

week local radio programmes. The year before, she had checked 169 issues of the district newspaper (f. R-757, op. 4C, d. 2/20, l. 38).

Cutting off Soviet citizens from the influence of capitalist foreigners remained important even during the years of the Thaw. In the early 1960s, Turpeinen censored two exhibitions—one on agriculture and the other of paintings—and inspected 85 local libraries. As a result, 378 copies of forbidden or outdated books were withdrawn from the shelves. On average, she paid five annual visits to the Sortavala publishing house (eight in 1964). Among other things, she informed the CPSU town committee that a book printed there and bearing the censor's stamp had been sent to a bookshop. The case was hotly debated at a meeting convened by the committee's bureau, to which a director, a chief engineer and a secretary of the primary party organisation of the publishing house had been invited (f. R-757, op. 4C, d. 2/20, l. 39).

As the media were reproducing almost exclusively the official discourse and its dominant narrative during most of the Soviet period and any other information was being censored, many ordinary citizens, but members of the intelligentsia in particular, were rather sceptical of these official sources of information. Until the 1970s, most of them turned to alternatives, such as the Russian-language broadcasting services of the BBC, Voice of America, Radio Freedom and others. After Stalin's death, Soviet mass media gradually underwent changes and a certain freedom of expression from the Khrushchev period survived during the more conservative Brezhnev era (see above), before Gorbachev's perestroika led to a significant liberalisation. While the Stalinist system had served the political purpose of reinforcing national identity at the expense of others, the perestroika years saw the reappearance of individual counter-memories that contradicted the earlier master narrative and production of national myths (Gero-vich 2008: 223).

#### **4. THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICS OF BORDER DISCOURSES**

During most of the post-war period, local geopolitical visions and narratives were dominated by the global geopolitical regime of the time. The Cold War rhetoric produced by the central elite was reproduced in the local context. Its grand narratives of a struggle between two radically different socio-economic and ideological systems produced in particular the identity of the defender of the holy socialist Motherland described above, which prevailed over other elements of local identity. Borders were invested with a symbolic meaning that reflected this view, such as in the metaphor of an 'iron curtain.' Finland, for example, was not seen so much as a neighbour than as a part of the capitalist world, which was accused of being expansionist and militaristic. In the Soviet discourse, the militarised border near Sortavala thus owed its existence to threats held to be emanating from the West.

The power of symbols on which Soviet discourse was based (Medvedev 1994) is especially obvious when it comes to the Soviet state border with the West. Beyond it lay hostile imperialist countries closely identified with the threat of war. In Soviet mass propaganda, but also in other forms of politicised discourses, such as art, the state border had therefore acquired a sacred meaning: the border defended the 'sacred

boundaries of the Motherland' (Gusseinov 1999). Sortavala's 'border mentality' was conditioned by this powerful symbolism, and the notion of a sacred border was central to the self-image of Sortavala's residents (Izotov 2013: 172).

This symbolic role of the state border was also present in popular culture. In a manner typical of the period's patriotic sentiments and, more generally, of the Russian tradition, the wartime song *Katiusha*, whose lyrics were composed by Mikhail Isakovskii, is about a girl waiting for her boyfriend, a border guard, whom she asks to preserve the Motherland just as she preserves their love (*Pust' on zemliu berezhet rodnuiu, a liubov' Katiusha sberezhet*). Similar expressions can be found in Sortavala, where the local newspaper published the Russian translation of a poem by the Finnish-speaking poet Ilmari Saarinen, 'The Letter' that evokes a border guard's emotions and patriotic feelings (*KZ*, 8 March 1960).

Official rhetoric and phraseology created a whole body of *novoiiaz*, as some scholars named it after George Orwell's 'newspeak' (see Zemskaja 1996), giving rise to neologisms such as 'impenetrable borders.' Official clichés thus entered everyday language, although in some cases they were ridiculed in works of art, especially songs. The famous poet-singer Bulat Okudzhava, for instance, used the ideological cliché of a 'border under lock and key' in one of his songs (see Boiko 2000) that combined public and biographical narratives.

#### **4-1. Local Border Discourses**

In contrast to the Moscow citizen who, in Okudzhava's imagination, 'walks by the border under lock and key,' residents of Sortavala rarely had a chance to even see the state border, which was literally and figuratively located in a closed zone. In newspaper articles and official documents written between 1940 and the early 1950s, the state border is practically invisible. Somebody reading only these texts would hardly realise that they were produced in a completely militarised closed border town, populated by a significant number of soldiers and border guards. In later years, references to the border turn sometimes up in unexpected places. Thus, a meeting on economic issues held in the late 1960s contains the following statement: 'The common interests of our multinational state in defending our borders form the basis of the economic development in the USSR' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/85, l. 23).

In Soviet times, many local residents were involved in activities linked to the defence of the state border. In the official discourse, they were portrayed as voluntary border guards. There existed close ties between Border Troops units and local schools, some of them going back to 1946 and 1947 (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/57, l. 7). Military officers often gave lectures, informing students about their duty to defend the border and explaining how they could assist the border guards' work.

Similarly, labour collectives at local establishments were called upon to assist the Border Troops. A study of the role of people's patrols (*DND*, short for *Dobrovol'naia narodnaia druzhina*) in Soviet discourse has shown how citizens were gradually drawn into taking part in this form of social control (Kharkhordin 1999: 285–286). In the border area, this led to the definition of special tasks. In 1971, for instance, it was reported that 280 residents participated in people's patrols at the bor-

der settlement of Värtsilä and provided intensive assistance to the border guards (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 67/1260, l. 51).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the liberalisation of the regime under Khrushchev led to the emergence of a new official discourse. In line with the idea that the establishment of a communist society was imminent, approaches to educate the masses (*vospitanie*) underwent slight changes. Henceforth it was emphasised that this education should be based on the ‘moral code of builders of communism’ whose main task was the ‘education of man (as a member) of communist society.’ It was during this period that the term ‘border town’ made its appearance in official speeches. To cite but one example from 1964: ‘Comrades, Deputies! Our border town is fighting in the name of high labour productivity, the maintenance of order and a high standard of domestic culture’ (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 44/1005, l. 48).

The liberalisation also meant that local values and a local sense of place could be represented through the opinions of ordinary citizens. In 1960, *KZ* thus published letters from local readers, reacting to the projected reduction of Soviet troops. The author of one of them, an employee at the Värtsilä metallurgic works, expressed his confidence by claiming that ‘our borders will still be safe after this measure’ (‘It’s wonderful!’ *KZ*, 19 January 1960).

The era of Stagnation, under Brezhnev, was marked by plans to develop the North Ladoga territory, when the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, in the early 1970s, started to pay special attention to the Finnish-Russian borderlands by adopting a resolution in favour of the social and economic development of territories in Karelia and Leningrad Oblast ‘that used to belong to Finland.’ This was followed by a similar resolution passed by the Council of Ministers of the USSR, On Measures for the Further Development and Public Services in the Settlements of the Border Districts of the Karelian ASSR (*O merakh po dal’neishemu razvitiuu i blagoustroistvu naseleennykh punktov pogranichnykh raionov Karel’skoi ASSR*), which referred to the further development of local industries and the construction or reconstruction of cultural institutions. However, the implementation of this programme faced the typical hurdles of that period and only partly achieved its aims. As a speaker during a meeting of the local administration noted: ‘According to the resolution on the development of the North Ladoga region, the implementation of public services and infrastructure should have been achieved by 1980. In fact, we are way behind the schedule. Our construction firms do not have the capacity to solve the problem... We have funds in the budget for these purposes but lack the labour force to carry out our plans’ (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 78/1347, l. 37).

Issues of border security were a regular feature in official documents. During the same meeting, attention was also drawn to a speech made by A. A. Kochetov, the chairman of the Karelian Republic’s Council of Ministers, who had called for increased political vigilance in the border area and expressed his opinion on the necessity of strengthening patronage ties (*shefske sviazi*) between the collectives of local establishments and army units (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 78/1347, l. 38).

In official discourses on the education of the Soviet people, references to the principles of ‘vigilance’ were recurrent and obligatory, as witnessed by the rhetoric employed by one of the local deputies, the military commissar of the town: ‘The CPSU

takes care of the education of the Soviet people in terms of their readiness to defend the great achievements of socialism. Our major aim is to educate young people and students so that they will be ready to discharge their duty as defenders of the Motherland' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 78/1350, l. 4–5). Strengthening the ties between civilians and the military as well as social networks englobing both was held to be a major aim in public narratives and practices, expressed in the omnipresent motto 'The People and the Army are indivisible.' This led, for example, to the establishment of units of The Young Friends of Border Guards. In 1969, the local newspaper thus reported that participation in the military game Zarnitsa-69 was not confined to the town but also extended to small settlements, citing the 'battle' of two such units, recruited among the schoolchildren of Rantala and Taunan, who used self-made automatic guns made of wood (*KZ*, 4 February 1969).

Soviet symbols were used until the very end of this era to promote the people's defence of the border. One was the Red Banner, passed from collective to collective to reward activism in this field. In 1974, the regional committee of the CPSU and the KSFR's Council of Ministers thus passed a resolution that, in the *noviaz* typical of the period, awarded the Red Banner to Unit 2121 of the Border Troops stationed in Sortavala for the 'good results in the defence of the state border, good military and political training, strengthening military discipline (and) successful participation in the socialist competition for carrying out the resolution of the XXIV Congress of the CPSU' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 79/1352, l. 4).

The local authorities, too, regularly participated in these efforts to promote the identity of the homeland defender. In the 1970s, the town council organised Deputy's Days, during which local deputies attended seminars and courses, where border issues were a frequent subject. One such seminar was dedicated to the theme 'Tasks of deputies working with people in the border area' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 79/1352, l. 13). Sortavala's border town status also appeared in a variety of administrative contexts. In 1971, for example, the local Commission for Youth Affairs expressed concerns about juvenile delinquency and stated the necessity of improving the education of young people, because Sortavala 'is located in the border zone' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 64/1232, l. 66).

Ties between the military and the civilian administration were not one-way affairs, particularly in the early Soviet times, when the troops often extended their assistance to the local administration. Sortavala's border guards helped, for example, redirect energy supplies for the town from the electric power station at Hämäkoski, then in disrepair, to the hydroelectric station at Harlu. In 1945, they were involved in plans to collect scrap iron (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/2, l. 2 and 1/4, l. 2).

At the time, the administrative authorities also laid down detailed rules related to the territorialisation of the border area. As early as March 1945, the Karelian government, that is the Soviet of People's Commissars of the KFSSR, passed the resolution Of a Regime for the Prohibited Border Zone in the KFSSR, which established an 800-metre-wide border strip (*polosa*) and a 22-kilometre-wide border zone and regulated access to them as well as defined rules for those living within the border zone. Everybody wishing to enter the area had to obtain a permit from the local militia and had to register with the NKVD border guards or the local Soviet administration upon arrival. Access

to the border strip was limited to NKVD border guards. Any construction work, including on local roads, in the border area required approval by a commander of the Border Troops. Certain outdoor activities, such as hunting or fishing, were tightly regulated as well, even pigeon-breeding, a popular hobby, was not permitted at the time. Taking photographs or filming was strictly forbidden without prior authorisation (f. R-2203, op. 1, d 1/5, l. 67–70).

It was during the Khrushchev period that ordinary residents, in line with the official ideology, came to be more closely involved in border protection. New regulations in the form of The Statute on the Protection of the State Border, previously adopted through a decree (*ukaz*) of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, were published on 5 August 1960. The border strip and border zone remained in place, as did strict rules regulating entry of the area, residency and citizens' movements within the border zone. The passport regime was indeed high on the agenda. The border regime was under the control of the militia and border guard units, but the local administrations as well as the managers of local establishments were charged with taking prompt action in case of any infraction and to safeguard the local population's support of the border regime (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 38/936).

Documents from the Sortavala's municipal archives offer, indeed, evidence that this participation was more than rhetorical. In a report to the executive committee of the town council, a chairman of the commission for Socialist Law and Public Order, informed the meeting that local residents and voluntary patrols (DND) played a significant role in protecting the border, mentioning in particular the people's patrol at Värtsilä. A notable number of people infringing the border regime and trespassers were said to have been identified and captured because they had been signalled by these patrols. The speaker evoked, for instance, a DND member at the *sovkhos Zastava* [The Frontier Post] personally arresting a trespasser, who was later awarded a medal 'for extraordinary participation in the protection of the state border' (*Za otlichie v okhrane gosudarstvennoi granitsy*). Due to information offered by another DND member, yet another trespasser was reported to have been arrested.

At the same time, officials apparently did not always respect regulations of the border regime. According to the chairman quoted, 'organisational errors lead to the entry of "undesirable individuals" into the forbidden zone, make it easy to trespass at the state border and undermine public order in the town and the area.' Another report mentioned that individuals without proper permission from the militia officers or without the required documentation (*neformennye spravki*) and telegrams from relatives living in Sortavala had succeeded in entering the forbidden zone. It was recommended that these people should be deported from the border zone, but the author also noted that infringers often had big families, which would make expulsion difficult. Documents from the late 1950s and early 1960s, indeed, refer to residents without a job, who are drunkards and of whom nobody takes care. One example quoted in more detail is that of a resident of Värtsilä, who did not work and exhibited anti-social behaviour. Once, while being drunk, he was said to have followed the rails leading to Finland, but was apprehended by a border guard preventing him from leaving the country. Other inhabitants of Värtsilä were reported of not working regularly. It was stated that people like

them should not be able to live near the border. Their cases are among the examples found in official documents of lives that strongly contradicted officially sanctioned social norms.

According to the 1960 border regime, residents of the border area was obliged to always carry with them their passport or another form of identity proof while moving in the area. However, the report mentioned that many residents fail to do so and that border guards or DND patrols therefore had to arrest them until they could prove their identity. This was said to be a time-consuming affair and due to the fact that ‘people had not received enough explanations how to comply with the regulations of the border zone.’ The responsible officials were admonished to redouble their vigilance. Participants of the meeting then decided that local political actors should be obliged to inform local residents about the regulations of the Statute and stated that members of the local militia, border guards, as well as members of trade unions, the Komsomol and the Communist Party, too, ought to participate in these efforts.

Similarly, it was reported that the local administration did not enforce the compulsory registration (*propiska*) within three days of any person entering the border area. In some cases, individuals and even whole families had only registered a month later. This was said to constitute an additional burden for the border guards and people’s patrols, who had to spend time tracking suspicious individuals and trespassers, and to negatively affect their vigilance. In other cases, housing committees had submitted incomplete documents (*spravki*), with missing stamps and information, instead of the passports handed in for registration by the individuals concerned.

In the official view, some problems of defending the border stemmed from tourism. The Sortavala district attracted not only geologists and seasonal workers, but also numerous tourists. It was reported that border guards sometimes were informed too late about their presence in the area. Residents of Leningrad, for example, had made boating excursions in the area during a visit to the monastery of Valaam, while the border guards ignored everything about the presence of these ‘admirers of the region.’ Finally, the persons in charge had been obliged to inform the border troops about these visitor groups. It was held that timely control undertaken by the border troops would help reduce the numbers of ‘undesirable individuals’ and ‘hostile visitors’ (*vrazheskie elementy*).

Local archives from the 1960s also offer evidence of the participation of residents from other localities of the North Ladoga area in activities related to the defence of the state border. At the settlement of Pitkäranta, voluntary patrols were reported to work in close co-operation with the local militia to implement the border regime (*pasportno-pogranichnyi rezhim*). In 1963, workers at the factory Pitkäranta had apprehended 36 persons who had violated the regulations and a number of volunteers were awarded distinctions by the local council for defending the border (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 38/935, l. 71–72).

Local identity in Sortavala during the Soviet period was deeply marked by the symbolic meaning and the mythologising of the border guards present in the town, especially through various rituals and celebrations regularly reported by the local newspaper. In May 1978, delegates from many local establishments and organisations, led

by the first secretary of the local party branch, took part in the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Soviet Border Troops (*KZ*, 30 May 1978). Similar to other Soviet celebrations of professional groups, an annual Day of the Border Guard was celebrated in May, the month in which the Border Troops had been established. The following quote is typical of the way these events were reported.

All Soviet people love the border guard and appreciate his services. Reactionary circles in the West continue their attempts to undermine the USSR. Under these circumstances, the CPSU and the Soviet government pay constant attention to the defence of the sacred boundaries of our Motherland... Hundreds of thousands of volunteers, members of party committees, the Komsomol and the trade unions all the time take care of increasing the vigilance of the population and the active participation of residents of the border area in the defence of the border and their assistance to the border guards (*KZ*, 27 May 1978).

The programme of the celebration included a concert, various events in the town park and the opening of memorials. Children attending groups that organised activities related to the defence of the border participated as well. Special meetings were held in many local establishments, such as the one set up at the local railway depot (*lokomotivnoe depo*) on the eve of the Day of the Border Guard to honour veterans of the Border Troops and to offer them presents (*ibid.*).

The state border with Finland was closed in Soviet times and Sortavalans, as other Soviet citizens, could only cross the border at Vyborg after having followed the required procedures. It played a crucial role in dividing the two nations. In everyday life the real border and the ‘capitalist enemy’ beyond it remained invisible. The lack of contact and unfamiliarity with the Finnish neighbours resulted in mythologising of the border, the border area and the foreign neighbours. Nor did the latter’s misrepresentation as ‘them’ in official discourses favour understanding of what ‘us’ meant. The process of demythologisation only started in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Moreover, official narratives of the border, as exemplified by the newspaper articles published between the 1940s and mid-1980s, never depicted the border guards as real people, or individual personalities. Under the condition of censorship, there were no opportunities to publicly discuss certain aspects of the coexistence of border guards and civilian residents. Only during Gorbachev’s perestroika did journalists from the local newspaper start to treat border issues in the light of individual experiences. During the May 1986 annual celebration of the Day of the Border Guard, a local journalist wrote for the first time in detail about the daily life at the local garrison, mentioning private issues and identifying border guards by their family name (*KZ*, 28 May 1986). Since then, lively and realistic descriptions of border-related issues have become a frequent feature in the local newspaper. Thus, it was only in the second half of the 1980s that subjective elements were added to representations of locality in this border area, contributing to create a sense of place as described in the approach of human geographers such as Tuan (1974b; 1977), Buttimer (1994) and Relph (1976).

#### ***4-2. Pending the Arrival of the Other: Discovering the Border***

Between 1944 and 1988 Sortavala's Finnish neighbours represented a dispelled Other, and the state border the boundary of socialism rather than a frontier with Finland. This explains the complex character of residents' first experiences with cross-border contacts. One might be tempted to think that Sortavalans perceived the border zone simply as an obstacle or barrier in their everyday lives. However, spatial representations of the North Ladoga area were much more multi-faceted. When the border regime started to become less strict, some biographical narratives emphasised the advantage of the town's close location to the border. Discussions about the consequences of expected visits by the foreign neighbours intensified in the late 1980s. But, as prospects of cross-border interaction still remained uncertain, many of the ideas vented by ordinary residents or representatives of the local authorities were of a speculative nature.

One of the discussion threads published in the local newspaper centred on fears that 'wealthy Finns' would come and buy up land or islands of Lake Ladoga. In 1989, a Soviet-Finnish joint venture, 'Ladoga,' established to promote the development of international tourism in the Sortavala area, thus led to heated and controversial debates, after the local paper had reported that a working group of Finnish and Russian experts had decided to allot a plot located on the nearby island of Kukkosaaari for a tourist centre, whose construction was to be financed by AO Sovfinturproject, Goskomturist USSR and the Council of Ministers of the KASSR (*KZ*, 12 January 1989). Many local residents voiced concerns about losing control over their territory (*KZ*, 21 and 28 January, 11 and 15 February 1989), while Vladimir Stepanov, a member of the CPSU's Central Committee and First Secretary of Karelia's regional party committee, described the decision as valuable and important for the socio-economic development of the area and actively supported the project during his election campaign (*KZ*, 9 February 1989). At the same time, this example shows that local residents now were given the opportunity to publicly express their opinions.

One of the articles spoke about a 'massive attack by Finnish firms on the economic basis of the town' (*KZ*, 11 February 1989) and raised a number of questions: Would Soviet citizens have access to the planned tourist centre and be able to establish contacts with Finnish visitors? On what basis would commercial activities be organised in the border area? And, more particularly, would the newly established Karelvneshtorg, a regional organisation responsible for foreign trade, have a branch in Sortavala? To what extent the local budget would benefit economically from the Ladoga project?<sup>21</sup> Would local residents be given the opportunity to visit border towns in Finland? There was also some apprehension about how Finnish visitors might perceive the Soviet Union:

If Finnish tourists will have free access to our town, they will have the opportunity to compare life in two societal systems. They will make certain evaluations of our economic and social problems, comment on the poor state of our roads etc. It is hard to believe that Finns will have lunch in a *stolovaia* [a basic Soviet canteen; A. I.] or buy food in our shops. Perhaps they will be shocked by the long waiting lines in our shops (*KZ*, 11 February 1989).

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21 This has to be seen in the context of the legislation on holding foreign currency in Soviet times.

On 27 November 1990, the Soviet Union's Council of Ministers passed a resolution that introduced new simplified rules for residents and certain categories of persons (tourists, veterans, artists, economic experts, etc.) wishing to enter the closed border zone. The issue was widely discussed in the local media and led to mostly negative and critical reactions (*KZ*, 5 January 1991). Local newspaper headlines, such as 'How can we live without a border zone?' reflect these concerns. The paper also published several letters by ordinary residents that unanimously protested against the decision. One of them, signed by a whole family, noted: 'We totally agree with the author, her conclusions and suggestions. We believe that it is not necessary to open up the border. It is not very difficult for us to obtain permits for our relatives and friends from other regions' (*ibid.*).

On 27 December, a decision made earlier by the Supreme Council of the KASSR to simplify regulations for entering the border zone located on Sortavala's municipal territory after 1 January 1991 was being discussed at the fourth annual session of the town council. One of the deputies held a speech in which she called the abolishment of the border zone inadmissible and was supported by several other deputies. The council unanimously voted in favour of a note to be addressed to the republic's Supreme Council, which contained the following suggestions:

Given the serious crime situation, the beginnings of foreign tourism, the lack of a developed services infrastructure, the complex ecological situation and the unpreparedness of the town council for this measure, we ask the Supreme Council to annul its decision on opening up the closed border zone and also ask that the earlier passport regime remain in place' (*ibid.*).

The hostile attitude of the local community towards the liberalisation of the border regime requires some explanation here, because it concerns the main subject of this research, i.e. the production of a sense of place. It should thus be seen in its historical and geographical context. For decades, local residents had been living in a closed territory associated with a 'quiet' and 'clean' environment. Any changes to its status were therefore perceived as a threat to an environment familiar since early childhood. The unanimous position taken by local actors with widely diverse political views and backgrounds can therefore be interpreted as concerns for losing the privilege of living in a border zone. Interestingly, this apprehension seems to have been directed mainly towards an internal threat, stemming from visitors from other territories of the former Soviet Union, because many of those opposed to the Supreme Council's decision adopted a favourable attitude towards opening up the area to foreign tourists, economic actors and other visitors from abroad.

Newspaper articles published during the following years appeared to confirm the validity of local arguments made both against and in favour of a lighter border regime. The arrival of organised crime, drug trafficking and prostitution lived up to the expectations of those who had warned against the impact of international mass tourism on a relatively small area, while opportunities created by cross-border interaction offered new prospects of life to many local residents. And, indeed, this situation gave rise to rival local narratives about cross-border interaction: euphoric stories about social and political changes that inaugurated a new era, on the one hand, others, deeply pessimist, denouncing the dramatic fall in living standards and a state no longer providing for the

welfare of its citizens, on the other. This debate took place in a situation where foreign tourists who looked rich and respectable arrived in unfamiliar big busses and a certain number of North Ladoga residents eventually succeeded in finding informal ways of obtaining foreign currency from these visitors.

The early period of this meeting of East and West culminated in an international event that celebrated the inauguration of the new era, the festival 'Worlds Meet' in June 1990. During this music festival, which also included The World Party organised in Joensuu, visitors non only from Finland but also from other countries arrived for the first time in huge numbers in the formerly closed border area. A special train linked Joensuu with Sortavala. With the assistance of Finnish experts, the town of Sortavala built an imitation of the legendary Laulurinne [Singing Slope] in the local Vakkosalmenpuisto Park.<sup>22</sup> The programme included performances by Soviet, Finnish and various international artists, among them Karelia Brass, a jazz ensemble from the Finnish-speaking collective Manok from Petrozavodsk. A second World Meets festival was successfully organised two years later, in June 1992, but did not attract as many visitors. Its programme was a combination of Russian and Finno-Ugric folk art that was reminiscent of earlier Soviet cultural practices in Sortavala, and performers wore ethnic costumes. The main attraction was Samppa Uimonen (1927–2001), the Finnish kantele player and rune-singer, who performed Kalevala epic poetry.<sup>23</sup>

#### ***4-3. The Homeless Soviet Man: Discourses on Socio-Economic Identities***

Inspired by Marxist-Leninist doctrine, Soviet official discourse schematically described Soviet society as composed of the working class, the peasantry and a layer of intelligentsia between the two. In a more realistic approach, it would be possible to identify various interest groups, foremost among them the nomenklatura, which was the main promoter of Soviet identity politics, from its earliest Stalinist strongly dichotomous expression to its later, more alleviated forms, such as the notion of 'developed socialism' characteristic of the late Brezhnev years (see above). The nomenklatura system, whose constitution was more or less complete in the late Stalinist period, was introduced in Karelia in 1946. Access to the nomenklatura was on the basis of criteria such as party membership, nationality, social or family background and the level of education. The most important quality required by the pretender to a nomenklatura position was his (implicit) willingness to execute directives issued at higher levels of authority. In terms of territorial identity, this means that Karelia lost any hope of developing regional self-governance after the war. Although the region was then given the

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22 The site is reputed to offer Europe's best acoustic environment because it is partly enclosed by a high rock (*Karelia*, 17 February 2001).

23 Uimonen was born in a village located on the Lake Ladoga island of Tulola, about 10 kilometres from Sortavala, and spent most of his life in Kitee, a twin town of Sortavala on the Finnish side of the border. A cable TV company from Petrozavodsk produced a short documentary of the second Worlds Meet festival that included an interview with the artist by anchorman Alexander Nikolaev. The documentary can be consulted at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uh8kyt8Diyo> (last accessed on 27 October 2016).

status of a national republic,<sup>24</sup> the latter's significance was a far cry from that defined by the nativisation or indigenisation (*korenizatsiia*) policy of the 1920s and early 1930s (see Kangaspuro 2000: 143–147).

In political science, social identity is usually conceived in terms of particular groups or categories (nation, social class, subculture, ethnic group, gender etc.) that individuals use to describe themselves as belonging to. How then did residents of post-war Sortavala perceive themselves? As already mentioned, most of them were resettled from other parts of the Soviet Union. In addition to their ethnic and cultural diversity, they were also characterised by their different social backgrounds. Many of them had been born into a peasant family. Stalin's modernisation project, with its emphasis on rapidly industrialising the country and the leading ideological role of the working class, had led to the formation of a specifically Soviet type of socio-economic identity that also shaped the identity of Sortavalans.

An examination of this identity must take into account the structure of the local economy, which was based mainly on agriculture and the production of consumer goods, as well as on transport—Sortavala was located at a railway junction. The most important establishment of the consumer goods industry was the furniture and ski combine in Helylä, one of the main producers of skis in the Soviet Union, with which not only its employees but also most residents of Sortavala proudly identified themselves. Its disappearance in the post-Soviet years is thought to have profoundly affected Sortavalans, leading to radical changes in their self-identification as economic actors and a reframing of local identity.

Many of the Sortavalans who resettled there in the late 1940s came from villages elsewhere in the Soviet Union, became town dwellers and received an education or technical training during the country's modernisation, which allowed them to join the working class or the intelligentsia. In the agricultural sector, the authorities established several *kolkhozes* after the war, which soon were transformed into *sovkhoses* that is state enterprises that employed agricultural workers. People working in this sector not only had to live in rural areas that lacked a basic infrastructure but also had few privileges. For instance, they did not have internal passports, which would have allowed them to leave their village. Industrial workers, on the contrary, were held in high esteem. Official discourse, relayed by the local media, glorified the working class as the most important strata of the population and attributed to it a strong socialist consciousness.

In the 1940s and 1950s, there were numerous newspaper stories about representatives from the various migrant communities that had resettled in Sortavala. Most of them experienced significant changes in their life after moving to North Ladoga. In addition to living in an unfamiliar cultural environment and becoming part of new social networks, many took up a new professional career. It can therefore be assumed that work identities were often in a state of flux.

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24 The Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic (*Karelo-Finskaia Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*) was established in 1940 and was incorporated into the Russian SFSR as the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (*Karel'skaia Avtonomnaia Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*) in 1956.

The institutional agencies promoting this new identity were labour collectives as well as schools and other educational institutions. According to the official Soviet discourse, members of the working class demonstrated their moral values to other social groups through their ‘heroic labour.’ In media narratives, this idea was used as a tool to encourage practices aimed at socio-economic development. Between the 1960s and early 1980s, newspaper publications often used these kinds of narratives with the intention to improve working ethic or reinforce a culture of labour. Their authors generally called upon the working population to revise its attitude towards work. Higher labour productivity was seen as the ultimate goal of the Soviet economic model.

## 5. PRODUCTION-BASED PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Public narratives emphasised full employment as one of the major achievements of the Soviet economic system, which thus distinguished itself from capitalist economies. Unemployed people had no official status in the Soviet Union and were considered criminals. In Sortavala as elsewhere in the USSR, full employment was considered more important than other economic goals, but here in a context of an insufficient labour supply. Under the conditions of a planned economy, this led to frequent difficulties of implementing state-funded programmes of socio-economic development in North Ladoga (see section 4-1.).

### 5-1. *The Industrial Sector*

Industrial production in Sortavala partly relied on the old technical infrastructure of former Finnish companies, partly on new establishments created in Soviet times, such as the furniture and ski combine (SMLK) at Helylä. Sortavala’s industrial sector also included a sewing factory, a brewery, a meat factory, a printing house, a metallurgical factory, mineral quarries and an establishment producing materials for road construction. In the late 1960s, the town counted eleven establishments of the primary and industrial sectors: in addition to the above mentioned enterprises, there were a dairy, a bakery, a fish-processing factory, the West-Karelian Electricity Company, Leskhov [forestry], a combine producing construction materials (*Kombinat proizvodstvennykh predpriatii*) and a state establishment for repair works and other services (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 32).<sup>25</sup> The local state enterprises accounted for five per cent of Karelia’s industrial production. Technologically, few had changed since Finnish times. Sortavala’s industrial landscape had therefore remained virtually unchanged.

Public narratives about the sector focussed on efforts to fulfil the objectives defined by yearly or pluriannual plans, a subject treated in close connection with party ef-

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25 The four main industrial establishments in the Sortavala district, the SMLK, a metallurgical factory at Värtsilä, a plywood combine at Lahdenpohja and a marble-and lime-processing factory at Ruskeala, together employed about 4,000 people; the sixteen other local factories accounted for 2,600 employees (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 54/1133, l. 25). A significant number of people were also employed at the local railway station and depot. The little-developed construction sector suffered from a lack of labour.