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# Urbanization and Deurbanization in the Russian Revolution and Civil War\*

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Urban Russia in 1917 was the crucible of revolution. The collapse of the tsarist government began first in the capital city of Petrograd; the appeal of the Bolshevik party among the urban populations of Petrograd, Moscow, and other cities (along with its influence among troops at the front) was critical in ensuring the successful seizure of power by the Soviets in October 1917. Indeed, the city, and especially its urban work force, had long been central to Marxist theorists, who opposed their vision of a proletarian revolution centered in the city to that of the populists, who believed that rural peasants would provide the spark of revolution in Russia.

It was not only a historical irony, then, but also a critical threat to the future course of the revolution, that from the very moment of Bolshevik success in late 1917, thousands and thousands of urban residents, workers and nonworkers, were abandoning the cities for the relative security of provincial towns and rural hamlets. Between May 1917 and April 1918, the city of Moscow lost 300,000 of its 2 million inhabitants. From 1918 to 1920, the city lost another 700,000 people. Moscow's population toward the end of the civil war was thus half of what it had been in the midst of the 1917 revolution. An even more catastrophic fall occurred in Petrograd: its population plummeted from 2.5 million in 1917 to 700,000 in 1920.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1917 and 1920, nearly every city in the former Russian empire had suffered similar population losses. Of the ten largest cities in 1910,

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<sup>1</sup> *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik goroda Moskvy i moskovskoi gubernii* (hereinafter *Stat. ezhegodnik g. Moskvy*), vyp. 2 (Moscow, 1927), p. 15; Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie (TsSU), *Trudy*, vol. 8, vyp. 1, part 32, p. 342.

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TABLE 1  
CHANGE IN SIZE OF MAJOR RUSSIAN CITIES FROM 1910 TO 1920

City	1910 Population	1920 Population
St. Petersburg .....	1,962,000	722,000
Moscow .....	1,533,000	1,028,000
Odessa .....	506,000	435,000
Kiev .....	505,000	366,000
Khar'kov .....	236,000	284,000
Saratov .....	206,000	190,000
Ekaterinoslav .....	196,000	164,000
Tiflis .....	188,000	327,000
Kazan .....	188,000	146,000
Baku .....	167,000	256,000
Astrakhan .....	150,000	123,000
Rostov-on-Don .....	121,000	177,000
Nizhnyi Novgorod .....	109,000	70,000
Ufa .....	103,000	93,000
Minsk .....	101,000	104,000
Samara .....	96,000	177,000
Tsaritsyn .....	78,000	81,000
Perm .....	50,000	74,000

SOURCES.—For 1910, B. R. Mitchell, *Abstract of European Historical Statistics*, abridged ed. (New York, 1975), pp. 12–15; Baedeker, *Russia* (1914; New York, 1970). For 1920, Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie, *Trudy*, vol. 8, vyp. 1, part 1, table 3, and Mitchell.

the decline in Kiev came closest to Moscow's and Petrograd's: Kiev's population dropped by 28 percent in the years spanning the revolution and civil war. Only a handful of cities gained in population between 1910 and 1920: two, Baku and Tiflis, were politically independent after 1917 and as such were havens for refugees from the destitution and conflict of revolutionary Russia. The other cities that grew were all located on the periphery of European Russia, close to sources of grain but also at one time or another centers of White Army activity as well. Samara and Tsaritsyn on the Volga, Perm in Western Siberia, and Rostov-on-Don all recorded marked increases in population at a time when cities everywhere were contracting (see table 1).<sup>2</sup>

Bolshevik leaders feared they were losing their working-class base of support, that the proletariat that demonstrated such revolutionary class

<sup>2</sup> For 1910 population, B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics, 1750–1970*, abridged ed. (New York, 1975), pp. 12–15; Baedeker, *Russia*, facsimile of the 1914 ed. (New York, 1970). For 1920, TsSU, *Trudy*, vol. 8, vyp. 1, part 1, table 3.

consciousness in 1917 was becoming "declassed" as a result of the economic pressures and dislocations of the civil war. Menshevik leaders used this same fear to argue that since the social base of Bolshevik legitimacy had withered away, the Bolsheviks themselves should reconsider the assumptions on which they based their right to rule.<sup>3</sup>

Nikolai Bukharin spoke in March 1918 of the disintegration of the proletariat; Ian Rudzutak reported to the second All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions in January 1919: "We observe in a large number of industrial centers that the workers, thanks to the contraction of production in the factories, are being absorbed in the peasant mass, and instead of a population of workers we are getting a half-peasant or sometimes a purely peasant population."<sup>4</sup> And Lenin reiterated this theme at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921: "People have run away from hunger; workers have simply abandoned their factories, they set up housekeeping in the countryside and have stopped being workers."<sup>5</sup>

Western scholars, too, citing the contemporary record, describe the "withering away of the proletariat." John Keep writes: "The men who made the October revolution, in so far as they were civilians and not soldiers, were soon dissipated to the four winds. . . . their place would eventually be filled by men who came straight from the village and were cast in a different mold."<sup>6</sup>

In this light, it becomes extremely important to examine the reality of this postulated decline of the working class and to ask how the demographic and social changes that took place between 1917 and 1921 affected the set of factors that had propelled the Bolshevik party to power in the first place.

It is one thing, however, to examine concrete indices of economic and social change, particularly demographic data, and quite another to link such changes to more elusive concepts that usually go under the name of "revolutionary" or "class" consciousness. For example, it can be argued that there existed, among Bolshevik supporters in late 1917, a "revolutionary consciousness," a common sense of purpose and commitment to replacing the old regime with something new and more socially just. Some of the elements of this revolutionary consciousness have been

<sup>3</sup> See E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1966), 2:196; Leopold H. Haimson, ed., *The Mensheviks: From the October Revolution to World War II* (Chicago, 1974), pt. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Carr, 2:196.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed. (Moscow, 1963), 43:42 (my translation).

<sup>6</sup> John L. H. Keep, *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (New York, 1976), pp. 261–62. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 85–86.

identified in recent studies of the revolution and working class by S. A. Smith, David Mandel, and Rex Wade, among others.<sup>7</sup> It was a consciousness shaped by short-term factors, most notably the specific economic and political experience of 1917, and by long-term factors as well. These include the ideology of Marxism itself, which fostered a tendency among workers to interpret their experience in terms of social class and class conflict. Another long-term factor was the workplace and the relations it engendered: an autocrat-subject relationship between management and labor, and solidarity among workers who labored and suffered together in such close proximity. Still other factors have to do with social attributes of workers—education, skill, maleness, and youth—which predisposed them first to develop a sense of politics and then to respond in a calculated, conscious manner, rather than in a visceral way, to the visions of revolution posed by the Marxist parties and by events leading up to 1917. Finally, the location of workers in cities also helped to shape revolutionary consciousness, in ways that will be detailed below. Suffice it here to say that urban working-class culture reflected several important attributes of the urban milieu, such as individual autonomy, utilization of a wide array of cultural and educational opportunities, and a social heterogeneity that enriched the perceptions and experience of urban residents.

All these factors helped to shape a specific kind of revolutionary consciousness pertinent to the specific conditions of 1917. It was a consciousness strongly influenced by ideas of class and of socialism. It does not follow, however, that these attitudes or this revolutionary consciousness was necessarily permanent and unchangeable. If some elements influencing this consciousness were changed, it is completely plausible that different attitudes might emerge. Kin, neighborhood, or possession of skill, for example, might be placed above class as the immediate source of a worker's identity. In such a case, the party whose popularity was based on its appeal to class interests, the Bolsheviks, might not command the same loyalty they had enjoyed under earlier conditions.

Of course, conditions did change after 1917. Of the factors important in shaping the consciousness of 1917, perhaps the only constant was Marxist ideology, which remained a powerful mediator of experience

<sup>7</sup> S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd* (Cambridge, 1983); David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime* (London, 1983), and *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power* (London, 1984); Diane Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1981); Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt, 1917–1921* (Cambridge, 1983); Rex A. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militias in the Russian Revolution* (Stanford, Calif., 1984); Ronald G. Suny, *The Baku Commune* (Princeton, N.J., 1972); William G. Rosenberg, "The Democratization of Russia's Railroads in 1917," *American Historical Review* 88, no. 5 (December 1981): 983–1008.

and whose appeal cannot be dismissed. But factory relations were dramatically transformed, the political and economic context of public life was also fundamentally different from what it had been before the revolution, and the cities, instead of representing the attractions of modernity and culture, became after 1917 places from which to flee.

There were many signs, by early 1918, that the Bolshevik party did not command the same allegiance that had brought it to power. Although the Bolsheviks had not completely lost their mandate to rule, there were uncomfortable signs of an independent factory movement in Petrograd in early 1918 and a string of Menshevik successes in local Soviet elections in the summer of 1918.<sup>8</sup> By 1921, amidst discontent and strikes among Petrograd workers, and a growing Workers' Opposition movement within the Communist party, sailors at the Kronstadt naval fortress rebelled, demanding Soviet reelections without Communist participation. The revolt was crushed by loyal Red Army troops, but the alienation it reflected prompted the party to search for a new economic policy to placate frustrated workers and peasants alike.

The party assessment of this debacle depended upon its interpretation of the social composition of its former supporters. The old Kronstadt revolutionary sailor had left the fortress, and his place was occupied by peasants and other unrevolutionary elements. The "true" working class had been driven away from the cities by hunger, to be replaced, presumably, by new workers from cottage industry, agriculture, and white-collar jobs eliminated by the revolution.<sup>9</sup> (This was the same argument used to explain the Bolsheviks' lack of success among workers in the early months of 1917—that the cadres of conscious proletarians were diluted by nonproletarian elements.) In addition, Bolshevik ideology assumed that large factories were an essential component of proletarian consciousness; with the shrinking of the work force in these plants, with the decision by skilled workers to manufacture cigarette lighters that could be more easily exchanged for grain than machine tools, party officials believed that Russian workers were losing their class consciousness: this could only be restored by the resumption of production in large-scale plants.<sup>10</sup>

The questions of support and of working-class consciousness are critical in interpreting this period and in understanding the sources of the Soviet political and social system, and they deserve a prominent place on the

<sup>8</sup> Mandel, *Petrograd Workers and Soviet Seizure*, pp. 390–413; see Vladimir Brovkin, "The Mensheviks' Political Comeback: The Elections to the Provincial City Soviets in Spring 1918," *Russian Review* 42 (1983): 1–50.

<sup>9</sup> *Istoriia rabochikh Moskv 1917–1945 gg.* (Moscow, 1983), p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Lenin, 43:42.

research agenda. This article will investigate just one aspect of changing social relations during the civil war, the problem of social composition in the former urban strongholds of the Bolshevik party. Given the obvious social dislocations indicated by the drastic decline of Russia's urban population, the question who stayed and who departed becomes important in identifying the nature of the available constituency for Soviet power during its early period of rule. In particular, this article will address the question of the nature of the deurbanization of Russia and the relationship between this deurbanization, the "declassing" of the proletariat lamented by the Communist party, and the formation of a new and possibly different set of attitudes among workers—working-class consciousness—during these years.

#### URBANIZATION AND REVOLUTION

A discussion of Russian urbanization is inevitably a tale of two cities, St. Petersburg (after 1914, Petrograd) and Moscow. In large part, this is because of their political prominence and relative magnitude. St. Petersburg, with 2 million residents in 1910, and Moscow, with 1.5 million, were four times and three times the size of their nearest competitors.<sup>11</sup>

Other Russian cities had grown as well since the early 1860s, when Russia's emancipation of its serfs loosened the bonds that restricted economic growth. But urban growth did not necessarily produce urbanization, in the sense of the adoption by the society of values associated with cities and with urbanism. Proportionally, Russia's urban population was dwarfed by the countryside. In 1860, cities accounted for 11.3 percent of the total population; this share had not quite doubled by 1917, to 21.6 percent. St. Petersburg and Moscow provinces, however, were the two most urban in the empire: 75 percent of Petrograd province's population lived in cities in 1915, and 53 percent of Moscow's did.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, Riazan province, an agricultural region that sent many migrants to Moscow, could claim an urban population of only 7 percent of its total in 1915.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, pp. 12–15.

<sup>12</sup> Gaston Rimlinger, "The Expansion of the Labor Market in Capitalist Russia, 1861–1917," *Journal of Economic History* 21 (1961): 208–15, esp. 211; E. G. Gimpel'son, *Sovetskii rabochii klass, 1918–1920* (Moscow, 1974), p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> (There shall be occasion to refer to Riazan again later in this essay.) *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Rossii* (Petrograd, 1915). The 1915 definition of "urban" is not clear. One study of Russian urbanization restricts the term to settlements of at least 15,000 people, or 20,000 in some cases (Robert A. Lewis and Richard H. Rowland, "Urbanization in Russia and the USSR, 1897–1970," in *The City in Russian History*, ed. Michael Hamm [Lexington, Ky., 1976], p. 206). Using these criteria, Lewis and Rowland claim that 9.4 percent of the population was urban in 1897, a figure that is considerably lower than those used here. Therefore, the definition of "urban" used by Russian census officials must include cities



The social composition of Russian urban dwellers defies the strict definitions of census categories. Although urban growth was fueled largely by migration, the passage to the city was not one way, and an inhabitant did not acquire all the facility and characteristics of urban residence as soon as he or she passed the city barriers. The research of R. E. Johnson has shown that migrants themselves traveled back and forth many times during their years in the city; their families also tended to be distributed between city and village. It was not unusual for a working-class wife to bear her children in the city and then send them back to the country to live with relatives until they were old enough to work. Even more common, married male migrants lived and worked in the city while their wives and children remained home in the country.<sup>14</sup>

Such characteristics suggest that there existed a number of types of workers in Russian cities on the eve of revolution and that workers responded in different ways to the opportunities and pressures of 1917 and the years that followed. To clarify the following discussion, it is useful to rank these urban types in terms of a hypothetical "level of urbanization," in which "urbanization" is defined as the complete adoption of urban values, culture, and experience:

- type A: most urbanized, parents permanent city residents, children born and raised in city;
- type B: parents in city, children move back and forth (consecutively as much as all together);
- type C: father in city, mother in country, children (especially boys) move back and forth;
- type D: father in city, mother and children in country;
- type E: sons and daughters come to city as first-generation migrants, parents remain in country.

The working-class memoir literature provides examples of all five types, although it is impossible to assign numerical weights to each category.<sup>15</sup>

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smaller than 15,000. See also Chauncey D. Harris, *Cities of the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C., 1972), chap. 7.

<sup>14</sup> R. E. Johnson, *Peasant and Proletarian* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1978); *Pervaya vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia 1897 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1903).

<sup>15</sup> A classic memoir of the genre is S. I. Kanatchikov, *Iz istorii moego bytiia* (Moscow, 1929); see an abridged translation of this and other memoirs in *The Russian Worker*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell (Berkeley, 1983). See also Reginald E. Zelnik, "Russian Bebels: An Introduction to the Memoirs of Semen Kanatchikov and Matvei Fisher," *Russian Review* 35 (1976): 249–89, 417–47; and L. M. Ivanov, "Preemstvennost' fabrichno-zavodskogo truda i formirovanie proletariata v Rossii," in *Rabochii klass i rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii*, ed. L. M. Ivanov (Moscow, 1966), p. 105.



Families of type A, however, were clearly in the minority, although growing in numbers; barely 10 percent of the Moscow working class in 1912 had been born in the city, although the percentage of workers whose parents had also been workers (types A through D) was greater. For all of Moscow province in a 1908 study, about 40 percent of workers had parents who were workers, a figure that rose to 45 percent for workers aged fifteen to twenty-five years.<sup>16</sup>

In assessing the impact of the urban crisis on urbanized workers after 1917, two questions arise. First, it is important to inquire whether and in what ways the city acted upon its inhabitants, especially those of the working class, to produce a particular cast of mind (*oblik* is the Russian term), a set of characteristics and values that can be labeled "urban working-class culture." The second question concerns the link between such culture and propensities to revolutionary activism.

Among the city's special contributions to the creation of a working-class culture were the ways in which city life encouraged workers to act together, such as in food supply and dining cooperatives and in sick funds. The necessities of communal living developed the practice of cooperation, and of course, as the Marxists argued, the experience of working in large mechanized factories also taught cooperation. On the other hand, the diversity of the urban work force also provided opportunities for individual mobility and encouraged separatism as well as cooperation; typesetters, highly skilled urban workers, were notorious for setting themselves apart from other workers and often rejected participation in a wider labor movement in favor of helping themselves.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to these competing values of cooperation and individualism, the city offered its working-class residents cultural opportunities that in turn encouraged workers to value culture and education. Evening schools, public schools, neighborhood clubs and libraries, theater, and an active publishing industry offered workers a wide range of opportunities for self-improvement. Many workers used their reading ability to familiarize themselves with basic political issues, which were far more accessible in the cities than anywhere else, thanks to the concentration there of publishers and political activists.<sup>18</sup>

Among the ways in which these urban values were transmitted, three deserve special mention. The first of these is family. The typology offered

<sup>16</sup> I. M. Koz'minykh-Lanin, *Ukhod na polevye raboty fabrichno-zavodskikh rabochikh moskovskoi gubernii* (Moscow, 1912).

<sup>17</sup> *Istoriia Leningradskogo soiuza rabochikh poligraficheskogo proizvodstva*, vol. 1 (Leningrad, 1925); V. V. Sher, *Istoriia professional'nogo dvizheniia rabochikh pechatnogo dela v Moskve* (Moscow, 1911); Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, chap. 2; Mandel, *Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime*, chap. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, pp. 45–46.

above might suggest that the nuclear family was a rare phenomenon in urban Russia. Yet the children who grew up in such families quickly absorbed the values of their parents and used these values to define for themselves a distinct subculture of their own. The attributes of an urban youth culture are complex and have been discussed at greater length elsewhere;<sup>19</sup> moreover, there is surely room for further investigation into the entire problem of urban culture, both of the young and the old. However, there did exist an urban youth subculture based on substantial personal autonomy deriving from the absence at home of working parents, from the less restrictive control by heads of urban families, from the availability of culture, recreation, and work away from the family's strict tutelage. Youths in the city were thus relatively free to gravitate toward associations of their teenage peers, which reinforced a special sense of local identity. The favorite activities of such groups—literary discussions, drama, politics—also helped to forge an identity that was seen to be distinctly modern and distinctly urban.<sup>20</sup> Further, perceptions and experiences of social relations interpreted in the light of Marxist class ideology were surely an important lesson imparted by working-class fathers.<sup>21</sup> Thus the urban working-class family was perhaps weaker as an institution than the archetypical patriarchal peasant family, but this weakness gave members of urban families a flexibility and freedom not easily found in the countryside.

A second important medium for transmitting new values was the city's concentration of workplaces and the proximity of plants in different industries, of different sizes, and representing different types of work. In contrast to laborers in single-industry towns such as Ivanovo-Voznesensk or the mining communities of the Urals, city workers could share a variety of experiences, among family members employed in different places, or in local taverns and dining halls, or in the activities of youth groups. The political and social attitudes that developed among urban workers who assimilated diverse experiences reflected the interaction of workers of different types.

<sup>19</sup> Diane Koenker, "Urban Families, Working-Class Youth Groups, and the 1917 Revolution in Moscow," in *The Family in Imperial Russia*, ed. David L. Ransel (Urbana, Ill., 1978), pp. 280–304.

<sup>20</sup> V. Iu. Krupianskaia, "Evoliutsiia semeino-bytovogo uklada rabochikh," in *Rossiiskii proletariat: oblik, bor'ba, gegemoniia*, ed. L. M. Ivanov (Moscow, 1970), p. 283; Anna Litveiko, "V semnadtsatom," *Iunost'*, no. 3 (1957), pp. 3–18; I. V. Babushkin, *Vospominaniia, 1893–1900* (Moscow, 1951), p. 39. On the role of theater, see Gary Thurston, "The Impact of Russian Popular Theatre, 1886–1915," *Journal of Modern History* 55 (1983): 237–67.

<sup>21</sup> See the memoir by Eduard Dune, "Zapiski krasnogvardeitsa," MSS in the Nicolaevsky archive, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California.

The exemplary working-class neighborhoods of the two capital cities were Vyborg in Petrograd and Zamoskvorech'e in Moscow. Both districts were dominated occupationally by highly skilled metalworkers, but they also housed workers of other industries, especially women in textiles and food processing. The two districts shared a physical isolation from the upper-class and political culture of their cities, but were not so homogeneous that residents never came into contact with nonworkers or with workers of different social backgrounds. In 1917, both districts were far more politically active than other working-class neighborhoods of more homogeneous industrial composition.<sup>22</sup>

A third means by which the city fostered a special working-class culture was through the concentration of political power and activity. Newspapers ranging from government gazettes to sensationalist tabloids were printed in the cities, and they were read avidly by urban workers.<sup>23</sup> The world of politics easily became the stuff of conversation in working-class neighborhoods, and urban workers had much better access to political information than workers scattered in provincial factory and mining towns. Furthermore, as political centers, both cities (although St. Petersburg more than Moscow) attracted opposition and underground activists. Socialists naturally sought to organize among workers, and their participation as evening-school teachers as well as professional political activists helped to give a socialist cast to ideas of political opposition. The city's particular advantage was to make available to workers a mixture of theory and a variety of experience that made a revolutionary socialist world view seem especially valid.

But how did this urban working-class culture contribute to the outcome of the two revolutions of 1917? It is indeed difficult to prove that working-class supporters of Soviet power were somehow more "urban" in attitudes than those who supported other parties or none at all. Recent research by Heather Hogan, Victoria Bonnell, and others<sup>24</sup> has demonstrated that organized workers—those active in trade unions, factory committees, Soviets—tended to be urban, skilled, and predominantly male. Craft unions were especially successful in organizing in the first few weeks after February 1917, as they had been after 1905. Although the attribute

<sup>22</sup> On neighborhoods, see Laura Engelstein, *Moscow, 1905* (Stanford, 1982); and Mandel, *Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime*.

<sup>23</sup> Reading habits before and after the 1917 revolution were surveyed by E. O. Kabo in 1923, and reported in *Ocherki rabochego byta* (Moscow, 1928).

<sup>24</sup> Heather J. Hogan, "Labor and Management in Conflict: The St. Petersburg Metal-working Industry, 1900–1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1981); Victoria E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Berkeley, 1983); Smith (n. 7 above).

of skill rather than urban experience may have been more important in facilitating such organization, the union ideology reflected values fostered by urban working-class life: socialism, collectivism, organization, and culture.<sup>25</sup> It is also true that maleness was a more important factor in organization than urban experience per se; women did not organize themselves effectively either in 1917 or before, even though the proportion of urban-born women in the work force was generally higher than that of urban-born men.<sup>26</sup> The contributions of urban women to the development of working-class culture, as wives, mothers, and workers, are largely uncharted, in part because they did not participate in the unions that provide much of the published record of working-class life before and during 1917, but their role deserves further study.

The future of the urban working class was represented by its youth, the children chiefly of families of type A and to a lesser extent of types B and C. These youths espoused urban and socialist values: education and culture, collectivism and comradeship, sobriety, sexual equality (apparently on a level higher than that of their parents), class pride, and solidarity.<sup>27</sup> In 1917, working-class youth and others organized for the first time on a large scale; fragmentary biographical information suggests the leaders of their youth groups came from urban rather than from migrant families.<sup>28</sup> By October, and even earlier, many working-class youth groups were enthusiastic if undisciplined supporters of the Bolshevik party. By contrast, young workers who had come recently from the countryside, as a young Moscow metalworker recalled, "were still weakly developed, and after the February revolution wavered among the Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, and Bolsheviks. The other and large part of the youth—products of worker families—already had experienced hard factory labor, had received the tempering of a worker. This worker youth after the February revolution very quickly organized around Bolshevik party cells, joined in protest meetings against the policies of the Provisional Government, fought for the eight-hour working day."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion*, p. 263; Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, chap. 2.

<sup>26</sup> In 1912, 11 percent of women in factories and 23 percent in nonfactory manufacturing were urban born, compared to figures of 9 percent and 7 percent for urban-born men. Since many replacements for drafted workers after 1914 were wives of factory workers, the percentage of urban-born women in the work force was probably even higher in 1917.

<sup>27</sup> Litveiko; *Krasnaia Presnia 1905–1917 gg.* (Moscow, 1930), pp. 455–57; *Prechistenskie rabochie kursy* (Moscow, 1948).

<sup>28</sup> Koenker, "Urban Families," p. 301.

<sup>29</sup> *Moskovskie bol'sheviki v ogne revoliutsionnykh boev* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 275–76 (my translation).

Although youth organizations as such played only a supporting role in the actual seizure of power, the energy and commitment of youth were tapped by the revolution in other ways. Armed worker militias and Red Guards recruited members predominantly from among young and unmarried workers between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Bolshevik party electoral candidates, in Moscow at any rate, tended to be substantially younger than those of the other two socialist parties. Alexander Rabinowitch also suggests indirectly that Petrograd Bolsheviks were attractive to and perhaps composed of young workers, particularly those under thirty years old. Although he does not dwell on the social composition of the party rank and file, he indicates that the Bolsheviks in Petrograd were a highly autonomous group of activist workers (a characteristic also of the Red Guards), who shaped the policy of the leadership, sometimes against Lenin's wishes.<sup>31</sup> Their political independence and self-confidence reflected the advantages of urban culture: education and individualism, underscored by the strong sense of class separateness and consciousness that characterized the Bolshevik program in 1917. But although the revolutionary activists were dominated by skilled young male urban workers, more recent migrants were also brought into the revolutionary arena in Moscow and Petrograd precisely because of their location in the urban centers: here the urban working class gave its special stamp to the revolutionary outlook of the nonurban elements it was able to mobilize.

The evidence is only circumstantial that young workers of urban families supported the radical Bolsheviks more than other parties, and that their radicalism was conditioned by prior attitudes shaped by urban life. But there is little evidence for the contrary argument that urban radicalism in 1917 was fueled by the rawest and least politically experienced elements of urban society. As for the Bolsheviks themselves, they had no doubts about the social composition of their supporters; they read the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, when they received 36.5 percent of the urban vote to 24 percent overall (and 47 percent in Petrograd and Moscow).<sup>32</sup> And even though the army gave nearly half its votes to the Bolsheviks, the army would soon be demobilized. Thus their urban supporters were all-important, and the Bolshevik reaction to the urban depopulation following the revolution suggests they feared that the loss of their urban proletarian cadres would seriously

<sup>30</sup> Wade (n. 7 above); V. I. Startsev, *Ocherki po istorii Petrogradskoi krasnoi gvardii i rabochei militsii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1965).

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (New York, 1976).

<sup>32</sup> L. M. Spirin, *Klassy i partii v grazhdanskoi voine v Rossii* (Moscow, 1968), pp. 59–60.

undermine their legitimacy, if not their ability to govern. "Without such an economic base," argued Lenin in March 1921, in advocating the New Economic Policy, "there can be no lasting political power for the working class."<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, when the cities collapsed after 1917, among those who departed were the same urban and skilled young male workers who had fought for Soviet power in October, now leaving to fight in the civil war. Bolshevik hegemony was threatened in two ways: by the loss of these supporters and others like them who rusticated themselves outside the cities, and by changing social and economic conditions that might have served to alter the components of urban culture that had produced such firm Bolshevik support in October. Bolsheviks thus feared "declassing" in two senses, both in changes in social composition and in changing attitudes.

#### DEURBANIZATION IN MOSCOW: DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Given the tremendous transformation that occurred in Russia between 1910 and 1920, it is not surprising that statistical sources can only hint at the dimensions of that transformation. Nonetheless, published census results permit us to trace the movement of the overall population of Moscow by size, age, sex, and precinct from its peak in 1917 through 1918 and up to 1920. Specific divisions by occupation were reported only in the 1918 and 1920 censuses, so a detailed study of changes in population by employment categories can be made only for the shorter period.

Over the entire period from February 1917 to August 1920, Moscow's population dropped by almost one million, a loss of 520,000 males, and 470,000 females. During the same period, there were roughly 110,000 births and 200,000 deaths, a natural decrease of 90,000.<sup>34</sup> Thus about 900,000 people must have left the city by the summer of 1920. Further, William Chase estimates from the 1926 census that about 100,000 people moved into Moscow during the civil war,<sup>35</sup> so the task becomes to account for one million lost Muscovites. Who were they? The sober, urban, most class-conscious workers? Or the politically marginal recent recruits from the Russian countryside? The answer to this question should provide a new appreciation of the nature of the social base underlying the political decisions made during these years, decisions that were to have a critical formative influence on the subsequent shape of the Soviet state and society.

To develop a profile of the changing social composition of Moscow, ideal indices would be place of birth, length of residence in the city,

<sup>33</sup> Lenin, 43:311.

<sup>34</sup> *Stat. ezhegodnik g. Moskvy*, pp. 15, 88.

<sup>35</sup> William Chase, *Workers, Society, and the State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918–1928* (Urbana, Ill., forthcoming), chap. 3.



occupation, length of time in that occupation, education, parents' occupation, and so forth. Most of these are unavailable, so it is necessary to estimate changes in social composition using age, sex, and occupational indices only.

Because occupational data were published only in the 1918 and 1920 census reports, it is difficult to determine who were the first 300,000 people to leave Moscow. The actual outflow did not begin until after May 1917, since a population count made for electoral purposes showed a slightly higher population in May than in February. By September, there were 195,000 fewer inhabitants in the city; about 163,000 of these were aged fifteen or over. Yet over the same period, the number of registered voters in the city—adults over twenty—increased slightly. It is unlikely that fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds (of whom there were 250,000 in September)<sup>36</sup> would have left in such disproportionate numbers. Therefore, the adults who had left by the autumn of 1917 may have been so marginal to the urban community that they had not bothered to participate in the electoral process in 1917. Most of those who departed were men (103,000 to 60,000 women); the evidence is suggestive that these were men and women most closely connected to the countryside, abandoning the city to make sure they would share in the expected redivision of land.

From September 1917 to April 1918, another 120,000 people left, 83,000 of them adults, 42,000 of them adult males. (Men and women over sixty did not participate in this exodus; their numbers actually increased from February 1917 to April 1918, a phenomenon that raises intriguing questions about the position of the aged in Russian society during this period.) By early 1918, Moscow had lost a considerable number of adults, especially adult males. Men left in the greatest numbers from the industrial suburbs to the east of the city center and from the southern Zamoskvorech'e. Some of these losses may have been due to relocation, as the city Soviet commandeered large private houses and reassigned them to workers' families.<sup>37</sup> But the decline in the female population was uniform throughout the city, and this reaffirms the suggestion that the men who left the factory districts were the marginal and single men, those of type D, who had only recently come to the city from the countryside.<sup>38</sup>

Where exactly did the refugees go? Scattered evidence suggests that they returned to the countryside, both in the north and in the grain-

<sup>36</sup> The published February census groups fifteen- to fifty-nine-year-olds, without further division.

<sup>37</sup> G. S. Ignat'ev, *Moskva v pervyi god proletarskoi diktatury* (Moscow, 1975), p. 281.

<sup>38</sup> The census by geographic districts—precincts and later commissariats—was reported in *Biulleten' Tsentral' nogo Statisticheskogo Upravleniia*, no. 33 (1920).



producing districts far beyond Moscow. Already in April 1918 four trainloads of women and children, accompanied by extra cars of food for the journey, were en route to Syzran on the Volga, an evacuation sponsored by the local trade union council.<sup>39</sup> A comparison of the rural population between 1917 and 1919 indicates that the farming population of agriculturally nonproductive Moscow province declined from 72,000 in 1917 to 64,000 in 1919, echoing the urban pattern. Moscow city workers with ties to nearby regions may have preferred to trust their chances in the city rather than to return home, even if home were nearby. On the other hand, the agrarian population of more fertile Riazan province, the source of many Moscow migrants, increased from 175,000 in 1917 to 192,000 in 1919.<sup>40</sup> The northernmost regions of Russia around Arkhangel, Vologda, and Tver also increased in population during the civil war, and surely substantial population gains went unrecorded in the southern regions beyond the limit of the twenty-two provinces of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Once again, as in the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century, town-dwelling Russians escaped to the forest and to the steppe. What is most curious about the changes in rural population is that the overall rural growth of about 8 percent was accounted for entirely by men; the female rural population remained constant, so the destination of the female out-migrants from Moscow remains something of a mystery.<sup>41</sup>

Between 1918 and 1920, Moscow's net loss was about 690,000 people.<sup>42</sup> Of these 690,000 missing persons, only 190,000 were economically self-supporting; the remaining 490,000 or so were dependents. Thus 70 percent of the missing Muscovites were children, nonworking women (and men, about 34,000 of them) between the ages of twenty and fifty-nine, and those too old to work. Little else is known about these refugees, neither whom they depended on, nor whether the women were workers' wives, factory workers themselves made redundant by the return of their husbands from the front, grandes dames of society, or shopkeepers' spinster daughters. But by and large, for a whole series of cultural reasons, nonworking women had not played a significant role in political activity in 1917,<sup>43</sup> and their absence after 1918 probably had little effect on the

<sup>39</sup> *Professional'nyi vestnik*, April 20, 1918, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> TsSU, *Trudy*, vol. 6, a study of the economic stratification of the peasantry in 1917 and 1919.

<sup>41</sup> *Ekonomicheskaya zhizn'*, December 1, 1920, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> The natural decrease in this period was 56,000, but since mortality statistics were not provided by sex, net out-migration must be calculated without regard to sex. In order to preserve the value of sex-ratio information, it is preferable here to refer to net loss of population rather than net out-migration.

<sup>43</sup> See the worker families reported on in Kabo (n. 23 above).

TABLE 2  
NET CHANGE IN MOSCOW WORKING POPULATION BY OCCUPATIONAL  
GROUP FROM 1918 TO 1920

Group	Male	Female	Total
Workers .....	-90,760	-9,680	-100,440
Servants .....	-25,390	-56,270	-81,660
Employees .....	-59,460	+24,400	-35,060
Free professions .....	-720	+1,340	+620
Proprietors .....	-46,960	-14,530	-61,490
Other .....	+65,690	+14,320	+80,010

SOURCE.—*Statisticheskii ezhegodnik goroda Moskvy i moskovskoi gubernii*, vyp. 2 (Moscow, 1927), pp. 46–51.

political and social consciousness of the Muscovite supporters of Soviet power. The children who left, on the other hand (especially some 100,000 teenagers), were now removed from a formative urban experience. But their absence, too, would little affect current political life in the city. If the city was “declassed,” in other words, it was not because of the departure of women and children.

To evaluate the impact of Moscow’s depopulation on its political life, it is important to know which *self-supporting* individuals left the city. The net loss of 194,000 economically independent residents can be accounted for in table 2.

Among the largest groups of absentees were workers, domestic servants, and proprietors. Workers will be examined in more detail below. Domestic servants were a rural class, cut off from city life and from one another; most worked as single maids of all work in middle-class households. (These and cooks disappeared most completely between 1918 and 1920.) Nor did domestic servants produce dependents for future urban generations.<sup>44</sup> Their disappearance would have little negative effect on urban political life; furthermore, if they were reabsorbed into the urban work force in other occupations, their exposure to political culture might actually increase.

The departure of individual proprietors for Paris, Berlin, Odessa, Vladivostok, or wherever else they escaped to, like the departure of their servants, probably did not directly affect socialist political relationships

<sup>44</sup> *Stat. ezhegodnik g. Moskvy*, p. 73. In 1912, 4 percent of domestic servants were urban born (the city average was 29 percent). Among servants, there were sixteen self-supporting individuals for every one dependent, while the overall ratio was about two dependents to one independent (p. 74).

in Moscow. Note also that 60,000 male employees left; their leaving was partially balanced by an influx of 24,000 women employees, primarily typists and other clerical personnel (messengers and couriers were classified as servants). Many of these office workers presumably worked for Soviet institutions, the biggest growth sector in Moscow, but others replaced departed or drafted men in business, factory, or cooperative society offices. Finally, an additional 80,000 residents in other categories came to the city, including 14,000 wards of the state (orphans, invalids, prisoners), and 50,000 people classified simply in "other occupations." Since these were almost all males, this large group of newcomers certainly represents the Moscow Red Army garrison. Many of these may not have been newcomers at all, but workers reassigned from Moscow factories to Moscow barracks.

Returning to the change among workers between 1918 and 1920, note that 90 percent of the decline is accounted for by men. Working women did not leave the city, unlike their economically dependent counterparts; from 90,000 in 1918, their numbers dropped only to 80,000 in 1920, whereas the number of male workers fell from 215,000 in 1918 to 124,000. In Petrograd, too, women dominated the labor force after 1918, especially in the age group fifteen to twenty-five.<sup>45</sup> During the civil war, Moscow women continued to work in the same occupations they had held during the war and in 1917: textiles, clothing manufacture (especially army uniforms), and food and tobacco production.

Among men, skilled workers suffered the greatest numerical losses (although in percentages, these losses were less than among semiskilled or unskilled workers). It is this group that included the most committed of the revolutionary activists of 1917. Indeed, a different set of figures that permits comparison of 1920 and 1917 shows that the number of metalworkers, the quintessential urban proletarian activists, declined in Moscow by almost 40,000, or 66 percent: 25,000 of these left between 1917 and August 1918, a loss therefore only marginally represented in the comparison of 1918 and 1920.<sup>46</sup> By virtue of their scarce and flexible skills, these metalworkers were among the most employable men in Russia, and many of them traveled the countryside during these years, finding work at the big state munitions plants in centers such as Sormovo, Tula, and Izhevsk; here they received the same food ration as Red Army men and were closer to sources of food supply.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> TsSU, *Trudy*, vol. 26, vyp. 2, tables 3 and 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Fabrichno-zavodskaiia promyshlennost' g. Moskvy i moskovskoi gubernii 1917–1927 gg.* (Moscow, 1928), p. 1. These industrial figures presumably derive from the August 1918 industrial census, taken four months after the urban population count that provides most of the occupational information used here.

<sup>47</sup> D. A. Baevskii, *Rabochii klass v pervye gody sovetskoi vlasti (1917–1921 gg.)* (Moscow, 1974), p. 250.

Like Moscow's, Petrograd's losses included large numbers of skilled and valuable longtime workers. In fact, none left in such great numbers, both absolute and relative, as the skilled metalworkers, so that by October 1918, when the Red Army's need for armaments caused metal production to revive, metal union officials pleaded for a return of workers to the city: "We still have raw materials, coal, and iron. We still have machines. We can and know how to work. But few of our metalworkers have stayed in Petrograd. Some died in the fight for freedom, others have gone to the front, still others have left the red capital during the evacuation, and still others have dispersed all over the country in search of bread for themselves and their families. Many, after the closing of their factories, moved to other branches of industry, joined the militia, or engage now in petty trade."<sup>48</sup>

But despite the allegations of declassing, of workers returning to their native villages, statistical evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of Moscow's skilled workers were lost to the Red Army itself. And the loss of such activists surely diminished the reserves of Bolshevik agitators and Bolshevik supporters. On the other hand, of more than 300,000 Muscovites mustered into the army,<sup>49</sup> not all were hereditary proletarian cadres—workers of the family types A, B, and C. Scattered evidence compiled from biographies and from figures on aid to army dependents suggests that many recruits came directly from tsarist army units on active or reserve status in Moscow, and from families of white-collar employees as well as of workers.<sup>50</sup> However, recruits were overwhelmingly young, unmarried, and childless; workers of this type had enthusiastically supported Soviet power in 1917, and their physical absence from the city would clearly affect the political climate.

Not all eligible workers joined the Red Army, however. Reports about the initial May 1918 mobilization suggest that from 15 to 25 percent of those called were too ill to report; others were rejected upon initial examination, so it is likely that only half of those called up left the city. Many other workers also remained in Moscow in reserve units, working their jobs during the day and training evenings and on weekends.<sup>51</sup> Still others, especially skilled workers, received permanent assignments as army instructors in Moscow. A young printer who volunteered for duty in May 1920 was trained as an instructor and spent the remainder of the civil war training reserve units of printers in his original Moscow neigh-

<sup>48</sup> V. Z. Drobizhev, A. K. Sokolov, and V. A. Ustinov, *Rabochii klass sovetsskoi Rossii v pervyi god proletarskoi diktatury* (Moscow, 1975), p. 91 (my translation).

<sup>49</sup> *Krasnaia Moskva 1917–1920 gg.* (Moscow, 1920), p. 618.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 435–38.

<sup>51</sup> *Uprochenie sovetsskoi vlasti v Moskve i moskovskoi gubernii* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 443–52.

borhood.<sup>52</sup> Finally, just as had happened in 1914 and 1915, skilled workers were deemed too valuable for production to be used as soldiers, and beginning in late 1918, they began to return to their original industrial occupations.<sup>53</sup>

It is important now to evaluate the nature of the change in the social composition of Moscow during the civil war years, and especially to suggest something about the fate of the politically active urban workers who helped make the revolution in 1917. First of all, they did not rusticate themselves in large numbers. Those that returned to the countryside were those with the closest ties there—unskilled recent migrants, servants, and nonworking dependents. Second, although many of the urbanized workers served in the Red Army, many also remained in the city. Moscow experienced what a Soviet analysis of the 1918 census called a “middling-out” of the working class.<sup>54</sup> Many of the most politically committed workers left the work force for military service or for posts in the Soviet government. The least politically active workers (e.g., the nonvoters in 1917) returned to their villages, leaving the middle strata, including women, in the labor force. But the skilled workers whose class consciousness and revolutionary zeal had helped win the October revolution did not entirely disappear, and the women who remained were likely to be family members of these veterans of 1917.

Unquestionably, the population was older; the median age of Moscow residents rose by a year between 1917 and 1920, and other evidence confirms the commonsense assumption that the skilled workers who stayed in the city and continued to work were older family men. They were less likely to have been Bolshevik supporters than their younger brothers or sons. Eduard Dune’s father, a skilled worker and a family man, sympathized with his son’s determination to fight for Soviet power in October 1917, but he himself chose to stand aside. Thus it was the loss of young activists rather than of all skilled and class conscious urban workers that caused the level of Bolshevik support to decline during the civil war. Older workers had tended to support the Menshevik party in 1917;<sup>55</sup> the Menshevik resurgence in 1918 was made possible in part by the Red Army’s mobilization and removal from the urban political scene of the activist young workers. Such an analysis suggests that revolutionary consciousness may have been based as much on generational as on class

<sup>52</sup> *Leninskii zakaz: sto let tipografii ‘Krasnyi proletarii’* (Moscow, 1969), p. 97.

<sup>53</sup> Baevskii, pp. 246–48.

<sup>54</sup> Drobizhev et al., p. 151.

<sup>55</sup> Koenker, *Moscow Workers*, chap. 5.

distinctions, a fact which was not part of the Bolshevik canon of revolutionary theory.

The changed social composition of the Moscow work force can be summarized by returning to the five types of urban workers described above. Urban type A workers had no place to go except the Red Army. Young men from this group may have disappeared during the civil war; their parents and sisters remained. Type D workers, husbands and fathers alone in the city without families, were the first to leave in search of land even before the serious crises began. Many workers of types B and C, whose attachment to the countryside depended on the length of the family's stay in the city and on the economic viability of their village property, may have chosen to stay in the city; young sons in these groups would also provide Red Army recruits. Finally, some young workers of type E, the first-generation migrants, may have also chosen to stay on, especially those who had begun to take advantage of city life. A number of Red Army veterans came from this stratum, and some recalled having attended evening schools while in the city.<sup>56</sup> Workers of this type who were least assimilated would have returned home with the first wave of refugees in 1917, but social origin is an especially poor predictor of the outlook of such young unattached workers. Further research on the formation of the Soviet working class after 1921 would do well to observe the career paths of similar young workers who migrated from the countryside without the baggage of strong rural ties. It is likely that some of these type E workers would interact with and be assimilated into the urban core of the working class that had remained in the city.

#### DEURBANIZATION IN MOSCOW: CULTURAL CHANGES

The prevailing analysis of the "declassed" proletariat in 1920–21 by Mensheviks and Bolsheviks was based on two assumptions: one was the physical disappearance of former proletarians, and the other was the changing consciousness of the proletarians who remained. The demographic data for Moscow reveal that a sizable core of veteran urban proletarians remained in the city; they did not all disappear. Lenin assumed that a worker who manufactured cigarette lighters in his darkened former factory was less class conscious than his neighbor who used his skills to manufacture machine guns or locomotive parts. And while one may argue with Lenin's rather narrow definition of consciousness, there is no question that the dislocations of the civil war produced changing attitudes and caused workers to rearrange the priorities of their value systems. The question is, Were urban workers' values, their political consciousness,

<sup>56</sup> *Geroi grazhdanskoi voiny* (Moscow, 1974).



declassed or deurbanized? Did workers forget the class origins and class pride that had been so important in 1917? How did the dislocation of the civil war alter the specific elements that had contributed to the prevailing political consciousness as of October 1917?

Urban workers were especially likely to participate in political activity because of four factors: the educational and cultural opportunities afforded as part of an urban upbringing; the awareness of class interests fostered by ideology, employment patterns, and the settlement of workers in specific neighborhoods; the ease of organization for workers whose education and skills gave them resources with which to act; and the fact that the cities themselves were centers of political life.

The civil war exodus from Moscow affected some of these factors and not others. Education and culture continued, although at reduced levels. All children, regardless of social class, were given free noon meals, provided they attend city schools for an hour each day. The city could not afford to heat the school buildings, but the idea, explained Moscow Soviet chairman M. N. Pokrovskii, was to feed them and at the same time to teach the habit of attending school. The city's cultural life, especially its theaters, seemed to visitors more vibrant than ever before. The number of libraries in Moscow nearly tripled and in Petrograd doubled between 1917 and 1919; educational institutions, especially for workers, expanded at the same rate.<sup>57</sup> The theater, always one of the most popular Russian art forms, was especially lively. An American visitor in 1918 wrote, "In the days before the war, the cheaper seats at the Moscow Art Theatre and at the opera and ballet were fought for by long queues of students and workmen in blouse and belt. The only difference today, with the ascendancy of the proletariat, is that the workman's greater comparative wealth has enabled him to move down into the parterre."<sup>58</sup> A year later, Arthur Ransome attended a performance of *Uncle Vanya* at the Art Theatre, and was "struck by the new smartness of the boy officers of the Red Army, of whom a fair number were present."<sup>59</sup> Factory theaters were also springing up, twenty of them by late 1920.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Arthur Ransome, *Russia in 1919* (New York, 1919), pp. 187–88, 183–84.

<sup>58</sup> Oliver M. Saylor, *Russia, White or Red* (Boston, 1919), p. 87.

<sup>59</sup> Ransome, p. 139.

<sup>60</sup> *Rabochii klass sovetskoi Rossii v pervyi god diktatury proletariata. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, ed. D. A. Chugaev (Moscow, 1964), p. 322. Indeed, the broad popularity of drama among the Russian working populace raises the heretical notion of the revolution as theater. Angelica Balabanoff suggests as much in her recollections of 1919, although she did not seem to appreciate the importance of drama in Russian popular culture: "I had already been shocked by the display and theatricality of public life in revolutionary Russia (the Bolsheviks seemed to be masters of stage direction), which seemed to me unsuited to the



Working-class neighborhoods continued to exist through the civil war and became ever more autonomous units of public and daily life. Workers in these neighborhoods often became responsible for maintaining their factories, domestic safety, and housing: as landlords fled, more and more apartment buildings, for example, became “wild”—that is, were managed on an ad hoc basis by residents themselves.<sup>61</sup> Unemployment and even cooptation of workers into official Soviet positions would not necessarily have taken workers away from these neighborhoods, and thus their proletarian character was not likely to change despite the social changes going on in the city at large. There were substantial population shifts within the city, as workers resettled in formerly middle-class residential areas. On the other hand, because of the breakdown of local transport and the strong sense of neighborhood and district loyalty that appears again and again in workers’ memoirs, it is unlikely that workers moved very far from their original places of residence.

The neighborhood may well have replaced the factory as the focus of working-class identity during these years. And the consolidation of these neighborhoods may have been aided by a curious new phenomenon appearing in the statistical record: the absolute number of marriages began to climb in 1918, doubled in 1919, and remained at a high level well into the 1920s (see table 3).<sup>62</sup>

A number of explanations were proposed and dismissed at the time by Soviet officials. First, only a small part of the increase represented marriages deferred from the war years; these had been “made up,” based on prewar rates, by mid-1919. More influential was the award of cloth and later cash to wedding couples, and some marriages may have been fictitious, made to qualify women for the special Red Army ration.<sup>63</sup> But even when these nuptial incentives were repealed in mid-1920, the rate remained high.<sup>64</sup> It is more pertinent that early in 1918 civil marriage replaced church ceremonies; one might guess that urban workers most likely preferred to marry outside the church and that such urban couples accounted for much of the marital increase.<sup>65</sup> A British Labour party

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Revolution’s proletarian character” (Angelica Balabanoff, *My Life as a Rebel* [Bloomington, Ind., 1973], p. 219).

<sup>61</sup> Kabo, p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> *Stat. ezhegodnik g. Moskvy*, p. 88.

<sup>63</sup> *Krasnaia Moskva*, p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> Nor were easy divorces a significant factor, since the divorce rate was low during this period. *Otchet Moskovskogo gubernskogo ekonomicheskogo soveshchaniia na 1-e oktiabria 1921 g.* (Moscow, 1921), p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> G. V. Zhirnova, “Russkii gorodskoi svadebnyi obriad kontsa XIX-nachala XX vekakh,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 1 (1969), pp. 48–58.

TABLE 3  
MARRIAGES AND MARRIAGE RATES IN MOSCOW FROM 1912 TO 1923

Year	Marriages	Marriages per 10,000 Population
1912 .....	9,564	58
1913 .....	10,093	60
1914 .....	9,679	55
1915 .....	7,478	41
1916 .....	7,623	39
1917 .....	9,918	54
1918 .....	12,650	75
1919 .....	24,693	174
1920 .....	21,363	191
1921 .....	19,863	169
1922 .....	21,072	153
1923 .....	25,342	156

SOURCE.—*Statisticheskii ezhegodnik goroda Moskvy i moskovskoi gubernii*, vyp. 2 (Moscow, 1927), p. 88.

delegate to Russia was told in 1920 (probably by Inessa Armand) that such people before the revolution preferred to live together without benefit of clergy rather than submit to the institution of the church; now, “as a rule, they prefer to be legally married.”<sup>66</sup> Urbanized workers rather than peasants strongly preferred a secular culture; the rise in the civil marriage rate was thus surely facilitated by the fact that the women remaining in the city were relatively more urban than peasant, as were the men. They were the children of type A and B families; and in marrying they were not only expressing hope in the future, but helping to perpetuate the elements of urban culture that had been evolving since well before the revolution. The families they would produce (slowly, because the number of births continued to fall during these years) would be purely urban, too. Consequently, this surge of marriages (equaled elsewhere in Russia only in Petrograd) represented a consolidation of urban working-class society in the midst of what otherwise has been portrayed as urban collapse. One might also expect that the frequency of marriages added a new element of kinship ties to reinforce or to rival the existing bonds of class and neighborhood.

The advantage of urbanism most negatively affected by the crisis of 1917–20 was the urbanized worker’s special reservoir of resources and

<sup>66</sup> *Report of the British Labour Delegation to Russia* (London, 1920), p. 21.

organizational facility. Economically, the period was a nightmare. Real wages plummeted, and nominal wages became meaningless as more and more compensation came in the form of uniform food rations. On the other hand, Moscow workers all had a great deal of time off work, which they might have used for culture, political activity, and organization. In 1919, the darkest year of the civil war, the average worker spent eighteen days a month at work and twelve days off. Of those twelve, six were missed for personal reasons; the figure was even higher (9.5 days) for the stalwart metalworkers: for every two days on the job, they took one off.<sup>67</sup> Most of these days were not spent in political activity, however, or in idle carousing, but in the search for food, on personal trips to forage in the countryside. Thus the city's advantage as a cultural center was offset in this period by the total absorption of its residents in the struggle for daily existence.

Still the workers who remained in the city were among the most urbanized elements, and although the urban propensity toward working-class activism may have been slowed, it was not reversed. But activism, even working-class activism, was not necessarily identical to Bolshevism, and other short-term changes occurred during the civil war years that may have helped to alter the class consciousness and Bolshevik support of 1917. They were probably not the changes blamed by Lenin for the deterioration of workers' consciousness, such as trading homemade cigarette lighters on the Moscow black market.

What then were the changes? First of all, Bolshevik consciousness in 1917 had been reinforced by a sense of class separateness and class identity. Separate neighborhoods remained after 1917, but there was a tendency toward more interclass mingling, not less. For example, British labor delegates visited a nine-room apartment occupied in 1920 by its former sole resident, a rich widow, plus a factory worker, a tram conductor, a military student from rural Smolensk, and a former lawyer now employed in a Soviet bureau, all with wives and children.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, once the government had chased out its class enemies, the need for a class-pure government might not remain as essential as it had in 1917. With the departure of so many manufacturers, bankers, and traders, perhaps the Bolsheviks' extremist vision of class struggle no longer seemed so important. This may be why party membership dropped in 1918.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, William Chase argues with some evidence that the place of the big bourgeoisie was taken by petty traders selling foodstuffs and

<sup>67</sup> *Krasnaia Moskva*, p. 65.

<sup>68</sup> *Report of the British Labour Delegation*, p. 138.

<sup>69</sup> Ignat'ev (n. 37 above), p. 91.

manufactured goods on the Sukharev market.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the class enemy was alive and well and fighting in the White Armies, as newspapers stressed throughout the period, although, despite the appeals for Sunday work to produce more arms and all-out drives such as “Front Week,” this confrontation was removed from the direct daily experience of most workers.

A second short-term factor in the Bolsheviks’ success in 1917 had been their identification as a peace party. Once Russia had withdrawn from the international war, this appeal must have been diminished, too. Careful research in the varied periodical press of the period may help to determine how the populace felt about the civil war that their boys were mobilized to fight, but memoir sources give the strong impression that the civil war was perceived as a just and necessary conflict: Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, and nonparty citizens all volunteered to defend the social revolution.

The economic situation had unquestionably been a major critical factor in the formation of the particular class consciousness of 1917. Factories closed, workers were laid off, and the devastating supply crisis haunted the cities throughout 1917. If the economic crisis was due to sabotage, as workers believed, then the socialists in the Provisional Government had been powerless to stop it. The Bolsheviks received a great deal of support precisely because they had not been implicated in the economic debacle of 1917.

But the economy continued to collapse in 1918, 1919, and 1920. Did the urban cadres of 1917 face the continuing crisis with the same sense of class consciousness that they had shared in October? Ralf Dahrendorf has argued that under varying conditions, class identity can lose its power as a focus of unity, and that other factors—workplace, neighborhood, skill, kin—may become more important.<sup>71</sup> The struggle for existence that workers in 1917 tried to solve as a class, through the Soviets, was not solved, and to survive, workers turned to other sources: individual trading and foraging for food, local institutions, workplace control. The result was that the Bolshevik party had to scramble politically to keep the backing of its former supporters. That no other organization arose to challenge them successfully may be ascribed in some measure to the utter lack of resources that workers had for any new mobilization of their

<sup>70</sup> William Chase, “Moscow and Its Working Class, 1918–1928: A Social Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1979), pp. 36–39; Marguerite Harrison, *Marooned in Moscow* (New York, 1921), pp. 151–57.

<sup>71</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Consciousness in Industrial Society* (Stanford, Calif., 1959), and *Conflict after Class* (London, 1967).

energy and support, but also to Bolshevik control of the means of repression, including control over food distribution, housing, and of course the Cheka—the new government's secret police.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

This examination of the civil war years, particularly in Moscow, suggests that the deurbanization of those years represented a change in quantity but not entirely in quality in the cities. The proletariat declined in the city, but it did not wither away. Thus its basic urban character remained, reinforced in marriage and in the location if not the quality of its experience. Despite substantial turnover and the presumed influx of new generations of nonurbanized peasants after 1921, a core of the city's working class remained to impart its own brand of urban culture.

If the relationship between the urban working class and its representative Bolshevik party changed during these years, it changed not entirely because the cadres of 1917 left the factories for the front, the villages, the black market, or the commissariats. Rather, it changed because the political and economic conjuncture of these years called for different responses and fostered a different set of priorities from those of the preceding revolutionary years. If Lenin's perceptions of the situation were at all representative, it appears that the Bolshevik party made deurbanization and declassing the scapegoats for its political difficulties, when the party's own policies and its unwillingness to accept changing proletarian attitudes were also to blame.

A number of writers have suggested that the civil war years be viewed as a generational experience, in Karl Mannheim's sense, during which new values are acquired that are retained by members of a generation throughout their active lives.<sup>72</sup> What characteristics were acquired during these years that might have become part of a new Russian urban culture? One must look to the many negative elements of the period: the atmosphere of political emergency and terror against opposition; the prevalence of crime and utter lawlessness in working-class districts; the collapse of any semblance of a market economy; the erosion of industrial discipline and of productivity; the decline of the workplace as the center of one's life; the experience of unemployment, of living on the dole, and later in the period, of labor mobilization; and the wholesale militarization of society. But we should not ignore, in assessing the formative elements

<sup>72</sup> Fitzpatrick (n. 6 above), pp. 64–65; Robert C. Tucker, "Stalinism as Revolution from Above," in *Stalinism*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1977), pp. 91–92; Stephen F. Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," *ibid.*, pp. 3–29; see also Alan B. Spitzer, "The Historical Problem of Generations," *American Historical Review* 78, no. 5 (December 1973): 1353–85.

of the period, the continuing positive aspects of urban life: theater, libraries, schools, recreation, family formation, associations, newspapers, political participation, and the sense that a new society was being created even in these dark years.

The demographic and social evidence presented here thus modifies the hypothesis that Russia "deurbanized," that its workers were "declassed" during the years from 1917 to 1921. Just as urban growth and urbanization are not synonymous, so too we should distinguish between the numerical decline of the urban population, or "urban contraction," and "deurbanization," which suggests a reversal of all of the elements of the urbanization process. Despite the years of hunger, cold, and disease in the cities, despite the antiurban utopian dreams that these years encouraged,<sup>73</sup> urban life and urban culture were not extinguished during the Russian civil war, but only transformed. The full nature of this transformation remains to be explored.

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g., the pseudonymous work of the agricultural economist A. V. Chaianov: Ivan Kremnev, "The Journey of My Brother Alexei to the Land of Peasant Utopia" (Moscow, 1920), reprinted in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* 4, no. 1 (October 1976): 63–117.