in *Nilo's Journey: Finnish American Migration to the Soviet Union in the 1930s*, p. 254.

⁴⁰ Irina Takala, "From the Frying Pan into the Fire: North American Finns in Soviet Karelia" in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*, edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin, (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004), p. 109.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Borje Vahamaki, 'Memoir Accounts of Finnish North Americans in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s', in Irina Takala and Ilya Solomeshch (ed.), *North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s*. Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press 2008.

Plan in 1928, sought to exploit Karelia's lumber resources by bringing skilled workers into the republic. Second, there were the leaders of Karelia, Gylling and Rovio, who since the October Revolution tried to preserve Karelia chiefly Finnish in social and cultural forms.⁴³ When the ethnic makeup of the republic was threatened with an influx of Russian speaking workers after 1928, Gylling lobbied the Kremlin to recruit skilled Finnish workers from North America. He aimed to satisfy the Kremlin's demands for rapid industrialization of Karelia and, at the same time, bolster Karelia's Finnish heritage. Given the permission to bring in foreign workers, Gylling and Rovio employed Matti Tenhunen in the United States and John (Jussi) Latva in Canada to carry out the recruitment of North American Finns and arrange their transportation to Karelia.

This third group had a largely financial motivation to send Canadians and Americans to the Soviet Union. Pogorelskin argues that Tenhunen and Latva treated the recruitment process as a business, i.e. they were the padrones of the Finnish immigrant communities. They made personal fortunes through the commissions they received for each recruited worker. Moreover, they allegedly misused workers' collective funds, such as the Machine Fund, collected by emigrants for the industrialization of Karelia. In essence, Pogorelskin suggests that without the above mentioned interest groups and the particular political and economic developments within the Soviet Union, the Karelian Exodus would not have been possible.

Writers such as Markku Kangaspuro and Peter Kivisto concentrate on the Soviet economy and politics in attempts to explain the Karelian exodus. Just like Pogorelskin, they

⁴³ Alexis Pogorelskin, "Communism and the Co-ops: Recruiting and Financing the Finnish-American Migration to Karelia" in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*, edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin, Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004.

argue that the main impetus for migration came from the Soviet Union and Karelia in particular, rather than being generated as a spontaneous action in North America. Kivisto points out that the decision to emigrate was “carefully orchestrated by Soviet officials.”⁴⁴ Kangaspuro argues that the “Karelian Project” would not have materialized without the approval from the Kremlin. In order to understand the Soviet decision to bring in foreign skilled workers, one must explore the tenures of Soviet economy Karelia’s national politics.

Kangaspuro suggests the Soviet economic depression that occurred in 1927-1928 resulted in fractured relations between Soviet authorities in Moscow and the peripheral autonomous regions such as Karelia. Moscow began to undermine Karelia’s autonomy in 1927 when it took over the timber company Karelles, the largest trust of Karelia’s government.⁴⁵ By 1930, Karelia’s budgetary autonomy was already non-existent, although politically Karelia’s governors still wielded considerable power. Moscow’s intention to centralize economy and governance reflected a common pattern in Russian/Soviet history in times of crisis.⁴⁶ Consolidation of economic and political authority began in 1927-1928 with the Five-Year Plan; in the process it was used by Moscow to accuse republics in separatism in the mid-1930s. Such an approach eventually led to the cleansing of the Karelian state apparatus and to the political persecution of Karelia’s Finnish population.

The Soviet depression resulted in labor shortages and hunger waves. Karelia's economy was not in a condition to meet the industrial quotas set by the Five-Year Plan. According to

⁴⁴ Peter Kivisto and Mika Roinila, “Reaction to Departure: The Finnish American Community Responds to “Karelian Fever” in Irina Takala and Ilya Solomeshch (ed.), *North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s*. Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press 2008.

⁴⁵ Markku Kangaspuro, “The Soviet Depression and Finnish Immigrants in Soviet Karelia” in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*, edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin, (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004), p. 133.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Moscow's calculations, Karelia had to employ 101,000 seasonal workers by 1931 to meet the production requirements.⁴⁷ Gylling argued that 15,000 skilled permanent workers could be as efficient as 101,000 seasonal workers demanded by Moscow.⁴⁸ For these reasons, although not for these reasons alone, Gylling lobbied Moscow, and Moscow agreed for a plan to bring 10,000 skilled workers from North America.

Alternative Modernities

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of globalization, scholars had shifted the focus from the discussion of modernity – a singular universal model of western development – to debates about alternative modernities, the non-western reaction to modern forces of industrialization and urbanization. Modernity spans the entire symbolic, political, and economic universe; it is about the relationship between power, society and the subject. With the advent of industrialization, and agricultural and political revolutions, which rocked Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, a period of construction of “modern” states was underway. In the process, fundamentally changed was the relationship between the state and the person, where the state aimed to make its people into subjects.⁴⁹ New modern institutions of power were erected and, in part, they aimed to discipline the population, in the process cultivating a productive labor force. Through education and cultural enlightenment the modern state strove to create the kind of subject that internalizes and appropriates values, norms, and perspectives of power, which in turn takes on the function of subject formation.

The concept of alternative modernities emerged in reaction to western capitalist modernity. It implies with it different conceptions of ideologies and frameworks of thinking; all

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 135.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See Michel Foucault on “subjectification”, and Karl Marx on “false consciousness.”

related to the question of what the modern state and the modern subject should look like. Without question, all political modernities, namely the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracies, and capitalist enterprise, have their roots in the intellectual and theological traditions of Europe.⁵⁰ Although classical theorists of modernization – Marx, Webber, Durkheim – predicted that one type of modernity would engulf the rest of the world, this turned out to be not the case.⁵¹ Authors such as Francis Fukuyama systematically contribute to the discourse of capitalist modernity as an inescapable conceptional option before humanity. In an infamous 1989 essay “The end of History?” he argued that the “triumph of the west, of the western *idea*, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism.”⁵² Cultural analysis however, has demonstrated that while modernity was diffused from the west, usually by ways of colonization and imperialism, new forms of modernity developed around the world, typically predicated on specific local contexts.

The advent of alternative modernities into the study of Soviet history prompted many to interrogate the received intellectual constructs such as modernity.⁵³ Historians began to question the ways different societies responded to industrialization and urbanization by looking at key elements such as forms of expertise, material and institutional apparatuses, norms, values, and different forms of labor organization. A cultural approach to modernity also allowed the examination of local agency, and the way it appropriated, adapted and transformed differing forms of political and socio-economic modernity.⁵⁴ The presence of North American Finns in the

⁵⁰ See Samuel N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus*, Winter 2000; 129, 1.

⁵¹ Eisenstadt argues that the progress of modernization revealed that “modernity” could not be equated to “westernization” or “Europeanization.”

⁵² See Francis Fukuyama, “The end of History?” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

⁵³ See Mkhia Harbans, “Alternatives to Modernity or Multiple Modernities – what else?” *Pakistan Perspectives* July-Dec: 1-10.

⁵⁴ *ibid*

Soviet Union presents an opportunity, as we will see, to study the convergent points of alternative modernities, as embodied and expressed by immigrants themselves on the move across national boundaries.

As Michael David-Fox notes, the discussion around alternative modernities divided the English-language Soviet and Russian historians in the west into two camps and dominates the historiographical discussion in the field.⁵⁵ While both the “modernity group,” espoused by the likes of Stephen Kotkin and David Hoffman, and the “neo-traditionalists”, led by Sheila Fitzpatrick, agree that the Soviet Union presented an alternative form of modernity, the latter group rejects comparison between liberalism and communism.⁵⁶ Discussion of any type of Soviet modernity implies a discussion of a “shared modernity” with the west, which neo-traditionalists deny. There was nothing shared according to them, as it was distinctive – Stalinist. The “modernity group,” on the other hand, is convinced of the shared characteristics between western and soviet modernities. In some way neo-traditionalists espouse a certain parallel of a *sonderweg* thesis in German Historiography – applicable to Russian history it is the *osobiy put'* (a special path) historical development.⁵⁷

In the west modernity was at the center of social scientific research throughout the cold war. Since the 1990s, academics have also begun to grapple with the concept of alternative modernities, and its significance in western modern history. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, a renowned

⁵⁵ Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History,” *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropasm*, Bd. 54. H. 4. 2006.

⁵⁶ For discussion of Soviet modernity see, David Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*. Cornell University Press, 2003; Stephen Kotkin, “Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture,” *Kritika Explorations in Russian and Euroasian History* 2 (2001) No. 1, pp. 111-164; Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Introduction,” *Stalinism: New Directions*. Ed Sheila Fitzpatrick. New York: Routledge, 2000; Peter Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: the Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” Amir Weiner ed., *Modernity and Population Management*, (Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 19-45.

⁵⁷ Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History.”

American sociologist and anthropologist is often credited with coining the term in the late 1980s. Since the publication of “Early Modernities” and “Multiple Modernities” in *Daedalus* in 1998 and 2000 respectively, the term multiple, the alternative, and entangling modernities spread all across the social sciences.⁵⁸ In general, the alternative modernity paradigm counterpoises Francis Fukuyama’s concept of the “end of history” and is at odds with the modernization literature of the postwar era which equated modernization with westernization and Europeanization. However, although proponents of alternative modernities conceptual frameworks argue that it allows one to understand the contemporary world as a story of “continual development and formation, constitution and reconstitution of multiple, changing and often contested and conflicted modernities,”⁵⁹ many historians in fact tend to slide back into grand national narratives, masking extreme forms of cultural relativism in alternative modernity language.

For example, in a collection of articles of the edited 2002 volume *Globality and Multiple Modernities: Comparative North American and Latin American Perspectives*, scholars came together to adapt the discussion of alternative, or multiple modernities to the Americas. In the end result, most of the alternative modernities described in the volume become nationally oriented, although the editors suggest this to be merely a coincidence. According to Dougals Francis for example, for Harold Innis, the nation, civilization, and modernity were essentially all the same:

This essay explores the ideas of Harold Innis only, looking at his ideas on modernity and civilization through an analysis of his views on how Canada evolved within Western civilization and yet emerged, as he believed, with its own version of that civilization – what Innis referred to as a “Canadian civilization,”

⁵⁸ See *Daedalus. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 129-1 (2000): *Mutliple Modernities*; *Daedalus. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 127-3 (1998): *Early Modernities*.

⁵⁹ Shmuel Eisenstadt, Jens Riedel and Dominic Sachsenmaier, “The Context of the Multiple Modernities Paradigm,” *Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese and Other Interpretations*, eds Dominic Sachsenmaier and Jens Riedel, (Boston: Brill, 2002), p, 2.

one that was different not only from the European but also from the American version of civilization.⁶⁰

The reconstitution of the national building school is also accompanied by the reconfiguration of history from above. As Louis Roniger and Carlos Waisman note in the aforementioned volume: “the social models and transformation institutionalized in these regions were the direct result of explicit *political* and *intellectual* [my italics] projects carried out by the *intellectual* and *political* [my italics] elite. These trends shaped the distinct institutional patterns that set out American societies apart from each other and from the metropolis in relation to which they constructed their early identities.”⁶¹ This is not far off from the history of the great men approach. The role of the masses, agency, and many other key elements established in the field of bottom-up social history of the 1970s and the 1980s is seemingly brushed aside. Ignored are the unintended consequences of the grand plans of the political and intellectual elites, the in-betweenness, and the dialectical relationships between the actions of the elites and the masses.

While the multiple modernities paradigm provides social scientists with an indispensable framework to analyze the points of convergence in modern history, the addition of a transnational approach to multiple modernities will allow researchers to stay away from returning to the archaic ways of considering national history as the epitome of the past, the present, and the future. There are detectable links between the debates about alternative modernities in Soviet historiography and the discussion of multiple modernities in the Americas’ context. Indeed, writers, such as Douglas Francis, Louis Roniger, and several other contributors

⁶⁰ Douglas Francis, “Modernity and Canadian Civilization: The Ideas of Harold A. Innis,” *Globality and Multiple Modernities: North American and Latin American Perspectives*. Eds Louis Roniger and Carlos Waisman (Sussex Academic Press, 2002), p. 215.

⁶¹ Louis Roniger and Carlos Waisman, “Approaching Multiple Modernities in the Americas,” *Globality and Multiple Modernities: North American and Latin American Perspectives*. Eds Louis Roniger and Carlos Waisman, (Sussex Academic Press, 2002), p. 2.

to this new field may be labeled neo-traditionalists who see the United States, English Canada, Quebec, Brazil, etc. as having their own *osobiy put'* to modernity. We in fact may be witnessing the re-affirmation of *sonderwegs*, *staple theses*, *frontier theses*, and the advent of new special paths to nationally oriented historiographies.

The present study considers alternative modernities as conditioned by radically different economic and political ideologies, and the entangling relations between them made possible by the transnational movement of information and human capital. Mary Nolan for example has demonstrated that Weimarian Germany played with the ideas of adopting both Americanism and Soviet models.⁶² One was not exclusionary of the other as it might have seemed. Nolan shows that for many politicians in Germany, Americanism offered technological and organizational innovations that were considered compatible with socialism. If modernities, as the present study tries to argue, were in fact entangling in their connections between Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union, then the concept of alternative modernities – as alternative forms of economic and political governance, rather than as thinly veiled culturally conditioned differences between nations such as the United States and Canada – must also be placed at the center of contemporary debates in Canadian history.

There are numerous studies on the structural changes inflicted on societies and nations from above as a result of the importation of foreign experience and technology. For example, Marc Raeff analyzed the way the Petrin state in the 18th century imported 17th century central European cameralism – the German science of administration into Russia.⁶³ On the other hand,

⁶² See, Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁶³ See Marc Raeff, “The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 80 (5) Dec, 1975.

there are very few studies⁶⁴ that concentrate on the structural changes immigrants inflicted on societies from below, or from the “side”. North American Finnish immigrant experience on both sides of the Atlantic forms the foundation for the present transnational paradigm approach to the study of entangling, or converging modernities. The movement of migrants between differing modernities brought significant changes to both societies. Immigrants in this way become the protagonists in the story of entangled modernities.

The fact that migrants, as agents of one particular modernity, could profoundly shape entire socio-economic and political discourses of another body politic, in many ways empowers the individual migrant as an agent in history. North American Finns enjoyed a privileged status in the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s and the first part of the 1930s primarily as a result of Soviet leaders’ propensity to import the best features of bourgeois modernity to industrialize the agrarian state and enlighten Lenin’s “semi-Asiatic” masses. However, by the mid-1930s, when Soviet socialism and the Soviet culture were declared superior,⁶⁵ North American Finns’ fortunes reversed, and during the purges “those previously treasured foreign contacts generated waves of xenophobic terror and mass physical annihilation.”⁶⁶ The rejection of certain elements of western modernity partially accounts for the demise of the North American Finnish communities in Soviet Karelia by the late 1930s – the point where the present story ends.

⁶⁴ For an example of an alternative account of Canadian history see Dirk Hoerder, *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada*, McGill University Press, 2000. This work is most important in the way it deconstructs the Canadian myth of a dichotomy between national unity and ethnic diversity. Instead, Hoerder emphasizes the long-standing complex relationship and interaction between members of different ethnic groups in Canada.

⁶⁵ Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History.”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 540.

Migration and Modernity

Migration is a fundamental process that shapes human communities, social structures, and polities. It diffuses material, spiritual, political, social and economic culture wherever, whenever and whoever it comes in contact with.⁶⁷ Globalization and migration are interdependent phenomena. Migration of human capital and experience began several centuries ago; however in the context of migration and modernities, we could signal the 18th century as the start of modern globalization. We in fact can explain this modern globalization, which partially resulted from recent transnational and transoceanic migration of human capital and experience, in terms of multiplicity of its modernities.⁶⁸ Globalization then can be seen as a process of a diffusion of western modernities and its encounters and its dialogue with its alternative forms. In other words, modernity is diffused by migration of human capital, ideas and experience, is in turn adapted and recreated in the local context. The effect of migration on modernities brings to the fore the question of the local versus the global, of the fluid interaction between the two, of the process of localization and hybridization, which in turn produce new forms of social relations. The Soviet experiment is indeed a distinct moment in the history of modernity and is perhaps the best case study for alternative modernity.

Although Soviet history, in particular under Stalin, is usually considered an anomaly in the history of the western world, on a par with that of Hitler's Germany, there are too many similarities between western capitalist modernity and socialist soviet modernity. Historiographies using solely national frameworks are impotent to explain trends both local and global, aside the

⁶⁷ See, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar. "On Alternative Modernities," *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar. Duke University Press, 2001. Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," *Alternative Modernities*, ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar. Duke University Press, 2001.

⁶⁸ Bill Ashcroft, "Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-Colonial," *A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 40 (1), 2009.

context of international relations. They are also futile when it comes to the analysis of different frameworks of modernities, and the way alternative ways of thinking shape and reshape alternative global societies. Alternative modernities help us to explain forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation state.⁶⁹ The present study aims to demonstrate the way local and global are interconnected, often to a degree where separation is impossible. The local no longer can be discarded, and its dialogue with modernity is in fact what constitutes alternative modernities. As Roland Robertson suggests, the term “glocalization” better depicts the relationship between the local and the global as one of interaction and interrelation. It makes no sense to define the global as if it excludes the local.⁷⁰

Interrelation between the local and the global is then best exemplified through the process of migration and is so diverse and intense that it becomes difficult to pinpoint agency to individual actors, who become both subjects and objects of multiple modernities.⁷¹ In the process of migration, actors find themselves in between states and modernities, or “in between the positives by which subjectivity is normally constituted.”⁷² Migration process is the inbetweenness moment in the history of identity of actors, the diaspóra, and the state, where all three are constituted and reconstituted through the process of adoption, adaptation, and reformulation. The movement of people thus affects the formation of diasporas, states, and modernities. To better understand the processes that underline the formations and practices of modern day states and

⁶⁹ Simon Gikandi, “Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100 (3) 2001.

⁷⁰ Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” *Global Modernities.*, eds Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Rolands Robertson, (London: Sage, 1995).

⁷¹ See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford University Press, 1990.

⁷² See Bill Ashcroft, “Beyond the Nation: Post-Colonial Hope,” *The Journal of the European Association of Studies on Australia*, Vol. 1, 2009, p. 14.

diasporas, one must make sense of the movement of human capital and experience across national borders.

On the Move: Finnish Migrants in Transnational Currents

Contemporary transnational theory holds that transmigration is a recent phenomenon dating back to the 1980s. It involves an ongoing transnational movement, made possible by the rapid improvements in communication and transportation over the past several decades, where the forces of globalization are undermining the powers of the nation state. The theory relegates old patterns of migration to a type of directed movement with a point of departure and point of destination. Several scholars, however, have convincingly demonstrated that transnationalism is not a novel phenomenon and has historical precedents.⁷³ In tandem with these findings, my study orbits around a group of migrants who in the first three decades of the 20th century continuously moved between Finland, Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The fact that this movement was transnational explains the absence of its comprehensive story from the annals of North American and European national historiographies.

Between the 1860s and the 1920s approximately 375,000 Finns migrated to the United States (315,000) and Canada (60,000).⁷⁴ At the turn of the 20th century, Finnish economic development caught between its traditional agricultural economy, demographic metamorphosis, and the advent of industrial capitalism, destabilized long established social structures. Nearly 70

⁷³ See Nancy Fonner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*. Yale University Press, 2000; Donna Gabaccia and France Iacovetta, editors. *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers in the World*. Buffalo, N.Y: University of Toronto Press, 2002; Dirk Hoerder, "From Euro-and Afro-Atlantic to Pacific Migration System: A Comparative Migration Approach to North American History" in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, University of California Press, 2012.

⁷⁴ Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement or Return: Finnish Emigrants (1860-1930) in the International Overseas Return Migration Movement*, (Helsinki, 1979), p. 162.

percent of Finland's population at the time still made their living through agriculture.⁷⁵

Furthermore, between 1810 and 1870, the population of the Grand Duchy of Finland had doubled, from 863,000 to 1,770,000.⁷⁶ The rise in production of cash crops for the market rather than for subsistence, coupled with outdated legislation that demanded the land not be divided among children, made migration from rural areas to towns and cities in Finland and abroad inevitable. Economic fluctuations on global, regional and local scales, coupled with initiatives in the United States and Canada to recruit labor and populate its uninhabited lands, resulted in a mass transatlantic movement of Finnish farmers and workers to North America. Initially, few migrants intended to stay and, as sojourners in the classical sense, intended to return to Finland. However, for a myriad of reasons, including marriage, job security, availability of land, inability to pay for a return trip, familial ties, or fearing the embarrassment of return, many chose to settle in North America.

Celebratory narratives – those of acculturation, adaptation and assimilation – have long been practiced by Canadian and Finnish-Canadian historians. Although written from “below”, these works, in sync with the larger trends in North American social and cultural history, were still composed within national, and by the virtue of the topic, also diasporic frameworks. Spurred by the official policy of multiculturalism researchers, with an agenda to give ethnic minorities a ‘proper’ place, or a third voice within the official bi-cultural and bi-lingual national paradigm, celebrated, and in the process constructed the histories and identities of ethnic communities in Canada. However, as Roberto Perin writes, “the reality of immigrant experiences is far from the celebration of ethnic revivalists, or governments’ new cultural policies based on such intangibles

⁷⁵ Rasila, Viljo, *Istoriia Finlandii* [History of Finland] (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press, 2006), p. 116.

⁷⁶ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, *In Search of Socialist El Dorado*, p. 15.

as subjective perceptions, private preferences, or the importation of metropolitan cultures.”⁷⁷

Communities were far from static, as people came and left. As a result, the application of fixed identities, whether national or diasporic, to the analysis of the spatial process of transition, can lead to erroneous assumptions and conclusions. On the contrary, the heterogeneity of identity, generated by transnational and transcultural contact, makes it possible to analyze societies and groups in flux, and thus reveals the process of their social construction.

The term *immigration* assumes a static state of affairs. At the same time, return movements have been ignored by most historians because they fall outside the parameters of national historiographies. Going home is considered an “anti-progressive, illogical and illusory” practice and is depicted by researchers as “unproblematic and natural insertion of migrants into ‘home countries’”.⁷⁸ Between 1870 and 1930 approximately 60,000 American-Finns and 13,000 Canadian Finns returned to Finland.⁷⁹ Their movement is automatically canonized by researchers as return migration, dismissed in the process as either a failed North American venture, or as a triumphalist return to the homeland. In the same time period about 7000 North American Finns migrated to the Soviet Union. All these numbers however are static and not indicative of the constant movement that characterized immigrant lives in this period. One can read these figures in a different way: out of 375,000 *immigrants* to the United States and Canada, at least 81,000 (21.6%) crossed international borders again, and this is without taking into consideration the internal migration within North America and the Soviet Union.

A collection of archives assembled on both sides of the Atlantic reveals a perpetual transnational movement of Finnish labor throughout the 1920s and the 1930s. For example,

⁷⁷ Roberto Perin, “Writing about Ethnicity”, in John Schultz eds., *Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History* (Prentice Hall of Canada, 1990).

⁷⁸ Armine Ishkanian, “Home Comings and Goings” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 13(1), 2004.

⁷⁹ Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement or Return*, p. 162.

Finns who arrived to work at the railroads in Ohio eventually migrated to work in Ontario's mines, and subsequently to the forest camps of Northern Ontario and Michigan.⁸⁰ In the 1920s August Aalto traveled through most of the U.S., and then migrated to Karelia in 1933, only to go back to Finland in 1934.⁸¹ Toivo Meronen was born in Finland in 1897. In 1927, he arrived in Canada, and remained there until 1931, when swept up by the Karelian fever he found himself in the Soviet Union in 1931. In 1932 he left Karelia for Sweden and from there to Finland, where he remained until 1937, when he departed for New York, where he stayed until he crossed the border to Canada in 1938.⁸²

National historiographies have little room to incorporate actors who leave the political contours of the nation-state. Unless of course they are members of the charter groups who are on the move.⁸³ In this study I look at a transnational movement between North America and Europe throughout the first part of the 20th century, and examine the way migrants' identities were dialectically constituted, negotiated, shaped, and reshaped by coming into direct and indirect contact with diasporic and national imagined communities. Migrants' identity became a terrain where national and diasporic imaginaries were constructed to consolidate and maintain the physical and psychological domains of the nation-state and the diaspora – its political and cultural borders.

⁸⁰ Passenger Lists: Quebec 1925 – 1935, Library and Archives Canada. RG 76, T-14763, vol. 3, p. 138 to T-14793, vol. 11, p. 186. Passenger Lists: Halifax 1925 – 1935, RG 76, T-14823, vol. 1, p. 9 to T-14835, vol. 3, p. 209.

⁸¹ Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement or Return*, p. 122.

⁸² Национальный архив Республики Карелия [National Archives of the Republic of Karelia], фонд 685, опись 2, дело 11/132, Листы 56-65. (Statistics according to the Resettlement Committee on how many people re-emigrated from Karelia by the last day of December 1933. The document is dated by February 3, 1934 and signed by the director of Resettlement Administration Tuominen); Drotingholm, New York, March 1938, Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957; (National Archives Microfilm Publication T715, 8892 rolls); Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸³ Such as the lament in Canadian historiography for the French-Canadian exodus to the U.S at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Sources

In addition to an extensive literature review required for such an undertaking, my analysis is based on a close reading and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data extrapolated from Canadian, American, Finnish, and recently opened Russian archives. The present work has made the most of the available sources, some of which have previously been untouched by historians. For example, I have examined lists of all North American Finns who were recorded upon arriving in Karelia in the first part of the 1930s. Based on Karelia's Resettlement Agency records, and the lists compiled by Eila Lahti Argutina,⁸⁴ I have produced an extensive statistical analysis of the immigrants' gender, age, marital status, place of origin, profession, and work location in Karelia.⁸⁵ In addition, examination of the transatlantic ships manifests (passenger lists) paints a picture of the scope of North American Finnish mobility throughout the 1930s. The manifests also allow us to glimpse the operations of border officials at Canadian entry ports. Their scribbling on the lists, where they indicated who was to be detained, or if the form was completed improperly provides a rich ground for analysis. What the border agents saw as proper and improper does not necessarily reflect the government's policy at the time, but rather the way that immigrants and different segments of the population were represented by the state in the dominant discourse. Similarly, registries of the returning migrants coupled with the records of the arrested and executed in the Great Purge, and its comparison to the lists of immigrants who

⁸⁴ An investigative journalist, Argutina collected the names of North American Finns departing to Karelia from Finnish-Canadian and Finnish-American newspapers. The lists are stored in the Varpu Lindstrom Archives in Clara Thompson Archives at York University.

⁸⁵ See Evgeny Efremkin, "Recruitment in North America: An Analysis of Emigrants to Soviet Karelia", *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, ed. Markku Kangaspuro and Samira Saramo, Special Double Issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* 15 (2011): 103-126; Evgeny Efremkin, Переселение североамериканских финнов в Советскую Карелию в 1930-1933 годах: статистический анализ [Resettlement of North American Finns in Soviet Karelia 1930-1933, Statistical Analysis] Труды Карельского научного центра РАН № 6. 2011. С. 97-105 (*Proceedings of Karelian Research Centre of Russian Academy of Sciences*).

arrived in Karelia in the early 1930s, offer an array of possibilities for demographic analysis of those who arrived, departed, were arrested, were executed, or survived.

The compilation of qualitative sources includes interviews with survivors, immigrant memoirs, letter collections; Finnish-Canadian and Finnish-American, mainstream Canadian, Canadian communist, and Soviet Karelian newspapers, records of the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC), minutes of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) meetings, correspondence between leaders of the CPC and Karelian representatives in North America, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) reports and notes, minutes of the presidium of the All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (VKP (b)), resolutions of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK) of the VKP (b), minutes of the meetings of the SNK of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), reports and memos of the State Political Directorate of the Autonomous Karelian Soviet Socialist Republic (AKSSR), reports and notes of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, correspondence between SNK VKP (b) and SNK AKSSR, and technical literature on North American Finns published in the 1930s by Soviet experts. This array of sources allows me to engage critically with the experiences of North American Finnish migrants in North America and the Soviet Union from the official perspectives – as recorded and documented by national, regional and local organizations and institutions. On the other hand, interview compilations, memoirs, and letter collections offer a projection of immigrants' gaze on the story. The North American Finns who migrated to Karelia in the early 1930s serve as the main focus of this study. Analysis of the group's demographics, their physical movement across national borders, psychological contact fostered through correspondence, and everyday life experiences are central to the present narrative. The study also investigates the actions and

responses of national, regional, and local symbolic elites on both sides of the Atlantic to migrants' movement within and between national borders.

Research material for this project was gathered from a wide range of sources. One of the difficulties for my investigation was my lack of knowledge of the Finnish language. I was able to bypass this problem in several ways. First, Varpu Lindstrom, an expert on the Karelian Exodus, presented me with translations of piles of articles from the *Vapaus* (a Finnish-Canadian newspaper), documents from the reports of the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC), and letters sent from Karelia back to the continent. In addition to these translations, Lindstrom herself was a rich source, replying to my questions on Finnish language, culture, and social life. Second, Samira Saramo of Lakehead University, Alexei Golubev of the University of British Columbia (who previously taught at the Petrozavodsk State University), and Professor Irina Takala of the Petrozavodsk State University generously offered their help with the translation of numerous documents, including government records, immigrant letters, and immigrant interviews. Finally, I have secured the translation of other important documents, for example, the extensive correspondence between the Karelian recruiters in North America with Karelian authorities and representatives of the FOC.

Whereas lack of proficiency in the Finnish language stalled my research on several occasions, my Russian language skills allowed me to navigate archival waters where many Finnish American and Finnish Canadian scholars would have been lost. At the Archives of Ontario in Toronto I was able to examine CPC documents seized by the RCMP in 1931 for the arrests and trials of Canadian communist leaders. These documents point to the financial and political relationship between the CPC, the VKP (b) and the Comintern, and between the CPC and the FOC. At the National Archives in Ottawa I had the opportunity to examine Comintern

archives.⁸⁶ The series consists of records created by the CPC, by its various agencies, organizations and units. These records deal with matters pertaining to development in Canada and also reflect on the relationship between the CPC and the Comintern. The documents, most of which are in Russian, include correspondence, minutes, reports, proceedings, conference materials, circulars and appeals, membership records, and financial records. These records allowed me to develop new insights into the dynamics of the Karelian Exodus. Finally, I was fortunate to have access to invaluable records found at the archives in Petrozavodsk, Karelia's capital. These collections are extensive in their scope. They include detailed lists of arriving Canadian and American immigrants in Soviet Karelia, documents pertaining to the places of employment of Canadian and American Finns, lists of those who returned to North America, lists of those who were arrested, imprisoned, and executed, minutes of the local communist cells where Canadian and American Finns lived in large numbers, correspondence between Karelian leaders and the central authorities in Moscow, records of the ministries of internal and external affairs, and the list goes on. For the most part in the past seven years I was trying to get my hands on any material that had anything remotely to do with the Karelian fever.

Methodology

The thesis aims to fill gaps in the historiographies but not through a structuralist-comparative approach between immigrant experience in North America and the Soviet Union. Instead, subscribing to post-modern theories of social constructionism, and transnationalism, it offers a multifaceted interpretation of sources based on a variety of perspectives. It exhibits immigrant identities shifting in relation to certain variables, depending on the authors and the origin of the sources. In turn, the conceptual framework which allows the examination of such a

⁸⁶ Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG 10 K reels 269-285. The Comintern Fonds.

diverse range of sources is transnationalism and the parallel dismissal of national building school theoretical approaches. Narratives are identities. To decipher the process of identity formation of individuals, diasporas, and nations, is to tell their story. This study seeks to understand how and why North American Finns were courted or rejected by different institutions, governments, and organizations. How were their experiences/narratives/identities appropriated or discarded in the process of national and diasporic identity formation?

The present work is preoccupied with themes of modernization of society and nationalism, relentlessly researched by Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, Benedict Anderson, and Grigor Suny. Anderson, for example has convincingly demonstrated that through the facility of literacy, mass media and improved methods of communication, symbolic elites managed to infuse commonly shared values, beliefs, norms, and identities, despite the contradictory internal divisions (along the lines of ethnicity, religion, class and gender) within the assumed national entities.⁸⁷ Suny similarly persuasively applied this theoretical method to the study of national formation in the Soviet Union's constituent republics.⁸⁸ He argues that the Soviet government artificially created some of the union's constituent republics in the attempt to keep the Soviet state intact.

To complement the nation-state building process outlined by these historians, this effort also draws on the works of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. I use the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and its emphasis on the population as an object of governance to explain the processes of national identity formation in Canada and the Soviet Union. The bureaucratization of these fast modernizing societies allowed governments to observe, evaluate, document and

⁸⁷ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, 1991.

⁸⁸ See Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford University Press, 1993.

classify their populations. The production of knowledge, argued Foucault, and its association with power, produced subjects who embodied dominant discourses through organized practices, such as mentalities, rationalities and techniques. The dominant discourses in turn channel the ideologies shared by the ruling elite. In Gramsci's opinion, the prevailing worldview becomes the dominant ideology and perpetuates the social, cultural and political status quo. His theory of cultural hegemony explains that cultural norms in a society are dictated by the symbolic elites, and must not be considered natural or inevitable, but distinguished as artificial social constructs. The media and the education system, for example, are among the most potent instruments that allow consistent propagation of the received ideas.

The investigation of national and diasporic identity formation is undertaken through the prism of transnationalism – the economic, political, social and cultural interconnectedness fostered by migrants through an international movement of bodies, capital, ideas, and experience. As Rainer Baubok suggests, transnational life existed for a long time but was not seen as such. Thus the transnational lens provides a new analytical framework to evaluate what has not been seen before.⁸⁹ Migrations of individuals belonging to national and diasporic entities comprise heterogeneous groups of people with diverse personal and social characteristics. The uncovering of the process of the homogenization of these diversities is the principal aim of the present investigation. Imagined community construction – the mobilization of migrants' experiences under national, ethnic or ideological banners – is achieved through psychological and physical exchange within but also across national borders.

Pioneered in the early 1990s by Nina Click-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton-Blanc, immigrant transnationalism allows the study of the dialectical process of identity

⁸⁹ Rainer Baubok, "Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism" in *International Migration Review* 37 (3), 2003.

formation: first, as influenced by hegemonic processes of social construction and classification of immigrants according to race, ethnicity, and gender; second, the way immigrants transform these social constructions through response and resistance strategies, in the process altering collective identities and conceptions of citizenship.⁹⁰ As transmigrants embody new meanings and forms of representations in one society, they transmit and contribute to hegemonic social constructions in other places to which they physically or psychological “belong”. In other words, immigrants have all the tools necessary to fundamentally transform societies with which they come into contact.

Terminology

Some of the terms used in this work warrant definition and contextualization. *Discourse*, a term used extensively throughout the dissertation, can be defined as a system of thoughts that systematically constructs the subject of which they speak, and is the site where social construction takes place. It informs social practices and defines the social world. While discourse can be understood as a dialogue articulated in written, spoken and symbolic forms (i.e. texts, language, policies and practice), it is also dominant because of its connection to the symbolic elites and its power to be ‘heard’ and ‘seen’ in the society.⁹¹ As Van Dijk put it

It is the symbolic elite and its discourses that control the types of discourses, the topics, the types and the amount of information, the selection of censoring of arguments, and the nature of rhetorical operations. These conditions essentially determine the contents and the organization of public knowledge, the hierarchies of beliefs, and the pervasiveness of the consensus, which in turn are potent factors in the formation and reproduction of opinions, attitudes, and ideologies.⁹²

⁹⁰ Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton-Blanc, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration” in *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68 (1), 1995.

⁹¹ Van Dijk, “Mediating Racism: The Role of the Media in the reproduction of Racism” in Ruth Wodak *Language, Power and Ideology: Studies in Political Discourse*, (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1989), p, 199.

⁹² Ibid.

Social reality then is contextual, historically produced through discourses, whose main aim is the legitimization of power and the formulation of some universal truths to sustain the dominance of the symbolic elites. As Michel Foucault suggested, power and knowledge (discourse production) are interrelated and form the basic foundation of human relationship – struggle and negotiation for power.⁹³

The idioms of *ethnicity* and *nationality* in my work are almost interchangeable. My understanding of these concepts is informed by the social constructionist strand of postmodernism. Both ethnicity and nationality are unending building projects of worldviews by a group of individuals in a dialectical relationship with the society. Fredrick Barth and Max Weber⁹⁴, in contrast to primordialist theories of ethnicity that stressed the universal existence to ethnic identity, came to demonstrate that ethnicity was socially constructed, and perpetually negotiated and renegotiated by external forces and self-identification. The fundamental element in the process of ethnic construction is the process of exclusion and incorporation in a perpetual process of mobility and contact between ethnic groups.

The main difference between the two terms is that nationality is a more crystallized and institutionalized version of ethnicity. Both are supported by mythology, religion, ideology, and philosophy, and subjectively internalized by upbringing and education to become part of the identity of social citizens. Eric Hobsbawm⁹⁵ and Benedict Anderson have convincingly argued that ethnicity and nationalism (the notion of ethnic pride) are modern inventions and that prior to

⁹³ See, Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Translated by Gordon L. Marshall, J. Mephram and K. Sober (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980).

⁹⁴ See, Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969); Max Weber, *Economy and Society*. Translated by G. Roth and C Wittich, (New York: Bedminster, 1968).

⁹⁵ See, Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

the emergence of modern nation-states in the 18th and 19th centuries, ethnic homogeneity was not a pre-requisite in forging large-scale societies. “Nation is not a fixed, tangible entity” writes Anderson, “but a mental construct that is continuously defined and redefined.”⁹⁶ While the term nationality can denote a legal relationship between a person and the state, national identity however can also symbolize a person’s subjective sense of belonging to a national entity.

Imagined community, a term coined by Anderson, refers to a process of cultural construction of a nation. Although members of the community will likely never meet each other, they nonetheless bask in the same national identity and share common interests, language and symbols, which were fortified through means of mass communication.⁹⁷ The ability of the symbolic elite to control the means of communication and engage in the manufacturing of public opinion is the driving force behind imagined community building. Although the term was coined to denote the process of national construction, in this work I utilize it to denote the social construction of ethnic identities within and between national entities.

The term *alternative modernities* refers to the way different societies responded to the processes of industrialization, urbanization, secularization, rationalization, all of which fostered new forms of labor and social relations. The term modernity is also closely associated with the construction of modern nation states in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, which brought a fundamental change in the relationship between the state and the individual. New modern institutions of power (i.e. schools, bureaucracies) strove to discipline the population in order to cultivate a productive labor force. One of the main functions of the modern state became subject formation – the kind of subjects that internalized and appropriated values, norms, and perspectives of power. The present work analyzes migrant movement between two, at times

⁹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

radically different, conceptions of modernity – western capitalism and Soviet socialism. Soviet modernity implied different ideas about industrial discipline and labor organization, as well as diverse conceptions of ideologies and frameworks of thinking, related to the question of what the modern state and the modern subject should look. As a result, migrants in this study are analyzed within, but also at the intersection of, nation-states, diasporic entities, and modernities.

Finally, it should be noted that terms *immigrant*, *emigrant*, *migrant*, and *transmigrant* have different meanings. While immigrants and emigrants are familiar figures in the methodological national narratives, migrants are those who make up migration chains that include both immigration and emigration as one continuous international process. As for transnational migrants, they are those who maintain interconnections through physical and psychological communication across national borders. I use all these terms depending on the situation and author of the sources. The same individual can be labeled immigrant, emigrant, migrant, or transmigrant in differing contexts, places, and times.

Outline

The first chapter, “A Re-Imagined Community”, looks at the involvement of the symbolic elites, or “active” elements in the left-wing North American Finnish communities, in persuading the rank and file, the “passive” elements, to leave Canada and the United States for a better and a brighter future in Soviet Karelia. While emigration was undeniably spurred by the deteriorating economic conditions in North America, the role of the recruiters in attracting large numbers of workers with families to move across the Atlantic was equally important. Inspired by the grand vision of the head of the Karelian government to make the republic a socialist and Finnish homeland, leaders of the North American Finnish left became convinced that Karelia was now the homeland of socialist-minded Finns. Their conception of this new Finnish

homeland would however be void of any meaning if the rank and file did not subscribe to it. Thus, when Karelian-sponsored recruiting offices opened in New York and Toronto in 1931, leaders of the communities launched a full-scale propaganda campaign in the press and in the socialist halls to “sell” Karelia to the public.

The second chapter, “The Artificial Republic”, takes the reader to the Soviet Union, where under the new nationality policy that promoted indigenous culture, Karelia’s leadership was actively involved in endorsing the Finnish language and culture in a place where Finns constituted less than one percent of the population. The arrival of North American Finnish specialists in Soviet Karelia was crucial to the success of the project. Immigrants, it was thought, would solve the economic problem and also offset the demographic imbalance in the republic dominated by Russians and Karels. The local government’s vision of Karelia was reflected in the future it imagined for Karelia, and by assigning North American Finns a privileged economic, social, and cultural status in the republic, the Karelian leadership made it clear whom it considered the ideal citizen. Finnish cultural and social norms, promoted through official channels and the media, glorified North American Finnish working methods and living standards as a model to be emulated by others. In the process, the Karelian government appropriated migrants’ identity in its own public discourse, and the merger became the foundation for the construction of a new, Finnish socialist Soviet Karelian identity.

The third chapter, “Canada’s Nationality Policy”, analyzes the reaction of the Canadian state and the public to the departure and return of Canadian Finns throughout the 1930s. Examination of Canadian newspapers, customs declaration forms (transatlantic ship manifests), and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) files denote a process of national identity construction. The Canadian bureaucracy, informed by social Darwinist views of race and

ethnicity, and the Anglophone bourgeois concern over modernization brought about by the forces of industrialization and urbanization, both consciously and subconsciously developed an elaborate system of categorization of Canada's population according to prescribed criteria of ethnicity, nationality and race. In other words, a rigid, albeit invisible nationality policy was developed. By making the populations recognizable in the official discourse, border officials, just like the census makers, constructed specific representations of Canada's ethnic populations. In order to control the population of a rapidly modernizing society, the Canadian community had to be made "knowable" and familiar. Rigid classification of Canada's "ethnic" populations also contributed to the construction of diasporic identities in Canada.

The fourth chapter, "At the Intersection of Modernities", analyzes the infusion of North American ideas, culture, and experience into Soviet society, and depicts immigrants as agents of social and cultural change. Having embodied North American representations of modernity, they introduced new working methods, values and routines, as well as novel forms of labor organization to Soviet Karelia. With the help of imported machinery, tools and equipment, immigrants drastically increased the production rates of Karelia's industries. Glorified and publicized by the Karelian government and the media, their labor shops and farm communes became models to be emulated in Karelia and throughout the Soviet Union. North American Finns also came to play an important part in Soviet elites' attempt to modernize the Soviet society both economically and culturally. Although they were agents of cultural and technological change in their own right, immigrants' social and ethnic identities were subsumed and appropriated by the Soviet state and Karelia's cultural producers in attempts to promote a Soviet version (an alternative) of economic and cultural modernity. Their physical and intellectual movement across national borders shaped and reconstituted the Soviet path to

modernization, even if for a short period of time. In the process, concepts of the local, the national and the modern (i.e. the global), became increasingly entangled.

In the last chapter, “The State and the Stranger: The Purges and the Deconstruction of an Imagined Community”, I examine the role of the state, local sections of the communist party, and general populace in the persecution of North American Finns during the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s. The contradictory nature of Soviet nationality policies which reversed a full 180 degrees in the mid-1930s changed the public perception of North American Finns from hard working, modernizing and enlightened, to people who were strange, unfamiliar, and alien. Hailing from bourgeois nationalist states like Finland, the United States and Canada, immigrants were represented as a potential fifth-column. The turnaround of the nationality policy made Finnish cultural and social norms obsolete, and led to the downfall of the republic’s Finnish elite and the persecution of North American Finnish specialists. Newly uncovered archives reveal first, that local communists and the general populace participated in the purges with enthusiasm, with causes for such rigorous support ranging from fear to personal gain to ignorance. Second, the modernization of the Soviet state introduced new methods of documenting and categorizing the Soviet population, and in many ways facilitated the logistic side of the purge.

Chapter 2:

A Re-Imagined Community: The Finnish North American Left and the Karelian Fever

It turned out that eternity existed only as long as Tatarskiy believed in it, because nowhere outside this faith, did it exist. To truly believe in eternity, it was necessary that this belief was shared by others – because faith which is not shared by everyone is called schizophrenia.⁹⁸

In the early 1930s tens of thousands of North Americans migrated to the Soviet Union in search of work and a better life.⁹⁹ For the most part, it was the Great Depression in the west and a promise of a utopian socialist future in the Soviet Union that propelled this transnational movement. Emigration of North American Finns, although similar in many ways to this broader trend, was nonetheless significantly different. Their destination was Soviet Karelia in particular, rather than the Soviet Union in general. Given Karelia's proximity to Finland and its centrality to the Finnish national folklore and Finnish ethnic identity, factors of nationality and ethnicity, not solely ideological predisposition and economic considerations, played a major part in the exodus. The Karelian fever then can be conceptualized in terms of ethnic or diasporic identity construction, where leaders of the North American Finnish left in concert with the Finnish leadership of Karelia aimed to sell Karelia to the North American Finnish public. Engaged in cultural production and diffusion, leaders of the Finnish left fostered a new, reconstituted ethnic and national identity, whose ideological center was to become Soviet Karelia.

⁹⁸ Victor Pelevin, *Generation P*, Vagrus, 2004.

⁹⁹ So far there is only one attempt to study this phenomenon: see Tim Tzouliadis, *The Foresaken: From the Great Depression to the Gulags – Hope and Betrayal in Stalin's Russia*, (London: Little, Brown, 2008). This is a rich field that awaits research and analysis. Records of British passenger lists, easily accessible through ancestry.ca reveal that tens of thousands of North Americans were on the move to the Soviet Union, often already under labor contracts with various Soviet trusts.

German historian Reinhart Koselleck argued that at any given time political concepts embody in themselves a certain interpretation of the past, understanding of the present, and visions for the future.¹⁰⁰ Most North American Finnish emigrants did not belong to Canadian or American communist parties. Only a small portion of emigrants (roughly about 10-15 percent)¹⁰¹ were “active” contributors to socialist or communist movements, whereas the rest merely sympathized with international socialism, and as a result were reactive participants in left politics. These “passive” elements embodied, with their own bodily practices – through the process of migration to Soviet Karelia – certain interpretations of the past, understandings of the present, and future visions promoted by leaders of the North American Finnish left. Without the bodies transmigrant Finnish workers and their families provided, ideology and ethnic identity preached by diaspora leaders could not be turned into something real – the Karelian fever. The aforementioned theoretical approach allows me to study the movement as a dialectical process, where both the elite and the rank and file became involved in cultural production and diffusion, conditioned by ideology and ethnicity. In the end, the dynamics of the recruitment process reinforced by the actual process of migration gave birth to an alternative imagined Finnish socialist community with its cultural headquarters in Soviet Karelia.

Although the main focus of this chapter is diasporic identity formation, I utilize aspects of transnational theory to examine the social construction of ethnic and national identities, a process which diaspora theories, with its static vision of the migrant, cannot decipher. They treat

¹⁰⁰ See Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Translated with an introduction by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

¹⁰¹ Both the CPC and the CPUSA were against the emigration of North American Finnish communists to Soviet Karelia. Tim Buck and the executive committee of the CPC placed a limit on the number of party members to be granted transfers to the Soviet Union. In several memos, Tim Buck indicated party members should represent no more than 10-15 percent of the entire migration to the Soviet Union. Moreover, lists of the arrested North American Finns during the Great Purge reveals a similar ratio of communists among the immigrant communities, despite the fact that party members were targeted more consistently than the general population. Irina Takala for example also finds that the percentage of communists among North American immigrants to Karelia did not exceed 15 percent.

the diaspora as a single unit, not taking into consideration that diaspora, just as the nation, is a social construct, an imagined community, behind which one can detect motivation, interests, and visions. Diaspora theories are not able to account for those who are positioned on the margins of ethnic identity, can only deal with the communal aspects of migrants' lives, and are at a loss when migrants disassociate or distance themselves from their presupposed ethnic and/or national community. They render diasporas as something real, rather than imagined, concrete, rather than intangible, natural, rather than constructed. Generalizations about diasporas as specific ethnic and national immigrant groups obscure the degree of migrants' mobility. Diaspora, just as ethnic distinctiveness, is then both a construct and a process.

The framework of transnationalism on the other hand considers migrants as transmigrants, whose identities are perpetually reconstituted, be it in the context of a diaspora, a nation, or other socio-cultural and political formations. Whereas national paradigms envision the nation as the final destination or as the initial departure point for the migrant, transnationalism examines migration as a continuous practice. Where a national oriented historian might lament or celebrate a migration trend, be it incoming or outgoing, a transnationalist is concerned with the individual migrant, as well as with the larger international and transnational processes that allow the movement, and in the context of which migrants' individual and collective identities are forged. Transnationalism enables historians to paint a more complete picture of migratory patterns and migrant experiences, but also allows researchers to sway away from canonizing migrant workers and families as exclusive members of exclusionary national units.

Diaspora is a re-imagined community, in most cases by the symbolic elites, and as suggested by Benedict Anderson not in the sense that it is false, but in that it is a psychological creation. Although conventionally it is characterized as a stable entity, it should be understood in

terms of social and cultural processes of movement and change, of transnational forces imagined into communities.¹⁰² The present chapter aims to unveil the process of diaspora formation from above by examining the initial stages of ethnic and national imagined community construction. What were the methods and venues through which leaders of North American left-wing Finnish communities in concert with the agents commissioned by the leaders of Soviet Karelia, utilized political ideology, national mythology, and ethnic organizations, to recruit Canadians and Americans of Finnish origin to work and settle in Soviet Karelia? In other words, how was culture appropriated, re-produced, and diffused within and between national and diasporic borders? With the help of a transnationalist approach, which warrants the concept of hybridity and allows one to appreciate the dynamics of a community that has points of reference in multiple cultures and nations, this chapter also addresses the process of collective identity formation from below. The concept of hybridity provides for a multidimensional view of a system through which human capital, experience, and ideas flow across borders real or imagined, and the process of their formation and reformation into larger – local, regional, and global social constructs.

Sustained by a complex transnational network, marked by a flow and interaction of ideas, individuals, and cultural artifacts across and within national borders, it is impossible to comprehend migrants' stories through national or diasporic centered historiographies. The following analysis shows that migrants' identities became a terrain where national and diasporic imaginaries were constructed to consolidate and maintain the physical and psychological

¹⁰² See James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 9 (3), 1994; Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 1 (1), 1991. The authors argue that old localizing strategies of studies bounded by community, organic culture, region, center, etc. in fact obscure more than they reveal.

domains of the diaspora – its political and cultural borders. Through the case study of the Karelian fever I argue that transnational migrant labor – a subaltern force consisting primarily of nuclear and extended family units on the move in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in search of economic and social security – became a means by which diaspora leaders defined and redefined the cultural and political borders of their re-imagined communities.

Migration Demographics, Statistical Analysis, and Economic Causes of Migration

Who were these North American Finns? Were they all workers? Was there a specific pattern to their migration? Was it mostly men or women who migrated? Were they young or old, single or married? The following analysis is based on the records of nearly 4,000 North American Finns that immigrated to Soviet Karelia between 1930 and 1933.¹⁰³ This is a substantial and representative sample in many respects. Sources vary on the total number of emigrants, hovering between 5,500 and 10,000. Therefore, my sample is at the very least representative of 40 percent of the movement, and in the best case scenario it accounts for 7 out of every 10 that went to Soviet Karelia. According to Irina Takala’s calculations, by mid-May 1932, 3,228 North American Finns went to Karelia.¹⁰⁴ The sample used in this paper numbers 2319 individuals that arrived by the same period of time, which is also representative of 7 out of every 10 North American Finnish immigrants. Further, according to the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU), a de-facto Soviet secret police agency, by November 1932, 4,399 North

¹⁰³ Based on the Karelian Resettlement Agency records, the lists were compiled by Eila Lahti-Argutina, and deposited in the Clara Thomas Archives (from here on referred to as CTA), Varpu Lindstrom Fond F-0558. I had the privilege of translating these documents from Russian to English. Translated copies can be found in the same fond.

¹⁰⁴ Irina Takala, “Североамериканские финны в довоенной Карелии” (“North American Finns in pre-war Karelia”) in [Североамериканские финны в Советской Карелии 1930-х годов: Сборник научных статей и источников] (*North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s: Academic Essays and Sources*), (Petrozavodsk: PetrGU, 2007), p. 40.

American Finns made their way to Karelia.¹⁰⁵ My sample accounts for 3,344 immigrants arriving in Karelia by November 1932, accordingly representative of 76 percent of the movement.

Upon arrival, the Karelian Resettlement Agency recorded immigrants' first, last, and patrimonial names, year of birth, professional occupation, place of employment and the date of arrival in Karelia. These registries allow me to extract information such as the number and size of families that arrived in Karelia, to trace individuals who came as part of extended families and to calculate the number of single men and women. I was able also to draw on gender, age, and family status disparities in the movement. In addition, the compiled statistics provide data for the type of professions immigrants practiced and the location of employment assigned to them, thus allowing me to trace migrants' movements in Karelia. Further, these records make it possible to trace the rise and decline of the Karelian fever by year, month, and day of arrival. I was able to draw a direct correlation between the "fever" rates and the rise and the decline of unemployment numbers in Canada and the United States.

North American Finnish migration to Karelia was largely a family oriented movement and, in some respects, a chain migration, albeit an explosive and a short one.¹⁰⁶ Nearly 75 percent of immigrants came as part of an immediate family – as husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, children, brothers and sisters. As shown in graphs 2.1 and 2.2, only one of every four immigrants was single. I had indicated in my previous work that given the large composition of families, the Karelian fever could not have been as ideologically motivated as argued by some

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See Evgeny Efremkin, Карельский проект или карельская лихорадка? ("Karelian Project or Karelian Fever"? in [Ученые записки Петрозаводского Государственного Университета] (*Academic Notes of Petrozavodsk State University: Social Sciences and Humanities*), N.3 (95) October 2008, p. 48.

scholars. It seems hardly plausible, that “ideological fanaticism” was a primary factor for migration when workers with their families first and foremost had to secure employment security in the most uncertain economic period of the twentieth century. It is difficult to argue that couples with children, whose percentage was high among immigrants, were fanatics of any kind. It is not to deny immigrants’ left-leaning beliefs or their role in the decisions to go to the Soviet Union. However, there is a vast difference between simply sharing in political and ideological convictions on the one hand, and manifesting them in radical and practical ways on the other.

North American immigrants were also predominately male; women represented only a third of the movement. Numerical superiority of men can be explained by the labor market conditions in North America. In Canada, for instance, Finnish women found themselves in more favorable financial positions than Finnish men. Most Finnish women were employed as domestic workers, a sector that had not suffered as severely from the depression, as had lumber, construction, and farming, where the majority of Finnish men were employed.¹⁰⁷

Based on my sample, only 25 single women arrived in Karelia, as opposed to 1064 single men. The ratio of single men to single women in the movement was forty two to one. Finnish socialist women, although restricted by economic and social factors, were in many respects no less radical than their male compatriots. If we take this premise as a point of departure, we can draw a direct link between the economic effects of the depression on North American socialist Finns and the fundamental causes of the Karelian fever. In other words, one of the main reasons why more men than women went to Karelia was because the depression did not affect women as

¹⁰⁷ Varpu Lindstrom, Канадские Финны и десять лет Великой депрессии (“Canadian Finns and Ten Years of the Great Depression”) in [Североамериканские финны в Советской Карелии 1930-х годов: Сборник научных статей и источников] (*North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s: Academic Essays and Sources*), (Petrozavodks: PetrGU, 2007), p. 12.

harshly as it did men. Nearly 75 percent of Canadian lumberjacks were single men.¹⁰⁸ If we assume that radicals were unattached single men and women, and take the lumberjacks out of the equation, we are left with just over 10 percent of Canadian immigrants who fit the profile of an ideological fanatic.¹⁰⁹ Many Finns were left leaning, however only 5 to 10 percent were in any respect radical – to the point of Bolshevization.¹¹⁰ If we follow this logic, then ideological considerations had to take a second place to economic factors in the decision to migrate to Soviet Karelia.

Among North American male Finns who migrated to Karelia 48% were lumberjacks, 18% carpenters, 8% construction workers, 5% drivers, and 4% sawyers.¹¹¹ Women were, for the most part, registered under a husband's occupation and place of employment. Only in a few registries was occupation and place of employment indicated for women. Among American immigrants, thirty-eight women were registered as officially employed and only seven on the Canadian side. There are reasons, however, to suspect that some of the workers did not have the expertise in the occupations indicated upon registration. For example, Takala finds in case studies of Segozero and Tungudu areas that only 50 and 15 percent respectively had experience working in the woods, although the majority were listed as lumberjacks.¹¹² However, Takala's

¹⁰⁸ Karelian Resettlement Agency records, Varpu Lindstrom Fond F-0558.

¹⁰⁹ Evgeny Efremkin, Переселение североамериканских финнов в Советскую Карелию в 1930-1933 годах: статистический анализ [Resettlement of North American Finns in Soviet Karelia 1930-1933, Statistical Analysis] Труды Карельского научного центра РАН № 6. 2011. С. 97–105 (*Proceedings of Karelian Research Centre of Russian Academy of Sciences*).

¹¹⁰ See Evgeny Efremkin, Карельский проект или карельская лихорадка? ('Karelian Project or Karelian Fever?'), [Ученые записки Петрозаводского Государственного Университета] (*Academic Notes of Petrozavodsk State University: Social Sciences and Humanities*), N.3 (95) October 2008.

¹¹¹ See graphs 6.1, 6.2

¹¹² Irina Takala, "Североамериканские финны в довоенной Карелии", p. 44.

findings are most likely representative of American immigrants, given that Canadian immigrants were well known worldwide as experienced and technologically superior lumbermen.¹¹³

The pace, the rate, and the pattern of immigrant arrivals in Karelia leave aside any doubt the phenomenon was in fact a “fever”. As graph 10.1 clearly demonstrates the exodus coincided with the rise of unemployment in Canada and the United States. In 1930, when the unemployment rate hovered between 7 and 12 percent, only 77 Finns (2 percent of the sample) made the transatlantic journey to “workers’ paradise.”¹¹⁴ On the other hand, in 1931, when by the end of the year unemployment had risen to 18 and 22 percent in Canada and the United States respectively, the flow of immigrants to Karelia increased to 1853 (45 percent of the sample). In 1932, the worst year of the Great Depression, as unemployment rates reached their peak in North America, the exodus sustained its 1931 rate, with slight gains in Canadian, and small losses in American, numbers. Overall, 1702 North American Finns (or 41 percent of the sample) went to Karelia in 1932. In 1933 the unemployment rates remained similar to the previous year, however exodus numbers drastically declined, with only 507 North American Finns (or 12 percent of the sample) immigrating to the U.S.S.R.

The Karelian fever broke out in autumn of 1931 and lasted until the closing months of 1932. Graph 8.1 shows its rise and decline. In August 1931, eight weeks following the opening of Karelian Technical Aid (KTA) offices in New York and Toronto, more than 100 people arrived in Karelia. During the next month the influx soared to 226, or 12 percent of those who arrived in 1931. In October and November, the ‘fever’ hit North American Finnish communities. In these months more than 1,000 made their way to Karelia, representing 26 percent of all those

¹¹³ Sari Autio, “Soviet Karelian Forests in the Planned Economy of the Soviet Union, 1928-1937” in *Rise and Fall of Soviet Karelia*, edited by Antti Laine and Mikko Ylikangas, (Helsinki: Kikumora Publications, 2002).

¹¹⁴ See graphs 8.1, 10.1.

who arrived between 1930 and 1933. For the next several months the ‘fever’ continued fluctuating, and the immigration flow was significantly reduced by spring of 1932. However in summer and autumn of 1932 the number of emigrants increased again. In the sixteen months spanning September 1931 to December 1932, 3,376 North American Finns had gone to the Soviet Union, or 84 percent of the sample. The last large wave of immigrants arrived in the fall of 1933. However, its volume was significantly smaller than in previous years.

Recruiting the North American Left-wing Finnish Diaspora

The official campaign to recruit North American Finns to work and settle in Soviet Karelia began with the opening of the KTA offices in New York and Toronto in May 1931. The effort however was not without precedent. North American Finns began providing aid to Soviet Karelia soon after the Russian Revolution, and Karelia’s Finnish leadership launched a propaganda campaign to generate financial support in the North American Finnish communities in the 1920s. Already in 1920 the Finnish section of the American Socialist Party in Duluth organized a so-called ‘Russian Aid Committee’.¹¹⁵ In the early and mid-1920s similar organizations mushroomed across the country. In charge of the first ‘Soviet-Karelian Aid’ Committee in the United States was Matti Tenhunen, who later would spearhead the Karelian recruitment in New York and Toronto in 1931.

The 1920s also witnessed the first trickles of North American Finns to the Soviet Union. In 1921 several American groups arrived in Kuzbass and Kniajia Guba.¹¹⁶ In 1922 a group of 88 American Finns arrived in the Soviet Union to establish a cooperative agricultural commune Kylväjä. In the next several years groups of Canadian Finns from Northern Ontario and American Finns from Wisconsin and Illinois would establish similar communes, Säde and Työ

¹¹⁵ Mayme Sevander, *Skitaltsi*, (Petrozavodsk: PetrGu, 2006), p. 31.

¹¹⁶ Mayme Sevander, *Red Exodus: Finnish American Emigration to Russia*, (Duluth: Oscat, 1993), p. 35.

respectively.¹¹⁷ This early movement was small, and in large part politically and ideologically motivated, and would differ substantially from the mass movement of the early 1930s, the driving force of which would become the deteriorating North American economy. This early migration was in some aspects successful, both from the migrants' perspective and from the point of view of Soviet authorities. Although there were many disgruntled returnees, the Finnish socialist press in North America concentrated mainly on the success stories in Karelia bearing, for the most part, only positive news about the Soviet Union and the achievements of North American immigrants in the 'workers' paradise'. These reports would come to play a significant role in the decisions of North American Finns to go to Soviet Karelia in the early 1930s.¹¹⁸

Recruiters

Although efficient, the press was not the key way to disseminate information about prospectives in Soviet Karelia. Recruiters, all members of the Finnish section of their respective communist parties, and paid by the Karelian government, were most persuasive. They were clearly instructed to target only the North American Finnish community, and promote Soviet Karelia as a worker's republic where one could live immersed entirely in Finnish culture and language.¹¹⁹ Endorsing "new Finland", recruiters painted an idealized image of Karelia. It was socialist, they claimed, it was Finnish; there were jobs, free education and medicare, as well as hefty pension plans for all workers. The message was clear – Karelia was *the* place to be for Finnish workers and their families: "it is much better to build socialism with your hands in

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Evgeny Efremkin, "Recruitment in North America: Analysis of Emigrants to Soviet Karelia, 1931-1934, in *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, ed. Markku Kangaspuro and Samira Saramo, Special Double Issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* 15 (2011).

¹¹⁹ Comintern and CPC archives reveal that there were scores of people, most of whom were not Finns, who applied for transfers to the Soviet Union, however got rejected. Last names of the applicants were Anglo-Canadians, and of Eastern European descent, mostly Ukrainians and Russians.

Karelia than to suffer of hunger and unemployment in the exploiters' country.”¹²⁰ Karlo Ranta, who at the age of ten was taken from the United States to Karelia by his parents, later recalled the arguments put forward by recruiters at public meetings: “In the USSR, everybody has equal opportunities. Here you won't find a beggar, no one goes to bed with an empty stomach, and there are no lines for bread. Medical care is free, old people get pensions, and workers can go to sanatoriums and recreation centers.”¹²¹ Aino Streng, who immigrated to the Soviet Union from Canada in 1932, mentioned that recruiters placed emphasis on the predominance of the Finnish language and culture in Karelia, and thus made many believe that they were going to ‘another’ Finland: “We were very glad that we were going to Eastern Karelia where Finnish was spoken. We were satisfied, as we knew that Finland was so close. Only a large forest divided us.”¹²² In 1935, during an interrogation by the Soviet secret police, in answer to a question about the reasons for his arrival in Karelia, Niemi, an American Finn said “I by nationality am a Finn and I came to Karelia as the homeland of the Finns.”¹²³

Led by¹²⁴ the grand vision of Edward Gylling, the leader of Soviet Karelia 1920-1935, to settle Karelia with Finns from North America, recruiters depicted a utopia, in contrast to the dystopia in which actual life was lived. Gylling’s leading recruiter in North America, Matti Tenhunen, called on Finns to help the Soviet Union to implement its Five-Year plan.¹²⁵ Tenhunen consistently utilized the North American Finnish socialist press to promote the Soviet Union. He urged that Soviet Karelia would fail without assistance: “help is needed in lumber

¹²⁰ Nevalainen P. Punaisen myrskyn suomalaiset. S. 277.

¹²¹ Interview with Karlo Ranta, June 2003.

¹²² Boucht C. Onnea esttimassa. Helsinki, 1973. S. 41.

¹²³ Alexis Pogorelskin, “New Perspectives on Karelian Fever: The Recruitment of North American Finns to Karelia in the Early 1930’s,” in *Journal of Finnish Studies* 1, no. 3 (December 1997), p. 167.

¹²⁴ Edward Gylling was formerly an important member of the Social Democratic Government in Finland.

¹²⁵ *Vapaus* February 5, 1931.

camps, river runs, saw mills, paper factories, fishing, agriculture, and construction.”¹²⁶ Recruiters like Tenhunen invited Finnish workers to participate in the construction of both Finnish Karelia and of the larger socialist project, the Soviet Union. They made potential migrants feel that they were needed. Karelia was advertised in Finnish-Canadian and Finnish-American newspapers as early as 1929,¹²⁷ when several articles appeared asserting that Finns could enjoy the public use of Finnish language in Karelia in ways unimaginable in Canada or the United States.

Recruiters targeted families. Free education was a message that fell on many attentive ears. Emphasis placed on Finnish language accessibility and richness of cultural activities also played a significant role in attracting recruits.¹²⁸ Niilo Kaano recalls that KTA representatives made countless promises and one recruiter, Jeannei Jokela, even claimed that Karelia was an independent entity.¹²⁹ Many interviewed survivors also mentioned the role recruiters played in their parents’ decisions to move to Karelia.¹³⁰ Niva Erwin for example, who arrived in Karelia at the age of 14 with his parents, two younger brothers and a younger sister, heard Matti Tenhunen speak at a hall.¹³¹ Niva’s father, who was a Bolshevik agitator in South Dakota, would eventually be arrested, charged with counterrevolutionary agitation, and executed in January 1938. Susan Harris, writing about her uncle Niilo Kaano who perished in Stalin’s purges in the late 1930s, mentions that for her parents’ generation, Karelia was like Mecca, and all that was Finnish began in Karelia.¹³²

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Paul, Austin. “Soviet Karelian: The Language That Failed.” *Slavic Review* 51, no. 1 (1992).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Susan Harris., *Nilo’s Journey: Finnish-American Migration to the Soviet Union in the 1930s*, Montpelier, Vermont (April 2000).

¹³⁰ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/037, File 5 Niva Erwin transcript of taped interview.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Susan Harris., *Nilo’s Journey*.

As Alexei Golubev suggests, the more ridiculous agitators' arguments were, the more impact they sometimes had, especially on children and youth: "In one Finnish school, an agitator delivered a lecture about the future realm of workers, with equality and justice for all. When children asked where he got this information from, the agitator responded that he learned about that from Karl Marx who came to Finland during summer vacations of 1930."¹³³ Such stories had a profound impact, in particular on children who would later vividly recall the whirlpool of events that would take them away to Karelia. One of the leading recruiter's daughters, Mayme Sevander, who moved with her family to the Soviet Union at the age of 11, later would write in all her books that ideological fanaticism was the main reason for the Karelian fever.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century Finnish socialist community halls were the cultural and social centers of North American Finnish communities. Dances, parties, art and theater classes, as well as workers' meetings were held at these centers. In the 1920s they came to serve as sites of agitation for the Soviet cause, and by the early 1930s also became a central venue through which KTA agents relayed the recruiting message. Matti Tenhunen, Oscar Corgan, Kalle Aronen, and Jussi Latva, the four heads of the KTA offices, frequented these halls to propagandize Karelia. Stories about social, political, and cultural life in the Soviet Union were also spread by official delegations sent to Soviet Karelia by ethnic community organizations. After their return delegations usually embarked on cross-country tours to share their experiences, promote Karelia, and further spur recruitment. Public lectures and speeches given at these gatherings often attracted hundreds of spectators and were also usually published in the socialist press. An example of this typical occurrence is a series of lectures given by John Virta on a tour

¹³³ Reino Kero, *Suureen Lanteen: Siirtolaisuus Suomesta Yhdysvaltoihin*, (Turku: Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, 1996), p. 278.

across Northern Ontario after his return from Soviet Karelia in late 1931,¹³⁴ where he accentuated good living conditions in the Soviet Union, and denied the increasing immigrant return rates from Karelia, despite evidence to the contrary. American and Canadian communist party members with public speaking talents met with people at local halls, but also frequented people's homes to attract additional recruits to Karelia.¹³⁵

Farewell parties organized for those departing for Karelia also served as sites of propaganda. For example, on 27 May 1931 a crowd of 3,000 gathered at Port Arthur to see sixty Canadian lumberjacks off to the Soviet Union.¹³⁶ These colorful and well-attended events became a form of a celebration of class struggle and provided an ideological link between North American and Soviet workers. Locals of the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) were in fact encouraged to give farewell parties.¹³⁷ Its leaders believed that extensive media coverage of these spectacles would help the FOC advertise itself and attract new members. For example, a left-wing Finnish community in Kirkland, Ontario was particularly concerned about people leaving for Karelia. By the early 1930s immigration from Finland to Canada virtually halted, and depleting membership in ethnic organizations became a concern for leaders of the FOC who thought the community was in danger of losing its cohesiveness.¹³⁸

Nonetheless, the FOC was actively involved in the recruiting process and even sent several delegations to the Soviet Union to counter 'lies' spread in the Finnish press by returning immigrants about miserable living conditions in the Soviet Union. One such group was

¹³⁴ *Vapaus*, October 5, 1931.

¹³⁵ Mayme Sevander, *Of Soviet Bondage*, (Duluth, MN: OSCAT, 1996), p. 8.

¹³⁶ *Vapaus*, May 27, 1931.

¹³⁷ *Vapaus*, May, 18, 1931.

¹³⁸ *Vapaus*, Sep 24, 1931.

organized and headed by Gus Sundquist, head of the FOC.¹³⁹ Returning speakers' public appearances drew large crowds (up to 600 people) in cities like Port Arthur and Fort William. This shows that interest in Soviet Karelia among North American Finns was high. In a letter addressed to New York, dated March 1932, John (Jussi) Latva, the head recruiter in Canada, referring to the large influx of people to the KTA offices, mentioned the term Karelian fever for the first time. He wrote that in the previous two days he had received 60 immigrant applications, and expressed concern about the danger of a looming war that could halt this exodus from Canada.¹⁴⁰

North American Finnish community leaders were enthusiastic about sending Finnish workers to buttress the republic's Finnish demography, language, and culture, and were also very particular and selective about the kinds of people they would allow to migrate to Soviet Karelia. The FOC, for example, sent only its most outstanding members. The fact that leaders of the organization were responsible for screening applicants allowed them to restrict emigration of 'undesirable' elements of the North American Finnish society. Grounds for rejection included womanizing, addiction to alcohol, passivity in community work, and refusal to subscribe to socialist newspapers.¹⁴¹ The truth that the FOC expected 'proper' Finns to subscribe to socialist newspapers demonstrates the importance placed by the leadership on the media as means of organizing North American Finnish communities.

¹³⁹ Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/0340, File 18.

¹⁴⁰ Национальный Архив республики Карели (from here on referred to as НАРК), Ф. 685, оп. 2, д. 136 (Переписка с инрабочими, списки по предприятиям) л. 49 Выдержки из письма нашего представителя в Канаде тов. Иогана Латва, Торонто, 8 марта 1932 г. Reference to the looming war can be explained by Latva's embodiment of dominant Soviet discourses – which constantly warned of a looming war, of a possible military intervention of capitalist states in Soviet Russia.

¹⁴¹ Sevander. *Of Soviet Bondage*, p. 8.

Karelia presented an opportunity, a gateway to a possible return – a triumphant ‘homecoming’ to the soon to become socialist version of Finland. Finnish socialist leaders had been disappointed by defeat during the Finnish Civil War, but were reinvigorated by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Most red Finnish activists fled to Russia and established there a new Finnish Communist Party. As a result, Russia became a focal point for many left-wing Finns in North America. Developments in Karelia, and the promise of the republic becoming a socialist Finnish entity, with an eventual (or as certain as the logic of historical determinism of Marxism-Leninism dictates) incorporation of the rest of Finland under a Great Red Finland banner, meant that Karelia was becoming a hub of attention for left-wing Finns abroad.

Recruiters, affiliated in one way or another with the leadership of North American Finnish organizations, played a crucial role in selling Soviet Karelia to North American Finns. The fact is that with the opening of KTA offices in New York and Toronto in 1931 the number of Finns leaving North America increased exponentially. Whereas in 1930 only about 100 immigrants departed to Karelia, in 1931 the number would skyrocket to almost 2,000.¹⁴² In the next two years, over 6,000 North American Finns would make their way to Soviet Karelia, a number many times larger compared to the trickles of North American Finns to Soviet Karelia throughout the 1920s. Although it is true that Soviet immigration policies were more relaxed in the early 1930s, as well as the fact that the Great Depression encouraged many to look for employment elsewhere, nonetheless, the large number of emigrants can only be explained by the persuasive rhetoric of recruiters.

¹⁴² See graphs 8.1, 9.1.

Role of the Finnish-Socialist Press

The press played a central role in fostering a utopian image of both the Soviet Union and Soviet Karelia. The North American left-wing Finnish press, in contrast to the ethnic conservative/right wing one, was well coordinated in its attempts to reach wider audiences.¹⁴³ Organs such as *Tyomies* in the United States, *Vapaa Sana and Vapaus* in Canada, and *Punainen Karjalan* (Red Karelia) published both in Karelia and North American Finnish communities, continuously celebrated Soviet Karelia. This relenting propaganda campaign contributed substantially to the increase in the popularity of socialism and communism in North American immigrant communities throughout the 1920s and the 1930s.

In Canada for example, the circulation of *Vapaus* in the period between 1911 and 1939 was at its highest in 1932, at 5,000 subscribers.¹⁴⁴ Coincidentally membership in the FOC also reached its peak in 1932 and 1933. As a result, in the early 1930s, in the midst of the Karelian fever, the popularity of socialist ideals in the North American Finnish communities was at an all time high. A reading of the *Vapaus* in the early 1930s is revealing. In January 1931, the newspaper announced that the Soviet Union was to recruit workers to Soviet Karelia, that 30 people had already departed, and given the acute labor shortages in the Soviet Union, especially in the lumber industry, many more were needed.¹⁴⁵ A common feature in many issues were celebrations of international communist figures such as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; praise of Finland's 1918 revolution; and a systemic slander of the Finnish government.

¹⁴³ Auvo Kostiaainen, "Finns," in Hoerder with Harzig (eds.), *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s*, vol. 1, p. 243.

¹⁴⁴ Edward Laine, *On the Archival Heritage of the Finnish Canadian Working-Class Movement: A Researcher's Guide and Inventory to the Finnish Organization of Canada Collection at the National Archives of Canada*, (Turku, Finland: Institute of Migration, 1987).

¹⁴⁵ Vaino, Jarvi, "Finish Canadian Bushworkers in Soviet Karelia", *Vapaus* Jan 14, 1931.

The newspaper also kept track of unemployment numbers and at any opportune moment highlighted and celebrated organized labor protests across Canada. Headlines such as “With the help of Leninism, fight against imperialist war, social fascism, against right wing and left wing digressions and for the revolution and a Soviet Canada”¹⁴⁶ were common phenomena. *Vapaus* was dominated by visually attractive symbols of socialism and communism, with hammers and sickles decorating several pages of every issue. The same pages often contained Finnish poems and stories of the Finnish civil war.¹⁴⁷ A collage of such symbols, it seems, offered an easy way to interpret the relation between Finnish culture, socialism, North American communities, and Soviet Karelia.

One of *Vapaus*' editors even called Karelia “unelmien todelisuus”, a place where dreams come true.¹⁴⁸ He urged the unemployed to go to Karelia, where Finnish people had forsaken the slavery of capitalism.¹⁴⁹ “The Soviet Union” exclaimed another author “is the only fatherland for workers.”¹⁵⁰ In February 1931, an article reprinted from the *New York Times*, questioned if the world's emigration movement was shifting to the Soviet Union, as many automobile workers had moved there and approximately 13,000 technicians and engineers signed special work contracts.¹⁵¹

Vapaus often came to the defense of the FOC endorsed Karelian initiative. When unsympathetic reports about life in Karelia surfaced in the press in September 1931, *Vapaus* was quick to denounce them. A certain Kemppainen had gone from the United States to Karelia, and upon return wrote a critical commentary of life there that was published in *Sault St. Marie News*

¹⁴⁶ *Vapaus* Jan, 17, 1931.

¹⁴⁷ “To Karelia”, *Vapaus*, Feb 5, 1931.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ *Vapaus*, Feb 13, 1931.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

and the *Upper Michigan Farm Journal*, and then reprinted in the *Canadian Uutiset*.¹⁵² The public response and criticism of Kempainen was swift and fierce. Letters arrived from both within Canada and Karelia to denounce Kempainen and others like him. Among many things, he was accused of being a drunk and a lazy socialist. Many it seems shared the belief that people like Kempainen misinformed the public about the living conditions in the Soviet Union as did mainstream Canadian bourgeois newspapers, which at that time widely reported about the existence of brutal labor camps throughout the Soviet Union, including Karelia.¹⁵³

Vapaus was in fact at the forefront of the recruiting process. The newspaper supported and advertised policies of the Comintern, bolstered the relevance of Karelia to Finnish national culture, provided detailed instructions on how to apply for work overseas, and even suggested what to take along to the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴ Its caricatures ridiculed the failing capitalist system in North America, graphically depicting unemployment, riots, and hunger marches, while at the same time praising the Soviet Union, where work and social care appeared guaranteed for all.¹⁵⁵ One of the tactics contrasted negative images of closing factories and large unemployed striking crowds in North America and the glorified images of the hammer and sickle in the background of healthy and physically strong workers fulfilling the first five-year plan in the Soviet Union.

Finnish communities in North America and Karelia were connected by *Punainen Karjala*. As a matter of fact North American Finnish and non-Finnish socialist publications were available in Karelia throughout the 1930s. Sources indicate that successive waves of immigrants often brought copies of the *Daily Worker* and the *Tyomies* with them, or they were sent by

¹⁵² *Vapaus*, Nov 27, 1931.

¹⁵³ Several articles on Soviet labor camps appeared in the *Toronto Star* in the late 1920s. One of the articles recapped the stories of several North American Finns who escaped the Gulag in 1929. "Tales of Horror Told by Prisoners of Soviet who Fled to Finland", *Toronto Star*, December 14, 1929.

¹⁵⁴ *Vapaus*, January 17, 1932.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

friends and relatives from Canada and the United States via mail. The reverse was also true and North American Finns' economic and political achievements in Karelia were followed in the Canadian and American Finnish communities. From the early 1930s, the town of Matrossi, along with other timber industry settlements where North American lumberjacks constituted the majority of the workforce, such as Vilga, Interposiolok and Lososinskiy logging camps, became centers where the latest technologies for forest harvesting and transportation were taught to local workers.¹⁵⁶ Karelian authorities even established a special school in Matrossi to teach local workers North American working methods.¹⁵⁷ These places were meant to become model communes and settlements, from which Canadian and American Finnish experience was to be disseminated throughout the Soviet Union in efforts to increase production on farms and factories. These schools and settlements were portrayed in the North American Finnish socialist media as model societies, where culture, ideology, nationality and skill came together to create a sense of a Finnish socialist utopia.

Constant efforts in *Tyomies* and *Vapaus* to depict life in Karelia on the verge of utopia were in many ways reflective of socialist realism – an official Soviet art form institutionalized by Stalin in 1934. In the discourse of socialist realism, consistent with Marxist-Leninist ideology “a true representation of society that was in the process of building socialism involved the depiction not only of ‘life as it is’ but also ‘life as it is becoming’. If life as it was in the 1930s lacked culture and consumer goods, the socialist future promised both to all Soviet citizens.¹⁵⁸ In the

¹⁵⁶ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala “The Harsh Reality of Fine Words”, in *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, ed. Markku Kangaspuro and Samira Saramo, Special Double Issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* 15 (2011), pp. 126-147.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 223.

words of Sheila Fitzpatrick the basic trope of socialist realism is “the superimposition of a better ‘soon’ on a still imperfect ‘now’.”¹⁵⁹

The Finnish-socialist press in Canada and the United States was a site where conflicting claims of belonging, and frameworks of identity, were articulated and renegotiated. Prompted by particular visions of the future, leaders of the left-wing Finnish Diaspora participated in a process of cultural production and diffusion of what they perceived as commonly shared political, social, and cultural ideals and myths. In their hands, the ethnic press became a crucial component in shaping one’s ethnic identity in the Diaspora. While the family unit remained the principle producer of culture in the private sphere, immigrant institutions monopolized the process in the public one. The arrival of immigrants usually revitalizes the diaspora by providing it with additional bodies to legitimize the existence of national or ethnic imagined communities. By encouraging migration to Soviet Karelia, the FOC in this way endorsed a new “point of return” for the Finnish left. It rendered Karelia the focal point of left-wing Finnish culture and identity.

Facilitating Comintern Propaganda in North America

The Comintern, the CPC, and the CPUSA, combined with the relentless efforts by the recruiters to portray the Soviet Union in the best possible light, all contributed to the content the socialist media fed North American Finns, and constituted the imperative context and discourse in which the Karelian fever took place. It fixated a certain image of work and life in the Soviet Union that aimed to appeal to American and Canadian Finnish audiences disillusioned by the economic depression in North America.

North American English language socialist publications such as *The Daily Worker* in the United States and *The Worker* in Canada provided continuous coverage on social, cultural, and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

political developments in the Soviet Union. The radical press in Canada never let an opportunity pass to draw the public's attention to the achievements of the Soviet socialist economy and the breakdown of the Canadian capitalist system. In line with the Comintern, *The Daily Worker* often exaggerated the successes of the Five-Year Plan in the Soviet Union. In one article, entitled 'Only in the USSR the Living Standards of the Working Class are Being Raised', the author highlights that in the capitalist countries:

There is unprecedented, widespread unemployment, involving tens of millions, at the time when the employers are waging continuous attacks upon the already miserable wage-rates of the workers, when in the countries of capital unbearable and cruel slavery actually rules, in the Soviet Union the creative initiative of the wide working masses is steadily growing, wages are going up, the government social insurance funds increasing, unemployment liquidated, the cultural standards of the most backward people being raised.¹⁶⁰

The advent of the Great Depression in 1929 only intensified press' attacks on capitalism in North America. The socialist media, particularly in Canada, was, like many information outlets, far from independent. For example, the Comintern often pressured the CPC to adopt the Third Period policy in its agenda.¹⁶¹ In fact, it can be argued that from 1930 on, CPC's policies and programs were determined by narrowly perceived diplomatic concerns of the Soviet bureaucracy.¹⁶² Policy changes in the Soviet Union also meant a metamorphosis in the itinerary of international communism and a subsequent modification of the goals of the CPC. The new task of all communist parties, declared the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), was first and foremost the defense of the Soviet Union. In 1929 the Tenth ECCI Plenum

¹⁶⁰ Library and Archives Canada (from here on referred to as LAC), Group 28 IV 4, reel M-7385, file D 0636. An article in the *Daily Worker*, date unknown. Most likely written in Spring of 1931.

¹⁶¹ The Third Period policy was a theoretical concept adopted by the Communist International in 1928. According to Comintern's analysis economic development in the capitalist world following 1928 would tailspin into an economic collapse, accompanied by mass working class radicalization, which would make conditions in the countries affected ripe for a proletarian revolution.

¹⁶² Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada*, (Montreal: Vanguard Press, 1981), p. 11.

assessed the international situation and the impending tasks of the Comintern's sections as follows:

In the struggle against the threatening war danger, against the capitalist offensive, and against the campaign of slander of the reformists, all communist parties must carry on a broad enlightenment campaign to explain the gigantic achievements of socialist construction in the Soviet Union (the Five Year Plan).¹⁶³

In April 1931, the Eleventh ECCI Plenum declared that the immediate task of the Comintern sections was to protect the interests of the Soviet Union: "it imposes on all Comintern sections the duty of conducting the most active struggle in defense of the Soviet Union..."¹⁶⁴

The Comintern's pressure on the CPC to adopt the Third Period policy in its agenda had a direct effect on the fate of many left-wing Finnish Canadians. Promises of a bountiful future in the 'workers' paradise' could not have come at a more opportune moment. The North American continent was in economic, social and political disarray. In April 1929, the Comintern bluntly intervened in CPC affairs, first by delaying its convention, and then, utilizing the available time to entrench the Buck-Smith faction in power. Tim Buck promised Canadian communists' unconditional conformity to Stalinists in Moscow; he would remain the leader of Canadian communists well into the 1960s. The Lenin School, established by the Comintern in Moscow in the 1920s became a medium through which changes in communist doctrine were conveyed from the Kremlin to Canada.¹⁶⁵ Stewart Smith, Buck's right hand in the CPC was the school's most prominent Canadian student in the late 1920s. He was also responsible for a great deal of Soviet propaganda that appeared in the *Worker*, CPC's official press organ. At the sixth convention of the CPC in 1929, Smith's speech on the international situation, writes Angus, "was as close to

¹⁶³ *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents*. Volume 3, 1929-1943. Selected and Edited by Jane Degras, (Routledge: New Impression Edition, 1971), p. 51.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

the contemporary Comintern orthodoxy as might be expected...everything was predicated on the view that the entire world had now entered 'the third period of capitalist development'."¹⁶⁶

The Comintern's program in Canada was spread by the CPC, its branch organizations, and the radical press. Dated May 19th, 1931 a letter from CPC's Central Agitprop Department to the Cultural Department of the Profintern reads:

In connection with the cultural work of our organization here, we request that you try to furnish us with a number of suitable plays in the Russian, Ukrainian or Bulgarian languages...we have a shortage of suitable revolutionary drama...we also request that you send us a popular text-book or guide for our dramatic circles in the Russian language.¹⁶⁷

In the early part of 1931, the Comintern issued a 20 page, 46 section paper entitled "Resolution on the Tasks of the CP of Canada". The document was printed in English, French, and Russian. The file carries an entire overview of the actions to be undertaken by Canadian communists in relation to the Third Period policy in Canada.

Furthermore, in July of the same year, a report on the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the CPC explicitly stated the aims of the propaganda campaign in Canada:

In our propaganda, we must see that we link up concretely the problems confronting all sections of the working class with the war danger. If possible, use local and sectorial grievances of the workers and farmers and link them up with the war danger and the danger of attack against USSR.¹⁶⁸

The task of communist leaders in Canada it seemed was to find commonalities between random occurrences in Canada and virtually unrelated policies of the Moscow-controlled Comintern and convince the public of the entangling and interdependent relationship between their miseries in North America and foreign and internal affairs of the first workers' state. The first item on the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁶⁷ LAC, The Comintern Fonds MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98. Letter from the Central Agitprop Department of the CPC to the Cultural Dept. at the Profintern in Moscow.

¹⁶⁸ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98. Report on the meeting of the CEC 14.7.1931.

agenda of the Central Agitprop department meeting in summer 1931 was to propagandize the centrality of the Soviet Union and of the CPSU to the Canadian proletarian cause:

When speaking of USSR and its successes, we must state that without the existence of the party there would not have been and cannot be any Soviet Union. The success of socialist construction is entirely due to the existence and principles of the party of Lenin. This must be made clear.¹⁶⁹

The CPC's most advertised slogan in 1931 was "Help the Soviet Union to complete its Five-Year Plan without outside intervention."¹⁷⁰

Leaders of the CPC were instrumental in spreading pro-Soviet propaganda in Canada. Tim Buck drew huge crowds for his speeches. In December of 1934, for example, 3,500 flooded Massey Hall to hear and see Buck; another 17,000 gathered at Maple Leaf Gardens several months earlier following Buck's release from prison.¹⁷¹ Mass meetings were held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, drawing a crowd of about 600 sympathetic spectators to listen to the speeches of a delegation returning from the Soviet Union.¹⁷² Two communist meetings in Montreal, one under the auspices of the Friends of the Soviet Union and another featuring Tim Buck, attracted crowds of 5000 and 10000 respectively.¹⁷³ It was important for communist leaders to support and promote the Soviet Union at least for the fact that the first socialist state by its mere existence, in many respects, gave credibility to the North American left.

The Karelian Fever and the CPC: Transnational Hierarchies

The next section demonstrates that the actions of communist leaders in North America and the Soviet Union were first of all interdependent, and second, were situated within specific

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98.

¹⁷¹ RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, 28th December, 1934. Secret No. 711. Summary Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934*.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid. The RCMP followed CPC spokesmen on cross-country propaganda tours.

transnational hierarchy of power. Tenhunen and Latva, heads of the KTA offices in New York and Toronto, both lived in North America. They were employed by the Karelian government to which they answered directly, and as a result traveled extensively across the Atlantic. In their efforts to recruit left-wing Finns, they had to deal with the opposition of the Canadian and American communist parties to the exodus of some of their best members. After all, Finns constituted significant percentages of the CPUSA and the CPC memberships.

Notwithstanding the fact that Tim Buck and the CPC eventually cooperated with Tenhunen and Latva, they did so reluctantly. While to some extent the CPC was ready to support those who wanted to move to the Soviet Union, it did not want to give any special preferences to Finnish migrants: “we finally can treat the applications from Finnish comrades in the same fashion as all other applications and we will not have to take into consideration their special plea that they are going to Karelia.”¹⁷⁴ In May of 1931 the executive committee of the CPC emphasized that although questionnaires for transfers to Karelia would be sent to the districts, “they must not be sent out to the units, since many comrades would consider it as an invitation.”¹⁷⁵ Although Canadian communist leaders adhered to the international communist hierarchy and discipline, they nonetheless wanted the “Karelian Project” to be advertised as little as possible.¹⁷⁶ On several occasions the party’s Central Executive Committee (CEC) issued statements reminding that all party members requesting transfer had to get party approval first: “again we warn that the question of the ‘run’ to the USSR of groups of Party members and

¹⁷⁴ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/039, File 11 Communist Party Archives (Evgeny Efremkin Research File) Letter to Sundquist March 25, 1931.

¹⁷⁵ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/039, File 11 Communist Party Archives (Evgeny Efremkin Research File) Report on the meeting of CEC 7.4.1931

¹⁷⁶ On the concept of a “Karelian Project”, see Evgeny Efremkin, “Karelian Project or Karelian Fever? Orders from Above, Reaction from Below: Conflicting Interests in Kremlin, Karelia and Canada”, *North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s: Proceedings of International Research Seminar May 2008.*, ed. Irina Takala and Ilya Solimeshch. Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press, 2008, pp. 55-83.

individual comrades, without permission, must stop...we need every fighter here”.¹⁷⁷ The CPC, like its counterpart in the United States, was worried that the exodus of socialist Finns, who were the backbone of North American communist parties, would be detrimental to the labor movement in North America.

A letter from the CEC to Gus Sundquist, the man in charge of Karelian transfer applications, shows that there was a stringent limit set on the number of party members allowed to leave. “Dear comrade:” reads the letter, “there are dozens of applications coming in steadily from Finnish comrades for transfers to the USSR. You remember that the political Bureau decided that not more than 15 or 20% are to be Party members.”¹⁷⁸ Restrictions on party members leaving for Karelia were discussed by CEC as early as 1929. In a letter to Alf Hautimaki in Port Arthur, dated November 2, 1929, the Polcom gave the following instructions on the matter of the Karelian Lumber Commune: “...also that in selecting the Commune you will not draw too heavy on those workers who are valuable to the Party.”¹⁷⁹

The Party reminded comrades that: “...his or her duty to our class and the USSR is to carry on the struggle here and not attempt to solve the personal difficulties by immigrating to the country of Proletarian Dictatorship.”¹⁸⁰ On several occasions party members disobeyed the center:

However it appears that some Party comrades do not take decision of the centre seriously and leave on their own. Often these comrades misuse their party membership. The Political bureau dealt severely with the 8 party comrades of Montreal who have organized a commune to the USSR behind the back of the Party.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/039, File 11 Communist Party Archives (Evgeny Efremkin Research File) Report on the meeting of CEC 9.6.1931.

¹⁷⁸ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98. Letter from the CEC to G. Sundquist 25.3.1931.

¹⁷⁹ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98. Letter from the CEC to Alf Hautamaki 15.11.1929.

¹⁸⁰ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98. CPC’s resolution on transfers to Karelia.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

The Canadian communist leadership was also convinced that a number of comrades joined the party only in order to facilitate a transfer to USSR. A report of the CEC meeting on Oct 15, 1931 reads:

In connection with the emigration to the USSR we receive reports that in some localities leading comrades carry around bundles of party materials and addresses saying that if they are arrested it will help to get themselves deported to the USSR. This is no less than treachery to the Party and strict disciplinary measures are to be adopted in such cases.¹⁸²

This statement raises doubts about whether some Finns were at all dissatisfied when deported by the Canadian authorities. It appears that some of them in fact were anxious to get deported, because it was the only way they could get around CPC's approval and sail off to the "promised land."

Despite the opposition to the Karelian venture, both the CPC and the CPUSA nonetheless agreed, in one way or another, to facilitate some transfers. What allowed coordination between the recruiters, Karelian authorities, the CPC, the CPUSA, and the Finnish socialist organizations in North America, was a complex web of transnational interrelations developed throughout the first part of the 20th century on individual, organizational and national levels. First, the rigid structure of international communism, headed by the Comintern, demanded obedience to the decisions reached in Moscow, and as a result secured some form of coordination through official transnational communication lines.

Evidence for the top-down character of the relationship between the recruiters, who represented the Soviet Karelian government, and the CPC can be found in the correspondence between Matti Tenhunen, Karelia's main recruiter and agitator in North America, and Tim Buck, head of the CPC. In his letters, dated May 1931 Tenhunen asks Buck to be as cooperative as

¹⁸² CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/039, File 11 Communist Party Archives (Evgeny Efrekin Research File) Report on the meeting of CEC 15.10.1931.

possible in granting Finnish members transfers to the Soviet Union, given that he, Tenhunen, had clear instructions from above: “I have very close instructions from *otherside* [my italics] from both political and state offices...and we went on very nicely working out program for this [Karelian] work on basis of instructions and general line set from *otherside*.”¹⁸³ When Buck appeared to be hesitant about giving his blessing to the Karelian venture, Tenhunen bluntly replied: “I think it is error from part of [CPC] comrades if they think that this matter of bringing over about 3000 workers from US and Canada before end of this year is *for discussion*.”¹⁸⁴ Tenhunen insisted that the recruitment process was not negotiable. Orders were given and they must be executed: “this matter is not nature of party discussion and it has not been practice in the past to submit *decision of Soviet Union for discussion*.”¹⁸⁵ Tenhunen was explicit that the CPC could only deal with political matters, such as providing background checks on recruits’ political and social activities. Tenhunen also assured Buck that any questions regarding his authority in matters pertaining to recruitment could be quickly settled by contacting the Kremlin: “questions of my right to come and organize staff to work and ask you to give political guidance is very easily settled by wiring to other side.”¹⁸⁶

Appropriating Finnish Socialist Identity

Almost all sources point to the fact that while the leadership of the CPUSA and of the CPC was somewhat reserved about emigration of socialist Finns from Canada and the United States, leaders of North American Finnish communities supported this migration, often enthusiastically. As mentioned, developments in Karelia, and the promise of a socialist Finnish

¹⁸³ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98, k282. Letter from Matti Tenhunen to Tim Buck 17.5.1931.

¹⁸⁴ LAC, The Comintern Fonds, MG 10 K 3, Fonds 495, file list 98, k282. Letter from Matti Tenhunen to Tim Buck 22.5.1931.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

entity, made Karelia the focal point of attention for left-wing Finns abroad. As a result, leaders of North American Finnish communities were keen on sending Finnish workers to buttress the republics' Finnish demography, language and culture. For this particular ethnic "elite" the survival and perpetuation of the ethnic and ideological ideals and identities they upheld and promoted depended in large part on the success of the Karelian fever. Several historians have demonstrated convincingly that the FOC was often at odds with instructions received from Moscow and was not afraid to resist and disobey the official line of the Comintern.¹⁸⁷ Thus, the fact that the organization wholeheartedly supported and assisted the recruitment of North American Finns to Soviet Karelia, indicates the level of commitment to the Karelian cause, but also makes one wonder about the motivations behind such eagerness.

The minutes of the national convention of the FOC reveal the efforts deployed by its leaders to stress the achievements of the U.S.S.R and the role the FOC played in "developing the productive energy of Soviet Karelia – the Fatherland of all Finnish workers."¹⁸⁸ Salminen, Chairman of the Executive Committee, often referred to the Soviet Union in his speeches as the property of the international proletariat. He also claimed that it was the FOC that should be credited with sending all the migrants to Soviet Karelia. "The Finnish organization of Canada", he said, "made no mistake by sending over 2,000 Finns to Soviet Karelia helping to execute the socialist building program of that country."¹⁸⁹ Salminen argued that the consolidation of Soviet

¹⁸⁷ See Samira Saramo, "Road to Utopia: Finnish Life in Canada Up to 'Karelian Fever'." In *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*. Edited by Markku Kangaspuro and Samira Saramo, *Journal of Finnish Studies*, Special Edition, 15, 1&2 (2012): 18-38.

¹⁸⁸ RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, 16th October, 1935. Summary Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935*, edited by Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker. St. John's. Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Karelia was of extreme importance given its strategic location in case of a war against imperialists: “It is the wall between the latter and ‘butcher’ Finland.”¹⁹⁰

The FOC seemed to be impervious to change in its stance on the Karelian venture. It promoted Soviet Karelia as a homeland of Finnish workers until 1936, when Gylling and Rovio were already long displaced in Karelia and the Finns’ privileged status was supplanted by a gradually rising ethnically based persecution. Even when notable Finnish communists began returning to Canada and denounced the actions of Soviet leaders, the FOC remained loyal to the Comintern’s line. Salminen for example claimed all those who returned, estimated at about 20 percent of the total, were allegedly all “becoming tools of the enemies of the Soviet Union.”¹⁹¹ In December of 1936, when a Finnish member of the CPC, who was in charge of the local Vapaus library in Montreal, returned from Soviet Karelia, the Finnish bureau of the CPC decided to expel him, on the grounds that, having been a disciplined member of the party, he should have remained in the Soviet Union regardless of conditions there.”¹⁹²

Finnish socialist halls were multipurpose community centers that served many of the social, cultural, political and economic needs of their members.¹⁹³ Some historians have pointed out that it was in these halls where the Finnish brand of socialism became closely intertwined with the Finnish culture. For their part, Finnish-Canadian leaders knew too well how to exploit the alienation immigrants faced in the hostile Anglo-Saxon environment in order to solidify their

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, 6th December, 1936. Summary Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part III, 1936*, edited by Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker. St. John’s. Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1995.

¹⁹³ See Varpu Lindstrom, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada*. Multicultural History Society of Toronto, 1988.

own position/status in the community.¹⁹⁴ To underscore immigrants' miseries in North America, the FOC disseminated publications in Finnish, placing an emphasis on the alleged contrast between American and Soviet societies. The FOC conventions called for the "Canadian Finnish workers and poor farmers [to mobilize] against the savage terror in Fascist Finland and in support of the heroic Finnish Proletariat."¹⁹⁵ Popularization initiatives of achievements in the USSR were often among the organization's top priorities. In particular, the FOC concentrated on the achievements of Soviet Karelia, trying to convince its audience that under the Soviet banner all workers and toiling farmers, not withstanding race or nationality, could build a new life.¹⁹⁶

The FOC appropriated the Karelian fever in its own folklore, depicting itself as the vanguard of the movement. Ethnicity is not value free and carries with it an ideological message.¹⁹⁷ The dialectical process of politicization of ethnic communities occurs when the rank and file embodies the discourses emanating from communication channels that are typically controlled by ethnic elites, and then use this information in their own interest. Whereas for individual migrants, the move to Soviet Karelia served their immediate economic and cultural needs, for leaders of ethnic institutions the Karelian fever gave an opportunity to legitimize their leadership, reformulate communal ethnic identity, and strengthen its ideological tenets.

¹⁹⁴ See Orest Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: Formative Years: 1891-1924*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press: University of Alberta Press, 1991; Carmela Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: Politicizing Hungarian Immigrants in Interwar Canada*. McGill-Queens Studies in Ethnic History Series, 1994; John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian pro-Communist Organizations in Canada*. PMA Books, 1979. These works are particularly useful in examining the process of cultural production and diffusion in the Diaspora. Kolasky, for example, looks at the way the Ukrainian Labor-Farmer Temple Association center in Winnipeg disseminated publications – newspapers, journals, texts and books – in the city. Communists realized the alienation Ukrainians experienced in immigration and often stressed it in their writings and addresses. Ethnic leaders exploited this opportunity to promote their causes and in the process redefined migrants' socio-political identities. Given Anglo-Saxon hostility, communist affiliation gave migrant groups a refuge, a place where they could congregate.

¹⁹⁵ RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, 16th October, 1935. Summary Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935*, edited by Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker. St. John's. Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ J.Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion*.

Alternative Finlands

There is a need to explain Finns' predisposition to left-wing politics in North America. The Finnish Civil War of 1918 and its outcome had a significant impact on the way many Finnish immigrants defined themselves in Canada and the United States. Finns, like many other ethnic groups, strongly identified with national politics of the mother country. Political developments in Finland generated the conditions for the 'Great Divide' in the Finnish community: a division between those who supported the conservative nationalist regime of the 'White Guard' in Finland, and those who defended the cause of the "Red Guard", composed of socialists and communists.¹⁹⁸ The ideological split divided localities, communities, neighborhoods, and even families into warring camps. The presence of the 'Great Divide' and the institutional character it bore is central to the history of early Finnish settlements in North America.¹⁹⁹ In fact, it was only by the late 1980s that the 'Great Divide' ceased to be a divisive force in the Finnish North American communities.²⁰⁰

Some scholars suggest that socialist consciousness was inherent to Finnish immigrants even before they arrived in the New World. Others argue that it was the leaders of the Finnish communities, the labor aristocracy, who injected immigrant neighborhoods with communist ideology. Nonetheless, there is a prevalent consensus that the development of socialist institutions and organizations was a phenomenon unique to the experience of Finnish immigrant communities in Canada and the United States. Therefore, left-wing institutionalization and radical politicization of Finnish immigrants in North America was the result of an interaction

¹⁹⁸ Oiva Saarinen, "Geographical Perspectives on Finnish Settlements in the Sudbury Area." In V. Lindstrom, O. Saarinen and B. Vahamaki (ed.), *Melting into Great Waters: Papers from Finnforum V*, a special issue of *Journal of Finnish Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 Dec 1997, p. 21.

¹⁹⁹ Oiva Saarinen, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Historical Geography of the Finns in the Sudbury Area*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

between the host society and the Finnish community, which created a new social, cultural and political Finno-Canadian identity. Arthur Puotinen, for example, argues that Finnish political radicalism in the United States developed according to the peculiar social conditions the newly arrived experienced in the New World.²⁰¹ He also credits William Høglund for capturing the unique essence of Finnish North American political radicalism: “if Finland prepared the immigrants for socialism, America ripened them.”²⁰² Finns were one of the latest immigrant groups to arrive in Canada; they often occupied the most dangerous and low paying positions in the Canadian labor force and, thus, were more vulnerable to radicalization. As a result, we can suggest with confidence that radicalization of North American Finns occurred as a result of the unfavorable socio-economic conditions they encountered in Canada and the United States.

That said, nothing solidifies the legitimacy and the myth of an imagined community better than the triumphant return after an exodus. Migration movements, their meanings, and identities are usually canonized by the discursive languages of the national and diasporic entities within and between which migrants are in motion. For example, return migration from North America to Finland in the early decades of the 20th century was celebrated by the Finnish state as well as by leaders of right wing “white” Finnish Diaspora in Canada. Between 1860 and 1920 about 10 percent of Finland’s entire population immigrated to North America.²⁰³ Public reaction to emigration in Finland was divided along conservative and left-wing lines, where both camps, albeit for different reasons, deemed emigration undesirable, and aimed to discourage the

²⁰¹ Puotinen, Arthur, ‘Church and Labor Conflict in Northern Michigan’, in M. Karni (ed.), *Finnish Diaspora II: United States*. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981, p. 143.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Reino Kero, *Suuren Länteen: siirtolaisuus Suomesta Yhdysvaltoihin ja Kanadaan* [To the Great West: immigration from Finland to the United States and Canada] (Turku: Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, 1996), p. 58.

exodus.²⁰⁴ By the early 20th century the rhetoric of public officials in Finland shifted from blaming the emigrant for irresponsibility, towards ensuring contacts between Finnish emigrants and Finland.²⁰⁵ Following the achievement of independence in 1918 the Finnish state further expanded its contacts with Finns abroad. As early as 1908 the state made several attempts to improve contact with émigrés by publishing and circulating booklets in North America to advertise opportunities in Finland and encourage return.²⁰⁶

Links between the Finnish state and the Finnish Diaspora were further solidified in 1927 with the founding of the Suomi-Seura (Suomi Society) and the Overseas Finns' Association.²⁰⁷ It was hoped that improvements in lines of communication would spur more Finns to return. In the 1920s there was also a marked increase in organized group visits to Finland. At the same time, the Finnish government, interested in return migration both for demographic and economic reasons, began targeting a particular type of emigrant - migrants with savings. The government hoped that they would benefit the deteriorating Finnish economy.²⁰⁸ The Finnish socialist media in North America was quick to denounce the campaign as an attempt to rob migrants of their savings.²⁰⁹ It dismissed Finland as a doomed state with a deteriorating economy, and tried to discourage return as much as possible. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Karelian recruitment would bear a similar, economic character in the early 1930s, as the first rubric on the immigration applications would ask to indicate the applicant's ability to contribute to a so called 'machine fund', which was supposed to finance the industrialization of Karelia. For the most part, the more a potential immigrant could contribute to the fund, the more likely his or her application was to

²⁰⁴ Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement or Return*, p. 188.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 189.

²⁰⁷ Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement or Return*, p. 190.

²⁰⁸ Niilo Wallari, "Why Receptions by Bourgeois for Pleasure Visitors to Finland", *Industrialisti*, August, 1931.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

be approved. By that time however it was be the turn of the right-wing press to denounce the exodus to Soviet Karelia, with the left-wing radical press wholeheartedly supporting the movement.

In the 1920s two competing versions of a Finnish homeland emerged.²¹⁰ ‘White’ Finland encouraged Finnish emigrants to return to their homeland, and promised those who accepted registration with the Finnish government, citizenship, and a passport.²¹¹ The Finnish government in the 1920s, not unlike the Karelian leadership in the 1930s, attempted to recruit relatively wealthy Finns. Émigrés sent remittances back to Finland, while returning migrants it was hoped would deposit their savings in Finnish banks. For their part, leaders of conservative Finnish communities in Canada and the United States supported increased links with Finland, and dubbed return migration a positive phenomenon. Although return migration depleted the community’s ranks in North America, nonetheless it reinvigorated national building where, according to them, it was most needed – ‘white’ Finland, a bastion for conservative and god-fearing Finns.

While the movement of Finns from North America to Finland is interpreted, in a conventional sense as return migration, emigration to Soviet Karelia in the 1930s is dubbed an exodus to a ‘promised’, or ‘wretched’, land, depending on the interpretation. Whereas for the conservative Finnish leadership and its audience, the Soviet Union and its Russian majority were enemies in cultural, ideological, and political terms, for leaders of left-wing communities and their followers in Canada and the United States, Soviet Karelia of the 1920s and the 1930s

²¹⁰ Alexis Pogorelskin, “New Perspectives on Karelian Fever: The Recruitment of North American Finns to Karelia in the Early 1930’s.” *Journal of Finnish Studies* 1, no. 3 (December 1997), pp. 165-78.

²¹¹ Alexis Pogorelskin, “Nationality Policy in Karelia, 1931-1939: From Vision to Disaster.” *Entering Multiculturalism Finnish Experience Abroad: Papers from FinnForum VI*, edited by Olavi Koivukangas (Turku, Finland: Institute of Migration, 2002).

became an alternative, a newer, and a potentially better version of Finland. As mentioned, once the exodus began, the right-wing Finnish camp channeled its efforts into stopping the movement. For example, the United Empire Loyalist Organization lobbied the Canadian government to ban emigration to the Soviet Union from the country altogether.²¹² Although the Finnish conservative lobby enjoyed limited support from Bennett's government, nonetheless it did not represent a powerful enough force to influence the federal government. Moreover, the Canadian government had no interest in stopping emigration, and in fact did nothing to prevent the exodus, despite being fully aware of the movement. Sources show that the government welcomed the departure of left-wing Finns, which seemed to rid the state of undesirable communist sympathizers and helped to alleviate rampant unemployment of depression-stricken Canada.

Writing on issues of mobility, identity, and migration, Donna Gabbacia argues that ethnic community organizations can be seen as “local sites of cultural production and exchange”, with mobility at the center of the process.²¹³ Seen from this angle, the physical movement of transmigrant Finns either to North America, or from Canada and the United States to Finland and Soviet Karelia, was an essential element in the process of diasporic and national imagined community construction. By the very fact of their material movement, migrants embodied specific cultural and ideological values, which in turn were appropriated, refashioned, and reproduced by the leaders of the communities preaching those same doctrines. When a Finnish migrant moved to Soviet Karelia in the early 1930s, local, regional, and national organizations and governments appropriated the migrant's movement, or in other words the migrant's narrative, or identity in their own diasporic and national folklores, promoting it in exclusive

²¹² *Vapaus*, April 11, 1931.

²¹³ Donna Gabbacia, Book Review – Nicholas De Maria Harney, *Eh Paesan! Being Italian in Toronto* (in *Canadian Literature*, issue 216 [Spring 2013])

terms, just as the FOC demonstrated that in spearheading the Karelian exodus. This way, the migrant became a part of a national or a diasporic story, with his/her identity to be molded and refashioned as circumstances allowed or demanded. Thus when Finnish migrants moved back to Finland, right-wing conservative groups in Canada interpreted it as their own effort to support the homeland, whose mere existence justified their diasporic organizations in the first place. This is what I call an on-going appropriation process, where migrants' movement and identity is interpreted by organizations, institutions, and governments in such a way as to fit the appropriate national and diasporic discourses.

Transnational Agents

The movement between localities, regions, and across national borders did not occur in isolation. The case of the Karelian fever demonstrates that transnational migration was a result of an intricate web of interrelations between individuals, organizations, and governments across the Atlantic. Transnational ties between left-wing Finns in Soviet Karelia, Finland and North America, sustained on both organizational and personal levels, made the recruitment of North American Finns to work and settle in Karelia a possibility. For example, in 1929, Kullervo Manner came to the United States to sway Finnish-American opinion in favor of communism.²¹⁴ Manner, chair of the Socialist Democratic Party in Finland before escaping to Moscow in 1918, played a central role in forming the Communist Party of Finland (SKP) in exile.²¹⁵ Manner's mission in North America was to sway the Finnish cooperative movement to the communist cause, thus to allow the CPUSA to appropriate the cooperative's finances. Although Manner failed in his mission, his arrival in the United States demonstrates the interconnectedness

²¹⁴ Alexis Pogorelskin, in R. Harpelle, V. Lindstrom and A. Pogorelskin (ed.), *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia During the Depression Era*. Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004.

²¹⁵ The party would remain illegal in Finland until 1944.

between the communist parties in the United States and the Soviet Union, but also a complex web of relations between different interest groups, and the desire and ability to influence events across the Atlantic.

Several other leaders of the Karelian government and the SKP were well known in the United States and Canada. Santeri Nuorteva served in the Finnish parliament as a member of the Socialist Democratic Party from 1907 to 1910. He immigrated to the United States in 1911 where he played a significant role in the development of early Finnish socialist organizations. He edited magazines such as *Sakenia* (“The Spark”), and newspapers *Toveri* (“The Comrade”) and *Raivaaja* (“The Pioneer”), and was influential in the official affairs of the Soviet Russian government in the United States. In 1920, while in England, he chose to be deported to Soviet Russia rather than return to the United States. In Soviet Russia he headed the Anglo-American Division of the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and between 1924 and 1927 came to serve as the chairman of the Soviet Karelian Central Committee.

Yrjo Sirola was a prominent elected official in Finland and served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 1918 Finnish revolutionary government. He was also one of the founders of the SKP and an active functionary in the Comintern. Between 1910 and 1914 Sirola worked as a professor of social science at the Finnish Socialist Federation’s Workers People’s College in Smithville, Minnesota. From 1925 to 1927 Sirola served as Comintern representative in the CPUSA. Sometime in the 1920s Sirola also managed to teach at the Communist University of the National Minorities of the West in Leningrad, in the department of Finns and Estonians, where he most likely came in contact with Gustav Rovio, one of the founding members of Soviet Karelia. In 1930 he left the Comintern to join the Karelian commune as a People’s Commissar of Public Education in the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Karelia. Although these

individuals' roles were not as central as those played by the recruiters, nonetheless these influential individuals generated the necessary pretext for this particular migration. The presence of the same leading Finnish left-wing politicians and activists in Finland, Moscow, Soviet Karelia, and North America throughout the first three decades of the 20th century suggests the existence of a transnational paradigm within which the Karelian fever took place.

Grassroot Transnational Links: Immigrant Letters

Transnational theory was at its inception concerned with the economic and political interconnectedness that migrants maintained with their home country. Such a view placed emphasis on the physical presence of a migrant both in the country of origin and in that of settlement, but neglected the ever-evolving nature of communication technologies. Recent research however started taking into account the importance of ideas, experiences, values, cultural artifacts, and technologies that travel with humans from nation to nation. As demonstrated, there was a substantial and perpetual movement of migrants between Finnish cultural centers in North America, Finland, and the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s and the 1930s. In addition to the actual physical movement, one of the main mediums that sustained transnational communication and either encouraged or limited further transnational migration were immigrant letters. Finns arriving in North America in the late 19th, and early 20th centuries, wrote back to Finland, encouraging others to come. Niskanen, for example, remembers that when his mother was only five years old, his grandfather left for the United States and later wrote letters inviting the grandmother to join him. Niskanen's father would later join his family in North America, when he realized he could not find a job in Finland.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Niskanen Interview, *Устная история в Карелии: Сборник научных статей и источников. Вып. II. Североамериканские финны в Советской Карелии 1930-х годов / Сост. и научн. ред. И. Р. Такала, А. В. Голубев. – Петрозаводск: Изд-во ПетрГУ, 2007. – 192 с. <http://oralhist.karelia.ru/libr.htm>.*

Immigrant correspondence between friends and families in North America and the Soviet Union reveals a fluid exchange of information, ideas, material goods, and experience across national borders. In this conversation one can also witness a renegotiation and a reformulation of identities. One correspondent mentioned having received *Tyomies* issues in Soviet Karelia and staying up-to-date with news in the American Finnish communities: “It was really good that you ordered *Tyomies* for us. It’s nice to see American happenings.”²¹⁷ The correspondent also mentioned visual representations of her community in North America in the form of personal pictures given her by friends, as well as pictures appearing in the newspaper: “It’s so nice to get even photos from here since I can’t come see it myself.”²¹⁸ The same was true of correspondence addressed to the American and Canadian communities, as emigrants often included newspaper clippings and photographs in their letters from Karelia.

One immigrant talked about having access to American English-language books in the Soviet Union.²¹⁹ Another mentioned listening to American records on a phonograph: “Here I am listening to the phonograph and writing this letter. Remembering being on the farm and listening to it makes me feel sad.”²²⁰ One girl thanked her correspondent “for the two calendars, a pocket calendar, and the issues of *Punikki*” (“The Red One” – Finnish socialist magazine published in the U.S).²²¹ North American Finnish journals and newspapers appear to have been widely available in Karelia in 1933. At least one respondent urged her family members not to send anymore issues of newspapers and journals, as apparently they were widely available in her community in Petrozavodsk: “if I want to read *Punikki* I just have to stretch my neck in this and

²¹⁷ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, Heino Collection, Letter #1 2009-025/034.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, Heino Collection, Letter #2 2009-025/034

²²⁰ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, Heino Collection, Letter #4 2009-025/034

²²¹ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, File 15 Taimi Davis letter collection, 2009-025/034

that direction and some here get it.”²²² She did however ask her relatives in the United States to send her old school books on Canadian and British history with anyone who would travel to Karelia in the near future. The North American youth it seems was also active as many were engaged in organizing English speaking clubs in Karelia: “we also organized here a little while ago an English language youth club...we write handwritten newspapers, study all kinds of subjects...”²²³

In their correspondence immigrants often mentioned specific cultural artifacts brought over from North America: “I also received those three books, candy and chewing gum, darning needle, and that very fine underwear...and then I have received greetings from everyone.”²²⁴ The particular cultural and psychological association of material things with their past seem to have bridged immigrants’ daily experiences in North America and the Soviet Union: “The alarm clock that mother and Sofia Puolakka bought as a birthday present for me wakes me up every morning. That little calendar frame is standing there on top of the radio.”²²⁵ Here we see that the material artifacts exchanged between the sender and the recipient across national borders carried with them culturally specific information which only the recipient could decipher. “Aunt Aili sent me a Christmas card.”²²⁶ An English-language Christmas card could only resonate with a North American Finn in Karelia. This sort of interaction was transnationalism at a grassroots level, and might explain the perpetuation of a North American identity among some communities in the Soviet Union throughout the 20th century. Some letters written from Karelia to Canada and the

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Letter Collection. Writing to Resident of Lakeridge June 20, 1933.

²²⁵ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Letter Collection. Petrozavodsk, Soviet Karelia, March 20, 1937.

²²⁶ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Letter Collection. Writing to Resident of Lakeridge June 20, 1933.

United States in the late 1980s²²⁷ demonstrate that some North American Finns still maintained their cultural distinctiveness and remembered American holidays and the English language despite the fact that their community was physically destroyed in the late 1930s and during the Second World War. Culturally specific festivities however would not be recognizable without particular rituals (dances), foods, and smells. In their letters many immigrants attest to having received packages with familiar foods, such as cookies and dried meats, as well as culturally familiar medicines, such as iodine (joti) and aspirins from North America.²²⁸

More than that, Finns in North America and Soviet Karelia exchanged different working techniques they had mastered on opposing sides of the Atlantic.²²⁹ One correspondent mentioned receiving a book from Finland on telecommunication lines work:

First they sent me a whole pile of books on telephone central work...But this book that is coming will be of good use to me also... I know myself how hard it is to get those books...But if you happen to run into a chance of getting the book, I'd want it mostly on telephone cable work, underground and in poles.²³⁰

While men exchanged information on working methods, women often swapped cooking recipes and tried to stay up to date with the latest fashion trends: “please send me some dress patterns and some pictures from the catalogue” asked Terttu in a letter to her sister Toini in the United States.²³¹

Writing to his family in Canada Antti Kangas addressed the recipients as “community friends.”²³² Separated by an ocean, a continent, and thousands of kilometers from their families and friends in North America, many Finns in Karelia nonetheless maintained a high degree of

²²⁷ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds.

²²⁸ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Letter Collection. Aate Letter, Petrozavodsk, November 9, 1933.

²²⁹ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Letter Collection. Petrozavodsk, November 21, 1934.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Clara Thompson Archives, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds. 2009-025/035 File 6. Arthur Koski letter collection.

²³² Ibid.

involvement in their former communities. In a series of letters, a father writing back to his daughter in the United States managed to instruct her on how to run the estate and capital he left behind in the United States. Moreover, he seemed to have been overly preoccupied with his daughter's marriage, often asked for new pictures of his grandson, and stressed in his letters that he closely followed developments in the United States.²³³ Flowing through transnational circuits, communication between individuals, families, and communities across the Atlantic conditioned the migration flow and bridged human capital across time and space, in the process facilitating grass-root-level hybrid identities.

Conclusion

Although there was a certain element of spontaneity in the Karelian fever, for the most part it was a well organized and carried out recruiting scheme. As immigrant letters and interviews demonstrate, many immigrants required convincing and emigration, even in the context of the Great Depression, was not a foregone conclusion. The lure of Karelia was grounded as much in Finnish culture, as in socialist ideology. With the Karelian leaders sanctioning the scheme, recruiters in North America utilized the mediums of ethnicity and ideology to mobilize potential immigrants, while local ethnic organizations, such as the FOC endorsed the selling of Karelia to its members and even took it upon itself to be the vanguard of the movement. For the Karelian fever to become a reality, the public had to be convinced of the authenticity of the project, but also of its inevitable success. In order to retain their legitimacy and their jobs, the FOC and recruiters had to persuade the rank and file to migrate to Soviet Karelia, and were to a large extent successful. They convinced their audiences of the existence of an alternative community – an alternative Soviet type of Finland. Whereas only 7000 North

²³³ Clara Thompson Archives, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds. 2009-025/035, File 1 Martha Hoxell Collection.

American Finns migrated to the Soviet Union, many more provided financial and moral support to Karelia, and even more were engaged with Soviet Karelia through the press, personal transatlantic links, by travel, remittances, and correspondence.

The edifice of cultural production in the Finnish left-wing diaspora was the ethnic socialist press. It endorsed however a pattern that was already in motion in the 1920s. Transnational links between Finnish communities in Canada, Finland, the United States, and the Soviet Union existed from at least the early 20th century. Relations were established through official channels, such as the Comintern, but also through unofficial sources, such as personal and institutional links between Finnish leaders across the Atlantic. When the press, with the help of the recruiters and the FOC, endorsed Soviet Karelia as the symbolic home of Finnish workers in the early 1930s it popularized and advertised the Karelian recruitment scheme. By assuming control of the movement, the ethnic leadership appropriated this transnational phenomenon into its own diasporic discourse/narrative. It was no coincidence that recruitment coincided with the propagation of Karelia as an alternative Finland. It was only then, with the entry of the ethnic leadership into the process, that Soviet Karelia began to take the form of an alternative – Finnish socialist community.

In concert with the Finnish leadership of Karelia they shared a vision of the future of the left-wing Finnish Diaspora. Leaders of the Finnish diaspora in Canada in fact fused the past – Karelia's folkloric role in the Finnish ethnic identity, present – poor conditions in North American and future – the inevitable success of the Soviet, but also Karelian, project – into one aspect – that is migration to Soviet Karelia. Displaced by the Finnish Civil War, the left-wing Finnish leadership in North American found a new home in Soviet Karelia, which promised soon to become what Finland should have been in 1918. The Karelian fever in this way sanctioned

and legitimized the views of the leader of the Finnish-left in North America. The mere existence of the Soviet Union legitimized the left movement in the United States, while the appearance of Karelia came to legitimize the power and influence of the left-wing Finnish leadership. In the process, the migrant's identity/narrative became a terrain where leaders of diasporic and national imaginaries now conflicted over the right to appropriate his/her story in their own hegemonic narratives/discourses.

In many ways, the battle between left and right wing Finnish groups in the press was one over the definition of a national and ethnic identity. In the process of elaborating their diasporic folklores, both were competing for their members' loyalty, and both embraced "return" migration to the symbolic home of the diaspora. Varpu Lindstrom noted that the FOC never recovered from the departure of the 2000 Canadian Finns to Karelia, most of whom were members of the FOC.²³⁴ However, in light of the fact that many came back by the mid-1930s, it was not the numerical exodus of its members that crippled the organization, but rather the failure of the republic as a Finnish-socialist entity and the general dismay with the communist system in the Soviet Union.

²³⁴ See Varpu Lindstrom, *The Finns in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Ethnic Series, 1985.

Chapter 3:

The Artificial Republic

...I propose adding the term “imagined futures” to the set of concepts that relate to nation-building. An imagined future is a dynamic element in an imagined community. When a nation comes into existence, it will be composed of different interest groups that view the future of the collective body from different perspectives, and that propose actions or policies in accord with these diverse interests...The concept of an imagined future is particularly useful for understanding immigration policies...²³⁵

Under the Soviet nationality policy, which promoted indigenous culture, Karelia's red Finnish elite was capable of endorsing the Finnish language and culture in a place where Finns constituted less than one percent of the population. The arrival of North American immigrants was central to Gylling's project, as it allowed the Karelian leadership to entrench the demographic, political, and cultural position of the republic's Finnish-speaking minority. Immigrants, it was calculated, would solve labor shortages in the republic and help local industries meet five-year plan quotas. More importantly, Gylling hoped that immigrants would offset the demographic imbalance in a republic dominated by Russian and Karelian populations. Gylling had a particular vision for Karelia. The future he imagined for it was clearly reflected in his immigration and public policies. He was obviously partial towards immigrants of Finnish origin. Moreover, the fact that North American Finns were assigned a privileged economic, social, and cultural status in the republic indicates whom the Karelian government considered ideal citizens. Finnish cultural and social norms were promoted through official channels and the

²³⁵ Alan Simmons, *Immigration and Canada: Global and Transnational Perspectives*, Canadian Scholars' Press, 2010.

media, glorifying North American Finnish working methods and living standards as a model to be emulated by others. Finnish origin did not only signify a privileged socio-economic status, but also became synonymous with cultural, social, and political enlightenment.

The following chapter unveils a process of “artificial” national community construction. A series of circumstantial developments made it possible for the red Finnish faction to wrest political power away from their Russian rivals. Specifically, it was the Soviet nationality policy, which was in force from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s that stimulated the necessary conditions for the rapid ethnicization (in this case Finnicization) of the public discourse. I begin by exploring the mythological role of Karelia in the Finnish national identity, in particular its folkloric renaissance in the mid-to-late 19th century. Then the story turns to the early 1920s when in contrast to the Marxist orthodoxy, Soviet leaders sanctioned an affirmative-action-like nationality policy that aimed actively to promote the languages and cultures of formerly oppressed minorities at the expense of the Russian majority. It was in this context that Edward Gylling lobbied the Kremlin and secured political authority in Karelia. Throughout the 1920s, under the auspices of the Soviet nationality policy, Gylling would institutionalize Finnish cultural norms in the republic’s public arena and consolidate the red-Finnish grip on the Karelian economic and political infrastructure. In the early 1930s, taking advantage of relaxed Soviet immigration policies, Gylling lobbied the central government to allow skilled Finnish workers from Finland and North America to immigrate to Karelia. Backed by the local government and the Soviet nationality policy, many of these immigrants would participate enthusiastically in the promotion and entrenchment of Finnish and North American cultural norms. What follows then is an account of appropriation in the dominant discourse of migrants’ identities by the Karelian

cultural and political elite, where the merger became a foundation for the construction of a new, Finnish socialist Soviet Karelian identity.

Karelia in the Finnish National Folklore

Ethnicity and nationality are relatively modern social and “imagined” constructs.²³⁶ Contrary to Karl Marx’s predictions that it would disappear with the decay of capitalism, nationalism re-emerged and redefined itself during the 1930s in North America, Europe, but also the Soviet Union. This made unsustainable the notion that nationalism, and nationalities were disappearing in the solvent of economic development and social mobility.²³⁷ In the 1980s and the 1990s, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Grigor Suny²³⁸ demonstrated the way nationalism and the making of nations was conditioned by class and modernity. Making nationality, like making class, came to be seen as a “complex process of creating an ‘imagined community’ that finds its expression in symbols, rituals, flags, songs, collective actions, and the articulation and representation of its goals.”²³⁹ For an historian, uncovering the socio-economic and political developments underlining national formations became a framework for understanding social, economic, and political changes occurring in societies over time and space.

The most important role in the development of national communities is played by so-called symbolic elites. This term refers to groups (such as state actors and journalists) who are implicated in the construction of dominant discourses through their privileged access to powerful

²³⁶ See Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford University Press, 1993.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ On the discussion of nationalism see John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*. Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina Press, 1982; John Breuilly’s *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester University Press, 1993; Ernest Gelner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Blackwell Publishing, 1983; Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 1985; Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*. Blackwell Publishing, 1986; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1788*. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford University Press, 1993.

²³⁹ Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past*, p. 17.

institutions and instruments (such as the mass media) in society.²⁴⁰ Although this definition may not be precise, symbolic elites can be broadly understood as “those who control the means of communication and who are engaged in the manufacturing of public opinion.”²⁴¹ Historically, usually in the context of a political struggle, they “invented traditions” and defined and redefined the criteria of membership in a national community: “They revive, refine, and pass down rhetoric, symbols and rituals that soon appear to have a naturalness and authenticity that originates deep in history and possesses legitimacy for shaping the future.”²⁴² For these reasons, the role played by political leaders and the educated strata in the formation of a Finnish-socialist national identity in Karelia in the 1920s and the 1930s should not be underestimated. They licensed a particular representation of society and history, and channeled their efforts at entrenching their beliefs through certain images, texts, and discourses. North American Finns for their part played a central role in cultivating national identity in Karelia in their own image.

Key to nation-state building is a construction of a myth of a single people who share one territory, undivided loyalty to government, and a common cultural heritage.²⁴³ The place and role of Karelia in Finnish culture, folklore, and national identity cannot be overestimated. It was in Karelia that during the 1820s-1840s Elias Lönnrot discovered old runes which he used to create the *Kalevala*.²⁴⁴ A Finnish national epic poem, *Kalevala*, was published in 1838 and became the point of reference in the Finnish language, culture, and ethnic identity.²⁴⁵ It was not without significance that *Kalevala* was used extensively by Jean Sibelius. A Finnish composer of the late

²⁴⁰ See Van Dijk, *Discourse and Power: Contributions to Critical Discourse Studies*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.

²⁴¹ Van Dijk, “The Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse & Society* Vol 4(2) (1993), pp. 249-283.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁴³ Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 68. No. 1 (Jan., 1995), pp. 48-63.

²⁴⁴ Unelma Konkka, ed., *Puteshetviia Eliasa Lönnrota: Putevyiie zametki, dnevniki, pisma 1828-1842 gg.* [The voyages of Elias Lönnrot: Notes, Diaries, and Letters, 1828-1842] (Petrozavodsk: Kareliia, 1985), 8-12.

²⁴⁵ Paul Austin, “Soviet Finnish: The End of a Dream,” *East European Quarterly*, 21:2, 1987, pp. 183-205.

Romantic period, Sibelius played a key role in the formation of the Finnish national identity. As a result, since the middle of the 19th century Karelia became the foundation of an imagined Greater Finland, subsequently inspiring many Finnish writers, poets, artists, and composers to perpetuate the national myth, a movement which came to be known as *Karelianism*.²⁴⁶ As one Finn put it, Karelianism was “an escape to a past of Karelia and the entire Finnish tribe, which was the Finnish form of universal escapism and utopia.”²⁴⁷

Soviet Nationality Policy, 1920s-1930s: Institutionalizing Ethnicity

In the midst of the Russian Civil War, Bolsheviks found themselves fighting on the domestic front, as well as fending off foreign interventions. Given Karelia’s geo-political importance to the survival of the Bolshevik regime, Lenin and the People’s Commissariat on Internal Affairs (NKVD) set up the Karelian Commune as a buffer against repeated Finnish attempts to annex the region.²⁴⁸ The creation of the commune had several other rationales behind it: first, to prevent Karelian nationalism, which was anti-Russian, anti-Soviet and thus presented danger to Soviet internal security; second, the commune would become a medium through which to spread the socialist revolution to Scandinavia.²⁴⁹

Although these developments reflected military and strategic concerns of the state, there was also an underlining political and ideological rationale. Despite staunch opposition within the Communist Party, Lenin believed concessions to national minorities would demonstrate to workers abroad and within the territory of the former Russian Tsarist Empire, that socialism was

²⁴⁶ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, *In Search of Socialist El Dorado: Finnish Immigration from the United States and Canada to Soviet Karelia in the 1930s*. An Unpublished Manuscript.

²⁴⁷ Paul Austin, “Soviet Karelian: The Language That Failed,” *Slavic Review*, 51:1, 1992, p. 22.

²⁴⁸ Markku Kangaspuro, “Russian Patriots and Red Fennomans,” *Rise and Fall of Soviet Karelia: People and Power*, ed., Antti Laine and Mikko Ylikangas, (Helsinki, Finland: Aleksanteri Institute, 2002), p. 28.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

compatible with national cultures.²⁵⁰ Lenin strongly believed that the nationality question in the Soviet Union was an inevitable historic phase, a byproduct of capitalism, and once all of national culture was exhausted, conditions for the organization of an internationalist socialist culture would be ripe: “national identity is not an essential and permanent reality but rather an unavoidable by-product of the modern capitalist and early socialist world, which must be passed through before a mature internationalist socialist world can come into being.”²⁵¹ Lenin argued that by insisting on the development of national minorities’ culture, he would speed up the historical process, which would culminate in a smooth transition to a universal Soviet culture and communism in general. This thinking formed the foundation for the Soviet nationality policy, which allowed regional minority leaders to gain and consolidate political power.²⁵²

Dubbed *Korenizatsiya*, meaning “nativization” or “indigenization,” the Soviet nationality policy did not simply endorse, but actively promoted, and even trained national elites into leadership positions in local government, schools, industrial enterprises, management, bureaucracy, and nomenklatura.²⁵³ The Soviet state financed mass production of books, newspapers, journals, movie, and opera productions, museums, and other forms of non-Russian language cultural production.²⁵⁴ Local languages assumed official status and all who served in

²⁵⁰ Michael Gelb, “Karelian Fever: The Finnish Immigrant Community during Stalin’s Purges,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 45, no. 6 (1993), p. 25. See also, Joseph Stalin. “Marxism and the National Question,” *Prosveshcheniye*, Nos. 3-5, March-May 1913. Accessed through Marxist Internet Archive <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm>

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

²⁵² The Soviet Union was the first European multiethnic state to confront the rising tide of nationalism by systematically promoting the national consciousness of its ethnic minorities and establishing for them many of the institutional forms characteristic of the modern nation-state. In the 1920s, the Bolshevik government, seeking to defuse nationalist sentiment, created tens of thousands of national territories. It trained new national leaders, established national languages, and financed the production of national-language cultural products. For discussion on the subject see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1929-1939*. London: Cornell University Press, 2001.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

local governments, regardless of national and ethnic background were encouraged, and in many cases required, to learn the local language and culture. For example, between 1928 and 1938, the number of non-Russian newspapers increased from 205 titles in 47 languages to 2188 titles in 66 languages.²⁵⁵

Writing about the essence and consequences of *Korenizatsia*, Yuri Selezkine depicts the Soviet Union in the 1920s as a communal department with various nationalities inhabiting it.²⁵⁶ Lenin's theory of good ("oppressed nations") nationalism, according to Selezkine formed the ethno-cultural infrastructure for the later development of the ethno-national identities in the Soviet republics.

...uncompromisingly hostile to individual rights, they [Bolsheviks] eagerly, deliberately and quite consistently promoted group rights that did not always coincide with those of the proletariat. The world's first state of workers and peasants was the world's first state to institutionalize ethno-territorial federalism, classify all citizens according to their biological nationalities and formally prescribe preferential treatment of certain ethnically defined populations.²⁵⁷

Another Soviet historian, Grigor Suny, goes as far as to argue that the majority of national republics were Soviet-era creations, when the central government gave *carte blanche* to certain ethnic groups, while denying others' claims for self-determination. From the early 1920s up until the reversal of nativization, and the ensuing russification of the Soviet society in the mid-1930s, Soviet federalism guaranteed and actively endorsed cultural rights of an array of national minority groups. In fact, at one point Lenin advocated for the Soviet Union to have over 100 official national languages.

²⁵⁵ Yuri Selezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Pluralism," in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), pp. 414-452.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

To help “backward”, or oppressed, nationalities to catch up with the Great Russians, the state was to assist local leaders financially and politically in introducing their own courts and agencies of government that would function in the native language and consist of people familiar with life and mentality of the local population.²⁵⁸ The party was to help local national leaders to develop their own press, local social clubs, and other cultural and educational institutions in native languages.²⁵⁹ For example, it was considered scandalous if North Caucasians or Ukrainians did not have their own theater, libraries, or literary organizations.²⁶⁰ It was in this way that a small red-Finnish educated elite in Karelia utilized *Korenizatsia* to promote and entrench the Finnish language and cultural forms in a territory where Finns were only one of many national/ethnic minorities, but who as a result of circumstances got a grip on political power in the republic. North American Finns arrived in Karelia in the context of this widespread indigenous, and in some respect artificial national construction – a historical period which one historian called a “feast of ethnic fertility, an exuberant national carnival sponsored by the party.”²⁶¹

Edward Gylling: Role of the Elites

One of the minority leaders who emerged from such circumstances was Edward Gylling. A prominent Social Democrat and the Commissar of Finance for the revolutionary “red” Finnish government during the Finnish Civil War, Gylling found himself in the Soviet Union in 1920. When the Civil War was lost for reds in Finland, Gylling’s dream of a greater socialist Finland was also lost. Shortly after, however, he developed a new plan, in which socialist Karelia would

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Desiatyi s"ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi partii: Stenograficheskii otchet [Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party: Verbatim Report] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1921), p. 101.

²⁶⁰ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment”.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 425.

become sort of a bridgehead that would carry the revolution to Finland. Following negotiations with Georgy Chicherin – the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, as well as Lenin and Stalin, Gylling became head of the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KASSR), serving as chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars from 1920 until his dismissal in 1935.

Gylling personally negotiated political and economic terms for Karelia and was granted full authority in the republic’s administration. For Gylling the task in Karelia was “a bit like a contract for Finnish communists.”²⁶² Although an internationalist and socialist throughout his life, nonetheless Gylling’s civilizing mission throughout his time at the helm in Karelia was heavily imbued with the Finnish nationalist discourse, which penetrated the Karelian government and society on all levels. During his rule Karelia became a national home for Finnish communists dispersed around the world. Gylling once even admitted he was a nationalist, although he claimed that nationalism was a necessary evil that had to accommodate communism at this stage.²⁶³

The policy of *Korenizatsia* brought red Finns to power in Karelia. It was used by Gylling and his supporters as a guiding principle to subject the republic to Finnish cultural norms and political authority. To solidify his creation demographically Gylling set out to recruit skilled Finnish workers from Finland and North America. Alarmed by the influx of Russian workers and fearing demographic russification Gylling relentlessly lobbied the Kremlin to allow North Americans to come to Karelia. Despite opposition from the Ministries of Internal and External Affairs, the Kremlin leadership thought it would be beneficial to the Karelian and Soviet economies to approve the scheme. The request came at an opportune moment. Soon after the

²⁶² Markku Kangaspuro, “Russian Patriots and Red Fennomans”, p. 28.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 30.

revolutionary fervor subsided, Bolshevik leaders realized that there was an acute shortage of skilled and unskilled labor in the Soviet Union. To solve the problem, they encouraged limited immigration of specialists which resulted in tens of thousands of North Americans crossing the Atlantic to work in the first workers' state.²⁶⁴ For example, at the Soviet embassy in Germany alone, more than 70 people were employed to manage the recruitment office.²⁶⁵

Without the administrative tools and without support from the central government, the Finnish Karelian community would have never blossomed the way it did from 1920 to 1935. The application of *Korenizatsia* was at times so intense and penetrated local discourses to such an extent that it made anyone who objected to the policy subject to public condemnation.

Indigenous Karelians who spoke against finnicization were labeled 'separatists', and any Russians who did so was labeled a 'great power chauvinist'. Markku Kangaspuro has suggested that "had the Orgburo of the Central Committee of the party, headed by Stalin, not made a decision supporting the views of the Finns on March 6, 1922 the game would have been over."²⁶⁶

In fact, if one were to juxtapose the process of national building in Soviet Karelia throughout the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, to the national construction process in the Finnish Grand Duchy under the Tsarist regime prior to 1918, one would find striking similarities: "the similar process of national construction produced similar results; a national consciousness and a national (autonomous) administrative machinery."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Preliminary analysis of British Passenger Lists of the first half of the 1930s reveal that thousands of North Americans of Russian, Polish, Jewish, German, Finnish, Italian, and British descent were making their way to the Soviet Union in search of employment.

²⁶⁵ Журавлев, С. В., Тяжелникова, В. С. Иностранная колония в Советской России в 1920 - 1930-е годы :Постановка проблемы и методы исследования /С. В. Журавлев, В. С. Тяжелникова.//Отечественная история. -1994. - № 1. - С. 179 – 189. [Zhuravlev, S.V, Tyazhelnikova, V.S. Foreign Colony in Soviet Russia in 1920 - 1930's: Problems and Research methods / S. Zhuravlev, VS Tyazhelnikova. // History of Russia. -1994. - № 1. - S. 179 – 189]

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

In convincing Soviet authorities to allow immigration of skilled Finnish workers from North America, Gylling argued that the Soviet government would not need to invest any capital in the venture. Throughout the 1920s several North American groups expressed a desire to settle in Karelia. In asking for permission to immigrate they indicated a willingness to pay for their own transportation and import the necessary tools and equipment. In addition, another development in the early 1930s played into Gylling's hands and facilitated the recruitment of North America workers. In light of an acute labor shortage, Soviet social scientists determined that training new cadres would be significantly more expensive than bringing skilled workers from abroad.²⁶⁸ And in September of 1930 the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) approved in principle immigration from North America.²⁶⁹ On March 5, 1931 SNK SSSR allowed the Karelian government to bring up to 2,000 lumbermen from Canada. In the next four months alone, 2,824 North American Finns arrived.²⁷⁰

Gylling resisted russification even before he assumed power.²⁷¹ An economist and a demographer by training, he often lamented the initial Finnish exodus to North America. Even before the revolution in Finland, he argued it was imperative for the Finnish state to 'reclaim' the lost North American tribe. During his tenure in Karelia he would struggle to rectify this

²⁶⁸ НАРК, Ф. 841, оп. 1, д. 403. Проект к заседанию Президиума КСПС от 26/X-30 года [The project for the meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU]. The meeting of the presidium of KSPS in 1930 has determined that training new personnel/workers would be more expensive than to invite foreign workers from abroad.

²⁶⁹ НАРК, Фонд 690, оп. 1, д. 19/213 «Постановления СНК, списки и переписка о привлечении специалистов инрабочих» Выписка из протокола №35/55 заседания СНК РСФСР 16/IX-1930 г [Decision of the CPC, lists and correspondence on attracting skilled workers. "Extract from the report number 35/55 meeting of the SNK of the RSFSR]

²⁷⁰ НАРК, Фонд 690, оп. 1, д. 19/213 «Постановления СНК, списки и переписка о привлечении специалистов инрабочих» Выписка Постановление №35 СНК СССР от 5.03.1931 г. [Decision of the CPC, lists and correspondence about attracting foreign specialists "Extract Decree number 35 SNK, USSR]

²⁷¹ Alexis Pogorelskin, "The Migration of Identity: Critics Confounded/Karelian Fever Explained" in *Siirtoilisuus (Migration)* 1/2001, 28.

‘mistake’ by initiating an elaborate transatlantic recruiting scheme. It must be made clear that Gylling and his entourage instructed recruiters in Canada and the United States to enlist workers exclusively of Finnish descent. At the time of the Great Depression, labor migration to the Soviet Union was an attractive option, in particular for left-wing immigrant workers. There is enough evidence to suggest that throughout the first part of the 1930s North Americans of Finnish, Russian, Polish, German, Italian, Ukrainian, Hungarian origin were on the move to the Soviet Union.²⁷² The CPC archives and a close reading of the *Worker* reveal that many workers of non-Finnish origin contacted the CPC and the KTA offices to inquire about employment opportunities in the Soviet Union. However, the CPC, the FOC, and Karelian recruiters refused to provide information on how to get a transfer to the Soviet Union, let alone accept non-Finnish applicants for consideration.²⁷³ It was clear that Gylling wanted skilled workers specifically of Finnish origin; others, no matter how skilled, were of little interest to the Karelian patriarch.

Gylling imagined a future where Soviet Karelia would be populated by the Finnish diaspora, where the lost North American tribe would live immersed in socialism, the Finnish language, and the Finnish culture. Gylling’s immigration policy was not an isolated thought, but an integral part of his broader vision for Karelia in the international system. ‘Ideal’ immigrants were gauged according to their ethnic suitability within the republic’s imagined future.²⁷⁴ After all, Gylling’s search for skilled workers to boost the republic’s economy and fulfill five year plan quotas dictated by the Kremlin all too conveniently coincided with his search for specifically Finnish specialists. As a result, in addition to skilled workers, Gylling also received a fair share

²⁷² Ancestry.com. *UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008.

²⁷³ LAC, Group 28 IV, 4, reel M-7377, 2 A 1261. CPC resolution on transfers to Karelia.

²⁷⁴ Simmons, Alan. "Immigration Policy: Imagined Futures," *Immigrant Canada: Demographic, Economic and Social Challenges*, eds, Shiva Halli and Leo Driedger, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 21-50.

of ethnic community activists – the educated leaders and cultural producers, or as one commentator noted ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’.²⁷⁵

Reproducing Culture

As a result of its demographic insignificance the Finnish-speaking population of Karelia was for the most part invisible in the early 1920s. In 1921 there were only about 1,000 Finns in Karelia, with 550 residing in the capital – Petrozavodsk,²⁷⁶ while the majority of the republic’s population spoke Russian and various Karelian dialects. Yet, by the mid-1930s, the republic’s public and administrative life came to be dominated by the Finnish language and culture.

Theatres, orchestras, choirs, art studios, as well as an array of newspapers and radio stations operated in the Finnish language.²⁷⁷ Whereas in the early 1920s red Finns faced resistance from the local “Karelian-Russian” opposition, the adoption of *Korenizatsia* gave the red Finnish faction an upper hand in the conflict, and allowed Gylling to appoint and control the political and cultural bureaucracy in the republic. Thanks in large part to immigration from Canada and the United States, the Finnish population in Karelia increased from 2,544 in 1926 to 12,088 in 1933.²⁷⁸ All in all, North American Finns made a substantial contribution to the Karelian economy. However, they were also markedly active in the republic’s social, cultural, and political life, and were instrumental in creating a new Finnish Karelian identity. They played a central role in developing the local administration, educational system, and cultural institutions, all in a language not familiar to the vast majority of the population.

²⁷⁵ See Jack David Eller, “Ethnicity, Culture, and “The Past,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* vol. xxxvi, no. 4, fall 1997.

²⁷⁶ Paul Austin, “Soviet Finnish: The End of a Dream”, p. 427.

²⁷⁷ Takala, I, P. *Finny v Karelii I v Rossii: Istoria vozniknovenia I gibeli diaspori*, [Finns in Karelia and Russia: History of the emergence and the death of a diaspora] (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2002).

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

In the early 1930s, Finnish was becoming an increasingly influential language in the public sphere. Following the signing of the Treaty of Tartu in 1920 it was expected the language of administration, legislation, and public education in Karelia would be that of the ethnic majority, which in turn meant one of the Karelian dialects.²⁷⁹ However, under pressure from Gylling, that privileged role was assigned to the Finnish language.²⁸⁰ Its influence grew throughout the 1920s under the auspices of *Korenizatsia*, and in 1929 the Karelian Regional Committee (Obkom) of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKP b) established that there would be no choice in the language of instruction between Russian or Finnish, and that Finnish would become the mandatory language of literature, writing, and instruction in schools.²⁸¹ The fact that the number of people who could read and write doubled from 1920 to 1932²⁸² also meant that the message conveyed by Karelia's cultural producers was reaching even wider audiences.

The rising influence of the Finnish language and culture in the public sphere in the first part of the 1930s coincided with an exponential rise in the number of Finnish-speaking cultural producers in Karelia. For example, unionized teachers of Finnish descent in Karelia constituted 8.2 percent of the total in 1926, 11.1 percent in 1928, 15.5 percent in 1930, and 30.9 percent in 1933.²⁸³ Notable is the steep increase in the number of Finnish-speaking teachers between 1930 and 1933, a trend that coincided with the Karelian fever. A similar trend could be noticed in the publishing industry. Finns represented 3.4 percent of the republic's printer's union membership

²⁷⁹ Paul Austin. "Soviet Karelian: The Language That Failed."

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid., p. 27.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 28.

in 1926, 14.3 percent in 1928, and 30.2 percent in 1933.²⁸⁴ By 1933, Finns also comprised more than a quarter of all the art workers in the republic.²⁸⁵ These numbers are significant because in 1933 the Finnish population was only 12,088, nine times inferior to the number of Karels (109,046), and eighteen times less than that of the Russian majority (224,445).²⁸⁶

Finnish intellectual workers in North America had at best limited employment opportunities; however in Karelia they were welcomed with open arms. By 1934 the Karelian branch of the Soviet Writers' Union (SWU) had 12 members, 9 of whom were Finns.²⁸⁷ Mikko Ylikangas estimates that there were 32 Finnish writers in Karelia, along with 12 Russians and 5 Karels. The majority of Finnish writers were North American immigrants who, among other things, also actively advocated further Finnish migration to Karelia.²⁸⁸ The growing number of Finns in administrative positions of Karelia's cultural and political infrastructure was a direct result of the *Korenizatsia* policy. Whereas in the second part of the 1930s, the excessive number of Finns in positions of importance would be widely criticized, in the first part of the decade the exact opposite held true. The Finnish elite, as well as the rank and file, knew how to exploit the favorable situation in their own interests. For example, at regional workers' union meetings, many complained that not enough Finns, in particular North American Finns, were employed or involved²⁸⁹ with the central office of the Insnab.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁸⁷ Mikko Ylikangas, "The Experience of Finnish-American Writers in Soviet Karelia", *Journal of Finnish Studies*, Volume 8, Number 1, 2004, p. 152.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 156

²⁸⁹ Insnab was a Soviet state organization responsible for the provision of foreign specialists employed in the Soviet industries with food and commodities. It was established in 1932 with the aim to reduce the impact of food shortages on foreign workers' communities.

²⁹⁰ КГАНИ, ф. 3 (Каробком), оп. 3 (Резолюции и доклад 2 Всекарельской конференции инрабочих). [Resolution and report of the Karelian Workers Conference] JI. 2.

The creation of nations as imagined communities, according to Ernest Gellner, is achieved through public education, public rituals, and mass mobilizing institutions such as the army or political parties.²⁹¹ If that is the case, Karelia's Finnish institutional completeness was virtually fulfilled. Finns for example, predominated in the command core of the republic's military units. Whereas Karels and Russians virtually monopolized the rank and file positions (Karels 65% and Russians 34%), Finns were in the majority among the intermediate and senior commanders (60%).²⁹² Finns also held major posts in the government and in the Communist Party. New publishing houses printed newspapers and books in Finnish, and imported literature from Finland. Between 1929 and 1933 almost all books published in Karelia were in the Finnish language.²⁹³ Furthermore, a drama theater was established, with membership composed entirely of North American Finns. By 1932, 99.6 percent of Karelian children in schools, and 70 percent of Karelian adults were being taught in Finnish.²⁹⁴

The policy of *Korenizatsia* created a situation where ethnicity and privilege became inseparable. Ethnic interests were openly promoted by the political elite through administrative units, through the Communist Party, trade unions, and the media.²⁹⁵ For example, well defined salary categories clearly privileged Finnish workers. The highest paid category of workers was

²⁹¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. John Wiley and sons, 2006.

²⁹² С. Г. Веригин, Э. П. Лайдинен. Финны в воинских формированиях Советской России (1918–1940 годы). *Российские финны: вчера, сегодня завтра. Сборник статей, посвященный 20-летию Ингерманландского союза финнов Карелии* / Науч. ред. Е. И. Клементьев. Петрозаводск: Карельский научный центр РАН, 2010. 209 с [S.G Verigin, E.P Laidinen, Finns in the military formations of Soviet Russia (1918-1940). Russian Finns: yesterday, today and tomorrow. Collection of articles, dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the union of Ingermanlanian Finns of Karelia / Eds, EI Klement'ev. Petrozavodsk: Karelian Research Centre]

²⁹³ Auvo Kostiainen, "Genocide in Soviet Karelia: Stalin's Terror and the Finns in Soviet Karelia," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 21 (1996): 4, p. 332-341.

²⁹⁴ Takala, I, P. *Fiiny v Karelii I v Rossii*, p. 30.

²⁹⁵ Markku Kangaspuro, "The Soviet Depression and Finnish Immigrants in Soviet Karelia," *Karelian Exodus: Finns in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*. Eds Ron Harpelle, Varpu Lindström and Alexis Pogorelskin, Special issue of the Journal of Finnish Studies, vol. 8, no. 1, (Aspasia Books, Inc., 2004), pp. 132-140.

dominated by North American specialists. They received higher salaries than any other group, and, what is more important, had access to special stores, such as *Insna*, and thus foods and consumer goods that were often unavailable to the majority of the population. In addition, North American workers were provided by the authorities with significantly better living quarters than local workers. ‘National workers’ – all other Finns legally residing in the republic comprised the second category and earned the so-called language bonuses, which amounted to higher salaries than workers in the third category dominated by Karels and Russians.²⁹⁶

The media obviously knew how to play the *Korenizatsiya* tune. For example, correspondents for *Punainen-Karjala* (Red Karelia) actively encouraged further Finnish immigration to the republic. One journalist accused the leadership of the Kondopoga lumber site of sabotaging the nationality policy and favoring Russian over Finnish workers.²⁹⁷ According to the article printed in the paper, the Russian management was reactionary, and promoted workers only from its own group. It is clear that the *Korenizatsia* policy generated the necessary conditions for institutionalized ethnic and social inequality, to the benefit of the Finnish population.²⁹⁸

Karelia’s demographic realities did not reflect the republic’s political landscape. In the early 1930s, a total of approximately 65,000 immigrants came to Karelia. The majority of immigrants (81%) were either of Finnish descent, 7,700 (12%) or Russian, 44,000 (69%).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ *Karelian Exodus: Finns in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*. Edited by Ron Harpelle, Varpu Lindström and Alexis Pogorelskin. Special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, Aspasia Books, Inc., 2004.

²⁹⁹ Takala, I, P. *Fiiny v Karelii I v Rossii*.

Also, in 1933 more than a third of the population was born outside of Karelia.³⁰⁰ Thus, based on numbers alone, immigrants played at the very least an important demographic role in Karelia's social, cultural, economic, and political life in the 1930s. Russian immigrants, who outnumbered Finnish ones 6 to 1, nonetheless found themselves in a position of a political, cultural, and economic inferiority. In unbalanced competition with other immigrants over jobs and scarce resources, protected by the state and the local administration, North American Finns played a pivotal role in the construction of a particular form of representation of the Karelian community.

An Imagined Community: The Greatest Trick the Nation Ever Pulled was to Convince the World it Does Exist

The ideological power of imagined communities lies in its ability to generate distorting perceptions of reality. Peoples' everyday experiences, however, serve as an antidote in this equation, as they often find little consistency with the "realities" as interpreted and projected by ruling elites and cultural producers. For example, the majority of letters and memoirs penned by North American immigrants in Karelia in the early 1930s testify to the fact that life in Karelia was extremely difficult, and at times unbearable. The truth about life in Karelia, they wrote, did not reflect the far-fetched stories told by Karelian recruiters in Canada and the United States.

For example, the three memoirs written by Finnish-Canadians Martti Heurlin (1975), writer Salli Lund (1983), and journalist Veikko Taipale (1986) all mention that most immigrants

³⁰⁰ Ирина Такала, Национальные операции ОГПУ/НКВД в Карелии // В семье единой: Национальная политика партии большевиков и ее осуществление на Северо-Западе России в 1920-1950-е годы. Петрозаводск, 1998. С.161-206. [Irina Takala, "National operations of OGPU / NKVD in Karelia," // In a single family: National policy of the Bolshevik Party and its implementation in the North-West of Russia in 1920s-1950s. Petrozavodsk.]

could not stand the birthing pains of socialism and left quickly.³⁰¹ In an interview, Eila Balandis, a Canadian Finn who survived the purges and the Second World War, mentions the difficult conditions in which North American Finns found themselves upon arrival in Karelia.³⁰² She recounts how at one sitting she ate a lot of wheat porridge, which she then threw up. This incident caused her mother to lash out at her father for bringing his family to a place “where children had to eat chicken food.”³⁰³ Her father, like many other immigrants, believed that a better future was just around the corner, and that they should just wait. This sort of thinking was a reflection of typical Soviet propaganda, which endlessly promised a bountiful future amid permanent state of scarcity and chronic economic depression. The basic trope of socialist realism, argues Sheila Fitzpatrick is “the superimposition of a better ‘soon’ on a still imperfect ‘now’.”³⁰⁴ In the discourse of socialist realism, the Soviet society was represented in terms of not ‘life as it is’ but ‘life as it becoming’.³⁰⁵

Although the Karelian government had sincere aspirations to supply North American specialists with the necessary lodging and food provisions, the incompetent Soviet bureaucratic apparatus stalled such initiatives. Two letters from the Head of the Customs Office, a certain Rutenberg, written 6 months apart, show that as late as December 1932 officials still did not have the slightest idea about the regulations on levying duties on foods and goods brought across the border by foreign workers.³⁰⁶ OGPU weekly reports reveal that many of the workers’ houses had

³⁰¹ Eila Lahti-Argutina, “The Fate of Finnish Canadians in Soviet Karelia,” *Journal of Finnish Studies*. Volume 8 Number 1, 2004.

³⁰² Баландис Эльза Августовна [Balandis Elsa Avgustovna] interview (unpublished). Conducted by Alexei Golubev, Petrozavodsk, 2009.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, (Cornell University Press, 1992), p, 222.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 230

³⁰⁶ НАРК. Фонд 690, оп. 1, д. 19/213 «Постановления СНК, списки и переписка о привлечении специалистов инрабочих», л. 33 — Письмо Глав.Тамож.Управ. в СНК КАССР от 26.12.1932. [Decision of the Council of

leaking roofs and no heating, and despite workers' numerous appeals to Karelles (a trust which owned the houses) problems were addressed very slowly. When repairs were finally begun, they had to be halted once again because of a shortage of nails. In addition, OGPU records show that the expensive equipment brought from North America by immigrants was misused and rendered useless by incompetent administrators.³⁰⁷

Most of all, foreign workers were frustrated by the lack of employment and adequate housing. For example, given the absence of work in Petrozavodsk, the Karelstroï (Karelia's construction trust) had to send some of its employees to work on the outskirts of the city. Many were dispatched to Kondopoga, but soon returned arguing they did not want to live apart from their families, and that on top of everything there was a housing shortage in the town. Thirty fishermen who were sent to Kandalksha from Petrozavodsk also returned citing an absence of adequate housing in the area. Correspondence between government officials, dated July 1935 reveals that although directives for the construction of houses for foreign workers were given out as early as 1931, most construction sites had not even begun their projects.³⁰⁸ When the ministries did finally allot the necessary funding in the summer of 1935 it turned out that there was now an acute scarcity of construction materials, and the project had to be postponed once again.

The underlying promise of the entire recruiting scheme was guaranteed employment for all. However, North American Finns encountered a different reality. Although official settlement statistics indicate that all arriving workers were assigned work at various trusts throughout

People's Commissars, lists and correspondence about attracting foreign specialists. Letter of the head of Customs Control to the SNK KASSR]

³⁰⁷ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 10/115. л. 5 Письмо всем хозорганам Карельской АССР, получившим импортное имущество через Переселенческое Управление. [Letter to all the economic houses of Karelian ASSR which received imported property through the Resettlement Agency].

³⁰⁸ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 15/166. Л. 112.

Karelia, other sources, such as records of arrests, reveal that some were in fact unemployed.³⁰⁹ Ivan Chukhin, for example has demonstrated that, although the official line claimed unemployment was non-existent in the Soviet Union, by the early 1930s there in fact were close to 500,000 people out of work in the Soviet Union.³¹⁰ Chukhin also argues that mass arrests and imprisonment throughout the 1930s, in addition to solving the country's socio-political problems and dissent, were meant to provide the much needed labor for Stalin's failing industrialization initiatives.³¹¹ The OGPU set up several labor camps intended for large industrial projects throughout Karelia in the 1930s. In fact, forced labor could be found throughout the Soviet Union since the early 1920s. Thus, in some way, recruiters did not lie, as work was guaranteed for everyone, even if it meant employment in the Gulag.

In addition to the bureaucratic ineptitude, North American Finns had to deal with the condescending attitudes of local Russian and Karelian workers, who often resented immigrants, calling North American Finns "nahlebniki" (parasites) and bourgeois. Not surprisingly, they accused foreign workers of stealing jobs from locals, and the OGPU reported cases of mistreatment and even abuse as early as 1931.³¹² Although the Karelian government, as well as the republic's major industrial trusts wholeheartedly supported immigration from North America, common workers did not.

³⁰⁹ Based on the statistical analysis of the lists of North American Finnish immigrants to Soviet Karelia (Resettlement Agency records) compiled by Eila Lahti Argutina (deposited in the Lindstrom Fonds at Clara Thomas Archives, York University). For preliminary analysis of the lists see Evgeny Efremkin, *Переселение североамериканских финнов в Советскую Карелию в 1930-1933 годах: статистический анализ* [Resettlement of North American Finns to Soviet Karelia in 1930-1933: Statistical Analysis], *Труды Карельского научного центра РАН № 6. 2011. С. 97–105* (*Proceedings of Karelian Research Centre of Russian Academy of Sciences*).

³¹⁰ Чухин И. Карелия–37: Идеология и практика террора.— [Chukhin I. Karelia-37: Ideology and practice of terror], Петрозаводск: изд-во Петрозаводского ун-та, 1999.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 22/254 «Доклады и докладные записки ГПУ АКССР о положении финско-американской колонии и...». л. 51-59. Доклад ГПУ АКССР о состоянии финно-американской колонии в Карелии на 1-е октября 1932 г. [Report of the GPU AKSSR on the state of the Finnish-American colony in Karelia as of 1st October 1932]

Many American and Canadian specialists believed they were coming to a place where everyone was equal, in particular when it concerned their Finnish compatriots. However they found the realities to be much different from what they expected. For example, at one of the logging camps, ten border hopper Finns were excluded from Insnab dining rooms despite the collective demand by American workers to let them stay and eat from the food allotted to them.³¹³ After the request was denied and the dining room was divided into two sections to differentiate between legal and “illegal” workers, immigrants began sarcastically referring to sections as the “Bosses” and “Proletarian” zones. Workers also often complained about the rampant corruption in the Insnab stores. For example, there were several complaints about the store in Uhta, where the same worker was responsible for the ordering of provisions, management of stockpiles, as well as the accounting.

North American Finns also found the sales personnel at Insnab stores rude and conniving. Allegedly they put up poor quality products on the shelves, while quality foods and goods were being sold “under the counter” for higher prices. In 1933 Insnab privileges for foreign workers were canceled altogether, causing uproar among North American immigrants. The cost of living increased drastically as a result, and caused many to re-emigrate.³¹⁴ In addition to shortages of consumer goods, inadequate food provisions, and long lines in the stores, there were also the frequent hold ups in the payment of salaries. And as a result of poor and unsanitary living and working condition, mass illness was also not uncommon.³¹⁵ Living conditions were poor to the

³¹³ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 22/254 «Доклады и докладные записки ГПУ АКССР о положении финско-американской колонии и...». Л. 54. [Report of the GPU AKSSR on the state of the Finnish-American colony in Karelia as of 1st October 1932]

³¹⁴ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, *In Search of Socialist El Dorado*, p. 104.

³¹⁵ КГАНИ, ф. 3 (Каробком ВКП(б)), оп. 2, д. 790 (Информации обкома и переписка... о партийно-массовой работе и культурно-бытовом обслуживании иностранных рабочих и промпереселенцев). февраль-декабрь 1932. л. 23-26 Докладная записка о положении иностранных рабочих в Карелстройобъединение (март 1932 г.) [Information of the regional committee and correspondence ... about the party mass work and cultural services of

extent that it made most immigrants admit they made a mistake in coming to Karelia, and some even claimed that conditions in depression-stricken United States were by far superior to what they had to endure in the Soviet Union.³¹⁶

A letter written by one of the immigrants in March of 1932 reflects the disparity between the recruitment message advertised in the Finnish communities across Canada and the United States on one hand and Soviet reality on the other. Edvard Mason's comments illuminate the deceptive nature of the constructed and idealized image of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, and highlight some of the reasons for the failure of Soviet immigration policy. Mason writes:

I am back from Petroskoi and on the way to USA. When I arrived there with Lehtimaki's group, I found things much different there as was described in New York. We was promised work in the aeroplane shop, but there was nothing of this kind, and nothing under construction, or in the sight, that such workshop would be constructed in the nearest future. We was promised 3 room apartment, but there was no house of that kind built in all town and we had to put in poorest living quarters one could ever think of. Sufficient food was promised, but it was poorest I ever eat in all my life. And wages, which was going to be 300 rubles per month, was little over 200 rubles per month for the time I worked there on the building. And when they wanted me to go to lumber camp, I refused, demanding the work for which I was assigned, then they told me I could quit, which I did. I demanded the money back what I paid to you and Lehtimaki, they refused, offering me the rubles, which I couldn't use...³¹⁷

Immigrant letters expose that many immigrants felt deceived upon arrival in Karelia. For example, one of the first groups to arrive in Karelia noted that "in Canada we are used to thinking that Petrozavodsk is a Finnish speaking city. This is not the case."³¹⁸

Open letters warning about substandard quality of life in Karelia appeared as early as August 1931 in the North American Finnish press. For example, Lauri Nordling wrote that people should not go to Karelia unless they were wholeheartedly dedicated to the socialist cause.

foreign workers and industrial migrants. February-December 1932. Report on the situation of foreign workers in Karelstroyobedinenie (March 1932)]

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ NARK, f. R-685, op. 2, d. 99, l. 95. Edvard Mason, Private letter dated to 18 March 1932.

³¹⁸ *Vapaus* 3 August 1931.

Otherwise, he insisted, they would be disappointed: “In many cases people leave and go back to the capitalist world, sometimes ashamed, having lost everything, and sometimes they become real enemies of socialism – better be clear in your mind before you come.”³¹⁹ Nordling also encouraged men to go to Karelia first, settle in, and only when conditions improved to call for their families to join them. Such a recommendation stood in contrast to the message spread by recruiters, who encouraged men not to leave their families behind.³²⁰ Recruiters were concerned that men would leave Karelia without fulfilling their contracts, something that eventually did happen.

Nordling also observed that in Karelia, contrary to what people were made to believe in Canada, illiteracy was widespread, as was the belief in superstitions and religions.³²¹ Soviet Karelia was highly nationalistic he wrote, illiterate, with a poor infrastructure and chronic food supply shortages. Karelia as advertised by recruiters it seems was a mirage. It is worth quoting in full, one historian’s observation on the disparities between the constructed realities, as opposed to everyday experiences, in Karelia:

In the immigrants’ dreams—and probably in the stories of American and Canadian recruiters—Petrozavodsk was a large beautiful city with straight and broad streets, multi-story buildings, and many parks and gardens. In reality, in the early 1930s, the capital of Karelia was a small and dirty town with less than a third of its streets paved, cows and goats grazing at the crossroads, and few streetlights. Horses were the major means of transportation. The electric power supply was often cut, and almost a quarter of the population lived without it at all. There was no sewage system or centralized water supply... Many families could not even dream of an apartment of their own and had to rent a room or even just part of a room. Extreme overcrowding with poor sanitary conditions led to a high incidence of disease as well as a high mortality rate.³²²

³¹⁹ Lauri Nordling, “Letter from Karelia” in *Vapaus*, 11 August 1931.

³²⁰ Matti Tenhunen encouraged family immigration, although the Soviet government preferred male immigrant workers, without families.

³²¹ Lauri Nordling, “Letter from Karelia” in *Vapaus*, 11 August 1931.

³²² Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, *In Search of Socialist El Dorado*.

Several articles in the Canadian mainstream media – *The Star* and *The Globe* – throughout the late 1920s and the early 1930s reported on the brutal Soviet prison camps and, as evidence, presented testimonies of North American immigrants who managed to escape the Gulag.³²³ These claims however were dismissed by the CPC and the FOC as bourgeois propaganda aimed at tarnishing the Soviet image. Within the Finnish communities, many of the returnees tried to tell the horrid truth about Soviet Karelia. However, most of their pleas fell on deaf ears. To make matters worse, the socialist press in Canada was quick to denote such rhetoric as signs of betrayal and bourgeois propaganda.

The left-wing press in North America contributed exponentially to the construction of the Soviet and the Soviet Karelian image as a constantly progressing society, whose imperfections would be settled in the near future. For North American Finns, who were far removed from the Soviet actualities, it was difficult to develop a balanced judgment. Moreover, returnee witness accounts and contradictory stories in the media further divided the Finnish community, even within the left. For example, a group of Finns seen sent off “by hundreds of comrades” to the Soviet Union in August of 1931, wrote to the *Vapaus* that on their way a crowd of “strangers came by and tried to talk us out from leaving,” citing poor conditions in Karelia.³²⁴ The use of language here is very telling. While it was “comrades” who came to see them off to Soviet Karelia at the port in Halifax, it was “strangers” (or the ‘others’) who were trying to talk them out of going.³²⁵

Furthermore, sources indicate that the OGPU and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (NKID) knew all too well, and warned both the Soviet government as well as the Karelian leadership,

³²³ “Tales of Horror Told by Prisoners of Soviet,” *The Toronto Daily Star*, 14 December 1929. This article recounts the story of 7 Finns who escaped from a Karelian Gulag.

³²⁴ *Vapaus*, September 24, 1931.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

that North American immigrants would be disappointed with the social conditions in Karelia and would most likely return to North America. The OGPU and the NKID had their own reasons for concern. They feared, and rightfully so, that foreign workers would transfer currencies abroad and expose the harsh realities of Soviet life in their correspondence with friends and relatives abroad. At a meeting of the Orgburo TSKa dated September 22, 1932, a certain Postishev wrote to Karelia asking Gylling to stop the immigration of Canadian fishermen until proper dwellings and other buildings had been constructed. NKID representative, a certain Rotshtein wrote to SNK RSFSR in 1930 and stated that bringing Finnish workers to Karelia would be counterproductive.³²⁶ First, he argued, the emigration of left-wing elements from Finland would weaken the class struggle in Finland. Second, there was a good chance that living and working conditions in the Soviet Union would turn out to be much worse than in Finland, which would inevitably result in return migration and tarnish the Soviet image in the eyes of the international proletariat. OGPU opposition to immigration from abroad dated to at least 1928. In fact, Gylling, while lobbying the government to allow immigration from North America, had to work hard to convince authorities in the Kremlin to bypass the opposition of the OGPU.

Attempts by the OGPU and the NKID, two of the most powerful ministries in the Soviet Union, to forestall immigration from Europe and North America can be explained by the very nature of their existence – the protection of the Soviet imagined community from internal and external threats. They and, as we will see, also the Canadian government and the RCMP, with vast resources at their disposal, were well informed about the inconsistencies between Soviet propaganda and lived realities, and were convinced that immigrants would find social conditions

³²⁶ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 17/187 «Переписка с СНК СССР о создании постоянных кадров...». л. 11.
[Correspondence with SNK, USSR about creating a permanent staff]

in Karelia unappealing, even unbearable. The “Potemkinites”³²⁷ at the OGPU and the NKID were trying to protect the Soviet façade. It is not surprising then that these same agencies would participate in one way or another in the purges that would destroy the North American communities.

Representations of imagined communities always appear more colorful and attractive at a distance. For example, Mennonites who traveled to Canada following the Second World War were “dismayed to encounter large unpopulated areas of trees and prairie, and a country that was “less civilized” than the richness they had been expecting.”³²⁸ Marlene Epp argues that our traditional and popular understanding of Canada and the North American continent is challenged by such a narrative. In a similar fashion, Finns who arrived in Canada in the 1920s and in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s were dismayed (although to different degrees) to find that the images of Canada as a land of opportunity and of Soviet Karelia as a workers’ paradise were misleading, constructed representations of social, cultural, and economic realities.

Re-Emigration

Evidence of the fact that the Karelian imaginary was chimerical is the quick paced re-emigration from Karelia. Having realized they had been deluded by recruiters, people began to leave the region as soon as they arrived. The Peoples Commissariat of AKSSR mentions re-emigration of North American Finns as early as March of 1931.³²⁹ There were reports of immigrants who did not even unpack their suitcases, but turned around and went back to North America, or continued their voyage to Finland. However, the majority did not leave right away.

³²⁷ According to a story, Potemkin Village was a fake village constructed to impress, and fool, Empress Catherine II during her visit to Crimea in 1787, into believing that peasants enjoyed high standards of living.

³²⁸ Marlene Epp, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War*. University of Toronto Press, 2000.

³²⁹ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 230 «О рабочей силе на лесозаготовках» л. 11. [On labor in logging]

Only 63 Canadian and American Finns left Karelia in 1931.³³⁰ On average, migrants returned after spending about a year there. Departure en-masse began in late 1932, as North American specialists departed even before their employment contracts expired, many without getting paid.³³¹ As mentioned, some of the reasons that prompted migrants to move on were poor living conditions, insufficient food supplies, inadequate and late supply of materials to work sites, and hold ups in salaries.³³² According to the Karelian Resettlement Committee and Canadian Passengers lists, by December 1933, 322 Canadian Finns and 560 American ones had left Karelia.³³³ Although there are no official records for 1934 and 1935, it is likely that the outflow of North American Finns from Karelia continued apace. Even though it became more difficult to leave the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s, nonetheless there were those like Matti and Katri Kujala of Dorchester, Mass, who received their passports at the U.S. consulate in Moscow as late as the spring of 1936.³³⁴

As OGPU records show women were the ones who encouraged emigration from Karelia.³³⁵ While the ratio of women to men was virtually identical in the re-emigration stream, there were twice as many men as women who initially made their way to Karelia. Women were

³³⁰ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 2, дело 11/132, Л. 56-65. List of American and Canadian Finns who returned to North America between 1931 and March 1934. Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд 685, опись 2, дело 11/132. [National Archives of the Republic of Karelia]

³³¹ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, *In Search of Socialist El Dorado*, P, 101.

³³² НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 22/254 «Доклады и докладные записки ГПУ АКССР о положении финско-американской колонии и...». л. 55. [Reports and memoranda of GPU AKSSR on the situation of the Finnish-American colonies and ...]

³³³ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 2, дело 11/132 Листы 56-65; and *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications T-479 to T-520, T-4689 to T-4874, T-14700 to T-14939, C-4511 to C-4542. Library and Archives Canada, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds. Library and Archives Canada Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Passenger lists comprised the official immigration records of Canada between the years covered this collection, although the forms used and information recorded varied. Lists from later years usually contain more details depending on the form.

³³⁴ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 2, дело 11/132. Листы 56-65

³³⁵ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 22/254 «Доклады и докладные записки ГПУ АКССР о положении финско-американской колонии и...». [[Reports and memoranda of GPU AKSSR on the situation of the Finnish-American colonies and ...]

thus more likely to re-emigrate. Moreover, nearly 20 percent of the returnees were children.³³⁶ Analysis of transatlantic passengers' lists reveals contrasting patterns of migration from North America to Soviet Karelia, as opposed to return migration from Soviet Karelia to North America and Finland. On their way to the Soviet Union, it was common for men to arrive in advance of their families, who joined them once they established themselves financially in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, return migration was markedly different and reveals a reverse trend: women and children left first, and were followed by their husbands, on average about a month later.³³⁷ It seems as if women and children were leaving Karelia in a hurry. One can conclude that promises in regards to free education, healthcare, and social security, offers which attracted many couples with children to Karelia in the first place, were at best misleading. Although free, the level of education, healthcare, and the overall standards of living were appalling to many women who decided to leave. They played a major role in persuading their husbands to do the same.

In order to dispel one of the myths about return migrations, it should be noted that returning Canadian and American Finns did not all go back to North America. In fact, close to fifty percent of the returnees did not end up in Canada or the United States, but went to Finland, Sweden, Germany, or moved on to other regions in the Soviet Union. It suggests that although immigrants were desperate to go back, return specifically to North America was never a foregone conclusion. The fact that women and children were leaving before men also suggests that North American Finns feared for the well being of their families in Karelia, and were trying to escape it as quickly as they could. Passenger lists' analysis reveal that several North American Finns arrived at the ports of Halifax and New York working as ship crew members. This demonstrates that some spent all their money to get to Karelia and were looking for any way

³³⁶ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 2, дело 11/132. Листы 56-65

³³⁷ Ibid.

possible to return home, wherever they considered it to be. Edward Waldman for example, arrived in the port of New York on April 1933 on board the President Harding hailing from Bremen, working as a crew member.³³⁸

In addition there were instances, although rare, that immigrants left for other regions in the Soviet Union. Sources show that in attempts to find suitable employment and better living conditions North American Finns moved actively within Karelia and the Soviet Union.³³⁹ For example, a group of 16 auto-workers left Karelavto and relocated to an automobile factory in Nizhniy Novgorod. In the second half of 1934 alone, 143 requests were submitted to the Resettlement Agency asking for a transfer. Workers cited low wages, a chance to receive a better salary elsewhere, and remoteness of current work locations from major towns and food supplies as the main motives for relocation. For example, Vaine Kuffal asked to be transferred to the Matrossi lumber camp location, as he and his family lived far away from their nearest neighbors, there was an absence of any cultural centers or activities, and nearest food provision posts were nearly 50 kilometers away.

Abolition of Insnab provisions for North American Finns proved to be the last straw. In 1931 and 1932, although appalled by the living conditions, Canadian and American Finns were nonetheless one of the most privileged groups in the Soviet Union. Insnab provisions allowed foreign workers to receive 7 times more bread than Russian workers, 3 times as much sugar, 1.5 more fish, and they also could receive 1.5 kg of butter a month, something that Russian workers

³³⁸ Library and Archives Canada, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds. Library and Archives Canada Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. President Harding, Hamburg, April 1933 *Passenger Lists, 1865-1935*. Microfilm Publications T-479 to T-520, T-4689 to T-4874, T-14700 to T-14939, C-4511 to C-4542.

³³⁹ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 13/153. Л. 184. Протокол №11 Заседания Комиссии по рассмотрению вопросов о перемене инорабочими места работы. [Protocol number 11 Meetings of the Commission on the questions of foreign workers' job location changes]

could only dream about. Reversal of the migration trend was so drastic following the cancelation of Insna benefits that by mid-1933 there were as many North American Finns returning as arriving in Karelia. Mass exodus of North American Finns from Karelia began in the early months of 1933. They left the republic consistently throughout 1932, at a rate of about 20 migrants per month. However, from January 1933, the number of returnees more than doubled. Between January and September an average of 50 immigrants departed Karelia every month, with the largest exodus recorded in March, when 83 Finns left.³⁴⁰

The Dominant Discourses and the Power of Imagined Communities

The belief in the infallibility of the Soviet Karelian imagined community was strong. In some cases people continued to consider their arrests during Stalin's purges a mistake, a result of a misunderstanding and confusion, blaming saboteurs and other real and imagined enemies of the Soviet regime for their misfortune. Many of the survivors maintained the ideological allegiance to the Soviet state even following Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech, and some remained convinced of Stalin's altruism even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In light of absence of significant resistance or alternative agendas within the Soviet public discourse, it seems that North American Finns embodied the hegemonic Soviet representations of the society. Immigrants however were not simply passive recipients, but also propagated and zealously defended the virtue of Soviet Karelia's integrity. Judith Hokkanen, for example following 10 years spent in a Soviet prison, still believed her arrest was illegal and was the work of internal class enemies who infiltrated the Soviet society.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Evgeny Efremkin, *Переселение североамериканских финнов в Советскую Карелию*. [Resettlement of Soviet Finns to Soviet Karelia]

³⁴¹ Mayme Sevander, *Red Exodus: Finnish-American Emigration to Russia*, (Tyomies Society, 1996), p. 6.

Yet another North American Finn mentioned the horrors of the terror, the arrests at night, of the deportations, and the miserable living conditions.³⁴² However, he also was convinced in the good nature of the Soviet regime, holding spies and saboteurs accountable. It was because of them, he thought, that people were being wrongfully accused and arrested. Such thinking was shared by many others, who were certain that those arrested were most likely American agents that were somehow involved in “white Russian” sabotage. Sources indicate that even those who returned to North America believed most of the arrests were reasonable. A questionnaire sent to the returnees revealed a widespread belief in the existence of internal enemies in the Soviet state at the time. The general consensus was that if people were arrested there was in most likelihood a good reason for it.³⁴³ These beliefs were a reflection of typical Soviet interwar propaganda sifted from top to bottom through official channels and the media. This again, was a result of the embodiment of the dominant Soviet discourse rather than projections of daily-lived realities in Soviet Karelia. There is very little, if any evidence to suggest North American Finns sabotaged Soviet industries, or belonged to any type of international spy rings. Soviet propaganda was permeated with messages about lurking external and internal enemies, of perpetual danger to the Soviet regime. Due in large part to monopoly on lines of communication by the time mass purges set on the Soviet society, the state managed to convince the majority of the population of the absolute necessity of the project.

Unsympathetic reviews about Soviet Karelia surfaced in the ethnic and mainstream press in the United States and Canada as early as the mid-1920s. For example, American Finns who returned from the Sower commune cursed it and the entire Soviet system for cheating honest

³⁴² Clara Thompson Archives (CTA), Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Collection of Letters, Urimolahti, 25 July 1938.

³⁴³ Маме Севандер, Скитальцы: о судьбах американских финнов в карелии, (ПетрГу, 2006), p, 40.

people.³⁴⁴ In the 1930s, Karelian fever returnees complained that they were misinformed by the recruiters and the socialist press. Nonetheless, most returnees refrained from open criticism, as disapproval directed at the Soviet Union was often met with resentment and hostility in the North American Finnish left-wing communities. Disillusioned migrants who were swept by the Karelian fever, but somehow managed to make it back to North America in most cases chose to remain silent about their experiences in the Soviet Union.³⁴⁵ Many moved to a different locale and became apolitical, while some were shunned even by friends and family.³⁴⁶

In September 1931, a certain Kemppainen upon returning from Karelia wrote an extensive critical commentary about it, which was published in the *Sault St. Marie News* and the *Upper Michigan Farm Journal*, and then reprinted in *Canadian Uutiset* (published in Thunder Bay).³⁴⁷ The response was swift. In the next several weeks letters came in from within Canada and Karelia to criticize and denounce Kemppainen. He was accused of being a drunk and a lazy socialist. In fact, from the early 1930s, party members were being expelled from the CPUSA for criticizing the Soviet Union following their return from Karelia.³⁴⁸ The ideological protection of the Karelian regime was powerful and extended beyond its geographical borders. The Soviet Karelian cause was propagated but also cultivated and protected by North American Finnish community leaders and their followers. Those who decided to return to North America were seen as traitors and deserters in Canada and the United States, and were also criticized by those who

³⁴⁴ Mikko Ylikangas, "The Experience of Finnish-North American Writers in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s", in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North American and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*. Edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin. Special Issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* 8(1): 152-175.

³⁴⁵ Varpu Lindstrom, "Heaven or Hell on Earth? Soviet Karelia's Propaganda War of 1934-1935 in the Finnish Canadian Press". Proceedings of International Research Seminar Petrozavodsk, 22-23 May 2008, *North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s*. Petrozavodsk State University, 2008.

³⁴⁶ Mayme Sevander, *Of Soviet Bondage*, (Oscat, 1996), p. 4.

³⁴⁷ "Soviet Karelian Workers Answer to Kemppainen's Provocative Lies", *Vapaus* 27 November 1931.

³⁴⁸ Peter Kivisto, "Reaction to Departure", Proceedings of International Research Seminar Petrozavodsk, 22-23 May 2008, *North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s*, (Petrozavodsk State University, 2008), p. 48.

remained in Soviet Karelia. Immigrants' letters reveal that many held a grudge against those who returned: "Selma Maki, she didn't have a strong enough desire to a build a socialist society.

What does she give as her reason for returning?"³⁴⁹

In response to the growing criticism of Soviet Karelia and the Soviet Union by returning Canadian Finns, Gus Sundquist, head of the FOC, asked Gylling for permission to send over a Canadian delegation to inquire into living and working conditions of Canadian Finns in Karelia, to which Gylling enthusiastically agreed. For Gylling the arrival of the delegation meant an opportunity to promote Karelia in North America once again, as the immigration flow virtually stopped by 1934.³⁵⁰ As for Sundquist, following his return from the Soviet Union he immediately set off on a lecture tour throughout Finnish communities across Canada, which was subsequently published in the *Vapaus*. What was striking in Sundquist's reports was the way in which he criticized, and in the process ostracized, returning Canadian Finns. In a letter to Eklund, dated April 1935 Sundquist wrote that the delegation met with many workers in Karelia and have not heard a single worker expressing a wish to return to Canada and that "the fact is that the kind of person who wants to move back from here to a capitalist country must have something wrong with his head or then he is here for some specific purpose."³⁵¹

The rhetoric in these few lines requires further attention. According to Sundquist anyone who left Soviet Karelia was deviant. He hinted that returning Canadian Finns might in fact be infiltrators, saboteurs, and Finnish spies. Sundquist's remarks were in line with the Soviet dominant discourse of the day, which in light of the Third Period policy and the economic depression engulfing the country saw departure from the Soviet Union as an act of treason. To

³⁴⁹ KTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/035 File 6 Arthur Koski letter collection. 28 October 1934, Letter by Terttu to Toini.

³⁵⁰ Varpu Lindstrom, "Hell or Heaven or Earth," p. 93.

³⁵¹ Sundquist's letter to Eklund, 3.4.1935, quoted in Varpu Lindstrom, "Heaven or Hell on Earth," p. 93.

substantiate his argument Sundquist brought with him a manuscript of the “Statement of 1483 workers who moved to Soviet Karelia about what is taking place in Soviet Karelia” which was published by *Vapaus* as a book in October 1935.³⁵² The document was full of accusations against those who spoke out against the Soviet regime, and underscored that North American communities in Karelia had been compromised and infiltrated by saboteurs. It condemned criticism spread by the returning migrants, branding them as “bourgeoisie agents masquerading as workers.”³⁵³

Contrary to attempts by FOC leaders to save face, one returnee and a former member of the FOC, Suomela, decided to go public and authored a short monograph “Six Months in Karelia: What an Immigrant saw and experienced in Soviet Karelia.” He was also quickly denounced by the left-wing press and accused of being an agent of white Finland. One of the letters condemning Suomela interpreted the return of Canadian Finns as a call for war against the Soviet Union. The letter blamed them for engaging in “whisper campaigns” against the Soviet regime and glorifying the capitalist system in North America. In his turn, Sundquist was only too happy to grant support to such claims: “This stage preceding the military attack was without weapons but it was nevertheless war.”³⁵⁴

Return from Karelia fostered further discord within the Finnish North American left. The ideological struggle was most visible in the press, with the *Vapaus* and *Vapa Sana*, taking opposing stances on the issue. *Vapaus*, which supported the Karelian venture, published the “Statement of 1483 Workers” that celebrated North American Finnish achievements in Karelia, and refuted stories of the returnees. *Vapa Sana*, on the other hand, published Suomela’s critical

³⁵² Varpu Lindstrom, “Heaven or Hell on Earth”, p. 95.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Sundquist’s letter to Aronen, quoted in Varpu Lindstrom, “Heaven or Hell on Earth”, p. 96.

account on conditions in the Soviet Union. There was even a division among the returnees themselves. Suomela, for example, mentions heated debates on returning ships between those who wanted to stay quiet, and even lie, so as not to discredit the first workers' state, and those, like Suomela, who argued that truth about the terrible living and working conditions in the Soviet Union had to be told.

Nonetheless, while some could not cope with Soviet realities and left, others were still convinced that the place of Finnish workers was nowhere but in Soviet Karelia. One of the letters written from Karelia to Canada exclaimed: "I can already say that our place is here at least as long as imperialists govern outside of the Soviet Union. And if Karelia needs us we can stay here forever, but after Finland has its revolution we may be needed there."³⁵⁵ This respondent's enthusiasm reflects the embodiment of official Soviet propaganda, but also reveals the influence of the dominant discourses in Karelia, where a promise of a socialist utopia blended with guarantees of a Finnish-speaking homeland.

The fact that many migrants stayed devoted to the Soviet cause, most probably depended on their individual experiences, but also reflected the persuasive ideological and imagological power imagined national communities have over individual, subjective reasoning. Some of the North American Finns who went to visit relatives in the Soviet Union in the 1970s were surprised to find that many were more than content with their lives in the Soviet Union and had no regrets leaving depression-riddled capitalist North America.³⁵⁶ In addition, there were those who survived the purges, famines, and deportations, and upon return to North America still retained their socialist and communist allegiances. Finally there were those who never stopped

³⁵⁵ Letter from Karelia sent to the Kirkland Lake Women's Section by Ilmi Manner, *Vapaus*, 19 October 1931.

³⁵⁶ Michael Gelb, "Karelian Fever: The Finnish Immigrant Community during Stalin's Purges," *Europe-Asia Studies* 45, no. 6 (1993), p. 137.

supporting Soviet Karelia and the Soviet Union. For many years they would continue to believe in the infallibility of the Soviet regime, despite the mounting evidence to the contrary. Lauri Hokkanen's own mother, for example, refused to believe in the wicked nature of the purges³⁵⁷ even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of previously restricted archives that revealed Stalin's atrocities.

On the other hand, many ardent supporters of the CPC and the FOC were disillusioned by the failure of the Karelian venture. Many came knocking on CPC doors asking for information about their relatives in Karelia. The CPC however could not do much. It placed several requests with Soviet authorities, but no explanations were ever sent back. Some of the returnees even wanted to sue the CPC and demanded back the money they had invested in the Machine Fund.³⁵⁸ This produced a crisis in the relationship between the CPC and the Finnish communities in Canada. There is enough evidence to suggest that the FOC's all-in investment mentality in the failed Karelian venture brought on the decline of socialist and communist popularity in the Finnish communities across Canada. The symbolic elite struggled to sustain the ideological grip over their constituencies: "Quite frankly [our position] is critical...if we cannot fulfill our obligations and explain the situation we're sunk. There has emerged a threat to the very existence...of communist organizations among the Finns."³⁵⁹ The contrast between reality and the perceived image of Soviet Karelia was so stark that it made the staunchest communists turn white for a brief period of time.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

³⁵⁸ Karelia accepted only relatively wealthy immigrants, who were in the position to contribute to the so-called Machine Fund, which would pool money for the purchase of tools and equipment for Soviet Karelia

³⁵⁹ Quoted in Michael Gelb, "Karelian Fever, The Finnish Immigrant Community during Stalin's Purges," p. 101.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

The FOC did all in its power to plug the leak in their ship caused by returning immigrants. It did so by ostracizing its own former members who spoke out against the Soviet regime. For example, one member of both the FOC and the CPC, who was in charge of the local Vapaus library in Montreal, upon his return from Karelia, was questioned by the CPC as to the reasons he did not remain in the Soviet Union.³⁶¹ He answered frankly that his family did not like the living and working condition there and preferred to live in Canada. Finding it difficult to explain why a well known Communist Party member, who had been praising and defending the Soviet Union for the past decade, refused to remain in Soviet Karelia and instead preferred “capitalist” Canada, and to avoid further negative publicity, the Finnish Bureau of the Communist Party expelled the member on the grounds that, having been a disciplined member of the Party, he should have remained in the Soviet Union regardless of the conditions there.

Conclusion

Returning migrants did not fit into the contours of the imagined community constructed by the North American Finnish left, and as a result found themselves on its margins. While some were expelled from political and ethnic organizations to forestall ideological “contamination” of the community, others removed themselves from the left-ethnic organizations voluntarily. The daily lived experiences in Soviet Karelia were in bold contrast to the messages and images spread by the Finnish and non-Finnish left in Canada and the United States. In case of the Karelian fever, most migrants who had gone to and returned from Karelia denounced the Soviet

³⁶¹ RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, 16th October, 1935. Summary Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935*, edited by Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker. St. John’s. Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993.

Union. While some chose to remain quiet, others spoke out. In either case, the returnees found themselves ostracized from the imagined collective.

By 1934 the Great Depression subsided, and with it the Karelian fever. The KTA closed its doors in the United States, while in Toronto John Latva's funds for recruitment were also running out. Nonetheless, records reveal that even by 1935 there were as many as 3,000 North American Finns ready to depart for Soviet Karelia. However, the migrant contingent had changed, as those willing to depart were of the poorest element and did not have the means to sponsor their own voyage. In the first half of 1934 for example, 940 contracts were signed with North American Finns, however only 57 would depart to Karelia.³⁶² While workers lacked funds to emigrate, Soviet authorities refused to sponsor their voyage. It seems that there were more than enough factors to halt the exodus from North America to Soviet Karelia, including failure of the Soviet immigration policy, returnees' revealing stories, letters written from Soviet Karelia dissuading from immigrating, improving economic conditions in Canada and the United States, and the closure of KTA offices to coordinate and facilitate emigration. Despite all of that, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that even after 1934 (when migration to Karelia virtually halted) North American Finns continued to cultivate and defend the social Finnish Soviet Karelian identity, and many would refuse to believe in the ill nature of the Stalinist regime even several decades later.

Mass migration of North American Finns to Soviet Karelia in the early 1930s strengthened Gylling's Finnish socialist vision of Karelia. By granting North American Finns a privileged economic, social, and cultural status in the republic, the Karelian government made it clear who it considered the "ideal" member of society. Gylling's vision of Karelia was reflected

³⁶² Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 12/140, л. 36.

in the future he imagined for Karelia, where Finns, and more specifically skilled male Finnish workers, were valued most and were clearly privileged. North American Finnish social and cultural norms were actively promoted by the Karelian government through official channels and the media. Up until the mid-1930s they glorified North American Finnish working methods, setting their experiences as an example for Karelian workers, but also for the rest of the Soviet population to emulate. In the process, the Karelian elite had appropriated the identity of North American Finnish migrants in its own hegemonic discourse. Immigrants' achievements, both real and constructed, became the cornerstone for the construction of a Finnish socialist Soviet Karelian identity. Through the appropriation of North American Finnish migrants' social and cultural identities, Karelia's leaders strengthened the demographic, political, and cultural status of the republic's Finnish public character.

Many migrants participated enthusiastically in the construction of the Karelian Finnish community. Cultural producers as well as the rank and file exploited their privileged positions in the society. With the Finnish language and culture supported by the state, North American Finnish writers and teachers actively promoted finnicization of the republic, and encouraged further immigration of Finns from Finland and North America. For their part, skilled workers often took their privileges for granted and protested, often by leaving, when those privileges were threatened. Although as the next chapters will show it yielded many positive changes in the Karelian economic development, for most actors involved in this story the migration scheme failed miserably. One of the consequences was to be a rapid deconstruction of an imagined socialist-Finnish community, first, physically, in the Soviet Union with the advent of the purges, and then psychologically in North America with a total disillusionment with the Karelian fever.

Chapter 4:

Canada's Invisible Nationality Policy Creating Ethnicity, Managing Populations, Imagining a Nation

*"No ID, no person."*³⁶³

In the 1920s and the 1930s, the political borders of the Canadian state, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador, were similar to what they are today; surrounded by the Pacific, Arctic, and Atlantic Oceans, bordered by the United States to the south. The same however cannot be said about Canada's cultural frontiers. In the past two centuries large transatlantic waves of human migration routinely altered the demographic composition of Canada's populations. This necessity to study Canadian history in transition makes national borders an ideal place for examining the process of Canadian national identity³⁶⁴ formation. The following chapter adopts critical discourse analysis in examining the ways in which Canadian border officials documented incoming immigrants, returning residents, and visitors to Canada. The strategy reveals an idiosyncratic process of reproduction of social and political domination in text and talk.

Since entering Canada was always a privilege and not a right, Canadian border officials and security agencies, such as the Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP), were assigned the roles of profiling, classifying, and monitoring individuals and groups crossing national borders.

³⁶³ Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita*. Vintage, 1996.

³⁶⁴ I treat national identity as a sense of belonging to one nation, regardless of one's citizenship status. Officially, prior to the adoption of the *Canadian Citizenship Act 1947* which conferred Canadian citizenship as a status separate from British nationality, Canadian nationality denoted British subjects who were born, naturalized or domiciled in Canada, as per *Immigration Act 1910* and *Canadian Nationals Act 1921*. What made Canada's nationality laws more confusing was that the status of 'British subject', regulated by the *British Nationality and Status Act 1914* and adopted in Canada by the *Naturalization Act 1914*, was still considered the main form of identification, at least as far as public officials were concerned.

This chapter examines the way Canadian public officials, border agents, the RCMP, and the mainstream media socially constructed the Canadian population. Embodying dominant discourses based on accepted popular and scientific wisdom about race, gender, and ethnicity, these powerful agencies with significant financial and political resources created labels for different segments of the population, in the process delineating the social, political, and cultural contours of the Canadian national identity. Representations imbedded in these discourses helped the symbolic elites to imagine a Canadian national community through an elaborate and complex system of population classification and management. By defining an exclusive place for certain segments of the population in the national social formation, they also defined what being Canadian meant.

In the first half of the 1930s, hundreds of North American Finns who ventured to the Soviet Union were on their way back to Canada and the United States. For fear of being detained, migrants would rarely disclose they were returning from the USSR. In addition, the fact that ships on which they came arrived from Finland, Great Britain, or Germany made it difficult to detect who was actually coming back from Soviet Karelia, and who was returning from a short visit to Finland. The more passenger manifests I encountered, the more I began to notice specific trends in the way border officials were documenting and classifying returning Canadian Finns, but also other passengers into prescribed categories. The categorization and treatment of incoming immigrants, returning residents, and visitors to Canada depended on several factors, such as class, ethnicity, gender, family status, nationality, and place of birth.

Based on the examination of aforementioned transatlantic ship manifests (Canadian passenger lists), Canadian mainstream newspapers, and RCMP files, I look at the way the Canadian imagined community was constructed in the official and public discourses. The way

that immigrants were depicted by border officials upon arrival in Canada, documented by Canadian security agencies, and represented by the mainstream media was central to the process of subject formation in Canada. I argue that in the early 20th century, Canadian bureaucracies, reinforced by the media and bourgeois culture, began to enforce strict categorization of its population according to racial, ethnic, and national criteria. In the process, they fostered specific representations of Canadian national identity, and also contributed to the construction of diasporic identities in Canada. Although the chapter still retains its focus on the Karelian fever, it also broadens the investigation to the Canadian population in general. This effort is made to demonstrate the larger pattern by which state officials and cultural producers appropriated or rejected ethnic and cultural particularities of particular groups in the Canadian society in efforts to define the cultural and social contours of the Canadian national identity.

The present chapter draws on the works of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. I use the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and its emphasis on the population as an object of governance to explain processes of national identity formation in Canada. The bureaucratization of this fast modernizing society allowed the state to observe, evaluate, document, and classify its populations. The production of knowledge, argued Foucault, and its association with power, formed subjects who embodied dominant discourses through organized practices, such as mentalities, rationalities, and techniques.³⁶⁵ The dominant discourses, in turn, facilitate the diffusion of ideologies shared by the ruling elite. Gramsci's prevailing worldview is particularly handy here, as it depicts a dominant ideology that perpetuates the social, cultural, and political status quo. His theory of cultural hegemony explains that cultural norms in a society are dictated

³⁶⁵ See Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Translated by Gordon L. Marshall, J. Mepham and K. Sober (New York, Pantheon Books, 1980).

by symbolic elites, and must not be considered natural or inevitable, but as artificial social constructs, whose main aim is to manufacture consent and legitimacy of state power.³⁶⁶

Immigrant experiences continue to be defined in terms of assimilation and acculturation. From the historical perspective this is problematic, because such rendering of immigrant stories further contributes to constructing monolithic national and diasporic identities. Instead, one needs to look at how national and ethnic identities were created, negotiated, and renegotiated across social contexts and levels of scale. The present work looks not at the way immigrants were incorporated in Canada, but rather how the Canadian “incorporation regime” was itself culturally produced.³⁶⁷ Through representation of certain non-charter groups as foreigners and “outsiders,” public officials and the economic and political elite constructed a version of an “insider” whom they envisioned as the ideal member of the national community.

Dominant Discourse on Race and Ethnicity in Early 20th Century Canada

One of the main tangibles in Canadian historiography is the emphasis on founding nations, and the ensuing ethnic and political conflict between them, as the centerpiece of Canadian history.³⁶⁸ However, the English and French myth of bifurcated identity that dates back to the Plains of Abraham is an outdated rhetoric of conquest and assimilation.³⁶⁹ Gramsci wrote that myths were social constructs propagated by the hegemonic forces to be accepted from below as normal reality. They simply go unquestioned as common sense. In this way, the myth of bifurcated identity in the Canadian national discourse predominates in the public realm and

³⁶⁶ See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

³⁶⁷ Yasemin Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational membership in Europe*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

³⁶⁸ Dirk Hoerder, Donna Gabaccia, James Oliver Horton, *People on the Move: Migration, Acculturation and Ethnic Interaction in Europe and North America*, (Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, 1993).

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

academia to this day. Although since the 1970s the focus has shifted to the study of other ethnic communities, it seems merely to reinforce yet another national paradigm, now dressed up in the rhetoric of multiculturalism.³⁷⁰ Dirk Hoerder infuses a more refreshing account of Canadian history by taking national and provincial narratives apart, arguing that immigrant groups' social spaces extended beyond provincial and national borders. Canadian societies were built by men, women, and children argues Hoerder, and it was only later that smaller regions coalesced into larger spaces, such as provinces and nations.

The second wave of the industrial revolution began in Canada in the early 20th century and witnessed the expansion of manufacturing, resource extraction, as well as concentration of the ownership of the means of production.³⁷¹ Centralization of state power, in turn, was paralleled and reinforced by the economic and cultural modernization of the society, where the growing influence of capital and the state led to new forms of social relations.³⁷² For example, in the intellectual realm, the response to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* resulted in the emergence of British idealism as the dominant philosophical outlook of leading philosophers and university teachers in Canada.³⁷³ The theory of evolution was thought to explain the ultimate understanding of the universe. All forms of knowledge, be it poetry, history, philosophy, or natural science could converge to provide a universal form of explanation. Darwin's evolutionary theory found a comfortable place in the idealists' social explanation, where social Darwinism came to explain not only the natural, but also the social world in the minds of the academics, the elite, and soon in the Canadian public mind. It was only in the

³⁷⁰ Roberto Perin, "Writing about Ethnicity," in John Schultz ed., *Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History* (Prentice Hall of Canada, 1990).

³⁷¹ See John A Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec: A Socio-Economic Perspective* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2000).

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Brian McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era*, (McGill-Queens University Press, 1991).

1930s, with the incursion of the Chicago school of social research in Canadian universities that social scientists began to emphasize the influence of the environment in shaping social structure, values, mores, and institutions, thus rejecting the idea that genetic predispositions explained the character of nations and ethnic groups.³⁷⁴ However while this was a breakthrough in the direction social sciences were taken, it would take another generation for such views to penetrate into the public mind and discourses.

The premise of social Darwinism consequently was grounded in Clifford Sifton's recruitment of non-British immigrants to settle the prairies. He assumed that the so-called immigrants in "sheep skin coats" from central and Eastern Europe were 'racially' suited for labor in the harsh northern Canadian climate. In this context, people of particular origins were racialized. Finnish men, for example, given the absence of good land and work in the cities, clustered in the resource extraction industries of Northern Ontario, in the process becoming primarily concentrated in the lumber industry. Finns were included in the Canadian nation in so far as they served national economic building needs. However they were placed in unequal relation to settlers who more closely approximated the model of an ideal citizen.³⁷⁵

A useful expansion of Benedict Anderson's notion of an imagined community³⁷⁶ is Alan Simmons' idea of imagined futures.³⁷⁷ The social construction of the Canadian nation, according to Simmons, encompasses an ever-present dominant visualization of the nation's future, and it is this imagined future around which nation-building efforts are concentrated. Immigrant

³⁷⁴ Marlene Shore, *The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, the Chicago Schools, and the Origins of Social Research in Canada*, (University of Toronto Press, 1987).

³⁷⁵ Andrea Flynn, "Constructing Categories, Imagining a Nation: A Critical Qualitative Analysis of Canadian Immigration Discourse," (Ph.D. diss., University of Western Ontario, 2011), 61.

³⁷⁶ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso Books, 1991).

³⁷⁷ Alan Simmons, "Immigration Policy: Imagined Futures," in *Immigrant Canada: Demographic, Economic and Social Challenges*, edited by Shiva Halli and Leo Driedger, (University of Toronto Press, 1999), 21-50.

populations and their identities are always in flux not only as a result of economic fluctuations on global and domestic markets, but also as a result of the changes in the national perceptions of “ideal” community members. As Andrea Flynn suggests, “at any point in time, immigration policies will continue to make sense only insofar as they enable the nation’s goals [as defined by political leaders] to be realized.”³⁷⁸

The increasing arrival of non-British and non-French migrant workers to Canada since the late 19th century began to challenge the largely “white” order in Canada. By the early 1920s, non-British immigrants constituted almost a quarter of all immigrants entering the dominion.³⁷⁹ Sifton’s immigration policies in the 1890s, as well as his replacement’s in 1905, Franck Oliver, reflected the intersection of economic and demographic interests, but also showed concern over national cultural identity.³⁸⁰ Both Sifton and Oliver believed that the country was supposed to be filled with desirable, more “ideal” immigrants, rather than with people who would only contribute to the deterioration of Canadian racial and national character.³⁸¹ As a result, they looked to refrain from recruiting non-British immigrants as much as possible.

Mariana Valverde argues that between 1880 and the First World War major changes took place in Canada that generated the social and cultural consolidation of a nation. At the forefront was the social reform movement, headed by the bourgeoisie and the affluent sections of the emerging middle classes, shaping the working classes, and protecting the interests of bourgeois

³⁷⁸ Andrea Flynn, "Constructing Categories," p. 63.

³⁷⁹ Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Immigrant Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979).

³⁸⁰ Andrea Flynn, "Constructing Categories," p. 63.

³⁸¹ Reginald Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy since Confederation* (Canadian Historical Association, 1991), 8.

culture.³⁸² The reform movement was based on social purity within a clear racial and ethnic context, where racial and national purity became almost synonymous. Social and moral reformers, constituted for the most part of white Canadians of British descent aimed to “correct” society’s ills, which in their minds were directly connected to the forces of industrialization, secularization, and modernism.³⁸³ Immigration and immigrants in their minds were one of the problems created by the changing nature of the capitalist society. In the 1920s there appeared clearly entrenched notions of ‘legitimate and ‘illegitimate’ occupants, and ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ immigrants.³⁸⁴ The centralization of the Canadian economy and politics was also followed by cultural modernization. To sustain this large, and often disconnected economic and political entity, a national identity was needed, a common culture. In the process, a dominion which was home to racially and ethnically diverse populations was being transformed into a single nation.

The national identity fostered by the growing middle classes and the Canadian state had clear ethnic overtones. It was dominated by white settlers of British origin in an uneasy but necessary union with French Canada. There was no one unified entity or party that drove national identity construction, but nonetheless, the foucauldian symbolic elites involved in the construction of the imagined community had a common socio-cultural denominator, which was conditioned by contemporary discourses on race, ethnicity, class, and gender, and grounded in imperial, transcontinental, and international contexts. For example, national identity was in part

³⁸² Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (University of Toronto Press, 2008).

³⁸³ On the discussion of modernity and religion in Canada see Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2001).

³⁸⁴ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1848-1871* (University of Toronto Press, 2001).

shaped by the so-called imperialists. Although few in number, imperialists' ideas, imbued with the colonial language and symbols reflecting notions of Anglo-Saxon superiority permeated the public discourse.³⁸⁵ A radically different conception of Canadian identity as an alternative vision of a nation of two races came from Quebec. As H.V. Nelles suggests, French-Canadian public memory had evolved opportunistically into a larger celebration of Canadian nationality, where two races were to be united within the empire.³⁸⁶ As for the representation of the non-British and non-French nationalities and ethnicities in the public and official discourse, they were depicted at best as foreign, and at worst as racially and socially unfit for the Canadian society, landscape, and climate. After all, Canadian immigration policy, at least until 1967 was plainly racially exclusionary, and always suspicious of the 'subversiveness' of foreign elements.³⁸⁷

White supremacy was also ingrained in the Canadian legal structure. The system, argues Constance Backhouse, instituted perverse racial discrimination, perpetuated through institutionalized and systemic practices. In the early 20th century, race and ethnicity were being designated, or rather imposed, on the population by officials, novelists, historians, and the media. The proliferation of social sciences in turn professionalized, institutionalized, and rationalized racism, creating in the process an elaborate system of ethnic and national codification.³⁸⁸ By conferring outsider status on European and Asian immigrants, the Anglo-Saxon and the

³⁸⁵ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, (University of Toronto Press, 1971).

³⁸⁶ H.V. Nelles in *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (University of Toronto Press, 2000).

³⁸⁷ See Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrants Workers*; Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Emigration* (McGill-Queens University Press, 1988); Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, (University of Toronto Press, 2010).

³⁸⁸ Constance Backhouse, *Color-Coded: A legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (University of Toronto Press, 1991).

Francophone elites in Canada were affirming their own identity and privilege.³⁸⁹ Thus racialization and categorization of races and ethnicities reveals more about insiders, the “friends,” than about outsiders, the foreigners, potentially “enemies”, as over time the “cultural and physical characteristics of a group become inseparable from its work role and its subservient position.”³⁹⁰

Creating Ethnic Populations

Ethnicity is a matter of contrast, and thus inherently relational. To assume an ethnic identity (or to assign one to someone else) is to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’ on the basis that ‘we’ share something that ‘they’ do not. Knowledge and reality, in the view of social construction theorists, are produced in order to provide a framework of understanding. With this in mind, I suggest that the Canadian state manufactured ethnic identities at the nation’s entry points. By ‘hailing’ passengers in social interactions, that is through the classification of incoming passengers’ into prescribed national, ethnic, and racial categories, the state and border officials outlined the parameters of “foreign” as opposed to Canadian identities. This cultivation of ethnic and racial categories denote a process of subject formation – the articulated categories were not ‘natural’, but rather imaginary and symbolic, constructed to reflect the dominant ideologies shared by the Canadian political, economic and cultural elite. Classification of the population into ‘knowable’ groups served a specific purpose, making the population, visible, accessible, familiar, and, thus, manageable. In addition, it allowed the Canadian bureaucracy to draw cultural contours around the concept of Canadian national identity, an essential component of any modern nation-state.

³⁸⁹ Kay Anderson, “The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category,” in Gerald Tulchinsky, ed., *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives* (Chicago: Copp Clark Longman, 1994).

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

The ‘discovery of population’ marks the origins of modern governments. As Bruce Curtis demonstrates, in the process of state formation, the state centralizes authority over knowledge production, and, through capturing “matter of national interest” numerically codifies social relations.³⁹¹ Writing about census makers, Curtis argues they configure social relations in keeping with particular political and cultural objectives and interests in order that such relations may be known and governed.³⁹² In other words, the census seeks to tie people as state subjects and citizens to official identities within a determined territory in order to rule them.

As Foucault has shown it is through visibility that modern nations exercise controlling systems of power and knowledge, or what he called power knowledge.³⁹³ Increased visibility means the state can more easily track or manage its population through their lives. In turn, subjectivities are conditioned by structural forces which “act upon” individuals,³⁹⁴ in the process classifying them into particular social, political, economic, and cultural categories. Concepts such as majority, minority, immigrant, and native are then socially constructed. Associated with distinctive minority statuses classified into categories such as ethnicity, race, and gender, immigrants’ identities and subjectivities are “made” in the process of cultural production in the public sphere.

The analysis of Canadian passenger manifests³⁹⁵ reveals a similar process of governing predetermined identities, where definitions of the ‘knowable community’ fit right into the

³⁹¹ Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (University of Toronto Press, 2001).

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Michel Foucault, *Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*.

³⁹⁴ Andrea Flynn, "Constructing Categories, Imagining a Nation: A Critical Qualitative Analysis of Canadian Immigration Discourse".

³⁹⁵ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications T-479 to T-520, T-4689 to T-4874, T-14700 to T-14939, C-4511 to C-4542. Library and Archives Canada, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds. Library and Archives Canada Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Passenger lists comprised the official immigration records

cultural equations of dominant groups in society. These lists, used by Canada's border officials to screen people entering the country, consisted of several rubrics: name of passenger, age, gender, marital status, previous presence in Canada before; if so, when, where, and how long, whether intending to permanently reside in Canada, whether able to read and write, birth country, race, nationality, destination, occupation, date of arrival, port of arrival, port of embarkation, ship name, and shipping line. While all these categories can be subjected to analysis, the present work centers on passenger entries in sections of 'country of birth', 'nationality', and 'race'. These forms were filled out on the ships by British pursers and upon docking in Canadian harbors were handed over to Canadian immigration officials.

The sample used for this chapter includes over 5000 passenger entries recorded at the port of Quebec between 1931 and 1937. Detailed assessment of these manifests reveals inconsistencies between passengers' own sense of ethnic and national identity on the one hand, and the state's depiction and representation of its population in the public discourse on the other. Whereas the state mandated categories such as race and nationality for classification purposes, it was left to border officials to fill in the gaps, to make sure that individuals entered "appropriate" terms in the rubrics. The "corrections" that immigration officials applied to passenger entries in the race and nationality sections reveal the nature of the national discourse, and the contours of the dominant ideologies.

One of the main revelations is that non-British and non-French Canadian residents, regardless of whether they were born in Canada or not, were depicted as foreigners, and deemed by border officials to be on the periphery of Canadian national identity. While border agents did

of Canada between the years covered this collection, although the forms used and information recorded varied. Lists from later years usually contain more details depending on the form.

not seem to share a consensus on whether concepts such as Canadian nationality or race existed, they, for the most part, agreed about what being non-Canadian meant. In the vast majority of cases, when Canadian residents of European descent, whether born in Canada or abroad, entered ‘Canadian’ under the nationality and race rubrics, border officials crossed out the entry and instead wrote in the person’s presupposed race, ethnicity and nationality, be it Ukrainian, Italian, Finnish, or Polish.³⁹⁶ Even if the person in question was born and raised in Canada, spoke fluent English, and might have never visited Europe before, he/she was still considered a member of that nationality and race to which his/her ancestors allegedly belonged. More importantly, it meant that he/she was a foreigner – not Canadian.

For instance, a Romanian national of Jewish heritage had to enter “Hebrew” in the race section of the manifest, although initially he described himself as a Romanian.³⁹⁷ In a similar case, Dagobert Lisser, born in Germany, identified himself as German by race. However, after a conversation with the immigration official, it turned out that Dagobert’s race was Hebrew. Another passenger, born in Canada to Finnish parents, was prevented from self-identifying as Canadian either by nationality or race, despite the fact that, technically, the *Immigration Act 1910* and the *Canadian Nationals Act 1921* allowed him to do so.³⁹⁸ Another Finn, William Koskilainen, was born in Canada and entered ‘Canadian’ under the nationality rubric. It was however changed by the officials to ‘British’ to denote his status as a British subject.³⁹⁹ Thomas Fuelson, born in Norway, entered ‘Scandinavian’ in the nationality section; however the border agent changed the entry to Norway. The imposing classification system was applied even to

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14785 vol 7, p. 187. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ T14784 Duchess of Bedford, from Liverpool, Aug 1933. Passenger Lists, Halifax and Quebec Ports, 1865-1935, North York Central Library: Canadiana Department.

French Canadians. Joseph Renaud, born in St. Remi Quebec, entered Canadian in his nationality and race rubrics, but state officials thought it was more appropriate to label Joseph British by nationality and French by race.⁴⁰⁰

One could be Canadian by race and nationality only if one was of British heritage.⁴⁰¹ More than that, a British descendant had the choice to be British or Canadian; such a privilege did not extend to any other ethnicity or race in the first half of the 1930s. Even then there were some ambiguities as to what constituted a Canadian nationality and if there was such a concept as a Canadian race. Arriving in the port of Quebec in 1933, aboard the *Duchess of Richmond*, Doris Johnston indicated she was born in Toronto, that her race was British, and nationality – Canadian. Traveling on the same ship, Sarah Stevenson, and Walter O’Neal, although born in England, similarly entered ‘Canadian’ in the nationality rubric. Another passenger, Dugald Henderson, born in Scotland, considered himself Canadian both by nationality and race. However, the examining immigration officials were of a different opinion and corrected all the ‘Canadian’ entries to ‘British’. On the other hand, Freda Knox, born in England, traveling with her Canadian born children Valerie and Angus, identified herself and her children as Canadian by both nationality and race, and while the race rubric remained untouched by border agents, the nationality rubric for all three was changed to British.⁴⁰²

Out of the 1062 passengers arriving on the *Duchess of Richmond*, on 122 occasions people entered Canadian in either the race or nationality rubric. Five of every six ‘Canadian’ entries were corrected by immigration officials to what they considered to be the correct national

⁴⁰⁰ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14785 vol 7, p. 185. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

⁴⁰¹ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications T-479 to T-520, T-4689 to T-4874, T-14700 to T-14939, C-4511 to C-4542. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C.

⁴⁰² *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14785 vol 7, p. 181. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

and racial identity of these people. As mentioned, there were exceptions, and some border officials did not seem at all concerned with the way some passengers self-identified.⁴⁰³ For example, Jean Roy, born in Quebec, was allowed to leave Canadian under the nationality heading. When George Saloum and Chammas Kevorkian, born in Syria and Turkey respectively, entered ‘Canadian’ in the nationality sections and ‘Syrian’ in the race columns, they were not told to change the entries. The fact that not everyone subscribed to the practice suggests that it was a result of personal preferences, not a mandatory exercise. The reality that many border agents chose to change passenger entries indicates the prevalence and nature of the ethno-racial public discourses of the early 1930s.

In some cases, border officials seemed increasingly preoccupied with people’s race rather than their nationality.⁴⁰⁴ Arriving on the *Empress of Britain* at the port of Quebec in 1933, American born Morris Epstein, his wife Anne, and their children Herbert and Norma entered U.S. in the nationality section and English in the race column.⁴⁰⁵ However, based on their perceived appearance, accent, or family names, immigration officials changed their entries in the race section to ‘Hebrew’. Similarly, a large group of Canadian born passengers of British descent arriving in the port of Quebec on the *Laurentic* in 1931⁴⁰⁶ entered ‘Canadian’ in the race section. Without exception, however all ‘Canadian’ entries were changed to ‘British’, ‘Hebrew’, ‘French’, and ‘Finnish’, to reflect border officials’ apparent knowledge of anthropologic typologies and world geography.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14903 vol 21, p. 32-45. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

⁴⁰⁵ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14785 vol 10, p. 61. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

⁴⁰⁶ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14773 vol 8, p. 95-101. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

Passengers of English and Scottish descent demonstrated the ambiguous tendency to identify both with Canada and Great Britain. Some, who were born in Canada, still considered their race and nationality to be British, while for others 'Canadian' was becoming the dominant national and racial identity. In the first part of the 1930s the majority still identified with Great Britain and the British race. Things however began to change in the second part of the 1930s. It seems that with the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, and with the coming of age of a generation which was in its youth during, and after, the First World War the construction of Canadian national identity began to gather steam.

In 1936 and 1937 increasing numbers of immigration officials were getting used to the idea of Canadian nationality and Canadian race. Moreover, there was also a tendency on the part of the passengers to identify as Canadian both by race and nationality. Britishness, as a form of self-identification, it seems was becoming less paramount by the late 1930s. The trend was changing to such a degree that some border officials began to change passenger entries from 'British' to 'Canadian', although Canadian citizenship as a status separate from British nationality would not become legal and official until the passing of the *Canadian Citizenship Act* in 1947. For example, in 1937, Canadian born Charles Frederick Pinder arrived in the port of Quebec with his wife Hilda Mary and daughter Joan. He entered 'British' in the nationality rubric, however it was changed to 'Canadian' by the border official.⁴⁰⁷ By 1937 immigration officials were also far less inclined to assign 'foreign nationalities' to Canadian residents of European descent, although ideas about presupposed races still remained intact.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14859 vol 1, p. 19. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

⁴⁰⁸ *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14790 vol 2, p. 3-10. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

Up until the late 19th century, all passengers who were not of “British birth” were simply designated as “foreign” by immigration officials.⁴⁰⁹ By the 1930s however, the state seems to have refined its methods of population classification. While non-British residents were still assigned a “foreigner” status, there developed an entire system of ethnic and national categorization. For their part, immigration officials played a constitutive role in subjectifying passengers to ethnic, racial, and national identities, and assigning them specific – visible – roles in the Canadian social formation. Although Canada did not have a clear-cut nationality policy at the time, the ideological interpellation process outlined above facilitated the assignment and redistribution of specific social identities, which reformulated subjects’ identities along the lines of political, social, and cultural values of the dominant groups in Canadian society.

Classification strategies employed by immigration officials at Canada’s entry points also reveal a great deal about the intersection of ethnicity, class, and gender. One should not neglect the class divisions prevalent between the ‘charter’ groups (aka, British and French) and the diasporic groups in the Canadian society.⁴¹⁰ For example, the vast majority of cabin and first class passengers returning to Canada were of Scottish or English origin, while Canadians of eastern and southern European origin, as well as Canadians hailing from the Scandinavian countries, traveled predominately in third class.⁴¹¹ Passengers of British descent, traveling in the first class, were usually members of the bourgeoisie and the financial elite, and were less likely to be detained than passengers of European descent traveling in the third class, in occupations

⁴⁰⁹ Ancestry.com. Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Original Documents, *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications T-479 to T-520, T-4689 to T-4874, T-14700 to T-14939, C-4511 to C-4542. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

⁴¹⁰ See John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic*

⁴¹¹ Ancestry.com. Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Original Documents, *Passenger Lists, 1965-1935*. Microfilm Publications T-479 to T-520, T-4689 to T-4874, T-14700 to T-14939, C-4511 to C-4542. LAC, n.d. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

considered of lower class status.⁴¹² Gender and family status also played a role. Single passengers were more likely to be detained than married men and women with children. The interaction between the individual and the state at national entry points speaks volumes about the nature of the dominant public discourses of a particular national entity at a given point in time.

Managing Populations

Classification of the population into visible, knowable, and recognizable categories facilitated the process of governing. If before the First World War, the state was preoccupied with the type of people who entered the Dominion, in the interwar period it was faced with another task – how to govern the diverse populations of the country. According to Althusser, there is a blurry line between the functions of ideological state apparatuses (i.e. family, church, schools) and repressive state apparatuses (i.e. police, military, criminal justice system). In modern societies the educational system is a central agency which cultivates and reinforces national imaginaries. Ideological control of its curriculum is crucial for the maintenance of particular representation of the social formation, which also has to constantly re-impose and re-invent itself. In other words, ideological control of the educational curriculum is imperative to social order and stability. For example, social and moral reformers of the early 20th century aimed to promote progress, righteousness, morality, patriotism, unity, security, and the prosperity of Canadian society through the public education system.⁴¹³ In this equation, children were subjected to education edicts that stressed virtues of ideological uniformity and cultural accommodation.⁴¹⁴ The most extreme example of cultural assimilation could be found in the

⁴¹² Ibid

⁴¹³ Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

industrial schools, which isolated aboriginal children from their parents, demeaned aboriginal customs, and enforced Christian values.⁴¹⁵

However, whereas the public education system was controlled and administered by the state, various language schools found in the ethnic communities across Canada were not. Reflecting the interests and ideologies of alternative social formations – i.e. diasporic communities – they posed a potential threat to the uniformity of the dominant national ideology. In the 1930s, the state reached to observe and document potential ‘deviant’ activities in the ethnic language schools with the help of the RCMP. Concerned with growth of communism as an alternate force to the religious foundation of Canada, as well as a threat to its social and economic security, the state needed to cultivate knowledge about any ideological delinquents. The following section reviews surveillance reports of Finnish and Ukrainian language schools, compiled by the RCMP Intelligence section on the activities of those who were considered threats to Canada’s national security.⁴¹⁶ These reports were circulated within the Cabinet, among senior civil servants, and within the RCMP itself.

Testimonies of RCMP officers reveal that the bureau had an in-depth knowledge of the language schools’ mandates, operations, and curriculum. For example, they knew that the largest Finnish schools were located in Port Arthur, Fort William, Nipigon, and Intolla with student populations of over 200. RCMP could identify by name all the schools’ teachers, and singled out in its reports those who were particularly intelligent and outspoken.⁴¹⁷ Intelligence also detailed the “nature of teaching”, outlining the schools’ curriculum, such as the subjects taught,

⁴¹⁵ See John S. Miloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and Residential School System, 1879-1986*, (University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

⁴¹⁶ *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*. Edited by Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker. St. John’s (Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994).

⁴¹⁷ RCMP HEADQUARTERS, Ottawa, 9th September, 1926. Secret. NO. 334, Weekly summary. Notes Regarding revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

methodologies used, as well as the content of administered examinations. “Did God Create Mankind, or Mankind Create God”, an essay by a 13 year-old boy attracted the attention of one of the reporting officers. Prompted to conduct further investigation, the officer added that the boy was a leader amongst the Pioneers, and his brother, also a graduate of the Workmen’s Circle School, was a leader in the Young Communist League.⁴¹⁸ Other students’ essays mentioned in the report were “Coal: How this dangerous work is very poorly paid”, “the Labor Problem”, and “Can there be peace between the workman and the Boss.”

The RCMP also singled out particular language school teachers, whom it considered most dangerous. One of them was Ivan Symbay from a Ukrainian community in Edmonton. One report stressed that Symbay “is unusually well educated...a fluent speaker...is imbued with revolutionary ideas...exceedingly well thought of by the Ukrainians generally, and must be regarded as a dangerous man.”⁴¹⁹ The report underlined that he refrained from teaching English in his classrooms, spoke poorly of religion and royalty, and propagated socialist values. The RCMP also made note of guest lecturers frequenting language schools. For example, it documented a lecture delivered by Gus Sundquist, the Secretary of the FOC, to the students of the “Executive Courses” in Sudbury:

He lectured about the building and tasks of revolutionary organizations, and particularly reminded them of the fights which the Finnish Organization has conducted against the menace from the right. These fights must be continued, he said, if the Finnish Organization shall remain a revolutionary organization. Finally Sundqvist said that the Finnish Organization is an educational and cultural organization in the class fight.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, 5th August, 1926. Secret. NO. 330. Weekly Summary. Notes Regarding Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

⁴²⁰ RCMP Headquarters Ottawa, 20th October, 1933 No. 677 Secret Weekly Summary Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

Finnish and Ukrainian educational and cultural organizations represented, or dictated, the interests of the marginalized social groups in the Canadian society – ethnic minorities and workers. The alternative ideologies of these diasporic social formations, expressed in unconventional language, symbols and meanings, posed a challenge to the established social order according to the RCMP. The bureau was concerned with the influence of ethnic socialist organizations on foreign farming communities. For example, it noted that a children’s orchestra, composed of 26 students, associated with the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) of Edmonton, accompanied its organizers into neighboring farmer settlements, performing revolutionary songs and marches.⁴²¹ In their reports, RCMP agents made it clear that Ukrainian communists relied on music as an avenue of propaganda. They even followed a mandolin orchestra on a tour of the Prairies. Trained by the Winnipeg section of the ULFTA, the music troupe which consisted of 20 young girls was considered dangerous by the RCMP.⁴²² Officers also mentioned the prevalence of socialist symbols in the Finnish and Ukrainian language schools, such as photographs of Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders hung on the schools’ walls.⁴²³

RCMP officers in the field made it clear that immigrants’ ideals and loyalties as well as the symbols and the language they were using were not Canadian, or western (imperial at that time). As far as the RCMP was concerned, immigration and radicalism were visibly intertwined. Communism, they held, was a European disease transferred by European immigrants: “The more immigrants that we put into Canada, the better it will be for the Communist movement and the

⁴²¹ RCMP Headquarters Ottawa, 5th August, 1926. Secret No. 330 Weekly Summary Notes Regarding Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

⁴²² RCMP Headquarters Ottawa, 17th July, 1926. Secret No. 327 Weekly Summary Notes Regarding Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

⁴²³ Ibid.

end of the capitalist class will be nearer and it will help the Communist party to organize farmers against the capitalist class. There will be more soup houses than ever in Canada this year.”⁴²⁴ Immigrants, by virtue of their ethnicity were represented as a foreign and potentially menacing force that could disrupt Canada’s social and economic system, and even threaten the domestic agricultural industry. These sentiments came to the fore during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, when authorities and the press made the public believe the majority of strike leaders and participants to be revolutionaries and ethnic immigrants. Strikers were depicted as “aliens” and “anarchists”, and the *New York Times* proclaimed that Bolshevism invaded Canada, despite the reality that the majority of strikers were Canadians or immigrants of British descent, and their ideas and demands were reformist rather than revolutionary in nature.

The RCMP closely monitored the ULFTA and noted in its reports the strategies and the methodologies the radical organization applied in recruiting new members and expanding their organization. In particular the RCMP was concerned with the type of education the organization promoted, but also with its views on religion, as well as the type of entertainment, leisure activities, and literature it promoted.⁴²⁵ The Mounties paid close attention to the ULFTA. For example, officers made note of the way the organization was preoccupied with the number of students that attended language schools, the number of picnics and shows organized by the sections, the status of propaganda activities, the number of lectures delivered, the quantity of literature sold, the number of new members recruited into the organizations’ branches, the dropout rate, and if youth was being actively recruited.

⁴²⁴ RCMP Headquarters. Ottawa, 19th August, 1926. Secret. No. 332. Weekly Summary. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

⁴²⁵ RCMP Headquarters Ottawa, 17th July, 1926. Secret No. 327 Weekly Summary Notes Regarding Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

RCMP officers were also perturbed by the un-Christian funeral processions held in the Finnish and Ukrainian communities. In one of the communiqués, the officer called the funeral processor a Communist ‘priest’, stating:

Bolsheviks and Communists are trying to separate their members from the Church and religion forever. The members of the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association are particularly prohibited to attend any Church service. Many of them live together only on a marriage license, and none of them baptize their children. Now they start a new form of funeral, exactly the same as the Communists in Russia.⁴²⁶

The report mentioned the three main ideological state apparatuses (school, family and the church), which according to Althusser are required to channel the dominant ideologies and form compliant subjects. The fact that diasporic organizations were involved in the consolidation of communities with alternative ideological institutions alarmed public officials. Un-Christian funeral processions were seen as foreign, and un-Canadian. The following report is worth quoting in its entirety:

Three young Pioneers boys and girls dressed in white blouses and red scarves with two red banners bearing the hammer and sickle and numerous wreaths of roses formed the most conspicuous part of the funeral. The ceremonial program consisted of funeral marches played by the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association band, reading of telegrams and letters expressing deep condolences and regrets from distant organizations, and addresses delivered by delegates representing local organizations. The addresses were of propaganda text expressing deep sorrow, and urging the workers to join and fill in a thousand fold the vacancy left by the comrade whom cruel fate had torn out of the ranks of the revolutionary movement.⁴²⁷

Also closely monitored were Finnish socialist halls and the Finnish socialist press. The RCMP kept close watch over Gus Sundquist and other notable Finnish socialists. The bureau it

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ RCMP HEADQUARTERS. Ottawa, 20th October, 1933. NO. 677. Secret. Weekly Summary. Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934*, edited by Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker. St. John's, (Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993).

seems had agents within the Finnish communities who helped officers in the field to interpret lectures delivered by radical socialists in the Finnish labor temples. A. T. Hill, for example, was reported addressing a mass meeting of Finnish workers in the hall of the Finnish Organization of Montreal, where he spoke of his experiences in the Kingston Penitentiary, and rallied workers to unite in the defense of the Soviet Union, in the struggle against Fascism and the establishment of a Soviet Canada.⁴²⁸ The agency highlighted that the majority of attendees at socialist and communist mass meetings were of “foreign extraction,” and that some of them had to be turned away because halls which held the meetings were filled to capacity.⁴²⁹ The left-wing Finnish press was also closely monitored, in particular the *Vapaus*.⁴³⁰ The newspaper, for example, often publicized the names of prominent socialist leaders in the Finnish communities, which made the RCMP surveillance job much easier.

Ethnicity, race, and ideology were closely linked in the public discourse, and European immigrants were conventionally seen as bearers of foreign ideologies. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, notions such as ethnicity and race provided state officials with the analytical tools to monitor and manage Canada’s populations. Ideological “loyalty” was a pre-requisite for full participation in the Canadian society. However, ideological uniformity was difficult to achieve as a result of the disparity in the economic and political power positions of different groups in the Canadian imagined community.⁴³¹ Division of the population to prescribed ethnic and racial groups outlined in the previous section of this paper, further reinforced the economic and

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ RCMP Headquarters Ottawa, 28th December, 1934. Secret No. 711 Weekly Summary Report On Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934*.

⁴³⁰ RCMP Headquarters. Ottawa, 20th October, 1933. NO. 677. Secret. Weekly Summary. Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934*.

⁴³¹ Further on this topic see, John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*, (University of Toronto Press, 1965).

political imbalance in the national community and urged some to question the existing social order.⁴³² The state, to preserve the social formation intact, had to ensure that alternative ideological formations would not challenge the dominant cultural, social, and political framework of the Canadian society. One's ethnicity or race either facilitated or erected barriers for full social, economic, and cultural membership in this social formation, and the perpetuation of such hierarchies was fundamental to the stability and survival of the social order.

Ethnic Management and National Security

One of the practical ways in which the Canadian state utilized ethnic population management was in matters of national security. With the adoption of the 1907 Immigration Act by Frank Oliver, whose purpose was “to enable the Department of Immigration to deal with undesirable immigrants,”⁴³³ the Canadian state was endowed with the means to control Canada's immigrant populations. The category of “prohibited” immigrants was expanded and the government was given authority to deport immigrants within two, later three, and five years of landing. During the First World War, the state closely monitored and then interned Germans and nationalities from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Ukrainians.⁴³⁴ Furthermore, following the Bolshevik revolution national security services began to pay close attention to Russian ethnics and nationals. In 1918 orders-in-council declared illegal labor and anarchist groups, such as the Industrial Workers of the World, and banned publications in languages of potential fifth

⁴³² For radicalism in immigrant communities in Canada see, Varpu Lindstrom, “The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression,” in R. Harpelle, V. Lindstrom and A. Pogorelskin (ed.), *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia During the Depression Era*, (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004); Ian Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980* (University of Toronto Press, 1987); *Re-Imagining Ukrainian-Canadians: History, Politics and Identity*, edited Rhonda L. Hinthner and Jim Mochoruk (University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁴³³ Quoted in Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (University of Toronto Press, 2010), 138.

⁴³⁴ See Swyrypa, F., and Thompson, J.H., editors, *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada during the Great War* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1983).

columns within the dominion, such as Finnish, Russian, Hungarian, and German. During the first red scare in 1918 and 1919, the RCMP arrested scores of individuals for attending meetings where the Russian language was used, and for having in their possession papers in the Russian language.⁴³⁵

Amendments to the 1919 Immigration Act prohibited immigration of explicit ethnicities and races because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property.”⁴³⁶ An amendment to the Naturalization Act stated that citizenship could be taken away if a person was found “disloyal.”⁴³⁷ Furthermore, during the Second World War it was the turn of Italians, Germans, and Japanese to play the fifth column role.⁴³⁸ To diffuse political and social tensions in the society, the state interned or persecuted groups of people based at times only on their perceived or real ethnicity, race, and nationality. Throughout the cold war the fifth column was thought to be composed mainly of Eastern European nationals and Canadians of Eastern European ancestry. Changes in international developments coupled with the evolving pseudo-scientific understandings of concepts such as ethnicity, race, and nationality, not only prescribed various populations into social and cultural roles, but at the same time generated perceived internal and external threats to Canada’s national identity. Canadianess it seems was always under siege, and the notion of Canadian identity is more easily explained by what it does not represent, than for what it actually stands for.

⁴³⁵ RCMP Headquarters Ottawa, 17th July, 1926. Secret No. 327 Weekly Summary Notes Regarding Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report. Quoted in *R.C.M.P. Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929*.

⁴³⁶ Quoted in Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 138.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ See Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe, eds., *Enemies Within: Italians and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad* (University of Toronto Press, 2000); Ann Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1981).

Historians such as Jack Granastein trumpet the First World War as a defining moment for Canada and for Canadian identity. In some respects they are correct, because the state was learning how to manage its population and suppress internal unrest. The treatment of ethnic and political minorities during the Great War and following it (Easter Riots in 1918, The Winnipeg General Strike in 1919) demonstrates that Canada was indeed on the verge of independence and political maturity as a nation state. However, the greatness of the Canadian state was not made on the battlefields of Europe, but in public offices across the nation, where the bureaucracy matured in its internal management of the state. From Red River rebellion to Easter Riots to Winnipeg General Strike to internments in both world wars, to cold war persecution of communists and eastern Europeans to the FLQ crisis, the Canadian state demonstrated a consistently successful method by which unrest could be handled through ethnic population management.

In July of 1931, Liberal Senator Pierre Casgrain introduced a bill in the Senate entitled “An act to Provide for Alien Identification Cards.”⁴³⁹ It required that “every alien of more than sixteen years of age, upon entering Canada by vessel with the intention of residing in Canada, shall before leaving such vessel complete on oath before and obtain from a peace officer a card of identification.”⁴⁴⁰ Any alien, “a person who is not a British subject,” convicted of an offence against this act, would be convicted of a criminal offence within the meaning of the Immigration Act, with a penalty of imprisonment of up to seven years. The identification card would indicate in addition to an address and a photograph, the place and date of birth, as well as nationality of the subject. In Casgrain’s words, the bill would have provided “a check on the communist

⁴³⁹ LAC, *Journals of the Senate of Canada: Second Session of the Seventeenth Parliament 21-22 George V. A.D. 1931*, Volume LXIX (Ottawa: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1931), 260-261
http://www.archive.org/details/JSCe69_1931_uoft, <viewed 7 July 2013>.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

agitators acting under the direct instructions from Moscow who are taking advantage of the depression in an attempt to undermine the present social order in Canada.”⁴⁴¹ The proposed bill was a natural outgrowth of the tendency by the state to categorize and classify the population of a modernizing society. In practice, it would have allowed Canada’s “peace officers,”⁴⁴² to detect and deport foreign born workers engaged in any strike or other activity considered revolutionary.

The bill was popular in influential circles across Canada. Mayors and police chiefs seemed to have embraced alien registration cards. The Mayor of Winnipeg, for example, stated that “95 percent of the Canadian people support the proposed legislation to register all aliens. All hope there will be no delay.”⁴⁴³ A similar opinion was expressed by the Montreal Police Department Director who telegraphed the Senate that he is “strongly in favor of identification cards, especially in Montreal, in order to control the foreign element.”⁴⁴⁴ Thus, ideas about population control along lines of ethnicity, race, and nationality, especially in areas with large concentration of “aliens” were not simply expressed on a theoretical level, but pursued in practice by powerful political actors on municipal, provincial, and federal levels.

There was also a significant opposition to the legislation both on a grassroots level and within various levels of government. The Jewish community in Winnipeg, for example, laboriously lobbied against the bill arguing it would diminish immigrants’ achievements and belittle their efforts to become model citizens in Canada. It is worth noting that while immigrant communities were understandably resistant to the bill, others opposed as well. Many rejected

⁴⁴¹ LAC, Group 28 IV, 4, reel M-7384, 14 E 0556. ‘On the Canadian Defense Front’ an article in the *Labor Defender*.

⁴⁴² According to the proposed bill, a “peace officer” was customs officer, officer of the army, navy, militia, RCMP, and any police officer, police constable, bailiff, constable or other person employed for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace or enforcing the laws of Canada

⁴⁴³ JTA Archive, “Municipality of Winnipeg Protests against Alien Registration in Canada,” August 4, 1931.

<http://www.jta.org/1931/08/04/archive/municipality-of-winnipeg-protests-against-alien-registration-in-canada>

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid

alien registration cards because they feared it would set a dangerous precedent, which would be unpredictable in the way it could in the future be applied to the rest of the population.⁴⁴⁵ After a prolonged debate, the bill was defeated 20 to 12. Causes for rejection included interference with civil rights of the people, and the high costs associated with such an undertaking.

The planned bill was in tandem with the tendency of the state to equate certain ethnicities and races with various sources of local, regional, or national danger. For example, an analysis of Canadian passenger lists reveals that residents or visitors of British descent were almost never detained at the border. Similarly, immigrants entering Canada for the first time, who had undergone rigorous inspection prior to receiving entry documents, were also seldom detained. However, returning Canadian residents of non-British ethnic background, as well as non-British visitors were much more likely to be apprehended at the border. The rate of detentions clearly depended on one's ethnicity and/or nationality. For example, residents, visitors, or merchants of Russian descent were detained at a higher rate than 'foreigners' from other countries.⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, the fact that prior to 1947 Canada issued two types of passports, a blue colored document to British subjects by birth, and a red colored passport to the naturalized British subjects made border officials' profiling tasks much easier.

The demographic concentration of ethnic groups in certain geographic areas fostered increased suspicion towards foreign born individuals. For example, in September 1931, following a demonstration broken up by police in Kirkland Lake the courts sentenced six Finns to prison terms, while one Ukrainian and one Englishman were released with a warning.⁴⁴⁷ The

⁴⁴⁵ *The Winnipeg Tribune*, "Bill for Alien Identification Cards Opposed," July 15, 1931.

⁴⁴⁶ A 57 year old Jack Hannah from Russia detained (then released) was visiting a son in law, who is a doctor. LAC, *Passenger Lists, 1865-1935*. Microfilm Publications, Roll T-14784 vol 6, p. 103. RG 76-C. Department of Employment and Immigration fonds.

⁴⁴⁷ *Vapaus* (18 September 1931).

author of the report which covered the incident and the trial was extremely satisfied with the “reds” taking a hit in Kirkland Lake, where according to him they seemed to have been very active. The growing Finnish population of Kirkland Lake, according to the author was one of the reasons for the growing red menace in the city.

Ethnic management allowed the state to maintain the ideological status quo, fostered a unified vision of a Canada, but also contributed to the process of diasporic identity construction. Marginalization of left-wing Finns, a result of repressive state policies and unfavorable socio-economic conditions, was in turn a nationalizing, and at times a radicalizing experience for the Finnish population of Canada. In the early 1930s the national unemployment level reached 600,000 or 32 percent of the population.⁴⁴⁸ Finnish immigrants who arrived on the eve of the Great Depression were often the first to get laid off and the last to get rehired. For example, among the 2000 Canadian Finns who left for Soviet Karelia in search of work between 1931 and 1933, more than 30 percent were unemployed.⁴⁴⁹ In the context of xenophobia, socio-economic prejudice, and political exclusion – an inevitable response to an economic crisis – many Finns were subjected to increased state persecution. In 1931, when the CPC was banned and its leaders were arrested, the RCMP intensified the surveillance of Finns who represented large percentages of the party’s membership. Singled out for surveillance, many Finnish workers were blacklisted, and eventually deported.⁴⁵⁰

Young men without work and relief during the depression became potential dangers to social stability, and deportation came to play a role in managing the ethnic/undesirable

⁴⁴⁸ Varpu Lindstrom, “The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression,” 16.

⁴⁴⁹ On the causes of North American immigration to Soviet Karelia see, Evgeny Efremkin, “Эмиграция Канадских Финнов в Советскую Карелию во времена Великой Депрессии” (“Opportunists: Emigration of Canadian Finns to Soviet Karelia in the early 1930s”), *Ученые записки Петрозаводского государственного университета*, (Academic Papers of Petrozavodsk State University). N. 3 (95) October 2008, pp. 42-52.

⁴⁵⁰ On the topic, see Barbara Roberts *Whence They Came*, and Varpu Lindstrom “North American Finnish communities during the Great Depression.”

population. During the 1920s and the 1930s, deportation of undesirables was a way to manage labor supply and maintain social order, as deportations helped to alleviate employers, municipalities and the state of the problems of unemployment and political unrest.⁴⁵¹ Deportation in the immigration policy was as necessary as sewage in the urban setting.⁴⁵² In turn, public opinion for the most part approved of the policy of ridding the country of the poor, unemployed, and the politically undesirable.

The economic depression and the hostile attitudes towards immigrants put a dent in the demographic structures of the 'Finnish' population in Canada. Its male population for example declined from 25,257 in 1931 to 22,752 in 1941.⁴⁵³ Causes of the decline can be explained by several factors. First, immigration of Finns to Canada decreased dramatically in the 1930s, as only 758 Finns were allowed in between 1931 and 1941. In addition to natural deaths that took place in this period, males were more likely to return to Finland,⁴⁵⁴ or to travel to Soviet Karelia. Furthermore, 173 males, 29 females and 19 children were deported.⁴⁵⁵ The Canadian government deported mainly men (86%) as opposed to women (14%). Fearing public unrest emanating from unemployed on the move across the country in search of work, the government aimed to rid the state of 'dangerous foreign' men. Canadian society at the time was dominated by patriarchal discourses, which saw the non-British immigrant male as a potential menace to internal security of the state. Although not a rule, but in most cases women were targeted when thought to be

⁴⁵¹ Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935*, (University of Ottawa, 1988).

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Varpu Lindstrom, "The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression", in R. Harpelle, V. Lindstrom and A. Pogorelskin (ed.), *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia During the Depression Era* (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2004), p. 17.

⁴⁵⁴ Virtanen, Keijo. *Settlement or Return: Finnish Emigrants (1860-1930) in the International Overseas Return Migration Movement*. Helsinki, 1979.

⁴⁵⁵ Varpu Lindstrom, "The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression", p. 19.

accomplices. Only when women entered “male” spheres, such as places of work and public protest, were they targeted by the state.

Between 1930 and 1934, 16,765 immigrants were deported, 6 times the number of deportees in the previous five years.⁴⁵⁶ Some Canadian regional leaders, such as the mayor of Winnipeg, the same Ralph Webb who supported alien registration cards, campaigned to deport all ‘undesirables’. Similarly, the Mayor of Sudbury, a city with a large concentration of Finns, went as far as to demand the Dominion government ‘deport all undesirables and Communists’.⁴⁵⁷ In 1934, 94 percent of applications for naturalization were refused, many on the grounds of political, or labor radicalism, as well as general ‘bad character’.⁴⁵⁸ Between 1931 and 1933, 2.3 percent of the entire Finnish population of Canada was deported. Most of the Finnish deportees were suspected of ‘dangerous radicalism’, but officially were charged with vagrancy, mental illness, or being ‘an expense to the government’.⁴⁵⁹ For instance, in 1932, Arvi Tielinen, Thomas Pollari, Viljo Piispa, and Jaako Makynen were convicted on ‘public charge grounds’ for taking part in an unlawful assembly after they had marched in a parade in Timmins, Ontario. In less than a year they were deported. Prominent individuals in Finnish Canadian communities, such as Martin Parker (Pohjansalo), an associate editor of the *Vapaus*, were often rounded up and deported.⁴⁶⁰ In another case, in 1931 *Vapaus*’ editor Arvo Vaara was arrested for participating in a May Day demonstration, labeled ‘particularly clever individual...and particularly dangerous’,

⁴⁵⁶ Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935* (University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 144.

⁴⁵⁷ Alosius Balawyder, *Canadian – Soviet Relations between the World Wars* (University of Toronto Press, 1972), 181.

⁴⁵⁸ Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935*, 145.

⁴⁵⁹ Varpu Lindstrom, “The Finnish Canadian Communities during the Decade of the Depression,” 21.

⁴⁶⁰ Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935*, 143.

and deported.⁴⁶¹ “He is a menace to the existing economic and governmental structure of this country” read the charge.⁴⁶²

During the Great Depression the Bennett government’s rhetoric and actions were permeated with explicit references to ethnicity and ideology as markers of foreignness, difference, and danger. Fear of the fifth column seemed to be a matter of daily life and political decision-making throughout the 1930s. Angelo Principe, writing about Italian internment in Canada during the Second World War, argues that by the late 1930s the fifth column hysteria engulfed Canada from coast to coast.⁴⁶³ The RCMP actively recruited Italian-Canadian informants, and Canadians in general voluntarily provided the RCMP with documents about alleged spies, saboteurs, and enemy agents. As with Finnish and Ukrainian schools in the early 1930s, the RCMP now paid close attention to the content of the curriculum taught in Italian language schools.⁴⁶⁴ Despite the growing hatred of right-wing ethnic organizations with the advent of the Second World War, left-wing ethnic organizations were not spared the scrutiny. In fact, in the late 1930s, charges against communists in Canada were as ridiculous and, often as fictitious, as ever. RCMP methods used to fabricate charges against the communists were strikingly similar to the way local NKVD authorities in Karelia conducted its arrests in 1937 and 1938. Given that actual hard evidence was difficult to come by, charges of conspiracy were based on reports that X knew Z who knew Y. Norman Robertson, a senior official in the department of External Affairs, even described himself humorously as a one man Cheka or Gestapo.

⁴⁶¹ Varpu Lindstrom, “The Finnish Canadian Communities during the Decade of the Depression,” 23.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Roberto Perin, *Enemies Within*, p. 17.

⁴⁶⁴ Luigi Bruti Liberati, “The Internment of Italian Canadians,” in *Enemies Within*.

Shaping Diasporic Identities

Throughout the 1930s ethnicity and ideology reinforced each other, in the process mapping out borders of imagined national, but also diasporic communities. The fact that the state persecuted left-wing Finns played an important role in reinforcing the ‘Great Divide’ within the Finnish communities.⁴⁶⁵ Authorities and cultural producers tended to alienate pro-communist organizations, and befriend, or act indifferently towards the anti-communist associations. The split in the Finnish-Canadian community then had as much to do with official government repression of communists, it did with disputes within the community. It seems that Canadian government’s mapping and categorization of ethnicities had a significant effect on the formation and reformulation of ethnic identities in these communities.

Although the division along political and ideological lines between Finnish right-wing and left-wing groups dated to the Finnish Civil War, and was sustained and reinforced through transnational links with Finland and Soviet Karelia throughout the 1930s, it was also augmented by the Canadian state. Public policies aimed at the marginalization of socialist immigrant communities often bypassed conservative, loyalist Finnish groups. Unlike the FOC, right-wing Finnish organizations promoted loyalty to the crown and preached the Protestant religion, something that was sure to generate sympathy with the Canadian public. The Canadian state and right-wing immigrant groups had something in common – conservatism, religiousness, and a hatred of socialists and communists. Finns who belonged to right-wing organizations and attended churches had a better chance to be accepted in the Canadian society than their socialist compatriots. Lauri Salmio, a chairman of one of the right-wing organizations boasted at one of

⁴⁶⁵ See Oiva Saarinen, “Geographical Perspectives on Finnish Settlements in the Sudbury Area,” in V. Lindstrom, O. Saarinen and B. Vahamaki (ed.), *Melting into Great Waters: Papers from Finnforum V*, a special issue of *Journal of Finnish Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 Dec 1997, 21.

the meetings: “Our National Finnish Society’s membership card in this country is becoming like a passport, even if for another purpose. It will become such ‘sesame’; it will open many doors for Finns.”⁴⁶⁶ On several occasions the *Toronto Star* chronicled the dissatisfaction of conservative Finnish organizations with the departure of socialist Finns for Soviet Karelia. For example, the Organization of Loyalist Finns in Timmins condemned their socialist countrymen and was “ready to join hands with Canadians to rid the community of the communist menace, the well-paid Russian agitators.”⁴⁶⁷

Socialist Finns departing to the Soviet Union in the first part of the 1930s became the subject of criticism and scorn by right-wing Finnish organizations, but also by the RCMP. In its reports about the exodus the agency remarked: “The departure of these men from Canada will leave nothing to be regretted as they are all avowed communists. It is quite possible that many of them will want to return to Canada.”⁴⁶⁸ The fact that there was nothing ‘regrettable’ about their departure shows that socialist Finns did not fit into the contours of the Canadian national discourse. The RCMP imagined a future with no place for Finnish communists in the Canadian national imaginary. Given that *Vapaus* published scores of names of people who have gone to Karelia, returned from Karelia, or was associated in one way or another with Karelia and the Soviet Union, the RCMP was well aware of the exodus. Moreover, it seemed to be informed of the harsh living conditions in the Soviet Union as well, as it suggested that many of the Finns would return to Canada. Nonetheless, the RCMP and the Canadian government remained idle about the situation at best. Given that the Karelian fever occurred in the midst of an economic

⁴⁶⁶ Varpu Lindstrom, “The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression,” 21.

⁴⁶⁷ *Toronto Star*, (12 May 1931).

⁴⁶⁸ Varpu Lindstrom, “The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of the Depression,” p. 17.

depression and mass deportations, departure of these ‘foreigners’ to Karelia was most likely welcomed; at the very least, it was not discouraged.

Canada’s official stance towards its ethnic populations shifted in accordance with international developments, and the changing perceived or real threats to what the elite considered to be its vital domestic and foreign interests. For example, Canadian public attitudes towards Finns changed drastically from 1939 to 1941.⁴⁶⁹ In November 1939, a mere three months following the signing of the non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the latter invaded Finland. The Winter War lasted for several months, ending in a virtual stalemate by March 1940. A review of the *Globe* and the *Toronto Star* in those years reveals a sympathetic account of the Finnish struggle against the Soviet Union, often described in David vs. Goliath terms.⁴⁷⁰ This led to a changing public attitude towards Finnish nationals as well as naturalized subjects of Finnish descent in the Dominion. The leftist groups were marginalized even further and some were even interned given their sympathy and links with the Soviet Union, while loyalist Finns received support and sympathy of the public. For example their speeches and gatherings that criticized their socialist compatriots were often mentioned in the *The Globe* and the *Toronto Star*.

Public perceptions of Finns however were reversed when the Soviet Union entered the war on the side of the allies against Germany and Finland. Influenced by the official propaganda both in the United States and in Canada, the Soviet Union and socialists by association were now portrayed in a sympathetic light by the North American media. Stalin in fact was named man of the year in 1943 by *Time* magazine. Hollywood released films that portrayed the Soviet

⁴⁶⁹ Varpu Lindstrom, *From Heroes to Enemies: Finns in Canada 1937-1947* (Toronto: Aspasia Books, 2000).

⁴⁷⁰ *Toronto Star* (12 October 1939); *The Globe*, (3 November 1939). Just two of the numerous October and November 1939 issues covering the Russo-Finnish War.

leadership and its people in a positive light. Public attitudes towards Finland and by association Finns in Canada swung to the other extreme. Right-wing Finns were now considered dangerous fascists, whereas left-wing communities' marginalization subsided somewhat. In fact, several editorials appeared in the *Toronto Star* with the FOC appealing to the Finnish population (both in Canada and Finland) to depose the fascist Finnish government.⁴⁷¹ For example, *The Star* published "Expel Nazis' is Plea of Canadian Finns."⁴⁷² The transition in public perceptions was truly remarkable. The FOC, a radical left-wing organization, was given the national podium to be heard. More than that, they were not called foreigners, immigrants, or even Finns. Whereas previously Canadian mainstream newspapers never depicted Finns as Canadian citizens or even as British subjects⁴⁷³, the tone now changed, and Finns, and socialists at that, were declared to be Canadian.

Karelian Fever Returnees

Population movements across state boundaries are an inherently political matter – they threaten to sever the alignment of territory, political institutions, and society that states try to create and in which nationals so fervently believe.⁴⁷⁴ This explains why Finns returning from Soviet Karelia in the mid 1930s did not indicate on their declaration forms (although specifically asked to do so) that they had spent a prolonged amount of time in the Soviet Union. Loyalty to more than one state, let alone one like the Soviet Union, was bound to generate negative reaction from Canadian authorities, as transnational actions in general usually generate perceptions of disloyalty. The imagined national community constantly redefines but also protects itself. The

⁴⁷¹ "Expel Nazis is Plea of Canadian Finns", *Toronto Star*, (24 June 1944).

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ "Jobless Finns leave to work in Russia" *Toronto Star*, (18 June 1932).

⁴⁷⁴ Roger Waldinger, "Foreigners Transformed: International Migration and the Remaking of a Divided People", in Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

modern state needs to manage its population at both internal and external levels in order to monitor and “protect” the membership of the national collectivity.⁴⁷⁵

It is obvious that most returning Finns were hesitant to disclose they spent a considerable amount of time in the Soviet Union. Very few mentioned they had lived or worked in the Soviet Union, despite a mandatory section in the passenger manifest to disclose the last place of residence. There was a good reason why the returnees did not the reveal truth about their escapades, because when they did, they were often detained, denied entry, and deported.⁴⁷⁶ Out of 296 returning Canadian Finns, 15 were detained, of whom 5 were deported. Only 7 or a mere 3 percent of the returnees specified they were coming back from the Soviet Union. Five of the seven were detained, held for questioning, or deported.⁴⁷⁷ Some of the returnees seem to have changed their names when crossing North American borders once again. For example, Oscar Heino returning to Sault-Saint-Marie in August of 1933 with his wife Aimo and children Veikko and Sylvia changed his last name to Heine and first name to Paavo.⁴⁷⁸

Hannes Maki, his wife Ida and their 7-year-old Canadian-born daughter Taimi were detained for a week when they arrived at the port of Quebec in April of 1933.⁴⁷⁹ Hannes and his family came back a mere four months following their departure from Canada, and were on their way to Nanaimo, BC. A 32-year old lumberjack, Charles Palo and his wife Anna, were on their way back to Tionaga, Ontario when they were detained, although released the same day, at the port of Quebec in October of 1933.⁴⁸⁰ Palos were among the few who indicated in the passenger manifests their Soviet residence. Ale Simonson, a 32-year old farmer, his wife Hilja and a 2-year

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid

⁴⁷⁶ Passenger Lists, Halifax and Quebec Ports, 1865-1935, North York Central Library: Canadiana Department.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

old daughter Evelyn from Densmore, Saskatchewan were arrested and held in detention for 18 days before being released in March 1933 at the port of Halifax. What is also striking about this family is that all three members held different citizenships. Ale was American, Hilja Finnish, and Evelyn Canadian. In a similar fashion, the Ylikarhula family of 3, including a 9 year-old American citizen Toivo, were detained, but then also deported. They left for Karelia in August 1932 and upon their return a year later were denied entry to Canada. The head of the family indicated he was coming back from the Soviet Union.⁴⁸¹

Conclusion

Ethnic identities are generated not only at grass root levels and by diasporic leaders, but also in a dialectical relationship with national bureaucracies. The search for an ever elusive Canadian national identity should begin in the first part of the 20th century. The Canadian bureaucracy, informed by social Darwinist views on race and ethnicity, coupled with the Anglophone bourgeois concern over modernization brought on by the forces of industrialization and urbanization, both consciously and subconsciously developed an elaborate system of categorization of Canada's population according to prescribed criteria of ethnicity, nationality, and race. In other words, a rigid, albeit invisible nationality policy was developed. The way immigrants were represented and treated in the public discourse speaks volumes about nature and the process of construction and renegotiation of the Canadian national identity. Border officials, in many ways similar to Canadian census makers, imagined Canada's ever changing population. Officials at Canadian borders and in public offices created Canada's ethnic populations, by making them recognizable in the dominant discourses. In addition to classifying Canada's population according to gender, region, and class, they delineated strict categories of

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

ethnicity and race, making the Canadian community ‘knowable’ for the government and the public. And once the community became recognizable; it was easy for officials to monitor and handle its populations.

Whereas in the 19th century, the Canadian state and public were concerned with the type of people that were entering the country, by the 20th century the concern shifted to managing and controlling the existing populations. RCMP records reveal that the Canadian state was concerned not merely with ‘foreigners’ but with different categories of “foreigners”. Immigrants and foreigners were not all the same. In light of their ethnicity, race, and nationality coupled with one’s class and ideological affiliations, all immigrants carried differing, albeit potential social, economic, political dangers to the existing social formation. Rigid classification of Canada’s “ethnic” populations also contributed to the construction of diasporic identities in Canada. I have demonstrated that in relation to the Finnish Diaspora, the “Great Divide” in the community was conditioned by the different degrees of marginalization of Finnish socialist and conservative groups by the Canadian government.

The reproduction of ethnic, national, and racial identities in the public discourse served a practical purpose for the state. For example, the categorization process made it possible for authorities to detect, monitor, and, then, “handle” radical socialists throughout the country. Terms radical and immigrant were closely intertwined in the public discourse of the interwar period. Although officially, the cold war would not commence until after the end of the Second World War, the interwar period in Canada was already ideologically charged, as evidenced by the red scare that accompanied the Bolshevik Revolution and the massive crackdowns on socialists and communists with the advent of an economic depression in the early 1930s.

Left-wing immigrant communities presented authorities with one of the greatest dangers to the established order, because they represented the only viable, complex, and sophisticated alternative to the existing dominant ideology in Canada. What perturbed authorities was not their ability to gather mass support through propaganda, although it was also a matter of concern. Rather, it was the immigrant communities' ability to create and sustain institutions (language schools, labor temples, unlicensed marriages) dissimilar and independent/detached from mainstream ideological state apparatuses. Even though Canada had no official "nationality policy", it nonetheless legislated and operated with an acute awareness of ethnic and racial distinctions in the society. By reproducing perceived ethnic and national identities in the national censuses and at Canadian borders, the state made the population visible. This in turn, allowed the state to track individuals, to survey, to supervise, and to apply/enforce acceptable social and political conduct through ideological state apparatuses.

One of the repercussions of the process outlined above is that immigrants' stories throughout the first part of the 20th century remained in contemporary discourses just what they were back then – immigrants' stories. They were not incorporated into the national discourse and historical narratives, but were left on the periphery of the national conversation, marked as parts of "foreign", "immigrant", "new Canadian", or, as it called today, "multicultural" history. This very fact indicates that they are also on the margins of what we consider today the dominant national identity in Canada. The reality that in our day a fairly educated undergraduate student thinks of Canada in the 19th and early 20th centuries in multicultural terms, attests to the power of current dominant discourse on multiculturalism, stemming from Trudeau's attempts in the early 1970s to consolidate the nation, which at that point required more than a national vision dominated by British cultural texts and symbols.

The process of ethnic identity construction and population management outlined above was only the beginning, or rather a part, albeit an important one, in the construction of a Canadian imagined community in the 20th century. Official multiculturalism in Canada is a sociological reality, or an ideal that involves an elaborate process of classification of the Canadian population into different ethnic categories. This policy had its origins in the classification of non-British immigrants and residents during the interwar years. It was a logical outgrowth of the process of ethnic imagination and control of Canada's diverse populations. This is not to argue that grass-root level identity construction did not exist in 20th century Canada, but to suggest that ethnic categorization in census and border registries (two of the main agencies distributing ethnic, national, and racial identities in the first part of the 20th centuries), were bound to produce a population, who eventually would have to be managed *officially*, now through the policy of multiculturalism. Canada's invisible nationality policy was the precursor of official multiculturalism in Canada.

Chapter 5:

At the Intersection of Modernities: *Migrants as Agents of Economic and Cultural Modernity*

North American Finns' presence in Soviet Karelia left a visible imprint on its economy and society. Prior to their arrival to the Soviet Union, most of these migrants were exposed to industrialization and urbanization, and the accompanying economic and cultural modernization that generated new forms of labor and social relations. When they re-emigrated to Finland, or chose to relocate to Soviet Karelia, migrants also brought along North American "cultural baggage" – ideas, experience, technology, innovative thinking, and mentalities. Having embodied North American representations of modernity, in Soviet Karelia they became defacto agents of social and cultural change. With the help of imported machinery, tools, and equipment, as well as with the infusion of new working methods, values, routines, and ethics, they drastically increased production rates at the republic's trusts and factories. Glorified and publicized by the Karelian government and the media, immigrants' labor shops and farm communes became models to be emulated by others in Karelia and throughout the Soviet Union. Having come into contact with the local population and the Soviet bureaucracy, North American Finns inculcated elements of western modernity into everyday life patterns of the local population as well as into the Soviet society and economy at large.

In this chapter, I look at the intersections of the local and the global; I examine the dialectical process of cultural diffusion and appropriation. North American Finns found themselves at the crossroads of modernities, in-between capitalist western modernity and socialist Soviet modernity. While they were agents of change in their own right, their social identities were subsumed and appropriated by the Soviet state and Karelia's cultural producers in

order to promote a Soviet version (an alternative form) of economic and cultural modernity. Migrants' physical and intellectual movement across national borders shaped and reconstituted the Soviet path to modernization, even if for a short period of time. In the process, concepts of the local, the national, and the modern (i.e. the global), became increasingly entangled. The deciphering of this relationship in turn reveals the dialectical undercurrents of diasporic and national identity formation. One of the main findings of this paper is that culture and ethnic traits had little to do with migrants' superior working techniques and hard-working mentalities. Rather it was the embodiment of a particular form of modernity – in this case social, cultural, and economic values of an industrial capitalist North American society – that set them apart from the rest of the population in Soviet Karelia despite the shared linguistic and ethnic commonalities.

Alternative Modernities

Modernity spans the entire symbolic/political/economic universe and is about the relationship between power, society, and the subject. The advent of industrial, agricultural, and political revolutions in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries ushered in the beginnings of the modern state. These major economic and political tremors fundamentally altered the relationship between the state and the subject.⁴⁸² Newly erected modern institutions of power (schools, prisons, bureaucracies, etc), among other things aimed to discipline the population in attempts to cultivate a productive labor force. Through education and cultural enlightenment the modern state now strove to generate a subject who recognized, but above all appropriated and internalized, the values, norms, and perspectives of power.

In the present work, alternative modernities allude to the differing conceptions of ideologies and frameworks of thinking related to the question of how the modern state and the

⁴⁸² Karl Marx's concept of 'false consciousness' and Michel Foucault's idea of 'subjectification' both addressed to the processes in which the ruling elite instilled the dominant ideology in the public mind – making it common sense.

modern subject should look like. Without a doubt, all political modernities, namely the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracies, and capitalist enterprise, have their roots in the intellectual and theological traditions of Europe.⁴⁸³ In fact, many notable writers and scholars predicted that capitalist modernity would sooner or later engulf the rest of the world.⁴⁸⁴ Recently, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Francis Fukuyama in his highly controversial “The End of History” argued that the western form of liberal political rule has triumphed and that capitalist modernity was an inescapable conceptual option available to humanity.⁴⁸⁵ Nonetheless, despite globalization and the advance of capitalism, recent developments in international relations suggest that a global triumph of western form of modernity is anything but a foregone conclusion.

These developments led many to argue that an application of cultural analysis to the study of modernity reveals an existence of an array of alternative modernities, predicated on specific local contexts, which were formed as a reaction to experiences and practices diffused from the west – usually by ways of colonization and imperialism. Some began to assert that even western modernity itself was not monolithic, and that one could detect multiple/alternative modernities within the dominant western European and North American ideological paradigm. This overt emphasis on cultural determinism and the subsequent mushrooming of alternative modernities, in my opinion, contributes to the reproduction and re-entrenchment of national centered historiographies (national historiographies in disguise if you will). The proliferation of the term and its explicit accent on the “special path” – culturally specific approach to deal with

⁴⁸³ See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002.

⁴⁸⁴ Among them Karl Marx, Max Webber, and most recently Francis Fukuyama.

⁴⁸⁵ See Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest* (Summer 1989).

the contradictions of industrialization and urbanization – each nation embarks on the way to its modernity – renders the term superfluous, as the original meaning of the notion is lost. I rather utilize the term alternative modernity to refer to the fundamental variations between social relations generated by western capitalism and soviet socialism. The way the state and the populace responded to the advent of modernity differed markedly in these two societies. The cultural approach to modernity however has its benefits. For example, it offers a particularly helpful framework to examine the role of local agency, and the way it appropriates, adapts, and transforms differing forms of political and socio-economic modernity.⁴⁸⁶

Migration and Modernity

Migration, globalization, and modernity are closely interconnected. Migration is a fundamental process that shapes human communities, social structures, and politics. It diffuses material, spiritual, political, and social culture wherever, whenever, and whoever it comes in contact with.⁴⁸⁷ It can be argued that migration and globalization facilitate the diffusion of western modernity, as well as its encounter and dialogue with its alternative forms.⁴⁸⁸ In other words, modernity is spread through migration of human capital, ideas, and experience, which in turn are adapted and recreated in local contexts. The impact migration has on the formation of modernities brings to the fore the issue of local vs. global, of the fluid interaction between the two; of the process of localization and hybridization that produce new forms of social relations. The Soviet experiment is a distinct moment in the history of modernity, and is perhaps its most

⁴⁸⁶ See Mukhia Harbans, *Alternatives Modernities*, “Alternatives to Modernity or Multiple Modernity – What else?,” *Pakistan Perspectives* Dec, 2010.

⁴⁸⁷ Dilip Parameshvar Gaonkar, “On Alternative Modernities,” in *Alternative Modernities*, Dilip Parameshvar Gaonkar ed. (Duke University Press, 2001); Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” in *Alternative Modernities* Dilip Parameshvar Gaonkar (Duke University Press, 2001).

⁴⁸⁸ Bill Ashcroft, “Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-Colonial,” *ARIEL* Vol. 40, No. 1 (2009).

potent alternative form. The case study of North American Finns in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s offers an opportunity to examine the converging points of alternative modernities. The fact that migrants, as agents of a particular modernity, could so profoundly impact the Soviet Union's socio-economic and political universe in many ways empowers the individual migrant as an agent in history.

Historiographies using exclusively national frameworks of analysis are incapable by their very nature of explaining the interrelation between local and global trends. National exceptionalism and the belief in special historical paths cannot constructively elucidate how alternative ways of thinking shape and reshape different visions of global societies. For example, in the North American public and academic discourses, Soviet history is considered an anomaly in the western development, on par with Hitler's Germany. In reality, however, there are more similarities in the evolution of the western capitalist and the socialist form of modernities than one might suspect.⁴⁸⁹ The framework of alternative modernities and the role migration plays in it allows us to explain forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state.⁴⁹⁰ Ronald Robertson suggested that it makes no sense to define the global as if it excludes the local, and proposed the term "glocalization" to denote the impossibility of separation between the two conceptual frameworks of thinking.⁴⁹¹ The interpolation, which in this case is exemplified through, and by the process of, migration, is so diverse and intense that it becomes difficult to pinpoint agency to individual actors, who become

⁴⁸⁹ One example is Alexander McGregor, *The Shaping of Popular Consent: A Comparative Study Between the Soviet Union and the United States, 1929-1941* (Cambria Press, 2007).

⁴⁹⁰ See Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 100 No. 3 (2001), pp. 627-658.

⁴⁹¹ Ronald Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity- Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, eds, Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, (Sage Publications, 1995).

both subjects and objects of multiple modernities.⁴⁹² In course of migration, actors find themselves in between states and modernities, or “in between the positives by which subjectivity is normally constituted.”⁴⁹³ It is at this juncture that individual, diasporic, and national identities are reformulated and re-constituted. The movement of human capital and experience conditions the formation of Diasporas, nation-states, and modernities.

Agents of Modernity

In wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, a bloody civil war, and the advent of collectivization by the late 1920s, the Soviet state managed to liquidate virtually the entire capitalist business class as well as the “bourgeois intelligentsia,” while the professional elite, who survived the Bolshevik onslaught, fled abroad. With the launch of the first Five-Year Plan, Soviet leaders soon realized there was an acute shortage of specialists to facilitate industrialization and modernization of the Soviet society.⁴⁹⁴ It was in this context that the communist leadership approved limited immigration from the west. In summer of 1930 the XVI Congress of the VKP (b) agreed to the policy of inviting foreign engineers, experts, and trained workers to the U.S.S.R.⁴⁹⁵ The scheme made sense economically. In search of solutions for an acute labor shortage, Soviet social scientists determined that training new cadres would be significantly more expensive than bringing skilled workers from abroad.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹² See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, (Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁴⁹³ Bill Ashcroft, “Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-Colonial,” p. 91.

⁴⁹⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Introduction,” in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*. Ed., Sheila Fitzpatrick, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 19.

⁴⁹⁵ Irina Takala, “From the Frying Pan into the Fire: North American Finns in Soviet Karelia,” in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era (Special Issue of the Journal of Finnish Studies)*, Vol. 9 No. 1, 2004, p. 114.

⁴⁹⁶ НАРК, Ф. 841, оп. 1, д. 403. Проект к заседанию Президиума КСПС [Project for the meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU] от 26/X-30 года. The meeting of the presidium of KSPS in 1930 has determined that training new personnel/workers would be more expensive than to invite foreign workers from abroad.

The Soviet government planned to use North American specialists as instructors and mentors, and their habitat as model communes to teach the indigenous population new working techniques.⁴⁹⁷ In early 1931 Edvard Gylling⁴⁹⁸ received directives from Moscow to use foreign labor to introduce American technology and working methods into the following sectors of the economy: construction, road maintenance, forestry, and state farms.⁴⁹⁹ Gylling, however, generated these ideas already in 1929, if not earlier. Citing contemporary scholarship, he argued that North American workers' productivity was more than double than that of the local population.⁵⁰⁰ Writing to Moscow in December of 1929, Gylling envisaged "involving a small group of Finnish-Canadian lumberjacks who, coming with their own working tools, could bring with them and instill American methods of logging."⁵⁰¹ Even then, the idea of North American labor migration to the Soviet Union belonged neither to Soviet nor to Karelian leaders. Groups of North American Finns wrote to the Soviet and Karelian governments as early as 1927 requesting permission to immigrate and to set up agricultural and worker communes. North American Finnish migration thus was in many ways a grassroots phenomenon that was eventually utilized by the central and regional governments to assist and promote their own particular hegemonic national visions.

Once the immigration of foreign labor to Soviet Karelia was approved in principle, various Karelian labor trusts and organizations, ranging from industrial and agricultural, to educational and cultural, expressed an acute interest in receiving a fair share of North American

⁴⁹⁷ НАРК, Ф. 685, оп. 2, д. 69 л. 19

⁴⁹⁸ Edward Gylling, formerly an important part of the Social Democratic Government in Finland, was the leader of Soviet Karelia from 1920 to his dismissal in 1935.

⁴⁹⁹ НАРК, Ф. 685, оп. 2, д. 69 л. 43

⁵⁰⁰ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 17/187 «Переписка с СНК СССР о создании постоянных кадров...» [Correspondence with SNK, USSR about creating a permanent staff] 2.04.1930 г.

⁵⁰¹ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 17/187 «Переписка с СНК СССР о создании постоянных кадров...» л. 1-3 л. 1СНК КАССР [Correspondence with SNK, KASSR about creating a permanent staff ... " 18 декабря 1929 г.

specialists at their factories, communes, and ministries. For example, in early 1931, the Karelian State Mining and Industrial Trust asked for 200 qualified North American workers for its mining operations.⁵⁰² Several weeks later the Karelian Auto Trust put in a request for 417 specialized North American workers, including 300 drivers.⁵⁰³ Even the Karelian People's Commissariat on Cultural Enlightenment asked for some North Americans to come and work for the organization, specifically requesting the services of a conductor, Valdemar Heklund, and an artist, singer and music teacher, Ioan Ahti.⁵⁰⁴

The experience, skills, and technology immigrants imported into Karelia brought about revolutionary changes in several of the republic's economic sectors. For example, previous to the arrival of Canadian lumberjacks, production in Karelia's forest industry was seriously hampered by primitive tools and working methods. However, following the implementation of North American inspired methods of labor organization, work techniques, and hardworking attitude Karelia's forest industry was completely reformed.⁵⁰⁵ Mechanization of forest harvesting in Karelia began only with the arrival of North American immigrants.⁵⁰⁶ Prior to that, Karelia, the leading region in the industry, had neither the required machinery nor the specialists who could operate these machines. Several reports point to the fact that the expensive machinery brought over by North American Finns and delegated to certain agricultural and workers' communes, was misused, abused, or altogether abandoned – mostly due to the lack of knowledge in

⁵⁰² HAPK, Ф. 841, оп. 1, д. 403 л. 8

⁵⁰³ HAPK, Ф. 841, оп. 1, д. 403 л. 11

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ See, Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado: Finnish Immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s* (Michigan State University Press, 2014).

⁵⁰⁶ Kishchenko, T. I., "Rostki novogo na lesozagotovkakh [New sprouts in timber harvesting]," *Na fronte mirnogo truda*, [At the Forefront of Peaceful Labour] p. 66.

exploitation.⁵⁰⁷ In the United States, in the early 1920s, 50 percent of all logs were transported from the logging sites by trucks or tractors. By contrast, in Karelia in 1932 only 2 percent of harvested timber was hauled from the logging sites by truck or tractor.⁵⁰⁸ North American mechanics and drivers arrived in large numbers in Karelia,⁵⁰⁹ and they also brought the much valued North American machines, tools, and technology. The first trucks used for tree hauling in Karelia were 23 American Model AA Fords brought by immigrants themselves, or purchased through their financial contributions to the Machine Fund.⁵¹⁰

Analyzing North Americans' Success

Throughout the first part of the 1930s, Soviet journalists and social scientists actively explored the causes behind North American workers' high performance rates. They soon established that one of the main factors contributing to their success was the tools and technologies they imported from Canada and the United States.⁵¹¹ Specifically, Karelian journalists pointed to the superiority of the Canadian axe and the hacksaw, which wore down less frequently than their Soviet counterparts, and, more than that, led to increased production. Canadian tools in fact were imitated by Soviet Karelian manufacturers. The Onega factory for example manufactured an axe called "Canadian." Later, with the reversal of the nationality

⁵⁰⁷ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 10/115 Л. 30-31. Протокол совещания при Обкоме ВКП(б) от 5 марта 1933 г. об использовании инрабочих на строительных работах и о плане завоза инрабочих на 1933 г. [Minutes of the meeting with the Regional Committee of the CPSU (b) on 5 March 1933 on the use of foreign workers in construction work and the plan for the arrival of foreign workers for 1933]

⁵⁰⁸ Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado*, p. 37.

⁵⁰⁹ Based on the Karelian Resettlement Agency records, the lists were compiled by Eila Lahti-Argutina, and deposited in the Clara Thompson Archives, Varpu Lindstrom Fond F-0558. For an in-depth analysis of these records see "Переселение североамериканских финнов в Советскую Карелию в 1930-1933 годах: статистический анализ, Труды Карельского научного центра РАН № 6. 2011. С. 97–105 (*Proceedings of Karelian Research Centre of Russian Academy of Sciences*)

⁵¹⁰ НАРК, Ф. R-286, оп. 1, д. 23/208, л. 58.

⁵¹¹ Анализ рабочего времени на лесозаготовках Кареллеса и организация бригады [Analysis of working time and the organization methods of the in the lumber brigade of Karelles] *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, [Soviet Karelia] № 5 – 7 1931.

policy and the fall of Finns from grace, it was renamed ‘Onega’.⁵¹² Also noted was the attentive and “modern” care migrants allotted to the upkeep of their tools and equipment.⁵¹³

Canadian and American Finns brought with them scores of mechanized tools, cars, tractors, and even plane parts in attempts to establish an aviation shop. At the very least, 56 automobiles were brought over from North America in the early 1930s. These were mainly Fords and Chevrolets, as well as several Buicks, Studebakers, Hudsons, Nash Sedans, Graham Pages, Chryslers, and Durants.⁵¹⁴ All in all, North American Finns brought over approximately 500,000 dollars worth of equipment to Soviet Karelia.⁵¹⁵ There was even a group of pilots-mechanics who organized the purchase of aviation equipment from a bankrupt North American company to be transferred to Soviet Karelia, where an aviation repair shop and base for the construction of new gliders was supposed to be established.⁵¹⁶

Despite the significant role the mechanization of labor played in North Americans’ success, Karelia’s cultural producers quickly realized that new forms of labor organization and work ethic brought over from across the Atlantic were equally important. It was not enough, they argued, to simply introduce new technology into the worksite and train the workforce to use it. To achieve high levels of productivity, workers had to be taught new forms of labor organization and adapt to novel forms of industrial discipline.

⁵¹²See, Reino Kero, “The Role of Finnish Settlers from North America in the Nationality Question in Soviet Karelia in the 1930’s.” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 6, no. 3 (1981): 229-241.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Фонд 690, оп. 1, д. 19/213 «Постановления СНК, списки и переписка о привлечении специалистов инрабочих» л. 107-109 — Общий список автомобилей, ввезенный сев-ам. переселенцами в 1930-1933 [Decision of the SNK, lists and correspondence about attracting specialist foreign workers... General list of cars imported by North American settlers in 1930-1933].

⁵¹⁵ Takala, Irina. “V Poiskakh El’dorado. Severoamerikanskie Finny v Dovennoi Karelii [In Search of Eldorado. North American Finns in Soviet Karelia.] In *Voprosy Istorii Evropeiskogo Severa* [Questions on Northern European History] Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University, 1993, p. 95

⁵¹⁶ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 22/254 «Доклады и докладные записки ГПУ АКССР о положении финско-американской колонии и...» л. 109 В Реввоенсовет Союза ССР. 16.12.1932. [Reports and memoranda of OGPU KASSR on the situation of the Finnish-American colony and ... To Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR

First and foremost, Soviet workers had to learn ways to efficiently utilize time at work.⁵¹⁷ Labor had to be rationalized, and time had to be reasonably allocated for individual operations of work if high production rates similar to those of North American employees were to be achieved.⁵¹⁸ One journalist who observed North American Finns noted that Canadian lumberjacks did not waste time the way local workers did. They do not “beat around the bush,” have set time for breaks, and they work in a set rhythm. The author placed particular emphasis on the fact that Canadian workers had a certain rhythm to their labor, and did not make any unnecessary movements. Karelian scientists reported that while a Canadian worker spent on average 87.93 percent of his time at work performing useful tasks, among local workers the rate was only at 42.94 percent, with the remainder of the time spent slacking off (21 percent) or performing unnecessary tasks/work (30 percent).⁵¹⁹ Furthermore, a foreign worker could harvest 1 cubic meter of wood in only 47 minutes, while a local worker did the same job in only 87.5 minutes.⁵²⁰ In terms of daily production, in 1931, the average productivity of labor among local lumberjacks was 4.3 cubic meters (152 cubic feet) of wood per person per day, while the productivity of labor of North American lumberjacks reached 8.5 cubic meters (300 cubic feet) per person per day. Some reports boasted of Canadian lumberjack teams in Matrossy who managed to achieve an (unchallenged rate in the U.S.S.R) average of 12 cubic meters (424 cubic feet) of harvested wood per person per day.⁵²¹

Karelia’s industry specialists and cultural producers were amazed at the way North American Finns exercised self-regulatory individual and communal control. North Americans

⁵¹⁷ *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 3 – 4 1932.

⁵¹⁸ Степанов П. В борьбе за лес / П. Степанов // *Карело-Мурманский край*. [Stepanov P. In the struggle for forest / P. Stepanov // Karelian-Murmansk Region] – 1932. – № 1-2. С. 45-48.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado*, p. 121.

managed their work and leisure time through mediums such as clocks, calendars, and community newspapers. These time-regulatory items were particularly noticeable to Karelian journalists because they were virtually absent among Soviet workers. The latter allegedly had an awkward timetable, a “poor” work ethic, and hardly any watches, clocks, or calendars to organize their labor around. The only time-indicator for Soviet workers, as one journalist explained was the sun. Soviet cultural producers identified a direct correlation between new forms of labor organization and industrial discipline on the one hand and high productivity on the other, and were convinced that adoption of new technologies and working techniques to local conditions would inevitably augment production rates among local workers.⁵²²

Those who observed and studied North American Finns at work concluded that improved technology, novel forms of labor organization, and rigid industrial discipline were the prerequisite for increased productivity. The first Five-Year Plan demanded speedy economic modernization. Rationalization of labor became the slogan of the day, as the soviet political, economic, and cultural elite realized that rapid (or shock) industrialization was not possible without fundamental changes in the population’s attitudes towards work. In other words, rationalization of work demanded cultural modernization – a reconsideration of many aspects of the individual’s social and cultural life.⁵²³⁵²⁴ Whereas in the early 1920s hardly anyone bothered with questions concerning rationalization of labor, labor’s productivity, and industrial discipline,

⁵²²“Мастер Леса” *Карело-мурманский край*, [“Master of the Woods” Karelian-Murmansk Region], No. 5-6, 1935

⁵²³ “Анализ рабочего времени на лесозаготовках Кареллеса и организация бригады,” [Analysis of the working time and the organizational principles of the lumber Karelles brigade] *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 5 – 7 1932.

⁵²⁴ “Лесосовхоз Интернационал,” *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 7 – 8.

by the late 1920s both state officials and cultural producers called for an increased tempo in the development of *byt*⁵²⁵ and culture.

In this context, North American immigrants became the epitome of cultural and economic modernization in Karelia. Their unrelenting work ethic and their disciplined, self-regulatory behavior was credited with their high performance rates, and, as a result, came to serve as a model to be emulated to produce experienced, disciplined, and efficient soviet labor.⁵²⁶ As one journalist put it, “the experience of Canadian lumberjacks in Karelia, which had given magnificent results among the Karelian lumberjacks who utilized it, demonstrates to us the concrete ways to rationalize the lumber production industry and increase in its production quotas, deserves its due attention and its infusion into the wider practice of Karelia’s lumber industry.”⁵²⁷

Iosif Tonkel, one of the most prolific commentators on North American Finns, published several books and articles on the subject in both the Russian and the Finnish languages.⁵²⁸ He recommended copying North American working methods and applying them to local conditions almost in their entirety.⁵²⁹ For Tonkel, Canadian and American methods of labor organization and work routines were by far superior to soviet ones. Canadian and American workers were punctual and absenteeism was not a widespread problem, something that could not be said about the local workforce. North Americans were also markedly active socially and culturally. The

⁵²⁵ A stereotypical vision of everyday life

⁵²⁶“ Проблема рабочей силы в 1931 г.” [Problem of the labor force in 1931] *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 3 – 4 1932.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ See, Iosif Tonkel, *Brigady i iacheiki na lesozagotovkakh v Karelii* [Timber Harvesting Teams and Brigades in Karelia], (Petrozavodsk: Kirja, 1932); Tonkell, *Jännesaha*; Tonkel, Iosif, *Miten puutavaran kuljetusta parannetaan* [How to improve timber transportation] (Moskova-Leningrad, 1933); Tonkell, *Kanadskiie lesoruby*.

⁵²⁹ И.И. Тонкель, Опыт канадских лесорубов в основу рационализации лесозаготовок второй пятилетки, [Experience of Canadian lumberjacks in the rationalization of harvesting during the second five-year plan] *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 3 – 4 1932.

majority of workers were members of the communist party and belonged to some form of cultural or social organization.⁵³⁰ Tonkel was impressed with the way immigrants constructed and maintained their houses. He also noted the indispensable value of their specialized work wardrobe.⁵³¹ Tonkel argued that if Canadian-type working tools, clothing, and shoes were made available to local lumberjacks, it would save resources and increase productivity.⁵³²

An efficient workforce, it was believed, had to manage itself also outside work. Soviet cultural producers paid close attention to the way North American Finns organized their leisure time, and were convinced that it also led to increased productivity during working hours. One observer of the foreign communities noted that “rationally organized leisure contributes to the increased interest of the worker in the tasks he performs, as well as to the elevation of his cultural and political level, while at the same time allowing him healthy recreational time.”⁵³³

In the context of the state inspired cultural modernization of Soviet society, well organized leisure, hygiene, physical exercise, and above all sobriety, it was argued, helped produce a more effective and productive labor force. As Sheila Fitzpatrick demonstrated, during the cultural revolution of the 1930s, the Soviet elite aimed to civilize the masses in order to mobilize and cultivate a disciplined and productive labor force.⁵³⁴ Adopting Frederick Taylor’s ideas of scientific management, Alexei Gatsev developed a “science of work” in the Soviet Union. In the context of rapid industrialization, culturing unskilled peasants and workers with industrial discipline became an urgent task. While in the west, industrialization was for the most

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ И. Тонкель, “Канадские лесорубы в советской Карелии: техника организации труда, нормы, труд. [Canadian loggers in Soviet Karelia: Labour Organization Methods, Standards, Work Practices] (Государственное лесное техническое издательство, 1934).

⁵³² И.И. Тонкель, Опыт канадских лесорубов в основу рационализации лесозаготовок второй пятилетки, *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 3 – 4 1932, pp. 97-98.

⁵³³ И. Кан, “На Родине” [The Homeland] *Карело-мурманский край*, No. 5-6, 1935.

⁵³⁴ See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Cornell University Press, 1992).

part a gradual process, and industrial discipline was being infused in the workforce at a moderate pace through education, laws, and regulations, in the Soviet Union, given the circumstances, a more intense approach had to be adopted.

North American immigrants were commended for particular attention they allotted to daily hygiene. Dirty homes were evidence of unculturedness.⁵³⁵ To instill values of hygiene, the state created competitions for the cleanest homes, and North American Finns were usually among winners of those contests. Similarly, punctuality and sobriety were to make workers more reliant and efficient.⁵³⁶ Canadian Finns, for example, made sure to punish their compatriots and colleagues who indulged in heavy drinking by publicly shaming them in the local newspapers. The FOC for example made sure to screen out those who drank and denied them the opportunity to travel to Karelia. By and large, although not without exceptions, Canadian Finns were a good example of a sober and responsible workforce.

Physical competition was likewise applauded, again for the reasons that it fostered a healthy, sober, and orderly leisure time, and contributed to better performances during working hours. North American Finns excelled in sports as well, in particular in the skiing competitions. They won regional and national championships, something that was zealously advertised both by the Karelian and the Soviet mainstream press. North Americans also imported the game of baseball to Karelia.⁵³⁷ One of the North American Finns wrote a letter to the Sports Committee of the USSR in Moscow, outlining the rules of the game of baseball, which then would spread across the entire country.⁵³⁸ As Golubev and Takala write, Soviet authorities readily admitted

⁵³⁵ See David Lloyd Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 20

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ See Mayme Sevander, *Skitaltsi [Wanderers]* (Peterozavodsk, PetrGu, 2006), p. 116.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

that in terms of fitness North American Finns were much closer to ideals of physical development than the Soviet population:

... which was just learning ways to embody – literally, through sports – the socialist image of modern men and women. Finnish Americans and Canadians fit the Bolshevik visions of how the modern body should look, because their experience of sports and recreational activities was a product of the Western modernity, which during the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s remained a point of reference for Soviet authorities and rank-and-file builders of socialism alike.⁵³⁹

Listening to, or playing, music, attending theatre and political schools were other ways for model socialist workers to occupy themselves in their free time. Again, North American specialists were at the forefront of these “high” culture and political activities. Immigrants, for example, constituted a majority in the Symphonic Orchestra, while the national theatre in Petrozavodsk was staffed almost entirely with North American Finns. The regionally famous musical ensemble “Kantele” was also put together by an American Finn, Karl Rautio. Having received his music education at the University of California, Karl arrived in Karelia in 1922 and soon began working as a music teacher at a teachers’ college in Petrozavodsk.⁵⁴⁰ North American Finns became the vanguard of western modernity in the Soviet Union. They seemed to have embodied most of the virtues of the ideal soviet worker – technologically advanced, well organized and disciplined, sober, accountable, and healthy. Depicted as agents of cultural enlightenment by the Soviet media, North Americans’ experiences and identities were appropriated by Soviet cultural producers in order to promote a Soviet version of modernity in attempts to fundamentally alter local workers’ values, attitudes, and approach to work.

⁵³⁹ Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado*

⁵⁴⁰ А.С.Максимова. Наследие Карла и Эрика Раутио в рукописном нотном фонде Государст-венного национального ансамбля песни и танца Карелии «Кантеле» 107-11. Российские финны: вчера, сегодня завтра. Материалы межрегиональной научной конференции, посвященной 20-летию Ингерманландского союза финнов Карелии. Петрозаводск: Карельский научный центр РАН, 2010. [A.S. Mskimova. Legacy of Charles and Eric Rautio in the Dance Ensemble of Karelia "Kantele" 107-11. Russian Finns: yesterday, today and tomorrow. Materials of interregional scientific conference devoted to the 20th anniversary of Finnish Karelia Ingermanlandian Union. Petrozavodsk: Karelian Research Center]

Applying North American Work Experience, Technology, and Labor Organization

To facilitate the accommodation of North American expertise, work ethics, and methods of labor organization to local settings, the Karelian government set up professional schools and model working communes employing North American workers as instructors. From the early 1930s, Matrossi, along with other timber industry settlements with large North American immigrant populations, such as Vilga, Interposiolok, and Lososinskiy logging camp, became centers where the latest techniques for forest harvesting and transportation were taught to local workers.⁵⁴¹ A special school, for example, was established in Matrossi to educate local workers in North American methods.⁵⁴² There alone Canadian Finns organized courses which trained at least 293 instructors, who were then dispatched, upon successful completion, to different parts of the Soviet Union to train others in North American lumber cutting and processing methods.⁵⁴³

Reino Kero notes that in the early 1930s to get familiar with the infamous North American forest harvesting techniques scores of Soviet workers' groups were organized and dispatched to Karelia.⁵⁴⁴ To visit Canadian lumber sites and attend special courses delivered by Canadian and American instructors, forest workers came from as far as the Urals, Siberia, Caucasus, republics of Komi and Chuvashiia.⁵⁴⁵ North American specialists likewise travelled across the Soviet Union to share their experience. In fact, they were so successful that North American working techniques were being made scientific. For example, the Karelian Research Institute launched an extensive project to study North American immigrants and their labor

⁵⁴¹ Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, "The Harsh Reality of Fine Words: The Daily Implementation of Immigration Policies in Soviet Karelia," in *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, Special Double Issue, *Journal of Finnish Studies* Vol. 15, No. 1-2, p. 104.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Reino Kero, "The Role of Finnish Settlers from North America in the Nationality Question in Soviet Karelia in the 1930's."

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Wissanen, P., "Hilli," *Karelo-Murmanskii Krai*, 5-6 (1934), 53-56; Kero, *Neuvosto-Karjalaa rakentamassa*, 130-131.

organization methods in order to create a scientific model of effective timber harvesting in attempts to universalize the practice across the country.⁵⁴⁶

Despite their low numbers, North American immigrants had a disproportionate impact on Karelia's economy. They were without doubt the most qualified and the most in demand group of Karelia's workforce.⁵⁴⁷ Although their influence was felt mainly in the forest industry, other economic sectors were affected as well. In fact, Karelia's main construction trust (Stroyobyedeneniye) received more tools (\$40000 worth of tools and machinery) than the lumber sector did (\$20000).⁵⁴⁸ Immigrants brought with them everything ranging from nails to equipment for entire factories. They played a pivotal role in the construction of large industrial projects such as the pulp and paper factory in Kondopoga and the ski factory in Petrozavodsk.⁵⁴⁹ The Kondopoga paper factory was particularly successful. It employed North American Finnish miners, carpenters, and mechanics who had enhanced its operations and drastically increased its production quotas. The factory also served as a school, enlightening local workers on new vital technical skills and new forms and methods of labor. In the same way, production at the Petrozavodsk ski factory skyrocketed with the infusion of North American labor into its operations.⁵⁵⁰ Between 1932 and 1934, following the introduction of American and Canadian expertise, the number of workers in one of the factory's sections was reduced from 92 to only 4, while production actually increased.

The dissemination of North American ideas and experience in the Soviet Union was in many respects also a grassroots, transnational process. Innovative ideas found their way into the

⁵⁴⁶ NARK, f. R-690, op. 3, d. 62/509, l. 67.

⁵⁴⁷ Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado*.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ И. Туомайнен, "Три года жизни и работы лыжной фабрики," [Three years of life and work of the Ski Factory] *СОВЕТСКАЯ КАРЕЛИЯ / NEUVOSTO-KARJALA*, № 9 – 10 1934.

Karelian society with the arrival of immigrants, but also by way of correspondence between immigrants and their friends and relatives in the United States and Canada. In their letters, migrants often asked for various technical literature in various trades. One respondent asked his relatives in Canada for new books on telecommunications: "...this book that is coming will be of good use to me...I know myself how hard it is to get those books...but if you happen to run into chance of getting the book, I'd want it mostly on telephone cable work, underground and in poles."⁵⁵¹ Ideas flowed in both directions across the Atlantic. One respondent shared with his friends in North America new working techniques he witnessed at a Karelian factory.⁵⁵² Women, shared cooking recipes and latest trends in fashion.

The establishment of North American Finnish farming communes throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s made a significant contribution to Karelia and the Soviet Union's agricultural economy. One of the earliest, and also one of the most successful, was Sade (Ray), established in the Olonets region in 1922. In a short period of time, it became a model cooperative, and farmers and social scientists from all across the Soviet Union came to observe its operations. For example, in 1931, 92 tour groups came to the commune from the Leningrad region alone.⁵⁵³ Many adopted Sade's model, its technologies, and established similar communes elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Some of Sade's plots served as basis for student training at the Leningrad Agricultural Academy and other young specialists from different Karelian kolkhozes.⁵⁵⁴ In 1934, Sade was nominated to the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, where it

⁵⁵¹ CTA, Varpu Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034, File 15, Taimi Davis Collection of Letters Petrozavodsk, Karelia Nov 21, 1934.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ NARK, f. R-695, op. 1, d. 29/324, l. 3.

⁵⁵⁴ Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado*.

earned a medal, 10000 rubles, and a car as prize.⁵⁵⁵ The Soviet press highlighted immigrants' tools, machinery, and most importantly their competitive, hard-working, dedicated mentalities as keys to the commune's success. The cooperative settlement also attracted famous Karelian writers Emil Parras and Lauri Luoto, foreign writer Martin Andersen Nexø, and a German socialist painter Heinrich Vogeler.⁵⁵⁶

North American Finns were indispensable to many Karelian industrial sectors. In the context of the Soviet food rationing system of the early 1930s, foreign workers were one of the most privileged groups in the country. However, in 1933 and 1934, many lost access to Insnab provisions. This caused a backlash in the North American Finnish communities, and prompted many of Karelia's working organizations and trusts to lobby the government to maintain foreign workers' privileged positions to prevent them from leaving Karelia and the Soviet Union in general. In January 1933, Karelgranit officials wrote to the Karelian government asking it not to deprive the 15 North American Finnish stonemasons employed at the Trust of their Insnab provisions.⁵⁵⁷ Citing their foreign expertise crucial to the development of stonemasonry in the republic, Karelgranit representatives were convinced that denial of Insnab provisions to foreign workers would result in the decrease of their production and also might lead to their complete withdrawal from work.⁵⁵⁸ In a similar manner, Karelavto officials asked for all its North American Finnish workers to be left on Insnab supply, simply for the fact that without their

⁵⁵⁵ Иштонкова, В. В. "Как погасили "Луч". Последние годы коммуны "Säde" / В. В. Иштонкова // Российские финны : вчера, сегодня, завтра : материалы межрегиональной научной конференции, посвященной 20-летию Ингерманландского союза финнов Карелии (Extinguished the "Ray." Last years of the commune "Säde" / VV Ishtonkova // Russian Finns: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Materials interregional scientific conference) / [науч. ред. Е. И. Клементьев]. - Петрозаводск, 2010. - С. 76-86..

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 159.

⁵⁵⁷ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 23/262 «Докладные записки и списки инрабочих»... январь-февраль 1933 г. 16 Докладная записка Карелгранита в Прав.комиссию при СНК АКССР от 17 января 1933 г. [Notes and lists of foreign workers...Memorandum of Karelgranit to main committee at SNK AKSSR...]

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

input, the organization might go bankrupt. Aside the North American drivers and mechanics, there were hardly any qualified personnel in the republic to sustain the trust's operations.⁵⁵⁹ Lobbying the government for similar reasons, representatives of Karelia's main construction trust, Karelstroj, also pointed out that foreign carpenters and masons were the most qualified workers in the entire republic. North American specialists introduced new tools, technical knowledge, new methods of work, and overall augmented the trust's production. For example, the American system of plastering, both speeded up production and cut its costs, and at the same time saved considerable amount of materials and labor time. On top of all, its quality was significantly better than the local system of plastering.⁵⁶⁰

“Ax and Saw Heroes”: Appropriating Foreign Identities into National Discourses

While Karelia's cultural producers were busy documenting and advocating the adoption of foreign tools, technology, methods of work, and forms of labor organization, they were simultaneously involved in cultural appropriation and diffusion. The following analysis of Soviet Karelian press reveals the ways by which soviet cultural producers supported and reinforced national and ideological discourses through the appropriation of North American Finnish social, ethnic, and economic culture into the dominant discourse. Consistent with the Marxist ideology, they preached the homeland to be not so much a geographical as much as a class concept.⁵⁶¹ It appeared only rational to them that the motherland of North American Finns was neither Finland, nor Canada or the United States, even if their passports stated otherwise. Instead, in line with the Soviet ideological dogma, Soviet journalists considered North American Finns as an integral part

⁵⁵⁹ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 23/262 л.25 Докладная записка Карелавто в Прав.комиссию при СНК АКССР от 5 января 1933 г. [Memorandum of Karelavto to main committee at SNK AKSSR]

⁵⁶⁰ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 23/262 л. 25 Докладная записка Кареллестроя в Прав.комиссию при СНК АКССР от 20 января 1933 г. [(Memorandum of Karelstroy to main committee at SNK AKSSR)]

⁵⁶¹ И. Кан, “На Родине” [The Homeland], *Карело-мурманский край*, No. 5-6, 1935.

of the Soviet workforce and society, who had finally found their proletarian homeland. Wilhem Heikkonen, one of the North American instructors at the Vilga lumber camp, in response to a journalist's statement that his students were surpassing him in trade skills, replied: "...this is good. It means I have done my job right, it means I justified the confidence of the state, of our country, where millions of people like me finally found a real home."⁵⁶² The journalist concluded his article with a statement that "virtually every foreign worker in Vilga or Matrossy can subscribe to what had been said by comrade Heikkonen."⁵⁶³

In the Soviet media, Canadian and American Finns were portrayed as victims of bourgeois exploitation in North America, which they allegedly escaped by finding refuge in Soviet Karelia. Here, claimed one journalist "they found their real motherland, to which they give all their efforts, their knowledge, their skills."⁵⁶⁴ By contrast, in North America, they were faced with poor working conditions, long working hours, employment insecurity, economic depression, and even starvation.⁵⁶⁵ In the Soviet Union, they no longer worked for the bosses, but for themselves and for their motherland. Immigrants' high production rates were then attributed to the motivating ideological and national spirit of the Soviet society. "They have brought with them experience, technology and refined working methods" boasted one article, "...and the fusion of their experiences with the enthusiasm of patriots of the Soviet motherland, resulted in unprecedented results" (implying high production rates).⁵⁶⁶ The author continued to argue that North Americans' production rates were higher in the Soviet Union than in North America simply because all immigrants shared a patriotic zeal towards the Soviet Union and shared an

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

unrelenting commitment to its ideological cause. A monograph entitled *Ax and Saw Heroes* published in 1933 by Johansson O. Kustaa, in both Russian and Finnish, described North American Finnish contribution to the Karelian and Soviet economy in heroic terms, assigning immigrants' success to patriotic dedication and socialist idealism.⁵⁶⁷ In the press, North American immigrants came to personify labor enthusiasm and solidarity of the international proletariat. An excerpt from an interview conducted with a North American Finnish lumberjack by a Karelian journalist in 1935 is worth quoting at length:

Forty-odd years I have lived in Finland, America and Canada. For thirty years I bent my back for the capitalists and for thirty years I have not seen a happy day. I was a logger, driver, miner, worked for merchants and farmers. On several occasions I have experienced the charms of unemployment. I have traveled across half of the world in search of a happy life and I could never find it. I worked, hating my job, as I worked only to avoid starvation. I never had an opportunity to input my own ideas into a venture, invent something, or rationalize labor. I knew that any sort of rationalization of labor would have the hardest impact on the worker himself, and would only add more unemployed to our ranks. I am in the Soviet Union for the fourth year now. I am a leading lumberjack at the Vilga mechanized lumber site. I am proud that I am a lumberjack, and I am proud that I am entrusted with training young Karelian lumberjacks with Canadian lumber production methods.⁵⁶⁸

By appropriating North American success, Soviet elites and cultural producers also appropriated migrants' socio-cultural identities into the Soviet dominant discourses. While North Americans' daily lived experiences were markedly different from what Soviet cultural producers imagined them to be, migrants' transnational movement and socio-cultural identities were subsumed to substantiate the process of cultural, economic, and political imagination of the Karelian republic and the Soviet state. Karelia's cultural producers and state officials appropriated western forms of industrial discipline and applied them to local conditions in order

⁵⁶⁷ Johansson, O.; Kustaa (1933) *Kirveen ja sahan sankarit* [Ax and saw heroes]. Petroskoi, Karelia, Russia: Kirja [*Finnish*].

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

to legitimize the Soviet regime and ideology. For example, the media tried to convince the public that North American Finns' unparalleled achievements in various regional and national economic sectors was natural because in the Soviet Union they had finally found a place where their labor was no longer alienated. Apparently it had nothing to do with their experiences and training they received in North America.

The process of appropriation and adaptation of western forms of industrial discipline to local conditions however was not linear, and had undergone significant modifications. North American Finns for example found it difficult, and sometimes virtually impossible, to work in the so-called "leap economy" of the Five-Year plan era. While they were used to specific, and at times monotonous, work rhythms reflective of Fordian principles, in the Soviet Union *Udarnichestvo* ("shock work")⁵⁶⁹ and socialist competition dictated the industrial ethic and discipline. As David Hoffman convincingly demonstrated, although Soviet cultural producers and the state adopted western techniques, nonetheless they implemented a markedly different industrial order to accommodate specific local conditions, which in the context of the backward economy was the rational thing to do. However, as Hoffman argues, it backfired in the sense that the society, tired after constant leaps, could not and would not embody shock industrial therapy.⁵⁷⁰ More than that Soviet authorities confused the population with the introduction of shock work, failed to discipline their labor force, and the western industrial discipline did not take root.

⁵⁶⁹ Udarnik - a highly productive worker. The concept originated in the Soviet Union during the first Five-Year plan. The word is associated with "shock work" or work at full pressure, exceeding established deadlines and standards. Those who achieved the best results were used as examples for others to follow. The most notable was miner Alexei Stakhanov – leading to a media inspired movement – Stakhanovtsi.

⁵⁷⁰ David Lloyd Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*.

The appropriation of certain elements of western modernity and the rejection of its other rudiments was particularly noticeable in the cultural sphere. For example, one journalist while praising the organized nature of North American leisure time, rich in cultural activities, nonetheless believed that Soviet realities required a different cultural behavior. Songs that Finns brought from Finland and North America the author dismissed as “old and boring”, and instead called for new, energetic songs, which would reflect the spirit of *Udarnichestvo* – up-tempo work. The author urged the news songs to exemplify the new spirit of labor in the Soviet Union. North American Finns were applauded because they fully adhered to the main tenets of socialist modernity. They represented a clean, hardworking, cultured, disciplined, and well performing labor force – a fundamental requirement for economic modernization.

“Hardworking” North American Finns in Finland and Soviet Karelia in the early 1930s

In the course of this research, what made me think about the intersections of identity and modernity in the first place was a comparative analysis of documents written by local officials and journalists about North American Finns both in Karelia and in Finland. As mentioned previously, migration to Karelia throughout the 1920s, and especially in the early 1930s, resembled, in both scope and nature, return migration of North American Finns to Finland. Sources reveal that in Finland, not only Karelia, North American Finns were noted by local officials and cultural producers to have particularly hard working attitudes, innovative working techniques, and novel forms of labor organization – something that set them apart from the rest of the population and caught the attention of authorities. For me, it was a surprising discovery, not the least for the fact that most literature on the Karelian fever typically uses cultural relativist arguments to demonstrate North American socialist Finns as hard working immigrants, often also exclusive to other ethnic groups in Canada and the United States. Many argue that ethnicity

and the nature of the Finnish culture explained Finns' inherent predisposition to hard and productive work. Likewise, left historians characteristically note North American Finnish socialist character to be the underlining reason for their dedication to hard work and a better future.

A closer look at the reaction of local officials and cultural producers to North Americans' daily living and working activities in Finland and Karelia demonstrates that ethnicity and political orientation had very little to do with the hard-working nature of these migrants. Rather it was their encounters with western modernity, and the subsequent embodiment of new social, economic, and cultural values, which led North American Finns to stand out from the rest of the population in both Finland and Soviet Karelia, even amid similar national, ethnic and linguistic traits.

In a detailed analysis of return migration to Finland in the first part of the 20th century, Keijo Virtanen observed that returning migrants made significant contributions to the Finnish economy. He credits this phenomenon to what he calls "mental capital" – or the experience North Americans brought to Finland. For example, in one of the Finnish counties, local magistrates put a report together in which they talked exclusively about the input of North American returnees into the local industry and culture. Fifty out of fifty eight officials spoke positively of the returnees, and almost all the bureaucrats made note of the industriousness and hard working ethic of North American Finns, which, according to them, differed substantially from the more relaxed and unorganized work ethic of the native population.⁵⁷¹ North American Finns were noted to import new ideas, capital, tools, machinery, working techniques, and attitudes to Finland. Veikko Anttila, for example, recollected that having become familiar with

⁵⁷¹Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement or Return: Finnish Emigrants (1860-1930) in the International Overseas Return Migration Movement* (Suomen historiallinen Seura, 1979), p. 8.

new working methods and machinery in America, returning migrants played an important role in the mechanization of agriculture in southern and central Ostrobothnia.⁵⁷² Virtanen writes that working hard “got into the blood” of many migrants from North America.

Virtanen also observed that wherever in Finland they were found in large concentration, North American returnees were represented disproportionately in local and regional cultural and political organizations. These findings echo similar trends in Soviet Karelia, where both the state and cultural producers hailed North American Finns as bearers of modernity, both cultural and economic. Just as Karelia’s cultural producers, Virtanen noticed that discipline and routinization of work and leisure time contributed to North Americans’ high levels of economic and cultural production. The virtually identical reviews of North American Finnish contributions in Finland and Soviet Karelia might as well void arguments made by ethnic and national historians, who more often than not propagate the exceptionality of their subjects of study. What made North American Finns stand out to both Soviet and Finnish officials were not as much ethnic or politically specific traits but rather the embodiment of North American conceptions of modernity.

Impressed by good living conditions they were exposed to in the United States and Canada, the returnees were encouraged to improve their lot in Finland as well, and, as a result, emulated experiences they have acquired abroad. It is interesting that the supposedly right-wing returnees were noted by local Finnish officials to have radical attitudes and ideas, which they spread in the Finnish countryside. In light of these revelations, it is more than misleading to attribute hard-working traits exclusively to socialists, or to specific ethnic groups, and, as is the case with the Karelian fever historiography, romanticize their national and/or diasporic building

⁵⁷² Ibid.

efforts in Soviet Karelia. Socialist migrants to Karelia and white/conservative returnees to Finland both brought with them skills and experience acquired abroad, and applied them to new social, political, and cultural settings. It then seems that the ideological argument behind a particular socio-cultural identity of the migrant (be it right or left wing) is overplayed by historians whose subjectivities are influenced by specific political, ideological, or national discourses.

It is not surprising then that many North American researchers praise various ethnic groups, such as Finns, Italians, etc. as exceptionally hard working. Hard working attitudes are a trait of North American modernity, which commands a particular work ethic and industrial discipline. This reality also explains the fact that many North American Finns, when writing about the Soviet society, often portrayed Soviet workers as lazy and backward. North American Finnish hard working attitudes should be explained by, and contextualized in, the fierce competition which they faced in labor markets in North America, and the scientific management to which many were exposed and subjected to in its industrial centers.

Foreign Modern

Whereas the Soviet economic and cultural elite welcomed North American Finns and skills and methods of work they brought to Karelia, local workers and the low-level management were not as enthusiastic about the intrusion of foreign workers with their unorthodox working routines. On the surface, the impending conflict between North American Finnish specialists on the one hand and local Russian workers and management on the other hand seem to have had ethnic and national roots. A close reading of the archives however reveals that these quarrels had much more complex causes than simple ethnic differences. Documents show that most of the

heated disputes between Finns and Russians occurred at the workplace. Outside work, relations between the two groups were, if not harmonious, definitely not hostile. In most cases, the Russian management and local workers refused to adapt Canadian methods of work, or put into use North American tools and machinery, citing preference for traditional tools and methods of work. On the other hand, North American Finns often complained that Russian workers were too lazy and slacked off at job sites.⁵⁷³

“I have my own opinion, my own head, and my own ideas. I am an educated man and I do not wish to consent to the suggestion of others, even though they are made by people who have many years of technical experience abroad.”⁵⁷⁴ Kirpetskiy, an engineer at the Lossosinsky lumber yard, and the author of these words, did not hide his dislike of foreign workers. He thought them to lack discipline and respect for authority. “We have built the White Sea- Baltic Canal without the help of foreign workers”, he continued, “and it is a magnificent canal.”⁵⁷⁵ Putting together monthly reports, local authorities at lumber cites with significant concentration of North American specialists, noticed the propensity of immigrants to get along with local Russian workers, and, in fact, command their respect for the new ways of work they introduced, which subsequently led to drastic increases in production. At the same time however, immigrants continuously conflicted with management who bluntly refused to tolerate innovation in labor organization.⁵⁷⁶

Russian managers often complained that North American workers, in the absence of American technologies and tools, were basically useless. Their production rates dropped

⁵⁷³ Ф. 685, оп. 1, д. 21/235 Информационный доклад НКТруда АКССР, л. 3 В Наркомтруда РСФСР. Информационный доклад [Information Report of the NKTruda AKSSR to People's Commissariat of the RSFSR. Information Report (не датирован, март-апрель 1931 г.)

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, «Положение на лососинском лесопункте» л. 16 [Situation on the Lossosinky Lumber Post]

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 230 «О рабочей силе на лесозаготовках» [On labor in logging]

considerably even in comparison to local workers when they had to work in “traditional” working setting with “conventional” tools.⁵⁷⁷ North American Finns were used to a highly technical manufacturing environment in North America, where they got used to working as part of a conveyer. As a result, they were not as efficient in tasks which in Canada and the United States were long ago mechanized and routinized, and performed by machines or other workers.

Another obvious reason for the discord between North American and Russian workers was the fact that the former had a privileged status, higher food rations per day, and access to the coveted Insnab stores, inaccessible to local populations; all within the context of chronic national food and commodities shortages. North American Finns became an easy object of envy and jealousy. Often labeled bourgeois and freeloaders, immigrants were criticized for their “excessive” style of living. For example, when North Americans introduced new facilities into the construction of living barracks for the workers, which were commonly used in North America, such as private bathrooms and toilets local workers saw these designs as ‘excessive’, and bourgeois.⁵⁷⁸

Ethnic tensions were in many ways facilitated by the state. In the early 1930s, in accordance with the *Korenizatsiya* policy North Americans enjoyed all the benefits of the Soviet affirmative action policy at the expense of the Russian majority, and were, at the same time, portrayed in the public discourse as role models to be emulated by others. With the changing of the nationality policy in the mid 1930s, the situation was reversed, and verbal attacks on immigrants became much more systematic, mostly because Finns fell out of favor with the

⁵⁷⁷ КГАНИ, ф. 3 (Каробком ВКП(б)), оп. 2, д. 790 (Информации обкома и переписка .. о партийно-массовой работе и культурно-бытовом обслуживании иностранных рабочих и промпереселенцев) [Correspondence and information .. about the party and mass work and cultural services for foreign workers and industrial immigrants] февраль-декабрь 1932 г.

⁵⁷⁸ The term Bourgeois was transformed, as a result of massive propaganda, to mean foreign capitalist enemy of the socialist revolution and the working class. An antagonist of the communist and the rogue.

central authorities and had nowhere to look for protection. Moreover, immigrants carried a double burden of being “twice” foreign. In 1934, when Stalin declared national bourgeois tendencies to be among the main dangers to the Soviet regime, immigrants immediately became an easy target. Cultivated fears of foreign invasion made North American Finns a potential fifth column. Although the United States, Canada, and Great Britain were not on Stalin’s enemies list, there was the implication that migrants arrived from bourgeois states. At the same time, increasing tensions with Finland in the second half of the 1930s contributed to a change in the public perception of Finns in the Soviet Union. Previously represented in the press as hardworking and diligent citizens, Finns were now being vilified and depicted as bourgeois and potential international spies.

While this discussion is covered in detail in the next chapter, here it suffices to note that amid the reversal in the nationality policy and the removal of Gylling from power many saw an opportunity to replace North American Finns from positions of privilege and power in Karelia. A physical education teacher was targeted at a party meeting in the Lossosinky settlement, and later fired, because it was argued that he, a nationalist bourgeois, had educated the youth using bourgeois nationalist methods of gymnastics rather than Soviet methods of physical training.⁵⁷⁹ The reduction of production rates in various economic sector of the republic were similarly blamed on bourgeois nationalists.⁵⁸⁰ The fact that most of the art classes in the region were run in the Finnish language was enough for conspiratorial allegations of bourgeois nationalists’ tendencies. By the virtue of their ethnicity and even foreignness alone Finns were being

⁵⁷⁹ КГАНИ, ф. 2998 (Лососинский завод), оп. 1, д. 4 (Протоколы партсобраний Лососинской автобазы за 1937 г.). лл. 61-62 Протокол №37 общего закрытого партсобрания... лососинской автобазы от 15.09.1937 [Lososinskaya plant...Protocols of the Lossosinskaya carpool party meetings for 1937...Protocol of the party meeting ... of the Lososinskaya carpool from 09/15/1937]

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid. л. 61об

systematically blamed for all the problems in the republic. Ethnicity became a marker of foreignness and vice versa.

Conclusion

Most western scholars tend to ignore the positive aspects of North American Finnish migration to the Soviet Union. Mostly due to lack of resources they often choose to concentrate on the purges and, in this case, the tragic fate of North American Finnish immigrants. A transnational approach to the story reveals that North American Finns not only contributed to the Soviet economy and culture, but in many ways profoundly altered local ways of working, enjoying leisure and even thinking. The lens of migration and transnationalism allows us to see North American Finns as carriers of western modernity to the Soviet Union, which was in turn extrapolated and appropriated on local, regional, and national levels. These migrants found themselves at the intersection of alternative modernities. As I have tried to demonstrate, the widespread change North Americans inflicted on the Soviet society was conditioned much less by their ethnic identity and ideological orientation than by the “industrial cultural” baggage they imported from the United States and Canada. This should prompt other historians to probe the conventional culturally deterministic explanations of immigrant experiences in the 20th century. In fact if one were to look for one trait that was shared universally by virtually all North American Finns, it was their embodiment of western modernity in the United States and Canada. There were no other constants. Not all immigrants spoke the Finnish language. They differed on politics, had diverse ideological orientation, and had different conception of the Finnish ethnicity and identity.

In this case, North American Finns became agents of modernization, whose technological knowledge and culture became instruments in the hands of the Soviet elite to endorse their own

version of the modern state and a modern population. Although they were agents of change in their own right, nonetheless, North American Finns became tools in the hands of the political elite and cultural producers in attempts to promote and create an ideal, modern soviet labor force. Soviet journalists and scientists were quick to study Canadian and American Finns at work. They documented their method of work and labor organization, in the process generating scientific literature in the forms of academic articles, newspaper articles, books, and pamphlets. They promptly established that American technologies were useless without the application of specialists' working methods, tools, and above all disciplined mentalities. At the same time however, cultural producers attributed North Americans success to their patriotic zeal towards the Soviet Union and a desire to build socialism. North American Finnish success stories became success stories of the soviet worker – at least they were publicized to appear in this light.

The bolshevist path to modernization however was opportunistic. Whereas in the first part of the 1930s, American and Canadian immigrants were emulated as role models of economic and cultural modernization, in the second half of the 1930s, with political shift in the domestic and international arenas, immigrants became foreign, an immediate threat to the national, cultural and economic foundation of the Soviet state. By the late 1930s, North American cultural patterns had become increasingly criticized as “petty bourgeois” and “harmful”. Once the tide was reversed, and North American specialists fell out of favor with the central government, the same traits which made them stand out as exemplary workers and citizens, now made them subject to persecution, arrests, and murder.

Chapter 6: The State and the Stranger: The Great Terror and the Deconstruction of an Imagined Community

*When the subject of eternity disappears, with it disappear all its objects – and the only subject of eternity remains the one who at least occasionally recalls it.*⁵⁸¹

I spent 10 days not sleeping at continually ongoing interrogations. I have received minor injuries. But others, when they got out of there, were hardly recognizable. Then I spent 10 months in prison. The Russian prison was a terrible anguish. Due to poor air and food people were getting sick. A significant part of the prisoners were women. Last winter, new interviews were also conducted in Petrozavodsk. There was no physical torture, but very few were released. And why is that? Because the government has issued a resolution that 95% of foreigners are criminals. The crimes were planned. It is also easy to see that this brutal figure was followed by local authorities and, even then, not always legally.
(Matka Venajan)⁵⁸²

Introduction

In late July 1937, Nikolai Ezhov, the people's commissar of internal affairs of the USSR signed Operative Order 00447 – “the operation for repression of former Kulaks, criminals and anti-Soviet elements.”⁵⁸³ This order, based on an earlier resolution adopted by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the VKP (b) inaugurated a period of total terror. The operation was to start in August and last four months. The quota established for Karelia was at 1,000, with 300 subject to “first category” punishment – the death sentence. In August, Ezhov signed order No. 00486 “The Operation for the repression of wives of traitors of Motherland” – which became the basis for repression of relatives of “enemies of the people” – including “socially dangerous children of convicts.”⁵⁸⁴ The so-called “national orders” of the NKVD were launched by order 00439 – “The Operation for repression of German citizens suspected of espionage against the USSR.” In August and September, further resolutions were adopted to extend repressions against

⁵⁸¹ Victor Pelevin, *Generation P*, Vagrius, 2004.

⁵⁸² “Matka Venajan Karjalasta Canadaan,” [A journey from Soviet Karelia back to Canada] *Tyomies* 27.4.1940. The author, who returned from Karelia to Canada, is writing about his experiences to Jaakko Saavinen in Brooklyn, NY.

⁵⁸³ Irina Takala, “The Great Purge,” Kangaspuro, Markku and Samira Saramo (eds.), *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, a special double issue of *Journal of Finnish Studies*, vol. 15, No. 1&2 November, 2011, p. 157

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Polish political immigrants and Harbinites⁵⁸⁵ workers and re-emigrants, and became the basis for mass repression of ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union, including Finns.

These orders set in motion the deadliest period of political purges⁵⁸⁶ in the Soviet Union. Repressions⁵⁸⁷ however began as early as 1934, and some historians⁵⁸⁸ have traced it to the early 1930s. To consolidate his power in the party, and the country in general, Stalin orchestrated a campaign that involved a purge of the Communist Party, Red Army leadership, wealthy peasants (kulaks), intelligentsia, national minorities, and the general populace suspected of wrecking and sabotage. Whereas before 1937 the term purge was used to denote the removal from positions of power and influence, with the advent of the Great Terror in 1937 and 1938 it came to indicate almost certain arrest, imprisonment, and in many cases execution.

The historiography of the Great Purge is divided into two main streams. Intentionalists, led by the likes of Robert Conquest, attribute the purge to Stalin's totalitarian system that maintained its citizens in a state of fear, and was a product of his ambitions, paranoia, and quest for unrestricted power.⁵⁸⁹ On the other hand, structuralists, among whom J. Arch Getty⁵⁹⁰ is the most notable historian, reject the totalitarian interpretation of the Great Terror, providing a multi-causal interpretation that depicts Stalin shifting support between various regional factions, playing one group against another, in a political game that got out of hand and developed into a "flight into chaos". People were selected at random, denounced or implicated by colleagues and

⁵⁸⁵ The term refers to several generations of Russian immigrants who lived in Harbin, Manchuria. Many re-emigrated to the Soviet Union in search of employment in the 1920s and the 1930s.

⁵⁸⁶ The term "purge" in Soviet political slang was an abbreviation of the expression purge of the Party ranks

⁵⁸⁷ The term "repression" was used to describe the prosecution of people considered counter revolutionaries and enemies of the people by the leadership of the Soviet Union.

⁵⁸⁸ See Irina Takala, "The Great Purge," Kangaspuro, Markku and Samira Saramo (eds.), *Victims and Survivors of Karelia*, a special double issue of *Journal of Finnish Studies*, vol. 15, No. 1&2 November, 2011.

⁵⁸⁹ See Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*. Oxford University Press, 2008; Zhores A. Medvedev and Roy A. Medvedev. *The Unknown Stalin*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2003.

⁵⁹⁰ See J. Arche Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks: 1932-1939*. Yale University Press, 2002.

acquaintances; NKVD officials often acted on their own initiative, and in the context of a highly unstable society of the 1930s, the planned, but limited purges spiraled out of control.

There is no single or simple explanation for as complex an event as the Great Purge. In many ways the purge was aimed at the potential “fifth column” in the Soviet society. North American Finns as a result carried a double burden: of being American, and also belonging, at least discursively, to the nation bordering Karelia – Finland. There was never an explicit order that called for the arrest and execution of either American or Finnish nationals in the Soviet Union. This makes the study of the purges in Karelia, and ‘from below’, even more necessary. Although local authorities and the population embodied certain representations of power, operated within specific discourses, responded to commands, their reaction to orders from above was anything but determined, was permeated with local socio-economic motives, reflected local and personal interests, and was largely opportunistic.

The North American Finnish experiment in Karelia took a drastic turn by 1935. With changes in the nationality policy and the reversal of *Korenizatsia*, Finns found themselves in a precarious position. Virtually overnight, the representations of Finns in the public discourses changed and became permeated with notions of foreignness and otherness. North American Finns and their cultural forms, once heralded as epitomes of modernity, now became increasingly criticized as “petty bourgeois” and “harmful.” Between 1935 and 1938 the Finnish elite were methodically displaced, the Finnish language banned, and Finnish cultural and social norms tabooed. By the time Stalin’s Great Purges were over, Finnish was no longer the official language, the Karelian government and the Karelian communist party were no longer dominated by Finns, Finnish publications ceased to exist as their editors and journalists were arrested and imprisoned, Finnish managers of large Soviet Karelian trusts were removed from positions of

power, Finnish teachers were fired and arrested, Finnish-language schools were closed, and North American Finnish specialists were methodically rounded-up and imprisoned. The imagined socialist-Finnish transnational community, actively constructed from early 1920s to mid-1930s was “discontinued” by 1938.

By the mid-1930s, North American Finns were no longer portrayed by the media and the government as exemplary and leading members of the international proletariat, but rather as dangerous foreigners. The visibility of their social and cultural norms made them particularly vulnerable to the looming purges. The common denominator in the rise and decline in the power of the Finnish-speaking community in Karelia was the nationality policy. While it supported the improbable solidification of Finnish cultural norms before 1935, in the same way it contributed to the decline in the power of Finnish culture and language when the policy shifted to favor the Russian majority. In both cases, actors on grass roots levels used the dominant discourse to promote their own interests.

This chapter adopts two theoretical frameworks in examining the multifaceted nature of the purge. First, as the famed Soviet dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, once asked, was it the egg or the chicken? Was it the system or the individual that was responsible for the killing of millions during the purges?⁵⁹¹ I suggest that both the state and the local populace were equally to blame for the persecution of North American Finns in Karelia. The governing discourses, although imposed through some form of terror, nonetheless required consent and support of the local population. And although human agency was constrained by “internalized, not necessarily

⁵⁹¹ See Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956*. Translated by Thomas P. Whitney. HarperCollins, 2002 (originally published 1974).

conscious, structures of knowledge (albeit discourse),”⁵⁹² it, nonetheless, was able, as I will demonstrate below, to exert power and to modify and change the direction of the purge to satisfy personal and local interests.

Second, the purge of national minorities, such as Finns in Karelia, was made possible by the modernization process of the nation state, in particular by the increase in its ability to exercise its control systems of power and knowledge through a growing bureaucratic state apparatus that tracked, recorded, and monitored population movements across national borders. Zygmunt Bauman wrote that one of the main preconditions for the modernization of a society was the removal of the unknown and the uncertain in an attempt to establish control over nature through hierarchical bureaucracies, rules, regulations, control, and categorization.⁵⁹³ However, in the process of making chaotic aspects of life appear regimented, familiar, and manageable, there was the inevitability of appearance of social groups who were difficult to administer, separate, and control. For Bauman, that social group consisted of *strangers*, persons who are present yet unfamiliar, the society’s “undecidables.”⁵⁹⁴

Both Baumann and Michel Foucault held that in order to track and regulate “strangers,” they must be made visible, easily recognizable. The controlling systems of power and knowledge – often transmitted through main communication channels controlled by the state – allow the dominant power to rename and reframe identities of social groups to fit the goals of the state. For example, if the identity of a person, or of a group of people, is renamed and reframed so that it now presents real or imagined danger to society, the state in the process justifies and garners

⁵⁹² Nick Baron “Construction of Immigrant Identities in Stalinist Russia: Explorations in Theory and Practice,” *iNtegraph: Journal of Dialogic Anthropology*, vol 1 Issue 2 (2009). Accessed online July 10, 2013 http://intergraph-journal.net/enhanced/vol2_1/baron/baronframes.htm.

⁵⁹³ See Zygmunt Baumann, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cornell University Press, 1991.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

public support for the action needed to be taken to eliminate the danger emanating from such an identity shift. I suggest here that national communities regenerate the collective at the expense of the “other”, the foreigner, and the state has considerable influence not only in shaping the identity of the “other” in the public discourse, but radically changing its definition.

In the end, the repression of North American Finns in Karelia was a result of human agency and the unrelenting forces of modernization of the Soviet society. It is easy to see the purges as a consequence of one man’s decisions, i.e. Stalin, or to blame the Soviet political system for its abject terrorophilia. While this explanation carries much resonance, it is often politically and discursively charged rather than historically accurate. The process of discursive identity formations in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s, where class and ethnicity reinforced the individual and collective positions in the hierarchies of power, can tell us a lot about the nature of the Great Purge. As we have seen in previous chapters, the transnational mobilization of ethnicity and its institutionalization in Soviet Karelia’s political, economic, and cultural institutions was made possible by the Soviet nationality policy, in the process of which scores of Russians were displaced from positions of power. The state moulds the nation, not the other way around.⁵⁹⁵ This holds true for interwar Karelia. The territorialization of ethnicity – a notion of a territory with a fixed ethnicity – in Soviet Karelia in the 1920s and the 1930s made ethnicity become subject either to privilege (Finnish experience 1922-1935), or discrimination (Finnish experience 1935-1938). The reversal of the indigenization policy had an immediate impact on the ethnic structure of power in the republic. As Finns were being displaced from positions of authority, Russians stepped in to fill the vacating roles. In this chapter I argue that purges in Karelia in 1937 and 1938 were a result of a cumulative process of modernization of the Soviet

⁵⁹⁵ See Victor Kiernan. *History, Classes and Nation-states*, edited and introduced by Jarvey J. Kay. Blackwell Publishing, 1988.

state from above, and a local and opportunistic (heavily imbued with socio-economic motives) reaction that stemmed from below, conditioned by specific local and regional contexts.

Consolidation of the Soviet State and Culture: 1935-1937

The rapid pace of industrialization and modernization of a largely agrarian Soviet society brought with it social and economic dislocation, which in turn intensified the centralization of political power.⁵⁹⁶ For Sheila Fitzpatrick, the Soviet Union in the 1930s was a ‘quicksand society’, where “workers, administrators, specialists, officials, party apparatus men, and in general, masses, were all moving around and changing jobs, creating unwanted surpluses in some places and dearth in others, losing skills or failing to acquire them, creating streams and floods in which families were destroyed, children lost, and morality dissolved.”⁵⁹⁷ Moshe Lewin calls the first part of the 1930s a period of social crisis.⁵⁹⁸ The industrial labor force tripled with 8000 new enterprises created.⁵⁹⁹ And as new groups entered the industrial sector in a rush (North American Finns among them), social tensions ensued:

...it was a time when semi-literate and illiterate peasantry and folk had to be brought into the industrial world and taught, simultaneously, to use machines, to get used to unfamiliar, complicated organization, to learn to read, to respect authority, to change their perception of time...it goes without saying that such tasks would take much longer than a decade, and they inevitably got complicated by a parallel effort in training, often from scratch...⁶⁰⁰

In turn, the reversal of the indigenization campaign and the shift from internationalism to Russo-centric patriotism brought a change in the philosophy and methods of cultural modernization of the Soviet state. The cultivation of the Russo-centric national spirit along with

⁵⁹⁶ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Cultural Revolution in Russia,” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 9, No. 1(1974), p. 56.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*. New Press, 1994.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

attempts to instill notions of discipline, patriotism, conformism, and orderly careerism now went hand-in-hand with economic modernization. As early as 1930 Stalin called Russians “the largest, the most cultured, the most industrial, the most active, and the most Soviet of all the nations.”⁶⁰¹ The end of affirmative action for national minorities, or the policy of *Korenizatsia* came in 1934 when Stalin officially declared the end of backwardness in the Soviet Union.⁶⁰² Stalin held that Lenin’s plan of bringing formerly underprivileged national minorities on par with the dominant group in the Soviet Union (i.e. Russians) was fulfilled. In practice, it meant that all affirmative action institutions were no longer needed.⁶⁰³ For example, social and national institutions, such as the Women’s department and the Jewish section, closed their doors, while the science of ethnology was banned altogether.⁶⁰⁴

The Russian language came to dominate the public sphere. Between 1937 and 1939 Cyrillic replaced Latin everywhere. In 1938 Russian became a mandatory language in all non-Russian schools. Even the Soviet past was becoming more Russian, as were the top echelons of the party and the state. With the proliferation of libraries and movie theatres across the country and the growing capability of the state to control the means of communication, the state’s ideological control of the populace was also becoming more sophisticated.⁶⁰⁵ Coupled with the rise in literacy, and the analogous facility of the state to mass produce literature, the state could

⁶⁰¹ McGregor, Alexander, *The Shaping of Popular Consent: A Comparative Study Between the Soviet Union and the United States, 1929-1941*, (Cambria Press, 2007), p. 12.

⁶⁰² Lenin’s original plan was for national minorities to catch up to the dominant group economically and socially.

⁶⁰³ Yuri Slezkine. “The USSR a Communal Apartment or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Pluralism,” *Slavic Review* 53:2, pp. 414-52.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ See И.Р. Такала "Финны в восприятии жителей Советской Карелии (1920-1930-е годы)." *Многоликая Финляндия, Образ Финляндии и Финнов в России: Научные Доклады*. Новгородский Межрегиональный Институт Общественных Наук, 2004. [I.R Takala "Finns in the perception of the inhabitants of Soviet Karelia (1920s-1930s)." *The Many Faces of Finland, Finnish Representations and Finns in Russia: Research reports*. Novgorod Centre for Advanced Studies].

much more easily facilitate the homogenization of the Soviet society and the consolidation of the body politic.

With the adoption of “socialism in one country” doctrine, the process of consolidating the Soviet state began in earnest. Andrei Zhdanov’s speech in 1935 was monumental in that it replaced the slogans of revolution and internationalism with ideas of socialism in one country, made possible by the defense of the fatherland around the core notion of Russianness.

Metamorphosis in the Soviet domestic policy brought changes to its foreign policy goals, which shifted from igniting a world revolution towards safeguarding its frontiers to give the Soviet state an opportunity to consolidate itself from within. It was, for example, evident in the directives and dispatches of the Communist International (Comintern) to the communist parties in Western Europe and North America. The Comintern called on communists abroad to gather financial and political resources, and mount an ideological defense of the Soviet Union against the imminent aggression of western powers.⁶⁰⁶ Internally, the state engaged in a series of political and social purges, which left no layers of the Soviet society untouched. The intelligentsia, peasants, workers, national minorities, military establishment, party members, and the ruling elite, whether they represented a real or imagined danger were all potential *strangers* in the newly forming socio-political matrix of the Soviet state.

The Ethnic Discourse

Although for the most part not expressed in virulent or violent terms, ethnic conflicts were a matter of everyday life in Karelia. The rise of Red Finns to power in the 1920s in the process of *Korenizatsia* made many local Russians and Karels unhappy. Reports of anti-Finnish

⁶⁰⁶ NAC, MG 10 K 282. The Comintern Fonds. On the discussion also see “Introduction” in Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

sentiments date from the mid-1920s. There was in fact a continuous flow of grievances to local party cells complaining about ethnic discrimination in Karelia, where Russians and Karels protested against being marginalized by the ruling Finnish elite. For example, indigenous Karels believed their children would be disadvantaged in the Russian-speaking Soviet labor market if they continued to be taught in the Finnish language.⁶⁰⁷

The mass arrival of North American Finnish specialists in the republic in the early 1930s further exacerbated ethnic and national tensions. Immigrants' privileged position in Karelia irritated local residents. The disparity between ethnic groups was manifested, for example, by the wage gap between Finnish immigrants and local Russian workers. In 1932 at the "Stroyobyedeniniye" construction trust North Americans' wages (of 207 rubles per month) were on average 45 percent higher than those of Russians (143 rubles per month).⁶⁰⁸ Similarly, at one of the factories in Petrozavodsk, immigrant workers earned 180 rubles a month, while the locals received only 100 rubles.⁶⁰⁹ The attention North American Finns received in the press also seemed to have exasperated the local population. For example, in August 1932, a boat on Lake Onega capsized, causing six men to drown, including four Finns and two Russians. The government of Karelia however extended condolences only to the families of the Finnish men by publishing their obituaries in the leading Karelian newspaper, *Punajnen Karjala*.⁶¹⁰

North American Finnish immigrants often spoke with disdain about Russian workers, and on numerous occasions displayed overt superiority towards the local population. They regarded

⁶⁰⁷ See И.П. Такала "Финны в восприятии жителей Советской Карелии (1920-1930-е годы)." p. 275.

⁶⁰⁸ НАРК, ф. 690, оп. 1, д. 22/254 «Доклады и докладные записки ГПУ АКССР о положении финско-американской колонии и...» л. 10 — Ориентировочная справка о переплатах на американских рабочих за 1932 г. (государственная строительная контора Стройобъединение) от 8.04.1932. [Reports and memoranda of GPU AKSSR on the situation of the Finnish-American colony and ...A Note on the overpayments to American workers in 1932 (State Office Building Stroyobedinenie)]

⁶⁰⁹ НАРК, ф. R-685, оп. 1, д. 13/150, л. 73.

⁶¹⁰ *Punajnen Karjala*. 27 August 1932.

Russians as backward and barely capable of progress. It was also not uncommon for North American immigrants to promote their compatriots at work and disregard the experience and seniority of Russian workers. Immigrants who were used to a particular rhythm and style of work were not enthusiastic about cooperating with local workers, who practiced inferior work methods and ethic, lacked expertise, and training, and did not speak the Finnish language. For example, the piecework system that was commonly practiced in Karelia caused North American specialists to isolate themselves into separate work groups, because the superior technology and skills they possessed allowed them to produce, and, as a result, earn more than if they mingled with the unskilled local worker groups.⁶¹¹

Russian workers and Finnish immigrants clashed in the aftermath of the pipeline accident on Lake Onega. A certain Zeleniuk, an assistant director of the Karelian section of the OGPU, headed the investigation. In his reports, he portrayed Russian engineers and management as “good party members and respected leaders” who were sabotaged by Finnish Americans.⁶¹² On the other hand, Kustaa Rovio came to the defense of North American Finns. He lashed out at Russian engineers and management, claiming they “could ruin any good project,” and argued that without Finnish-Americans, Russian workers would not have been able to make the pipes for the project in the first place.⁶¹³ While Rovio tried to explain that if not taken care of, North American Finns could re-emigrate, the incident allowed many Russian workers to voice their displeasure at the preferential treatment of North American migrants. Local workers detested the

⁶¹¹ Reino Kero, “The Role of Finnish Settlers from North America in the Nationality Question in Soviet Karelia in the 1930’s.” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 6, no. 3 (1981).

⁶¹² Alexis Pogorelskin, “Pipeline accident on Lake Onega: A Study of Ethnic Conflict in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s,” *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*. Special Issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (2004).

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

fact that foreigners received better pay, lived in better barracks, and had access to special stores (Ins nab), a privilege not extended to local populace.

The watershed in interethnic relations was the reversal of the *Korenizatsia* policy in 1935 and the consequent dismissal of the Finnish leadership from government posts. With the removal of Gylling and Rovio, a systematic deconstruction of the Finnish imagined community began. Letters written by North American Finns in the mid-1930s confirm the rising ethnic tensions in Karelia in that period. Many wrote back to Canada and the United States mentioning radical political changes and noted the disappearance of several North American Finns as early as 1935 and 1936.⁶¹⁴ Ins nab stores were shut down, and passport offices began to inquire about the status and location of foreign nationals. One of the respondents mentioned that by 1936 more than one-third of American loggers left Karelia, and those who were forbidden to leave, began slipping through the border.⁶¹⁵

By 1937 verbal attacks on Finns at local party cell meetings became commonplace. Analysis of the minutes of the Lossosinskaya cell between 1937 and 1939 reveals an ethnic conflict between Finnish and Russian party members. These sources point to a different dimension of the purge, something that was not discussed even by Mayme Sevander.⁶¹⁶ Party members from time to time, as if casually, mention episodes of ethnic hostility. These references are rare, and comprise about 2 out of the 250 pages of party cell minutes amassed between 1937 and 1939. However, while it might seem that ethnic conflict was sporadic, the fact that no one

⁶¹⁴ Clara Thompson Archives, Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/035 File 4 Judith Batson Collection: Kalle Karhonen Letters
Soviet Karelia Second Letter Petrozavodsk, 10/25/1936.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. ¼ Протоколы партсобрания первичной парторганизации лососинской автобазы [Protocols of the party meeting of the primary Party organization of Lososinskaya carpool] л. 23

paid particular attention to the hostile outbursts against Finnish members, at time culminating in death threats, demonstrates that ethnic bigotry was a common everyday phenomenon.

One party member, Buikov, called Finns fascists and accused them of killing Sergey Kirov.⁶¹⁷ He claimed that if a Finn had done something wrong, everyone kept quiet;⁶¹⁸ however if a Karel was at fault there was a lot of noise made about it and inquiries were launched. Buikov also claimed that he could now kill all three Finns (whom he was addressing at the meeting) and nothing would happen to him.⁶¹⁹ In 1938 attacks on Finns at the local party meetings intensified. A certain Erohin⁶²⁰ was quoted saying that all Finns would be fired from their jobs, and rightly so. The same Erohin occupied one of the Finnish worker's places in the barracks and claimed that authorities would find him a suitable place in Petrozavodsk, implying an impending arrest of all Finns. In April of 1938 a certain Vankin spoke that Finns would not need boots in the near future because all would soon be removed and their apartments would be freed for Russian workers.⁶²¹ One Russian firefighter claimed that all Finns, whom he labeled a convicted nationality, should be punched in the face.⁶²²

⁶¹⁷ On 1 December 1934, Sergei Kirov, head of the Party organization in Leningrad, and de-facto second most important person in the Soviet Union was shot and killed by a gunman at his offices in the Smolny Institute. Many believe that Kirov's murder was used by Stalin as a pretext to intensify purges of the dissident Bolsheviks, and later the society at large.

⁶¹⁸ КГАНИ, ф. 2998 (Лососинский завод), оп. 1, д. 4 (Протоколы партсобраний Лососинской автобазы за 1937 г.) лл. 23-24 Протокол №31 общего закрытого партсобрания Лососинской автобазы от 24/07-1937 г. Слушали информацию т. Емельянова Е. Ф. о политических настроениях на лососинской автобазе. [Party meetings protocols of the Lososinskaya carpool for 1937...Protocol 31 of the closed party meeting of the Lososinskaya carpool...Listened to Emelyanova EF about the political mood in the Lososinskaya carpool]

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. 1/5 Протоколы партсобрания первичной парторганизации лососинской автобазы Протокол партсобрания от 28 янв. 1938 г. [Protocols of the party meeting of the primary Party organization Lososinskaya carpool. Protocol of the Party meeting on January 28. 1938]

⁶²¹ НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. 1/5 Протоколы партсобрания первичной парторганизации лососинской автобазы Протокол партсобрания от 19 апр 1938 л. 23. [Protocols of the party meeting of the primary Party organization Lososinskaya carpool. Protocol of the Party meeting...]

⁶²² НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. 1/5 Протоколы партсобрания первичной парторганизации лососинской автобазы Протокол партсобрания от 19 апр 1938 л. 24. [Protocols of the party meeting of the primary Party organization Lososinskaya carpool. Protocol of the Party meeting...]

Given that party cell leaders recorded in the protocol that the final assessment of the work of the committee was satisfactory suggest that the aforementioned attacks against Finns were a normal occurrence, rather than an anomaly that shocked the participants. In fact there was no sign of excitement, stir, or a proposal for further discussion on the issue. More than that, attacks against Finns were not mentioned in the final protocols of the meetings, despite the fact that even the most minor events, such as lateness were well documented.

The Foreigner: Visibility and Vulnerability

The reality of the nation as an imagined community lies in its social matrix. And given that the nation is limited, it is characterized by exclusion. The construction of ‘us’ is accompanied by a parallel construction of ‘them’ – the ‘others’ who do not fall within the boundaries of the nation.⁶²³ Since the Bolshevik revolution, Soviet leaders tried to convince people of the infallibility of the Soviet future and the inevitable collapse of the bourgeois west. While the west was always suspect in the Russian mind, with the rise of the Bolsheviks to power it became synonymous with capitalism, an economic system Bolsheviks ferociously tried to destroy. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, under intense Soviet propaganda, the term bourgeois, which in pre-revolutionary Russia simply meant a class of artisans and tradesmen, now came to denote foreign capitalists and enemies of the socialist revolution and of the working class. Bourgeois and foreignness, class and ethnicity became interconnected in the dominant public discourse, identified *the other* in the community, and, by association, encouraged suspicion of immigrants.

Stalin’s efforts to root out last remnants of capitalism and nationalism in the Soviet Union became official when he declared that the greatest danger to external and internal security of the

⁶²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (Verso, 2006), p. 7.

Soviet state was bourgeois nationalism. The impending bolshevization and russification of the Soviet society that followed the reversal of *Korenizatsia* entailed a re-production of the society's cultural norms to fit the contours of the new Soviet modernity. For example, fairy tales in the ABC books were replaced by stories with protagonists and antagonists played out in the form of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, where villains were Kulaks and western capitalists.⁶²⁴ In Karelia, a border-republic next to “bourgeois” and “fascist” Finland, Bolshevization of schools became particularly important. For example, between 1936 and 1938 492 people were dismissed from teaching positions, of whom 72 for not possessing knowledge of Russian or Karelian.⁶²⁵

In 1937, Petrozavodsk was still a relatively small city, with only 15000 inhabitants, where people for the most part knew each other.⁶²⁶ North American Finnish specialists, who arrived in Petrozavodsk en masse between 1931 and 1934, comprised the cosmopolitan and intellectual part of the city. Native residents envied foreigners, did not understand them, often called them bourgeois; accused foreigners of eating their bread while Russian workers were starving. When immigrants complained about poor living conditions, local Russians and Karels urged them to “go back to Finland or America”⁶²⁷ and reminded them that “bourgeois have nothing to do here.”⁶²⁸ While the Karelian government, with Kremlin's blessing, together with all major Karelian industrial trusts wholeheartedly supported American immigration, the local population often resented the presence of foreigners, whom they saw as “freeloaders” who stole

⁶²⁴ Olga, Iliukha. “Behind the Facade of the Soviet School : Ways and Means of Bringing up a “New Individual” in the Schools of Karelia in the 1930s.” Laine, Antti, Ylikangas, Mikko, (eds). *Rise and Fall of Soviet Karelia*, (Helsinki : Kikumora Publications, 2002), p. 49-70.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Место расстрела Сандармох. [Place of execution: Sandarmoh] /Сост. Ю. А. Дмитриев. — Петрозаводск. 1999.

⁶²⁷ Irina Takala, “From the Frying Pan into the Fire: North American Finns in Soviet Karelia,” in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era (Special Issue of the Journal of Finnish Studies)*, Vol. 9 No. 1, 2004, p. 115.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

jobs from local workers. ‘Millionaires’, ‘capitalists’, ‘bourgeois’, ‘Amerikanski’ were commonly used insults directed at North American Finns. In the process, foreignness became clearly distinguishable by ethnicity, nationality, and social class in the public discourse.

During the purges, foreignness made the individual visible, and as a result vulnerable. The national operations sanctioned by the Soviet government in 1937 and 1938 aimed at the arrest, imprisonment, and execution of enemies of the state, were subject to multiple interpretations. Measures adopted by local authorities in Karelia when dealing with alleged bourgeois nationalists were so broad they obliterated any differences that existed in the Finnish communities. For local authorities it often did not matter if Finns were born in Karelia, in Finland, or in North America, if they were in position of power, regular workers, or even unemployed. All were equally perceived as foreigners with social, economic, and cultural ties to bourgeois nations. The purge did not leave anyone untouched. Among the purged North American Finns were lumberjacks, drivers, mechanics, carpenters, accountants, engineers, actors, teachers, managers, seamstresses, cleaners, plumbers, welders, office workers, typists, barbers, cooks, artists, dancers, directors, kolkhoz chairmen, foremen, bakers, dentists, interpreters, radio workers, journalists, nurses, sports coaches, and athletes.⁶²⁹

Possession of a foreign passport, as well as correspondence with Finland or North America, was enough to arouse the suspicion of local authorities.⁶³⁰ At a local party cell meeting in October of 1937⁶³¹ a certain Vlasov, claimed: “I have no doubt that in Sovhoz No. 2 there still remain wreckers and saboteurs, for example in the Sovhoz there is a score of people with foreign

⁶²⁹Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina: *Olimme joukko vieras vaan. Venäjänsuomalaiset vainouhrit Neuvostoliitossa 1930-luvun alusta 1950-luvun alkuun. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti*, Turku 2001. 652 sivua. Kuvitettu

⁶³⁰ СТА, Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034 File 15, Taimi Davis Collection of Letters, Urimolahti 25 July 1938.

⁶³¹ НАРК, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. [The primary unit of the CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk] Л. 90

passports who are in constant contact with Finland. These people are not only wreckers in my opinion, but some of them are spies... We must watch these people very carefully.”⁶³² At the same meeting a Finnish party member, Eminen, claimed that Luoma, a North American Finn, seemed to have been conspiring with other workers who also spoke English. As far as Eminen could say Luoma’s conversations in English carried a counter-revolutionary tone.⁶³³ Other party members looked to distance themselves from Luoma, who by that time had already been placed under arrest by the NKVD. They showered the latter with accusations; Luoma allegedly held petty-bourgeois views and built a house for himself in Petrozavodsk, and, it was not known, they claimed, where he took the money for its construction.⁶³⁴ Luoma was a suspect because he spoke foreign languages, and according to his former friends seemed to have had the determination of a bourgeois to acquire private property.

Domestic discourse on foreignness and the dangers associated with it were directly tied to matters of national security and foreign policy. As mentioned previously, as early as 1932 the OGPU spoke against North American Finnish immigration to Karelia and warned against the settlement of North American Finns in the border regions of the USSR. It outlined 11 regions (including Kandalashskiy, Kestegenskiy, Uhtinskiy, Rebol'skiy, Petrovskiy, Priazhinskiy, Olonetskiy, Louhskiy, Kemskiy and Kondopojskiy districts), as areas of strategic importance to the Soviet Union’s external security that contained important military strongholds, factories, and communication lines that could be sabotaged in time of war by the fifth column.⁶³⁵

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ HAPK, ф. П-93, оп. 2, д. 2/13

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Rovio received the communiqué forwarded to him by Kirov, however chose to ignore it. At the time, this urged the OGPU to increase its surveillance of Finnish immigrants in Karelia.

The change in the nationality policy brought about a struggle for power between Russian and Finnish factions within the Karelian communist party.⁶³⁶ The local party cell in Padozero was no exception. At one of the meetings, a certain comrade Esaulenko observed that “not all spies are from abroad, and there might be some spies among the Russians and Karelians.”⁶³⁷ In this typical logic of the time, which subscribed to dominant discourses from the center, Esaulenko involuntarily assumed that all who came from abroad were spies. At the conclusion of the meeting a suggestion was made to keep close watch over all the “guests” – foreigners that come visiting the Sovhoz and Petrozavodsk in general.⁶³⁸ The brutal repression of North American Finns in 1937 and 1938 was a direct cause of their representation as foreigners in the public discourse. In those years the terms of immigrants’ self identification – Finns, workers, pioneers, socialists – were associated within the hegemonic Soviet discourse with an alternative set of referents – foreign, saboteur, spy, fascist.⁶³⁹

The visibility of North American Finns, their names, the language they spoke, the way they dressed, and possession of American, Canadian or Finnish passports made them an easy prey for the local OGPU. Typical accusations against Finns were usually nebulous, and the vague parameters of article 58 of the Soviet criminal code resulted in numerous ludicrous charges. For example, subsection 58/10 called for an arrest with a sentence up to the death penalty for belonging to a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization.⁶⁴⁰ In practice it meant that if two people conversed in Finnish and criticized, in one way or another, the government or

⁶³⁶ НАРК, ф. П-1560 Первичная парторганизация Падозерского лесопункта Прионежского райкома НАРК, ф. П-1560, оп. 1, д. 4 Протоколы партсобраний. л. 4 – 9. [Primary party organization of the Padozerskogo lumber camp, Prionezhski district committee, minutes of the party meetings]

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Nick Baron, “Constructing Immigrant Identities in Stalinist Russia: Explorations in Theory and Practice.”

⁶⁴⁰ СТА, Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-25/40 [File 9 – Karelia Exodus – rough article](#): Article by Eila lahti Argutina “Documented Evidence of Finnish Canadian Destinies in Soviet Karelia.” Publisher Unknown.

the state, the duo was considered an organizational unit, and given the counterrevolutionary rhetoric of their dialogue, both could now be charged with belonging to a counterrevolutionary nationalist organization. In fact all socio-cultural or political contact between Finns could be interpreted as a “nationalist meeting.”⁶⁴¹ Any mention of Greater Finland was grounds for arrest. One Finn, a physical education instructor, was fired because he was instructing youth using bourgeois-nationalist methods of physical training instead of Soviet ones.⁶⁴² The political leadership was accused of ‘finnicization’ – a policy that was not only legal, but was also actively promoted by Kremlin bosses up to the mid-1930s. While being Finnish per se did not entail a crime, social and cultural contact with Finns in the past, present, or the future were sufficient grounds for arrest. As one Russian party member rightly noted, Finns were a convicted nationality.⁶⁴³

Deconstructing an Imagined Community: Demoting Ethnicity

The transformation and consolidation of the Russified version of the Soviet state in the second half of the 1930s invariably peripherized various social and ethnic segments of the society. Finns were one of the groups labeled and accused of bourgeois nationalism. What followed in Karelia was a frenzy purge driven from below and justified from above that resulted in a systematic removal of Finns from positions of power. It culminated in an ethnic purge, which among others included arrest, imprisonment, and, in many cases execution, of almost 800 North American Finns.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² НАРК, ф. П-2998 Лососинский завод. НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. 4 (Протоколы партсобраний Лососинской автобазы за 1937 г.) лл. 61-62 [Party meetings protocols of the Lososinskaya carpool for 1937]

⁶⁴³ НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. 1/5 Протоколы партсобраний первичной парторганизации лососинской автобазы. Протокол партсобраний от 19 апр 1938 л. 24. [Protocols party meeting of the primary Party organization Lososinskaya carpool. Protocol of the party meeting...]

The minutes of the party cells of the local VKP (b) in Karelia demonstrate the methodical and structural replacement of Finnish party members with Russian cadres. The party cells were important in that they had at their disposal all the functions needed to control all the industries and settlements in their jurisdiction. Thus when at their meetings, a person was blamed for “wrecking”, or “nationalism”, these records were immediately transferred to the NKVD, which in the vast majority of cases resulted in the arrest of the accused individuals.

Physical repression was accompanied by a systemic deconstruction of the republic’s Finnish dominated political, social, and cultural norms. With Finnish politicians removed, the majority of Finns in managerial positions were dismissed, arrested, and charged with fictitious crimes of sabotage and espionage. In some cases, Finns who were born in Canada and the United States and could barely speak Finnish were accused of spying for Finland. All Finnish books were burned, Finnish language newspapers discontinued, as was in essence the public life of the Finnish language. In a letter sent to North America in 1938 one contemporary observed that the Russian language and the russified version of the Karelian language were being imposed on the society making most Finns practically illiterate.⁶⁴⁴ In fact, Finns as a nationality “ceased” to exist altogether by 1939, at least officially. Even the national census did not mention Finns.⁶⁴⁵ Both symbolic and tragic was the fact that Dom Kulturi (House of Culture) was one of the places where many North American Finns from Petrozavodsk were brought in for interrogations often accompanied by physical abuse, torture, and death.⁶⁴⁶

In January of 1934 the VKP (b) declared local nationalism to be the main danger in Karelia. This heralded the beginning of the purges. Soon enough, local Russian and Karelian

⁶⁴⁴ CTA, Lindstrom Fonds, 2009-025/034 File 15, Taimi Davis Collection of Letters, Urimolahti 25 July 1938.

⁶⁴⁵ Paul Austin, “Soviet Finnish: The End of a Dream,” *East European Quarterly* xxi, no.2 June 1987.

⁶⁴⁶ Unpublished interview with Elsa Balandis, born 1922, taken 11 April 2007 by Alexey Golubev, stored in the archive of the Department of History of Northern Europe, Petrozavodsk State University, Russia.

authorities and community leaders seized the opportunity presented by Moscow and launched an attack against their neighbors. Karelian newspapers now echoed Moscow's line and pointed to immigrant Finns as the cause of many of the republic's misfortunes. The press blamed Finns for their disdain towards Russian workers and their methods of work. It emphasized that most, if not all Finns had bourgeois nationalist tendencies, which were evident in their references to the superior economic and social conditions they had enjoyed in the United States and Canada.

Overt political repression of North American Finns began in 1935. The first to be arrested and removed from positions of power were the leaders of the Karelian government. They were charged with deviating from the Leninist-Stalinist line and gravitating towards Finland.⁶⁴⁷ The danger came from what was termed local nationalism, which supposedly covered-up a bourgeois-nationalist revolution in the making. Gylling and Rovio were accused of bringing North Americans into Karelia, who according to the NKVD had no other reason to come but to subvert the Soviet regime. It seemed strange to authorities that immigrants left their comfortable lives in the United States and Canada to come and toil in Soviet Karelia. All Finnish political leaders who were advocating the Finnicization of Karelia, or, in other words, those who adhered to the Leninist-Stalinist nationalist line, were being removed in 1935-36. In a symbolic demonstration of the change of the political guard in Karelia, in March 1937, all streets and public places in Petrozavodsk with Gylling's name were renamed.⁶⁴⁸

The purge also subsumed the committee members of the KTA. Matti Tenhunen, head of the immigrant recruitment offices in New York, was charged with espionage and counterrevolutionary agitation. The fact that he travelled to the United States several times was

⁶⁴⁷ See Takala, I. P. *Fiiny v Karelii I v Rossii: Istoria vozniknovenia I gibeli diaspory*. [Finns in Karelia and in Russia: The history of the emergence and the death of a diaspora] St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2002.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

enough evidence to convict him. Another member of the KTA committee, Arvo Kataja, who arrived in Karelia in October 1933 and worked as a lumberjack, was arrested in April 1938, charged with section 58/6, 9 and executed in October 1938.⁶⁴⁹ Similar fate awaited Arthur Kari, member of the Canadian and the Soviet communist parties, a recruiting agent from Port Arthur. Having arrived in Karelia in September 1932, Arthur worked as a team leader at a forest site in the Muyezerky district.⁶⁵⁰ In September 1938 he was arrested and charged with spying for Finland. Seven days later he was executed. Victor Rossi, also member of both the Canadian and Soviet communist parties, responsible for immigrant recruitment in Sault St. Marie, arrived in Soviet Karelia with his wife Ida in June 1932. In March 1938 he was arrested and charged with sections 58/10,2 and executed in October 1938.⁶⁵¹ Another party member, Karl Tamminen, a recruiting agent in the Bruce Mines, was arrested in 1937-38.⁶⁵²

Other KTA members, such as Alquist in Sudbury, John Stahlberg from Montreal, and Jussi Latva from Toronto, survived only because they remained in Canada. Sources suggest that had Latva arrived in the Soviet Union anytime after 1936 he would have been immediately arrested and most likely executed. Tenhunen and Latva in the eyes of the not farsighted local OGPU were the masterminds of North American immigration to Karelia, whose entire purpose was to send bourgeois agents, spies, and saboteurs to the Soviet Union. In several interrogation protocols those arrested mentioned being recruited by Tenhunen and Latva. For authorities this was sufficient to arrest and execute Tenhunen, while Latva who wisely remained in Canada, was

⁶⁴⁹ Based on the Karelian Resettlement Agency records, the lists were compiled by Eila Lahti-Argutina, and deposited in the Clara Thomas Archives, Varpu Lindstrom Fond F-0558.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

described in NKVD reports as the “president of the intelligence organization” who had to be located.

The predominance of Finns in the intermediary and senior command positions in Karelia’s military infrastructure also did not go unnoticed. In March 1935, the military unit, the Karelian Egerskaya Brigade was dismantled. And once the Finnish political leadership in Karelia was removed, former members of the unit, whose command core was composed mainly of Finns, were extensively purged.⁶⁵³ First to be arrested in May 1936 was a former senior officer of the unit, Matson. In 1938 the NKVD would execute the last commander of the unit, a Latvian, Nikolai Kalvan.⁶⁵⁴ In total, of the 257 commanders and students of the Finnish section of Leningrad’s Infantry school, 225 were repressed, 90% of whom were executed or died in prison.⁶⁵⁵ The brigade once considered the pride of the republic, allegedly became a nest of spies, nationalists, and enemies of the state.

With the change of direction in the nationality policy in the mid-1930s Finnish cultural producers in Karelia were among the first to come under public scrutiny. Already in 1934, Karlit (The Karelian branch of Glavlit⁶⁵⁶) criticized Luoto and other Finnish writers for paying too much attention to national elements and ignoring Russian themes in their narratives.⁶⁵⁷ For example Luoto’s plays *The Old Horseman* and *The Forest Men at Play* came to be seen as a

⁶⁵³ С. Г. Веригин, Финны в воинских формированиях Советской России (1918–1940 годы) // Российские финны: вчера, сегодня, завтра [S.G Verigin, Finns in the military formations of Soviet Russia (1918-1940) // Russian Finns: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow]: сб. ст. Петрозаводск, 2010. С. 50–63.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ General Administration of Literature and Publishing. The agency responsible for censorship of printed works and protection of state secrets in the media in the period from 1922 to 1991.

⁶⁵⁷ See Mikko Ylikangas, “The Experience of Finnish-North American Writers in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s”, in *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North American and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*. Edited by Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alexis Pogorelskin. Special Issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* 8(1), pp. 166.

manifestation of local nationalism.⁶⁵⁸ Finns were now blamed and attacked for their efforts to create and propagate Finnish culture in Karelia. For example, Luoto in his *Valkoisen Leijonan Metsastajat* reflected his experiences as a miner in the United States, while Eemili Rautiainen's *Building the Soviet Land*⁶⁵⁹ drew a comparison between the life of unemployed American miners in the United States and in Karelia. Luoto's other work, *Young Blood and Eking out a Life at Sea* similarly discussed the struggle of miners, young communists, and the unemployed in America. With the change in the nationality policy, and with Gylling's removal, the new Russian and Karelian elite, executing the new nationality (anti-Finnish) line of the center, now wanted to ensure that writers would produce the kind of work which would meet the new demands of the center, as well as the interests of the new regional leaders. After 1935, there was simply no place for Finnish cultural producers in Karelia.

The change was abrupt. If in 1934 newspaper articles, such as the one by J. Petrov and comrade Hypponen, "Karjalan 15-vuotistaipaleelta" (Fifteen years of Soviet Karelia), praised American and Canadian Finns for their disproportionate input into the socialist and economic development of Karelia, by 1935 the same authors had to admit mistakes in not paying enough attention to the contributions from Karels and Russians to local economy and culture.⁶⁶⁰ In September 1935, the Karelian publishing house Kirya and its leading Finnish writers were accused of nationalism. Luoto was arrested and sentenced to a year in prison. Following the arrest Karlit confiscated many of the writers' books from shops and libraries. Writers' names were erased from theatrical productions. Many were accused of failing to generate Soviet Karelian culture and of orientating their works towards fascist Finland and bourgeois America.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁶⁰ Reino Kero, "The Role of Finnish Settlers from North America in the Nationality Question in Soviet Karelia in the 1930's," p. 32.

By 1935, for the Soviet state and the new leadership in Karelia, Finnish oriented literature became incompatible with the new identity the state tried to promote and construct in the republic. With the advent of the purges the majority of North American writers in Karelia were accused with counter-revolutionary agitation, arrested, and in most cases imprisoned and executed.

From 1935 Soviet authorities also began to reinstate the dominant position of the Russian language. Most languages across the country were converted from the Latin to the Cyrillic alphabet, with their vocabularies and grammars increasingly russified. In Karelia, Russian was re-introduced into the educational curriculum, while the Karelian language was russified to an extent that even Karels struggled to understand it. While in 1936 the Finnish language was for the most part outlawed, as late as 1935 it was still the language promoted and endorsed by central as well as regional authorities. Niskanen, for example, remembered that in the kindergarten all the instruction was in the Finnish language in 1935.⁶⁶¹ Another survivor, Yrjo Makkinen claimed that until 1936 North American youth in Karelia socialized exclusively in Finnish and English.⁶⁶² Russian was not really used until 1936. Niskanen claims that all instructors in the first part of the 1930s were Finns, and in addition to learning the Finnish language, they were even taught forms of traditional Finnish culture previously unknown to him. For example, they learned to make *verilettu*, in Finnish “bloody pancakes.”⁶⁶³ It was the first

⁶⁶¹ Interview with Niskanen. *Устная история в Карелии: Сборник научных статей и источников. Вып. II. Североамериканские финны в Советской Карелии 1930-х годов* [Oral history in Karelia: Collected articles and sources. II. North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s] / *Сост. и научн. ред. И. Р. Такала, А. В. Голубев. – Петрозаводск: Изд-во ПетрГУ, 2007. – 192 с.* <http://oralhist.karelia.ru/libr.html> <viewed 10 March 2014>.

⁶⁶² Interview with Miakkinen *Устная история в Карелии: Сборник научных статей и источников. Вып. II. Североамериканские финны в Советской Карелии 1930-х годов* / [Oral history in Karelia: Collected articles and sources. II. North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s] *Сост. и научн. ред. И. Р. Такала, А. В. Голубев. – Петрозаводск: Изд-во ПетрГУ, 2007. – 192 с.* <http://oralhist.karelia.ru/libr.html> <viewed 10 March 2014>.

⁶⁶³ Interview with Niskanen.

time he learnt such a word. Even the cooks, claims Niskanen, were all Finns. And then, he recalled, all changed and Finnish instructors were replaced by Russians.

Next was the turn of the Finnish agricultural ‘elite’. In 1935, following the death of a large number of pedigree cattle at the model Kolhoz Hiilisuo, the NKVD replaced the commune’s Finnish leadership with Russian cadres. In the same year, senior members of the Sade commune, Kalle Siikanen, Eelis Ahokas, and Juho Niemi among them, were arrested.⁶⁶⁴ Since the mid-1920s the commune represented immigrants’ success story in Karelia. The removal of its North American leadership and the subsequent renaming of the community in 1939 were symbolic of the shift of power in the republic in the second part of the 1930s. The NKVD also targeted the Radius commune, and in September 1935 arrested its two prominent North American Finnish farmers. Eelis Ahokas, who arrived in Karelia from Canada in 1926, was arrested, charged with section 58/10 and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor.⁶⁶⁵ Released ahead of time, Eelis was arrested once again in November 1937 and executed 2 months later. Karl Tamminen, a Canadian Finn and a party member, was arrested in April 1936, charged and sentenced to death in November 1937. Four days after the sentencing, Karl was executed.

In October 1935, the NKVD arrested Aaro Holopainen, the chairman of a famous Petrozavodsk Soviet Farm – Sovkhoz No. 2. Charged with bourgeois-nationalism the Sovkhoz’s forty North American members were subsequently repressed and their local cell of the VKP (b) dissolved. The party cell, established in 1930, was composed largely of North American

⁶⁶⁴ Иштонкова, В.В. «Как погасили “Луч”». Последние годы коммуны «Säde», Российские финны: вчера, сегодня, завтра [Ishtonkova, V.V. "How the Ray was Extinguished." The last years of the «Säde» commune, Russian Finns: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow]: сб. ст. Петрозаводск, 2010. С. 76–86.

⁶⁶⁵ Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina: Olimme joukko vieras vaan. Venäjänsuomalaiset vainouhrit Neuvostoliitossa 1930-luvun alusta 1950-luvun alkuun. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Turku 2001. 652 sivua. Kuvitettu. See index 2.

Finns.⁶⁶⁶ By January 1937 it had 14 members, 8 of whom were Finns; among them were “Kulmanen, Prasolov, Pilstrem, Lilbok, Williama, Raatikainen, Luoma, Manninen, Tuominen, Menshikov, Golubov, Shishkin, and Plehotkina.⁶⁶⁷ Following the purges, by the end 1939, the party cell was re-staffed with new members. Only one Russian, Prasolov was spared; as for the Finns, they were all gone.⁶⁶⁸

The trend was consistent throughout the republic. The numbers of Finnish members in the Karelian communist party steadily declined from 1326 (16.8 percent of total members) in 1934 to 314 (or 5 percent) in 1939.⁶⁶⁹ In the local party cell in Matrossi in 1933 the vast majority of communist members were Canadian Finns. However, by the early 1950s almost all had been replaced by Russian party members and candidates. Records show that Canadians assumed membership predominantly in the early 1930s, which corresponded with the mass arrival of North American Finns in Karelia. Russians, however came to dominate party ranks in the early 1940s, immediately after the purges (that oversaw the elimination of Finnish political and cultural influence in Karelia). Moreover, if the 1930s party cell’s documents were composed primarily in Finnish, by the 1940s Russian became the dominant language in official records.⁶⁷⁰

As a result of emigration and the purges, the Finnish population in Karelia decreased from 12,088 in 1933 to 8,322 in 1939.⁶⁷¹ This is an exponential decrease if compared to other nationalities in the republic. The number of Karels decreased from 109,046 to 108,571, while the number of Russians rose from 224,445 to 296, 529. As for North American Finns, their

⁶⁶⁶ НАРК, ф. П-93, оп. 2, д. 2/12, л. 28.

⁶⁶⁷ НАРК, ф. П-93, оп. 2, д. 2/12.

⁶⁶⁸ НАРК, ф. П-93, оп. 3, д. 2/3.

⁶⁶⁹ Takala, I, P. *Fiiny v Karelii I v Rossii: Istoria vozniknovenia I gibeli diaspory*, [Finns in Karelia and in Russia: The history of the emergence and the death of a diaspora] (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2002), p. 25

⁶⁷⁰ НАРК, ф. П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска.

⁶⁷¹ Takala, I, P. *Fiiny v Karelii I v Rossii: Istoria vozniknovenia I gibeli diaspory*, [Finns in Karelia and in Russia: The history of the emergence and the death of a diaspora] (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2002), p. 25.

communities were utterly destroyed by the Great Purge and then by the Second World War. Karelia's Ministry of Defense recorded that in 1950, 405 American and 205 Canadian Finns lived in Karelia⁶⁷², or roughly about 10-15 percent of the initial Karelian exodus.

In the wake of the change in the nationality policy, North Americans were no longer welcome, and as of the early months of 1935, North American immigration to Karelia was no longer encouraged. A letter from Karelia's Resettlement Agency dated May 28, 1935 informed SNK AKSSR that future recruitment of workers, particularly lumberjacks and other forest workers must be done only from other regions of the USSR.⁶⁷³ Officials called for the importation of labor from Ukraine and Belarus, given that recruitment in North America and of Tverian Karelles from the Moscow region had stopped.⁶⁷⁴ In August, the last six workers from North America arrived in Karelia.⁶⁷⁵

Section 58 and the Purge in Numbers

To conduct the vast majority of arrests and executions, the security organs employed only one of the 148 articles of the Soviet criminal code – article 58, suspicion of counter-revolutionary activities.⁶⁷⁶ The article's vagueness made it possible for authorities to interpret it in a multitude of ways. Sub-article 58/1 defined virtually any action, and even inaction, against state power as potentially counter-revolutionary. Sub-article 58/4 was reserved for those who provided some kind of aid to the “international bourgeoisie” in an attempt to overthrow the communist regime. In the end, the ambiguity of the criminal code allowed authorities to depict

⁶⁷² Irina Takala, “V Poiskakh El'dorado, p. 110.

⁶⁷³ НАРК, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 14/159 Планы работы Переселенческого управления при СНК КАССР на 1935 г. Л. 26 [Work plans for the Resettlement Department at SNK KASSR for 1935]

⁶⁷⁴ НАРК. Фонд 690, оп. 3, д. 72/631 "Планы создания постоянных кадров..." л. ["Plans for the creation of a permanent staff ...] 104-105

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956*. Translated by Thomas P. Whitney. HarperCollins, 2002 (originally published 1974), p. 5.

virtually all activities of Finns in Karelia as potentially counter-revolutionary. None of the aforementioned sub-articles however could be interpreted as widely as subsection 58/10 – anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary agitation and propaganda. Any kind of criticism directed at the Soviet political, economic, or social system was interpreted as opposition to the VKP (b), thus as counter-revolutionary agitation.

Sub-article 58/6, suspicion of espionage, was the most widely used charge. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn sarcastically noted, if one were to count all the people charged under this section, one could conclude that the majority of the Soviet population was not working on the land, or in the Soviet industries, but rather made a living by spying for foreign governments.⁶⁷⁷ The sub-article could be interpreted in many different ways. One could be arrested not only for espionage, but also for suspicion of espionage; even for connections that could potentially lead to suspicion of espionage. In theory, any person who spoke the Finnish language, or knew a Finn, could be suspected of espionage. 117 Canadian Finns were charged under sub-article 58/6; another 78 had the espionage charge combined with others. As a result, more than 60 percent of the arrested Canadian Finns were so charged. More than 90 percent of them were executed. The ratio of American Finns charged with section 58/6 was slightly lower, at 52%. All in all 364 out of the 399 North American Finns charged with espionage against the Soviet state were executed. Out of 35 that were incarcerated, only 7 would survive the labor camps. Thus 392 out of 399, or 98.2 percent of those charged with espionage died within 5 years of arrest.

Statistical analysis of the North American Finns who were arrested during the Great Purge in Karelia reveals that the “cleansing” was methodical, conditioned by factors such as social class, gender, citizenship, and age. The purge lasted for 13 months, from October 1937 to

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

November 1938.⁶⁷⁸ Arrests came in waves and can be divided into two periods. The first wave, the winter purge, lasted from November 1937 to early March 1938, when more than 50 percent of the arrests took place. During this time, the authorities targeted mainly the elites and leading members of Finnish communities. Out of 43 Canadian Finnish party members and candidates taken away, 31 were arrested during the winter purge.⁶⁷⁹ More than 80 percent of the arrested party members and candidates received the death sentence. Party membership seemed to guarantee an earlier arrest: first because it signaled community leadership; second it was simply easier to find these people. The average age of the arrested in the winter purge was 39.4; 5 years younger than in the summer purge of 1938, where the average age of the repressed was 44.5.⁶⁸⁰

At first, the state targeted the managerial elites as well as younger, more vibrant, politically and socially active leaders of North American Finnish communities. In July 1937, Kaarlo Bellman, Kalevala's district consumer cooperative chairman, a party member who arrived from Canada in 1922, was placed under arrest, charged with section 58/10, and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor at the Ivdelin camp in Sverdlovsk oblast, where he succumbed to illness in October 1941. Also in July, Toivo Vakeva, Kondopoga's hydroelectric power plant's foreman, was arrested, charged with section 58/7, 11, and executed in October 1937. Kalle Lehtonen, Vilga district forest site instructor, was taken away and also charged with section 58/7, 11, and was executed in December 1937. Only two days later, the chairmen of the Radius Commune, Kaarlo Lahti and Kalle Siikanen, were arrested. Both were found guilty of counterrevolutionary activities and executed. In November and December 1937 the NKVD took away Oscar Corgan

⁶⁷⁸ Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina: *Olimme joukko vieras vaan. Venäjänsuomalaiset vainouhrit Neuvostoliitossa 1930-luvun alusta 1950-luvun alkuun*. Siirtolaisuusinstituutti, Turku 2001. 652 sivua. Kuvitettu and the Karelian Resettlement Agency records, the lists were compiled by Eila Lahti-Argutina, and deposited in the Clara Thomas Archives, Varpu Lindstrom Fond F-0558.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

and Matti Tenhunen, two of the main recruiters in North America. Both were soon executed. In the closing days of 1937, NKVD agents whisked away Osmo Jokinen, deputy director of the communication department in the Kalevala district; Johannes Tuominen, transport manager from the Kanussuo district, and Yuhon Korhonen, Pryazha district Matroosa garage manager. The winter purge also swept away several actors and artists, an accountant, a dentist, journalists, and teachers.⁶⁸¹

After a period of relative calm, the next wave of arrests came in the summer months of 1938, when 30 percent of all the North American Finns taken away throughout the second part of the 1930s were arrested, reaching a peak in July at 113 arrests. The roundups targeted largely the proletariat, such as forest workers, drivers, carpenters, and construction workers. By the time the second wave of purges swept the Finnish communities there were few if any Finns left in positions of power that could have helped slow the purges. In this way the purge was methodical. Finns were systematically eliminated from Karelia's political and economic infrastructure. Most of the governmental and managerial posts were now staffed by Russians, some of whom called for extreme measures to be taken against the Finnish population. At his inaugural address Party Secretary Kuprianov boasted that he "will not sleep peacefully a single night until the last Finn has been banished from Petrozavodsk."⁶⁸²

The purge was felt everywhere throughout the society; it engulfed the political and social elite, cultural workers, skilled and unskilled workers, students, as well as the unemployed. The largest groups to be incarcerated were forest workers, carpenters and drivers, who together

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Michael Gelb, "Karelian Fever: The Finnish Immigrant Community During Stalin's Purges", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol.45, no.6 1993.

comprised 52 percent of those arrested.⁶⁸³ The NKVD did not discriminate; lists of the arrested included electricians, musicians, accountants, masons, actors, cleaners, seamstresses, plumbers, typists, fishermen, a wrestling coach, teachers, barbers, cooks, students, peasants, mechanics, tailors, dentists, nurse, and an interpreter.⁶⁸⁴ The NKVD saw enemies of the state lurking everywhere, and reported in 1937 that every single village in Karelia had some form of counter-revolutionary activity.⁶⁸⁵

The target or the usual suspect during the purges was an adult male, between the ages of 25 and 55, born in Finland. According to my calculations, at the very least 307 Canadian males and 12 Canadian females were arrested.⁶⁸⁶ More than half of the Canadian Finnish male population over the age of 18 in Karelia was subjected to purge. Nearly 75 percent of the purged males were between the ages of 27 and 46. The youngest was 18 years old and the oldest 64.⁶⁸⁷ On the other hand, about 35 percent of the Finnish American male population was purged. The disparity in the ratio of Americans and Canadians purged is largely related to the fact that many more Americans were in possession of U.S, rather than Finnish passports. As a result they were less likely to be targeted by authorities. Nearly 70 percent of the purged American adult males were between the ages of 37 and 56. In contrast, only 12 Canadian and 32 American women, or 5 percent of the adult North American population were arrested.⁶⁸⁸ In addition, 86 percent of all North Americans purged were born in Finland, while only 11 percent were born in the United States and 3 percent of the purged were born in Canada.

⁶⁸³ Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Чухин И. Карелия–37: Идеология и практика террора. [Chukhin I. Karelia-37: Ideology and practice of terror] — Петрозаводск: изд-во Петрозаводского ун-та, 1999. P. 38.

⁶⁸⁶ Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

Once arrested, women had a better chance than men of avoiding the death penalty or surviving in the labor camp. 20 of 42 repressed women did not receive the death sentence, but were instead sentenced to hard labor. On the other hand, only 15 percent of men avoided the death penalty. Also worth noting is that an American male had a better chance of avoiding the death penalty (22%) than a Canadian Finn (9%). All women were arrested in 1938. The average age of the arrested women was 37, while for men it was 41. The youngest arrested was a 19 year-old American Finn Helen Kallila, a music student who arrived in Karelia in 1932. She was arrested in July 1938, charged with subsection 58/6, 10 of the Soviet criminal code and executed in September of the same year. The oldest victim was a 60 year old Johana Karhinene. Johana had served as a Finnish member of parliament in 1914, 1917, and 1918, fled to Sweden after the Finnish civil war, and in 1920 left Sweden for the United States, where she stayed until 1926 when she arrived in Karelia. She was a member of the CPUSA and the Soviet Communist party. In late June 1938 she was arrested and charged with subsection 58/6. She was executed in the Olonets region in September of the same year.⁶⁸⁹

North American Finns charged with sub-section 58/10 of the criminal code (Anti-Soviet and counterrevolutionary propaganda and agitation) had a 50 percent chance of avoiding the death sentence, while those charged under subsection 58/6 had an 8 percent chance of survival. Only 20 of the 240 North Americans so charged did not receive the death sentence. From North American women, 23 of 28 were sent to prison with sub-section 58/10 in their charges. 9 of the 13 who did get executed had subsection 58/6 in their criminal charges. All 5 Canadian women who did not get the highest penalties had the 58/10 charge laid against them. Espionage was a grave crime in the late 1930s and the penalty for it, according to the criminal code, was

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

equivalent to being found guilty of subsection 58/2 – armed uprising or intervention with the goal of seizing power – up to death with confiscation, including formal recognition as the enemy of the workers. On the other hand, the penalty for sub-section 58/10 charge was at least 6 months imprisonment, a very mild sentence in comparison. However, a separate clause stated that in case of war or unrest, the penalty should be equated to 58/2, thus almost certain death. This explains why so many were sentenced to death under subsection 58/10. What I make of the fact that the rate of survival for those charged with sub-section 58/10 was at 50 percent was that the OGPU and local officials did not understand whether or not it was a time of unrest, were confused as to the nature of the repressions, and sentenced to death only half of those arrested and charged with subsection 58/10.

Based on the statistical analysis of the arrested (location of arrests), North American Finns, by the late 1930s were spread out largely in the Prionezhskiy, Kondopoga, and Kalevala regions. The American and Canadian numbers are somewhat similar with the exception of Prionejskiy region, where twice as many Americans were arrested. It seems that more than 40 percent of North Americans resided in the Prionejskiy district, mainly in Petrozavodsk and Matrossi, and about 20 percent lived in Kondopoga, and 15 percent in Kalevala. Notable places of mass arrests were forest sites in the Kalevala district, the Kondopoga paper factory, Petrozavodsk ski factory, the lumber camps near Matroosa, the Olonets lumber camps, Pryazha and Vilga lumber camps, and Kondopoga construction sites.⁶⁹⁰

All but five North American Finns were charged under article 58 of the criminal code. Five were charged with sections 19 (preparation of a crime) and 84 (illegal crossing of the border). Attempts at crossing the border were automatically considered traitorous and viewed as

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

conspiracy. Vilho Finnila, who arrived in Karelia in 1932, worked as a mechanic at a repair garage in Petrozavodsk. In June 1938, trying to cross the border to Finland, he was caught, placed under arrest, and charged with section 58/6 and 84 of the Soviet criminal code. On September 2, 1938 he was found guilty and 5 days later executed. Albert Hironen was born in Detroit Michigan in 1914. In 1931 he arrived in Karelia. Working as an electrician in Kondopoga, Albert tried to cross the Soviet border in July 1938. He was caught and charged with sections 19 and 84 of the RSFSR criminal code. In October of 1939 he was found guilty and sentenced to 5 years of hard labor. Lauri Kallio and his brother Urho Kallio arrived in Karelia in February of 1932. Lauri, a forest worker, and Urho, a floating laborer, were both caught crossing the border on August 8, 1938. In October 1940 both were found guilty and sentenced to 5 and 6 years accordingly. Solomon Laine, born in the United States, arrived in Karelia in October 1932. Working as a driver in the Kemi district, Solomon tried to cross the Soviet border and was caught in September 1937 and charged under 58/10,11 and 84. In November 1938 he was found guilty and sentenced to hard labor, where he died soon afterwards.

Based on Eila Lahti Argutina's statistics 727 North Americans were repressed in the late 1930s – 408 American and 319 Canadian Finns. All in all, as a result of the repressions, 595 North American Finns (81%) were executed, 50 (10%) were sentenced to 10 years in prison, 24 (3%) – 5 years, 18 (2%) – 3 years, 12 (1%) – eight years. 5 others received 4, 6, 7 and 15 year sentences, and 1 was deported. Those who avoided the death sentence were spread around the country in the Soviet prison system – the Gulag.⁶⁹¹ Prisoners were sent to camps in Komi ASSR, Kirovskaya oblast, Sverdlovskaya oblast, Kazakhstan, Magadan region, and Murmansk. 6 of the

⁶⁹¹ Main Soviet forced labor camp system.

7 people sent to Siberia died within the first 2 years of incarceration.⁶⁹² About 65 percent of those sentenced to serve in the labor camps died within the first 5 years of their sentence. All in all, 682 of the 727 repressed North American Finns, or nearly 94 percent died, if not from a bullet in the back of their heads, then from malnutrition, disease, and inhumane conditions in Soviet labor camps. In the end, a large portion of the North American Finnish adult male population was arrested, imprisoned or executed, and the demographic structure of the North American Finnish communities destroyed.

The purges in Karelia were made possible, on the one hand, by the growing ability of the state to observe and document its population and, on the other hand, by the eagerness of the local cadres to appropriate the official discourses and apply them to the local scene to satisfy immediate personal gains. Peter Holquist showed with convincing evidence that the lists and records composed and kept by the security organs in the 1920s and in the first part of the 1930s were subsequently used by the state to conduct mass arrests in the late 1930s.⁶⁹³ For example, to locate national minorities during the purges authorities used census lists taken between 1926 and 1937. The census, as mentioned in previous chapters, is not only an important organizing principle of society, but also assists the state in administrative and supervisory functions. During the purges, the census revealed to authorities where Kulaks and national minorities were located. Both had a special category on the census, which also made them automatically guilty by association.

⁶⁹² Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina.

⁶⁹³ Peter Holquist, "Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik Surveillance in its Pan-European Context," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (1997).

The NKVD closely monitored North American immigrants when they arrived in Karelia.⁶⁹⁴ Each report concluded with a list of ‘political characteristics’ of migrants. The authorities also had a network of informants within the North American Finnish communities, who updated local agents on the political and moral moods in these communities. There were strong currents in the OGPU that were opposed to North American immigration already in the 1930s. In a series of secret letters sent to Sergey Kirov, Leningrad OGPU officials, F.D. Medved and I.V Zaporozhets, urged Kirov to reconsider Karelia’s recruitment of North American labor, warning that many immigrants complain about the atrocious living conditions in Karelia, noting problems with housing, malnutrition, lack of public hygienic standards, low salaries, and absence of democracy.⁶⁹⁵ Given the frequency and the secret nature of such communiqués several things can be said. First, the OGPU was well informed of the immigrants’ living conditions, as well as of the grievances they had with local authorities and the Soviet state in general. Also, we can deduce that given that living conditions in North America were superior to those in Finland it is safe to say that North American Finns were the most dissatisfied with local socio-economic conditions. At the very least they had the most reasons to be upset. Thus, complaints by North Americans might have intensified the purge, as they attracted the attention of state security authorities, as well as neighbors and informants.

The OGPU were convinced that Finland, as well as most of the Western world posed an external threat to the Soviet Union, while western national minorities found within Soviet borders, in particular Finns, constituted a fifth column. This official discourse, which was appropriated all the way along the Soviet chain of command to Karelian political authorities and

⁶⁹⁴ Irina Takala, “Североамериканские финны в довоенной Карелии” (“North American Finns in pre-war Karelia”).

⁶⁹⁵ Michael Gelb, “Karelian Fever: The Finnish Immigrant Community During Stalin’s Purges.”

the security organs, was also embodied by the general populace. It is this process that made the purges appear as a rational and far from absurd development to many involved in the arrests. To the security organs and the local population, with limited information available, everything was open to wide interpretation. The scheme for the purges was developed from above; all they had to do on the local level was to fill in the blanks.

When officials sifted through the documentation available to them, they interpreted it in light of the official discourses of the time – which depicted Finns as fascists and nationalists – and those hailing from North America as bourgeois. For example, in the case of Huuki Kalle, the only information available to authorities was that he was born in Finland in 1898 and that in 1931 he migrated to Karelia from North America.⁶⁹⁶ The official discourse however allowed sufficient theoretical grounds for them to make the following conclusion: “Lived in Finland...there Huuki fell under the influence of Finland’s Intelligence Service and was packed off to America, where he continued working in its favor. In 1931 shipped to Russia with a special mission.”⁶⁹⁷ The interrogators did not possess any facts, nor could they explain why Huuki was shipped to the United States in the first place, nor why he resided there for a substantial amount of time. This however was already of no relevance to the authorities; they had established the probable cause and that was enough to put together a counter-revolutionary charge.

On July 18, 1934 Toivo Vakeva wrote a letter to the *Moscow Daily News*. In it, he complained that he received 2 rubles to 1 dollar return on the 300 dollars he gave to the Machine

⁶⁹⁶ Mayme Sevander, *Of Soviet Bondage* (Oscat, 1996), p. 48.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

Fund upon departing Canada in 1932.⁶⁹⁸ Toivo also noted that he was not alone in being duped and that one of his friends gave as much as 4,000 dollars and received less than 2,000 rubles in return. Toivo felt he was misled by the Karelian and Soviet governments and asked if the authorities could fix the problem by offering him and his friend credit in Torgsin stores. Toivo was among the first to be swept in the purges. Working at a Kondopoga Hydroelectric power plant, he was arrested in July 1937 and charged with 58/7, 11. On October 26, 1937 he was executed at the age of 31.⁶⁹⁹

In January 1938, Alexander Koskelainen, an American Finn, was arrested and charged with counter-revolutionary agitation, subsection 58/10, and executed 3 weeks later.⁷⁰⁰ The reason for his arrest was an incident which dated back to 1934. According to the OGPU in the summer of that year, Koskelainen, “while working at the Ilyinsky sawmill ruined the driving belt and thus put the sawmill out of operation for 15 days.”⁷⁰¹ In addition, working as a shop steward at the Karelavto he “intentionally disrupted the transportation plan.”⁷⁰² “Intentional” is the key word, as two-work related accidents were interpreted as counterrevolutionary activities almost 4 years after the incidents took place.

Born in Ontario, Helen Hill arrived in Karelia with her father Oscar at the age of 15. In February 1938 she was arrested, charged with sub-section 58/10, sentenced to 10 years of hard labor, and sent to the Karaganda labor camp. The NKVD accused her with “maintaining contact with relatives in the U.S. collecting information in favor of Finland’s intelligence service, praising life in capitalist countries, speaking of her intentions to cross the border, and fostering a

⁶⁹⁸ Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд 685, опись 1, дело 15/166 Л. 2 Письмо т.Вакава (Кондопога) от 18-го июля 1934 г. в редакцию Moscow Daily News [Letter of T.Vakava (Kondopoga) from 18th of July 1934 to the editor of Moscow Daily News]

⁶⁹⁹ Based on the statistics of the repressed compiled in Eila Lahti-Argutina.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Sevander, Mayme, *Of Soviet Bondage*, Osgood, 1996, p. 78.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

spirit of emigration among workers.”⁷⁰³ There seems to be no falseness in the accusations, except for her sending information to the Finnish Intelligence Service. On closer look, the accusations only summarize her daily activities, which before 1936 would not have aroused much suspicion. However with the call from above to unravel bourgeois nationalists all over the country, authorities interpreted her contact with relatives in North America as an attempt to collect information for the Finnish Intelligence Service. This episode suggests that the NKVD was following Helen for some time, and most likely had been screening her letters for at least several months, if not years, before arresting her. It is also obvious that Helen wanted to leave Karelia and discussed the option with her friends, relatives, co-workers, and possibly others in her community. The authorities however interpreted her rhetoric as counter-revolutionary agitation. In her work *Skitaltsi* Mayme Sevander mentions a pregnant woman who was incarcerated on a charge based on 6 year-old evidence. She apparently demanded a Canadian, instead of a Soviet, passport and expressed a desire to leave the Soviet Union.⁷⁰⁴

Maria Alfred, a member of the Petrozavodsk symphony orchestra, arrived in Karelia from the United States in October of 1931. In July 1938, she was arrested and charged with subsections 58/6, 9. At the interrogation she revealed that she had been recruited by Matti Tenhunen.⁷⁰⁵ Given that Tenhunen’s name appeared in several interrogation reports as the bourgeois nationalist mastermind responsible for facilitating the arrival of North American Finnish spies, the NKVD assumed that Maria was one Tenhunen’s agents sent to Karelia. Charges of espionage were similarly brought against Oscar Maki, when at the interrogation he revealed that Jussi Latva recruited him in Canada. According to Soviet officials both Tenhunen

⁷⁰³ Ibid., p. 79.

⁷⁰⁴ Mayme Sevander, *Skitaltsi*, [Wanderers] (Petrozavodsk, PetrGu), p. 86.

⁷⁰⁵ Mayme Sevander, *Of Soviet Bondage*. (Oscat, 1996), p. 78.

and Latva were among the most dangerous elements in Karelia, considered as the heads of the Finnish Intelligence Operation. As a result, anyone who in one way or another was associated with Tenhunen or Latva was a possible spy. According to this logic, all North American Finns were subject to repression and most likely execution, as section 58/6 of the Soviet criminal (espionage) in 95% of the cases meant a death sentence.

Vaino Finberg, head of the publishing house in Karelia, was arrested in December 1937. Accused of “increasing the publication of counter-revolutionary nationalist literature by cutting down Russian and Karelian language publications,”⁷⁰⁶ Vaino in effect was doing just what the state asked him to do before 1935. One of the first cultural producers to be arrested in the winter purges of 1937-1938, Finberg found himself caught between *Korenizatsia*, which encouraged Finnish cultural norms, and the Russification of the Soviet society in full swing in the second part of the 1930s. Ivan Chuhin writes that cases stored from as far back as 1919 served for repressions in 1937. He mentions a certain Alekseyeva who was arrested in 1919 because of her husband. The OGPU also happened to search her house in 1924. Records indicate the only items found were Finnish household products. These two incidents served as grounds for her arrest in 1938 and her execution several weeks later.⁷⁰⁷

Rewriting Discourses: The New Nationality Policy

Nationalism is a cultural script, a belief or a political ideology that engages a group of people in the collective discourses of a nation state. Through this script, members of the nation conceive of social reality, frame their aspirations, and re-formulate existing national ideologies.⁷⁰⁸ In Soviet propaganda of the mid-1930s, Finland was portrayed as an enemy state.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Чухин И. Карелия–37: Идеология и практика террора [Karelia-37: Ideology and practice of terror].

⁷⁰⁸ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

Throughout the 1930s images of Finns in the press and popular culture went from sturdy and clean workers, into white bandits.⁷⁰⁹ With the rise of fascism in Europe, a new external threat to Soviet security was created. Imagined or real, it made Soviet security organs pay particular attention to ethnic populations living on the Soviet periphery. A radical shift in the official discourses occurred in 1935 when Stalin announced that the main task of the party was the struggle with bourgeois nationalism. In 1936 and 1937, during the Spanish Civil War Stalin's fear of the "fifth column" only intensified.

There is no doubt that the purge was directed at the elimination of the fifth column, the perceived internal enemy. Both Vyacheslav Molotov (Chairman of the Council of People's Commissariat) and Lazar Kaganovich (Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party) later admitted that the chief reason for the purges was the removal of the fifth column.⁷¹⁰ Molotov went as far as to suggest that victory in the Second World War was due to the absence of the fifth column in the early 1940s.⁷¹¹ Statistics all too clearly show that several minority groups were in greater danger of being arrested than others. There was an exponential increase of ethnic populations in Soviet prisons. For example, the number of Germans in prisons rose by 18 times during the purges.⁷¹² Similarly, Finns, who comprised only 2.7 percent of the Karelian

⁷⁰⁹ Irina Takala, "North American Finns as Viewed by the Population of Soviet Karelia in the 1930s *Academic Notes of Petrozavodsk State University: Social Sciences and Humanities*), N.3 (95) October 2008.

⁷¹⁰ David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Interwar Russia*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 440.

⁷¹¹ Такала, Ирина Национальные операции ОГПУ/НКВД в Карелии [Takala, Irina, OGPU / NKVD National operations in Karelia].

⁷¹² Gabor Rittersporn "вредные элементы, опасные меньшинства, и большевистские тревоги: массовые операции 1937-38 гг. и этнический вопрос в ссср" // В семье единой. Национальная политика партии большевиков и ее осуществление на Северо-Западе России в 1920-50-е гг. Петрозаводск 1998, с. 100. [harmful elements, dangerous minorities and Bolshevik alarm: bulk operations 1937-38. and the ethnic question in the USSR " // In a single family. National policy of the Bolshevik Party and its implementation in the North-West of Russia in 1920s-50s].

population at the time of the Great Purge, nonetheless constituted 22 percent of all the inmates in Karelia's prisons.⁷¹³

With the passing of the so-called “national orders”, issued in July, under order 00439, the anti-Finnish campaign in the local communist party cells immediately intensified. Soviet newspapers began to publish articles on the “capitalist intrigues” within the country, boasting that enemies of the people all throughout the country were sabotaging large enterprises and entire industries. It seemed that all the ineptitude of the Soviet economy was being blamed on these yet to be visible enemies of the state. On the local level this dominant line was adopted in an awkward way. In their denunciation speeches, the accusers, who for the most part consisted of party members and cultural producers, as well as some common workers, referenced Stalin and the struggle with bourgeois nations, and then made a radical transition to the Kolhoz' garages and the berry farms, where they vigorously tried to uncover wreckers and saboteurs.

Adapting/Embodying Discourses: Manninen's Case

The discussion about Comrade Manninen at the general meeting of the Sovhoz no. 2 party cell in winter 1937 is typical of a trial of a Finnish party member who was condemned to arrest and expulsion from party ranks.⁷¹⁴ Manninen, former head of the local communist party cell, was blamed for demonstrating a passive attitude towards public work, drunkenness, and favoritism towards Finnish members of the party. The new secretary of the party cell, Plekhotkina argued that Manninen was an ardent nationalist: “Manninen knows the Russian language, but deliberately avoids using it, despite being an editor of the party's bulletin.

⁷¹³ Ibid, p. 101.

⁷¹⁴ Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. Л. 100-104 Протокол общего партсобрания совхоза №2 от 14.12.1937 [National Archives of the Republic of Karelia, First cell of the CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk. L. 100-104 Minutes of the general party meeting farm number 2].

Manninen deliberately avoided the Russian language and, failed to prove himself to be an exemplary member of the VKP (b), and instead showed himself to be a self-seeker and a careerist, who always put purely personal selfish reasons ahead of public interests.”⁷¹⁵ Another party member, Smirennov seconded Plekhotkina, arguing that Manninen’s tendency to speak in Finnish was sufficient evidence of his ardent nationalism.⁷¹⁶

Following a lengthy description of Manninen’s mortal sins, Plekhotkina turned to two other Finnish members of the cell, Kolander and Luoma, and reminded them that the central committee of the party had repeatedly called on its members and candidates to be vigilant and to expose enemies of the state lurking everywhere in disguise. Plekhotkina proposed to exclude Manninen from the party. She also blamed the aforementioned Finns for failing to exert the needed vigilance to uncover Manninen as a spy who had infiltrated the local party cell in 1930. Given the absence of any evidence to sustain her accusations against Manninen, Plekhotkina’s rhetoric reflected almost in its entirety the dominant discourse, which called on the populace to “uncover” spies and saboteurs that supposedly infiltrated all segments of the body politic in the Soviet Union, allegedly even Karelia’s Sovhoz # 2.

Manninen’s tribunal is a great example of how people at the grassroots level adopted and appropriated the discourse on the enemies of the people which stemmed from above, and mechanically applied it to people who even remotely resembled perceived enemies of the people. There was only one piece of circumstantial evidence against Manninen in that he allegedly got drunk with people who were considered enemies of the people. Plekhotkina in turn composed an entire protocol, which had little if anything to do with the real accusations against Manninen. Reading the protocols one gets a sense that Plekhotkina believed everything she said, even

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

though this belief was based not on facts but on discourse that she borrowed from newspapers and other official sources. The main basis for the accusation, however, was the fact that Manninen was a Finn.

Plekhotkina's accusations did not stop at Manninen. As a proper communist, she saw enemies of the people everywhere, and accused mechanic Telli with bourgeois nationalism for radio talks with Finland.⁷¹⁷ Telli also allegedly paid Finns 12 rubles for car repair, while a Russian only got 5 rubles.⁷¹⁸ A Russian party member, a certain Kriakin, came to Telli's defense, and for that was subsequently expelled from the party ranks.⁷¹⁹ Together with Prasolov, Plekhotkina blamed "capitalist" Harju for conducting counter-revolutionary agitation in their Sovhoz.⁷²⁰ It was the same Harju, who only several years earlier, using his own American money and without any retribution, donated about 100 cows from Finland to the Sovhoz, in the process saving it from bankruptcy. In return, in 1937 he was christened a capitalist and then perished in the purges.⁷²¹ At the same meeting, Prasolov blamed the head of the dining room, a certain Korka, for counter-revolutionary agitation, claiming that while there were enough food provisions, Korka allegedly told Russian workers that there was no food to go around.⁷²²

Adapting/Embodying Discourses: Surviving the Purges

Party cell meetings reveal all too clearly the way the official discourse was adapted in both theory and practice to the local level. For example, a meeting of the Interposiolok party cell

⁷¹⁷ Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. Л. 58-72. Протокол общего партсобрания совхоза №2 от 14.12.1937 [National Archives of the Republic of Karelia, the fund F-93 - Initial cell CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk... Minutes of the general party meeting farm number 2].

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Alexei Golubev and Irina Takala, *The Search for Socialist Eldorado*, p. 114.

⁷²² Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. Л. 58-72. Протокол общего партсобрания совхоза №2 от 14.12.1937 [Initial cell CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk... Minutes of the general party meeting farm number 2].

called for “every communist [my translation] on the site of his work to strengthen the revolutionary vigilance and repel all the class enemies, in whichever forms they appear.”⁷²³ At a party meeting in July of 1937 T. Nikiforov spoke of the wrecking caused by Trotskyites and Zinoviets, who murdered “our beloved Sergei Kirov... wreckers and saboteurs doing their best to destroy the Soviet Union, and so we need to arm ourselves politically, now more than ever and raise our cultural levels to the proper height...”⁷²⁴

Class enemies and bourgeois nationalists could appear anywhere, in any form, and given the nature of the new nationality policy, class enemies in Karelia most likely would be Finns. A certain Kliukin reported at the Sovhoz no. 2 party cell meeting in October of 1937:

I want to note one more time, that Harju often comes over to our Sovhoz, gets the workers drunk, lowers discipline levels at work sites...as well as Ahtola who conducts agitation among workers... I don't know the Finnish language, and our party member Williama, and candidate Tuomi are never willing to find out what the former are talking about and report to the proper authorities...I think that Williama and Tuomi's actions are not worthy of party members, as it signals nepotism and nationalist favoritism among Finns.⁷²⁵

Any Finn could be accused of espionage and counter-revolutionary activity, or bourgeois nationalism. Sulo Kokko, a Finnish-Canadian wrestling coach, was arrested and tried on allegations that he made Finnish and Karelian children wrestle against each other, thus inflaming national differences among children.⁷²⁶

⁷²³ НАРК, ф. П-1485, оп. 1, д. 1/12. Протоколы общих собраний первичной парторганизации Интерпоселка. Л. 19-23. Протокол общего собрания ... от 29 марта 1937 г. [Minutes of general meetings of primary Party organization of Interposek...Minutes of the general meeting].

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ НАРК, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. Л. 91. Протокол общего партсобрания совхоза №2 от 14.12.1937 [The primary unit of the CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk... Minutes of the general party meeting farm number 2].

⁷²⁶ Interview with Рааво Alatalo, *Устная история в Карелии: Сборник научных статей и источников. Вып. II. Североамериканские финны в Советской Карелии 1930-х годов* [Oral history in Karelia: Collected articles and sources II. North American Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s] / Сост. и научн. ред. И. Р. Такала, А. В. Голубев. – Петрозаводск: Изд-во ПетрГУ, 2007. – 192 с. (<http://oralhist.karelia.ru/libr.htm>)

Amid the chaos, Finns began to blame each other. A certain Tuomi, for example, claimed that he previously reported to the party committee about the misgivings of certain Finnish party members, whereas Kriakin and Kulmanen sought to hide these “wrecking” activities.⁷²⁷

Everyone seems to have been accusing each other. The same Plekhotkina, who blamed mechanic Telli for bourgeois nationalism, became the object of a denunciation protocol.⁷²⁸ Dated August 1937, the protocol was composed by a member of the Sovhoz, Tolpov, who accused Plekhotkina of failing to report the wrecking activities of Finnish-nationalists. Tolpov claimed that the head of the kitchen at the Sovhoz no.2 bought 50 kg of meat with worms in order to foster workers’ animosity towards the Soviet state. In addition, Manninen allegedly hired only Finnish workers, in the process denying several Russian cooks a job in the kitchen. All this, said Topolov was obviously a sign of local bourgeois nationalism, headed by party member Manninen.⁷²⁹

The state also encouraged the populace to participate in the rounding up of Karelia’s Finnish population. ‘Donositelstvo’ (whistleblowing) was an integral part of the communist ethic. In fact, sub-article 58/12 of the Soviet criminal code called for arrest and imprisonment for not reporting on counter-revolutionary activities. The minutes of the local communist party cell in Interposiolok⁷³⁰ demonstrate that by this time, a particular model of behavior was being constructed, as any shortcoming at any of the state enterprises was being labeled anti-Soviet behavior, either to be blamed on Trotskiyism or on foreign governments. Therefore it is not surprising that Finnish heads rolled in 1937 and 1938. The paradox is that Finns participated in

⁷²⁷ НАРК, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. Л. 91. Протокол общего партсобрания совхоза №2 от 14.12.1937. [The primary unit of the CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk... Minutes of the general party meeting farm number 2].

⁷²⁸ This file should have been deposited in the archives of the FSB, and remain secret until the middle of the 21st century. Национальный архив Республики Карелия, фонд П-93 – Первичная ячейка ВКП(б) совхоза №2 г. Петрозаводска. Л. 68-72. Протокол общего партсобрания совхоза №2 от 14.12.1937. [The primary unit of the CPSU (b) farm number 2 in Petrozavodsk... Minutes of the general party meeting farm number 2]

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ НАРК, ф. П-1485, оп. 1, д. 1/12

the “witch hunts” with the same, if not increased enthusiasm as the Russian population. A certain Sari, a Finnish member of the local party cell, was convinced that bourgeois nationalists had settled in Karelia and they “can be found even in local party organizations, and as a result of which regional production plans have not been fulfilled, especially in the lumber industry...”⁷³¹. Another Finnish comrade, Yaspi complained that “in the mass art work industries similarly we can find scores of bourgeois nationalists. All the 23 sections work in the Finnish language...”⁷³².

It seems that everyone, including Finnish communists adhered to, and applied the dominant discourse in their denunciations. Following the arrest of Luoma in March 1938, the local party cell of Sovhoz no.2 met to discuss the arrest. One of the Finnish party members, Kolander commented: “If the NKVD arrested Luoma then I am sure there was sufficient reason for that.”⁷³³ This was the typical logic of the time. Alanen, another Finnish member added: “Luoma always had petty-bourgeois traits, was not raised on proper ideological values, and did not want to study them. Therefore he should be excluded from the party.”⁷³⁴ Then it was Eminen’s turn: “Luoma often talked, in a secretive fashion, with several workers who were fluent in English, and often shared with them his criticism of the existing regime.”⁷³⁵ One of Luoma’s friends, Williama, added: “Luoma built a house for himself in Petrozavodsk and had a desire to acquire private property, and where he took the money no one knows.”⁷³⁶ On top of all the accusations against him, Luoma’s wife was accused of planting vegetables in public gardens utilizing wrong techniques, and, as a result was declared a wrecker at the party meeting.

⁷³¹ НАРК, ф. П-2998 Лососинский завод. НАРК, ф. П-2998, оп. 1, д. 4 (Протоколы партсобраний Лососинской автобазы за 1937 г.) [Party meetings protocols of the Lososinskaaya carpool] лл. 61-62. Протокол №37 общего закрытого партсобрания... лососинской автобазы от 15.09.1937.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ НАРК, ф. П-93, оп. 2, д. 2/13. Лл. 9-10. Протокол общего собрания парторганизации совхоза №2 от 14 января 1938 г. [Minutes of the General Meeting of the Party organization of the farm number 2].

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

The Interposiolok party cell meeting in November 1937, headed by Amalainen and two other Finns, concluded that several individuals should be excluded from the party. Among the 9 recommended, six were Finns by nationality. The party expelled two lumber industry workers accused of defending the previously arrested nationalist Jonsen.⁷³⁷ Storekeeper Helmi Jansen was to be removed because her husband was arrested and charged with anti-Soviet agitation and bourgeois nationalism.⁷³⁸ Mechanic Salo was to be fired from work because of his tendency to drink and skip work. Storekeeper Manti Ranta and mechanic Viesta were to be dismissed from their positions simply because they looked suspicious.⁷³⁹

In one of the reports of the local party cell in Interposiolok, Lauri Kivintelo, a Canadian Finn, sought to blame every other Finn so he could just prove his own innocence and loyalty.⁷⁴⁰ Kivintelo accused several Finns of nationalism, wrecking and sabotage, in the process claiming that local newspapers, run mostly by Finns, were in the hands of wreckers and spies. In the process they succumbed to the popular discourse from above. While Finns were trying to save their own skins by denouncing other Finns, the tendency did not go unnoticed by a Russian member of the party cell, Easaulenko who in response to Yuntunen and Pilhstrem's accusations of Tuominen, claimed that

...in my opinion, these addresses [by Yuntunen and Pilhstrem] are aimed at covering one's own skin, but this will not save them. The party has spearheaded an uncompromising struggle before, and it would continue doing so in the future. I propose to expel this bloody fascist dog, enemy of the people Tuominen from the party ranks.

⁷³⁷ НАРК, ф. П-1485 Первичная организация ВКП(б) Интерпоселка. НАРК, ф. П-1485, оп. 1, д. 1/13
Протокол №11 общего собрания первичной парторганизации мехбазы Интерпоселка от 18.11.1937 г.
[Protocol number 11 of the general meeting of the primary Party organization cotton base of Interposek].

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

And those who recommended him for membership, Yuntunen, Pihlstrom and Kulmanen.⁷⁴¹

The questioning of a former secretary, Kulmanen, at the party cell meeting in October 1938 demonstrates the degree to which the public discourse shifted in only 3 years. It also reveals the extent to which individuals at grass root levels, adopted new discourses, in many cases in order to survive. Following a series of accusations, and in order to stay in the party, Kulmanen had to apologize publicly and acknowledge his own political backwardness. In June 1937, when his friend Luoma found himself in the hot seat for publicly criticizing the Karelian leadership, Kulmanen went on record to say that he heard from the worker Ahtola that Luoma had indeed dubbed the leadership as weak and inept.⁷⁴²

Kulmanen and others like him eventually adapted to the dominant discourses and learned to survive, either by turning in their friends, lying to authorities, or finding loopholes in the system. In 1938, Kulmanen was brought in for questioning once again where he was asked as to the reasons he provided Tuominen (an expelled member) with a recommendation for party membership. Kulmanen, aware that the other two Finns, who also vouched for Tuominen – Yuntunen and Pihlstrom – have been both already expelled from the party for supporting the former, answered that he already then knew that Tuominen was a bad worker, but provided him with a recommendation in hope to encourage him to work better.⁷⁴³ To prove his loyalty, Kulmanen boasted that he helped turn in several enemies of the people in Sovhoz 2, in particular those who had been in radio contact with Finland. When asked why he had not learned Russian

⁷⁴¹ НАРК, ф. П-1560 Первичная парторганизация Падозерского лесопункта Прионежского райкома. НАРК, ф. П-1560, оп. 1, д. 4 Протоколы партсобраний. [Primary Party organization of the Padozerskogo lumber camp. Prionezhski district committee... Minutes Party meetings].

⁷⁴² НАРК, ф. П-93, оп. 2, д. 2/12.

⁷⁴³ НАРК, ф. П-1560 Первичная парторганизация Падозерского лесопункта Прионежского райкома. НАРК, ф. П-1560, оп. 1, д. 4 Протоколы партсобраний. [Primary Party organization of the Padozerskogo lumber camp. Prionezhski district committee... Minutes Party meetings].

or Karelian, Kulmanen mentioned that he had already started to read Karelian newspapers and was studying the language. Further, when asked why in 14 years he has not learned the language, Kulmanen complained about his own illiteracy and difficulty learning a new language, but also claimed that he is trying really hard to learn the language now, by reading Karelian newspapers.⁷⁴⁴

Purge from Below

Oleg Khlevniuk, one of the few historians who has been allowed to examine the secret files of the Politburo, argued that the terror was not a culmination of forces from below, but was initiated and directed from above, with the main purpose of eliminating a potential ‘fifth column’ in anticipation of war.⁷⁴⁵ Quotas for the arrested were indeed fixed in advance and then transmitted to administrative regions for fulfillment.⁷⁴⁶ However, one of the problems with the view from above is that it does not answer two main questions about the purges in Karelia. First, why were quotas exceeded in Karelia; why did local authorities persistently lobby the Kremlin to increase quotas? Second, why did Finns become the prime target in Karelia despite the fact that there was never an order from Moscow to target Finns, let alone North American Finns?

North American Finns fit the profile of potential “internal enemies” as described by officials in Moscow: they were immigrants, national minorities from bourgeois nationalist states, and on top of that, they sustained systematic cross border contact. Internalizing dominant discourses that promoted conflict along class and ethnic lines, local authorities, site managers, and common workers aimed to displace North American Finns and Finns in general, from the privileged positions they occupied since the 1920s in Karelia. While staged from above by the

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ See Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*. Yale University Press, 2004.

⁷⁴⁶ Moshe Levin, *The Soviet Century*, Verson, 2005, p. 107.

Soviet leadership, the purge was also driven from below, by the overzealous initiative of regional and local authorities, as well as by the masses themselves. This is not to argue that the entire society participated in the purges, which was definitely not the case, but to highlight human agency and responsibility in the ethnic cleansing that took place in Karelia in the late 1930s.

The purge was undoubtedly orchestrated from above. Order 00047, issued in July of 1937, directed against ex-kulaks and other anti-Soviet elements, called for 268,950 to be repressed, with 75,950 to be shot. For its operations 75 million rubles were allocated from the state budget.⁷⁴⁷ In Karelia, the number was set at 1000, with 300 to be shot.⁷⁴⁸ In Karelia, however, by November 20, 1937, the Karelian Troika had already sentenced 1,690 people to death, thus far more than the 300 quota established by the center.⁷⁴⁹ During the four months (July-November) of the initial repression, the Central Committee of the VKP (b), and the NKVD of the USSR received numerous telegrams from Karelian authorities with requests to increase quotas for arrests, especially for capital punishment.⁷⁵⁰ Amid systematic lobbying by local Karelian authorities, in particular for those to be shot, coupled with decisions in the center to widen the scope of the national purges in January 1938, additional quotas were established in January 1938, with 700 to be purged, including 500 to be shot.⁷⁵¹ In May, national operations were extended once again, this time until August 1. There was an exponential increase in the ratio of Karelia's population to be repressed as in comparison to the rest of the country. While the number of people to be repressed in the country as a whole was reduced by 400%, the

⁷⁴⁷ Такала И. Р. Репрессивная политика в отношении финнов в советской Карелии 30 – х гг. // Вопросы истории европейского Севера [Takala I.R, repressive policy against the Finns in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s. // Questions of history of Northern European]. Петрозаводск , 1993. С.126.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Irina Takala, "The Great Purge," p. 168.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

numbers of people to be repressed in Karelia decreased by only 30%, while the percentage of people to be executed actually rose by more than 60%.

Local authorities in Karelia seem to have been very enthusiastic, and also opportunistic, about rounding up Finns. One official wrote to his superiors in 1938: “we are asking to be given sanctions to arrest 9 Finns, we have no evidence, but they seem like interesting fellas to us...we need to isolate them immediately.”⁷⁵² Karelian NKVD chief S.T. Matuzenko (who replaced Mattison in 1938) wrote to Nikolai Ezhov (head of the NKVD) in 1938 that he discovered a major spy ring in Karelia involving North American immigrants.⁷⁵³ Matuzenko claimed that Gylling was the mastermind behind a North American Finnish spy ring in Karelia, and that Gylling and Rovio made the entire population of Karelia, including children, speak and learn “this strange language – Finnish.”⁷⁵⁴ Matuzenko asserted that the 1416 North American Finns remaining in Karelia were all under surveillance. In June 1938 he went on to ask for permission to remove all of them from the republic to Archangelsk and Omsk region, to be used as labor in the forest industry.⁷⁵⁵ In August, Matuzenko repeated his request to Moscow, however to no avail.⁷⁵⁶

Conclusion

An imagined community is in many ways predicated on imagined threats. It is my contention that national communities regenerate the collective spirit at the expense of the “other”, the foreigner. It was not a coincidence that border minority populations were the first to be targeted in the Great Purge. To consolidate the regime from within amid the fast paced

⁷⁵² Такала, Ирина Национальные операции ОГПУ/НКВД в Карелии [Takala, Irina, National operations of the OGPU / NKVD in Karelia].

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ ibid

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

economic and cultural modernization that shook the society to the core, Stalin's government first created, and then moved to eradicate, imagined dangers to the Soviet regime in the name of security and unity. Anachronistically, looking back, one can argue that repression of Finns in Karelia was to an extent a necessary step in the preservation and promulgation of the Soviet regime. Following the Second World War, two of the leading Soviet politicians, Molotov and Kaganovich, were still convinced that the repression of national minorities glued the Soviet national community, making the Soviet victory in 1945 possible.

The reversal of the policy of *Korenizatsia* in 1934-35 heralded the end of a "golden age" for Finns in Karelia. This affirmative action-like policy allowed some of the most powerful and organized "subaltern" groups of the former Russian empire to form national and autonomous republics. Finns in Karelia achieved dominant economic and political positions despite comprising only 1 percent of Karelia's population in the early 1920s. Russians, who were considerably marginalized as a result of the policies promoted by the state, emerged in the second part of the 1930s, now backed by the state, to challenge the Finnish hegemony.

Ethnic identity played an important role in Karelia during the purges. However, it was foreignness, as defined by ethnicity as well as social class, that made North American Finns stand out and become particularly vulnerable during the national repressions. An NKVD agent who interrogated Gylling, after a severe beating of Karelia's former leader, referred to him as 'hromoi barin' (the crippled master), which suggests that animosity was predicated on social class rather than on national or linguistic differences.⁷⁵⁷ Most of the party officials and NKVD agents in Karelia had limited, if any formal education.⁷⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, most of the Karelian population at the time was illiterate. This was in contrast to the relatively well educated

⁷⁵⁷ Чухин идеология террора [Chukhin, Ideology of Terror].

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

Finnish and North American Finnish elite and rank and file in Karelia in the 1930s. Given that there were no official orders that sanctioned the arrests of Finns in Karelia, one can attribute the causes for the tragic fate of North American Finns to a socio-economic struggle, where the under-privileged non-Finnish, largely Russian group tried to displace the socio-economic and political Finnish elite in Karelia.

The most stunning episode in the story of North American immigrants in Karelia is in the way they, virtually overnight, went from being seen as enlightening agents of modernity to being depicted as ‘dangerous foreigners’, “petty bourgeois”, “harmful”, potential agents provocateurs, spies, and wreckers. Once privileged as exemplary members of the international proletariat, after 1935 North American Finns “officially” became foreigners. The rise and fall of the Finnish language and culture in Karelia in the 1920s and the 1930s was conditioned by the changing nationality policy in the Soviet Union. In both cases, however, it was the actors at the grassroots level that utilized the dominant discourses in their own personal interests, usually to gain some form of economic, social, or cultural power. The mass arrests and the decimation of the Finnish and North American Finnish communities in Karelia in the second part of the 1930s would not have taken place without the enthusiastic support of local actors, who internalized dominant discourses stemming from Moscow and applied them to local settings.

It is also difficult to ignore the effect of modernization and abilities of the state to facilitate the purges. Control over the means of communication made it possible for the Soviet elite to dictate the terms and pace of Soviet industrialization and modernization. The subsequent cultural modernization and “enlightenment” of the “backward” population was also in many ways a process dictated from above. One of the preconditions of the modernization of a society is the removal of the unknowns and the uncertain. The cohesiveness of national imagined

communities however is often predicated on the degree of imagined threats to the collective. As a result, in many ways, the appearance of social groups who were to become *strangers*, persons who are present yet unfamiliar, was an inevitable “byproduct” of a modernizing society, especially at the initial stages of its national identity formation. The state possesses the ability to reframe the identities of social groups in the public discourse to satisfy the goals of the state. It regenerates national communities at the expense of the “other”, the foreigner. Finally, it has the power not merely to shape the identity of the “other” in the public discourse, but also to radically change its definition.

With the shift in the nationality policy, the Finnish community in Karelia was “discontinued”. The removal of Finns from positions of privilege in Karelia was methodical. First targeted were adult males who wielded significant social, political, and economic influence. Based on a statistical analysis of the purged, the male population of North American Finnish migrants was severely decimated. Coupled with the arrests and deportation, and the ostracization of the wives and children of the enemies of the people, the cultural peculiarity of the North American Finnish Diaspora was virtually destroyed. The Karelian communist party was no longer dominated by Finns, the Finnish language, as well as Finnish cultural norms, first lost official status, then their prestige. With top Finnish industry managers, cultural producers, writers and journalists, educators and trainers, and the North American specialists dismissed or imprisoned, the imagined socialist-Finnish transnational community, actively constructed from the early 1920s to mid-1930s by the likes of Gylling and his supporters, was “discontinued” by 1938. Although some elements of the Finnish and North American identities remained in Karelian folklore for some time, the Sovietization and russification of Finnish communities in Karelia was strong enough to virtually obliterate the presence of North American Finns from

Karelia's history. In the early 1990s, when asked on a radio show the meaning of the name Interposelok, no one knew it meant an "international town", established by North American Finnish immigrants.⁷⁵⁹

In the end, the repression of North American Finns in Karelia was a result of human agency. The reaction to the instructions from above was permeated with local socio-economic motives and was largely opportunistic. There is no question that Finns were targeted from below. Although there were never any directives from Moscow to target Finns per se, they became the main object of repressions in Karelia. In fact, Tenison, head of the Karelian NKVD, on numerous occasions wrote to Moscow complaining that there were no specific orders to deal exclusively with Finns, given that decrees 00047, 00439, 00485, 00593, were devised to deal only with Germans, Poles and the Chinese. At the same time, although the Soviet government never targeted Finns, it cultivated the context within which local authorities and the populace in general could justify their actions in removing a privileged group of "foreigners" from positions of power. Sources show that animosity towards Finns at the local level, although at times expressed in ethnic/national terms, was largely socio-economic in character, generated by the reality that "foreigners" occupied some of the most important positions in the society. Although Stalin's regime cultivated a system that not only made possible, but also encouraged, popular compliance and even enthusiastic assistance during the purges, the Karelian case demonstrates that the direction the purges were taken was conditioned largely by local factors.

⁷⁵⁹ Mayme Sevander, *Skitaltsi* [Wanderers] p. 92.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

At first glance, migration of North American Finns to Soviet Karelia in the 1930s might seem an anomaly, an aberration in the annals of 20th century immigration history – an exotic story about a group of radicals who left everything behind and ventured to the ‘promised land’ to build a better world. However, upon a closer look, the experiences of North American Finnish immigrants in Canada, the United States, and Soviet Karelia in the interwar period paint by far a more complex historical portrait. The initial point of departure of this work was the assumption that Canadian and American Finns were part of a transnational labor force on the move between national and diasporic centers of cultural production.

I have situated these migrants at the center of the story, and used their experiences as a focal point of attention around which the process of individual, organizational, regional, and national identity construction gravitated. In part, their mass migration to Soviet Karelia, could be explained by economic factors, where socially and economically disadvantaged and at times oppressed workers chose to escape the depression-stricken North American continent in an attempt to secure livelihood in a place where many believed the future and progress lay. What politicized and “culturized” their movement was not their migration per se, as much as the places and people they encountered along the way. I have tried to argue that whereas the movement of people was physically and psychologically transnational, leaders of national and diasporic imagined communities on both sides of the Atlantic were engaged in perpetual “branding” efforts either to include, or in other instances reject, the cultural, social, economic, and political memberships of these migrants in their communities. This, in turn allowed, national, regional, and diasporic leaders to define and redefine the cultural and political borders of their imagined and re-imagined communities.

It is the contention of this work that individual and collective subjectivities and identities were formed and shaped as much by nation states as by Diasporas. In the case of North American Finnish migration to Soviet Karelia there was, however, another dimension to the story. The transnational movement between radically different conceptions of modernity also allowed for fundamentally new ideas to penetrate Soviet society by way of immigrant human capital and experience. As a result, immigrants found themselves at the intersection of modernities. The present account depicted immigrants' stories, experiences, and the process of collective and individual identity formation in a tri-dimensional light – the nation, the Diaspora, and alternative modernities.

I also tried to empower the common migrant as an agent in the historical process. Not only did the North American Finns make rational decisions in moving to the Soviet Union, they also became de-facto agents of cultural, social, and economic change, by fundamentally transforming certain elements of the Soviet Karelian economy, culture, and society in the 1930s. That said, agency and structure cannot be understood as separate from one another. I have argued that although immigrants were agents of change in their own right, their social identities were either appropriated or rejected by national and diasporic elites to advance their own goals and agendas, in the process fostering particular versions of local, regional, national, and transnational communities. In control of the means of communication, these symbolic elites could influence and, in some cases, dictate representations of immigrants' identities in the public mind, by bestowing them with either positive, flattering interpretations – as we saw in Karelia in the first part of the 1930s – or negative connotations – as was the case during the purges in the second part of the 1930s in the Soviet Union, or throughout the 1930s in interwar Canada – all in an

attempt to foster a particular vision of their imagined community and advance specific goals and plans.

As a result, the only constant in this transnational narrative were the North American workers. What was changing, across time and space in North America and the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s, were their representations in the public discourse. In most cases, these representations reflected local, regional, and national interests rather than the real daily life experiences of the migrants in question. They were heroes and enemies, strangers and archetypes of an ideal citizen. At the same time, but in different places, and in other instances, in the same places but at different times, they were insiders and friends, or foreigners and outsiders. This research has demonstrated that the negative or positive representations of these migrants were often conditioned by the degrees of their individual and collective access to social and political power. Access to political centers of influence determined admittance to centers of cultural production; through mass communication systems cultural producers manufactured knowledge that usually favored one form of a cultural, social, political, or economic system over another.

The causes for migration among the rank and file of North American Finnish workers and their families are to a certain degree easy to discern. Various qualitative and quantitative sources show that many went in search of social and economic security, yet others followed their ideological convictions, while for others still proximity to Finland and the opportunity to live in a society dominated by Finnish language and culture proved to be too appealing to forego. To dissect and understand the interests of various states, organizations, and their leaders either to welcome or reject particular migrant groups is a more complicated task. The way symbolic elites and cultural producers treat and represent immigrants in the public discourse often reveals the social, cultural, and political contours of that regime. The entangling points of the interests of the

rank and file and of the symbolic national and diasporic leadership, and the analogous deciphering of this relationship completes, and then reveals, the dialectic historical process of identity construction and renegotiation. In other words, once the interests and motivations of both parties are understood for what they are in a specific historical context, it becomes easier to understand the fundamental issues at stake for individuals, organizations, and states in that space and place.

It is also my contention that historical narratives of immigration and ethnicity of the past two centuries operating exclusively within national frameworks are at best limited. A transnational lens and an inter-disciplinary approach illuminate trends, patterns, and stories otherwise undetectable. I by no means advocate that transnational theories and transnationalism per se obliterates the importance of the nation-state in modern history, or reduces the power it has. Rather, the work of an historian should be concentrated in this grey, in-between area where the process of state and Diaspora formation can be seen much more clearly, without the veil of political subjectivities obstructing the historian's research and narrative.

The problem with the subjective and exclusive nature of dominant national and diasporic narratives is that they further reinforce national and diasporic formation – simply reframing them in new, modern, or alternative terms. In this work, I mention the risks associated with special path approaches to history. The *Sonderwegs* and the *Osobiy Put's* tend to reproduce the grand political narratives of the great men in history. These seemingly special national paths to history obliterate the importance of men, women, and children who have lived, acted, and died, but whose stories and identities were excluded from the dominant discourse of the day, and, as a result, were relegated to the dust bins of history. Greatness someone once said is often a result of good luck, and if you doubt this then ask any loser. The application of a transnational approach

to the proliferation of the subject of multiple modernities in today's academia will allow researchers to move away from the archaic ways of considering national history as the epitome of the past, the present, and the future. Re-affirmation of special path national or diasporic-oriented historiographies might as well be one of the greatest backward steps of modern social sciences.

These issues are transparent in the historiography of the Karelian fever, which is permeated by two schools of thought, roughly divided along national/geographic lines. Those in the west tend to concentrate on the failure of the Karelian fever and the tragic fate of Canadian and American Finns in the Soviet Union. These writers emphasize the heroic nature of these hard-working, acute radical socialists who had nothing but the best and often selfless intentions of helping to build socialism in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, writers in Russia see the Karelian fever as a success story, where North American Finns are praised as champions of American modernity who had successfully, albeit for a short period of time, revolutionized Karelia's economic, culture, and the society as a whole. Both historiographical streams further perpetuate and reconstruct the diasporic myths of ethnic and national distinctiveness.

The role of ethnic and national leaders in the story of North American migration to Karelia in the 1930s is too large to ignore. For example, the leaders of the FOC in Canada were instrumental in facilitating the migration of two thousands Canadian Finns to Soviet Karelia. Once they became convinced that the new center of the Finnish left-wing Diaspora could be established in Gylling's Karelia, they wholeheartedly supported and promoted immigration to the Soviet Union. The fact that the FOC supported immigration to Karelia and was opposed to Finnish government initiatives to woo some of its former citizens back to Finland in the 1920s reveals a specific, ideologically driven agenda. The first step to "re-claim" Finland, the FOC

leaders believed, was to establish political and demographic dominance of Finns in bordering Soviet Karelia. When that would be achieved, the time would come to think about Finland and its future in the ideologically polarized world.

Everything points to the reality that the Karelian fever was in many ways a Karelian project – a well organized and executed recruiting scheme. Given the central role played by diasporic leaders in the movement, I hold that the Karelian fever can be conceptualized in terms of ethnic or diasporic identity construction, where leaders of the North American Finnish left in concert with the Finnish leadership of Karelia aimed to sell Karelia to the North American Finnish public. The symbolic elites of the Finnish-left renegotiated a new ethnic and national identity, whose ideological center was supposed to become Soviet Karelia. The FOC with the help of recruiters managed to convince the public of the existence of an alternative Finnish-socialist diasporic community, a Soviet type of Finland. In fact, the FOC gambled, and gambled heavily on the Karelian fever but, in the end, lost. Its best members left for the Soviet Union and most of the rank and file supported the initiative from North America. When the venture failed, it shattered the image of a new imagined community and with it the credibility of the FOC.

By assuming control of the migratory movement, which was in many ways spontaneous and transnational from the early 1920s, the ethnic leadership appropriated the transnational phenomenon into its own diasporic narratives. Using mass communication, namely the press and recruiters' public orations in the Finnish centers across the continent, they recruited, or rather generated ethnicity for a cause. I have shown the way the Finnish-socialist press in Canada and the United States became a virtual space where differing claims of belonging, and frameworks of identity were expressed and reformulated. In the hands of the symbolic elites and cultural

producers of the Finnish-left Diaspora, the ethnic press became a central means by which to produce seemingly commonly shared political, social, and cultural ideals and myths.

The struggle over the rights of re-presentation of a dominant ethnic identity was also expressed in the struggle of right-wing and left-wing Finnish community leaders over the meaning of homeland and the place of North America Finns in it. Whereas in the 1920s conservative Finnish organizations were attacked by their socialist compatriots for support of return migration to Finland, in the 1930s it was the turn of the right-wing Finnish community leaders to oppose migration to the Soviet Union so ardently supported by the FOC. The conflicting communities conceived of the Karelian fever in opposing terms, one seeing it as an exodus to a ‘promised’ land, others as a doomed journey to the place of the ‘wretched’. Whereas for the conservative Finnish leadership and its audience, the Soviet Union and its Russian majority were enemies in cultural, ideological, and political terms, for the leaders of left-wing communities and its followers in Canada and the United States, Soviet Karelia of the 1920s and the 1930s became an alternative, a newer, and a potentially better version of Finland.

Once in Karelia, North American Finns became a means in the hands of the local and national elites to foster specific representations of Karelian and Soviet imagined communities. Even before they arrived in Karelia en masse, Gylling and Kremlin leaders developed plans to make use of immigrants’ skills and cultural identities. For Gylling, immigrants would help to meet the Five-Year Plan quotas. More importantly they would strengthen the demographic position of Finns in Karelia, a matter that was important to Gylling long before he even reached a deal with the Bolsheviks to run Karelia in the early 1920s. Taking advantage of the all-Soviet nationality policy – a de-facto affirmative action initiative – Gylling fortified a regime dominated by Finnish language and culture. In other words, with the help of the *Korenizatsia* policy,

Gylling institutionalized ethnicity in Karelia in the 1920s and the 1930s. Finns comprised only 1 percent of the Karelian population in the early 1920s. Yet, by the mid-1930s, the Finnish language reigned supreme in the republic, and Finnish immigrants found themselves in control of most of the public political, social, and cultural institutions. Given North Americans' privileged economic status in the republic, ethnicity and class became virtually inseparable. Higher salaries, access to specialty stores, better working and living conditions, coupled with the support of the central and regional governments, as well as the government controlled media outlets, made North American Finns clearly privileged, and more importantly, distinguishable in Soviet Karelian society.

North American immigrants played a central role in Gylling's vision and attempts at creating a Finnish-socialist Soviet Karelia. Immigrants spoke Finnish and were well educated, and many assumed major positions in Karelia's cultural production industry. They dominated the theater troupe in Petrozavodsk, the Karelian symphony, and the publishing house. They were also among the leading writers, journalists, teachers, and instructors in the republic. In addition, immigrants were highly skilled. The experience and technology they imported from North America revolutionized several sectors of the Karelian economy. Their success allowed Gylling to boast about the high productivity of foreign specialists and continue to lobby the central government to increase the number of immigrants from Canada and the United States to be allowed into the country.

The arrival of Finnish-speaking specialists allowed Gylling to entrench the demographic, political, and cultural position of the republic's Finnish-speaking minority. Assuming that immigration policies reflect the type of societies leaders try to create, the very fact that Gylling encouraged a solely Finnish skilled migration from North America testifies to the fact that he

envisioned the skilled Finnish male as the ideal citizen of the community he tried so zealously to build. More than that, he made sure that North American Finns were socially and economically the most privileged group in the republic. Promoted by the government, the press and other cultural producers, North American Finnish social and cultural norms became the standard by which everyone else had to measure up. Finnishness it seems became equated with social and cultural enlightenment. In the end, from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s the public discourse in Karelia was ethnicized. Soviet Karelia of the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s was in many respects an “artificial” community.

Upon arrival many immigrants soon realized that Soviet Karelia was a distortion; some believed they were simply duped and were quick to leave. In fact, some left as soon as they arrived, without even unpacking their suitcases. Migrants who returned from Karelia found a cold reception in their former communities. Not many believed the returnees’ stories about appalling daily realities in Soviet Karelia. As a result, the returnees found themselves on the margins of this transnational community, ostracized for their “betrayal” of the Soviet Karelian cause. While some chose to remain quiet, others spoke out. In either case, the returnees found themselves excluded from the imagined collective. The belief in the ideals espoused by an imagined community can be binding. Even after the purges in the late 1930s, the de-Stalinization speech in 1956, and, in odd cases, even following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, some continued to believe in the infallibility of the Soviet regime, convinced that the arrests of the 1930s were a mistake for which they blamed an invisible army of class enemies that sabotaged honest working people.

In fact, the farther one is removed from an imagined community the stronger is its attraction (or repulsion – all depending on its representations in any given discourse). Finns who

arrived in Canada in the 1920s and in Soviet Karelia in the 1930s were dismayed (although to different degrees) to find that the images of Canada as a land of opportunity and of Soviet Karelia as a workers' paradise were misleading, constructed representations of social, cultural, and economic realities. They traded one distorted reality for another. They hoped to find social and economic security, however in both places reality and the image advertised had little in common. For example, the left-wing press in North America depicted Soviet Karelia if not yet, then a soon to be utopia. For North American Finns who were far removed from the Soviet actualities it was difficult to know better.

In the Soviet Union, North American Finns enjoyed a privileged status, and their ethnic and social identities, normalized in the public discourse, came to dominate the representations of the republic's public identity. In Canada on the other hand, virtually the opposite was true. By constructing certain ethnic groups as foreigners and "outsiders", Canadian public officials and cultural producers promoted a particular image of an "insider," whom they envisioned as the ideal member of the community. I have demonstrated the way in which Canadian border officials, national security agencies, and the mainstream press documented and represented foreigners in the public discourse, revealing a specific image of the imagined Canadian identity in the 1930s.

By the 1930s, the Canadian state developed an elaborate system that documented and classified its population according to ethnic, national, and racial criteria. I have shown that the identities border agents ascribed to the incoming passengers were often at odds with the way migrants and residents alike identified themselves. The Canadian state made its population recognizable by compartmentalizing it into easily identifiable social and cultural categories. What was also significant about the trend was that the Canadian government and its security and

border agencies in the 1930s came to see national and ethnic minorities not simply as foreigners, but as different kind of foreigners with varying degrees of potential, imagined, or real dangers to the overarching social formation.

The state also played a considerable role in the formation of diasporic identities in Canada. Through the process of hailing and interpolation, particular identities were imposed on the Canadian population— something that has contributed to the discursive formation of individual and collective identities. The construction of ethnic and racial categories at Canadian ports of entry articulated categories that were not ‘natural’, but rather imaginary and symbolic, re-produced to reflect the dominant ideologies shared by the Canadian political, economic, and cultural elite. The process was not simply discursive and it served a specific purpose for the state. When the population became ‘knowable’ it also became visible, accessible, and thus more easily traceable and manageable. In the end, it allowed the Canadian bureaucracy to draw cultural contours around the concept of Canadian national identity, an essential component of any modern nation-state. This was in fact Canada’s hidden, unofficial nationality policy. The Canadian state, with the help of its bureaucracy, security forces, and cultural producers facilitated the designation and redistribution of specific ethno-social roles, which reformulated subjects’ identities along the lines of political, social, and cultural values of the dominant groups in Canadian society.

The concept of otherness on the basis of ethnicity was nurtured and utilized both in Canada and the Soviet Union in the 1930s to solidify, develop, and promote national consciousness. While in the Soviet Union the nationality policy was official, in Canada it was invisible, where the state and authorities subscribed to a particular anglo and franco-centric discourse. The emphasis in Canadian historiography on the “founding nations” is in fact a sort of

a national Canadian *sonderweg*. Ethnicity, race, and ideology were closely interlinked in the public discourse, and in the 1930s European immigrants were conventionally seen as bearers of foreign ideologies. Ethnic management techniques allowed the state to maintain the ideological status quo and foster a unified vision of Canada despite the many social, economic, and political divisions within the country.

In this period ethnicity and ideology reinforced each other, in the process mapping out borders of imagined national, but also diasporic communities. I have demonstrated that in relation to the Finnish Diaspora, the “Great Divide” in the community was a result of internal dynamics, but was also conditioned by the varying degrees of marginalization of Finnish socialist and conservative groups by the Canadian government. Unfavorable public policies and the anti-immigrant public discourse of the 1930s were significantly more biased against the socialist immigrant communities than the conservative, loyalist Finnish groups. Unlike organizations like the FOC, right-wing Finnish community leaders preached loyalty to the crown and shared a common religion – Protestantism – with one of the societies’ dominant groups. More importantly both despised communists.

The phenomenon of the Karelian fever also provides a unique opportunity to study the convergence points of Soviet socialist and western capitalist modernities. The movement of North American Finnish human capital and experience, as we have seen, had inoculated elements of western modernity into everyday life patterns of the local population as well as into the Soviet society and economy at large. North American Finns brought western modernity to the Soviet Union. In turn, immigrant experiences were extrapolated and appropriated on local, regional, and national levels. North American Finns’ success stories became the means by which the political and symbolic elites tried to cultivate and promote an ideal type of a modern soviet

labor force. I have argued that Finnish migration from North America to the Soviet Union was initially a spontaneous phenomenon that was only later, opportunistically, utilized by Gylling and Soviet leaders to promote their own interests.

Soviet journalists and scientists were quick to study Canadian and American Finns at work. In a short period of time they generated scientific literature in the form of books and academic and newspaper articles, where they outlined the ways the modern worker should emulate immigrants' methods of labor organization, work routines and techniques. In this context, North American immigrants became the epitome of cultural and economic modernization in Karelia. Their unrelenting work ethic, innovative technologies, and their disciplined, self-regulatory behavior (both during and after work) was credited with their high performance rates and, as a result, came to serve as a model to be emulated to produce an experienced, disciplined, and efficient soviet labor force. Soviet elites and cultural producers appropriated migrants' socio-cultural identities into the Soviet dominant discourses. For example, they were often careful to omit that the new working techniques and technology were American or Canadian. Instead, they claimed that immigrants' high production rates were a result of a patriotic commitment of international labor force to the Soviet cause.

The North American Finnish presence in Karelia fundamentally shaped and reconstituted the Soviet Karelian path to modernization, and it demonstrated the convergence of the local, the national, and the modern (global). North American Finns stood out from the general population not only in Karelia, but also in Finland, where a large number of them returned throughout the 1920s. I have shown that returning Finns in Finland and in Soviet Karelia were distinguished less by their ideological or ethnic attributes than by their "peculiar" attitudes and behavior at work and in everyday life in general. The values they embodied by coming into contact with western

modernity in fast-paced industrializing and urbanizing North America was the only aspect that was universal to all North American migrants on the move across the Atlantic. While they might have differed on what defined ethnicity, nationality, political ideology, and so on, they more often agreed on what attributes constituted a good worker and a productive member of the society.

In 1935, however, immigrants' fortunes were abruptly reversed. The transformation in the nationality policy heralded the end of Finnish cultural dominance in the republic. The representation of North American Finns in the public discourse changed from archetypal to the foreign dangerous bourgeois. With the help of the state they became 'strangers' in Karelian society virtually overnight. The strategic displacement of Finns from a position of power, and their absence from Karelia's public life was methodical. In top down fashion, the first to go were the Karelian political leadership and the republic's Finnish army command. Cultural producers and senior management followed, with low level management and rank and file workers and specialists eliminated mostly in 1938. The imagined socialist-Finnish transnational community, actively constructed from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s was deconstructed and destroyed by 1938.

An imagined community is often predicated on imagined threats. Anachronistically, repression of Finns in Karelia was to an extent a necessary step in the preservation and promulgation of the Soviet imagined community. Years after the Second World War had passed, two of the leading Soviet politicians, Molotov and Kaganovich, were still convinced that repression of national minorities glued the Soviet national community, making the Soviet victory in 1945 possible. National communities regenerate collective identities at the expense of the "other", the foreigner. North American Finns became foreigners both ethnically and socially.

The Soviet government's call to eradicate bourgeois nationalism within the country put Finns in a particularly vulnerable position. Bourgeois and foreignness, class and ethnicity became interconnected in the dominant public discourse, identified *the other* in the community and, by association, encouraged a suspicious attitude towards immigrants.

From this aspect, the purges in Soviet Karelia were generated from below, although still situated within the discursive framework dictated from above. The Soviet government did not, at least officially, brand Finns as enemies of the state. It was the local authorities and the common populace that adapted the official discourse and applied it to local conditions in ways that both benefitted their own immediate interests and protected them from the purges. The purge had a clearly ethnic, class, and gender dimension to it. A statistical analysis of the purged North American Finns demonstrated that the primary target during the cleansing were male Finns of a particular age and social status in the society.

Primary power relations in the modern state are between the state and the individual. Migrants on the move between Europe and the Americas in the 1930s became agents of change, local to global, but at the same time, also subjects of contention between different visions of Diasporas, nations, and modernities. Migration is a dynamic and a fluid process. However, once on the move, in between various centers of cultural production, the agency of the individual begins to lose autonomy, and the identity of the migrant begins to change. For the social scientist, migrant movement allows witnessing the in-betweenness between diasporas, states, modernities, or any other social formations, and provides ample room for analysis of the hybrid space, and the construction/fortification of representations of social realities on its margins.

Migration allowed me to delve into several historiographical streams, among them the Karelian fever, Stalin's purges, national building in Canada, transnationalism, North American

immigration and ethnic history, and alternative modernities. Engaging in such a broad field of analysis allowed me to sway from special path national historiographies and simple explanations. In fact, the term *immigration* in recent years has become discursively charged, and in many ways politicized in today's academic and public discourse in general. The reproduction of national historiographies with powerful celebratory and filiopietistic narratives, be they anglo-centric, franco-centric, or depicted through the charade of multiculturalism, reveals a historian's background, political views, and ideological creeds instead of producing an analysis that shows the obvious and hidden human agendas and motivations in generating different social, political, and cultural relations and forming institutions and organizations. Immigration/migration then is a highly contested terrain – where national, diasporic, and other social identities take form. In fact, migration is a fundamental aspect that shapes social formations, as it makes possible discerning social, economic, political, cultural and ideological shifts across time and space.

One of the most significant findings of the research was the apparent shakiness, the fluidity, and the non-persistence of ethnic identity as a marker of self-identification. In the present story I have traced the way ethno-national identity changed like a chameleon. Individuals trying to adapt to different situations and certain environments, or organizations and national leaders trying to promote specific political goals and cultural agendas, twisted and modified ethno-national representations in the public sphere to survive, struggle, and persevere. The way people adapted to new technologies, new forms of labor and labor organization, or in other words, to specific modes of modernity, was however much more consistent than the changing representations of specific forms of ethnic identities. In other words, adapting to specific forms of modernity fostered many more similar shared daily life experiences, than the constantly changing abstract notion of ethno-national identity.

Ethnic identity is unstable, inconsistent, and open to multiple interpretations. As I have demonstrated, migrants' identities were contested by various forces in Canada and the Soviet Union – in some place they were rejected, in others accepted – the goal was the solidification of specific ideas, ideals, and representations, in this case Diasporic and national identities. The modern state possesses the necessary resources, and is in a position to significantly alter, or rebrand, public representations of ethno-national identities. The ability to either shape, or create ethno-national identities, serves specific goals for Diasporas and states. For example, the facility to classify into distinct ethno-national categories provides the state with the tools to monitor and control its subject populations. Ethnicity in other words is a brand, and more in the modern world it has become highly politicized and contested terrain, locally, nationally, and internationally.

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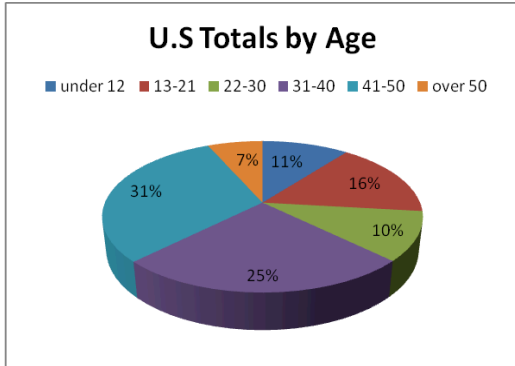
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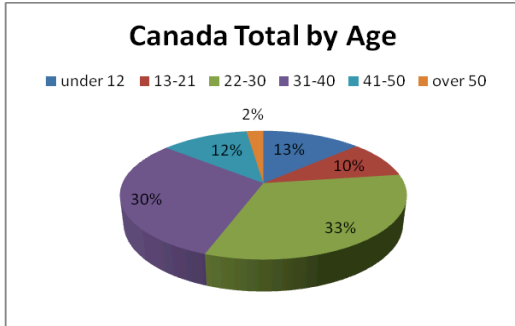
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- Dossier

Appendix

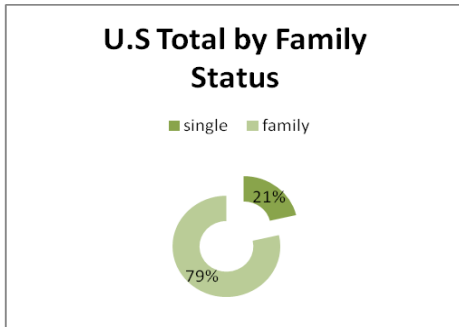
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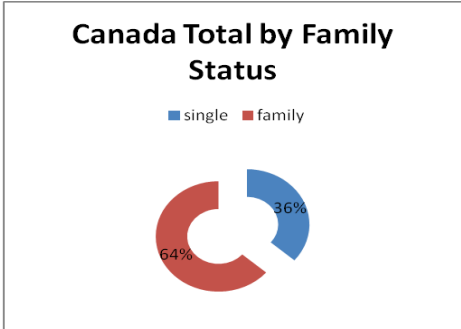
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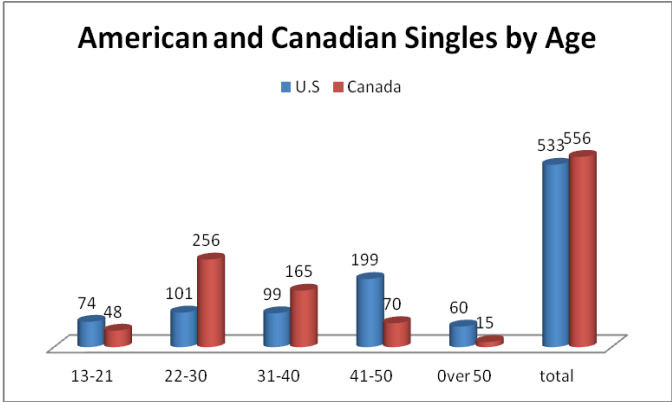
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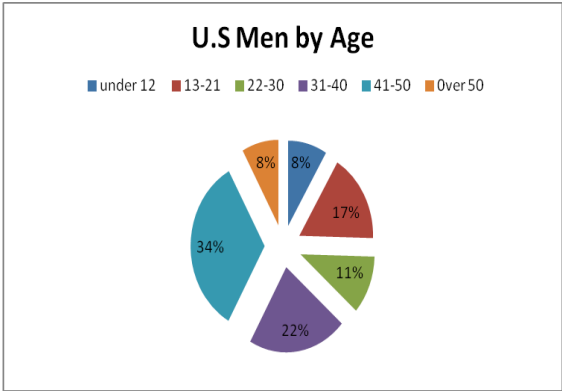
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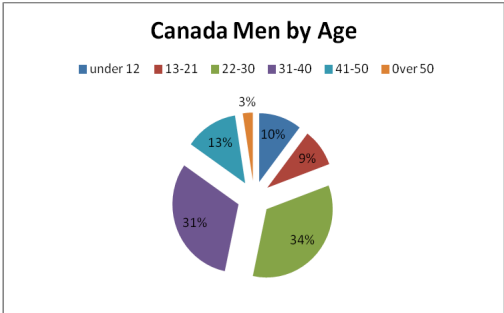
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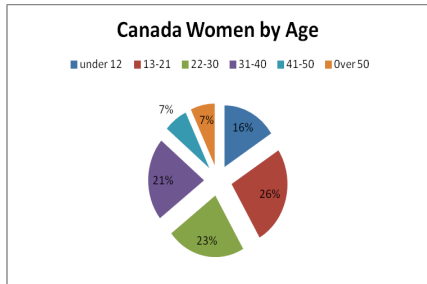
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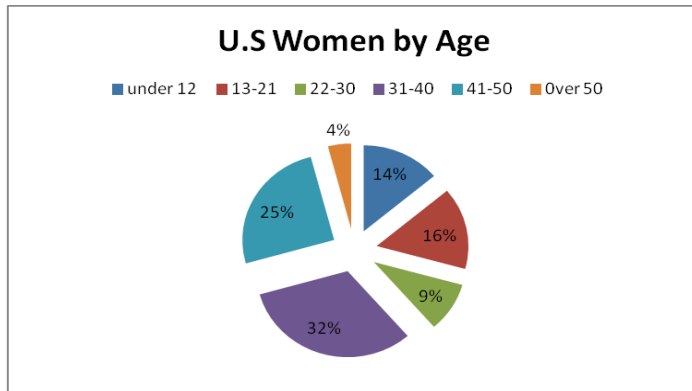
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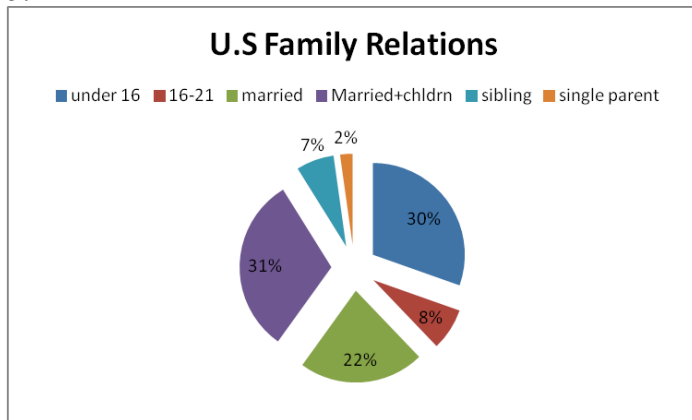
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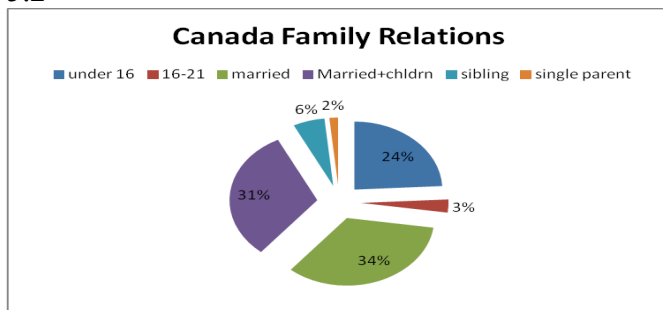
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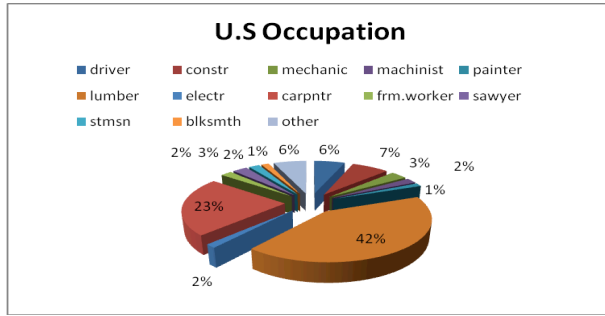
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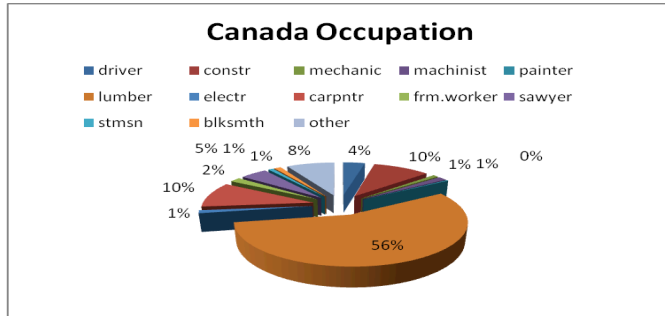
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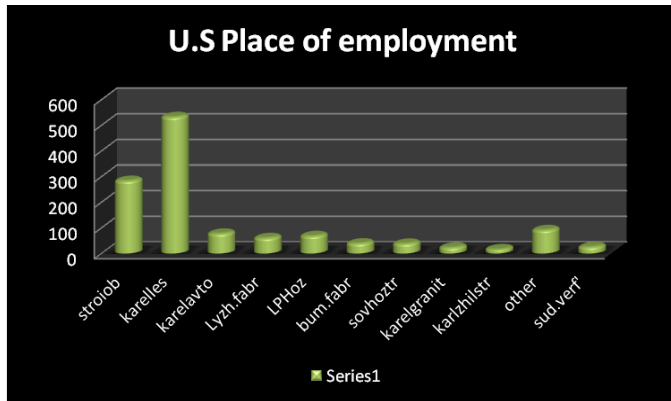
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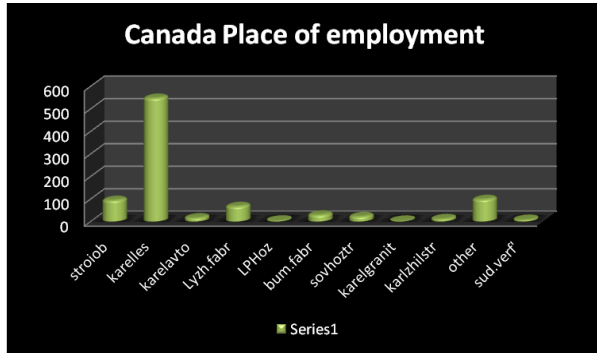
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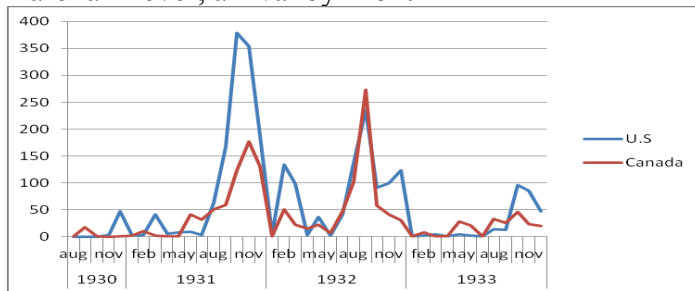
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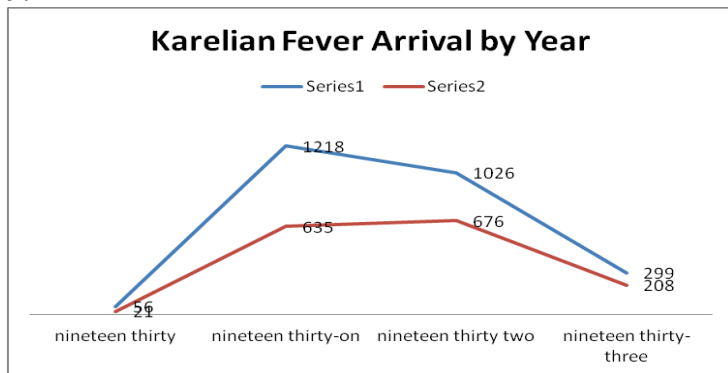
7.2



8.1 Kareljan Fever, arrival by Month



9.1



10.1

