

COMMUNITY BUILDING ON THE SHOP FLOOR: EMOTIONS,
FAMILIES, AND A COMRADES' COURT IN KHRUSHCHEV'S MOSCOW

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of emotions in community building in a Khrushchev-era comrades' court in the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory. One of the hallmarks of the Khrushchev era in Soviet history is the re-invigoration of volunteer local bodies of social control; tens of millions of citizens actively participated in *druzhiny*, women's councils, housing committees, and comrades' courts in republics across the Soviet Union. Historians over the decades and across the continents have debated the authenticity and efficacy of the Khrushchev-era spirit of civic-mindedness, or *obshchestvennost'*, in Soviet society. In this paper, I take as my source base the transcripts of the comrades' court at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory to explore the nebulous realm suspended between state and society, public and private. I argue that, in practice, the workplace comrades' court shifted conversations of labor discipline to violations of the gender order in family life. The specific mechanisms of the comrades' court encouraged peer intervention into personal interactions beyond the factory walls; the factory, then, became a place to discuss abusive husbands, neglectful mothers, and alcoholism in the home. I use feminist affect theorists to understand how shame and love circulated in the court in an attempt to transform the biological family into a factory family.

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This thesis is dedicated to my ideal-type kinship structure. Mom and dad, thanks for being with me on all these laps. This is for you.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH AND THE WORD COUNT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Community Building on the Shop Floor: Emotions, Families, and a Comrades' Court in Khrushchev's Moscow

Introduction

In 1974, the Charlie Chaplin of Soviet Russia, Arkady Raikin, debuted on television a satirical sketch of a comrades' court trial in an unnamed establishment (*ucherezhdienie*). The beloved funny man shifted uncomfortably in his chair while facing the chairman of the court—a middle-aged man dutifully conducting the trial behind a small table with a schoolteacher's bell, in case anything got out of hand. Behind Raikin were a dozen or so vocal members of his community. Raikin played a certain Comrade Oshlepkina, who had, from the chairman's report committed egregious "hooligan acts in a family place": swam in the fountain, drank vodka, cursed at his mother, propositioned a prostitute, and beat his wife. As the chairman of the court decried him for "conducting himself like a pig", Oshlepkina dropped his eyes beneath his thick, black eyebrows, and even started whimpering. When the chairman finished his introductory remarks, the audience erupted in clamor. Oshlepkina admitted to everything he was accused of profusely: "Everything you've said is correct," he mumbled over and over, but added in defense that "I myself am from a working family." The crowd was quick to rebut, and a voice can be heard: "All the more you should be ashamed! [*tem bolee pozor!*]" A man, an audience member of the trial who had been seated behind Oshlepkina on screen, stood up and, waving his finger furiously, suggested the hooligan's pay be docked as punishment, and that he should be tried at the district's People's Court. There were cheers of agreement from the other members of the collective seated at the court. Then, a middle-aged woman raised her hand to share her estimation of the defendant (punctuated by the crowd's jeers), and also to deliver the punch lines of the sketch. "This is difficult, this is very difficult. I am ashamed of Oshlepkina. But I am

especially ashamed of all of our collective...It's easy to take a person to court. But what did you do to help Comrade Oshlepkin?...We shouldn't judge Oshlepkin, comrades, but rather ourselves above all!" Emboldened by this supportive voice, Oshlepkin then rose and reflected the shame back onto his peers by denouncing *them* for not preventing *his* bad behavior. "Did anyone take interest in my personal life?...Did anyone gather around me?...Were any community activities engaged with me?"¹

By the Brezhnev era, the comrades' court of Raikin's sketch and other volunteer organs of local self-rule that had been a hallmark of the Khrushchev era had lost their idyllic appeal. Like many of Khrushchev's liberalizing initiatives, the groundswell of community activism under his tenure fell out of fashion with his ouster in 1964. Beginning in 1965, Soviet legal authorities shifted decidedly to a bureaucratization of the comrades' court system in the Soviet Union, subjugating the volunteer courts to more narrow understandings of due process and socialist legality. This shift was due in large part to the gross irregularities in the communal justice of the Khrushchev years. A series of decrees in the late 1960s severely weakened comrades' courts' jurisdiction, and by 1977, what remained of comrades' courts in industrial enterprises fell under full custodianship of factory administration.² Raikin is clearly poking fun at the exaggerated self-criticisms that endlessly reverberated in a comrades' court trial. The humor in Raikin's sketch, though, is dependent upon a shared cultural understanding that, at least at one point, comrades' courts trials set in motion serious emotional responses. This thesis takes a look at one of those

¹ All translations from the Russian, unless otherwise noted, are the author's own.

² Gordon Smith, "Popular Participation in the Administration of Justice in the Soviet Union: Comrades' Courts and the Brezhnev Regime," *Indiana Law Journal* 49 (1974): 238-252. In 1972, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR began work on drafting a new comrades' courts statute to replace 1961 law. In 1977, the new statute was passed. E. I. Filippov, *Istoria tovarishcheskikh sudov v RSFSR* [History of Comrades' Courts in the RSFSR] (Rostov: Publishing House of Rostov University, 1982), 81.

Khrushchev-era comrades' courts to uncover these community dynamics that would later undergird Raikin's satirical representation during Brezhnev's "stagnation".³

This project began as a general inquiry into volunteer community activism during the Khrushchev era. I found Khrushchev's *obshchestvennost'* (or community-mindedness) movement to be located at the nexus of both state and society, and public and private. In a four-way Venn diagram of these perennial dichotomies, comrades' courts and Khrushchev's volunteerism would occupy the darkest overlapping of the four circles. Soviet moral authorities intended for their citizens to refine not only their productive contributions to society, but to align their personal relationships and reproductive functions also for the good of the whole. What were the state efforts to create the ideal Soviet families in the Khrushchev era? What were the efforts of society? Where did the "state" end and "society" start when a co-worker of ten years visited your home for a preliminary fact-checking mission in preparation for the court hearing? Where did the "private" end and the "public" begin when the same bridge member discovered that you were drunk and your wife had been beaten, and then recounted the scene in an assembly hall of 200 workers at your factory?

In historiographies of the Khrushchev era, scholars highlight the idealism of Stalin's successor, and how Khrushchev's ambitious declaration in 1957 that communism would be achieved in 20 years was the justification for all of his reforms in the years to come. In handing over (partially) the adjudicating powers of the state to local communities, comrades' courts were envisioned by Party authorities to lead the Soviet Union one step closer to realizing a fully communist society. With over 10,000 courts in Moscow alone, few people in 1961 would have predicted that by the end of the decade, community justice would fall largely out of fashion. In

³ The Brezhnev era is commonly referred to as a period of stagnation (*zastoi*) because of little economic growth, a return to more centralized control over society, and a stricter grip on dissident literature. See Thomas Crump,

this sense, I also try to read the sources for this project from the perspective of someone who lived at the time and had no hindsight knowledge, but who “believes” in the project of communism. Instead of trying to peel back the layers of propaganda to reveal some hidden inner truth, what if we as historians took seriously what people said about their communities? Furthermore, most historical studies of comrades’ courts cases derive their materials from newspaper editorials and scholarly articles in contemporaneous law journals—on cases that were sensational enough, either for their insufficiencies or their over-sufficiencies, to be published. Instead of inducing the story of comrades’ courts from extraordinary cases, this study takes the transcripts of a single court in the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory from 1954-1964 to see how such a court operated in the aggregate. How did a workplace comrades’ court function? If punitive punishments were not the driving force of these volunteer courts, how was re-education achieved?

In the chapters that follow, I will zoom in on one comrades’ court at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory to explore how workers themselves negotiated this four-way Venn diagram between state and society, public and private. This ambiguous location of a comrades’ court in a factory is an ideal site to explore the boundaries of each, and boundary making as a contested process. In contrast to previous historians who employ a narrow reading of Foucault’s surveillance state, I see workers as having considerable agency in negotiating these boundaries, and borrow from Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* and Michel de Certeau to show how power in the court rang from a variety of competing voices. Men and women workers shifted the terms of the debate in the comrades’ court, and exposed instead their families as broken. I highlight the in the transcripts where this power was articulated along gendered lines in the family. One of the ways I see power being manipulated in the courtroom (and in the factory at large) is through the

mobilization of emotions. Words have power not simply in the cognitive or psychological changes they impart, but on emotional registers, too. Thus, I borrow from feminist affect theorists to highlight two of the affective vectors I see power being mobilized in the factory: shame and love-identification. I will show through an analysis of the court transcripts and factory media how these emotions attempted to reveal the biological family as fractured, and posited the factory family as ideal. Importantly, this is a study of a volunteer court *in a factory*, and as such I pay special attention to the ramifications the circulation of emotions had in this particular context.

In Chapter 2: Shaping Soviet Families From Above, I describe the state-initiated efforts to shape Soviet families, both ones that Khrushchev inherited from his predecessor, and those he created himself. I explore the legislative, economic, and moral campaigns that Khrushchev and other state authorities implemented in an attempt to solidify the married, procreative, heterosexual family as the ideal-type. Despite all of these attempts, domestic discord prevailed, and some working families took to the factory's comrades' court for assistance. In Chapter 3: Comrades' Courts in Context, I explain the history of comrades' courts in the Soviet Union, and the state policies that authorized their legality in the Khrushchev era. I also critique the scholarly literature of comrades' courts and the *obshchestvennost'* movement, and situate this thesis as departing from these earlier studies, in particular Oleg Kharkhordin's *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, and Brian La Pierre's *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*. In Chapter 4, I outline my theoretical framework and the methodology I used to make sense of the materials I gathered. Chapters 5 and 6 comprise the analytical sections of my thesis. In Chapter 5: A Comrades' Court in Action, I show how the specific features of the courtroom proceedings exposed the many problems plaguing Soviet families, despite the state-initiated efforts to shape

those same families outlined in Chapter 2. The second half of the chapter engages critically with the emotional work of shame in the courtroom. I argue that shame permeated the courtroom not to cast the defendant out of the factory, but actually to retain the errant worker within the factory walls. In Chapter 6: Comrades' Courts and the Coalescence of Community, I look to the factory media to examine how shame appeared alongside love-identification to swell the collective. I argue that the factory collective was posited as the ideal-type family structure in the circulation of love-identification, which, in turn, re-covered the biological, domestic family and all its intendant problems. The peculiar location of comrades' courts as neither under the auspices of Party or state administration, nor wholly spontaneous arrangements of worker justice, provide a fruitful landscape to explore community formation in the Khrushchev era, a process in which men and women workers actively participated.

Chapter Two: Shaping Soviet Families From Above

Following the demographic catastrophe in the Soviet Union due to WWII, leading officials devised a plan to repopulate the home front. Alexandra Kollontai's radical sexual equality rhetoric of the revolutionary period had long been eroded by Stalin's valorization of the Soviet family and repressive abortion and marriage laws in the 1930s.⁴ Ideology aside, following WWII, in many localities on the eastern front, for every 100 women, there were 19 men.⁵ The men that did return home from war faced devastating physical and psychological injuries, and had to be re-integrated into civilian life.⁶ Many had to abruptly end their wartime romantic liaisons on the front lines, which further added to the glutton of single mothers waiting at home. The impact of the war on Soviet families and gender relations is only recently being explored in the scholarship.⁷ What efforts did the Soviet state make to rebuild Soviet families and repopulate the country in the aftermath of WWII?

This chapter begins with the family policies that Khrushchev inherited (and, as we will see, created himself) after Joseph Stalin's death in 1953. I will outline the judicial and legislative efforts of the state to address divorce, alimony, and domestic violence in the 25 years between the passages of the Family Codes of the Soviet Union (1944 and 1969). This will include the Family Code of 1944, the lift on the ban on abortion in 1955, civil codes on divorce and child support, and criminal codes on domestic violence. In the second part of the chapter, I will show the economic measures the Soviet state took to help support safe and prosperous families, like Khrushchev's housing campaign, and emphasis on consumer goods. In the third part of the

⁴ Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵ Nie Makachi, "Replacing the Dead: The Politics of Reproduction in the Postwar Soviet Union, 1944-1955," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2008, 2n3.

⁶ Frances Bernstein, "Prosthetic Manhood in the Soviet Union at the End of WWII," *Osiris* 30, no. 1 (2015): 113-133.

chapter, I will shift to the efforts the state made to morally strengthen Soviet families, including the 1961 Moral Code for the Builders of Communism, and the explosion in the pamphlet literature on guides to *sotsialisticheskoe obshchezhitie*, or socialist communal living. Despite Khrushchev's best efforts to provide the legislative, material, and moral conditions to ensure ideal Soviet families, alcoholism, domestic violence, and generalized familial dissatisfaction prevailed in the 1950s-1960s. My argument is that many of these top-down measures pontificated from Moscow didn't actually fix Soviet families, and many were left with unresolved problems.

Legislative and Judicial Methods

It is hard to overestimate the demographic devastation of the Soviet Union following WWII (the Great Fatherland War). By some counts, 27 million Soviets died during those years, not including those millions that were forcibly exiled, or those who returned home physically injured and psychologically damaged. Even by the 1959 census, the population had yet to recover; there were still 81.9 men per women in the USSR as a whole, and in the 45-49 cohort, numbers were even more disparate—62.9 men per 100 women.⁸ In an attempt to rectify these daunting numbers even before the end of the war, Soviet authorities crafted a new family code to amend the previous 1936 code.⁹ Historian Mie Nakachi has shown how Nikita Khrushchev, then

⁷ See, for example, all of Mie Nakachi's works discussed in this section.

⁸ Deborah Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 81.

⁹ Some historians have claimed that the 1936 Constitution and new family code marked the high point of the Stalinist retreat from previous Leninist values. The 1936 family code is famous for re-instating the family as central to Soviet life, in direct contrast to earlier Bolshevik notions of the withering away of the bourgeois family. In 1936, Stalin also banned abortion, reversing the famous 1918 Bolshevik decree. Wendy Goldman, *Women, the Revolution, and the State*. Lauren Kaminsky argues in her article that the 1936 law actually showed continuity with the utopian visions of the family initiated by Lenin because it carried quite heavy alimony payments for fathers, and it still recognized children from unofficial marriages. Nevertheless, I think the balance sheet of Stalin's 1936 family code

First Secretary of the Communist Party in Ukraine, was central in drawing up the new Family Code of 1944 that was implemented across the Soviet Union as the country looked beyond the war years. Thus, a discussion of the 1944 Family Code is important because it not only provides a window into the state of families that Khrushchev inherited in the mid-1950s, it also is a reflection of the policies that Khrushchev himself helped to enact. Nakachi demonstrates that internal, upper-echelon communication among Party members explicitly understood the 1944 law as an attempt to increase the birth rate to repopulate the country. Publicly, Khrushchev and others couched the new legislation in terms of protecting single mothers and strengthening the family.¹⁰

The most significant measure of the 1944 code was to reverse the Leninist family policy of granting de-facto marriages the same legal rights as those formed outside of state or religious institutions. The new law only recognized marriages that were registered at the marriage and birthing records office, or ZAGS. As Lauren Kaminsky baldly stated, “For the first time, fatherhood outside of wedlock created neither rights nor obligations.”¹¹ In the place of the father’s last name on the child’s birth certificate, unmarried mothers had to leave the space blank, even if the father petitioned to be recognized. Only children from registered marriages could demand alimony payments from the father, and single women from unregistered unions would receive support from the state.¹² However, as Peter Juviler notes, support from the state only lasted until age 12, while child support from the father was to last until 18.¹³

still leans heavily toward the protection of the family over women’s equality. See Lauren Kaminsky, “Utopian Visions of Family Life in the Stalin-Era Soviet Union,” *Central European History* 44, no. 1 (2011): 63-91.

¹⁰ Mie Nakachi, “N. S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law: Politics, Reproduction, and Language,” *East European Politics and Societies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 41.

¹¹ Kaminsky, 84.

¹² Nakachi, “N. S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law,” 46.

¹³ Peter H. Juviler, “Women and Sex in Soviet Law,” in *Soviet Policy-Making: Studies of Communism in Transition*, ed. Peter Juviler and Henry Morton (New York: Praeger, 1967), 259.

Another aspect of the new Family Code of 1944 that is relevant to the gender dynamics within the comrades' court is the tightening of divorce procedures that the new law instated. Deborah Field describes the lengthy and costly procedure both parties had to go through in order to receive a divorce from the state: including a fee paid to the local court with a petition for divorce, an announcement in the local newspaper, and then an appearance at the district level court for reconciliation. Judges were instructed to only grant divorces in cases where “the continuation of marriage posed a threat to Communist morality,” meaning society as a whole would be damaged. The plaintiffs would then have to appeal to the city or *oblast*’ level courts to finalize the divorce procedure (and pay an additional fine). It wasn't until 1965 that divorce procedures were simplified, and then again in 1968.¹⁴ Although Field points out that in practice judges became more lenient in granting divorce, such that between 1955 and 1965 the divorce rate rose by 270%, Mie Nakachi notes that, in the immediate post-war period, men filed for divorce in 86% of appeals that made it to the USSR Supreme Court.¹⁵ Despite the relative growth in divorces in the Khrushchev period, it still wasn't an easy process, and likely especially disadvantaged women who would be left with the responsibility of raising any children. Moreover, Marianna Muravyeva adds that “the state started a wide-scale campaign against divorce: divorced people could not expect promotion, information about divorces was published in local newspapers, and divorces often became the subject of local Young Communist League (Komsomol) and party meetings.”¹⁶ Legal and social impediments to divorce were intended to discourage dissolution and strengthen the family, but when men and women entered these

¹⁴ Field, 70-72.

¹⁵ Mie Nakachi, "Gender, Marriage, and Reproduction in the Postwar Soviet Union," in *Writing in the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, et. al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 107.

¹⁶ Marianna Muravyeva, "Bytovukha: Family Violence in Soviet Russia," *Aspasia* 8, vol. 1 (2014): 95. Edward Cohn corroborates Muravyeva's assertion about party committees stigmatizing divorced members. See Edward

partnerships and failed to create a healthy home life, communities demanded more than legislative decrees or judicial processes, as I will later show.

Although a drafting committee for a new Family Code formed in 1963, and letters of grievances from families poured into periodicals throughout the Khrushchev period, it wasn't until 1968 that a new code was passed.¹⁷ This new law allowed for children born out of wedlock to have their father's name on the birth certificate, and allowed women to receive support from fathers if they could identify that they were living together at the time of conception, with or without an official marriage. However, this meant that children from casual relationships were not entitled to child support from their fathers.

Importantly, Nakachi reveals how the Family Code of 1944 effectively altered gender roles and expectations in the post-war period. The state expected women "to be mothers, regularly, often, and without fail," but men could cheat on their wives with impunity because men bore no financial responsibility.¹⁸ In her dissertation Nakachi concludes that this 1944 Law, in addition to other family policies, served in practice to de-stabilize family and gender relations—the exact opposite of its purported aims.¹⁹ Women began writing letters in dissent almost as soon as the law was instated, but protestations about the instabilities within families that the law created reached the apex during the Khrushchev years. Although the comrades' court that I investigated never explicitly mentioned the Family Code of 1944, a preponderance of cases referred to instabilities in home life that this law created. For example, many women relied on men for material support to raise children, and when their relationship soured, women feared

Cohn, "Sex and the Married Communist: Family Troubles, Marital Infidelity, and Party Discipline in the Postwar USSR, 1945-64," *The Russian Review* 68 (2009): 429-450.

¹⁷ Helene Carlbach, "Lone Mothers and Fatherless Children: Public Discourse on Marriage and Family Law," in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (New York: Routledge, 2009), 97.

¹⁸ Nakachi, "N.S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Family Law," 47.

¹⁹ Nakachi, "Replacing the Dead," 318.

losing that support, whether they were in registered partnerships or not. Partners weren't freely able to dissolve official marriages, and because of housing constraints, many were forced to live in close quarters with a sparring spouse. As I will show, these were the exact tensions that workers repeatedly discuss in the comrades' courts trials.

Another theme that came up in the course of the comrades' court trials was the persistence of domestic violence. This wasn't limited to the court at the watch factory, but appeared repeatedly in letters to the editors of popular women's magazines (*Rabotnitsa* and *Krest'ianka*), and in scholarly articles about volunteer organizations. Marianna Muravyeva has written the most extensively on domestic violence in the Russian and Soviet context. She concludes in one of her English-language articles that domestic violence prevailed in the Soviet period despite formal declarations of gender equality because the authorities failed to recognize domestic violence as a problem as such, because doing so would reveal that crime prevailed in the communist society.²⁰ The earliest Soviet criminal codes in 1917 remove any mention of the family as a mitigating circumstance for committing a crime, treating all citizens as equal under the law. Consequently, this removed the pre-Revolutionary provisions in the criminal code that explicitly forbid violence against spouses. New criminal codes were passed in 1922, 1926, and 1960 in the Soviet Union. Gradually, punishments for violent crimes lessened, such that by the 1960 criminal code, premeditated light physical assault, beating, or torture were punished by six-month to one-year imprisonments or a fine, or by measures of social discipline.²¹ Like in many legal systems across the world and throughout history, light or aggravated assault between intimate partners was notoriously hard to prosecute in the Soviet Union. Many police officers were unwilling to intervene in what they viewed as the normal life course of a romantic

²⁰ Muravyeva, 93-94.

²¹ Muravyeva, 97.

relationship, and the local people's courts were so backlogged with personal injury cases that seeking restitution was nearly impossible. Many women also feared going to the police because they would lose the household's primary source of income if their male partner was sent to a labor camp. But, as I will argue, some perpetrators of domestic violence appeared before the legal system in other ways: as hooligans.

Economic Measures

A central goal of Khrushchev's economic policy laid out in his address to the 20th Party Congress in 1956 was to increase the standard of living for Soviet citizens. During the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Union demanded that all citizens sacrifice whatever labor they had for the defense of their motherland, and so industrial outputs under Stalin were heavily weighted toward the military and heavy industry. In part, Khrushchev wanted to reward Soviet citizens who had sacrificed so much by making consumer goods more available, providing housing for its workers, and making public services more widespread. Indeed, daily life during the Khrushchev period generally got better for most Soviet citizens. It is noteworthy that the estimated Soviet GDP rose 265% from 1950 to 1960 (while in the U.S. it only rose 134%).²² Many historians portray Khrushchev's economic policies as a retreat to domesticity for Soviet families. In this way, through a separate apartment and the consumption of household goods, Khrushchev hoped to ameliorate familial discord and remove the material basis for disfunction. I highlight Khrushchev's housing policies and increased access to consumer goods because these two economic measures served to create what Svetlana Boym has argued as the closest sense of

²² Alexander Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme and the Fate of Khrushchev's reforms," in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, 13.

privacy in the Soviet experience.²³ The question this raises for my research is: How impenetrable was the private sphere created by housing and consumption in the Khrushchev era?

As Steven Harris flatly put it on the first page of his monograph, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*, “Moving to the separate apartment was the way most ordinary people experienced and shaped Khrushchev’s thaw.”²⁴ Indeed, in 1957 Khrushchev and communist party officials outlined the most ambitious housing policy yet for the world’s first socialist state. After decades of urbanization, communal apartments, factory barracks, and dormitories, Khrushchev promised that all housing shortages would be eradicated in ten to twelve years. The majority of these new dwellings would be *khrushchevki*, the derogatory short-hand for pre-fabricated five-story single-family apartment buildings constructed during Khrushchev’s tenure. Steven Harris notes that from 1953 to 1970, the Soviet government and its citizens constructed 38,284,000 apartments, permitting 140,900,000 individuals to acquire a newly-built home.²⁵ Christine Varga-Harris has argued that, despite the contradictions in moving to private, single-family apartments, Khrushchev’s housing campaign “offered evidence of both literal and symbolic movement toward realizing the promises of the Revolution in the sphere of daily life and Communism.”²⁶

But Khrushchev’s housing promise, although miraculous for what it did achieve, resulted in unexpected and dramatic consequences in Soviet society. Through the onslaught of letter writing and petitions for private apartments, Harris and other historians have noted the sense of entitlement Soviet citizens had for the state to provide them with a private apartment. Many of

²³ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

²⁴ Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 1.

²⁵ Harris, 5.

²⁶ Christine Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 56.

these expectations were disappointed by the state. Despite the massive construction campaign, living standards (determined by authorities and measured in square meters per person) still remained below the norm of 9 square meters per person in 1963. According to one survey in 1961, 100% of urban housing had electricity, but only 57% had running water and pumping, less than 45% had central heating, 29% had gas, and only 30% had a bath.²⁷ Many expectant residents simply squatted in apartment buildings as construction was finalized, eager to move to a room of their own. Fixtures in apartments often broke, and required constant repair. In this shortcoming, however, Harris notes that residents were able to make use of the *khrushchevki* in ways unintended by housing authorities, and thus carve out a world shielded from state inspection. Svetlana Boym makes a similar contention in her seminal work *Common Places*, in which she argues that in collecting knick-knacks of “domestic trash” in their private apartments, apartment dwellers were able to create a sense of privacy.

The shift from communal apartments and dormitories to single-family apartments reflected not only the regime’s priorities for spatial re-distribution, but also affirmed its commitment to family as the prized relational unit in Soviet society. Single-family apartments (*otdel’nie kvartiry*) of the Khrushchev era were just that: domestic space distributed according to single families. In the 1950s-1960s, during which the Family Code of 1944 was still applicable, single families meant those enshrined by official marriages (and most often, containing children). Single men and women, and those in unofficial romantic relationships, were no longer rewarded by the state with new living arrangements. Thus, Khrushchev’s housing campaign can also be read as a massive effort to consolidate and promote the nuclear family, that is, a husband and wife and their children.

²⁷ Varga-Harris, 16.

Moral Measures

To create good Soviet citizens worthy of marriage and procreation, government leaders, pedagogues, and parents alike emphasized the importance of “communist morality” in guiding day-to-day interactions. Although the term communist morality had been in use for decades, in 1961 it was enshrined in the Moral Code of the Builders of Communism.²⁸ How an individual conducted him- or herself at home not only had implications for how he or she would behave at work, in school, at the theater, etc., but also directly concerned society’s goal of advancing toward communism.²⁹ A true, devoted citizen had to emulate dedication to the socialist state in all aspects of his or her life, including personal relationships with relatives and intimate friends. The personal and the social were to be one. Personal conduct manuals, letters to the editors of popular magazines, and even factory wall newspapers propagated the importance of communist morality in guiding interpersonal relationships. Eighth on the list of the Moral Code was “mutual respect in the family, concern for the upbringing of children,” after tenets such as love and devotion to communism, the social community, and labor.³⁰

Brian La Pierre adds that the public discourse on communist morality also condemned the failure to intervene into the private lives of their peers if they were aware of amoral behavior.³¹ Soviet authorities hoped to not only inculcate proper, communally-minded ethics among their citizens, but also to hold each individual accountable for everyone else’s behavior. Deborah Field highlights the notion of education, upbringing, and molding of values that was

²⁸ Field, 11.

²⁹ Field, 18.

³⁰ For an English translation, see “Moral Code of the Builders of Communism, 1961,” trans. by Deborah A. Field. *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: An Online Archive of Primary Sources*. Michigan State University. <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1961-2/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism-texts/moral-code-of-the-builder-of-communism/>. Date accessed April 22, 2017.

³¹ Brian La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance During the Thaw* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 88.

rendered in Russian as *vospitanie*.³² *Vospitanie* could mean an adult teacher educating a young pupil, or it could mean a colleague or friend shaping his fellow comrade's behavior, without the didactic connotation. *Vospitanie* occurs again and again in the comrades' court transcripts and wall newspaper, and is an important word for this thesis.³³ As I will show, *vospitanie* also entailed a significant amount of emotional work on the part of the factory community.

Conclusion

Like many European states after the devastation of WWII, the Soviet Union also enacted pro-natalist policies to stimulate the birth rate and strengthen damaged families. In addition to these legislative and judicial means, two hallmarks of the Khrushchev era were also intended to fortify families: an expressed emphasis on domestic consumption (including new housing), and communist morality. By only recognizing official marriages, and actively discouraging divorce, Soviet authorities promoted families created by monogamous, married (heterosexual) partners. Authorities also encouraged mothers to give birth to multiple children by lengthening maternity leave, offering cash prizes, and improving working conditions for pregnant women.³⁴ With the official emphasis on communist morality throughout the Khrushchev era, encapsulated by the 1961 Moral Code of the Builders of the Communism, the state also implicitly advocated for marriages full of "mutual respect," and free from violence. Whether intentionally or not, Soviet authorities literally created space for consumer habits to decorate the private world of its families. As Kate Brown has shown, nuclear families were created through housing and consumption in a socialist economy, just as in the capitalist west. But despite all of these efforts,

³² Field, 18.

³³ In many places where I have translated "education," the Russian equivalent is *vospitanie*.

³⁴ Nakachi, "N. S. Khrushchev," 41.

problems still persisted in Soviet families. Husbands and wives split up without the proper divorce procedures, and cohabited with partners other than their official spouses. Children were born out of wedlock. And increasingly, as Brian La Pierre has shown, hooliganism became domesticated in the 1950s, and ceased to be solely a crime of the streets. I argue that state-initiated efforts to mold Soviet families could only go so far in creating ideal-type kinship structures. Something more was needed. In the chapters that follow, I will show that workplace comrades' courts were a site of community justice that activated public emotions to create a model of Soviet families from workers' own initiatives and priorities. Comrades' courts performed the community-building work that Soviet authorities had attempted in order to mold Soviet families.

Chapter Three: Comrades' Courts in Context

What agitates the fight with these occurrences [law breaking]? Our laws? Our propaganda? The opposite! Laws are written to the extent that they're beneficial [*skol'ko ugodno*]! Why hasn't there been any success in this fight? Because it's impossible to do it with propaganda alone, but it can only be accomplished if the people's [*narodnaya*] mass itself helps!³⁵
V. I. Lenin

Just as Lenin himself had presaged, Soviet family planning laws, communist morality propaganda campaigns, and even improving economic conditions still left some intimate relationships in disarray. Comrades' courts rose in popularity as the 1950s wore on in part as a place where the unseemly details of banal family life could be worked out. In this chapter, I will sketch out the political currents in the Khrushchev era from which comrades' courts emerged. When Joseph Stalin died in 1953, a new tenor of leadership appeared in Nikita Khrushchev, attenuating over two decades of violence, terror, and war. Khrushchev enacted meaningful changes to the Soviet political structure, and his *obshchestvennost'*, or community-mindedness, campaign was an important component of his de-Stalinization efforts. I will then move to a discussion of comrades' courts, a popular feature of Khrushchev's *obshchestvennost'* campaign, as they were envisioned by top Party members and leading legal scholars. Comrades' courts appeared alongside other disciplinary measures, like the *druzhiny* (community watch groups) and Party control commissions, forming a web of volunteer activities during the 1950s-1960s. However, comrades' courts in workplaces have a specific history in the Soviet Union and arose in the context of Soviet labor relations. I will discuss some problems facing comrades' courts and other volunteer groups generally speaking, and show that while the *obshchestvennost'* movement

³⁵ V. I. Lenin, quoted in *Sud Tovarishchei*, Dobrosel'skii, et. al. (Moscow: Moscow Worker, 1963).

was a mass movement, it was not without critique. In the second half of the chapter, I will explore the various historiographical accounts of comrades' courts and Khrushchev's *obshchestvennost'* campaign. Russian and North American scholars have vacillated in their evaluations of the efficacy of volunteerism during the Thaw, at times praising its communal spirit, deriding its disorganization, or shuddering at its reiteration of terror. I will conclude by outlining the present study, and my contributions to the historiography of volunteerism in the Khrushchev era.

De-Stalinization and Khrushchev's "Thaw"

When Joseph Stalin died in 1953, hushed sighs of relief could be heard underneath the millions wailing for the beloved leader's passing. Decades of terror, purges, executions, and deportations were fueled by the prerogatives of one man and a select few of his most trusted advisors. Millions of Soviet citizens grieved Uncle Stalin's death, despite the horror he had wreaked on their lives, because Stalin irrefutably achieved national glory in Soviet victory during World War II and the extraordinary industrialization drive that buttressed the victory. When Nikita Khrushchev took the helm of the Communist Party and Soviet state after Stalin's death, evidence of Stalin's "excesses" began to trickle in shortly thereafter. At the famous 1956 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev gave his "Secret Speech" that denounced Stalin's campaign of terror and violence, and urged others to come forward with their stories of persecutions. Stalin's "cult of personality" (*kult lichnosti*) anesthetized the population into acquiescence, at which Khrushchev also took central aim in his address. But even before his speech in 1956, Khrushchev began efforts to reverse some of his predecessor's most egregious policies, which contemporaries aptly referred to as the "Thaw" (*ottepel'*).

Historians have debated the terms and scope of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization efforts, and many have suggested continuities between the two leader's regimes.³⁶ However, for broad swaths of the population, Khrushchev's reforms ushered in a new era of socialist leadership, and a new direction for Soviet society. The first of such reforms was to dismantle the Gulag labor camp system that had cost the Soviet state millions of rubles in lost productivity, and cost the population tens of thousands of lives. In March 1953, just weeks after Stalin's death, an amnesty was decreed that released 1.2 million people from labor servitude in the Gulag system, a reduction of 48%. By 1960, the population was just over a half million of the most hardened criminals.³⁷ After 1956, Soviet citizens were encouraged to come forward with memories of Stalin's abuses in the Gulags, and the world learned of the Soviet Union's camp system through the wide publication of *Tishina* and Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. But the state's de-Stalinization efforts were not without criticism, and many people were reluctant to denounce the leader they had adored for nearly two decades.³⁸

In addition to publicly denouncing Stalin's violent persecutions, Khrushchev endeavored to systematically de-centralize Soviet authority, and empower its citizens to take over the functions of the state in the Soviet Union's march to full-blown communism. Although the 1956 20th Party Congress is famous for Khrushchev's rejection of the Stalinist past, the rest of the congress was primarily dedicated to economic reform. Khrushchev unveiled the 6th Five-Year Plan in 1956, and as Susanne Schattenberg contends, it was here that "the party called for 'much

³⁶ For example, Juliane Fürst argues in her chapter on youth in the 1950s, that the state exercised even more concern and control over what it deemed vagrants, *stiliagi* (hipsters), and other anti-social behavior among young people. Juliane Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?: Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture and Policy Between Stalin and Khrushchev," in *Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Social and Cultural Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006): 135-153.

³⁷ Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2. For a more thorough account of Khrushchev's liberalizing and humanizing reforms within the Gulag system itself, see Jeffery S. Hardy, *The Gulag after Stalin: Redefining Punishment in Khrushchev's Soviet Union, 1953-1964* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

broader participation by the people in the administration of the state.”³⁹ The next year, Khrushchev founded local economic councils (*sovnarkhozy*), which were meant to shift decision making in production from ministries in Moscow to local governments.⁴⁰ Consumer goods and housing were emphasized to raise the standard of living for millions of Soviet citizens who had fought hard in the Great Patriotic War. At the 21st Party Congress held in 1959, Khrushchev declared that the Soviet Union had achieved socialism, and was now advancing toward building the foundations of communism. To accomplish this, Khrushchev further specified his earlier promises about how he envisioned this popular participation:

“Many functions performed by government agencies will gradually pass to social organizations...Socialist society forms such voluntary organizations for safeguarding social order as the People’s Patrol, Comrades’ Courts, and the like. They all employ new methods and find new ways of performing social functions. The voluntary detachments of People’s Patrols should undertake to keep social order in their respective communities and see that the rights and interests of all citizens are respected and protected.”⁴¹

Perhaps the most significant of Khrushchev’s “ideological innovations” came in 1961 with the adoption of the Third Party Program at the 22nd Party Congress. The previous Party Program had been adopted by Lenin 1919, 43 years prior and, importantly, untouched by Stalin. The Third Party program had ramifications for the USSR’s new international orientation and pivoted to the production of consumer goods over military equipment. In terms of the ethos of the world’s first socialist state, Khrushchev proclaimed that the “dictatorship of the proletariat” would be abandoned in favor of an “all-people’s state”.⁴² Comrades’ courts, *druzhiny*, women’s

³⁸ Polly Jones, ed. *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, 7.

³⁹ Susanne Schattenberg, “‘Democracy’ or ‘despotism’? How the Secret Speech was translated into everyday life,” in Polly Jones, ed. *The Dilemmas of de-Stalinization*, 67.

⁴⁰ Schattenberg, 75.

⁴¹ Quoted in Harold J. Berman, *Justice in the USSR: An Interpretation of Soviet Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 285-286.

⁴² Alexander Titov, “The 1961 Party Programme and the fate of Khrushchev’s reforms,” in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, eds. (New York: Rutledge, 2009), 15.

councils, the Komsomol, and trade union organizations were again reiterated as the volunteer organizations of local self-rule that would put in motion this “all-people’s state”.

Obshchestvennye Organizatsii

The suite of informal, volunteer social-political organizations Khrushchev re-activated during the late 1950s was called collectively *obshchestvennye organizatsii*. These organizations were not to be official arms of the Soviet state apparatus, and had no formal ties with the Communist Party, although the Party was to aid in ideological guidance of the groups. They included comrades’ courts, *druzhiny*, street committees, housing committees, parents’ groups, women’s councils (*zhensovet*), among others. As previously mentioned, these groups were intended to take over the functions of the state, and allow Soviet citizens to look after their own lives in a truly communist society. One historian notes that by the mid-1960s, 966,412 such social organizations existed with a membership of 9,724,372 people, approximately 7% of the electorate.⁴³ Khrushchev's priority for greater informal political participation was hardly hollow rhetoric.

Comrades’ courts (*tovarishcheskie sudy*) were one such volunteer organization that Khrushchev paid particular attention. Again at the 21st Party Congress in 1959, Khrushchev emphasized that, “the time has come when more attention should be paid to the Comrades’ Courts, which should chiefly prevent assorted kinds of law violations. They should hear not only cases concerning behavior on the job but also cases of everyday deportment and morality, and

⁴³ Genia Browning, *Women and Politics in the USSR: Consciousness Raising and Soviet Women's Groups* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 51.

cases of improper conduct by members of the group who disregard standards of social behavior.”⁴⁴

Comrades’ courts have a long history in the Soviet Union, dating back even before the Russian Revolution of 1917. Historian E. I. Filippov marks the emergence of comrades’ courts at the 1905 revolution as “one form of rearing a working-class consciousness, proletarian discipline, solidarity, and morale.”⁴⁵ Lenin called on trade union committees to establish comrades’ courts in factories, and Trotsky instituted them in the Red Army to cultivate discipline during the early years of the Bolshevik state, when thousands of former peasants found themselves in urban centers and on the battlefield. The nature of comrades’ courts was severely weakened during the Stalin era, when, beginning in 1928, they were to be organized in consultation with local courts, and were primarily concerned with insults and slander.⁴⁶ Violations of labor discipline were now criminal offenses, and under the jurisdiction of the NKVD. However, in 1951, the Soviet of Ministers approved a law re-instituting comrades’ courts in factories. This iteration of comrades’ courts was intended to have a narrow aim, and was to inculcate in workers “a spirit of conscious observance of labor discipline, a high responsibility for fulfilling work, accurate and timely execution of orders and directives from the administration.”⁴⁷ These late-Stalinist courts had no jurisdiction in matters of conduct in daily life beyond the factory. But as the decade progressed in an atmosphere of de-Stalinization, the scope of comrades’ courts widened, such that by 1961 when a new statute finally appeared, there were already tens of thousands of comrades’ courts across the Soviet Union, taking up not only

⁴⁴ Quoted in Harold J. Berman, *Justice in the USSR: An Interpretation of Soviet Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 285-286.

⁴⁵ Filippov, 1.

⁴⁶ Filippov, 25-26.

⁴⁷ Filippov, 69.

issues in the factory, but “problems of daily life, of moral character, facts of incorrect behavior of members of the collective having allowed exceptions to the norm of social behavior.”⁴⁸

The June 3, 1961 Comrades’ Court statute officially recognized the creation of comrades’ courts in the Soviet Union. The law explained that they were to be “elected social organs, called upon to actively participate in the education of citizens in the spirit of a communist relationship to labor, to socialist property, the observance of the laws of socialist communal living [*obshchezhitie*], the development in Soviet people a feeling of collectivism and comradely mutual assistance, respect of the dignity and honor of citizens.”⁴⁹ Courts were to be established not only in factories and industrial enterprises of more than 50 people, but also in educational institutions, apartment buildings, on collective and state farms, and in other rural outposts. They were to hear cases regarding violations of labor discipline, “incorrect behavior in daily life,” and violations of social order. The courts were not intended to be punitive, but to prevent future violations from occurring, and to educate members on proper socialist behavior. As such, comrades’ courts were primarily limited in their punishments to social reprimands and warnings, but could also impose a small fine up to 10 rubles, transfer a factory worker to a lower-paying job, or in rare cases, recommend to the local soviet that the individual be evicted from his or her place of residence. The decisions of the court were to be final, with no right to appeal. The court was to consist of a chairperson and between 5-15 members, depending on the locale.⁵⁰ In factories, trade union organizations were to organize the comrades’ courts and oversee their elections. In apartment buildings, the ZHEK (*zhilishchmu-eksploatatsionnaya kontora*, or housing committee) oversaw the creation of the courts. The courts were to coordinate their

⁴⁸ E. M. Vorozheikin, *Kratkii spravochnik predcedatel’ya i chlena tovarishcheskovo suda* [A short handbook for the chairperson and member of the comrades’ court] (Moscow: Profizdat, 1965), 10.

⁴⁹ Filippov, 75.

⁵⁰ Vorozheikin, 21.

educational efforts with the local *druzhiny*, police, and People's Courts (*narodnyi sud*, or official criminal court system).⁵¹ Individual members of the collective, *druzhiniki*, police officers, or members of the comrades' court itself could initiate a case. In terms of the culture of the trial, members were discouraged from using official legal language because "they lead to a low culture of a person, and his [sic] bad manners [*nevospitannosti*]." ⁵² Importantly, comrades' courts trials were not a place to determine guilt or innocence; after their preliminary investigations and preparations for the trial, court members were only supposed to bring cases to trial where the offender had obviously violated one of the above-mentioned prescriptions.⁵³

Despite the legislation formally recognizing the authority of comrades' courts in the early 1960s, there were many criticisms then and now in retrospect about their operation. Contemporaries and later historians both acknowledge the open-ended definitions of violations that were subject to comrades' court censure. Included in the statute were clauses that authorized the court to hear cases about "violating the rules of socialist communal living," or having an "undignified relationship to women or parents." The statute gave no specific recommendations on what exactly these infractions were, and left local courts to determine for its members what it believed to be acceptable or forbidden. Brian La Pierre argues in his recent history that this left the door open for overzealous community members to wantonly prosecute the population. La Pierre concludes that ultimately this state-led initiative resulted in "arbitrary, ill-trained, and unprofessional agents of *obshchestvennost'*."⁵⁴ Regarding the volunteer organizations at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory, complaints and exposes were published in the wall newspaper.

⁵¹ In fact, some scholars have suggested that comrades' courts were revitalized to relieve the overburdened People's Court system, and in 1962, 34% of cases for light hooliganism were transferred to comrades' courts across the RSFSR. Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, 177. See also Yoram Gorlizki, "Delegalization in Russia: Soviet Comrades' Courts in Retrospect," *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 46, no. 3 (1998): 403-425.

⁵² Vorozheikin, 39.

⁵³ Vorozheikin, 49.

⁵⁴ La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, 147.

For example, one article criticizes a *druzhina* brigade that drank and partied like the hooligans they were supposed to detain.⁵⁵ Another perceived problem facing these organizations was their lack of punitive teeth. Some members of the community called for stronger punishments for offenders, including removing vacations rights and disqualifying offenders from the competitions for communist labor.⁵⁶

Historiographical Context

American Sovietologists reported on this new wave of volunteer activism in academic texts as events unfolded in the early 1960s. After the initial excitement over this new form of communal justice, there was a paucity of scholarly interest in these organizations until the late 1990s. Since the opening of the archives, scholars in Russia and the Anglo-American tradition have returned to Khrushchev's *obshchestvennost'* campaign with new archival material and theoretical tools. Notably, despite considerable scholarly attention over the decades, there has been only one positive estimation of the motives and impact of volunteerism in the 1950s-1960s. Below, I will enumerate the various arguments scholars have given as to why comrades' courts and *druzhiny* failed. Their conclusions, I will argue, are partly based on their methodological approach, and partly the result of their theoretical positioning as scholars. I will conclude this section with a new orientation for thinking about comrades' courts in the Khrushchev era.

One of the most prevailing historiographical conclusions drawn from studies of volunteerism in the Khrushchev era is that it was a loosely organized, ad hoc constellation of activities with very little oversight. This amounted to irregularities in policing and judgments, and ultimately de-legitimized the authority of these local bodies of self-rule. As an example,

⁵⁵ N. Pavlov, "The Tasks of Our *Druzhinnikov*" *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 3, January 9, 1961.

Sovietologist and journalist George Feifer recounts in his 1964 *Justice in Moscow* upon entering a comrades' courtroom that, "it was a typical reaction of a Russian theater audience: emotional, naive, uninhibited, and wildly fluctuating to the action of the moment."⁵⁷ Feifer's account is based on his observations while dropping in on court proceedings during his visit to Moscow. Feifer pays no attention to the issues that people were trying to sort out at the trial, and there's no sense of the broader context of these observations and how the court functioned over a period of time. Feifer wasn't able to talk to anyone during his visit, and obviously in 1964 didn't have access to archival materials. His account is colored by his positioning as an American scholar in Moscow at the height of the Cold War, and quickly dismisses comrades' court activity as a frenzied, chaotic ritual. Brian La Pierre claims that the lag time between comrades' court *de facto* expansion beyond narrow violations of labor discipline and the 1961 statute that permitted such leeway resulted in "diversity, arbitrariness, and illegality."⁵⁸ Another contemporaneous historian contended that "Particularly disturbing...is the catch-all provision of the Statute on Comrades' Courts giving them jurisdiction over 'other antisocial acts not involving criminal liability.'"⁵⁹ In the statute's ambiguity, comrades' courts, in this historian's view, were allowed to prosecute any act that the community deemed unacceptable. La Pierre laments that this campaign against hooliganism, in which comrades' courts played a crucial role, exposed "millions of ordinary citizens" to power that "was often arbitrary and unregulated; and dragged them through a degrading or demeaning detention process."⁶⁰ In speaking of the legacy of comrades' courts, La Pierre maintains that the state had "failed to legalize their [comrades' courts] status as valid sites of discipline," because there was conflict between official judicial

⁵⁶ "Violators Have No Place in Our Collective," *Za Sovetskie Chasy*, December 26, 1963.

⁵⁷ George Feifer, *Justice in Moscow* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1964), 110.

⁵⁸ La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, 148.

⁵⁹ Berman, 290.

bodies and volunteer ones, and thus comrades' courts were ineffective.⁶¹ Comrades' courts' volunteerism and anti-establishment premise, that Khrushchev and other leading Soviet officials commended, were for many historians, the cause of their demise.

On the other end of the spectrum (and often in within the same historical work), some historians have contended that these volunteer organizations were under the direct rule of party-state authorities, and that they weren't authentic, autonomous examples of civil society. As one American historian put it in 1963, "what really has happened is that the party...has developed some new levers and transmissions belts to use in running the Soviet Union."⁶² George Feifer scoffed: "But it is annoying to read sanctimonious Soviet explanations that this election of judges guarantees their objectivity, independence and quality. What hypocrisy! The judge serves at the pleasure of Party."⁶³ Deborah Field has also contended that these organizations were in practice responsible to the nearest party outpost, and had no real autonomy.⁶⁴ Despite Field's use of a diverse array of sources, and a perspective of morality from average Soviet citizens, her quick dismissal of community groups as yet another example of the party-state machine controlling a docile population falls into the same totalitarian mindset as that of earlier generations of scholars. In my study of the comrades' court at the watch factory, I can see no evidence of the factory's party committee meddling in the affairs of the court. In fact, most frequently were calls from workers in the factory for the party to exert *more* control over the court, not less.⁶⁵ Although it's hard to say who of the court members were also members of the party organization, only a

⁶⁰ Brian La Pierre, "Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale," *Cahiers du monde russe* 47 (2006): 352.

⁶¹ La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, 148.

⁶² Darrell P. Hammer, "Law Enforcement, Social Control, and the Withering of the State: Recent Soviet Experience," *Soviet Studies* 14 (1963): 390.

⁶³ Feifer, 83.

⁶⁴ Field, 19.

⁶⁵ As an example in the comrades' court of the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory, see "The Comrades' Court Should Educate [*vospityvat'*]" by Z. Sidrova, *Za Sovetskie Chasy*, December 18, 1958.

handful of the defendants were party members themselves.⁶⁶ Party organizations in factories had their own Party Control Commissions to inspect the private lives of its members.⁶⁷

Historian Oleg Kharkhordin's 1999 *The Collective and the Individual in Russia* crystallizes the view in recent historiographical interpretations of Khrushchev's *obshchestvennost'* drive that the organizations were both poorly organized and just another arm of the Soviet state apparatus. His work deserves close examination because for nearly two decades since its publication, scholars have based their interpretations of volunteerism in the Khrushchev era on his groundbreaking work. In his introduction, Kharkhordin places himself squarely within the post-revisionist, cultural history framework.⁶⁸ This study, drawing from Foucault's methodology of archaeology and genealogy, traces the development of the individual vis-à-vis the development of the collective, beginning with ecclesiastical courts in the late nineteenth century, to the individual self-fashioning in literature in the Brezhnev era. Kharkhordin cordons off the *obshchestvennost'* movement as distinct by referring to it as Khrushchev's "collectivization-of-life" drive, in that through the proliferation and intensification of these organizations, the notion of the collective, *kollektiv*, congealed in Russian society.⁶⁹ Importantly for Kharkhordin, this movement under Khrushchev marked a clear rupture from Stalin's strategies of social control, but not in ways that other historians of the era have conceived. Although Kharkhordin notes that the power of volunteer groups "looks more benign than the mad terror of Stalinist days," because censure and administrative reprimands were qualitatively different from executions, this was not the defining difference for Kharkhordin

⁶⁶ One person (of 176) was a full Party member, two were candidates, and 26 were members of the komsomol.

⁶⁷ For more information on Party Control Commissions, see Edward Cohn, *The High Title of a Communist: Postwar Party Discipline and the Values of the Soviet Regime* (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2015).

⁶⁸ For more information on shifts in Anglo-American Soviet historiography over the past five decades, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," *History and Theory* 46, no. 4 (2007): 77-91.

⁶⁹ Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 280.

between the two eras.⁷⁰ The author argues that the "petty but profound terror" that ensued during the Khrushchev period was more encompassing, more total than anything Stalin could have imagined. Kharkhordin describes this collectivization-of-life drive as "a system of communal enslavement, a system more meticulous and thorough in its attention to each individual than the more openly repressive Stalinist one it replaced."⁷¹ Through mutual surveillance and a spread of horizontal controls, comrades' courts and *druzhiny* intervened into the most private areas of people's lives--an injunction Kharkhordin characterizes as horribly invasive. The rupture of the Khrushchev era for Kharkhordin was that the *obshchestvennost'* movement was *more* repressive, not less, than the Stalinist terror.

One reason for Kharkhordin's and others' conclusions are the theoretical orientations of the historians themselves. As I've mentioned, Feifer and other scholars were intent on portraying the Muscovites as emotional and erratic, and their works were littered with Cold War stereotypes about the communist enemy. One of those stereotypes was the totalitarian model of communism that has pervaded Anglo-American scholarship right up until the present day, long after the opening of the archives and the emergence of a revisionist school of Soviet historiography.⁷² Curiously, Kharkhordin tries to avoid the totalitarian model of understanding Soviet history by employing the theoretical insights of Michel Foucault. However, as I will elaborate in the theoretical scaffolding section, I contend that Kharkhordin falls into the same traps as totalitarian scholars.

Moreover, nearly all of the earlier works on the *obshchestvennost'* movement are blind to role of gender in shaping the movement itself. La Pierre's study is the only one to point out that nearly 98% of hooligans in the Khrushchev era were men. For La Pierre, hooliganism was

⁷⁰ Kharkhordin, 288.

⁷¹ Kharkhordin, 296-97.

shorthand for the “rough masculine rituals of drinking, cursing and fighting: working class displays of machismo that were an everyday occurrence.”⁷³ La Pierre (and others before him) stop short of considering who most likely would be the hooligan’s unintended target, or who appealed to community organizations for intervention. In this study, I will show how conversations in the courtroom to prosecute La Pierre’s hooligans were structured by gendered relations in the biological family.

Kate Brown's brief discussion of volunteer groups in closed city built to house the staff of a plutonium refining city, Ozersk, in the Ural Mountains is the only sympathetic appraisal of *obshchestvennost'* in the extant historiography. She contends that "to assume that Soviet community policing efforts were a way for the state to pry yet deeper into people's lives is to overlook the fact that Soviet citizens had been worried about crime and social disorder since the war ended, and that millions of volunteers readily joined the new programs because the reforms empowered them."⁷⁴ In her findings, this was especially true for women who finally had recourse for drunk, negligent, and violent husbands. For Brown, these groups, combined with a flooding of consumer goods and other services unavailable to communities outside of the closed zone, created a *Plutopia* for workers engaged in the world's most highly volatile substance.

Finally, these earlier historical works all share in the same methodological shortcoming: they all rely on evidence published in newspapers or contemporaneous legal journals of the time. The problem with such a source base is that newspapers and journals only published the most salacious cases, or egregious oversteps in authority. Both Kharkhordin and La Pierre, the most recent historians to investigate comrades’ courts and other volunteer organizations, suffer from

⁷² For an overview of Soviet historiography, see Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History."

⁷³ La Pierre, "Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale," 357.

⁷⁴ Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 178.

this discrepancy. Instead, I investigated a single comrades' court from 1954-1964, to analyze how workers articulated their grievances over time. This, I contend, is as close to a "bottom-up" exploration of the *obshchestvennost'* movement that historians have conducted. I analyzed the transcripts for common themes over time, and noted the trends (and exceptions to the trends) in my analysis. Of course, it is impossible to control for the effects of the party and state on mental processes and speech acts, but I argue that in reading the transcripts of individual cases, I can see how Soviet citizens articulated the problems facing their community, including problems within families, and how they envisioned change.

Furthermore, in breaking with previous historians, I propose situating the comrades' court of the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory into the history of labor relations during the Khrushchev era. All of the authors mentioned above have placed comrades' courts alongside *druzhiny*, women's councils, and other volunteer groups of the late-1950s as a package of *obshchestvennye organizatsii*. But I see comrades' courts as arising from a specific history within the Soviet state of resolving issues of labor discipline, and therefore propose situating the court within a broader labor history of the post-Stalin era. As mentioned, comrades' courts were originally intended by Lenin and early Bolsheviks to educate newly arriving workers in labor discipline. Their infractions were tried by a court of their peers. However, during the early Stalin era and the Great Patriotic War, desertion and other violations of labor discipline were criminal offenses. It wasn't until 1951 that these penalties were removed.⁷⁵ Donald Filtzer's 1992 work is the most extensive (and only) study of labor in the Khrushchev era, and the dramatic changes it underwent after the death of Stalin. In Filtzer's words, filtered through Marx's economic theory,

⁷⁵ Donald Filtzer, "From Mobilized to Free Labour: de-Stalinization and the Changing Legal Status of Workers," in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 162. Criminal penalties for absenteeism were moved in 1951, and criminal penalties for switching jobs weren't removed until 1956. However, there is little evidence that job changing was

Khrushchev was faced with the dilemma of somehow extracting the most surplus value from the workers without the use of coercion; workers were both guaranteed a job, and were free to change jobs as they pleased. Workers, however, in the absence of a multiparty system, had little bargaining power outside of individual actions to slow work speeds or otherwise interrupt productivity.⁷⁶ Just as absenteeism was de-criminalized in 1951, so were comrades' courts revitalized in a limited sense to oversee concrete violations of labor discipline. However, comrades' courts do not figure in Filtzer's otherwise extensive study on labor in the Khrushchev period.

My study aims to re-inscribe comrades' courts into the history of labor in the Khrushchev period. If, according to Filtzer, violating labor discipline was one of the only ways workers could exert control over their labor, how did workers themselves articulate their transgressions? In the absence of coercive state or party oversight, how did workers discipline themselves and build collectivity? Furthermore, what was the role of emotions in community building on the shop floor? I build off of Kenneth Strauss' 1997 study, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia*, in which he contends that "though engaging in conflicts and in cooperative efforts, as well as in unconscious ways, [Soviet workers] were turning the factory community into a social melting pot internally and into an urban 'community organizer.'" His study outlines "a theory of human agency in which Soviet society, not the state, was shaping itself. Between the Soviet party-state and population there emerged a strong intermediate institution: the factory-community."⁷⁷ How did this "factory-community" coalesce in the Khrushchev era, throughout the tremendous changes of the Thaw?

prosecuted in the courts after 1951. See also Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 37-38.

⁷⁶ Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 4-5.

Chapter Four: Theoretical Scaffolding, Methodological Tools

As I have discussed above, the most influential work on Khrushchev's *obshchesvennost'* campaign since the opening of the archives has been Oleg Kharkhordin's 1999 *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*. Indeed, the two leading edited collections on the Khrushchev era both discuss the volunteer movement, and both cite Kharkhordin's ominous conclusion as the interpretation of comrades' courts, *druzhiny*, parents' committees and women's councils in the 1950s-1960s. It is on Kharkhordin's partial reading of Foucault that I lay the foundation for the theoretical scaffolding that supports my different reading of comrades' courts. Crucially, power may be omnipotent, but as Foucault explains, it is also multivalent, and there are competing and collaborating manifestations of power complicating any totalitarian narrative. In a similar vein, I look to Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* for guidance on how to read for people "making use" of their environments. Here, I contend that gender—encompassed by the family unit—was a primary way in which power was organized in the court.

In reading through my materials for this project, I was struck by the preponderance of weighty, emotional language coming from all sides of the courtroom discussion. As I mentioned earlier, George Feifer and others dismissed the efficacy of comrades' courts on precisely these grounds: their emotionality. Instead, here I take the performance of these emotions seriously, and will explore how they worked in the factory. Affect theory provides a way to understand these complex emotions. I first use Silvan Tomkins' taxonomy of shame as a guide for how to read for shame in the transcripts. Then, I borrow from later feminist affect theorists who broadened Tomkins' individual studies and postulated the collective, political ramifications for emotion. After a discussion of the theoretical literature consulted for this thesis, I will briefly lay out the

⁷⁷ Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1997), 213.

methodological tools that I used to assemble the historical material that the theoretical scaffolding supports.

Theoretical Scaffolding

Post-structural social thought came rather late to Soviet historiography. Stephen Kotkin's 1995 opus *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* marked a turning point in the way historians have written about the Soviet period, and particularly Stalinism, by bringing French thinkers like Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and Pierre Bourdieu to the conversation table.⁷⁸ As discussed in my historiographical review, Oleg Kharkhordin's study *The Collective and the Individual* uses a Foucauldian lens to trace the bifurcation of the collective and individual in Russian society throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite this, Kharkhordin limits his analysis of Khrushchev's collectivization-of-life drive to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, disregarding the French historian's other writings on power. When describing the people's patrols, Kharkhordin explains that it was impossible to escape "their omniscient gaze and omnipresent power,"⁷⁹ reminiscent of Foucault's description of the panopticon prison in his *Discipline and Punish*.⁸⁰ This characterization of the power of volunteer groups actually serves to flatten the dynamic, multivalent forms of power and resistance for the nearly 10 million people that participated in these volunteer organizations. In fact, Kharkhordin does not discuss the kinds of people that participated in these groups at all. There are no individuals who enthusiastically participated, or resisted participation, or only participated for concrete,

⁷⁸ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). For an excellent overview of Soviet historiography as it has developed throughout the decades, see Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History".

⁷⁹ Kharkhordin, 286.

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 201-202.

achievable aims. There are no success stories of the collectivization-of-life drive, only violence and invasion of private life. But *Discipline and Punish* should be read alongside Foucault's other writings on power, including his chapter in *The History of Sexuality Part I*. There, Foucault describes a power that is "the multiplicity of force relations immanent" in a given situation that is "always local and unstable." I see, too, the *obshchestvennost'* campaign as a site of "the omnipresence of power...not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another."⁸¹ The collectivization-of-life drive, then, while it spread power horizontally throughout society and did not emanate from the state, should not be understood as a monolithic power machine blanketing Khrushchevian society. Instead, I aim in this thesis to study one specific iteration of the *obshchestvennost'* campaign to see how multiple expressions of power were mobilized and organized in the court, and for what purposes.

Studies of Soviet history are often locked into an interminable dichotomy of "state vs. society," in their investigations to determine whether Soviet citizens really *believed* the propaganda messages they were being inundated with. Underlying questions of state vs. society is an assumption that totalitarianism may be a useful paradigm for which to think about the Soviet Union. Could there really be an "autonomous society" underneath layers of centralization, repression, violence and terror? Stephen Kotkin grappled with these questions in his study of Stalin's Magnitogorsk in *Magnetic Mountain*. Kotkin looked to Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* for an alternative way to think about state power in the Soviet Union, and I also find his insights useful for my study. Certeau explains that even in situations where there is a gross power imbalance and an oppressively dominant ideology strapping a society, the way individuals "make use" of the world around them necessarily changes their environments in

⁸¹ Michel Foucault, "Method," in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 93.

ways that the powers at be did not expect. “Between the person (who uses them),” Certeau explains, “and these products (indexes of the 'order' which is imposed on him), there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them.”⁸² Although the workers of the watch factory’s comrades’ court disciplined each other in ways that seem to be in line with how Soviet authorities intended, the creative ways in which they combined labor discipline with family life, and the instrumental use of emotion, brought about unexpected results, as I will explain in Chapter 6.

One of my central arguments, and contributions to the historiography of the *obshchestvennost’* movement, is that gender as a structural category organized power in the courtroom. In the chapters that follow, I will show how defendants, court members, and those in the audience articulated their understandings of proper behavior along gendered lines within the family. Marriages were to be official, heterosexual, child-bearing, and free of violence, disrespect, or alcohol. Men were to provide for their families, and women were to raise their children in the manner of communist morality. Aberrations from this ideal-type were common, and importantly, revocable.

In my initial reading of the court transcripts, I was struck by the prevalence of highly emotional language that seemed to dominate courtroom conversations. Affect theory, pioneered by psychologist Silvan Tomkins in the 1960s, provides a way to consider emotion in social science research, without reducing it to an irrational, purely physical phenomenon, and/or as something uncivilized, primitive, or "Eastern". In the preface to the 2008 re-issue of Tomkins’ seminal *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, Donald Nathanson explains that “over the decades of his research, Tomkins identified nine of these primary motivating mechanisms, the inborn protocols that when triggered encourage us to spring into action...Affect is motivating but never

⁸² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1985), 32.

localizing; the experience of affect tells us only that something needs our attention.”⁸³ Affects, then, are biologically produced changes in humans’ physiognomy that, when given attention and recognition, become a feeling. When that feeling is associated with past histories of such affective experience, the feeling is described as an emotion. The face, for Tomkins, was the primary site on the body for displaying affective changes, and to which he dedicated the most of his experiments. Because his theory identifies “inborn protocols” in humans, Tomkins spent a lot of time studying the faces of infants and young children in particular, to identify affect from the earliest years of life.

Shame is one of the negative affects that Tomkins identified later in his career, and which I highlight as especially relevant in the comrades’ court. For Tomkins, “the innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy.”⁸⁴ One of the earliest experiences of shame in a person’s life is when an infant realizes that it has experienced joy at looking at the face of someone who is not its mother. The infant then averts its eyes and attempts to hide its face in the shame of mis-recognition. For Tomkins, shame is ambivalent because it emanates from a desire to maintain contact with the love object—in the case of the infant, its mother.⁸⁵ In Chapters 5 and 6, I will use Tomkins taxonomy of shame to identify the affect within the comrades’ court, and show how the ambivalence of shame actually served to maintain contact between the defendant and the collective.

But in this thesis, I am interested not only in identifying the various permutations of affect within the courtroom, but also in asking, *How did this affect work? What did this affect do?* To help answer these questions, I borrow from feminist affect theorists to expand on the role

⁸³ Donald L. Nathanson, “Prologue: Affect Imagery Consciousness,” The Tomkins Institute <http://www.tomkins.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PROLOGUE-nathanson.pdf>, April 27, 2017.

⁸⁴ Silvan Tomkins, “Shame-Humiliation and Contempt-Disgust,” in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 134.

of emotions in the court. In reading through the court transcripts and other pamphlet literature from the time, I was struck by the prevalence of highly emotional, moralizing language. Rather than being something private and irrational, I see emotions in the courtroom as a collectively produced experience that operated in a coherent manner. In Chapter 6, my analysis of this historical case is informed by such affect theorists as Sara Ahmed, Eve Sedgwick, Janice Irvine, and Deborah Gould. I argue that an emotional community was formed in the factory that shared in the collective emotions of love and shame. Furthermore, part of a worker's *vospitanie*, or education, in the watch factory was an emotional education that the factory media helped to inculcate. In this sense, part of the disciplining power of the court members, in the Foucauldian sense of the word, was affective in nature.

The “emotional turn” in Soviet historiography has contributed greatly to our understanding of Soviet arts and literature, with few notable excursions into the role of emotions in political formation. In 2011, Mark Steinberg and Valeria Sobol edited a collection of essays in their *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* spanning the 18th-21st centuries, and including territories of the former Soviet Union. In his essay “Thinking About Feelings,” Ronald Suny argues for the importance of studying emotions in history, and contends that “specifying the emotions involved adds an essential element between structure and action that purely structural or strictly rationalist explanations leave out.”⁸⁶ It is this interplay between the structure of the comrades’ court and the emotions deployed that I aim to navigate in this thesis. In Glennys Young’s insightful essay on the Central Committee’s February-March Plenum of 1937, she argues that an “emotional hermeneutics” instructed top Party members to interpret “emotions as

⁸⁵ Tomkins, 137.

⁸⁶ Ronald Suny, “Thinking About Feelings,” in *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe*, Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol, eds. (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011): 103.

a way of diagnosing the underlying political essence of the self.”⁸⁷ The assumption behind this logic was that lurking uneasily beneath the surface, Communist Party members hid deeper, more authentic emotional truths. In this way, Young underscores that emotions and emotional management were critical concerns of Soviet leaders, and not to be dismissed as superfluous, or worse, bourgeois, expressions. In Polly Jones’ contribution on sincerity in Iurii Bondarev’s 1962 *Tishina* (Quietness), the first exposé in print of the horrors of Stalin’s gulags, she shows how “authors, editors, literary critics, readers, censors, and part officials” used literature to navigate new “emotional regimes” in the period of transition during the Thaw.⁸⁸ In Serhy Yekelchky’s 2014 *Stalin’s Citizens: Everyday Politics in the Wake of Total War*, the author investigates the everyday expressions of political participation in the Soviet project in the newly liberated Kiev after WWII. A large part of Yekelchky argues that proper displays of “civic emotions,” like hatred of the Nazi aggressors, made Kiev citizens “Soviet”. These civic emotions “functioned as a marker of a person’s inclusion in the political world rather than a true reflection of his or her beliefs.”⁸⁹

Equally relevant for this thesis, Soviet historians have also begun investigating the theatricality of early Soviet courts. Julie A. Cassiday’s *The Enemy on Trial* looks at theatrical productions of early Soviet courts, both in movies and theater. She focuses on the show trials of Stalin’s Great Terror, and contends that the theatricality of the trials was not impervious to “the vicissitudes of history and the peculiarities of culture.”⁹⁰ To investigate the connection between theater and show trial, Cassiday embarks on an examination of the cultural representations of the

⁸⁷ Glenys Young, “Bolsheviks and Emotional Hermeneutics: The Great Purges, Bukharin, and the February-March Plenum of 1937,” in *Interpreting Emotions*, 132.

⁸⁸ Filtzer, “From Mobilized to Free Labour,” in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 155.

⁸⁹ Serhy Yekelchky, *Stalin’s Citizens: Everyday Politics in the Wake of Total War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.

⁹⁰ Julie A. Cassiday, *The Enemy on Trial: Early Soviet Courts on Stage and Screen* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 4.

show trials. Cassiday's study is especially pertinent to this thesis because I posit the comrades' court as a theater, drawing on the historical precedent of earlier decades in Soviet criminal justice. In my study, I posit the comrades' court as a "theater of shame," any pay attention to the specific structural procedures of this volunteer court that produced the show. In Elizabeth A. Wood's 1995 *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia*, the author investigates the series of mock trials (*agitatsionnye sudy*) that were performed in the Soviet Union from 1919 to 1933. She argues, "whereas the earliest trials were structured in such a way to elicit dialogue and to acquit the fictional defendants, the later ones relied on humiliation, intimidation, and the collective guilt of all involved." These trials were a measure of *vospitanie*, or education, in the hopes of instilling the newly-working classes with new social norms.⁹¹

Pavel Vasilyevich's pioneering February 2017 article, "Revolutionary Conscience, Remorse and Resentment: Emotions and Early Soviet Criminal Law, 1917-1922" is the only work to my knowledge that engages with the questions of emotions in the courtroom. Vasilyevich corroborates Glennys Young's argument that emotions and emotional work were critical aspects of early Bolshevik revolutionary package. Vasilyevich looks at quotidian justice (not the high-profile show trials of saboteurs and counter-revolutionaries) and argues that, in the absence of legislated penal code, "emotions strongly influenced the administration of justice, the behavior of all legal actors, and the framing of defense in the early Soviet courtroom."⁹² The author posits the courtroom "as a space that is central to the process of marginalization, yet at the same time retains possibilities for negotiation, subversion, and the destabilization of

⁹¹ Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 1.

⁹² Pavel Vasilyevich, "Revolutionary Conscience, Remorse, and Resentment: Emotions in Early Soviet Criminal Law, 1917-1922," *Historical Research* 90, no. 247 (2017): 118.

hierarchies.”⁹³ Likewise, I also see the comrades’ court of the watch factory as a space where shared emotions can be both repressive and generative. In this thesis, I inscribe the courtroom in the broader factory environment to analyze the implications that emotions have for justice, labor, and as I will show in the following chapter, the family.

Methodological Tools

This study endeavors to be a “bottom-up” analysis of the *obshchestvennost’* movement during the Khrushchev era; this is an investigation of one comrades’ court at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory from the perspective of the participants themselves. Although there were unifying tropes of the hooligan in national media, and of course all union-wide statutes instituting the groups’ legality, I recognize the possibility that there was a great diversity of experience of the movement precisely because there was such little government oversight. Ten million people spanning two continents couldn’t possible have experienced the volunteer movement in the same way. To access this vantage point, I am looking at evidence produced by one of these groups itself. I am beginning with one comrades’ court in one factory in Moscow from 1954-1964, and reading the transcripts of the trials themselves to ask how workers conceived of the organization of power within these groups.

The transcripts of the comrades’ court at the watch factory are located in the factory’s collection at the State Archive of the City of Moscow (*Gosudarsvennyi Arkhiv goroda Moskvyy*). The comrades’ court at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory was formed in 1951, consistent with the crackdown on labor discipline in the late-Stalinist period.⁹⁴ I could not find any documents in the trade union files announcing the creation of the court, so I pick up my analysis

⁹³ Vasilyevich, 125.

when the transcripts of the trials begin: 1954. I selected this particular comrades' court at the watch factory for analysis because of availability: the watch factory saved the transcripts themselves throughout the decade, whereas in many other factories, only the decisions remain. There were also smaller comrades' courts at the departmental level, and sometimes those transcripts would be included in the all-factory case files, but for the most part their records have been destroyed. Sometimes after a departmental comrades' court trial, the accused would be referred to the larger all-factory court for further disciplinary action. The Moscow City Archives only preserved the all-factory court transcripts from 1954 to 1964, although the court existed before and after. The court saw approximately 170 cases during this ten-year period.⁹⁵ According to a 1960 article in *Za Sovetskie Chasy* (*To Soviet Watches*, as in "here's to Soviet watches"), there were 15 people elected to be members of the court, including the chairman or chairwoman, and so it was considerably larger than either the statute dictated, or legal scholars recommended.⁹⁶ Typically, case files of the trials included: the handwritten transcript of the proceedings, a questionnaire of the biographical information of the defendant from the personnel department (*otdel kadrov*), a slip from the factory director summoning the defendant to court, and a typed sheet of the decision. Some files included transcripts of smaller brigade meetings, written character statements from witnesses or friends, or any related documents from the police, if the defendant had been originally handled there. Many of the transcripts were illegible and I couldn't decipher the dialogue between the members of the court, the audience, and the defendant. However, even in those cases where the transcripts were difficult to piece together,

⁹⁴ Z. Sidrova, "The comrades' court should educate [*vospityvat*]," *Za Sovetskie Chasy* no. 49, December 12, 1959.

⁹⁵ It's hard to give a precise number because some of the transcripts were missing, and only the decisions remained. There were at least three cases where it was unclear if a trial was held at all, or if the court decided to settle the matter by other means.

⁹⁶ Z. Sidrova, "New composition of the comrades' court," *Za Sovetskie Chasy* no. 21, April 4, 1960.

the biographical information of the defendant, the crime he or she committed, and the decision was always typed.

In terms of methodology, I look to cultural historians' focus on language's power to create meaning. Following the linguistic turn in the social sciences beginning in the early twentieth century, cultural historians craft their research projects to investigate less how sociological categories or economic conditions shape reality, but how, language interacts with the material world to create meaning.⁹⁷ In this thesis, I do not view the institution of the comrades' courts as irrelevant to my study, but as a formation within which workers in the watch factory debated and unraveled violations of labor discipline. Of course, all historians go to archives and read words on pieces of paper, but here, I pay attention to the kinds of language people used in the court to articulate their grievances, and read the grouping of transcripts as a text in itself. The main argument of this thesis is that the words people said in the courtroom, read on the factory radio station, and wrote in the wall newspaper worked together in an attempt to reformulate the meaning of the family. I borrow from cultural anthropologists and conduct a thematic text analysis of the materials I gathered. A "thematic text analysis" is an examination of the occurrences of themes or concepts in a given work.⁹⁸ As Phillip J. Stone explains, a thematic text analysis can be quantitative or qualitative, and can be "quite informal" involving "'more or less' judgements."⁹⁹ In this study, I have stuck to a qualitative analysis of my materials, and noticed the repetition of the theme of the family. I then sought to explain by what processes the family entered the courtroom, and to what effects. My theoretical framework outlined above assisted me in organizing and explaining the inferences I made from my materials.

⁹⁷ Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2-3.

⁹⁸ Carl W. Roberts, ed., *Text Analysis for the Social Sciences: Methods for Drawing Statistical Inferences from Texts and Transcripts* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 3.

Chapter 6 relies primarily on the factory's media outlets at the time, which created part of the discursive environment in which the court was situated. The all-factory wall newspaper of the watch factory,¹⁰⁰ *Za Sovetskie Chasy*, was a single-sheet, double-sided newspaper that was printed twice weekly. The paper began the year the factory was founded, in 1930. Historically, wall newspapers were the ideological arm of the Communist Party in industrial enterprises—by promoting literacy and *kul'turnost'*, the factory wall newspaper could cultivate modern labor discipline in the newly-arriving proletariat, and contribute to erasing any vestiges of peasant "backwardness".¹⁰¹ Similarly, in the Khrushchev era, decisions of comrades' court trial were reprinted in the newspaper for educational purposes: to further shame the defendant, and to prevent other factory workers from committing the same kind of infraction. Only in April 1963 did the decisions of the trial in the transcripts mention publishing the proceedings of the case in the wall newspaper, however articles appearing as early as 1961 occasionally cover some trials¹⁰². The masthead of the paper indicates that it was an "organ of the party committee, factory committee [trade union organization], Komsomol [communist youth league], and directorate of the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory." Although the Communist Party Organizations (PPO, or primary Party organization) in the factory was the primary operations manager of the newspaper, many of the articles were written by worker-correspondents (*rabkory*), who voluntarily submitted articles from their perspective on the shop floor. The line between state and society, or Party and worker, is difficult to separate at the very micro level of individual interaction. It is this nexus that is the starting point of my analysis.

⁹⁹ Phillip J. Stone, "Thematic Text Analysis," in *Text Analysis for the Social Sciences*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ There were many more wall newspapers in the factory besides *Za Sovetskie Chasy* at the department and brigade level, but this one is the all-factory newspaper.

¹⁰¹ For more information, see Catriona Kelly, "'A Laboratory for the Manufacture of Proletarian Writers': The Stengazeta (wall newspaper), Kul'turnost', and the Language of Politics in the Early Soviet Period," in *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (2002): 573-602.

¹⁰² For example, "Comrades judge," *Za Sovetskie Chasy*, January 7, 1960.

Chapter Five: A Comrades' Court in Action

As I suggested in Chapter 3, comrades' courts were a space where factory workers took over the necessary interpersonal work of building healthy families that the state, despite all its legislative, economic, and moral efforts, could not always ensure. In this chapter, I zoom in on one court in particular to investigate how workers picked up the state's slack. I posit the comrades' court at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory as a "gender workshop." Here I use the term "workshop" to mean a space where problems were first identified and then were worked on collectively to get fixed. How did this workshop operate? Who were involved, and what work did this "workshop" perform?

This chapter concerns the first half of my definition of the workshop: the specific features of the comrades' court that brought the problems of the domestic realm into the public sphere for consideration. Society's broad understandings of hooliganism and labor discipline (that La Pierre derided in his study) allowed space for discussions of family life, in addition to workplace productivity and labor norms, and it was often that the court steered conversation away from the concrete domain of the crime on the factory floor to the turmoil in the domestic realm. In the course of the trial, workers (defendants, court members, and those in the audience) rendered the biological Soviet working family as broken and malfunctioning. However, these insufficiencies [*nedostatki*] were not insurmountable, and, with rare exception, did not disqualify the defendant from inclusion in the factory. The court transformed conversations about labor discipline to problems in the family in three stages: during the initial interrogation, the review of the community inspection, and when the meeting was opened for audience participation. In the initial interrogation between the chairman (or chairwoman) of the court and the defendant, the court almost always inquired about the defendant's family situation, thereby inserting from the

outset the family into discussions of workplace comportment. Defendants too would offer family troubles as a mitigating circumstance, or what drove them to deviance in the first place. Then, the court proceeded to recount the findings of the community inspection. In preparation for the trial, members of the defendant's brigade would visit the apartment and examine the defendant's relationships in the private sphere for further clues about his or her character. These additional discoveries would be presented to the audience for deliberation after the court members' initial interrogation. The other workers in the audience would then volunteer their opinions of the defendant and his or her behavior, and suggest a further course of action. These features of the factory court proceedings exposed the problems plaguing Soviet families, like domestic violence, child negligence, and endemic drunkenness. Thus, I argue, hearkening on Certeau, that Soviet workers “made use” of the comrades’ court at the watch factory as a platform to discuss family life.¹⁰³ Although the workers’ expositions of their families cannot be seen as direct resistance to the state, uncovering the failings of the domestic family had unintended political consequences, as I will show in the second half of the chapter.

Once the gender workshop identified the problems at hand, the *work* part of the workshop took over to fix the problem. In the second half of the chapter, I highlight the performative role of shame in the court. Nearly all historians of comrades’ courts note the ubiquity of shame directed to the defendant in the comrades’ courtroom, and recently historians have used Foucauldian notions of power to argue that shame was an insidious disciplining force.¹⁰⁴ In this chapter, I posit shame as an affect, and borrow from feminist affect theorists to show the productive, generative power of shame. I argue that shame directed toward the defendant actually served to retain temporary transgressors in the community. Moreover, shame was not

¹⁰³ For a deeper discussion of Certeau, see Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁴ See previous discussion in Chapter 4 of Kharkhordin’s *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*.

charged solely from the court members to the worker on the stand, but was spread throughout the auditorium. This shame was a socially produced and collectively shared emotion, and served to strengthen the bonds of the factory community. Lastly, I argue that the recovery from shame in a defendant's successful apology in turn re-covered the wounds of the biological family, without offering concrete solutions to heal them. In Chapter 6, I will further examine the role of emotions in community building by considering shame in the courts alongside love-identification in the factory media to re-form the ideal communal structure itself.

Gender and Labor Discipline

The factory began in 1930 making personal watches borrowing from Swiss expertise, and shifted production to include naval navigation instruments as the demands of the Great Patriotic War beckoned. By the 1950s, the factory was again primarily concerned with watches for personal consumption--a signal of the rising standard of living and household consumption indicative of the Khrushchev era.¹⁰⁵ I am less concerned about how prototypical this factory was in terms of the demographic makeup of its workers in comparison to other factories in the city, although those parameters could be taken into account for future research projects. Likewise, I am less concerned about how typical the comrades' court was compared with other courts in the city. This research will be left for another project, but here, my aim is to analyze how a workplace comrades' court operated. It should be noted, however, that of the 176 people that the court tried from 1954-1964, 35 (20%) were women. During this decade, the factory employed at

¹⁰⁵ For more on household consumption, see Svetlana Boym, *Common Places*, and Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union Under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (2005): 211-252.

any one time around 7,000 workers, and approximately 75% were women.¹⁰⁶ That means that roughly 8% of all men at the factory appeared before the comrades' court, while less than 1% of women did. (As a proportion of male workers, men were 12 times more likely to appear before the court than women.)

The few men of the factory, then, were overwhelmingly taking the stand for violations of social order and labor discipline. Inspired by Joan Scott's insistence upon gender as a category of analysis, I will show that their roles as husbands, fathers, and men were used to explain their roles as workers, citizens, and community members. Although fewer women appeared as defendants at the court, similarly their roles as wives, mothers, and women structured the conversations about disruptions of factory and public life. In other words, I argue that power in the courtroom was significantly organized along gendered lines in families, and less according to who was the most productive worker or loyal Soviet citizen. These conversations revealed that, far from being distinct spheres in a worker's life, an integral relationship existed between the family and the workplace. For the court, the family was sometimes the root cause of misbehavior, and always an additional victim. In constantly evoking the family in discussions of labor discipline and public order, the court ultimately showed how insufficient the collective of the family was in reproducing the Soviet worker. As shown in Chapter 2, the state's efforts to mold functional families weren't always working, and I argue here that members of the court transformed a space predicated on the correction of violations of labor discipline to a space to remedy this persistent problem in Soviet society.

Before even the initial interrogation could get to work, it is important to establish that all but one of the cases I discuss below were brought to court for violations of labor discipline or

¹⁰⁶ For the RSFSR as a whole, women comprised 44% of industrial workers in 1960. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 31.

public hooliganism in some form or another. Only one of the 170 cases dealt with infractions that occurred in the home or among family members; aside from this anomaly, the rest were violations of the larger social organization. In contrast to comrades' courts organized by housing committees in apartment buildings, workplace comrades' courts were intended to hear cases directly related to labor discipline or life within the factory walls. The most common violations the court heard were missing work, showing up to work drunk, and drinking on the job.¹⁰⁷ Later in the 1950s, the court at the watch factory began hearing cases that the local police had transferred for disruptions of social order in the surrounding community. The few misdemeanors that were committed in the public sphere included propositioning a woman for sex in the Leningrad railway station,¹⁰⁸ or when Comrade E. committed hooligan acts on a streetcar.¹⁰⁹ Whether they committed infractions inside or out of the factory, only one of the defendants was tried specifically for displaying improper behavior toward spouses, or for not raising children properly (although both of these were grounds for a case to be brought before a comrades' court according to the 1961 statute), as I will discuss at the end of this chapter. What is important is that the workplace community--court members, defendants, and the audience--shifted the terms of discussion of labor discipline and hooliganism to problems in the family. The leeway with which the state afforded the courts opened up the possibility for workers to discuss what mattered to them, without adhering to scripts of political loyalty, workplace productivity, or social contributions. The court treated alcoholism and truancy as being only the superficial offenses concealing a deep, troubled family life that the factory had a stake in resolving. What's more, self-professed family problems were now the concern of the entire factory community.

¹⁰⁷ Slightly over half, or 90 people, were tried at the court for an alcohol-related offense in the 10-year period under investigation.

¹⁰⁸ Protokol 08.09.1961, f. 365, op. 1, d. 663, ll. 220-231. Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv goroda Moskvyy [Central State Archives of the City of Moscow], hereafter, TsGAGM.

The first part of the workshop had unfolded: the community identified the family as the kinship structure that needed to be remedied.

Initial Interrogation

From the start of the trial, the court members explored the defendant's position in his or her family to uncover the hidden precursors to bad behavior. In nearly all initial interrogations following the presentation of facts, the court inquired explicitly about the defendant's family. A typical interrogation, like this one with Comrade V., a man, in 1961, asked questions like "What is the composition of your family? What are your living conditions?...Do you drink at home in your free time?"¹¹⁰ Sometimes the initial interrogation revealed explicitly broken families, like in the case of a young woman Comrade B., on trial after her fifth administrative offense for lateness or missing work. Comrade B. explained that her mother died young, and that her father lived with another family. Her grandmother and sister were the only ones left to raise the young worker. Comrade B. offered this information as context for her repeated infractions in the hopes that the court would be more lenient with her. In so doing, Comrade B. placed in public view her fractured family, "practically without parents," and the implications for labor discipline this familial collective had.¹¹¹ In another case, when the court tried Comrade F. for missing work, the court implored: "Tell us how you conduct yourself at home. How do you act with your wife and children? Do you scandalize them?" In one of the few instances of resistance to the invasiveness of the initial interrogation, Comrade F. blankly responded, "Anything happens in a family,"

¹⁰⁹ Protokol 12.10.1959, f. 365, op. 1, d. 494, ll. 103-111. TsGAGM.

¹¹⁰ Protokol 25.05.1961, f. 365, op. 1, d. 663, ll. 137-151. TsGAGM.

¹¹¹ Protokol 16.06.1961, f. 365, op. 1, d. 663, ll. 171-178. TsGAGM.

shielding his family life from further scrutiny.¹¹² Some defendants were reluctant to reveal details of their personal lives before their comrades in the factory, but even from Comrade F.'s evasion of the questions, this tipped off the court to probe deeper in later stages of the trial for evidence of troubled families. I will return to Comrade F.'s evasion later in the chapter when I discuss shame as a productive force.

Importantly, it wasn't just the court members prying into men's family lives during the initial interrogation. Men also offered their family situations as mitigating circumstances, or as the cause, to their violations. For example, in December 1954, Comrade G. appeared before his factory's court for showing up to work drunk.¹¹³ In the initial investigation, Comrade G. offered that things with his wife weren't so good at home, showing that, even in the eyes of this defendant, he viewed his families as broken and in need of intervention. Another Comrade S. appeared in 1958 for being drunk at work. After the court asked him who comprised his family (the defendant, his wife, and two children), Comrade S. expounded on this and explained that, "my wife and I aren't friendly," and that they just didn't understand each other. "I don't resort to fighting at home [*do drak ya doma ne dokhodil*]," he quickly added, and he paid alimony for the children.¹¹⁴ Comrade S. followed state demands for conduct in the private relationships to the letter: he paid child support, and didn't physically abuse his wife, both of which were against the law. However, Comrade S. found the laws insufficient to produce a home life hospitable to healthy behaviors. In another example, Comrade V., on trial for missing work for two days, explained point blank: "The reason for my behavior is my family situation." He elaborated that, "there are two bears in one lair [*Dva medvedya v odnoi berloge*]. The father isn't my own [*rodnoi*], there are always fights [*ssory*], and we had a bad life with my first wife because of

¹¹² Protokol 20.07.1964, f. 365, op. 1, d. 968, ll. 159-170. TsGAGM.

¹¹³ Protokol 15.12.1954, f. 365, op. 1, d. 248, ll. 25-31. TsGAGM.

this."¹¹⁵ Clearly, Comrade V. needed a to get out of this situation, but the formal state remedies weren't helping. Perhaps he could not get a divorce authorized through the quagmire of civil procedures. Were there no more apartments available for him to move out? Another Comrade L. explained that he missed work because, "on April 6, things were bad with my family and my wife. I fought and she threatened to divorce me. I was upset, and then went to drink, and then again." Comrade L. ended up missing work for a whole week because of the problems in his family. These were certainly not the harmonious families of "socialist communal living" that the state had hoped to inculcate with its propaganda campaigns and housing drive. In the cases I have seen at the watch factory, workers during the initial interrogation of the comrades' courts put the lingering problems of family life onto the community's agenda for further intervention.

In these examples, before even the court solicited participation from the audience, court members and defendants alike insisted that the family should figure central in violations of labor discipline. For men often more than women, the family was a key figure in shaming the defendant, and as a mitigating circumstance. The family increasingly came under the purview of court dialogue as the trial progressed, all under the pretense of investigating violations of labor discipline, and moved on to fix family discord. This initial interrogation shifted the domain of the debate; for the court, the collective of the family was in greater turmoil than the factory collective.

¹¹⁴ Protokol 29.09.1958, f. 365, op. 1, d. 421, ll. 39-44. TsGAGM.

¹¹⁵ Protokol 23.01.1961, f. 365, op. 1, d. 663, ll. 13-28. TsGAGM.

Community Inspections

According to the 1961 statute, members of the court, factory management, and other concerned citizens were allowed to participate in a verification of the facts of the case.¹¹⁶ Often, this involved a visit to the defendant's apartment building to ask family members and neighbors about his or her conduct in the private realm--details that seem out of place when investigating the facts of a case involving drinking on the job, for example. Members of the community inspection often raised the findings of the investigation after the initial interrogation, once the court accepted statements from the audience. I've separated out the specific details of the community inspection from the general conversation of the audience to show how new information about broken families entered the court. Although defendants were never tried specifically for domestic violence or child neglect, it was through community inspections that such demons of the private realm entered public life.

Critically, community inspections of the watch factory's comrades' court brought the horrors of domestic violence into the public realm. Domestic violence was notoriously hard to prosecute in official Soviet courts, and many women avoided interacting with the police for fear of further harassment or not being believed. Marianna Muravyeva notes that between the 1930s and 1960s, the Soviet state did not single out family violence in any of their criminological statistics because it wasn't differentiated from other forms of physical assault or deviant behavior.¹¹⁷ (It was not until the 1969 criminal code that domestic violence was treated as such.) Even when women tried to use formal pathways of redress, like appeals to the police force, they often were met with indifference.¹¹⁸ The People's Courts were so backlogged with other

¹¹⁶ Article 10, *Polozhenie o tovarishcheskikh sudakh 1961* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1961).

¹¹⁷ Muravyeva, 93.

¹¹⁸ La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, 133.

misdeemeanors that often women didn't come forward with their stories of abuse.¹¹⁹ Women couldn't rely on formal legislative or judicial mechanisms of the state to at least recognize the gendered violence that was a daily reality for many women. Although the volunteer court at the watch factory also didn't prosecute domestic violence as such (because light and serious bodily assault was still a criminal offense), the courts were a space where domestic violence was publicly recognized. The community inspection procedures of the court exposed instances of domestic violence that previously would have remained hidden in the private sphere, and offered them for community deliberation. This Khrushchev-era comrades' court was a novel approach to age-old problems: interpersonal violence that occurred in the private realm could not be solved by quietly settling matters behind closed doors, but by extolling the public to intervene.

Comrade S. appeared before the comrades' court in 1960 for a banal case of skipping work for three days. Instead of confining the conversation to the consequences such violations of labor discipline had for workplace productivity, the court focused on the community inspection that revealed a much more troubling picture. Comrade M. claimed that when he had come to Comrade S.'s apartment for an inspection, he found the defendant was drunk, and his wife beaten. A woman corroborated that Comrade S. was "always drunk, and habitually abuses his wife."¹²⁰ Similarly, to return to the case of Comrade F., who during the initial interrogation dismissively sighed that anything happens in a family, a community inspection revealed that "anything" really meant domestic violence. "He often comes home drunk, and scandalizes his wife," reported Comrade I., who had visited the defendant's home and talked with his neighbors to get a fuller account.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹²⁰ Protokol 05.05.1960, f. 365, op. 1, d. 576, ll. 85-98. TsGAGM.

¹²¹ Protokol 20.07.1964, f. 365, op. 1, d. 968, ll. 159-170. TsGAGM.

Far from being an unwanted invasion into private life, as Kharkhordin and La Pierre have contested, when viewed from the perspective of the receiving end of defendants' aggression, the community inspection revealed acts of violence against women that would have previously been confined to hearsay. It's hard to tell from the transcripts what (if anything) was done about the allegations of domestic violence that Comrade S.'s and Comrade F.'s co-workers raised at the session. But community inspections allowed for revelations in a public, semi-official space that violence still persisted between men and women in intimate relations despite the state's efforts to create functioning nuclear families. Moreover, these expositions of instances of domestic violence were revealed in front of audiences of a few hundred people. They weren't buried in secret Party Control Commissions, or contained in a small room in the district's People's Court. Results of community inspections that revealed domestic violence were broadcasted in conference halls and circulated among hundreds of people, contributing to a public awareness of the persistence of domestic violence.

A Public Forum

As discussed in the previous chapter, in the eyes of contemporary legal authorities, the real moral force of the comrades' courts were the public deliberations about the defendant's crime. In one handbook for comrades' court chairpeople and members, the author explained that

"Publicity [*glasnost*']—it is one of the most important principles, without which the formation of comrades' courts and their educational task would be impossible. Publicity means that the events of the comrades' court are conducted in the presence and with the participation of the collective of laborers and the *aktiv* of society. If the comrades' court reviews a case or conflict only in the presence of the violator or sparring sides, then the educational actions of its activities are directed only toward the given individuals. It's a different case when that same work is conducted in the presence of the whole collective. In this situation, the criticism of the actions of the offender are understood by the citizens

present at the court, and displays a serious warning for the actions of those who are not sufficiently solid, who still are susceptible to bad habits and foolish influences."¹²²

What details did workers at the watch factory find important to discuss in cases of absenteeism or drinking on the job? I argue that the open participation of the audience in the court trials transformed a workplace disciplinary court to a workshop on gender and familial roles. The public nature of the court enabled discussions about the proper roles for men and women, husbands, fathers, wives, and mothers that the state had yet to solidify. Moreover, by allowing the audience to participate in deliberations about the infraction and the defendant, workers, and especially women, were able to articulate the effects that harsh penalties would have for the rest of the family, considerations that were often overlooked in more formal courtrooms.

The audience of the comrades' court centered the effects the punishments would have on the defendants' families in their deliberations, both materially and symbolically. Materially, harsh sentences could result in fewer means for the family to survive. For example, in the community discussion of the case of Comrade S. (mentioned above), one of his co-workers recommended that the court should give the defendant a reprimand (*poritsanie*) because his family would suffer if his pay was lowered.¹²³ In another case concerning a group drink, a woman in the audience expressed her reservations about hearing the case at the People's Court: "I believe that we need to pursue these kinds of cases, but learning who of them has a family, who will suffer for their offenses, we need to transfer [the case] to the comrades' court."¹²⁴ If discipline and reform could be achieved without punishing the family as well, the factory comrades' court argued to keep the transgressor in-house. Symbolically, the defendant's trial had

¹²² Vorozheinkin, 41.

¹²³ Protokol 26.06.1963, f. 365, op.1, d. 866, ll. 76-84. TsGAGM.

weighed heavily on the family, which multiplied the gravity of the offense. At the same trial of Comrade Sh. (above) for drinking at work, another woman in the audience, Comrade R., condemned the accused because "he spoils the *kollektiv*, and poisons the life of his family," showing the symbolic consequences for the family of a workplace crime. During another trial in 1963 of Comrade S. for missing work, one of his peers remarked that, "from today, Comrade S. will withdraw himself [*udalyat'sya*] and think about his family." It is notable that the court did not recommend that Comrade S. reflect on the livelihood of his brigade, the factory as a whole, his Moscow community, or even the Soviet state at large. The court conceived of the gravest aspects of Comrade S.'s labor infraction as being directed primarily against his family. Community involvement in the court proceedings allowed for a broader consideration of the consequences of punishments, and recognized the effects on the family that formal, state-administered sentences carried.

Shame in the Courtroom and Beyond

In nearly all accounts of volunteer courts in the Khrushchev era, historians have noted the disciplining power of shame in the public forum of a court trial. Instead of exiling violators to prison camps, or using violence to enforce sentences, comrades' courts operated by making a spectacle of the errant worker. In the auditorium, the defendant sat at a table facing hundreds of his or her co-workers, meeting the gaze of his or her peers. By encouraging anyone present to participate, the people with whom the defendant worked side-by-side for eight hours a day, five or six days a week could cast judgment. The bad behavior of the watch factory's defendants

¹²⁴ Protokol 24.08.1959, f. 365, op. 1, d. 494, ll. 62-77. TsGAGM.

reverberated in factory wall newspapers and radio broadcasts, magnifying the effects of shame.

Brian La Pierre contends that

“Shame was at the center of the soft-line system's [use of *obshchestvennost*’ as opposed to state measure] conversion drama. Before they could be saved for the Soviet system, offenders had to be shamed and made to acknowledge the gravity of their offense. To enact this process of shaming and status reversal, officials required that workplaces convene a special assembly for the public discussion and collective condemnation”

of the violator.¹²⁵ Similarly, Oleg Kharkhordin also notes that "both colleagues and neighbors of the defendant were supposed to be present at and participate in this shaming procedure [of publicly confessing misdeeds and asking for forgiveness]," at the comrades' court meeting.¹²⁶ But aside from identifying the preponderance of shame in the comrades' court meetings, these authors stop short of exploring the quality and characteristics of that shame, and what precisely shame *did* in the setting of the court.

In this section, first I will use Silvan Tomkins' astute taxonomy of shame to inform how I locate the affect in the transcripts of the court. I will show that the shape that shame took when deployed from members of the audience to individual defendants frequently disciplined wayward notions of masculinity. In addition to disciplining the defendant, I argue that shame served to keep the workers on the stand in the factory community. Although Tomkins is primarily concerned with individual experiences of shame, I turn to feminist affect theorists like Sara Ahmed and Janice Irvine to show that shame circulated among various members in attendance, and was an inherently public, social emotion. In the sense, I contend that shame served to strengthen the bond of the factory collective. As I have demonstrated, in the initial interrogation and community inspection, the court had already brought the family into public discussion, and exposed its ineptitude as a model of socialist communal living. In the final part of this chapter, I

¹²⁵ La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, 180.

will turn to the apologies arising from shame that contributed to the re-covering of the domestic family's problems, without actually addressing the concrete injuries.

In his seminal multi-volume work *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, psychologist and social theorist Silvan Tomkins describes a system of affects--to be distinguished from emotions--that humans experience, originating in biological processes. "Shame-humiliation-contempt" is one of the negative affects that Tomkins posits in his opus; many of the defining characteristics of shame that he identifies appear in the public shaming that occurred in the comrades' court. For Tomkins, shame is ambivalent (whereas disgust is unequivocal) because there exists a troublesome combination of pleasure and rejection, connection and aversion. He defines shame as an incomplete reduction of interest or joy.¹²⁷ Shame was also marked on the body by averting the eyes, lowering the head, blushing, and turning in on oneself. Such a thorough taxonomy of shame allows historians to more precisely identify and describe the kind of shame present in individual moments in Khrushchev-era comrades' courts. The following are two clear examples when the word shame, *stydl*, was used to subjectify the defendant as the one who experiences shame. In one case in 1959, Comrade K. confessed to his crime (a group drink at work) and his affective experience when he declared, "Having announced that, I am very ashamed. I can't look anyone in the eye."¹²⁸ Other comrades in the courtroom could identify shame in the defendant, too. In another case that same year, a person from the audience remarked that "[Comrade Sh.] has been corrupted. He is silent now because he is ashamed and he can't say anything for his own justification."¹²⁹ In addition, following Tomkins' specification, I read shame also in instances when defendants wanted to hide details of their home life from the court. Earlier, I showed how,

¹²⁶ Kharkhordin, 282-283.

¹²⁷ Tomkins, 134.

¹²⁸ Protokol 24.08.1959, f. 365, op. 1, d. 494, ll. 62-77, TsGAGM.

¹²⁹ Protokol 01.09.1958, f. 365, op. 1, d. 421, ll. 1-8, TsGAGM.

when the court asked Comrade F. if he scandalized his wife or children, the defendant responded coolly that “anything happens in a family,” without offering any further details. I read this as a brief moment of resistance to the court’s asking about his personal life, and as a demonstration of shame. By avoiding the question, Comrade F. hid from view his role in his family, perhaps because he was ashamed of it.

But just because someone exhibited shame on his or her body, admitted to being ashamed, or spoke shaming words, doesn’t necessarily mean that shame was the affect that touched the core, inner self. Indeed, Janice Irvine contends that emotions are “deeply social, constructed from the outside in,” and cannot necessarily be read as a reflection of some “authentic” self.¹³⁰ This does not negate emotion and affect, but it places them in a social context to allow researchers to move beyond the individual experiences of affect and consider the myriad competing historical and material forces that also propel emotion. Irvine writes about sex panics in school auditoriums in the contemporary U.S., a public setting not unlike a Soviet comrades’ court.¹³¹ Irvine highlights how many of the school town hall meetings to discuss sex education were remarkable similar in the stories people told and format of the meetings, to the point of literal repetition of anecdotes. She argues that emotions in these settings are dramaturgically produced, in that they occur within a kind of “theater,” with “settings, cast, audience, staging, masks.”¹³² I also see the comrades’ courtroom as a kind of theater, with the factory auditorium, defendant and court members, and worker-audience all adhering to predictable, emotional

¹³⁰ Janice Irvine, “Transient Feelings: Sex Panics and the Politics of Emotion,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no. 1 (2008): 3.

¹³¹ Trials also took place in the auditorium of the factory where the defendant violated labor discipline, just as the school is the physical location in Irvine’s study where sex education was conducted. In this case, shame occurred in an auditorium with hundreds of workers. Also, workers in the audience were members of the public, in the sense that they were not directly related to one another and did not all live together, but they were united by the fact that they worked together, and spent a large amount of their time together at the factory. Similarly, Irvine’s school community were not anonymous, randomly congregating members of the public, but had the commonality of being parents of schoolchildren.

scripts. Both contemporaries and current scholars hearken on the theatricality of Khrushchev-era comrades' courts. In the previous quotation, Brian La Pierre notes the "conversion drama," of the court, in which workplaces "convene a special assembly for the public," so that defendants can be "exhibited" and subject to the "enduring gaze," of the audience. Indeed, according to the 1961 statute on comrades' courts, the proceedings had to take place in the workplace after working hours, identifying the time of the performance, and the geographic location of the theater. The leading actors of the courts were the chairman or chairwoman, two to three members, and a secretary, while the protagonist was the defendant. As I've shown in the first half of this chapter, there was even a script guiding the court proceedings: first, a presentation of the biographical data of the defendant and the basic facts of the offense; then, an interrogation of the defendant by members of the court; after that audience members could offer their opinions on the defendant's behavior; and finally the performance resolved when the court members issued a verdict and punishment. Therefore, what I claim in this section is not that workers felt shame, but rather that they *performed* shame in what they said and in how they carried their bodies. Similarly, the witnesses of shame didn't necessarily "believe" the ashamed's demonstrations as authentic expressions, but they tacitly accepted the performance as a sufficient performance of shame. Of course, there were invariably other affects of disgust, sadness, joy, etc. that also circulated in the courtroom, but I've singled out and centered shame because of its overwhelming repetition in the transcripts.

For Sara Ahmed shame, and affects broadly speaking, requires an encounter with past histories of shame to produce the affect. "Rather than using stickiness to describe an object's surface, we can think of stickiness as an effect of surfacing, *as an effect of histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs*. To relate stickiness with historicity is not to say that some

¹³² Irvine, 17.

things and objects are not ‘sticky’ in the present. Rather, it is to say that stickiness is an effect. That is, stickiness depends on histories of contact that have already impressed upon the surface of the object.”¹³³ While a thorough discussion of the history of shame in the Soviet system is beyond the purview of this thesis, it should be noted that shame as a disciplining tool had been used for decades prior to Khrushchev's *obshchestvennost'* campaign. Elizabeth Wood shows in her chapter that a fictional play of two boys being shamed for smoking cigarettes in 1925 circulated throughout the Soviet Union as an agitation trial.¹³⁴ Furthermore, stories of shaming instances proliferated in contemporaneous media, even in the very local community of the watch factory.¹³⁵ Shame, therefore, was expected, even preconditioned, by the historicity of the affect and the prevalence of shaming narratives in the mass media.

Whereas propaganda campaigns charged men to be better fathers--even by deploying shame--generic extortions could not accomplish the confrontational, interpersonal shame that the court audience could in an effort to change deeply-seated attitudes about gender and the family. In the examples that follow, I will show that for the watch factory's hooligans, shame was performed (and recognized) when defendants didn't satisfactorily reduce or eliminate their pleasure from drinking on the job, showing up to work late, or abusing their wives. Members of the court also pointed to the defendants' childish--and therefore un-masculine--behavior, in order to induce shame on the stand. Shame, then, directed from the audience members to the individual defendant, served to carve out the gender order that the court wanted to establish for the community.

¹³³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 90.

¹³⁴ Wood, “Shaming Boys Who Smoke Cigarettes,” in *Performing Justice*: 174-192. Although Wood does not critically engage with shame as an emotion, my point here is that there was a historical precedent for both courts to be theatrical, and shame to figure prominently in the courtroom.

¹³⁵ In Chapter 6, I will discuss in greater detail the role of the factory's wall newspaper and radio station in creating a discursive environment that surrounded workers, and the affects that circulated therein.

For example, Comrade Sh. appeared before the court for being drunk at work. One of his coworkers criticized the defendant for violating the norms for a married man with children, deriding the defendant for "having a family, but behaving like a little boy [*mal'chishka*]."¹³⁶ Little boys, in the vocabulary of Tomkins, don't know how to satisfactorily reduce their joy in play at the appropriate time, and therefore experience shame before scolding adults. The coworker infantilized Comrade Sh., as Tomkins' proverbial ashamed child. In the case of Comrade F., whose community inspection (above) revealed domestic violence, his fellow coworkers had a lot to say about the defendant's role in the family after learning of his deplorable home life. Members of the audience shamed Comrade F. for violations of the gender rules the community wanted to uphold. When his wife wasn't home, Comrade F. invited two young women (*devitsy*) into his home, and a few hours later, led them out. Comrade I. lambasted "that kind of behavior of a father of two children." An upstanding worker at the watch factory should be a good husband, meaning that he didn't bring young women around the house when his wife wasn't home. Here, Comrade I. derided the defendant for acting like a child and not taking responsibility for the wellbeing of his family. Another Comrade L. rose in exasperation and proclaimed: "it is beyond comprehension [*ne ukladyvaetsya v golove*] that a grown man, a father of a family, can't show up to work. I don't understand how Comrade F. thinks he is supporting his family." In a certain sense, I view truancy as a demonstration of shame in itself: Comrade F. was ashamed of their tumultuous family life, and hid from work to avoid exposure before his collective. "His poor wife came to me for two days and cried that she had nothing to pay for the children," Comrade F.'s department boss added. "And you, Comrade F., are running around town [*progulivaesh*]. Have you even once been with your children? Not once. And you decided with the department committee, having committed a crude offense, to refuse 20 rubles in material help

¹³⁶ Protokol 01.09.1958, f. 365, op. 1, d. 421, ll. 1-8, TsGAGM.

for your children? Your wife said otherwise your children would have to be taken out of daycare."¹³⁷ Comrade F.'s boss, thus, highlighted the humiliating failures of the defendant as father and provider for all of the audience to hear. As a good father and husband, the audience charged Comrade F. to be involved in his family's life, and support them materially. In another case in 1960 of a different Comrade F., one woman decried, "It's a wonder your wife hasn't left you. My husband doesn't drink like that. Are you not ashamed before your collective?"¹³⁸ In this example, Comrade F.'s coworker explicitly detailed the kinds of behaviors that were not permitted of husbands in the factory collective. Members of the forum did not use the generic word *rabochii*, *rabotnik*, *trudyashchii*, or *tovarishch* (all various degrees of worker or laborer) when lambasting the defendant for alcohol abuse, but for *husbands*, a category marking gender and (hetero-)sexuality norms.

According to Tomkins, another aspect of shame's ambivalence is its inability to be contained in a body. Shame is not stagnant or fixed, a state of the ashamed, but rather a process. It is this ambivalence of shame that set in motion the work of shame. Tomkins notes the "hall of mirrors of shame" that occurs when the original shamer is ashamed by the shame of the one who was shamed, highlighting the contagious nature of the affect.¹³⁹ Although shame can be experienced in the physical absence of others, the ashamed always at least imagines a witness to his or her shame, as both a referent and someone with whom to share in the shame. Shame is only possible in the presence of another, whether real or imagined. Sara Ahmed notes that "the demand for a witness shows us that the speech act...generates more than just a subject and an object; it also generates a community of those who are bound together through the shared"

¹³⁷ Protokol 20.07.1964, fond 365, op.1, d. 968, ll. 159-170, TsGAGM.

¹³⁸ Protokol 08.03.1960, f. 365, op. 1, d. 576, ll. 59-70, TsGAGM.

¹³⁹ Tomkins, 155.

shaming of the defendant.¹⁴⁰ What's more, I will show that in the comrades' court, shame was not simply doled out from the members of the court or the audience to the defendant, in a unidirectional force, but traveled throughout the defendant's daily world. Court members felt shame for having to discipline the defendant; audience members felt shame for letting the defendant succumb to vice; and the family-in-absentia was conjured to demonstrate a further object of shame. Shame was not a private emotion, but a public one; in the courtroom, shame served to stick workers together.

Shame's inability to be located in the body of the defendant is an under-recognized and crucial quality for its generative power. As an example, in a case of drinking on the job, the defendant's boss rose to express that "it is shameful when we judge a woman for drinking at work," revealing that the court members felt shame for having to shame the defendant.¹⁴¹ Often, members of the audience referenced the assumed shame of the defendant's family (who were not present at the trial), like one woman who commented that she "feels bad for his wife and son, probably the wife is very ashamed of him."¹⁴² Shame spread beyond the theater of the comrades' court, and into the imagined elsewhere of the defendant's family. True, propaganda campaigns and the Soviet state could garner up a shaming message to extol men and women to be better family members, but in their flat, generic slogans, shame didn't reverberate or perpetuate in the same way. In these efforts from on high, shame blanketed the population in stagnant, anonymous censure. Comrades' courts, on the other hand, allowed for shame to be circulated and resonated in context.

¹⁴⁰ Ahmed, 94. Although in this passage Ahmed is discussing the affect of disgust, the same principle can be applied to shame, by virtue of its "stickiness" to love. For a further discussion of love in the comrades' court, using Ahmed's reading of affect, see Chapter 6.

¹⁴¹ "Protokol 30.10.1962," f. 365, op. 1, d. 886, ll. 133-148, TsGAGM.

¹⁴² "Protokol 01.09.1958," f. 365, op. 1, d. 421, ll. 1-8, TsGAGM.

The defendant's brigade members also performed shame that one of their members had fallen to vice. In the same case, another worker confessed that concerning the fact "that [Comrade Sh.] comes to work drunk, we ourselves are at fault. We protect him at work, when we need to do otherwise with him--[we] need to expose [him]. Often comrades hide drunkenness and hangovers, they don't unmask them [*na svezhuyu vodu ne vyvodyat*]." In this theater of shame, fellow workers are ashamed for the drunken man, and also are ashamed of themselves for hiding him, echoing Tomkins' description of shame as a turning away. In another case of a man who didn't show up to work for three days, one of his colleagues remarked, "That Comrade S. conducts himself poorly in the collective, that's a fact, but it's partially our fault. Few are interested in his family life, and we are only just now registering these facts." Another lamented that despite the channels of discipline in place prior to appearing at the comrades' court, the brigade failed to instill good morals. Workers here recognized the shame in temporarily losing interest and contact with the defendant, just as Tomkins theorized. One Comrade K. proffered that, "I don't think that he is being encouraged, but it is our neglect that we didn't call him out at the department committee."¹⁴³ One Comrade Kh. focused his testimony as much on the faults of the brigade as on the defendant when he decried, "The silence of workers, not wanting to stand up and judge Comrade Sh., is not for the benefit of Sh. Behind his back they talk and complain, but here they're silent."¹⁴⁴ Workers in the audience noted the shame of trying to cover up and obscure violations of labor discipline, and also the shame that resulted in losing interest in the personal life of the defendant. Shame was not confined in these examples to the defendant, but spread throughout those in attendance at the comrades' court, and even extended to the family who weren't present. Although the intensities of the affect were notably different for the

¹⁴³ "Protokol 05.05.1960," f. 365, op. 1, d. 576, ll. 85-98, TsGAGM.

¹⁴⁴ "Protokol 01.09.1958," f. 365, op. 1, d. 421, ll. 1-8, TsGAGM.

defendant and his fellow comrades, shame was still the commonality undergirding and congealing the collective.

Indeed, the circulation of shame in the comrades' court allowed for the expansion of the workers' collective. Following from Ahmed's theorization of the "stickiness" of affect, I see shame also as not residing wholly in the individual, but adhering to other collective signs. In reading through the transcripts, the performances of shame that were recorded occurred in close proximity to broader collective associations. Discursively, this attached shame to these collective organizations, thereby making shame a constitutive process in the strengthening of communities. For example, in a case of a man who missed work for three days, one of his colleagues insisted that, "we can never exclude him from the collective. We have to punish him with the force of the collective."¹⁴⁵ In the trial of Comrade Ye. for propositioning a woman for sex in the metro, one worker remarks that "he is a *komsomolets* [member of the Communist Youth Organization]," thereby not alienating the defendant, but placing him in a larger collective body. The same colleague remarked that, "we are builders of communism," identifying the errant worker with Khrushchev's 1961 "Moral Code for the Builders of Communism."¹⁴⁶ These references to larger organizations served not as a foil to the defendant's individual bad behavior, but to show that these groups had the encompassing power to rehabilitate an individual worker. The defendant violated these collective bodies, but ultimately these collective bodies fought to have the defendant returned to them for further education.

¹⁴⁵ Protokol 05.05.1960, f. 365, op. 1, d. 576, ll. 85-98, TsGAGM.

¹⁴⁶ Protokol 08.09.1961, f. 365, op. 1, d. 663, ll. 220-231. TsGAGM.

The Defendant's Successful Apology

In order to be readmitted into the factory community—that is, given any punishment short of termination—a defendant had to satisfactorily apologize before the courtroom. There are two aspects of a successful apology that I highlight in this section: the apologizer's bodily performance of shame as an indication of remorse, and the affirmation of love for the factory collective as an ideal-type. As discussed in the previous chapter, shame requires a witness. Whether the court members, those in the audience, or the imagined family outside of the courtroom, a plethora of witnesses were available for the defendant's shame to be recognized. The defendant had to display certain bodily characteristics or declare statements of explicit remorse in order for the "apology" to be accepted by the community. Sara Ahmed contends, "shame binds us to others in how we are affected by our failure...that must be witnessed, as well as be seen as temporary, in order to re-enter the family or community."¹⁴⁷ In approving of the defendant's apology as legitimate, the court also allowed their fellow comrade, who had temporarily fallen victim to vice, to re-enter the factory community.

For example, in 1954 in the case of a young woman, Comrade K., for truancy, two different members of the audience rose to note that "there was not the least kind of remorse on her face,"¹⁴⁸ presumably meaning that the defendant didn't display an appropriate amount of shame in her actions. These audience members doubted if Comrade K. could be brought back into the collective because in not displaying shame, Comrade K. didn't affirm the very legitimacy of the rules of the collective. Despite these two contestations, ultimately the court decided to limit punishment to a reprimand. This case shows, however, that sincere apologies and demonstrations of shame could be found on the face, and that audience members looked

¹⁴⁷ Ahmed, 108.

¹⁴⁸ Protokol 27.10.1954, f. 365, op. 1, d. 248, ll. 9-16, TsGAGM.

there for proof of remorse. The court did find remorse in the case of the collective drink, mentioned earlier. One member of the audience added that the defendant must be ashamed because “at work, before the court, they literally cried.”¹⁴⁹ This was the same trial mentioned above when one of the defendants sheepishly admitted that he was so ashamed, he couldn’t look anyone in the eye. Crying was an unequivocal, demonstrable sign of remorse, and a detail that an observer deemed significant enough to reiterate during the trial.

In addition to the bodily displays of a successful apology was a declaration of contrition, a “pure-hearted confession,” or *chistoserdechnoe priznanie*. As the chairman of the comrades’ court explained in one article in the factory wall newspaper, “The comrades’ court can limit public discussion of the case and not undertake collective actions if the guilty party, having repented pure-heartedly, delivers an apology to the collective, or compensates the aggrieved party.”¹⁵⁰ This pure-hearted confession was also used once the trial came to the courtroom as proof of the defendant’s sincere remorse. The errant members who organized a group drink (above) in 1959 demonstrated this “pure-hearted confession,” and so did Comrade P. in 1961 for stealing watch parts.¹⁵¹ In another case, Comrade N. went even further to “give his word from his whole soul [*dayu slova ot vse dushi*]” to authenticate his apology.¹⁵² As historian Polly Jones has argued, sincerity was an especially important characteristic in the Khrushchev era because it differentiated attitudes and, in her case, literature, from the formulaic and insincere models of Stalin-era socialist realism.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Protokol 24.08.1959, f. 365, op. 1, d. 494, ll. 62-77, TsGAGM.

¹⁵⁰ Belov, I. “Greater rights of the collective: the new comrades’ court statute,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* No. 64, 14 August 1961.

¹⁵¹ Protokol 18.05.1961, f. 365, op. 1, d. 663, ll. 123-136, TsGAGM.

¹⁵² Protokol 24.12.2958, f. 365, op. 1, d. 421, ll. 67-74, TsGAGM.

¹⁵³ Polly Jones, “Breaking the Silence: Iurii Bondarev’s *Quietness* between the ‘Sincerity’ and ‘Civic Emotion’ of the Thaw,” in *Interpreting Emotions*, 153-154.

The quick slide between past, present, and future that apologies achieved in the comrades' court was, I argue, too hasty. Some critics of the court in the watch factory were concerned that the punishments were too light. One 1963 article from *Za Sovetskie Chasy* praised a neighboring factory's system for withholding vacation privileges for convicted workers.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, as discussed earlier, most of the criticism of the courts in secondary literature (see Chapter 4) focuses on the leniency of the penalties, or the inconsistencies in their application. However, I see the shortcomings of the comrades' court at the watch factory not in the punishments, but in the smooth affective slide between shame and love that glossed over the tangible effects "violations of labor discipline" had for families. Wives were still left abused and children neglected. No concrete measures were taken to reduce alcoholism, or to educate about conflict resolution in the home. Ahmed explains it this way: "Shame in exposing that which has been covered demands us to re-cover, such a re-covering would be a recovery from shame."¹⁵⁵ In the first half of this chapter, I showed how through the course of the trial, the demons of family life were exposed before the court. In the apologies that shame produced, defendants re-covered their exposed families, but not by offering solutions to the specific problems within the family. As I mentioned, families were often not present at comrades' court trials in the factory, and therefore the apologies weren't directed to those the court had already established were most affected by the defendant's bad behavior. The court did not extol defendants to go home and apologize to their families, or even advise defendants on how to improve their personal relationships outside the collective. These unanswered questions about family life were "re-covered" in the defendant's apology and resigned to the past. Ultimately, it wasn't love and

¹⁵⁴ "Violators have no place in our collective," *Za Sovetskie Chasy*, December 26, 1963. Although the title of the article suggests that convicted violators of labor discipline were removed from the factory, all of the proposals listed for strengthening the punitive authority of the court were for suspending privileges, and not to increase dismissals from the factory.

identification with the defendant's domestic family that would atone for his violation, but love and identification with his factory family.

In 1964, there was one anomalous case to the schema I've presented above. On April 23, 1964, 560 people, an unusually large amount, crammed into the auditorium to hear a case of "amoral lifestyles [*amoral'nyi obraz zhizni*]"'. On trial were a certain Comrade K.--a middle-aged employee with a seventh-grade education who had worked at the factory for nineteen years--and her much younger accomplice Comrade Ch., both having appeared before their peers at a comrades' court hearing in the past three years. In the words of Comrade K., on March 20 she escorted a visibly-intoxicated Comrade Ch. safely home to his shared apartment, whereupon "he treated me to 100 grams of red wine." When Comrade Ch.'s mother flew angrily into the room, the son "hurled a shoe" at her (*zapustil botinkom*). At the sight of such presumed debauchery, and her son's defensiveness, the mother set off for the police. The police arrived and took the two offenders into custody. The officials transferred the case to the workplace's volunteer comrades' court, and a month later, employees of the watch factory erupted in their opportunity to deliver justice. Comrade K.'s coworkers upbraided her repeatedly for drinking too much alcohol and socializing outside of the factory with various men, behaviors that were unacceptable for a 38-year-old single mother. Others brought up the fact that Comrade K. had a "bad relationship with her mother," which negatively impacted her teenage son, who already "brings girls home." A different Comrade K. (a colleague of the defendant Comrade Ch.) protested: "Not one mother would send her son to the police. He arrived home with a woman who is not [exactly] young, and this mother understood that this was bad. If I was in the position of that mother, I would have done the same thing and driven out [*vygnyala*] the drunk woman from my own apartment," highlighting the age difference between the defendants. Comrade R. remarked that, "a

¹⁵⁵ Ahmed, 104.

respectable [*poryadochnaya*] woman would not go lead a drunk man [home]. [Other] men also come to her at home,” insinuating Comrade K.’s promiscuity. (There was one skeptical voice who was not wholly convinced that Comrade K.’s behavior warranted such a hullabaloo. Comrade I. asked rhetorically, “At 38 she met a young man, what in that is bad?”) In the end, the court decided to recommend to the district executive committee to evict (*vyselit’*) Comrade K. from the city of Moscow.¹⁵⁶

It’s unclear why this case fell under the jurisdiction of the workplace comrades’ court and not the apartment building’s. Perhaps it was because both defendants were employees of the same factory, whereas they did not live in the same building. This is the only case of the 170 where the defendants were on trial not for a violation of labor discipline, but for “amoral lifestyles” in the domestic realm. Workers didn’t even need the pretense of a violation of labor discipline to investigate the private lives of the factory community. Furthermore, this is the only case of eviction during the ten-year period. Comrade K.’s age and gender were central to the shaming indictments that her coworkers launched at her, and in this case, Comrade K. was deemed so reprehensible that she was excluded from the factory (and city) community. The workers’ collective could not save Comrade K.

Previous historians have different interpretations of the effect of shame in the courtroom. Oleg Kharkhordin claims that because of the preponderance of shame, the comrades’ courts operated in a “system of communal enslavement,”¹⁵⁷ and a more totalizing matrix of “petty but profound terror” than even the executions and deportations of the Stalin era.¹⁵⁸ Kharkhordin’s analysis of shame in the comrades’ courts naturalizes liberal notions of the (heterosexual) family

¹⁵⁶ Protokol 23.04.1964, f. 365, op. 1, d. 968, ll. 106-128, TsGAGM.

¹⁵⁷ Kharkhordin, 297.

tucked away in the sanctity of the private sphere, and thereby any interference with the private sphere was an affront to the family. But I see the theater of shame of comrades' courts as qualitatively different from the 1930s and 1940s. Workers of the Khrushchev era were actively trying to dislodge family life from the private sphere and bring it into the public, in an attempt to bring peace and stability to the broader workplace community. Whereas contempt and disgust pervaded society to get rid of undesirables in Stalin's Terror, shame circulated in the Khrushchev-era comrades' courts to bolster the social norms of the collective, keep wayward members in the factory fold, and strengthen the relationship between the individual and factory collective. In so doing, shame also left unresolved, and therefore re-covered, problems in the domestic family.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the particular features of the judicial process of the comrades' court at the First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory brought the family out of the private realm of the apartment and into the public space of the factory. Through the initial interrogation and deposition of the community investigation, defendants, fellow comrades in the audience, and court members exposed the prevailing problems of Soviet families. These procedures unique to a comrades' court sanctioned confrontational, invasive, and interpersonal interactions by people closest to the wrongdoer. Alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and familial discord now became appropriate topics of public discussion, and workers steered discussions during the proceedings from violations of labor discipline to problems in the family. Of course, the implications of showing up late to work or drinking on the job for labor productivity were mentioned, but they

¹⁵⁸ Kharkhordin, 289.

were mentioned alongside, and often were overshadowed by, details of the defendant's fractured family. In exposing the problems plaguing Soviet families, the comrades' court challenged the viability of the family as the ideal-type kinship structure. Importantly, the defendant was rarely expelled from the collective for his or her transgression; of the 170 cases in the ten-year period under investigation, only two resulted in dismissal from the factory. Instead, shame served as the primary disciplining force within the courtroom, and was not limited to the defendant, but extended to all those present. Shame was often deployed along gendered lines as a way to delineate behaviors that the community would not permit. But shame did something more than just discipline: in the shared affective experience of shame, the ties between factory workers strengthened.

In the next chapter, I will show that while defendants were being retained in the factory collective, love and identification with the factory allowed for this collective to grow. I argue that through this "affective economy" of shame and love in the comrades' court, the workers' collective was posited as the ideal collective unit, eclipsing the family structure that resided beyond the factory walls.

Chapter Six: Comrades' Courts and the Coalescence of Community

In this chapter, I turn to the factory media to see how the affective drama of the comrades' court lived on beyond the final stroke of the chairperson's gavel. I will begin with a brief review of the methodological and theoretical framings for this chapter, and then move to an analysis of what emotional work the factory media attempted to achieve. I argue that the factory media instructed its worker-consumers to re-cover the shame of the biological family that the comrades' court activated (see Chapter 5) by disseminating messages of love and identification with the factory collective structure. This was discursively achieved not by throwing out the model of the biological family entirely, but by likening the factory family to its domestic analog.

A Productive Pivot: From Shame to Love-Identification in the Courtroom

In literary critic Eve Sedgwick's reading of the works of Henry James, the queer theorist proposes an intellectually compelling dimension to shame that moves beyond the repression-acceptance binary. She claims that "political strategies aimed directly at getting rid of individual or group shame, or undoing it" purport to do something impossible. The shamed parts cannot be "excised" from the individual or group, but are rather "available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, *transfiguration*."¹⁵⁹ Shame, then, is productive, not in the sense that it generates something antithetical to the shaming forces to extinguish it, but just something different. Shame can be worked with to mold something else entirely. I argue in this chapter that the circulation of love and identification with the factory family provided a resolution to shame, but in a way that didn't wholly reject the domestic family, but likened itself to it—just as

¹⁵⁹ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 62-63.

Sedgwick contends that shame isn't necessarily undone in politics, but transformed into something else.

In a similar sense, Ahmed argues that reconciling from shame involves “re-covering” the very thing that was shameful in the first place, without a need to directly address further the conditions in which shame arose; in Chapter 5, I showed how in the courtroom this recovery from shame amounted to a “re-covering” of the domestic family. What’s more, Ahmed contends that apologies arising from shame do more than just acknowledge past wrongdoings. Apologies also affirm that the rules that the defendant broke to begin with are the ideal models of behavior. In this sense, apologies are also a sign of love and identification with the idealized object—the factory collective. As Ahmed explains, “Shame can reintegrate subjects in their moment of failure to live up to a social ideal. Such an argument suggests that the failure to live up to an ideal is a way of taking up that ideal and confirming its necessity; despite the negation of shame experiences, my shame confirms my love, and my commitment to such ideals in the first place.”¹⁶⁰ This ambiguity of shame and love-identification actually provided an escape for defendants and members of the court. Instead of offering concrete strategies to improve domestic family life, workers could channel that renewed dedication to the factory family instead.

In theorizing about emotion in social movements, Deborah Gould’s contends that “movements, in short, ‘make sense’ of inchoate affective states and authorize selected feelings and actions while downplaying and even invalidating others.”¹⁶¹ As discussed in Chapter 4, comrades’ courts were one manifestation of a broader *obshchestvennost’* movement in the Khrushchev era that encouraged citizens, among other things, to clean up daily life. Thus, I see the factory media as contributing to this larger movement, and also instructing (*vospytyvat’*) its

¹⁶⁰ Ahmed, 106.

consumers on how to navigate their emotions, in a kind of “emotional hermeneutics” as Glennys Young postulated.¹⁶² In Chapter 5 I showed how, through the course of a comrades’ court trial, workers revealed the biological family to be fractured and malfunctioning. Through the circulation of shame in the courtroom, the workers’ collective remained intact, and even was tempered, and the troubles of family life were again covered over. In this chapter, I look to see how the factory media instructed workers to feel about their families as a part of the *perevospitanie* (re-education). In particular, I will show how, as an anecdote to the biological family, the factory media deployed messages of love and identification with the workers’ community as the ideal collective structure in Soviet society. Not in its contrast to the family, but in its likeness, or metonymy, did the factory media represent the factory community as the ideal-type collective structure. I argue that through love and identification with the factory collective, the shame connected to biological family was re-formed, and a more communist kinship structure was forged.

Beginning in 1960, articles periodically appeared in the factory’s wall newspaper (*stengazeta*) to announce to the broader factory community the results of the courts’ sessions. In this sense, *Za Sovetskie Chasy* was the end of the paper trail in the archive for the enterprise’s comrades’ court. Here, I do not limit my analysis to only those articles covering comrades’ courts trials, but widen my perspective to include articles pertaining to family life and personal conduct beyond the factory. Coinciding with La Pierre’s timeline that increasingly by the late 1950s “nobody’s business was everybody’s business,” so too did the wall newspaper publish more and more articles about morality and private life as the decade progressed, reaching a

¹⁶¹ Deborah Gould, “On Affect and Protest,” in *Political Emotions: New Agendas in Communication*, ed. by Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovitch, and Ann Reynolds (New York: Routledge, 2010), 33.

height in the early 1960s.¹⁶³ The factory's worker-produced radio station similarly dedicated a significant portion of its programming in the early 1960s to conduct in family life, and so I include for analysis its transcripts.

The wall newspaper and radio station combined populate the discursive atmosphere of the factory where workers labored six days a week. It's hard to say whether workers actually read the newspaper or listened actively to the radio programs, or whether they internalized its messages, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to study how media were consumed in the factory. Importantly, however, in terms of the production of the factory media, I situate it again in the tenuous overlapping of state and society. As discussed in Chapter 4, although the newspaper's masthead declared that it was an organ of factory administration, party and trade union organization, a factory wall newspaper was still one of the most basic, lower-level mediums of propaganda. Many of the articles were voluntarily submitted by workers in the factory, sitting at the workbench alongside staff writers. Just as Steven Harris argued that, when it came down to the people who physically built houses for actual families, "mass housing was not something that the 'state' created for 'society,' as if one was entirely separate from the other,"¹⁶⁴ so too I offer an entangled view of state and society in the production of factory media.

The Factory *like* a Family: A Simile

In the previous chapter, I showed how the mechanisms of the court brought the defendant's biological or domestic family into the factory public. The court exposed families' problems of drunkenness, cramped living conditions, domestic abuse, and negligence. As an

¹⁶² See discussion in Chapter 4.

¹⁶³ La Pierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, 89.

¹⁶⁴ Harris, 4.

alternative, the factory media projected the image of the ideal-type communal structure: the factory community. In this section, I will draw on the factory media to show how in its likeness to the domestic family, the factory family was posited as preferred kinship arrangement. This love for the factory family proclaimed in the media, in combination with the ambivalence of shame in the court, shows the affective processes of community building in a Khrushchev-era factory. Unfortunately, this love for the factory family couldn't heal the domestic family that had been violated, but it did point to an idealism of communism in the Khrushchev era that worked to ultimately transform domestic families altogether in favor of the workplace community.

In discussing shame, Ahmed explains that it is a failure to live up to an ideal that brings about shame in an individual. In the case of the comrades' court, the defendants failed to live up to the ideals of the factory community when they violated labor discipline. Ahmed contends that the ideal "does not necessarily have certain characteristics," and that "through love, an ideal self is produced as a self that belongs to a community."¹⁶⁵ In this sense, "the 'content' of the ideal" is somewhat empty; what's important for Ahmed is the subject's aspirational movement through love toward the ideal. It is therefore difficult to enumerate the specificities of the "ideal familial structure" that the factory media and comrades' court produced through their discourse. There were some hints at what an ideal communist family should be like, found in dozens of pamphlets on *sotsialisticheskoe obshchezhitie* and morality lectures (see Chapter 3), but there were no prescriptive guidelines on what exactly it meant to conduct a "worthy [*dostoinoi*]" relationship with women or parents. Following Ahmed, I am more interested in the efforts by the factory media to elicit love, and move workers toward the factory collective as the ideal familial structure, and less about the specific characteristics of the communist family.

¹⁶⁵ Ahmed, 106.

The factory became the ideal communal structure not in its rejection of the domestic family, but in its likeness to it. The factory reproduced the hierarchical structure of patriarchal families in its provision for the productive and reproductive lives of its workers. Of course, the factory provided jobs for men and women so that they could produce manufactured goods for Soviet consumers—the productive role of the factory is obvious. One of the guiding principles of women’s emancipation through Soviet-style socialism was that the state would take over all of the reproductive labor functions of the domestic family, thereby freeing women from unnecessary toil in the home for a richer social and laboring life. But in practical terms, the factory, and not “the state” as such, organized these services.¹⁶⁶ The First Moscow Kirov Watch Factory provided housing for its workers,¹⁶⁷ canteens, healthcare, educational opportunities. There was an “executive committee” in the factory administration, a “police force” in the *druzhiny* brigades, and a “judiciary” in the comrades’ courts. The factory allotted workers’ their vacations, organized theater clubs, musical groups, a youth organization, and impromptu field trips to museums in Moscow. Anna Pavlovna Abramova of the second brigade in the instrument department explained on the factory radio program that, “we not only work hard at the factory, but strive to organize well relaxation after the work day. Very frequently we go to the museum, theater, etc. Our boss [*master*] Anna Ivanovna Andreeva is always with us, leading everyone to events, participating equally with us.”¹⁶⁸ Factory-organized leisure time was also praised in the wall newspaper, where two women of the 25th brigade of the second assembling department wrote: “Our collective is very friendly. We regularly all together go to the movies, to the theater, organize a brigade evening, actively participate in competitions for artistic activities, and get first

¹⁶⁶ Of course, one could argue that the state was the one that set up factories in the first place, and that the factory administration was responsible to local soviets and trade union commissions, but the fact remains that when workers looked for daycare for their children, they didn’t turn to the local (*raionnyi*) soviet, but to the factory.

place. We participate in sport competitions.”¹⁶⁹ Instead of seeking entertainment, relaxation, and companionship by retreating to the domestic family, the factory performed all of the reproductive labor of the family in an alternative setting. In this sense, the factory was not only a “civilization” in Stephen Kotkin’s formulation, but a family, in that it provided for all of the productive and reproductive needs of the worker.¹⁷⁰

In addition to providing the material resources mentioned above to reproduce workers, the factory also played an important role in providing the ideological and emotional guidance to reproduce workers. Beginning especially in the late 1950s-early 1960s, articles proliferated in the wall newspaper to promote the newly formed parents’ club (to support parents in properly raising their children), a young women’s club (*klub devushek*), and group discussions about the proper ways to establish romantic relationships among the younger workers. From the very beginning of a reproductive relationship, the factory newspaper wanted to steer its fellow readers through a communist courting protocol. An article appearing in December 1961 recalled a “*disput*” (discussion) among Komsomol members of the factory on the subject “Of love, comradeship, and friendship.” A few young women complained that there were no good men to love, but the author of the article reminded readers that the young women were focusing too much on “personal interests, diverging from the collective.” They rushed too early into marriage without love because they wanted to create families. G. Lebedeva, the author of the article and presumably a staff member of the paper,¹⁷¹ advised that, “You need to work together, participate in social life, and then you’ll better find out about your friends and among them choose a person

¹⁶⁷ From 1958-1963, the factory built 10 apartment buildings, and more than 300 working families were able to have their own apartments. F. 365, op. 1, d. 859, l. 51.

¹⁶⁸ “Text of radio program 03.07.1963,” f. 365, op. 1, d. 875, l. 117, TsGAGM.

¹⁶⁹ S. Kolobanova and T. Gracheva, “We need to fight for the person! We believed in them,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* no. 95, December 9, 1963.

¹⁷⁰ See subtitle of Steven Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*.

¹⁷¹ At least one of her articles appears in every issue of the paper throughout the period under discussion.

based on spirit [*po dushu*].”¹⁷² The factory community saw just how troubled families could be in the comrades’ courtroom, and through the medium of the newspaper, instructed factory youth on how to create healthy families in the socialist spirit. Again in 1963 the factory held a meeting on love and friendship. This time it was a collaborative event with members of the army. One representative of the military section spoke at the discussion about “soldierly friendship, and patience toward the mistakes of a friend.” A member of the 30th brigade of the assembly department, Nina Pavlova, spoke about the “outstanding friendship of the collective of the 21st brigade, and the feeling of relationship [*o chustve otnoshenii*] to the comrades” in her brigade (the 30th).¹⁷³ As prescribed in Lebedeva’s article, the best way for young factory workers to establish a romantic relationship (from which a family would presumably follow) was to engage in social labor with fellow workers. The factory held discussions in the early 1960s for young people to come together and establish the foundations of a family in an approved, communal setting. From the beginnings of reproductive labor, the factory, as reported by the wall newspaper, educated its workers in cultivating collectivist, communist interpersonal relationships.

Once those romantic relationships among young people developed, and the workers reproduced, the factory’s parents’ committee was there to guide and direct young parents in raising their children. A boss in one department in the factory boasted that, “Workers of the department devote a lot of attention to the raising of the next generation. A parents’ committee was created. It supports the close connection with schools in which the children of workers in the department study. The committee introduces school children with our enterprise, looks after their progress in studies, their behavior.” The parents’ committee at the factory not only provided

¹⁷² G. Lebedeva, “On Love, Comradeship, and Friendship,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 100, December 21, 1961.

¹⁷³ G. Kulakova, “Person to Person—Friend, Comrade, and Brother,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 93, November 29, 1962.

instructional support for parents in raising their children, but also took over some of the parental tasks itself by “look[ing] after their [children’s] progress in studies, their behavior.”¹⁷⁴ In June 1960 the newspaper published an article by A. Nedoseikin, an inspector in the traffic department of the Moscow executive committee (*ispolkom*), instructing parents on teaching their kids the proper traffic rules when riding a bicycle. Nedoseikin wrote that “Indeed, a bicycle occupies a solid [*prochnoe*] place in the life of Soviet people,” recognizing its collective good, and that individually, “receiving that kind of present [a bicycle], the child feels joy, and is grateful to his parents for their attention and care.” However, parents do children a disservice when, “whether by their ignorance or lack of discipline” they do not teach them the proper rules of traffic.¹⁷⁵ The factory wall newspaper took as its responsibility instructing parents on how to raise their children, and that greater instruction in bicycle operation was needed in the capital. Articles such as these were clearly outside of the domain of productive labor, but show the factory taking an active role in raising the “next generation” of workers.

The wall newspaper also recounted instances where the members of the factory community took a more direct role in intervening in its workers’ family lives. The comrades’ court was not the only institution that had the tacit permission to enter into the domestic realm in the hopes of ameliorating conflict. Z. Dedyudova, a party agitator in the sales [*khodovoi*] department of the watch factory, made rounds in the section of the apartment building she was assigned to, and visited all of the families there. At first she was “somehow embarrassed to interfere [*vmeshat’sia*] in the personal [*lichnyi*] lives of people, but then understood that it was necessary. Of course they’re not happy about the curiosity with which you’re interested in all sides of life, but glad that [you’re] helping them.” Dedyudova explained that neighbors came to

¹⁷⁴ A. A. Ivanov, “The Features of the new firmly enter into the life of the collective,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 72, September 9, 1962.

her for support with a family. The son was a drunk, and beating his mother. Dedyudova and the neighbors then “frequently had discussions with the partners,” but nothing changed. Eventually, Dedyudova went to the secretary of the party organization of her department, who threatened the son with removal from the city of Moscow if his behavior continued. This, apparently, resolved the issue. The son in the article was not identified as a worker in the factory, but the agitator coordinated all of the interventions through the factory disciplinary apparatus. Just as the comrades’ courts authorized community inspections (see Chapter 5), a party agitator from the factory entered into the home lives of Moscow residents to instruct families on how to coexist in a communist manner. The tight enmeshment of the factory and families indicated a strong likeness between the two communal structures in the factory community’s continual attempts to interfere in domestic family life. In a 1963 article entitled “Educate assiduously and daily,” the author touts that there was a two-way exchange with the factory and families in reproductive labor. N. Bazhanovaya, the shift manager of the second assembling department, writes that, “We frequently happen to go to homes, talk with parents, and sometimes even parents come to us in the department,”¹⁷⁶ with questions about how to raise their children. Even outside of the framework of the comrades’ court, the factory frequently visited workers’ homes to perform necessary reproductive work. In all stages of family life—courtship, parenting, and mature disputes—the proximity of the factory to the family was an important precondition for the domestic family “transfigured,” in the words of Sedgwick, into the ideal-type factory family.

¹⁷⁵ A. Nedoseikin, “Parents should keep this in mind,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 40, June 13, 1960.

¹⁷⁶ N. Bazhanovaya, “Educate assiduously and daily,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 72, September 16, 1963.

“*Rodnoi Zavod*” and Love for the Factory Family

In the previous examples, workers identify with the factory community because of its likeness—approximation—of the domestic family. This understanding of the factory, I will show, easily slid in the media to the factory as a family in the sense that the factory *was* a family. I argue that love in the form of identification accomplishes this rhetorical sliding. In my sources, the word “love” (*lyubov*) was rarely used when speaking about either the factory or the biological family. However, following Sara Ahmed, I understand identification with an object to be an expression of love itself. Ahmed explains, “it [identification] is a form of love that tells the subject what it could become in the intensity of its direction towards another.”¹⁷⁷ Below, I will show how workers both identified the factory as a family, and identified *with* the factory as a family. The factory literally raised orphaned workers in the absence of a functional biological family. Workers expressed their love for their superiors on the shop floor, and identified paternal and maternal qualities in them. Finally, workers identified *with* the factory family in placing themselves within it. Pulsing from the radio station and the pages of the wall newspapers, such stories of love for the factory reverberated through the walls of the factory.

To begin, the factory community told stories of how workers came together to raise their orphaned comrades. In this sense, the factory not only aided families to raise the next generation, but the factory community actively brought up children themselves. For example, in the article mentioned above about a meeting to discuss the proper communist way to cultivate a romantic relationship, the author recounts in the first half the story of Nina Poltoratskaya, a young Komsomol member. She proudly boasted before her comrades: “In what other country will young women raise teenagers at the expense of their personal time!...For those under our guardianship, we’re not only educators [*vospitateli*]*—*we’re older comrades, advisors. And our

comradely participation helps them to correct themselves.” In another article, A. Tarakanovaya repeated the young woman’s assertion that the workers of the family were great parents in her biographical submission to the newspaper in 1963. “I remember how I first came to the factory. It became for me an excellent school. At five years old, I was without parents. There were sisters older than me, but how could they raise me?! In 1946 I finished trade school and applied to the factory. I was not the only new person. And now, I’ve already led a brigade for 12 years, all thanks to our good factory collective for raising me.”¹⁷⁸ In Tarankovoya’s short piece, she explained that she didn’t even need a domestic, biological family to be brought up properly, and to become the master of the 18th brigade of the second assembly department. The watch factory fulfilled that role, rendering the domestic family superfluous. In a similar example on the radio station, two members of the parents’ committee, Lida Terekhova and Tonya Atif’eva, took it upon themselves to raise a younger brother one of their coworkers who couldn’t support him after their parents died unexpectedly. The radio hosts told of the two women’s compassion: “The women of the brigade took it upon themselves to care for the young boy. They took him home, protected him, gave him clothes, while his biological sister not once came to the orphanage to see him. Already three years Seryozha has lived as an orphan. He has become the son of the whole brigade.”¹⁷⁹ This example shows that even models of family based on biological kinship fail: parents die, and siblings could be left in a position unable to care for younger family members. In this sense, the brigade of the factory is more dependable and more generous than the limited number of supports in the family, because the “whole brigade” could come together to raise a single child. In these examples, the factory community not only guided families on

¹⁷⁷ Ahmed, 126.

¹⁷⁸ A. Tarakanovaya, “The Collective is a good educator,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 73, September 16, 1963.

¹⁷⁹ F. 365, op. 1, d. 875, l. 62, TsGAGM.

comradely behavior, but literally overtook the reproductive responsibilities of the family unit to assert itself as the ideal collective form.

Like a biological family, the factory family also had paternal figures in the skilled workers, or master craftsmen and women. Workers identified these *mastery* as the mothers and fathers of the factory, providing such care for their workers that the biological family not always was able to do. One story told of a young worker arriving to the factory from a welfare family (*obespechennoe sem'ya*). The *master* of the brigade inquired into the worker's family situation, asking if she had parents and where they worked. The young woman testified on air that, "the *master* is like a biological father, women workers come to him with their own joys, worries, bitters. And not once have people not received support and dear advice."¹⁸⁰ The comrades' court trials were already exposing the lapses in care that mothers and fathers outside of the factory provided for their children. But inside the factory, skilled workers reliably demonstrated tenderness and support for their workers. In this example, the patriarch of the brigade could provide parental support to his workers, better than traditional, biological families. In a 1960 article by G. Lebedeva entitled, "In a friendly family," the author describes the brigade under the direction of master Boris Isayevich Merinin, and how well they work together. "The assembly workers love their master. Boris Isayevich is not only an old, experienced master," the article continues, but "he's a keen mentor [*vospitatel'*]. Together with the brigade he is seeing to the construction of a daycare."¹⁸¹ This is one of the few examples where the word "love" appears, but it is so similar to other expressions of identification with the factory community that the two sentiments become synonymous. It is fitting that this love is directed toward a person who, like a

¹⁸⁰ F. 365, op. 1, d. 865, l. 107.

¹⁸¹ G. Lebedeva, "In a friendly family," *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 20, February 28, 1960.

parent, is providing childcare for their children, only in the ideal, socialist form: a collective daycare.

But love for the *master* of a brigade wasn't only directed toward men. Women too held leadership positions within the factory. However, their leadership was explained using tropes of motherhood and maternal care. As the elections approached in 1963 for the local soviets, workers took to the radio to campaign for their candidates. One woman, speaking of the *master* of the second brigade of the mechanical department, Valentina Ivanovna Shertsneva, described how every morning the *master* "looks everyone in the eye," to make sure everything is okay in the department, and at home. When one of her brigade members' eyes were swollen, and cheeks tear-stained, Shertsneva "stopped at her workbench," and tried to work out with the young woman what was the matter, "without becoming entangled in family affairs." The speaker lauded that, "she [Shertsneva] approaches, and is simply motherly, and speaks with us in a friendly manner, and is always helping."¹⁸² Shertsneva is not depicted here as a provider, like Merinin was (above), but as a helper and mediator. What need is there for a biological family when the factory community can perform the same care work without all of the inconsistencies? In another article also entitled, "In a friendly family," published just a month earlier, M. Besfamil'naya,¹⁸³ chairwoman of the department's trade union committee, expounded on the closeness of the brigade under two women, A. Serkova and N. Savel'eva. In the article, Besfamil'naya commended the two women for teaching and mentoring young workers, and noted that everyone speaks of them "with pride and respect." Besfamil'naya continued to explain how "For the past ten years without interruption a million watches passed through the laboring hands of the women workers." The author here likened Serkova and Savel'eva's production to giving birth to millions

¹⁸² F. 365, op. 1, d. 865, l. 16-17.

¹⁸³ In Russian, the surname *Besfamil'nyi* literally means "without a family name."

of watches by “breath[ing] life into them, and [giving] them the right to exist.”¹⁸⁴ Women *mastery* were praised for their maternal capacities: for creating life and mediating problems along the way. The factory already had the necessary components of a biological family, but was better, because it didn’t foster such conflict and disputes as the biological families the comrades’ court revealed.

These examples show that the relation holding workers together in the factory was a familial bond; the physical structure holding this worker-family together was family-house-factory. In the media, workers identified both the factory community as a family, and the factory space as a family home. In one of the few articles that revisited the defendant in a comrades’ court trial, M. Pavlova’s “[You] Need to Believe in a Person,” demonstrates both the spatial and relational understandings of the factory as a family. Comrade Shilin was a good worker when he first came to the factory, but got involved with “friends from the street,” i.e. outside the factory walls, and began to drink. His fellow brigade members noticed Shilin slipping, and decided to take him under their wing to lead him back inside the factory. Pavlova finishes her piece by commenting that “Since that day it’s been almost a year. A close [*chutkoe*] relationship to the person, belief in his good beginning helped the collective in the re-education [*perevospytivat’*] of Vyacheslav Shilin. In that time he has become a good worker, and has felt himself as a part of a friendly family of comrades.”¹⁸⁵ The author does not mention that Shilin returned to his biological family for help with his drinking problem, or even to the larger Soviet community of Moscow. Shilin found salvation in the factory family collective. Another example is from a 1963 radio segment on the Moral Code of the Builders of Communism for the 46th anniversary of the October Revolution. In explaining the new kind of relationships the Moral Code encouraged of

¹⁸⁴ M. Besfamil’naya, “In a friendly family,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 11, February 28, 1960.

¹⁸⁵ M. Pavlova, “[You] Need to Believe in a Person,” *Za Sovetskie Chasy* 65, September 8, 1960.

Soviet citizens, the radio producers gave the example of the brigade laboring under Comrade Alexeyevich. “Labor for each member of the collective,” heralded the radio hosts, “became a necessary condition of life, and the brigade, comrades, became a genuine [*podlinnyi*] family, and the factory a birthing house.”¹⁸⁶ Again, in citing a birthing house instead of a private apartment or individual home, the producers were extolling the achievements of socialized reproductive care that the factory embodied. And yet another example in 1964, when the radio station hosted a program on the 40th anniversary of the Komsomol, and highlighted the leadership of Anatoly Novikov in working with the youth of the factory. One young person testified that, “I am very satisfied with my work. I regard the factory as my second home. And now everything has become more interesting because Tolya [Anatoly] is with us.”¹⁸⁷ Novikov showed fatherly guidance for these young workers, so much that the factory became for them a second home. In a program in April 1964 dedicated to the Day of the Soviet Constitution, the radio station broadcast another familiar story of the factory helping families with their material wellbeing. The factory helped a young family get into a new apartment, and the commentators added that, “having helped people, everyone in their own turn can do a lot for the successful functioning of their own [*rodnoi*] factory.” The use of *rodnoi* in this formulation is especially evocative because in Russian, it is used to indicate a biological, kinship relationship. (A “*rodnaya sestra*” would be your biological sister.) The word “*rodina*,” the noun form, is often translated to English as “motherland,” and used to describe the Russian nation, or Soviet Union, depending on the time and place. *Rodina* also connotes a biological, familial intimacy, in the idea that all ethnically-Russian people are the progeny of the same family.

¹⁸⁶ F. 365, op. 1, d. 865, l. 157. A “birthing house,” or *rodnoi dom* or *roddom* for short, was a medical care facility where expecting mothers would go for the last weeks of their pregnancies and to give birth.

¹⁸⁷ F. 365, op. 1, d. 980, 75.

The conflation of the factory and the family abounded in the watch factory's media apparatus. First, the factory was very involved in its workers' family life, and provided instruction on how to create romantic partnerships, raise children, and mediate disputes once families were established. As shown in the previous chapter, despite the factory's best efforts, the comrades' court exposed many of these families to be broken and non-functional. The biological or domestic family simply was not always working. But the idea of the family, just like the errant worker, was not wholly thrown out by the factory community. In fact, the factory in many ways resembled the biological family: it provided materially for its workers, and housed a number of paternal figures as skilled workers, or *mastery*, on the shop floor. In some instances, the factory literally raised orphaned members of the community, and reared them lovingly at the workbench. In this way, workers in the media slid effortlessly from the factory-like-a-family to the factory-as-a-family. Identification of the factory as a family, and identification *with* the factory as a family, was an expression of love that effectually re-formulated the biological family as a coalesced factory family.

Conclusion

The circulation of shame and love-identification in the factory were not independent events. As I have shown in this chapter, when defendants apologized, the shame they exhibited both acknowledged past wrongdoing, and demonstrated love and identification for the factory community. The watch factory's media provided emotional education in how further to manage the biological family: by projecting messages of the factory family as the ideal collective structure, the media instructed workers on how to appropriately relate to family life. In this sense, and in following Eve Sedgwick's formulation of the transformative nature of shame, the

biological family was recast as the factory family, whom workers should love and with whom they should identify. Despite all of the attention in the broader Soviet media on morality and personal relationships, workers in the watch factory actively cultivated a preferred family housed inside the factory walls.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined from a workers'-eye-view the processes of community building in a Khrushchev-era factory. First, I posited the efforts of the Soviet state to mold its working families as insufficient to create families free of violence, alcoholism, and neglect. I envisioned comrades' courts as a space where workers could negotiate their own model of a family to fill in the gaps left by pro-natalist family policies, strict divorce laws, dramatic improvements in living conditions, and an emphasis on communist morality. To access this alternative vantage point, I chose the transcripts of the factory's comrades' court and selections from the worker-produced media to extract the kind of communities workers deemed most troubled (the domestic family), and the community that they postulated as the ideal-type (the factory family). In Chapter 5, I showed that because of the particularities of this volunteer, informal court, men and women transformed conversations about violations of labor discipline into violations of family life in the domestic sphere. Throughout all the stages of a trial—the initial interrogation, the community inspection, and the public forum—defendants, court members, and workers in the audience exposed the problems troubling Soviet families, calling into question the domestic family as the ideal collective unit. I also engaged critically with the emotion of shame in the courtroom, and showed how the circulation of shame actually served to keep errant members in the collective, and “re-cover” the wounds of the biological family without proposing any concrete plans for restoration. The wall newspaper, as discussed in Chapter 6, also contributed to the transfiguration of the biological family, and taught workers a kind of “emotional hermeneutics” that demonstrated love for the factory family as a way to recover from the shame of domestic family life. The public and private, state and society necessarily were mixed in ambiguous combinations to redefine collective structures. The state

moved bodies and cultivated minds to shape Soviet families, but on the factory floor, workers engaged with each other's emotions to transform broken, biological families into factory families.

Normally, conclusions and epilogues in historical works go forward in time to try to narrate a satisfactory ending to the study. For this thesis—written during the centennial of the Russia Revolution—I will reach backward to the early years of the Bolshevik state for a resolution to this work. I see many resonances with the early revolutionary period and the transformations that took place during the Khrushchev era that, in a sense, were correctives to the violent, chaotic attempts of the Bolsheviks to will into being a new communist society.

Historians have dedicated ample thought in the past two decades to the processes of de-Stalinization during the 1950s and 1960s. In many respects, Khrushchev's policies were not only directed as a reversal, or antithesis, to Stalin's, but as a return to the ideals of the original Bolshevik—Lenin. As I explained in Chapter 3, comrades' courts were first implemented by Lenin in 1919, and were important formations in the new state. As Pavel Vasilyev explains, in the absence of a penal code (which didn't arrive until 1922), Soviet courts were ruled by a "revolutionary consciousness," an inherent sense of morality "that has a strong emotional component."¹⁸⁸ As a result, there was tremendous variation in the application of justice in the early revolutionary and Civil War period. In part this also had to with the stated preference for non-professional, working-class people to act as judges and lawyers, stripping away any pre-revolutionary markers of privilege.¹⁸⁹

I see Khrushchev's comrades' courts also as being saturated with emotion, and conducted by a group of lay workers. Emotions in the comrades' court of the watch factory, particularly

¹⁸⁸ Vasilyev, 122.

¹⁸⁹ Vasilyev, 124.

shame, served to keep workers within society. Contrast this with Stalin's contempt and disgust in show trials for so-called "enemies of the people" during the Great Terror, which amounted in their expulsion from the Communist Party, or worse, extermination. The quick turnaround of shame to love was the preferred emotional repertoire for discipline in this Thaw court. Exclamations of love and identification in the factory media were not directed toward Khrushchev, or even the Soviet Union as a national ideal, but a much more local collective: the factory. As I've shown, the slide from shame to love didn't necessarily get rid of problem families, but swept them under the factory's rug. In this sense, emotions were also de-Stalinized during the Khrushchev period in a return to a "revolutionary consciousness."

The re-configuration of the family that occurred in the watch factory also hearkened on utopian visions of the withering away of the family projected by early Bolsheviks. P. I. Stuchka, the first People's Commissar of Justice, reflected in 1925 that, "the period of war communism showed us one thing: a plan for the free family of the future when the family's roles as a cell of production and consumption, as a juridical entity, as a social insurer, as a bastion of inequality, and as a unit for feeding and bringing up children would all disappear."¹⁹⁰ But, much to the disappointment of many Bolshevik feminists, the family did not become extinct, and there were no museums built to house the antiquated specimen of the family.¹⁹¹ By the 1930s, the revolutionary ambitions for the family were dropped, and Stalin's 1936 Family Code entrenched the family as a key feature of Soviet society. I've argued here that in a Khrushchev-era comrades' court, the family again was re-figured, this time more with early Bolshevik resonances. The family didn't necessarily wither away in the process of a court trial, but was discursively transformed into a factory family, without the problems of alcoholism, domestic

¹⁹⁰ As quoted in Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State & Revolution*, 4.

violence, and child neglect. But the biological family metaphor was still meaningful in the Khrushchev era, and thus cannot be seen as antithetical to communism as it was during the early years of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the utopian aspirations for a community structure centered on the factory, and not the biological family, and this factory court resurfaced early Bolshevik ideas about communist society.

Of course, utopian aspirations broadcasted in the media did not always translate into realized utopian practices on the shop floor. Equipment malfunctioned, safety regulations were ignored, and central bureaucratic planning constantly left factories in short supply.¹⁹² For women workers, the picture was even worse: women were most often relegated to unskilled or lower-skilled positions in light industries, and few women were promoted to leadership positions within the factory.¹⁹³ Of course, there has been no systematic study of worker's attitudes and factory life in the Khrushchev era, but it's not hard to imagine that these conditions fostered a sizeable contingent of disgruntled laborers. Disaffected factory workers resisted their bosses' demands for increased production, and certainly not everyone considered their brigade as a family. This thesis is an important contribution to our understanding of how concrete problems in the family were obscured by visions of an idyllic factory family in the media, but this is not to say that everyone held these aspirations, or that they were realized in practice.

This thesis is also a modest contribution to the understanding of emotions, the family, and *obshchestvennost'* during the Thaw. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, I was limited in my ability to locate, and then read, the transcripts of this comrades' court. Further studies remain to be done utilizing materials from comrades' courts in other factories, apartment buildings, educational

¹⁹¹ This famous claim of Engels was quoted frequently by Lenin, and was repeated by S. Ia. Vol'son about the family. Goldman, 2.

¹⁹² Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 26.

¹⁹³ See Filtzer, "The position of women workers," in *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization*, 177-208.

institutions, and rural areas. Comrades' courts should also be studied alongside other volunteer organizations to see how the groups operated in concert (or not). This study would have also benefitted from oral history accounts of workers of the factory. How did they view the operation of the court and media outlets? This thesis is only the starting point for future research projects.

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