

contained in articles and letters published by the local newspaper. These fragments also inform about the motives and mechanisms at work in the transformations that the local urban and rural landscapes underwent during the Soviet period.

It has been argued that the Finnish architectural legacy of Sortavala occupied a central role in local identity-building. The continuing struggle of the local authorities and local citizens to halt the decay of the historical town centre and to promote a cleaner and more ordered urban environment can partly be explained by the admiration many residents had for this legacy, even though repeatedly proclaimed intentions to preserve local monuments had few practical consequences. Tourism may have had an even greater impact on local patriotism. Outdoor activities on Lake Ladoga and in the nearby countryside along with sightseeing trips, whether organised by institutional actors or not, contributed to the appropriation of the cultural and natural landscape by the Soviet newcomers. The area's great attractiveness for tourists living outside the region reinforced local pride.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Discursive representations of Sortavala in official documents and media publications allow for a better understanding of how Sortavala's location on the border has influenced the ways in which the local community has positioned itself. Throughout most of the Soviet period, official discourses attest of the pervasiveness of state socialism in all spheres of life, including forms of local identity, although reports on everyday practices and individual biographies permit glimpses of local identity-building that were not part of the official ideology.

The narratives examined in this book demonstrate how a diverse community of migrants has produced locality and created a sense of place. Initial feelings of unfamiliarity and alienation gave way to a certain local patriotism, as Sortavala slowly changed from a ceded Finnish town into a recognisable Soviet place. Similarly, the rural areas surrounding Sortavala underwent dramatic changes when the traditional Finnish habitat was replaced by settlement forms and agricultural practices typical of Russian traditions and Soviet collectivisation.

Official local discourses reproduced national ones that emphasised the construction of a new type of human being: Soviet man. This had clear repercussions on framing Sortavala's identity as a Soviet town. The chapter has illustrated the multiple methods and forms of communist socialisation through indoctrination of core socialist values. While some elements of the local Finno-Karelian tradition were incorporated into the narrative of Karelia's and, more particularly, Sortavala's Sovietness, this recognition implied clear limits as to which elements of the social, economic, cultural and architectural history of the town were acceptable. Overall, Soviet mass rituals, such as public celebrations with parades and demonstrations, sporting and other collective events, were predominant, since they were seen as manifestations of a united Soviet people and of its approval of party policies defined by the political elite.

Of particular importance for Sortavala's borderland identity were the discourses and practices linked to the defence of the socialist Motherland. Patriotic education

and paramilitary training started in childhood and continued well into adult life in the form of voluntary people's patrols and other institutions. Military personnel and border troops were omnipresent in this garrison town. The state border with Finland was invested with a symbolic meaning that gave it the status of a 'sacred boundary' that protected the Motherland and had to be defended against a foreign capitalist enemy. Ironically, few civilians among the local residents had an idea of what the border itself looked like.

Local socio-economic development was strongly informed by the highly centralised command economy. Like most peripheral Soviet towns, Sortavala experienced numerous shortages and low standards of living, even more so in the nearby countryside. Its industrial sector relied to a great extent on infrastructure and technology developed in Finnish times so that the local economy, but for a few exceptions, maintained its pre-war structure of providing local services and producing consumer goods. However, the Sovietisation of the local economy led to concentration in the form of larger or very large combines, such as the furniture and ski factory of Helylä, one of the largest industrial complexes of Soviet Karelia. Helylä, located some five kilometres from Sortavala, became a typical Soviet mono-industrial town, where the local combine took charge of almost every aspect of daily life, acting as a public utility company, creating a public infrastructure, providing housing to employees and looking after their social welfare.

Given this powerful ideological and socio-economic context, it is not amazing that Soviet narratives of Karelia focussed on the taming of a wild, untouched nature and the modernisation of a traditional society, thereby creating myths that bore little resemblance to historical realities. Karelian cultural traditions became institutionalised as codified folk arts and customs and incorporated into Soviet political socialisation projects and Soviet official culture with the aim of strengthening popular allegiance to the Party and the State. The more high-brow literary and artistic expressions of Karelianness were closely monitored and censored, if necessary, but also given limited public recognition within the Soviet nationality policy, particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War, when Karelia was still a national republic. Karelian songs and the *Kalevala* poem, for example, were seen as cultural resources that could be mobilised for promoting the idea of a multi-ethnic Soviet Union based on the friendship between its peoples. Over time, Karelianness less and less referred to the past or to the Finno-Ugric minorities and increasingly to a regional identity that was mostly Soviet in nature.

The Finnish-speaking community of Sortavala, composed of Ingrian Finns (*Ingermanlanders*) and Finns who had immigrated after the Finnish civil war or from North America and resettled in town, apparently succeeded in maintaining a distinct social and cultural identity during most of the Soviet period, but suffered increasingly from dwindling numbers through ageing members, mixed marriages and Russification. This evolution was, however, counterbalanced in a sense by other, Russian-speaking migrants who gradually discovered, explored and appropriated the cultural and natural landscape of North Ladoga, notably through various leisure activities, giving rise to new forms of local identity that can no longer be described as purely Soviet.

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