

AMERICAN 'KNOW-HOW' ON THE SOVIET FRONTIER:
SOVIET INSTITUTIONS AND AMERICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE
SOVIET UNION IN THE ERA OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

By

Benjamin Warren Sawyer

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ABSTRACT

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Between 1921 and 1927, approximately 5,000 individuals chose to leave their homes in the United States and Canada and cast their lot with the “Soviet experiment” being conducted in the lands of the former Russian Empire. Most migrants in these years came as part of a Soviet immigration strategy that required migrants to form groups that could be directed to a particular industrial or agricultural site, which they were required to transform into a productive venture through the application of their pooled financial resources and American “know-how.” Though many migrants and Soviet policy makers had high hopes for this immigration strategy when it was established in 1921, by the middle of the decade it had done little to facilitate immigration or generate any substantial economic impact. Thus, the NEP-era immigration policy contributed to, and became an early victory of, the political climate that ultimately gave rise to the coercive strategies of the Stalinist-era.

This dissertation examines this migration from the perspective of both Soviet policy makers and those who migrated under the terms of the NEP-era immigration policy. Drawing on a variety of archival sources in both the United States and the Russian Federation, my dissertation argues that the Soviet immigration strategy failed to accomplish Soviet leaders’ goals due to the inability of the state to fulfill the terms it offered those who chose to immigrate. This was an outcome of the administrative

rivalries inside Moscow, as well as the indifference to central policy shown by officials living outside the borders of the Soviet capital, which combined to create a Soviet state apparatus in which uniform implementation of policy was nearly impossible. Challenging contemporary depictions of these migrants as ‘utopian dreamers’ who became disillusioned when confronted with the horrors of life in the Soviet Union, my dissertation shows that most migrants in these years had far more realistic expectations for their life inside Soviet borders that were not inherently out of reach, but were rendered unattainable by the chaos of the Soviet state in the 1920s.

In addition, by applying an institutional economic framework to the NEP-era Soviet immigration policy, I provide a framework for understanding this period in Soviet history that remains absent in the current literature. In this respect, I contend that what unites many of the seemingly diverse policies of the NEP-era is the state’s attempt to establish formal institutions that corresponded with the reality of informal institutions as a means of enlisting non-state/non-Party actors into the Soviet project on the basis of shared short-term goals. As shown in the case of NEP-era immigration policy, this use of formal institutions to turn the ‘potential energy’ of various groups into the ‘kinetic energy’ that could drive the state further in its revolutionary goals proved effective in expanding the Soviet state apparatus, but failed miserably in facilitating economic development. Crippled by chaos in their efforts to build the trust required to enlist these sources of economic development in the Soviet project, Soviet leaders gradually abandoned the NEP-era strategy, and embraced a coercive strategy in which state policy was not a reflection of prevailing informal institutions, but a means of molding them into those deemed most appropriate by a handful of leaders in Moscow.

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history helped me to catch up in a field that was wholly new to me. Matthew Pauley and Steve Gold's insights into my work will also undoubtedly be crucial as I transform this dissertation into a monograph in the future.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Title (Russian Transliteration)	Full Title (English Translation)
AOC	_____	American Organization Committee (of AIK)
AIK	_____	Autonomous Industrial Colony- Kuzbas
AMO	<i>Avtomobil'noe Moskovskoe Obshchestvo</i>	Moscow Automotive Society
CPUSA	_____	Communist Party of the United States of America
IWW	_____	Industrial Workers of the World
KZP	<i>Komissiiia Zakonodatel'nykh Predpolozhenii</i>	Commission of Legislative Proposals (of Sovnarkom)
Narkomfin	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Finansov</i>	People's Commissariat of Finance
Narkomput'	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Putei Soobshcheniia</i>	People's Commissariat of Transportation
Narkomtrud	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Truda</i>	People's Commissariat of Labor
Narkomzem	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Zemledeliia</i>	People's Commissariat of Agriculture
NEP	<i>Novaia Ekonomicheskaiia Politika</i>	New Economic Policy
NKID	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Inostrannykh Del</i>	People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del</i>	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs
NKVT	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vneshnei Torgovli</i>	People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade

OII	<i>Otdel Promyshlennoi Immigratsii pri VSNKh</i>	Office of Industrial Immigration (of VSNKh)
PKSTO	<i>Postoiannaia Komissiia STO po Trudovoi Sel'skokhoziaistvennoi i Promyshlennoi Immigratsii I Emigratsii</i>	Permanent Commission of STO for Agricultural and Industrial Labor Immigration and Emigration
Sovnarkom	<i>Sovet Narodnykh Kommissarov</i>	Council of People's Commissars
SSSR	<i>Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik</i>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
STASR	_____	Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia
STO	<i>Sovet Truda i Oborony</i>	Council of Labor and Defense
TsIK SSSR	<i>Tsentral'nyi Iсполnitel'nyi Komitet SSSR</i>	Central Executive Committee USSR
VSNKh	<i>Vyshshii Sovet Narodnogo Khoziaistva</i>	Supreme Soviet of the National Economy
VTsIK	<i>Vserossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Iсполnitel'nyi Komitet</i>	All-Russian Central Executive Committee
VTsSPS	<i>Vserossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Sovet Professional'nykh Soiuzov</i>	All-Russian Council of Trade Unions
WPA	_____	Workers Party of America

INTRODUCTION

On April 6, 1923, police arrived at the New York recruiting office of the Autonomous Industrial Colony Kuzbas (AIK) and arrested two of the colony's recruiters on charges of grand larceny. The charges stemmed from accusations made by former AIK member Thomas Doyle who, along with his wife and two children, had paid \$1,000 to join AIK, but claimed conditions in the Western Siberian colony were not what the recruiters allegedly had promised them. According to Doyle, the colony's organizers had lured them and hundreds of other Americans "with their promises of a wonderful Utopia free from capitalism's oppression," only to deliver them into the material and moral depravation of life in the colony. In particular, Doyle was incensed by the practice of "free love," which he claimed was "enforced everywhere under Lenin's rule." "Day and night," he claimed, "these bewiskered Slavs would accost Mrs. Doyle, insisting that she yield." "There never was a more radical red than I was last May," Doyle told a reporter for the Chicago Daily Tribune, "so I went to the home of the reds- Russia- and they cured me forever."¹

The DoYLES were just a few of the approximately 5,000 Americans who left their homes in North America to cast their lot with the new world being built inside Soviet

¹ Lies and 'Free Love' Cure U.S. Reds in Russia, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 7, 1923. The DoYLES' story was also covered by the Washington Post, ("Charge Huge Fraud in Russian Colony," *Washington Post*, April 8, 1923.), The New York Times ("Starved, Robbed Back from Russia," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1923), and the Los Angeles Times ("Bill Haywood in Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1923.), all of which listed the DoYLES' investment as \$1,100, not \$1,000 as the Chicago Tribune had cited.

borders in the years of the New Economic Policy (1921-1927).² The majority of these individuals migrated to Russia as part of a greater NEP-era immigration strategy established in 1921 that sought to bring North Americans to Soviet Russia by offering immigrant groups the right to an agricultural or industrial site and access to Soviet space, in exchange for foreign currency and technical “knowhow” that the Soviet state so desperately needed. Though the opportunity offered under this policy initially drew much interest in the US and Canada, the slow trickle of migration taking place by the mid-1920s, combined with poor performance of many immigrant colonies, led Soviet leaders to end this immigration strategy in 1927, at about the same time as the entire NEP-era system began to collapse in general. In the end, it seems neither immigrants nor Soviet officials found in the other what they had hoped to find.

² There is no source that provides a definitive list of all those who came to the Soviet Union in these years. The estimate given above is a conglomeration of information from various reports that seems to be generally consistent with other sources referring to immigration numbers. The estimates combine the following reports: a report on the total number of Americans immigrating to the RSFSR, June 1921- October 1922, which gives a total of 531 immigrants [Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 363]; a report on total individual applicants for immigration from October 25 1922 to August 1, 1925, which lists 874 US and 245 Canadians accepted [GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 1, l. 47]; a report on total group applicants for immigration from October 25, 1922 to August 1, 1925, which lists 2,044 US and 248 Canadians accepted [GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 1, l. 48]; a report on total North Americans sent to the Soviet Union by the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia from 1922 to 1926, which lists a total of 274 people sent between August 1925 and November 1926 [Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI) f. 515, op. 1, d. 720, ll. 61-65]; and a total of 458 North Americans sent to AIK by the colony's organizing committee in 1922 [“Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2,” Millie and Herbert S. Calvert Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University Box 1, Folder 4]. The reports give a total of 4,674 North Americans who migrated between June 1921 and November 1926, 3,555 (76%) of which had come as part of migrant groups. This total does not account for the total individual applicants who came in 1926, the total numbers who joined AIK in the years after 1922, nor those who immigrated illegally, but none of these categories should significantly increase the total.

The story of disillusionment given above seems to provide an explanation for the failure of this immigration plan that fits harmoniously within the chorus of contemporary voices proclaiming the Soviet promise to be nothing more than a sham. Yet this narrative, which remains largely unchallenged more than ninety years later, leaves several unanswered questions concerning the nature of both the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Why, for example, was the Soviet government willing to permit immigration at this time, and what can this tell us about the nature of the Soviet state in the era of the New Economic Policy (NEP)? Given that those who returned to the United States were much more likely to have been disillusioned than those who remained in the Soviet Union, how representative of the greater pool of migrants were these returnees? If migrants were indeed drawn to Soviet space by utopian visions, as at least some seem to have been, what was the nature of the utopia they were seeking, and why were they so willing to believe that this was obtainable in Soviet space? For the many who chose not to return, what push and pull factors inspired them to depart their homes and take the risks that came with life in the Soviet Union? Finally, if unrealistic expectations were not the primary reason for the failure of the NEP-era Soviet immigration plan, how can we explain this failure?

This dissertation addresses these questions by examining immigration from North America to the Soviet Union in the NEP-era from the perspective of both the immigrants themselves, as well as the officials who were responsible for facilitating this migration. In terms of the migrants, this dissertation argues that the Americans who chose to migrate to the Soviet Union were motivated by a variety of non-material incentives, but only rarely could these expectations be deemed as unrealistic. The majority of those who chose to

undertake this migration process were so-called “reemigrants,” who had migrated from the Russian Empire to North America during the last decades of the Tsarist era, and wished to return to their former homes to rejoin family and help with the economic development of a new, modern Russia. Those without such roots inside Soviet borders, such as the Doyles, were more likely to be driven by a vision of Soviet space that was inconsistent with the realities of the time, yet this ideal was not a monolith. Though disappointment with life in the Soviet Union was by no means uncommon amongst migrants, the primary cause for this sentiment was not the sense of a lost paradise, as suggested by the Doyles’ account, but the hardships that came from the realization that the state was not living up to the terms that it offered migrants at the time of their departure.

As concerns the Soviet state, this dissertation contends that the immigration policy that facilitated the movement of these migrants was an earnest attempt by Soviet officials to exchange the right to entry into Soviet borders for the capital, machinery and American “know-how” that they so desperately needed to build the industrial economy on which they had staked their reputation. From the implementation of the new policy in 1921 to its demise in 1927, Soviet officials remained clear about the harsh conditions of life in the Soviet Union, as well as the material requirements each individual must meet to be allowed to immigrate. That many migrants struggled to gain a footing in their new homes should not be taken as evidence of malevolence on behalf of state officials, but as one of the many examples of Soviet officials’ inability to enforce the terms of centrally negotiated policies outside the walls of the policy-making agency. As I show, the story of the rise and fall of the NEP-era immigration policy is, in many ways, the story of the

NEP-era as a whole. By using institutional economic theory as a means of comparing this policy to several other contemporary policies, my dissertation offers a long overdue means of defining what it is that makes the NEP-era a distinct period, which in turn can help us better understand the reasons that Soviet officials chose to opt for the far more radical and destructive path of the Stalinist Five-Year Plan.

In explaining the ultimate failure of the immigration policy, this dissertation contends that primary responsibility rests with those charged with recruiting and managing immigration. This failure came on two basic levels. The first was the disconnect between the aims of those in Moscow and the non-Soviet recruiters to which they outsourced recruitment in the United States. For those in Moscow, the primary goal of the immigration regime established in 1921 was to facilitate economic development and to attract immigrants with the class-consciousness and technical “knowhow” that Soviet society so sorely lacked. Though Soviet immigration policy during the NEP-era was aimed at tapping into groups of Americans with non-material incentives for migrating, Soviet officials were always hesitant to recruit those with the most radical ideals, and had all but ended this practice by 1923. At about the same time, concerns that immigration would weaken the American labor movement led recruiters, under orders from the Workers’ Party of America (WPA), to prevent the emigration of communists. This change in policy had two implications. First, by sending groups of immigrants with non-revolutionary expectations for Soviet space as agents of revolutionary transformation, recruiters in the United States made the fulfillment of Soviet leaders’ goals highly improbable. Second, this policy meant that the actual numbers of those who immigrated was not an adequate reflection of overall desire to do so.

The second level of failure came through the simple mismanagement of the migration process on both sides of the Atlantic. If the selection process in North America made the probability of the communes' success highly unlikely on a general level, authorities' poor performance provided the material basis for the failure of many communes. This was particularly the case with the agricultural immigrant communes, where the lack of coordination amongst Soviet offices often left immigrants without even the means to establish production on the level of the individual peasants living around them, let alone build the modern farms that were supposed to charm those peasants into the twentieth century. While those with a more firm commitment to the principles of economic transformation, the goals of the Communist Party or other such ideals may have been more willing to endure hardships in the short term to reach their long-term goals, those "reemigrants" who increasingly became a larger portion of the immigrant population, had realized their goal of returning home upon arrival. Thus, when faced with the burdens that were often worsened, if not caused by, the state's mismanagement of their affairs, these immigrants were more likely to abandon their projects and search for better conditions elsewhere.

Moving beyond our current understanding of this migration process has implications that go beyond the state of professional history; possessing a deeper understanding of the reasons that individuals chose to depart the United States means ending a historical blindness towards the very tangible reasons that Americans may have considered emigration to be a rational choice, and thus challenges the hegemonic notion of the United States as the "natural" destination for global immigration. As Kate Brown has done well to point out, our attachment to a political narrative that contrasts the

freedom of movement in the United States with the coercive, unnatural state of movement in the Soviet Union often prevents us from fully understanding either place.³ As this research shows, ideas such as ‘frontier’ and ‘pioneer’ were contested terrain in the 1920s, and were in no way bound within a hegemonic American narrative. Furthermore, for those Americans living in the early 1920s, the raids on leftist groups and social discrimination against Russian-Americans that came with the post-World War I Red Scare, as well as the increase of violent labor conflicts, were very real experiences that shaped Americans’ expectations for the future. It should be no surprise then, that in this moment Americans saw emigration, especially to a country whose government offered access to land and freedom from the most pressing forms of repression facing the American working class, as a rational decision.

At the time of its establishment in 1921, the NEP-era Soviet immigration policy rested on a few basic realities. First, as with most policy of the time, the state acknowledged the need for outside support. Second, the state’s ability to enforce policies was limited by its narrow capacity to supervise actors over a large area. Third, the state did not possess the capacity to drive its population towards an acceptance of industrial forms of organization without their consent, meaning that it needed incentives to induce change. And finally, in light of the famine and shortage of housing, any policy that was adopted would have to take into account the finite nature of Soviet resources.

³ Kate Brown, “Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (February 2001): 17-48.

These realities, combined with the influx of immigration that followed the economic crisis in the United States in late 1920, drove Soviet leaders to forbid all immigration from North America as of April 20, 1921.⁴ Henceforth, immigration into the country was to be channeled through a set of official state and affiliate offices that could ensure that those arriving would be likely to advance the goals of the Communist Party and unlikely to be a net consumer of already limited state resources. The new immigration policy adopted by the Council of Labor and Defense (STO) on June 22, 1921, like so many Soviet policies formulated in that year, was one driven primarily by practical, and not ideological motives, but was not incompatible with the state's long-term goal of industrialization. For the policy's architects, the plan's main advantage was its potential benefit to the Soviet economy, which could be achieved by bringing in skilled laborers, hard currency and technology that the Bolshevik government so sorely lacked. From the very beginning, the plan centered almost exclusively on facilitating the immigration of the estimated three million former citizens of the Russian Empire who had emigrated to North America in the years prior to World War I. The new immigration policy, which was overseen by the Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh), required that all those wishing to come to Russia should do so in a group organized around a specific site, and should provide enough personal supplies (food, clothing, etc) for at least a year, as well as the machinery required for developing the site. Due to the absence of an official Soviet delegation to the United States, organization of the immigrant groups was

⁴ In the last months of 1920 and early 1921, around 16,000 Americans, most of whom did not have permission from Soviet authorities, entered Russia through the ports at Libau and Riga, with an unknown total coming through other points of access. [Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE) f. 3249, op. 2, d. 431, l. 26.]

outsourced to the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (STASR), which was tasked with vetting immigrants, collecting money, obtaining visas, and organizing transportation of immigrants and their materials from America to the immigrant communes.

In just a little over a year, STASR was able to dispatch eleven communes, primarily in the agricultural sector, but the failure of Soviet offices to fulfill their obligations to immigrants, STASR, and other state officials was highly detrimental to the immigrant groups. Upon arriving at the plot of land they had selected, immigrants often found that their land was already occupied, and the arrival of their freight was often delayed. As a result of these failures, control over immigration was shifted from VSNKh to the newly created Permanent Commission of STO for Agricultural and Industrial Immigration (PKSTO) in November of 1922.⁵ In February of 1923, PKSTO laid out a new recruitment strategy, which ordered that recruitment efforts be aimed almost exclusively at agricultural groups, which were to serve as both sites of increased production, as well as demonstration farms for the local peasantry. By the middle of 1926, however, the foundations of the existing Soviet immigration policy were coming undone, and in January 1927, the Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom) sent official orders to PKSTO that its work was to be put to a stop by February 1, and its functions absorbed by other state offices. Finally, on February 18, 1927, STO ruled that any future agricultural immigration would have to take place without guaranteed land from the state land fund.⁶

⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 1, l. 36.

⁶ Galina Tarle, *Druz'ia Strany Sovetov: Uchastie Zarubezhnykh Trudiashchikhsia v Vosstanovlenii Narodnogo Khoziaistva SSSR v 1920-1925* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 194.

During its existence, NEP-era Soviet immigration policy produced mixed results. By August of 1925, a total of 33 foreign communes were in operation in the Soviet Union, with a total of 3,249 members. Of the communes, 24 were from the United States and 5 from Canada, meaning that all but four had been organized through STASR.⁷ Some, such as the Commune Seiatel' near Rostov-na-Donu, were running relatively efficient operations, while others had already failed and folded.

The exception to VSNKh and STO's monopoly on group immigration came in the form of the Autonomous Industrial Colony, Kuzbas (AIK), which the Soviet government officially sanctioned to take over the coal mines and partially finished chemical factory located in Kemerovo, in Western Siberia. Though AIK was not exactly the same as those noted above, it was in line with the other group immigration projects of its time. Those who wished to immigrate were required to invest their own money into the project, to bring enough food and supplies for a year, and to demonstrate that they possessed a skill set that would be valuable for the project. In addition, AIK was given the right to manage its own office for recruitment and organization in the United States. AIK's recruitment also followed the general pattern of STASR, and the Soviet government officially absorbed the concession in 1926.

The Doyles' sordid, yet contrived account of the immoralities of Soviet society mentioned above offers us a picture of this failed policy that rests on two of the most common tropes that continue to define popular, and particularly Americans',

⁷ GARF f. 364 op. 6 d. 1. 148.

understanding of immigration to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, namely the naïve utopian radical reformed by his encounter with horrors of life in Soviet Russia and the deliberately deceptive Soviet agent whose agenda goes no further than taking advantage of those foolish enough to take the leaders of the revolution at their word. Considering that the Doyles' explanation is consistent with accounts offered by the influential voices of such diverse sources as mainstream newspaper publishers and disillusioned radicals such as Emma Goldman, it is not surprising that contemporaries with differing perspectives on immigration had a hard time being heard.⁸ After all, this "disillusionment narrative" suggested that anyone with an alternative explanation was either naïve or malicious, and thus not to be trusted. And for those who remained in any way doubtful as to the ultimate intentions of the Soviet government, the Stalinist revolution of the late 1920s and 1930s offered final proof that those early returnees had indeed been prophets of what was to come.

The temporal and political space of the post-Soviet era has provided scholars with the opportunity to reevaluate many such stories, yet more than ninety years after the Doyles' fabricated account of their time in Russia appeared in the American press, the disillusionment narrative remains unchallenged as the standard explanation for the departure of the thousands of individuals who cast their lot with the new Soviet state in the 1920s. With the exception of Anthony Sutton, who, despite several factual errors, did well to point out the role of the Soviet government in the failure of American agricultural colonies, most scholars have given little attention to the immigrant colonies of the time,

⁸ Emma Goldman's account of her time in Russia was first published in 1923, the same year as the Doyle's story appeared in the newspapers. [Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1923).]

dismissing them for their failure to live up to Soviet policy makers' goals.⁹ Though historians have produced several works looking specifically at early Soviet attempts to access American capital and technology, few scholars have recognized NEP-era immigration policy as part of this strategy.¹⁰ Those who have given more attention to immigration have reinforced the disillusion narrative, or, to a lesser extent, attributed the dwindling numbers to the improving economic conditions in the 1920s that undercut the incentives that drove migration. Andrea Graziosi, for example, paints a dismal picture of workers' experiences in the Soviet Union in this time, noting that "by 1923-24, the hundreds who were returning from a disappointing experience in the Kuzbass' industries were confirming Emma Goldman's contemporary prophecy."¹¹ Other, more sympathetic

⁹ Antony C. Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development 1917-1930* (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, 1968), 126-132. Sutton's limited access to sources led him to some incorrect conclusions about the communes themselves, but his overall understanding of the state's role in immigrant communes' failure is accurate. For examples of works that dismiss the communes see E.H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia: Socialism in One Country, 1924-26, Volume 3* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 499; Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (Penguin Books, 1989), 79.

¹⁰ Kendall Bailes, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917-1941," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no 3 (July 1981): 421-448; Dana G. Dalrymple, "The American Tractor Comes to Soviet Agriculture: The Transfer of a Technology," *Technology and Culture* 5, no. 2 (April 1, 1964): 191-214; Deborah Fitzgerald, "American Agriculture in the Soviet Union, 1928-1932," *Agricultural History*, 70 no. 3 (summer 1996) 459-486. Aside from Antony Sutton, Alan Ball is one of the few who have recognized immigration as part of this strategy, but his discussion of immigrant communes is limited to just a few paragraphs. [Sutton, *Western Technology*, 126-132; Alan M. Ball, *Imagining America: Influence and Images in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 72-74.]

¹¹ Andrea Graziosi, *A New Peculiar State: Explorations in Soviet History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000); Andrea Graziosi "Foreign Workers in Soviet Russia,

accounts, present the migration in a more positive light, but retain an assumption of idealism on behalf of those who immigrated.¹²

Those who have approached the topic of NEP-era immigration to the Soviet Union from the Russian perspective have been equally affected by the political climate of the Cold War. Many works on the topic of western immigration published in the Soviet-era are little more than overt political pieces that selectively employ positive case studies and overwhelmingly disregard details about the hardships that migrants faced.¹³ Political bias, however, was just one of the factors at play in these years; Galina Tarle's impressive work on foreign participation in the reestablishment of the Soviet economy from 1920-1925 was no doubt shaped by Soviet politics, but probably more so by the fact

1920-1940: Their Experience and Their Legacy," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 33 (Spring 1998): 38-59.

¹² J.P. Morray, *Project Kuzbas: American Workers in Siberia, 1921-1926* (International Publishers, 1983); Paula Garb, *They Came to Stay: North Americans in the USSR* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987). Choi Chatterjee has noted a similar absence of scholars' attention to less polarized accounts of the Russian Revolution produced by American women who witnessed the events of 1917 to 1920, noting that, except for Emma Goldman's work, which had significant propaganda value, "none of the other writings fit comfortably within the American narratives about the Russian Revolution." "By diminishing the drama of high Bolshevik politics, the military aspects of the civil war, and the allied intervention," Chatterjee explained, "women writers themselves ensured that their accounts would fade from history." [Choi Chatterjee, "'Odds and Ends of the Russian Revolution,' 1917-1920: Gender and the American Travel Narratives," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 12.]

¹³ V.I. Andriianov ed., *Oni Vybrali SSSR* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1987); A.A. Faingar ed., *Pochemu My Vernulis' Na Rodinu: Svidetel'stva Reemigrantov* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Progress, 1983). An article by Soviet historian I. Belenkina in the Faingar collection, for example, provides an interesting history of the First New York Agricultural Commune from its founding to its arrival in Soviet Russia in 1922, but then jumps from November 1922 to 1924 to 1931 all in the course of three paragraphs. [I. Belenkina, "Edemte v Rossiui!" in *Pochemu My Vernulis'*, ed. Andriianov, 40-55 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Progress, 1983).

that many of the most detailed records of immigrants' hardships and inter-governmental disputes were classified when she conducted her research in the 1960s.¹⁴ Fortunately, Russian scholar Zhuravlev did not take as long as his western counterparts in reexamining inter-war migration in the post-Cold War environment. Drawing on a wealth of documents, many previously unavailable, and employing social history methodology, Zhuravlev has brilliantly detailed the life of foreigners who worked in the Moscow Electrical Factory in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, my work hopes to build on this superb study by providing a greater framework of the "big history" (*bol'shaia istoriia*) into which the actions of "little people" (*mal'enkie liudi*) can be understood.¹⁵

Those who have focused specifically on Soviet immigration policy have provided valuable insight into the processes at work in deciding who and what could enter Soviet borders in the 1920s, yet their analyses tends to focus more on who and what the state sought to prevent from crossing Soviet borders, than on the ways that policy facilitated movement. Andrea Chandler's work, for example, provides brilliant insight into the formation of Soviet border policy in the 1920s, but treats this topic through the lens of the present, with NEP-era policy laying the foundation for the restrictive Stalinist border

¹⁴ Galina Ia. Tarle, *Druz'ia Strany Sovetov: Uchastie Zarubezhnykh Trudiashchikhsia v Vosstanovlenii Narodnogo Khoziaistva SSSR v 1920-1925 gg* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1968).

¹⁵ Sergei V. Zhuravlev, "*Malen'kie Liudi*" i "*Bol'shaia Istorii*": *Inostrantsy Moskovskogo Elektrozavoda v Sovetskom Obshchestve 1920-kh-1930-kh gg*. (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2000).

policy to come.¹⁶ Furthermore, Chandler's attention to macro-level developments and her treatment of more than eighty years of Soviet and Russian history understandably places the nuances of immigration outside the bounds of her work.

Yuri Felshtinsky's work gives much more specific attention to immigration and emigration in the 1920s, and demonstrates a better grasp on the factors that shaped Soviet policy in this era, but still neither fully appreciates the significance of North American immigration in the formation of Soviet policy as a whole, nor gives adequate attention to the expectations that Soviet leaders had for these migrants. Referring to the state's management of remigration into the countryside, for example, Felshtinsky states that the organization of migrants into their own groups was meant to keep them away from Russian peasants so as to "prevent the dispersion of American farmers and their cooperation with Russian and Ukrainians."¹⁷ This, however, could not have been further from the truth, as a primary goal of the group immigration strategy in agriculture was the establishment of demonstration industrial farms that could induce peasants to abandon their individual plots and take on the organizational forms of the immigrant communes. Proximity to native peasants was thus not only common, it was a major force in determining where immigrant groups would ultimately settle. The errors in Feltshinsky's work are actually quite telling; that his work is based primarily on published Soviet laws

¹⁶ Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1917-1993* (McGill-Queens University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Yuri Felshintsky, "Foundations of the Immigration and Emigration Policy of the USSR, 1917-1927," *Soviet Studies* 34, no.3 (July 1982): 333.

from the 1920s is testament to the massive gap that existed between decree and practice in the NEP-era.

In the years since I began my inquiry into the history of this immigration, some notable studies have appeared that have greatly advanced our understanding of this topic. Eric Lohr's *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union* is a much-needed analysis of Russian and Soviet citizenship policy that necessarily examines the early Soviet border policy regarding immigration and emigration in years of NEP.¹⁸ Lohr's treatment of this topic is the most nuanced available, and his presentation of the complex forces at work in the NEP-era breaks a long-standing tendency to treat the 1920s as simply a precursor to the Stalinist system of controls that came at the end of the decade. Lohr's treatment of immigration in the 1920s does, however, falter in its understanding of the aims of the NEP-era policy, and even more so in its appreciation of the significance that North America played in shaping this policy. Though Lohr correctly notes the importance of Germany in the history of immigration in the 1920s, his statement that PKSTO responded most favorably to petitions from Germans is inconsistent with the commission's reports, which show that applications from the United States and Canada were far more often approved than those from Germany.¹⁹ In addition, Lohr's treatment of Soviet

¹⁸ Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Lohr, *Russian Citizenship*, 159. According to a report by PKSTO, from the time of the commission's establishment to August 1, 1925, it permitted 824 of the 22,968 applications (3.4%) it had reviewed from Germany, while admitting 2,918 of 3,354 applicants from the USA (87%) and 493 of the 1,533 Canadians (32%) whose applications it had fully considered. Lohr does not offer specific numbers to support his statement. [GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 1, ll. 47-48]

immigration does not mention the Office of Industrial Immigration (OII) under the Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh), which laid the foundation of the Soviet immigration strategy that was later taken over and expanded by PKSTO. These points of oversight are perhaps the reason that Lohr only mentions immigration from North America in terms of the Finnish migration to Karelia and the remigration of religious sectarians.

Closer attention to the role of North Americans in the greater Soviet immigration strategy of the NEP-era challenges Lohr's claim that in these years "the Soviet Union decisively broke ties with its large diaspora, making travel and eventually even communication between the diaspora and the Soviet population extremely difficult, if not impossible."²⁰ While the laws of the 1920s no doubt weakened these ties, not all Soviet officials were oblivious to the advantages that the diaspora had to offer the new regime. Even as the state issued resolutions denaturalizing Russian citizens living abroad, it established an immigration policy that Soviet officials, including Lenin himself, hoped would allow hundreds of thousands of members of the diaspora in North America to return to their former homes bearing both the financial and intellectual gains they had amassed during their time abroad. The state's unwillingness to allow open migration no doubt widened the gap between the state and diaspora, but this was not the goal of the strategy; as my work shows, the breakdown of ties between the two sides was partially a result of American agents who were working against the desires of the Soviet state. Thus, even Lohr's admirable attention to the multiple forces at work in shaping NEP-era

²⁰ Lohr, *Russian Citizenship*, 150.

immigration policy misses out on an important case in which the state not only simply allowed, but actively worked to facilitate, mobility across Soviet borders.

In addition to Lohr's work, two other studies have also greatly enhanced our understanding of push and pull factors that drove immigration in the 1920s, as well as the immigrant experience inside Soviet borders. These studies, one by Finnish scholar Mikko Ylikangas, and the other co-authored by American historians Seth Bernstein and Robert Cherny, provide in-depth analyses of the "Seattle" commune, which was established in southern Russia in 1922.²¹ This commune, called "Seattle" both for the origins of the commune's founders and the similarity of the city's name to the Russian word for "sower" (*seiatel'*), displayed many of the characteristics that were common to immigrant communes in general, including the importance of ideological and material factors in migrants' decision to move to the Soviet Union and in the performance of the commune once established. Though Ylikangas' tendency to overemphasize the importance of idealism retains a touch of the disillusionment narrative, Bernstein and Cherny's article explicitly substantiates my own claims regarding the fallacies of the disillusionment narrative. Both articles, however, provide fabulous analysis of a wide variety of sources, including the commune's records held in the State Archive of Rostov Oblast (GARO).²²

²¹ Mikko Ylikangas, "The Sower Commune: An American Finnish Agricultural Utopia in the Soviet Russia," *The Journal of Finnish Studies* 15, no.1 (November 2011): 51-85; Seth Bernstein and Robert W. Cherny. "Searching for the Soviet Dream: Prosperity and Disillusionment on the Soviet Seattle Agricultural Commune, 1922-1927," *Agricultural History* 88, no.1 (forthcoming 2014). Seth Bernstein and I have been in touch with one another for the last few years, and I remain greatly indebted to him for the time and valuable insights he has offered me on this topic.

²² Bernstein and Cherny directly reference my claims regarding the disillusionment narrative, which have also been published in the journal *Ab Imperio*.

My dissertation builds on this work, providing a greater framework for understanding the place of Seattle within the greater migration of Americans to Soviet space in the 1920s.

Though most scholars have long-since written off the so-called “totalitarian” school’s explanation of the 1920s as a period of state “tactics” aimed at biding time while the state amassed the resources to implement forced collectivization, we have yet to establish a coherent narrative to take its place.²³ Despite the tremendous wealth of knowledge produced since the fall of the Soviet Union, scholars have tended to ask questions in more thematic than temporal terms, providing answers about the 1920s that do more to explain *how* central policy affected a particular facet of Soviet history than to provide insight into *why* certain policies were selected. As a result, more than twenty years after Lewis Siegelbaum lamented scholars’ lack of “consensus about what made these years unique, important, and even recognizable,” the field remains fragmented and without a framework for bringing scholarship on the 1920s into a greater dialogue.²⁴

[Benjamin W. Sawyer, “Shedding the White and Blue: American Migration and Soviet Dreams in the Era of the New Economic Policy,” *Ab Imperio* 2013, no. 1 (January 2013): 65-84.]

²³ The evaluation of Soviet policy in the 1920s as “tactics” is most associated with Richard Pipes. Writing on Soviet nationality policy in the 1920s, Pipes argues that pledges by Lenin and other Soviet leaders to allow national independence “was a tactical device intended to win over the minorities.” [Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 3rd Edition, 1997), v.]

²⁴ Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society Between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (Cambridge University Press, 1992): 2.

This dissertation aims to end this thematic segregation by providing a common ground for engagement across thematic fields.

In placing the immigration policy of the NEP-era within an institutional economic framework, I contend that the formal institutions regarding a wide variety of groups in the NEP-era were established to mobilize groups whose short-term goals overlapped with those of Soviet leaders, with little regard for the ideology or long-term goals of the state's new partners. In striking deals with a variety of actors- from foreign capitalists, to non-Marxist professionals, to the Russian peasantry- the state was able to tap into the potential energy of informal institutions, allowing Soviet leaders to fulfill goals that they could not accomplish on their own. The institutions that Bolshevik leaders established in the NEP-era were often sound in their foundations, and provided the framework for expanding the Soviet state apparatus, but performed horribly as a means of economic development. Just as in their attempt to use migrants as a force of economic progress, Soviet leaders proved themselves to be inept when it came to upholding the terms they negotiated with a variety of sources of economic energy. By 1926, most of those who had been tapped for this purpose in 1921 were no longer willing to ally themselves with the state, effectively rendering the NEP-era strategy useless as a means of economic development.

Institutions, as defined by Douglas North, are “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.”²⁵ Institutions can be informal, in which case they are upheld through societal conventions

²⁵ Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

and norms, or they can be formal, in which behavior is assured by the existence of a mutually agreed upon third party who is granted the right to punish those who fail to live up to the terms expected of those living under such institutions. Thus, formal institutions facilitate a greater scale of exchange by reducing uncertainty that may otherwise prevent transactions amongst groups with differing informal institutions.

In any given society, there is reciprocity between informal and formal institutions, and both impact the course of societal and economic evolution in a given area. Though much of Soviet history has been defined by the state's imposition of formal institutions on society with the aims of ingraining the population with the informal institutions that Soviet leaders saw as the most appropriate for a communist society, this was not the intention of Bolshevik leaders in 1917, and was certainly not the case in the first decade of Soviet power.²⁶ In these years, Soviet leaders retained a concept of historical evolution in which the social forces unleashed by capitalism (i.e. capitalism's informal institutions) were to be the dynamo driving the socialist revolution.²⁷ When Soviet

²⁶ An interesting challenge to this model is implicit in Richard Stites' explanation of the Stalinist system as one that did not aim to shape informal institutions, but one that assumed and codified existing informal institutions as perceived by Stalin, which emphasized the worst aspects of humanity. [Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).]

²⁷ Historians, particularly those associated with the totalitarian school, have mistaken the state's forced requisition of grain during the years of Civil War as evidence that coercion was an inherent trait of Bolshevism that was only abandoned during NEP because of the state's lack of capacity for violence. Though both War Communism and the Stalinist economic system relied on coercion, the goals of these two strategies were fundamentally different; the former was implemented with the short-term goal of surviving the Civil War and overcoming famine, while the latter had the much more comprehensive and cavalier goal of building socialism. My analysis therefore is in line with that of Alan Ball and others who have convincingly shown that War Communism

leaders began to work out the terms of NEP-era policy, they did so under the assumption that global capitalism had begun an inevitable process of disintegration, and thus they could operate with the confidence that shifting the more radical aims of the revolution into the category of long-term goals did not pose a threat to the vision they held when they took power in 1917. Even though Bolshevik leaders remained highly skeptical of the types of social forces at work in the space they governed (i.e. nationalism, peasant forms of production, religion), they nevertheless believed that the state could create the conditions that would induce an evolutionary process from these undesirable informal institutions into those of a socialist society. Creating such conditions, however, required a great deal more energy than the state could muster. Fortunately for the Bolsheviks, Soviet Russia, and the world in general, was awash in such untapped energy.

The primary principle underlying Soviet strategy in the NEP-era was the location of such untapped energy sources, and development of formal institutions that would turn this “potential energy” into “kinetic energy” that could be directed toward state goals. The sources of this energy- whether it be those who wished to immigrate, foreign capitalists who wished to tap into the vast natural wealth of Soviet space, or intellectuals who desired the reputability enjoyed by their counterparts abroad- existed outside the sphere of the Bolshevik Party, and rarely abided by the informal institutions that the Bolsheviks saw as appropriate. The conflicting long-term goals of these groups and the Bolshevik leadership at first makes these alliances seem peculiar, yet these groups shared a variety of the Party’s short-term goals. Though differences in long-term goals no doubt

was a policy that would not have existed without the immediate issue of survival facing the Soviet government after the it came to power in 1917. [Alan Ball, *Russia’s Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921-1929* (University of California Press, 1990), 5.]

shaped NEP-era negotiations, Soviet leaders' sense that the end of the capitalist order was imminent made it much easier to disregard those whose long-term goals were blatantly contrary to those of the Bolshevik Party.

The deals struck during the NEP-era were quite successful in expanding the capacity of the state, but proved much less effective as a means of economic development. Why then, did a uniform policy produce such a difference in outcomes? The answer lies in the peculiar nature of the Soviet state in the NEP-era. In order to acquire the cooperation of those allies who could build economic capacity, the state had to establish itself as a trustworthy partner. The deals struck with peasants, would-be migrants, and especially foreign capitalists, required that the state's potential allies take on risk that would not pay off in the event that the state broke its agreement. Though the state did a remarkable job in establishing a set of formal institutions that were in line with informal institutions, it was in the dangerous position of acting as both party to, and enforcer of, the terms it negotiated with its allies. Had the Soviet state been firmly established with entrenched bureaucratic interests, such a position may have been wholly unproblematic, but the instability and competing interests and offices that characterized the early Soviet state allowed for sudden swings in state policy in relatively short periods of time, and encouraged sporadic intervention into the Soviet economy. Under such conditions, foreign capitalists invested elsewhere, peasants grew crops according to their own desires, and the millions of dollars that foreigners may have brought to the Soviet economy remained outside Soviet borders. For those intellectuals and bureaucrats who helped expand Soviet state capacity, however, the state held a virtual monopoly on the means of achieving short-term goals. In the early years of Soviet power, these individuals

could, and did, opt to withdraw from Soviet space, but the increasingly tight restrictions on movement established throughout the decade gave those non-state actors little choice but to maintain an alliance with the state, regardless of the terms it offered. Ironically, this may be the only case in which the state managed to deliver effectively on its promises to seize the means of production in the years before the implementation of the Five-Year Plan.

The common factors noted above are evident in a variety of seemingly unrelated works that examine the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Francine Hirsch's work on Soviet ethnographers, for example, provides a brilliant case of this strategy in Soviet officials' attempts to expand their influence into the non-Russian areas of the Soviet Union.²⁸ Adeeb Khalid's work also points to the importance of the alliance between the Soviet state and Central Asian intellectuals known as *Jadids* in the implementation of Soviet policies in Central Asia.²⁹ The same type of strategy is evident in the alliances struck

²⁸ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Noting the weakness of the NEP-era Soviet state, Hirsch shows how the state tapped into the potential energy of former imperial ethnographers as a means to expand state power into the Soviet periphery. Though the majority of these ethnographers were initially opposed to the Bolshevik government, state sponsorship of their work allowed the two sides to forge an alliance based on a shared appreciation for scientific rule.

²⁹ Adeeb Khalid, "Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, 145-164 (Oxford University Press, 2001). Such an approach no doubt had its limits; as Douglas Northrup has shown, the kinetic energy Soviet officials expected to tap through an alliance with the "surrogate proletariat" of Uzbekistan's women was not enough to overcome the conservative energy unleashed during the Soviet unveiling campaign (*hujum*) of 1927. [Douglas Northrup, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2003).]

between non-Bolshevik intellectuals and the state in the 1920s. Kelly Ann Kolar's work on the formation of the Soviet archival system does well to demonstrate the major role that non-Bolshevik historians and archivists played in helping create the Soviet archival system that became crucial to managing information in the Soviet Union.³⁰

Whereas the NEP-era policy succeeded in helping to build state capacity and legitimizing the Soviet government in the eyes of its citizens, it proved abysmal in providing the economic capacity that the state so sorely lacked in 1921. In most cases, this was not a result of the Soviet officials' poor calculations regarding sources of potential energy, but was primarily the result of the inability of state offices to uniformly implement policy and Soviet leaders' ability to change terms of agreements that were not

³⁰ Kelly Ann Kolar, "What Kind of Past Should the Future Have?: The Development of the Soviet Archival System, 1917-1931" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2012). Just as in the case of the ethnographers treated by Hirsch, Kolar shows that prerevolutionary archival professionals found in the modernizing goals of the regime a common cause that allowed them to look past the many points of conflict in their differing world views, and to focus instead on the development of an archival system that they had long wished to establish, but that had been forbidden by the Tsarist regime. As such, Soviet officials traded these professionals the right to implement their western training, as well as the ability to work with documents that had previously been classified, and in return received a system for managing information that was to become a model for many archives across the globe. The regime's appeal to non-party specialists and experts on such terms is clear in the memoirs of Nikolai Valentinov, a Menshevik intellectual who remained in the Soviet Union until 1928. Valentinov emphasized that many specialists saw NEP-era policy as a vast improvement in Russia's political direction, and believed that it offered them an opportunity to improve the Soviet economy that was much different than the years of War Communism. Valentinov's account makes clear that he and other non-Bolshevik specialists allied themselves with the new state based on their belief they could help improve the state of Russia as a whole, thus further revealing the non-material incentives that were at work in mobilizing the state's allies in the NEP-era. [Nikolai Valentinov, "Non-Party Specialists and the Coming of the NEP," *Russian Review* 30, no. 2 (April 1971): 154-163.]

working out as advantageously as expected. This had the effect of dissuading would-be allies from striking deals with the state, and made poor examples of those who did ultimately negotiate concession deals with Soviet officials. As shown above, this is the core of the immigration story; those who wished to migrate were often prevented from doing so by STASR, and those who made it through STASR often faced conditions that were unlikely to inspire those who were on the fence about departing for Soviet shores. As such, the state lost out on millions of additional dollars in foreign currency and capital that would have likely come under more stable conditions.

Though immigrants were an explicitly marked source of economic development in the 1920s, they were minor in comparison to the two most significant identified sources of economic energy, namely foreign investors and the Russian peasantry. In order to tap the energy offered by foreign investors, the Soviet government established a policy of concessions, which offered fixed-term rights to a variety of production sites inside Soviet borders in exchange for the foreign investors' agreement to provide the Soviet government with certain provisions, often a small portion of the site's total output at fixed costs, as well as the state's right to all fixed capital invested in the site at the time the contract expired.³¹ Though the nationalization of foreign property and the formal renouncement of all debt accrued by the Tsarist and Provisional Governments following the Bolshevik revolution had cast the Soviet government as a less-than-trustworthy partner, Bolshevik representatives did an impressive job of drawing interest from foreign

³¹ The strategy of using concessions as a means of economic development had been first conceived in 1918, but was only seriously pursued with the onset of the New Economic Policy. [Anthony Heywood, "Soviet Economic Concessions Policy and Industrial Development in the 1920s: The Case of the Moscow Railway Repair Factory," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 3 (May 2000), 549.]

investors.³² The initial success in identifying this source of potential energy was not followed by the influx of foreign capital that many Soviet leaders had hoped for; despite receiving inquiries from around 1,500 foreign firms, by January 1925, GKK had concluded just forty agricultural and industrial concession contracts, no more than ten of which could be considered major operations.³³ Scholars who have focused specifically on Soviet concessions policy have done well to show that the failure of this capital acquisition strategy was not due to any inherent flaw in the concession policy itself, but was, much like Soviet immigration strategy, undermined by disputes amongst state offices in the Soviet capital.³⁴

³² After signing a concession contract with Armand Hammer in 1921, and reopening concession negotiations with Leslie Urquhart in summer 1922, the Main Concessions Committee (GKK) received an influx of concessions proposals for Soviet projects, many by former owners of these sites who wished to mitigate their losses by implementing the experience and technical expertise they had previously amassed regarding these sites that would otherwise be wasted. Leslie Urquhart was a British multimillionaire who had amassed his wealth from investments in mining. Armand Hammer was head of Allied Drug and Chemical. [Philip Gillette, "Armand Hammer, Lenin, and the First American Concession in Soviet Russia," *Slavic Review* 40, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 355–365.] In 1922, Soviet leaders also passed measures meant to ease foreigners' concerns about the stability of their potential concessions, including the replacement of the Cheka with a new state secret police administration, the State Political Directorate (GPU), the latter of which was not granted the right of extra-judicial authority that its predecessor had wielded. [Yurii Goland, "A Missed Opportunity: On Attracting Foreign Capital," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 2 (March 2003): 182.]

³³ Goland, "Missed Opportunity," 212.

³⁴ Goland, "Missed Opportunity," 179-216; Heywood, "Concessions Policy," 549-569. Even the Urquhart concession was eventually scrapped after officials in Moscow demanded such unrealistic terms that the Soviet representative in London refused to present the offer for fear that it would only serve to damage the reputation of the Soviet government. This final move, however, came only in May 1924, after nearly two years of on and off negotiations between the Urquhart and the Soviet government, in which the latter regularly changed its willingness to accept terms it had previously

For those few who succeeded in gaining a concession contract, the results were far from impressive, and most concessions were eliminated long before their contracts were set to expire. The state's turn against these concessions has correctly been noted as a sign of the growing isolation of the end of the 1920s, yet my own research on concessions has shown that, in at least one case, local officials' refusal to acknowledge centrally negotiated contracts was a genuine outcome of the central state's weakness outside the Soviet capital.³⁵ The Georgian Manganese Company, which signed a concession to work the manganese fields of Chiaturi, Georgia, in 1925, was crippled by local courts' refusal to recognize the terms of the concession agreement regarding maximum wage increases for local workers.³⁶ Given that the company eventually received favorable judgment in higher-level Soviet courts, it is highly unlikely that this

suggested were acceptable, often blaming such fluctuations on events extraneous to the negotiations themselves.

³⁵ Scholars agree, for example, that the Soviet government's claim that the Lena Goldfields, Ltd had violated the terms of the concession agreement was a thinly action meant to evict the company from the Lena river basin. This does not, however, mean that this eviction had been planned when the concession contract was negotiated in 1925. [V.V. Veeder, "The Lena Goldfields Arbitration: The Historical Roots of Three Ideas," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (October 1998): 747-792; Lohr, *Russian Citizenship*, 169-170; Sutton, *Western Technology*, 92-100.]

³⁶ "Robinson to Georgian Manganese Company, April 11, 1928," "W. A. Harriman to Robinson, April 18, 1928," W. Averell Harriman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Box 696 Folder 6. This example undermines the claims of Stalin's former assistant, Boris Bazhanov, and others who have claimed that Soviet leaders always planned to expel foreign concession holders, and that concession policy was merely a plan to dupe unsuspecting foreigners into investing in the Soviet economy. [Boris Bazhanov, *Bazhanov and the Damnation of Stalin*, translated by David Doyle (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), 99.]

was a centrally formulated strategy for evicting the foreign operators.³⁷ It thus seems that Moscow's control over its agents in the periphery once again worked to undermine the trust required for the NEP-era strategies to function.

The alliance between the state and the peasantry- often seen as the cornerstone of NEP- also reveals a similar breakdown of trust that worked to undermine the policy as a whole. When NEP was introduced in 1921, the state established a market for grain and permitted private production, offering the Russian peasantry the ability to maintain traditional forms of production and their corresponding social structures, as well as the opportunity to gain personal wealth through the cultivation of crops that the state prioritized. In exchange for establishing formal institutions that corresponded with informal institutions in the Russian countryside, the Soviet leaders hoped to incentivize peasants to produce particular crops on a scale that would allow the state to amass grain surpluses that could be sold on the global market for the hard currency required to industrialize. The shared goal in this alliance then, was high agricultural production. Just as with concessions, the differences in long-term goals of the state and its ally were largely irrelevant, as NEP's ideological father, Nikolai Bukharin, and other Soviet leaders' faith that the social forces unleashed by the market would fundamentally undo the capitalist world led them to expect that competing long-term goals would not persist

³⁷ Unlike the Lena case, the Soviet government agreed to a plan to repay Harriman for the money he had invested plus interest. The Soviet government lived up to the terms of this agreement, making payments to the company for more than a decade after the concession was terminated.

in the long-term. In the words of Lars Lih, Bukharin fully expected that “the overcoming of NEP would be NEP’s own doing.”³⁸

As is well known, NEP facilitated an economic recovery that saw an overall increase in state agricultural procurements until 1926, after which the mechanisms of NEP became less effective in ensuring peasant cooperation with state goals. As Simon Johnson and Peter Temin have convincingly argued, the failure of NEP was not a result of a malfunctioning grain market, but was a function of Soviet leaders’ inability to understand the macroeconomic factors at play in the mixed economy they had established.³⁹ This misunderstanding led Soviet policy makers to act in ways that they perceived would benefit the peasantry, but ultimately increased the price and scarcity of urban manufactures in the Soviet countryside. This led peasants to shift their labor away from those goods desired by the state, and into activities that were more beneficial to the peasants themselves. Unable to understand the role that Moscow’s economic policy was playing in reduced procurements, and unwilling to listen to those financial advisors who did, top Soviet leaders, including Stalin, began to see correctable problems as evidence of kulak sabotage that could not be undone under the terms of NEP. In response to the belief

³⁸ Lars T. Lih, “Political Testament of Lenin and Bukharin and the Meaning of NEP,” *Slavic Review* 50, no. 2 (Summer, 1991): 248.

³⁹ Simon Johnson and Peter Temin, “The Macroeconomics of NEP,” *The Economic History Review* 46 no. 4 (November 1993): 750-767. For more on the economic debates that led to the end of NEP, see David M. Woodruff, “The Politbureau on Gold, Industrialization, and the International Economy,” in *The Lost Politbureau Transcripts: From Collective Rule to Stalin’s Dictatorship*, eds. Paul R. Gregory and Norman Naimark, 199-223 (Yale University Press, 2008). Both authors show that the political environment of the time gradually excluded those with economic positions that were not in line with the increasingly narrow political worldview espoused by the Party leadership.

that peasants were hoarding grain, in the first months of 1928 the state unleashed a wave of forced procurements that brought in much higher quantities of cereals from January to March, but once and for all broke the trust that was so essential to the state-peasant alliance. As a result, by the middle of 1928 the NEP strategy for grain procurement was no longer feasible, rendering the NEP-era strategy wholly unsalvageable.

In addition to providing a narrative that marks the NEP-era as a distinct period on its own merit, this perspective on the 1920s also has implications for our understandings of the end of the NEP-era strategy and its replacement with the coercion-based Stalinist system. First, in arguing that the state's performance eliminated the sources of economic development on which NEP had been established, this dissertation contests the work of Stephen F. Cohen, V.N. Bandera and others who have argued that the NEP-era system remained a viable path for the Soviet state.⁴⁰ Second, in demonstrating that the bankruptcy of the NEP strategy was largely a function of Soviet leaders' inability to uphold their own terms, my dissertation offers a suggestion as to why Stalin's centralizing and coercive strategies may have become increasingly appealing in the second half of the decade. Though the scope of this dissertation makes such an observation preliminary, it is in line with Mark Harrison's analysis of a January 3, 1927 Politbureau meeting, in which the state's failure to enforce its own decrees was a major

⁴⁰ Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1973); V.N. Bandera, "The NEP as an Economic System" *Journal of Political Economy*, 71,3 (June 1963): 265-279. This is not to say that a mixed system of private and public sectors is somehow inherently unsustainable, only that the NEP-era system itself was an unsustainable version of such a system.

point of Stalin's criticism of his opponents.⁴¹ This focus on implementation, combined with Stalin's fierce defense of the role of the Party and his advocacy of state power to force radical change, provided a clear path amidst a jungle of theoretically based administrative infighting. In light of Soviet leaders' growing fear of capitalist encirclement, and the threat that dwindling grain requisitions posed to the Soviet project, the consolidation of power may have not been among Soviet leaders' most pressing concerns. The Soviet turn towards dictatorship was certainly an unexpected outcome of the early 1920s, but in light of the devolution of the NEP-era Soviet experiment with rule of law, rule of man must have looked more appealing than the prevailing rule of none.

On a final note, this conception of Soviet state strategy in the 1920s undermines the often implicit yet frequent tendency to see the NEP-era as characterized by the state's withdrawal from its citizens' lives, and the subsequent evolution of natural forms of social (often read "market") relations. Though the NEP-era reliance on informal institutions did generally result in less direct intervention in people's lives, the state neither fully withdrew, nor simply left its citizens to their own devices. Instead, it acted as a conduit for natural occurring energy, offering incentive sets to potential allies as a means of enlisting them in Soviet economic development. This sometimes required, as in the case of immigration policy, that Soviet officials overtly increase the state's role in the lives of particular groups as a means of establishing terms that both state and ally found acceptable, but even those cases in which the state's direct involvement was markedly reduced, citizens' lives were nevertheless shaped by the formal institutions that Soviet leaders had developed and actively sought to enforce. In this sense, to take the emergence

⁴¹ Mark Harrison, "Prices in the Politbureau, 1927: Market Equilibrium versus the Use of Force," in *Lost Politbureau Transcripts*, 239-240.

of a grain market under NEP as an outcome of the state's withdrawal from peasants' lives would be to mischaracterize the former, and to ascribe a subjective understanding of human nature to the latter. The requirement that agricultural immigrant communes serve as demonstration farms for rural Russians is a clear example of the ways that Soviet leaders actively worked to convince the peasantry to embrace the principles and social forms demanded by the market, and the ultimate failure of such efforts is testament to Russians' reluctance to do so. Thus, when Soviet leaders found the proverbial "carrots" of statecraft to be as difficult to procure as any other agricultural product of the time, they opted to eliminate the shortage of both by gradually turning to the supply of "sticks" they had amassed in the previous years, thus making violence the dominant medium in the Soviet state's relationship with its citizenry.

The first chapter of this dissertation begins in 1921, as Soviet leaders sought to bring the American working class into the Soviet project on terms that were mutually advantageous to both sides. This brought about the establishment of OII, and the basic principles that were to underlie Soviet immigration policy until 1927. This chapter demonstrates the primacy of economic factors in this process, and develops the framework for understanding this immigration policy as part of a greater state strategy that defines the NEP-era as distinct from the years of War Communism and Stalinism. Chapter one also shows the primacy of North America in the development of the first coherent Soviet immigration policy in 1921.

The second chapter shifts focus to North America to examine migrants' expectations for Soviet space and recruiters' first attempts to organize groups for

departure. This chapter builds the case for the nature of non-material pull factors in driving North American immigration, and elucidates important push factors that have often gone overlooked. It also demonstrates the problems of recruitment that were created by the lack of state involvement in this process. In the case of STASR, OII's unresponsiveness to queries regarding migration prevented the Society from effectively managing the potential energy of those who wished to immigrate. AIK's recruiters, however, were far more cavalier, using their distance from Soviet officials to sell a version of Soviet space that was largely unfounded. This haphazard start to the implementation of Soviet immigration institutions led to a series of adjustments at the end of the year that brought about the elimination of OII and a restructuring of AIK's personnel and recruitment practices.

Chapter three returns to the Soviet Union, detailing the ineptitude of Soviet immigration officials in their attempt to provide migrants the benefits that the state had offered at the time of migrants' departure. As is clear here, the early breakdown of the Soviet immigration system was not a result of an inherently flawed policy, but grew out of the chaos that engulfed the Soviet state of the early 1920s. In this environment, the state struggled, and regularly failed, to delineate rights and responsibilities, creating a climate of uncertainty that could have prevented even the most well-meaning Soviet officials from effectively implementing central policy. Further aggravating this situation was the blatant recalcitrance shown by Soviet officials who regularly ignored central policy when the terms were in conflict with their own interests. This had the combined effect of squandering much of the economic potential that the policy had sought to tap into from the very beginning.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation examines the above events from the perspective of those migrants who chose to engage the terms of the NEP-era Soviet immigration policy. Reinforcing arguments made above, this chapter shows the ways that recruitment practices in the United States led to a set of migrants who were particularly unsuited to cope with the hardships that were worsened, if not caused by, the state's mismanagement of their affairs. Drawing on evidence from a variety of sources, including state investigations into communes' affairs, this chapter shows a high correlation between a commune's success and the presence of Communist Party members amongst its population. Thus, when STASR's new leadership secretly decided to break with Moscow's orders and only allow emigration by non-Party members, it made the policy's success even more unlikely.

The final chapter of this dissertation examines the political processes that brought about the decision to abandon PKSTO and the group immigration policy as a whole in 1927. As PKSTO's new Chairman Vadim Smol'ianinov brought the Commission a new degree of official authority, he amassed a correspondingly large number of opponents whose own positions were compromised by that of PKSTO. With STASR's corruption exposed, and overwhelming evidence to prove the ineffectiveness of immigration as a means of development, PKSTO helped provide the material conditions that spawned a greater reconsideration of state strategy in the middle of the decade, which subsequently allowed its opponents to liquidate both PKSTO and the policy it was originally established to enforce. Placing the NEP-era immigration policy within the greater narrative of Soviet history, this chapter shows that by the mid-1920s, the state's disorder

had pushed many of the sources of potential energy located in 1921 outside the reach of the Soviet state, effectively rendering NEP-era formal institutions irrelevant.

CHAPTER ONE

THE OFFICE OF INDUSTRIAL IMMIGRATION AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF NEP-ERA SOVIET IMMIGRATION POLICY

When, in 1921, Soviet leaders approached the problems that came from immigration, they did so in an environment that was already ripe for institutional change.¹ The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in March 1921 was indicative of a greater reevaluation of the Soviet government's approach to nearly all aspects of political and economic life that came in the wake of the Red victory in the Civil War. Much like those who designed the new approaches towards traders, the peasantry, and foreign investors, the Soviet policy makers responsible for immigration policy were responding to a set of guidelines that was no longer sustainable, and thus the circumstances they faced demanded that they take action. Central to this was the acknowledgement that the state lacked the energy required to drive Soviet society towards the future that Bolsheviks had envisioned, and a resulting mandate that any new policies must themselves provide the bulk of the resources required to implement and enforce them.

The immigration policy developed in early 1921, and finally accepted by the Council of Labor and Defense (STO) in June 1921, proposed directing the flow of immigration that had begun to burden the country in 1920 into the fulfillment of state

¹ The term "institution" as used in this work is taken from the work of economic historian Douglass North, and refers to a set of rules by which individuals are expected to interact with one another. These rules can be either informal institutions- codes of conduct such as manners, religious formalities, and cultural norms, which are enforced by soft punishments such as shaming or a loss of social standing, or formal institutions, which are rules that are enforced with the threat of coercion from a mutually recognized third party (ie the state). [Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. (Cambridge University Press, 1990).]

goals, the most important of which was the establishment of modern industrial enterprises that the state could not manage on its own. In much the same way that a builder constructs a dam so as to harness the natural force of the river, Soviet leaders built barriers to immigration that could only be crossed by those who generated more energy than they consumed. And just as the dam builder's goal was never just to produce the electricity itself, but to fuel the machines of the electrical age, Soviet leaders came to treat immigrants as more of a means to an end than as important factors in their own right. Thus, the Soviet approach to immigration, like the Soviet approach to nearly all other factors of the time, was one in which ideology was never absent from state policy, but was largely embedded in the long term goals rather than the immediate tasks at hand.

The subject of this chapter is the first attempt to unite the revolutionary Soviet state and the American working class at the turn of the new decade. These efforts led to the establishment of the Office of Industrial Immigration (OII) of the Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh) in June 1921 and the Kuzbas Autonomous Colony four months later. Despite the fact that neither of these projects facilitated immigration until the following year, 1921 saw the development of many of the approaches to immigration that would continue to define Soviet policy until the liquidation of the NEP-era immigration regime in 1927. Though no future immigrant projects were organized along the lines of the Kuzbas Colony, and OII was replaced by a committee under the Council of Labor and Defense (STO) in October 1922, they should not be taken as evidence of a bankrupt immigration policy; OII was without the means to effectively implement the new policy, and most involved parties saw this as more a failure of OII itself than of the principles it was supposed to implement. Though the concentration of authority granted to the STO

committee did bring changes to Soviet immigration policy, the new committee's basic goals and expectations remained the same as those developed in 1921.

On the surface, the immigration policy that emerged in 1921 seems to have little in common with other policies of the time. After years of relatively relaxed policies toward international movement into Soviet Russia, the marked change in the state's approach to immigration was to place more regulation on entry into the country, eventually closing the borders to nearly all immigration in mid-1921. This is in stark contrast to the state's new approach to other actors such as peasants and traders who saw heavy regulation of their activity drastically reduced at about the same time. Yet, at the core of all of these policies was Soviet leaders' acknowledgement of a deficiency of power within their state, and an attempt to fill this gap by tapping into the energy of non-state actors to fulfill their goals. It is this general approach to fulfilling the goals of the Soviet regime- a process that can fairly be called an outsourcing of the revolution- that unites the NEP-era into a coherent period that is distinct from the periods of War Communism and the First Five Year Plan that bookend it.

Scholars have long commented on the unlikely alliances that Bolshevik leaders struck with non-Bolshevik groups in the 1920s, giving great attention to the logic of both the state and those who worked with it, in hopes of explaining the reasons for seemingly un-Bolshevik approaches to foreign capitalists, national minorities, social scientists and others. In recent years, historians have done well to displace more nefarious characterizations of the Bolsheviks' intentions, but their work has done more to modify our understanding of particular aspects of Bolshevik policy than to revise our characterization of the NEP-era as a whole. By applying the institutional lens to a wide

variety of actors, however, it becomes clear that what appear to be strange alliances in their own right are actually fairly common in the 1920s, and are underpinned by the same basic strategy as those alliances made with groups and individuals whose politics and long-term goals made them seemingly natural allies of the Bolsheviks. Like their political counterparts in the late 20th century who responded to shortages by shifting state obligations to private companies with little regard for the company's sense of mission, Soviet leaders took an attitude toward accomplishing tasks that privileged tangible results over the intentions of their new partners. For the Bolsheviks in the first years of the 1920s, these intentions were largely irrelevant, as the perceived imminence of world revolution ensured that the long-term was something that the Soviet state alone would control. In few cases is this attitude clearer than in the case of the NEP-era immigration policy described below.

Until 1921, the Soviet government maintained a relatively open immigration policy, which allowed nearly all those wishing to come to the aid of the revolution the opportunity to do so. Though those wishing to immigrate to Russia were supposed to get approval from the Soviet government, the evidence demonstrates that many people simply disregarded immigration laws, yet still managed to enter the country upon arrival. On one hand, the haphazard nature of immigration regulations can be attributed to the lack of consideration that Bolshevik theoreticians gave to border policy in the post-revolutionary world; after all, the revolution was an international event, and national borders were supposed to dissolve in time with the capitalist states that had imposed them

on the map.² Complementing this theoretical justification was the expectation that, in the short term, the Soviet Union could serve as a place of refuge for those facing oppression abroad. This policy was also not without its practical aspects; the fledgling Soviet state lacked the resources required to closely monitor those who came and went from their tremendous territory, and the various fronts of the Civil War meant that even the borders themselves were subject to relocation.

These considerations manifested themselves in the earliest Bolshevik immigration laws, which made migration especially easy for those wishing to come to Russia from the North America. As of January 1918, all those who held Russian citizenship living abroad were allowed the right to return to Soviet Russia, provided they first gain official permission from the Soviet government. Though military concerns surrounding former soldiers often complicated the plight of those wishing to return from Europe, Russian citizens in the US and Canada were generally without such issues, making their acceptance nearly guaranteed.³ In March 1918, Soviet Russia granted political asylum to all foreigners who claimed they had been persecuted in their home countries on political or religious grounds. This ensured the right of immigration to those who had fallen victim

² As Andrea Chandler has pointed out, most Bolshevik theoreticians considered borders to be tools of the ruling class, which they used to control markets. Such was the disregard for borders amongst the Bolsheviks, that just prior to taking power, they had discussed converting the Moscow customs house into a bath house. [Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1917-1913*. (McGill-Queens University Press, 1998), 30.]

³ Yuri Felshintsky, "Foundations of the Immigration and Emigration Policy of the USSR, 1917-1927," *Soviet Studies*, 34, no. 3 (July 1982), 331.]

to the post-World War I Red Scare in the US, and originally provided the new regime with an opportunity to showcase its solidarity with the workers of the outside world.⁴

Of particular interest to Soviet leaders was the potential benefit that skilled foreign workers, and particularly Americans, could bring to Soviet industry. Just a few months after the October Revolution, in March 1918, the Peoples' Commissariat of Labor (Narkomtrud) formed a special committee responsible for placing foreign workers in factories in which they were needed. Until 1920, the Narkomtrud committee dealt mainly with German groups and had limited success in facilitating their movement in the uncertainty of post-World War I Europe, but by 1920, the winding-down of the Civil War in Eastern Europe allowed those in North America easier access to Soviet space, making them a more important factor than they had been in the previous years.⁵ Though Narkomtrud's committee did well to find employment for many immigrants, it was never fully effective in securing positions for the new arrivals.⁶ On the one hand, many of those who arrived in the early years were unskilled, and thus came into competition with the masses of unemployed unskilled workers who were already living in Russia. On the other

⁴ The arrival of American anarchist Emma Goldman, for example, served as a chance to demonstrate Soviet Russia's solidarity with the international working class. ["Soviet Russia Welcomes Refugees," *Soviet Russia*, 31 January 1920.] Soviet leaders also tended to see Americans as possessing distinct characteristics that set them apart from citizens of other western capitalist countries. [Alan M. Ball, *Imagining America: Influence and Images in Twentieth-Century Russia*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).]

⁵ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 382, op. 2, ll. 4-6.

⁶ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 509, l. 29. Only about half of the 1,361 American re-emigrants who arrived in Moscow in 1920 were placed in jobs. Over 500 returned to their homes and Narkomtrud had lost track of 168 of them.

hand, though Russian managers had a clear interest in putting skilled immigrants to work in their factories, the specialists they sought were often not available from amongst the migrant pool.⁷

The tenets of this early strategy began to unravel in late 1920 and 1921, as a confluence of external and internal factors made it clear to Soviet leaders that their approach to immigration was no longer sustainable. The single largest incentive for more closely managing immigration came at the end of 1920, as the political repression and economic downturn in the United States sent thousands of Russian émigrés fleeing back to their native country. In the last months of 1920 and early 1921, around 16,000 Americans, most of whom did not have permission from Soviet authorities to immigrate, entered Russia through the ports at Libau and Riga, with an unknown total coming through other points of access.⁸ Tragically, these immigrants, many of whom had been left unemployed due to surplus production in the United States, found themselves facing the same employment status derived from an opposite set of problems: the famine, industrial underproduction and housing shortages that were widespread in 1921 in Soviet Russia.⁹

⁷ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 598, l. 34. For example, on July 13, 1920, the Central Committee of Tea, Coffee and Chickory (Glavchai) wrote asking for specialists in the cultivation of chickory and coffee production.

⁸ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE) f. 3249, op. 2, d. 431, l. 26.

⁹ The American agricultural sector grew greatly in the first years of World War I, when European mobilization for the war provided a new market for American foodstuffs abroad. By 1920, however, the recovery of European agricultural production spawned an economic crisis in the United States that drove up unemployment. In addition, the return

The available data on Petrograd during these months do well to illustrate the problems that this immigration caused. According to the Petrograd Provincial Department of Labor, 5,561 immigrants entered Russia through Petrograd from December 1920 to May 1, 1921.¹⁰ Already facing a shortage of food and housing in the city, Soviet officials directed all males over 40, as well as those coming with large families, out into the countryside, adding over 4,000 new consumers to the already inadequate pool of Russian agricultural production.¹¹ Likewise, the mass influx of foreigners into Petrograd in 1921 left even those with more proletarian resumes looking like a burden, and managing the nearly 1,200 of these immigrants who remained in the city came with its own problems. Even with the vast majority of immigrants relocating outside the city, those who remained in Petrograd exacerbated an already acute housing and food shortage. This was clearly not the type of international movement that Soviet leaders had hoped for.

of American soldiers to the workforce following the end of World War I displaced many of the foreign-born workers who had come to work in the factories while soldiers had been in Europe.

¹⁰ From a report submitted by Petrograd Guberniia Otdel Truda to Office of Industrial Immigration of VSNKh on October 26, 1922. [GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 340.]

¹¹ “The Arrival of Foreign Workers,” *Soviet Russia*, 18 March 1921, (republished from *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, 18 March 1921). In early 1921, the Russian countryside was already awash in unemployment from the lack of opportunities previously available through seasonal rural to urban migration (*otkhod*). The number of peasants engaging in the *otkhod* had declined from an average of almost 9 million from 1906 to 1910 to no more than 250,000 in the years of the Civil War. [Douglas R. Weiner, “*Razmychka?* Urban Unemployment and Peasant Migration as Sources of Social Conflict,” in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Shelia Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch and Richard Stites, 147-148 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).]

Table 1
Immigration to Petrograd, December 20, 1920 to January 1, 1922

Time of Arrival	Number of Groups	Total	Men	Women	Children	Left City
12/20/1920 to 4/1/1921	1-24	3,042	2,654	272	116	1,860
4/6/21 to 5/1/21	25-32	2,519	2,055	174	290	2,150
5/1/21 to 6/1/21	33-37	2,177	1,450	320	407	2,016
6/1/21 to 7/1/21	38-41	176	152	18	6	168
7/1/21 to 8/1/21	42-43	49	40	5	4	32
8/1/21 to 9/1/21	Collective	32	25	4	3	27
9/1/21 to 10/1/21	44	43	19	14	10	31
10/1/21 to 11/1/21	45/ Collective	30	24	5	1	11
11/1/21 to 12/1/21	46	63	48	12	3	14
12/1/21 to 1/1/22	Collective	25	17	5	3	7
Total		8,156	6,484	829	843	6,313

Source: GARF f. 364 o.1 d. 7 l. 340.

This fact was not lost on the local population, and many Russians came to look at immigrants with a suspicious resentment.¹² Though many of the immigrants who remained in the city held professional qualifications that Soviet leaders deemed desirable, the varying economic conditions in the two countries meant that the skill set possessed by an American worker of a particular profession was often different than that of his/her Russian counterpart. The degree of automation in western factories, for example, was generally much higher than that of Russian factories, meaning that seasoned American proletarians were often no better in a Russian factory than their unskilled Russian counterparts.¹³ “You Americans spoil good workmen” a Russian engineer told reporter

¹² Lewis Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile*, (Cornell University Press, 2008), 14.

¹³ “The Arrival of Foreign Workers,” *Soviet Russia*, 28 May, 1921, 528. Republished from *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, March 18, 1921. According to this article, in order to solve the problem of uncertain qualifications, “Arrangements [were] being made

Lewis Gannett of *The Nation*, during Gannett's visit to Soviet Russia in 1921. "[M]en come to our factory who'd worked in the Ford factory in Detroit, and they're no good... They'd been trained to work one highly-complicated machine. Day after day for years they've worked that machine, and they can't do anything else."¹⁴ Thus, for several reasons, even those immigrants who had looked so appealing to Soviet policy makers came to be a problem under the conditions of 1921.

Allowing easy access for immigrants during this crisis also had its ideological problems. According to Marxist theory, the unemployment caused by the devastation of war and the subsequent economic crisis should have been a catalyst to class-consciousness amongst the workers of the capitalist world. According to some critics of the policy, in allowing open immigration to Russia, Soviet leaders had created a safety valve for capitalist countries, and drawn the attention of many foreign workers away from their own domestic movements. Though this factor was clearly not a primary consideration for Soviet leaders, and held less significance for the United States than for other capitalist countries, it nevertheless strengthened the case for a change in immigration policy within the Soviet leadership, and would later be a major factor in the direction of recruitment in the United States.¹⁵

whereby an admission committee, assisted by technicians who have emigrated, would determine more fully the qualifications of each emigrant at the time of arriving at the border line, or at stations in Latvia. For that purpose the receiving committees in Riga, Libau and Ostrov have been supplied with workers familiar with Petrograd industries as well as American conditions."

¹⁴ Lewis Gannett, "Americans in Russia", *Nation*, 17 August 1921.

¹⁵ GARF, f. 364, op.1, d. 80, ll. 184-197. An additional explanation for the border closure was given by journalist Donald Day. In an article published in the Chicago Daily

Before they could make these changes, however, Soviet leaders were required to face several theoretical and practical problems. First, though some foreign revolutionaries feared that emigration would weaken their domestic movement, closing the borders to immigration could also damage the regime's image abroad, both among non-idealistic Russian émigrés and ideologically sympathetic foreigners who wished to go to Russia.¹⁶ This was dangerous in 1921, as the country needed both the economic and political support that came from their allies living abroad, and especially in the United States, where the post-WWI Red Scare had solidified governmental opposition to the new regime. Secondly, in light of the decimation of the already relatively small Russian working class, immigration remained one of the only ways to expedite the creation of a Soviet proletariat, and closing borders meant losing those who did have something to offer. On the other hand, selecting which workers were desirable, and then managing them once they arrived, was a heavy task for a state apparatus that lacked the capacity to handle the immigrants it already had. The task then, was to craft a plan that would allow

Tribune on March 18, 1922, Day attributed the closed borders to the trouble that returned Americans had caused in Petrograd following the Kronstadt uprising in 1921. Day's personal history makes him a source worth taking seriously; he was invited to accompany Ludwig Martens to Russia following his deportation, and spent most of 1921 living in Russia. Though Day had been deported from Russia and was living in Riga at the time his perspective on the border closure appeared in the press, he had been in Russia at the time of the Kronstadt uprising, and thus his own opinion may have been a product of popular speculation or his own experience at the time. Nevertheless, I have seen no other source that substantiates Day's claim. [Donald Day, "Bolsheviki Eye Russians in US for Ready Cash, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 March, 1922.]

¹⁶ As Michael David-Fox has pointed out, the Soviet government's position in the years after the revolution made it important to maintain a positive image abroad, especially in countries which did not extend diplomatic recognition to the regime. [Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941*. (Oxford University Press, 2012).]

immigration to continue, but only in cases in which migrants would be sure contribute to the economy.

In the first months of 1921, Soviet agencies attempted to form committees that would be given the appropriate authority to take control over immigration. In January 1921, officials from Narkomtrud requested that a resettlement committee be formed through Narkomtrud, and proposed that mass immigration of workers with both middle (*srednyi*) and professional qualifications from Western Europe should be disallowed, with the exception of extremely well organized groups of specialists in high-need areas, which included engineers, technicians and a few groups of highly-skilled workers.¹⁷ On February 25, STO ordered the Presidium of The Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh) to reach an agreement with a group of American workers who wished to take over the Moscow Automobile Society (AMO) automobile factory in Moscow, and ordered that an inter-office commission be formed to look into the possibility of reaching agreements with new parties of foreign workers.¹⁸ By March, representatives of Narkomtrud, VSNKh, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (NKID), and several other state offices had formed the Commission for Affairs of Reemigration from America (CARA), which was aimed at establishing a more comprehensive and inter-departmental set of regulations to deal with the problems that mass immigration from America was causing,

¹⁷ GARF f. 382, op. 2, d. 46, ll. 4-6. The report claimed that the conditions of life in Russian factories would not provide Western Europeans with a living standard that would match those to which they were accustomed.

¹⁸ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, ll. 22-33.

especially in light of the recent closure of the Soviet Mission in the United States the preceding December.

On March 28, 1921, at its second meeting, the commission voted to support an NKID resolution to temporarily close the border to reemigration, and to compose a communiqué to be sent to American workers explaining the reasons for this decision.¹⁹

At this meeting, the committee also adopted a set of resolutions that foreshadowed the policies that the state would officially adopt in the coming months. First, the committee proposed that workers should be permitted in groups whose members possessed the skills required to run their own separate enterprises or shops, with the exception of certain specialists that were in high demand. The committee proposed using the foreign-run enterprises as both sites of high production and as examples for the local population, and recommended that Narkomtrud begin collecting data concerning the enterprises that were available for use by groups of reemigrants. To solve the problems that came with the lack of a Soviet Mission in the United States, the committee proposed using the connections of recently-deported former Soviet Representative in America, Ludwig Martens.

On April 9, the Soviet Government complied with the requests of the inter-departmental commission and NKID, and issued a decree closing all Soviet borders to Americans as of April 20, 1922.²⁰ Though the decree noted that the restriction was temporary, it also noted that no Americans would be allowed to immigrate to the country until an official representative of the Russian Soviet Government had arrived in the

¹⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 1, ll. 3-4.

²⁰ “Closed to American Immigration”, *Soviet Russia*, 23 April 1921.

United States. At the time, the arrival of such a representative was far from imminent, as the US government showed no signs of easing the pressure on all-things-Soviet that had arisen during the post-WWI Red Scare.²¹ Thus the April 9 decree signaled a de-facto end of all legal, long-term movement from the US to Soviet Russia.²²

As before, Soviet leaders found it much easier to pass legislation than to enforce it, and the sparse and questionable nature of information on Russia available in the US only exacerbated the problematic conditions surrounding immigration. Even prior to the border closing, many Americans were unsure of whom to contact to arrange their migration to Russia, and the responses they received suggest that many Soviet officials were themselves unsure of how this process worked.²³ One of the most reliable sources of information on Russia, the bi-weekly bulletin *Soviet Russia*, only published the news of the April 9 decree on April 23, three days after the border had closed. Whether genuinely unaware of this situation, feigning ignorance in pursuit of personal gain, or convinced they could circumvent the new regulations, steamboat companies continued to

²¹ The United States continued to recognize Boris Bakhmetov, the Representative of the Provisional Government that had taken power in February 1917, and was subsequently deposed by the Bolshevik-led revolution the following October, as the official Russian Representative to the US until his resignation in June 1922.

²² It should be noted here that movement for short-term purposes, such as conferences and political meetings continued uninterrupted throughout the year.

²³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6 contains letters from Americans to various Soviet agencies expressing their frustration with the lack of clear information on who to contact regarding their desire to move to Soviet Russia.

advertise that they could secure entry for immigrants well after the borders had closed.²⁴ On April 30, Martens' former legal council, Charles Recht, who had become a primary liaison for the Soviet government following his client's deportation in December, received a telegram from the Soviet Representative in Sweden asking him to put an end to fraudulent steamboat company ads that were running in American newspapers.²⁵ Less than 3 weeks later, Maxim Litvinov (then serving as the Soviet representative in Tallinn, Estonia), denied entry to a ship carrying Canadian re-emigrants, thus forcing them to return to their homes.²⁶ Both these stories were covered in *Soviet Russia*, but only well after they had taken place, and steamboat companies continued to spread misinformation about immigration for months to come.

Despite these attempts to convince Americans not to emigrate to Russia, the evidence suggests that it took the Soviet government some time to effectively implement the border closing. The flow of immigration continued at a rapid pace following the April 9 decree, with 2,519 and 2,177 immigrants entering Petrograd in April and May respectively.²⁷ Of course, American immigrants' tendency to disregard Soviet law is evident in the fact that the majority of recent arrivals had immigrated without state

²⁴ There was ample reason for the steamboat companies to ignore the news of the border closure. As pointed out by a Detroit Free Press article of April 4, 1921, the thousands of Russian-Americans departing for Libau were a boon to the transportation companies, one of which had already scheduled 18 trips from Halifax to Libau in April alone. ["Sees Mystery in Slav Exodus," *Detroit Free Press*, 4 April 1921.]

²⁵ "Fraudulent Advertising," *Soviet Russia*, 28 May 1921

²⁶ "For Travelers to Russia," *Soviet Russia*, 28 May 1921.

²⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 340.

permission. Also, though the border remained open to immigration from other countries until July, it is unlikely that a substantial number of these immigrants were from outside the US.²⁸ Whatever the case, the harsh measures reported by Litvinov eventually led to a drastic decrease in immigration in the months that followed; only 257 immigrants entered through Petrograd in June, July and August combined.²⁹

Though CARA had made early progress in bringing together representatives of various agencies to solve the problems of immigration, and made early contact with American workers, their representatives failed to gain high-level support for the commission that they had proposed in March, and at the beginning of June the Soviet government still had no clear policy towards American immigration.³⁰ In these months, Ludwig Martens came to the fore as the leading proponent of a new Soviet immigration policy, supplanting Narkomtrud with VSNKh as the central state office in regulating and facilitating American immigration into the country. Soviet leaders' willingness to support Martens' proposal should be seen as both a mark of his experience and the primacy of the United States in shaping the NEP-era Soviet immigration regime. As noted before, the

²⁸ I make this assertion based on the fact that overall immigration into Petrograd dropped from over 2,000 in May to 176 in June. Had other countries been a source of these migrants, we would expect immigration to remain high until the border was closed to all countries.

²⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 340.

³⁰ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 36-43. In a letter addressed to Narkomtrud dated August 5, 1921, members of the Central Bureau of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia indicated that they had received a request for information from Narkomtrud dated April 6, 1921 and had responded, but had yet to hear back from Soviet officials concerning their position towards future immigration.

bulk of the earlier work carried out by Narkomtrud's offices had dealt largely with migration from Eurasia, and the members of the committee had little experience with the United States. Martens, on the other hand, had built strong relationships in America that would be required for any such plan in the absence of official Soviet representation in the USA.

At the time of the October Revolution, Martens had already built quite a respectable resume as an international revolutionary. He was born to a father of German decent in Bakhmut, Ukraine in 1875, studied engineering in the Russian Empire, and joined the Communist Party many years prior to the events of 1917. His political activity brought him into contact with Vladimir Lenin and other future Bolshevik leaders prior to 1917, but it also elicited the attention of Tsarist police, who arrested and deported him to Germany in 1896. After years of working as both engineer and propagandist in Germany and England, Martens moved to New York in 1916, where he continued his revolutionary work as editor of the publication *Novyi Mir* and took a position as vice president of a Manhattan-based engineering firm. In 1917 Martens returned to Russia on a ship that included none other than Leon Trotsky, and spent the next year and a half working on behalf of the Bolshevik party. In March 1919, Martens returned to his former home in Manhattan after Bolshevik leaders selected him to serve as the first official representative of the Soviet government in the United States.³¹

³¹ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), f. 124, op. 1, d. 1210, ll. 1-11. This file contains Martens' personal biography and other information for his application to the Society for Old Bolsheviks, which was reviewed in January of 1925. Martens made no mention of his work with immigration in his application.

In his time in the US, Martens witnessed first-hand the excitement the Russian revolution inspired in the working class of the United States. In May 1919, he played a leading role in organizing the first Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (STASR), office in New York City, which later played an important role in the immigration process. In this capacity he witnessed the enrollment of around 20,000 members in the many branches that sprung up across the country, and collected data on the population of former citizens of the Russian Empire living in the United States.³² When, seeking to preserve their democracy, the agents of anti-communism in the United States followed the example set by their Tsarist-era counterparts and deported Martens in January 1921, the ousted diplomat returned to Soviet Russia to continue his work with the Bolshevik government.³³ Upon returning, Martens was appointed Member of the Presidium of VSNKh, and continued his work on immigration. Because of his experience, he held positions on a variety of state committees dedicated to the immigration problem, including CARA, where he served as a representative of NKID, and a committee that negotiated a contract for turning over management of the AMO auto factory to a group of former American auto workers in February 1921.³⁴

³² RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, ll. 22-33.

³³ Commenting on Martens' continued work in US-Soviet ties following his deportation, historian Phillip Gillette concluded that "In a sense, the Martens Bureau, rather than ceasing to function, had merely shifted its base of operations to Moscow." [Phillip Gillette, "Armand Hammer, Lenin, and the First American Concession in Soviet Russia," *Slavic Review*, 40, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 362.]

³⁴ RGAE f. 3429, op 2, d. 431, l. 34.; "American Technicians and Russia", *Soviet Russia*, 2 April 1921. For more on the first Soviet Mission and Martens' work in the US

Despite the border closure, Martens and his group continued to make progress on the organization of foreign workers. In May 1921, the Soviet government made good on their agreement from February and turned the AMO factory in Moscow over to an artel of 123 re-emigrants who had worked in Ford's Highland Park Factory.³⁵ Through his contacts in STASR, Martens also managed to cultivate ties with interested workers who could meet the requirements set in his plan. By the summer of 1921, STASR had organized a second group of 120 tailors with a combined total of \$80,000 for machinery, and had been in contact with many other interested groups who were prepared to bring their money and skill to Soviet Russia. As the year continued, however, Martens gradually came to see the inter-departmental approach to managing immigration as unviable, and developed his own plan to solve the problems, and harness the energy, of labor immigration.³⁶

On June 10, Martens sent his immigration proposal to high-ranking Soviet leaders, including Lenin and Nikolai Bukharin. Martens' proposal opened by drawing into question the favorable attitude towards foreign concessions that had recently been

see Katherine A.S. Siegel, *Loans and Legitimacy: The Evolution of Soviet-American Relations, 1919-1933* (University of Kansas Press, 1996): 6-38.

³⁵ Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades*, 13.

³⁶ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, ll. 22-33. Though it is never directly addressed in the documents, it seems as if one of Martens' major issues with the treatment of immigrants through previous committees was their willingness to grant state resources to help support them.

adopted at a meeting of The Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom).³⁷ Not only were concessions problematic for their reliance on the class enemy, he claimed, but they would take a long time to produce the results at which they were aimed. Instead of looking to foreign capitalists for an influx of capital, Martens argued that the Soviet government should focus on the nearly three million former citizens of the Russian Empire who were currently residing in the United States, many of whom had saved their money while abroad and now wished to return to their former homes inside Soviet borders. According to evidence Martens had collected in his time as Soviet representative in New York, the vast majority of these people of Russian origin (*vykhodtsy*) resided in the industrial areas of the US, and thus were primarily the type of industrial workers that Soviet society so lacked.³⁸ Though he recognized the problems that came from the influx of Russian immigrants in the first months of the year, he emphasized that this was largely a function of circumstances, pointing out that those who had come to Russia without permission were disproportionately of peasant origin, and thus lacked the discipline and vision of their proletarian counterparts who remained in the US. In general, he argued, "this whole mass of Russian immigrants, returning homeward, appears to us to be an element in the highest degree desirable and useful. Having passed through the hard

³⁷ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d431, ll. 22-33. According to Martens' figures, in 1910 there were 2,823,387 former citizens of the Russian Empire living in the US, 1,398,999 of which were of Russian nationality, 1,139,578 were of Polish nationality, 149,671 were of Finnish nationality and 135,139 were of Lithuanian nationality.

³⁸ RGAE f. 3429 op. 2 d. 431, l. 40. Included with Martens' report was a map of the United States, which listed the areas in which the largest numbers of *vykhotsy* of Russian nationality were living as of 1910. By far the largest pockets of Russians were in New York (551,000), followed by Chicago (122,000), Philadelphia (95,000) and Boston (64,000).

school of American capitalism, having been efficiently and thoroughly disciplined by the American conditions of production, they would be injected into the mass of over-taxed and exhausted Russian workers as a fresh, invigorating element.”³⁹

The class-consciousness of the reemigrants was not, however, their only, nor even most desirable, feature. As Martens pointed out, cutting off these immigrants meant “depriving [the government] of not only a large quantity of skilled and other workers which the Soviet Republic so strongly needs, but also a meaningful flow of material resources in the form of a wide variety of industrial equipment, instruments, etc. which these workers plan to bring to Russia.”⁴⁰ In addition, the proposal noted that in the last few months, Soviet offices in Libau and Riga had received about two million American dollars from the 16,000 returnees who passed through those points of entry. The value of these immigrants was amplified by the fact that Soviet agencies required that they exchange their American currency at 1,500 rubles to the dollar at a time when the street value of a dollar was around 30,000 rubles in Riga, and had reached as high as 80,000 rubles in other parts of Soviet Russia. Thus, according to Martens, if done in an organized and appropriate manner, the reopening of Soviet borders to these Russian vykhodtsy could not only serve to bolster the class-consciousness of the Soviet workforce, but could also provide an immediate injection of much needed hard currency and technology into the Soviet economy.

³⁹ RGAE f. 3429 op. 2 d. 431, l. 27.

⁴⁰ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, l. 26.

In order to create a state office that could effectively tap this potential, Martens offered three general steps that he and other leaders would have to take. The first proposal was that STO grant the Presidium of VSNKh the exclusive right to regulate the immigration of foreign workers, with the goal of directing these workers towards the development of Soviet productive forces. Drawing on the success of earlier tailors' groups which had come bearing their own means of production, Martens proposed that this be accomplished by means of recruiting organized groups of foreign workers and leasing to them factories and other sites of production on the terms established by VSNKh and approved by STO. VSNKh's jurisdiction over foreign workers would include all labor immigration, including specialists and extending even to agricultural workers. Second, having received this right, VSNKh was to quickly begin organizing a special division which was analogous to their concessions division, with the goal of supervising immigration, concluding contracts with organized groups of workers, and collecting information on all factories that could potentially be turned over to foreign workers. The third and final step was to enter into a relationship with STASR, and to appoint two or three delegates of VSNKh (preferably American citizens) to ensure that each group brought with it the tools required for their enterprise. Through these steps, Martens asserted, it would not be an exaggeration to expect one hundred thousand vykhodsty would arrive by the end of 1921, bringing with them a total of between thirty and fifty million American dollars.

Less than two weeks after distributing his plan to Soviet leaders, Martens succeeded in getting his proposal on the agenda for the June 22 meeting of STO. Though a delay prevented him from reviewing the proposal until June 20, Lenin was clearly

interested in seeing Martens' ideas come to fruition. On June 22, he wrote to Martens expressing his support for the proposal, provided that the American immigrants brought with them foodstuffs and clothes for a two-year period, as well as the tools required to carry out the task to which they had been assigned. Lenin also encouraged Martens to work these changes into his report to STO that night.⁴¹ Martens accomplished this task, and on June 22, 1921, STO passed a resolution in support of his new immigration plan.⁴²

The clear support for Martens' proposal was foreshadowed by the publication of a large portion of his proposal in the pages of *Ekonomicheskaiia Zhizn'* on the same day of the STO meeting.⁴³ It is interesting to note, however, that though the article published in *Ekonomicheskaiia Zhizn'* was drawn almost word for word from the proposal that Martens circulated to the members of STO on June 10, it did not include the entire proposal. Notably absent from this article was the degree of importance that Martens placed on the raw financial resources that these immigrants could provide. For example, in the circulated proposal, the editors failed to mention Martens' emphasis on the hard currency that these immigrants could offer, as well as the horrible terms under which they were required to exchange this currency.

⁴¹ V. I Lenin to L.K. Martens, June 22, 1921. Lenin Internet Archive, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin> (accessed June 29, 2013). Though Lenin asked that all three be proposed, he noted that so long as they brought foodstuffs for two years, Martens could expect his "full support."

⁴² RGAE f. 3249, op. 1, d. 2531, l. 44.

⁴³ *Ekonomicheskaiia Zhizn'* 22 June 1921. Republished in *Soviet Russia*, October 1921.

There are several ways that one could interpret the exclusion of this portion of Martens' proposal from the newspaper article. On one hand, the brevity of the article could have been a result of the paper shortage which may have given him limited space in a major publication such as *Ekonomicheskaiia Zhizn'*. At the extreme opposite pole, one could also take this as a clear example of Martens' desire to trick unwitting American workers into coming to Soviet Russia so that the state could milk them for their material goods. I would contend, however, that the most appropriate interpretation lies somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. As a member of the collegium of VSNKh, the organization that was responsible for allocating resources for economic development, Martens was certainly aware that it would be difficult for any state committee to endorse a new organization when it was unable to finance those committees that already existed. One major difference between Martens' plan and those endorsed by the earlier Narkomtrud committee was the latter's proposal to provide state means to help establish immigrant groups.⁴⁴ Taking a cue from the other plans of the time, Martens decided to reflect his plan as one that would produce more energy than it consumed, by using limited resources of the state to tap into a source of energy that was outside the state. In proposing to turn the potential energy locked in the bank accounts and minds of American workers into the kinetic energy of factories and farms, he was merely speaking in terms that the Soviet environment of the early 1920s demanded. As noted above, Martens linked his immigration plans directly to the foreign concessions that the Soviet government was offering to foreign capitalists at the time. Therefore, while it is likely

⁴⁴ Point 7 of item #3 on the March 28 meeting of CARR was "To support in equipping the departing groups with tools and items for equipping the enterprise." GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 1, ll. 22-33.

that Martens deliberately left this information out of his article for fear of casting a negative light on his plans, one should not take this as evidence of a conspiracy, but more likely as a form of pragmatism that, while certainly not based in a concern for the immigrants themselves, does not preclude a benevolent attitude towards the welfare of the immigrants who would be arriving under the new policy. In addition, this supports claims by scholars such as Yuri Felshtinsky and Andrea Chandler that the NEP-era immigration policy represented a turn from the ideal to the practical.⁴⁵

The new plan adopted by STO on June 22 had five points, the first three of which were in line with Martens' position on immigration. The first point stated that the Central Industrial Department of VSNKh had resolved to establish a sub department that was to be responsible for overseeing the development of industry by means of turning over enterprises to American immigrants "on contract terms, giving them a certain degree of economic autonomy, and carried out in a certain manner." The second point charged this sub department with the collection of data related to these enterprises, while the fourth point granted the sub committee the right to enter into contract with the groups of industrial workers, reiterating these groups' right to some level of economic autonomy. Point three, which formally recognized STASR as the American counterpart of the immigration sub-committee was perhaps the most significant of these points for those working in the United States. As noted above, the many branches of STASR had worked to recruit those interested in migrating to Russia for several months prior to the resolution, and the Soviet government's official recognition meant that their work was not in vain. Furthermore, having official recognition as the arm of the Soviet Union

⁴⁵ Felshtinsky, "Foundations," 332; Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation*, 11.

meant greater credibility for the organization, which could help it in its future recruitment. STO did not, however, support all aspects of Martens proposal; though the final point of the resolution allowed VSNKh to be the leading state office in organizing remigration, it mandated that the VSNKh sub-committee coordinate its actions with the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) and Narkomtrud, which would have permanent representatives in the sub-department.⁴⁶

On June 29, just a week after the STO meeting, the members of the Office of Industrial Immigration (OII) of VSNKh held their first meeting. According to a decree passed on this day, the main goal of the department was to identify “which industrial enterprises, by reason of their equipment, or because of other particular conditions, are suitable for operation by foreign workers, and may be turned over to such workers organized into artels, cooperatives, etc...[with] such enterprises to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy, which will be determined in each case between the contracting parties, and to be under the supervision of the Supreme Council of National Economy.”⁴⁷ On August 18, 1921 Martens wrote to inform the Presidium of VSNKh that, under his supervision, the OII had established a permanent staff with Martens as the head.⁴⁸ Thus, in the fall of 1921, the committee set out to amass and distribute information for the use of its American offices.

⁴⁶ The STO resolution also failed to incorporate Martens’ proposal that groups of immigrants be granted entire regions (*tselye raiony*), limiting the sites to factories (*fabriki i zavody*). [Galina Tarle, *Druz’ia Strany Sovetov* (Moskva: Nauka, 1968), 135.]

⁴⁷ RGAE f. 3249, op. 1, d. 2531, l. 44

⁴⁸ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2 d. 431, ll. 25.

The degree to which Martens' plan solved the most pressing problems caused by immigration is impressive. In requiring that immigrants bring their own tools and supplies, he ensured that workers could provide for themselves and would make a guaranteed contribution to the technological base of the Soviet economy. By organizing immigration in groups, Martens' plan reduced the potential for conflicts between immigrants and local populations. And by using STASR as its agent in the United States, the Soviet government tapped into a low-cost means for screening potential immigrants for both political and professional qualifications. Even if a group failed to successfully manage a particular enterprise, the machinery that they had installed remained the property of the Soviet state. This focus on the self-sufficiency of immigrant groups as a prerequisite to entry set Martens' approach to immigration apart from those of other state committees, many of which were willing to allocate state resources to immigrant projects for the purpose of transporting, clothing or feeding their members.⁴⁹ Thus, the immigration policy adopted by the Soviet government in June 1921 promised (at least on paper) to be a net producer of energy and resources at a time when such things were at a premium.

On the other hand, STO's unwillingness to grant full power to VSNKh led to a continuation of the inter-departmental inefficiencies that had proven so detrimental to the regulation of immigration prior to the creation of OII. In particular, members of Narkomtrud who had been part of earlier plans to handle immigration were given the

⁴⁹ Narktomtrud and even VSNKh prior to Martens' arrival, had supported allocating material goods and cash to immigrant-run factories to help ensure their success. As will be clear later in this chapter, Martens was very clear in his belief that all immigrant projects should be self-sustaining and consume no state resources. [RGAE f. 3429, op. 1, d. 2501, l. 1-2; GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 30.]

right to participate in the formulation of VSNKh's path after June 1921, but their role was unclear. Throughout the remainder of the year, members of various state committees met to hash out the rights and powers of OII, as well as its relationship to Narkomtrud and other interested state offices. For several months following STO's resolution, Narkomtrud continued to carry out its immigration work. As the year continued, Soviet offices continued to work together to permit the entry of some immigrant groups, and on October 28 three members of VSNKh signed a mandate appointing former member of Martens' Soviet Mission in the USA, Abraham A. Heller, to serve as their official representative in the US.⁵⁰ The question of which offices held which rights, however, remained unanswered.

One of the holdups that seems to have caused much of the problems revolved around an alternative draft resolution on immigration and emigration put forward by Sovnarkom on July 17, 1921. In late August, Narkomtrud sent out appeals to governmental bodies to allow it to directly recruit small parties of skilled workers from the United States.⁵¹ On August 28, Small SNK discussed Narkomtrud's request and referred the petition to the People's Commissariat of Justice for review, but Narkomtrud's dissatisfaction with the resolution prevented Small Sovnarkom from

⁵⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2. For example, on September an inter-office meeting at Glavmetal included reps of Glavavtozav, AMO, VTsSPS and Narkomtrud. The group resolved to allow the entry of 250 American workers for AMO and to provide \$5,000 in credit for purchasing necessary instruments for AMO [GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 30]. Heller had served as the head of the Soviet Mission's commercial department, and thus had experience working in the United States. (Siegel, *Loans and Legitimacy*, 9.)

⁵¹ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 34. NKID wrote to inform NKT that they were not opposed to admitting skilled groups from America so long as they were Russians, and not American citizens.

approving new immigration regulations until the end of the year.⁵² In an attempt to settle the questions of departmental responsibility, representatives of several state offices met in the second half of November to discuss opposition to the new immigration plans. At one such meeting on November 18, representatives of Narkomtrud, VTsSPS, OII and NKID met to discuss changes to the earlier plans, but the four representatives from OII and NKID voted down the proposal to grant Narkomtrud the right to recruit their own specialists which was proposed by Narkomtrud's lone representative and supported only by VTsSPS's representative.⁵³ Less than two weeks later, however, at a meeting between members of Narkomtrud and VSNKh, representatives of the two sides finally reached common ground, with Martens agreeing to support a proposal to SNK that would modify the STO resolution of June 22 to give Narkomtrud the right to recruit groups for non-VSNKh operated enterprises, and to allow Heller to serve simultaneously as the American representative of VSNKh and Narkomtrud.⁵⁴ This did not mark the end of the disagreement; upon learning of the new proposal, Litvinov wrote to Narkomtrud to inform them that NKID considered it impossible to endorse any plan that recognized a permanent representative of the Soviet government in countries with which it did not have normal diplomatic relations. Furthermore, NKID required that all of Narkomtrud's

⁵² GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 36.

⁵³ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 1, l. 12.

⁵⁴ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 13-14.

recruitment be cleared by NKID and Cheka, further limiting Narkomtrud's ability to act independently in recruiting workers.⁵⁵

These troubles aside, by the end of 1921, OII had laid the foundation for its recruitment of foreign workers. In late November, Heller arrived to begin his work in the United States, and shortly after began coordinating the first scouts (*khodoki*) to carry out recognizance work for communes that were organized in the US.⁵⁶ The beginning of recruitment efforts and the departure of the first groups in mid-1922 did not, however, mark an end to the inter-departmental misunderstandings and conflicts that had begun in 1921; as the new offices began their work, the conflicts that resulted would lead to new regulations and, ultimately, the dissolution of OII altogether in October 1922.

At the same time that Soviet leaders were working out the details of OII, another similar immigrant project was being developed outside the bounds of both OII and Narkomzem. This project, which came to be known as the Autonomous Industrial Colony-Kuzbas (AIK), was developed and championed primarily by Sebald J. Rutgers and Herbert Calvert, both of whom had developed ideas on the basis of their experiences in the United States. Calvert, who was born in California, became interested in the Bolshevik Revolution after reading Lenin's "Appeal to American Workers," in 1918. Though he had no prior connection to Russia, the fact that Calvert was living in Mexico

⁵⁵ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 8.

⁵⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 144-147. The deployment of scouts to travel ahead of larger groups and arrange for land and other necessities for settlement was a tradition that had roots in peasant migration to Siberia and the Russian Far East in the nineteenth century. [Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Those Elusive Scouts: Pioneering Peasants and the Russian State, 1870s-1950s." *Kritika* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 31-58.]

when he encountered Lenin's letter suggests that he was attracted to revolutionary environments. In 1918, Calvert left Mexico for Detroit, where he began working as an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) at the Ford factories of Michigan.

In February 1921 Calvert departed for Russia, where he was to serve as a representative of the IWW at the First Congress of the Trade Union International (Profintern) to be held in June.⁵⁷ As he travelled alongside hundreds of Russians who were returning to Russia, Calvert realized the potential that this group had for rebuilding Russia, and began to think of concrete means for employing them in rehabilitating the Russian economy. Calvert's February departure made him one of the first delegates to arrive in Russia for the Profintern conference, and he used this extra time lodged in the Hotel Lux to make connections with those who informed him on the conditions of the economy and, perhaps more importantly, those with connections to high-ranking members of the Bolshevik party. These early contacts included former president of the Riga Soviet, Simon Berg, and Michael Borodin, who was, according to Calvert's own account, Lenin's "eyes and ears" amongst the international delegates.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1," Millie and Herbert S. Calvert Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 1, Folder 3. This folder contains the first chapter from an unpublished monograph on the history of the Kuzbas Colony that Herbert and Millie Calvert were working on in the last years of their lives, but never completed. In putting together their research, they collaborated with fellow Kuzbas participants Nemmy Sparks and Ruth Kennell Epperson, both of which subsequently are mentioned in this dissertation.

⁵⁸ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 3.

After spending some time gathering information, Calvert proposed his immigration strategy in April 1921.⁵⁹ Calvert argued that American workers could serve as “shock troops” of the industrial army of production, provided that they were organized effectively. Though much of his letter remained theoretical (he did not, for example, name a specific location), Calvert made two suggestions that would become cornerstones of the new Soviet immigration policy, and were wholly in line with Martens’ plan. First, Calvert recommended that immigration be focused on a single, geographically concentrated project. Secondly, Calvert argued that the skilled technicians needed for such a project could be found in America, where an American organizing committee could select suitable workers for a selected project. Through his new connections, Calvert managed to get his proposal to Lenin who, though interested, returned the papers with his handwriting across the first page, which read “A good idea. Give us something more definite.”⁶⁰

Given Calvert’s limited technical expertise, his lack of knowledge of the Russian language and his relative lack of knowledge of the Soviet economy, turning this idea into “something more definite” was not a simple task. Fortunately for Calvert, his idea continued to attract the interest of many others in Moscow who were better equipped to see his idea to fruition. The most significant of these came in May, when exiled American labor leader William “Big Bill” Haywood returned to Moscow and, after

⁵⁹ “Herbert Calvert, Letter to Soviet Leaders on Reconstruction, April 1921,” Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 15. Calvert’s notes say that he submitted his article “to various people including Bucharin <sic> in April 1921,” but he does not go into further detail.

⁶⁰ “Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1,” Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 3.

deciding to become personally involved in the project, introduced Calvert to Sebald J Rutgers, a Dutch engineer who had come to Moscow as a delegate to the Third Communist International (Comintern), and who had the technical know-how and political connections to make Calvert's proposal a reality.

In many ways, Rutgers' life prior to 1917 mirrors that of Ludwig Martens. Like so many of the early Bolsheviks, Rutgers had become a committed socialist as a university student. After completing his engineering degree in Delft in 1900, and spending the next fifteen years working in the Netherlands, most notably on the port at Rotterdam, Rutgers was sent by his employer to the United States, where he helped to found the Socialist Propaganda League in 1915. When revolution broke out in 1917, Rutgers traveled to Russia, where he took charge of water transportation prior to an illness that drove him to relocate to Italy in 1919. By 1921, however, Rutgers' health had improved enough to allow him to return to his work in helping develop the Soviet economy, a goal that he chose to pursue by personally investing himself in Calvert's plan for an immigrant colony. After some preliminary talks between the two, they agreed to form a committee to begin work on the project, and to drop any activity relating to their respective conferences that would interfere with their work on the immigrant project.⁶¹

In the late spring and early summer of 1921, Rutgers and Calvert began their investigation into an appropriate site for the American colony by conducting research in Soviet libraries and talking with members from all across Russia who had come to

⁶¹ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 3. According to Calvert, the two were initially joined by a Russian identified as "Comrade Malkin" who originally agreed to join their committee, but later withdrew from the project's operations altogether.

Moscow as delegates to the Profintern conference. After meeting with delegates from several organizations based in Western Siberia, the group finally chose the Kuznetsk Basin (Kuzbas) as the site of its concrete efforts. The area identified in this plan involved the redevelopment and expansion of a flooded coalmine, the completion of a chemical factory that had only partially been built prior to the outbreak of World War I, and the cultivation of various other resources in the area.⁶² As of early June, however, the group's knowledge of the Kuzbas remained second hand, which prevented them from developing any concrete plans for the area. Their project finally got an important jump start on June 22, 1922, when, in the same resolution that established OII, STO granted permission for 12-15 members of Rutgers' group to travel to the Kemerovo region and provided them with 2 million rubles to help cover their transportation expenses.⁶³ On June 28, Calvert and Rutgers, along with five others, departed for Siberia, where they spent the next two months visiting the sites they had proposed to develop, and familiarizing themselves with the area as a whole.⁶⁴ On August 3, the group arrived in Novo-Nikolaevsk [Novosibirsk], where they spent eight days working out an agreement

⁶² The site had been under development by a French firm prior to 1914, but had been abandoned during the First World War. The chemical factory in Kemerovo was only partially finished at the time of the French firms' withdrawal, and Kolchak's forces had flooded the mines as an act of sabotage during their retreat east in the Russian Civil War, meaning that most of the site's rich resources were inaccessible when the Kuzbas group visited in 1921.

⁶³ RGAE, f. 3249, op. 1, d. 2531, l. 44.

⁶⁴ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 3, According to Calvert, the group stopped in Ekaterinburg on their way to Kemerovo, at which time Calvert was offered, and accepted, a tour of the house in which the Romanovs had been executed.

for local support of the colony with the Siberian Revolutionary Committee (Sibrevkom). In the end, Sibrevkom not only enthusiastically endorsed the plan, it also gave the group \$200,000 in jewels that had been confiscated from fleeing elites to help provide the financial basis for the colony's development. Thus, when the group finally returned to Moscow on September 4, they had done a remarkable job of providing the "concrete" aspects of the project that Lenin had requested the previous April.

The initial plan for what became known as the Autonomous Industrial Colony-Kuzbas (AIK) shared many features with the plans developed by Martens. First, the organization of the 3,000 American workers that the group agreed to bring to the colony would take place through independent offices in the United States, where those working for the colony would professionally and politically vet those wishing to immigrate to Kuzbas as members of the colony. Second, the colony was to be granted a pre-determined site, for which it would be given a lease for a set number of years. Finally, the colony would be run on semi-autonomous conditions, allowing the workers a voice in the colony's direction. Unlike the colonies established under OII, however, the Kuzbas group sought a much greater degree of commitment from the state in their site's initial development. The most significant of these demands was that the state invest \$600,000 in the enterprise to purchase the machinery necessary for pumping out the mines and powering the chemical factory. The proposal also requested a much larger amount of property be turned over to the colony, which included not only the mines and factory, but also land for farming and harvesting wood for construction projects. Overall, by late summer 1921, the Kuzbas group had already completed the information gathering process that the OII and STASR had just begun, putting them well ahead of their

counterparts. Rutgers, Calvert and Haywood thus promised to unleash a much more definite and sizeable amount of potential energy, but demanded that state put out more of its own scarce energy to do so.

Despite the similarities between the plan for AIK and those of OII, the Kuzbas group drew a less-than-enthusiastic response from Martens, who eventually came to oppose STO's ratification of the proposal. According to Calvert, the Kuzbas group met with Martens shortly after deciding to form their exploratory committee, at which time he took an interest in the plan. Because the group recognized that having Martens' approval was important, the group had asked him to review their letter and technical specifications of their proposal prior to submitting it to Lenin and STO, but noted that Martens had delayed his endorsement and "signed the letter with some hesitancy only after lengthy explanations."⁶⁵ Martens' concern with the group was also manifest in his selection of two members of the exploratory group, one of which was A.A. Heller, to oversee the group's activities in Siberia. Nevertheless, in the group's final direct meeting with Martens, held September 2 in Ekaterinburg, Martens agreed to support the plans for Kuzbas.⁶⁶ In the weeks that followed the Kuzbas group's return to Moscow, however, it

⁶⁵ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 3.

⁶⁶ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 3. Such was Rutgers and Calvert's concern for Martens' endorsement that they had delayed their return to Moscow for an additional week so as to meet with Martens in Ekaterinburg. At that time, Martens had left Moscow to undertake work in the Urals, and thus would be unavailable to meet with the group in Moscow for several weeks at the very least. While in the Urals, Martens served as a guide to American investor Armond Hammer, who eventually signed a concession contract. [V.I. Lenin to the Members of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). October 14, 1921. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin> (Accessed June 28, 2013).

quickly became clear that whatever support Martens had expressed for the colony in the past had quickly vanished.

The arguments against Kuzbas presented by Martens, as well as the debates in which Soviet leaders engaged with Rutgers and Calvert, and amongst themselves prior to the state's official endorsement of the proposal, reveal the importance of material resources in the planning of the time, as well as the high value that Soviet leaders placed on maintaining a positive image in the western world, and particularly in the United States. On September 13, the Council of People's Commissars examined the Kuzbas proposal and recommended it be forwarded for consideration to the Council of Labor and Defense. Six days later the group was able to arrange a direct meeting with Lenin and succeeded in convincing him of the project's potential.⁶⁷ Thanks to Lenin's support, on September 23 the project was reviewed by STO, which found the proposal desirable "in principle," and ordered that a commission made up of representatives of VSNKh, Narkomtrud and the People's Commissariat of Land (Narkomzem) be established to negotiate a final contract with the group no later than September 28.⁶⁸

Despite these initial gains, the Kuzbas group found itself facing substantial opposition, the most important of which came from Martens, whose tepid support of the colony at the beginning of September had since turned into an active campaign against the group's proposal. In the following weeks, Martens, along with other members of VSNKh, petitioned Lenin and others to reject the Kuzbas proposal. On September 21,

⁶⁷ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 56.

⁶⁸ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 31

Martens wrote to Lenin and VSNKh Chairman Petr Bogdanov to ask that they wait until he returned to Moscow to make a final decision on Kuzbas, but stated that the project would not receive his support unless it was carried out without state resources. If the Kuzbas group could not accomplish their goals without state support, Martens argued, the state would have nothing to lose, as he believed that the groups that were currently being organized under OII could just as easily develop the Kuznets basin, but without any financial support from the state.⁶⁹ As a result of Martens' letter, the STO resolution of September 23 also included an order to have Martens return to Moscow as soon as possible to participate in the negotiations.

Though Martins was unable to fulfill the order to return to Moscow, his lack of direct involvement in the negotiations did not mean a clear path for Rutgers.⁷⁰ This was quickly made obvious by the new draft of the contract with the Kuzbas group that the Soviet subcommittee presented on September 28, according to which, the enterprise was to be stripped of its autonomy and operated under the direct control of VSNKh. Though both Rutgers and Calvert had been willing to make compromises in their negotiations with Sibrevkom and STO, this latest draft clearly angered them, leading them to draft a declaration to STO the following day, and directly confront STO's members on September 30. The declaration, signed by Rutgers and Calvert, recounted their earlier compromises, and acknowledged their willingness to live within the framework of Soviet

⁶⁹ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, ll. 20-21.

⁷⁰ In response to STO's order that Martens return to Moscow as soon as possible, Martens wrote to Lenin and Kizas on September 28 once again voicing his opposition to the Kuzbas project, but noting that he could not return to Moscow until October 15 at the earliest. RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 57.

laws and to negotiate with VSNKh through STO, but stated that “the American Revolutionary workers demand autonomy in their internal affairs.....[and] will try after the initial support to rely as little as possible on the resources of the Soviet government, and to that extent they want to be left free in their work as long as the results are satisfactory to STO.”⁷¹ The resolution also acknowledged that Rutgers and Calvert were well aware of the opposition to the plan, as they specifically addressed Martens’ claim that he could “achieve the same results cheaper with the American-Russian emigrants,” noting that because of their reduced commitment to revolutionary ideals meant that these returnees “most likely will not object to work on a commercial basis.”⁷² In conclusion, the declaration stated that the group was prepared to fulfill their obligations as outlined in the September 23 negotiations with STO, but would not agree to the changes proposed in the most recent draft contract.

The group’s response, which seems to have been even more aggressive in the STO meeting than in the written declaration, caused Lenin to proceed cautiously. The day after the meeting, on October 1, Lenin ordered VSNKh Presidium member V.V. Kuibyshev to record all his involvement in the negotiations through a stenographer for fear that the confrontation between Rutgers and the Soviet government would be picked up internationally. “This is a very important issue,” wrote Lenin. “Therefore we need to record this course of affairs, so later there cannot be any gossip or unfavorable censure.” Lenin also informed Kubyshev that the issue had been referred to the Central Committee

⁷¹ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 65.

⁷² RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 65

and the Profintern for further consideration once full and accurate information had been gathered.⁷³

Lenin's concern over the bad publicity that could come if the two sides did not reach an agreement on a contract for Kuzbas is an important reflection of both the general policy of the Soviet government in the early NEP-era, as well as a clue as to why Soviet leaders were eventually willing to support Rutgers project despite the relatively high degree of state investment that the plan required. As noted earlier, a crucial element of policy making in the NEP-era involved locating outside sources of energy to help in the accomplishment of state goals. At the same time that the state was carrying out negotiations with the Kuzbas group, it was also seeking to mobilize foreign capitalists to sign concession contracts to develop other resources inside Soviet borders. As evident in concurrent correspondence between high-level party members, Lenin and other leaders were very insistent on ensuring that foreign capitalists had enough faith in the Soviet government to take on the risk of long-term investments in Russia.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the entire immigration plan that had been endorsed the previous summer required that would-be immigrants maintain a positive image of the Soviet government. Because of their strong ties to the western world, and their high regard within leftist communities in the United States in particular, the Kuzbas group threatened to damage several other projects of the time, thus possibly costing the Soviet government much more than the amount the Kuzbas group was requesting for their project. Thus, Lenin's letter to Kubyshev helps

⁷³ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 58

⁷⁴ Several letters from the fall of 1921 demonstrate the importance that Lenin attached to signing a concession contract with Armand Hammer.

explain the support Lenin and others gave to the plan, despite its demands on the state's limited pool of resources and the opposition it faced from influential figures such as Martens.

The concerns shown by Lenin no doubt came to influence VSNKh's leadership, and on October 10 the presidium of VSNKh voted to support STO's earlier resolution on the autonomy of the Kuzbas project. The endorsement of this earlier position was, however, neither unanimous nor complete. Though the committee agreed to cave in on the political aspects, resolving only that the recruitment of workers be carried out amongst a wide circle of American workers (a clear expression of VSNKh's fears of the leadership's ties to the IWW), it only agreed to support the STO resolution under the stipulation that the immigrant workers supply the resources required to develop their enterprise. Furthermore, the resolution passed with only half of the presidium's members voting to support it, with VSNKh Chairman Bogdanov casting the deciding vote in favor of the resolution.⁷⁵

Over the next several weeks, Lenin pondered the pros and cons of supporting the Kuzbas plan, noting both the political and financial possibilities that the project could bring about. On October 12th, he wrote a letter to Molotov to be forwarded to all members of the Politbureau, in which he expressed his sentiments, noting that if the plan succeeded, it would be well worth the 600,000 gold rubles they were being asked to invest. On the other hand, Lenin expressed his concern with the group's reliability, noting that "*Heywood* is half-anarchist. More sentimental than business-like. *Rutgers* may succumb to Leftism. *Calvert* is highly garrulous. We have no business guarantees

⁷⁵ RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 443, l. 50.

whatever. Enthusiastic people, in an atmosphere of unemployment, may recruit a group of ‘adventurous spirits’ who will end up in squabbles.”⁷⁶ Lenin also noted that though the project had gained local support in Siberia, Martens remained against it. Lenin, however, continued to push Martens to remain open to the project, urging Martens to consider Armand Hammer as a potential source of financing for the project.⁷⁷ And though Martens never reversed his opposition to the Kuzbas Project, in the end, Lenin and other policy makers came to see the advantages of the project as more significant than the costs, and on October 21 and 25, STO and Sovnarkom respectively accepted a plan for the Kuzbas Colony.

In its final form, AIK was technically established as a foreign concession, making its contract the third such contract negotiated under Soviet concessions policy.⁷⁸ The contract allowed for the autonomy of the group, but included several changes to

⁷⁶ V.I. Lenin, “A Note to V.M. Molotov with a Draft Decision for the Politbureau of the CC, RCP(b) on the Question of an Agreement with the Rutgers Group,” October 12, 1921. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).

⁷⁷ V.I. Lenin to L.K. Martens, October 15, 1921. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin> (Accessed June 28, 2013); Gillette, “First American Concession in Soviet Russia,” 358-361. Martens had a long-standing relationship with the Hammer family, and Armand’s father, Julius Hammer, had provided much of the financial backing for the Martens Bureau. In the summer of 1921, Martens led Armand Hammer through the Urals on a trip that had sparked Hammer’s interest in investing in the Soviet economy. Though Hammer eventually signed the first Soviet concession contract, he never became involved in the Kuzbas project.

⁷⁸ S.S. Khromov, *Inostrannye Kontsessii v SSSR: Istorichesk, Chast II*, (Moscow, 2006), 236. Calvert notes that the Kuzbas site had been promoted by the Soviet concession committee earlier in 1921. [“Kuzbas Story, Chapter 1,” Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 3].

address the concerns that Lenin and others had about the original proposal. In order to quell fears about the political nature of the recruits, the members of the group who were party to the contract (Rutgers, Calvert and Haywood, along with Jack Beyer and Tom Barker) were to be joined by nine additional American labor leaders on the managing board of the enterprise, and all members of the colony were required to sign a declaration acknowledging colony's existence within the bounds of Soviet law, as well as the hardships they would face once they arrived in Soviet Russia. The Kuzbas group agreed to recruit approximately 5,800 Americans to work in Russia, each of whom was obligated to work for no less than two years, to provide a total of no less than \$200 for tools and personal supplies, and to pay for their own transportation from their homes to the Soviet border. The Soviet government, in turn, was obligated to provide transportation from the border to the colony, \$20,000 for an exhaustive economic study of the region, \$5,000 for recruitment work abroad, and \$100 for each of the first 2,750 immigrants who joined the project, thus limiting its maximum cost to \$300,000, and tying the bulk of the financial risk to the colony organizers' success. The Soviet government also agreed to place the enterprise under the supervision of the STO, thus helping to mitigate conflict that could potentially arise between the colony and those members of VSNKh who remained opposed to the project.⁷⁹

Having successfully completed their negotiations with the Soviet government, the members of the group set to work fulfilling their terms of the agreement. In late October, the group officially ordered Calvert, along with British-born activist Tom Barker, to

⁷⁹ J.P. Morray, *Project Kuzbas: American Workers in Siberia, 1921-1926*. (New York: International Publishers, 1983), 177-180.

return to the United States, where they were to serve as the colony's official representatives in America. As such, they were charged with the task of promoting and recruiting the colony, as well as forming an official "Committee of Organization" from amongst a list of potential candidates from various political parties. At the same time, Rutgers was to return to Holland for the next few months, where he was to serve as both the liaison between the American representatives and the Soviet government, as well as a point of communication between the American group and Haywood, the later of whom was to remain in Moscow.⁸⁰ Having laid out these roles, the members of the newly-christened Autonomous Industrial Colony-Kuzbas dispersed across the globe to begin turning their vision into a reality.

Thus, by the fall of 1921, advocates of immigration to Soviet Russia had laid the institutional foundations for their projects. Though OII and the Kuzbas Colony had different origins, at their core they reflected an attempt to solve the basic problems created by immigration. At the heart of these immigration plans, however, one can see far more than simple rules for allowing people to enter the country; OII and the Kuzbas Colony are reflections of the problems, and problem solving strategies, that were characteristic of early NEP-era Soviet Russia. In these conditions, immigration policy was almost inseparable from the questions of famine, industrialization, capital movement and political loyalty that were among the most pressing issues facing the new regime at the time. Unable to provide the energy required to solve these problems, Soviet leaders

⁸⁰ "Instructions to Calvert and Barker," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 18.

looked to sources of energy outside the party that could be inexpensively channeled to push the Soviet state closer to its goals.

As should be clear above, the development of NEP-era Soviet immigration policy was overwhelmingly shaped by the United States. Prior to the influx of American immigrants into Soviet Russia in late 1920, the regime had maintained a fairly open immigration policy, which allowed relatively easy immigration into the country. When the circumstances of early 1921 led the government to close the border to long-term migration in the middle of the year, it was those with ties to the United States who developed the foundations of the new immigration policy. The central consideration of both those who proposed the plans, as well as those inside the Soviet government who supported them, was facilitating immigration from America. Of course, these plans were assumed to, and eventually did, involve workers from many other countries, but none of these countries held anywhere near the significance that leaders placed on the US.

In 1921, Martens and the Kuzbas group were successful in advancing their plans because they offered a definite means for translating the kinetic energy locked in the souls and bank accounts of the American working class into the potential energy of a politically and technologically developed pocket of proletarian organization in Soviet Russia. True, these projects required that the state take on some economic costs, including a sizeable investment in the Kuzbas colony, but the bulk of the economic incentives on the table for these projects came in the form of unutilized property that the Soviet government seized following the revolution. The primary means for tapping into the energy of immigration was non-economic; these plans offered some immigrants the right to return to their former homes and families, and others the opportunity to become

participants in the construction of socialism. In closing the borders the Soviet government seized a monopoly on the right of immigration. As the official gatekeepers of movement, these new institutions were charged with brokering this abundant resource to those who had more tangible things to offer.

In return, these immigrants were to be directed towards the completion of tasks that Soviet leaders themselves deemed valuable, and agreed to provide the much-needed technology required to complete these tasks. The process of organizing these workers was to be carried out by autonomous offices in the United States, whose personnel understood what could be expected of American workers in certain professions and could serve as filters to remove counter-revolutionaries from the stream of immigration. The Soviet government's load was further lightened by the organization of groups and their settlement on a specific site; this kept management costs low, and reduced the potential social conflicts that could arise from placing American workers into Russian working conditions. Thus, these immigration plans appeared to account for all of the major problems associated with immigration in 1921. How these schemes played out on the ground, however, was an entirely different matter.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL AID TO SOVIET RUSSIA, THE AUTONOMOUS INDUSTRIAL COLONY-KUZBAS, AND THE BEGINNING OF NEP-ERA RECRUITMENT

At the end of 1921 the proponents of immigration to the Soviet Union had laid the foundations for the immigration policy of the New Economic Policy. Neither economically able nor ideologically willing to tolerate the nearly unrestricted movement into Soviet borders that began to swell in late 1920 and early 1921, Soviet leaders had completely sealed the borders to immigration and had used the reprieve as a chance to develop a new plan for managing the movement of people into the country. Like other NEP-era policies, the new immigration policy was to channel the energy of non-state forces towards the achievement of state goals through identifying groups and individuals whose energy they could tap into for minimal cost. But in the first year of this new policy it quickly became clear that even providing that minimal energy was not an easy task for a state that was facing shortages of nearly everything.

The second chapter of this dissertation shifts attention away from the formation of Soviet policy and looks to the first attempt to implement the new institutions established during NEP. Much of this chapter focuses on the situation in the United States, the American fascination with the Soviet Union, and the various opportunities that Americans believed they could access within the borders of the Soviet state. An essential aspect of my argument to this point has been that Soviet immigration policy in the NEP-era relied on a combination of economic and non-economic incentives, and that these incentives reveal a point of commonality that makes the NEP-era a coherent set of strategies, and not simply a period of ‘retreat’ defined by the institutional strategies of the

periods that bookend it. This chapter aims to substantiate this claim by focusing on the hopes and expectations that Soviet space held for those Americans who wished to relocate there, thus helping to elucidate the primarily non-material motivations that Soviet policy makers sought to tap into with their new immigration policy.

It was in these early months of the NEP-era Soviet immigration policy that recruiters had their greatest successes in terms of overall numbers. This was due to several factors including the lack of information coming out of Russia (the Civil War had just ended), the persistence of the push factors that had motivated the earlier immigration waves, and the fact that many of those with the means and desire to migrate under the NEP-era immigration regime did so as quickly as possible. But what marks this period of recruitment as the most unique is the variety of expectations that the immigrants of this time held for Soviet space. These ranged from the radical vision of those affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to the more conservative vision of reemigrants who saw their migration as a return to their home. This brought to the Soviet project some of the most reliable and dedicated workers of the 1920s, but it also brought those with the more unrealistic expectations who eventually returned to the United States and shared their tales of a materially and morally inferior Soviet world with an interested American media. This image of the hyperbolic promises of the new Soviet leadership and the abysmal condition of life in the Soviet Union helped to damage the new regime's reputation, and continues to mark our understanding of Americans' experiences in the NEP-era Soviet Union. In the end, however, the focus on these returnees obscures the wide variety of reasons that Americans chose to migrate to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and fails to acknowledge the actual reasons that Soviet immigration policy failed to live

up to the high expectations that Soviet leaders had held when they crafted the policy in 1921.

When the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (STASR) and the Autonomous Industrial Colony-Kuzbas (AIK) opened their doors for recruitment in the United States, there was no shortage of individuals who wished to emigrate to Soviet Russia. As mentioned in the previous chapter, by the time the border closed in April 1921, thousands of Americans were arriving in Russia every month, and the sudden end of Americans' free access to Soviet space left many in America, especially Russian-Americans, anxiously awaiting news regarding the reopening of the border, as well as the terms under which they could travel to Russia. Though the winding down of the Civil War in late 1920 had brought about improvements in the flow of information across the Atlantic Ocean, the picture of life in Russia remained fairly fragmentary to those in the United States, and the unclear allocation of power amongst Soviet governmental offices regularly exacerbated this uncertainty. Nevertheless, the push and pull factors of the time ensured that interest in migration to Soviet Russia remained strong enough to transcend the uncertainty and discouragement that came with the border closure of April 1921.

The interest Americans showed in migrating to post-Tsarist Russia, however, predated the surge of the new decade. After taking power in 1917, the Bolshevik party placed a heavy emphasis on presenting Soviet space as a site whose development was an inclusive affair that had a central role for the working people who were to shape its future. This image benefitted greatly from observers' ability to incorporate the new Soviet Russia into a variety of narratives, each with its own pull factors for those living

abroad. For Russian émigrés, the Bolshevik project could be read as a liberating project in which the outdated social and economic forms of the Tsarist era could be pushed aside, thus bringing about a ‘new Russia.’ From very early on, the leaders of the new Bolshevik regime had also cast themselves as the leaders of an international movement, and presented the “land of the Soviets” as a site in which the persecuted masses of the world could live free from their repressors. In this understanding of the Russian Revolution, participation meant not necessarily fulfilling the promise of a new Russia, but helping to make an evolutionary step in the progress of human society. As a demonstration of this claim, in March 1918 the Soviet government granted amnesty to any foreign citizen who claimed political or religious persecution in their home country, and shortly after passed laws that made Soviet citizenship highly assessable to those foreigners living inside the country.¹

Though the Bolsheviks’ message had a general international appeal, the position of the United States in the post-WWI years created unique soil for the development of these ideas. One reason for this was the nearly 3 million former residents of the Russian Empire who had migrated to the United States in the years prior to the outbreak of World War I, almost 1.4 million of whom had come from the Russian portion of the Empire.²

¹ Yuri Felshtinsky, “Foundations of the Immigration and Emigration Policy of the USSR, 1917-1927,” *Soviet Studies* 34, no. 3 (July 1982): 329.

² Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE), f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, ll. 22-33. According to this report, there were 2,823,387 former residents of the Russian Empire in the US as of 1910, of which 1,398,999 had come from Russia, 1,139,578 had come from Poland, 149,671 had come from Finland and 135,139 had come from Latvia.

Table 2
US Cities with Largest Population of Russians, 1910 (8,000 and higher)

City	Number
New York, NY	551,000
Chicago, IL	122,000
Philadelphia, PA	95,000
Boston, MA	64,000
Pittsburgh, PA	26,000
Baltimore, MD	25,000
Cleveland, OH	25,000
Detroit, MI	19,000
St. Louis, MO	17,000
Milwaukee, WI	12,000
Buffalo, NY	11,000
Worcester, MA	9,000
Scranton, PA	9,000
New Haven, CT	8,000
Shenandoah, PA	8,000

Source: RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, l. 40

Most of these immigrants had left the Russian Empire illegally, and faced strict punishment on return for abandoning their obligations to the Tsar, while those who had emigrated legally had done so on condition that they be eternally banned from the Russian Empire.³ This meant that the United States held a particularly large portion of individuals whose personal history made them not only interested in the events taking place in Russia, but who were predisposed to the promise of a new Russia. Though many of these Russians found the ideological message of the Bolshevik party to be appealing, such an attachment to ideology was not required for this group; Russians' personal attachment to the physical space inside Soviet borders meant that the pull of Soviet

³ Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship : from Empire to Soviet Union* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 90-113.

Russia held a far less mutable appeal than those with specific expectations for the country's political course.

For those Americans with no prior attachment to the space inside Soviet borders, several other contemporary pull factors were at work in driving immigration to Soviet Russia. Of course, the appeal of Bolshevik ideology, as well as the chance to participate in the construction of socialism played a major role in attracting some migrants. Yet, as will be clearer below, the nature of information on events in Soviet Russia allowed Americans in the post-WWI world to act as ideological cartographers over the empty map of the Russian Empire. Such a malleability of information allowed many other non-communists to see Soviet space as a site of fulfillment that was not necessarily Communist, nor even Russian. In fact, by 1921, Soviet offices were receiving regular letters from American inventors who offered their inventions and personal services to the Soviet state. The fact that among these inventions was “a perpetual motion machine operated by heavy iron springs and a ball,” and a weapon “which makes war impossible,” both of which could only be completed in Soviet Russia, speaks to the broad appeal and high possibilities of the Soviet project.⁴

Even in cases in which Bolshevik leaders directly addressed the American working class, their message was one that allowed for a super-national understanding of

⁴ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 167-171. Both of these letters were written in September 1921, but their authors make clear they had been attempting to attract the interest of the Soviet government for some time. There are several letters from inventors in this file, most of which are less fantastic than those mentioned above. Taken as a whole, however, they are indicative of a greater tendency of some Americans, with neither connections to Russia nor communist sympathies, to see the Soviet Union as holding possibilities that were not available in the United States.

the Russian Revolution that was inclusive of Americans. Lenin's "Letter to American Workers," of August 1918, for example, noted the differing struggles of the American and Russian working class, but placed key events in American history into the greater revolutionary narrative that was unfolding in Russia.⁵ According to Lenin, the actions of the Bolshevik Party were not only just as valid as those taken by the American revolutionaries in the late 18th century, but were likewise aimed at setting the stage for a new political and social order. In proposing a new narrative that incorporated key events in American history, the Bolshevik narrative allowed Americans to identify with the Russian Revolution without abandoning their identity as Americans.

Though the pull of Soviet Russia was no doubt alluring to many Americans, migration from the United States to Russia in the years immediately following WWI was equally, if not more a product of the many push factors of the time. The economic conditions in post-WWI America provided a major motivator in driving departure from the United States. During the Great War, the state's employment of soldiers, the increased production for the war effort, and the improved conditions granted to laborers during the wartime truce between labor and capital, led to a mass expansion of the American labor force that brought Americans who were not serving in the military into new occupations that had been previously held by those serving abroad. With the conclusion of the war came an abrupt end to the benefits of the wartime economy, leaving large numbers of Americans unemployed. This high unemployment, combined with the falling value of the dollar, put middle and working class American workers in

⁵ V.I. Lenin, "Letter to American Workers," August 20, 1918. Lenin Internet Archive. 8/20/1918. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).

the worst position they had seen in over 50 years.⁶ In such conditions, first generation Russians with no family network to rely on were likely to take advantage of their newly acquired right to return to Russia.

The economic conditions were only exacerbated by the post-WWI Red Scare that disproportionately targeted those who were attracted by the pull factors mentioned above. In this case the lack of information available on Russian events worked against the Bolsheviks and their leftist counterparts in the United States, as the rumors surrounding Lenin's status as a German agent allowed the anti-German sentiment of the WWI era to transfer relatively easily not only to Russian immigrants, but to all leftist groups.⁷ Such discrimination no doubt influenced the opportunities available to Russian immigrants, and increased the possibility that they would face violence from state and independent actors, thus making their perceived costs of migration to Russia much lower than they would have been had only economic factors been at work. In an ironic twist, the Red Scare of 1919-1920 also provided the Soviet government with an excellent propaganda opportunity by allowing the Soviet government to take in the hundreds of Americans who had been exiled following the Palmer Raids.⁸

⁶ Todd J. Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare: The Lusk Committee and New York's Crusade Against Radicalism, 1919-1923*. (Studies in American Popular History and Culture. New York: Routledge, 2003), 3-4.

⁷ Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare*, 6-9; The association between radical groups and Germany preceded the Red Scare. On August 17, 1917, for example, Arizona Senator Henry Ashurst stated that IWW stood for "Imperial Wilhelm's Warriors." [Melvin Dubofsky, *Big Bill Haywood*, (St. Martin's Press, 1987), 104-105.]

⁸ "Open Letter from Martens to Emma Goldman," *Soviet Russia*, 20 December, 1919, 14-15. The original letter was dated December 15, 1919.

Whatever the reasons driving Americans to migrate, the seemingly ever-changing allocation of immigration responsibilities taking place in Soviet Russia in 1921 made it nearly impossible for Americans to acquire accurate information about the state of Soviet immigration policy following the border closure of April 20 1921. This problem is well demonstrated by the case of the magazine *Soviet Russia*, which was one of the most reliable sources of information on Russia in the years after WWI. In the August 1921 issue of *Soviet Russia*, the editors published a letter written by Martens that still listed the People's Commissariat of Labor (Narkomtrud) as the office that was in charge of immigration, and instructed that "all those interested in any questions relating to the return of Russian workers from the United States, may communicate direct with the Committee on Re-emigration, People's Commissariat of Labor, Moscow." The letter noted that only organized groups of workers with their own tools would be admitted, it gave no specific timeframe for the reopening of the borders and stated that the problems of immigration could only be solved "after the Soviet Republic has established a mission in America."⁹ Of course, much of the information in this letter was outdated by the time of its publication, as the Council of Labor and Defense (STO) resolution of June 22, 1921 had officially allocated primary responsibility for immigration to the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (VSNKh) and recognized that STASR would serve as the representative of the Soviet government in the United States.¹⁰ The June 22 STO

⁹ Ludwig Martens, "Return of Workers to Russia," *Soviet Russia*, August 1921, 79.

¹⁰ RGAE f. 3249, op. 1, d. 2531, l. 44.

resolution was published in the following issue of *Soviet Russia*, but with no explanation of its relationship to Martens' letter, thus making it difficult to decipher which information was correct.¹¹ This type of poor editorial work no doubt helped to make information problems even worse, as in the case of *Soviet Russia*'s May 28, 1921 republication of a March 19, 1921 *Petrograd Pravda* article telling of the distribution of arriving immigrants more than a month after the borders had been closed.¹² As with the differing resolutions noted above, this article, subtitled "A Shortage of Workers" included no note explaining the borders had since been closed, and without reference to two letters from Soviet officials re-stating that the borders were closed, which appeared eight pages further in the same issue.¹³

Further augmenting the problems faced by those wishing to migrate were the misinformation campaigns that were carried out by those looking to cash in on immigration. On March 19, even before the borders were closed to immigrants, Ludwig Martens' former legal council, Charles Recht, warned the public of advertisements by people and organizations which falsely claimed to have received authority from the Soviet government to issue visas and organize transportation for groups of individuals who desired to move to Russia.¹⁴ Recht's statement seems to have had little effect, and

¹¹ "Industrial Immigration from America," *Soviet Russia*, September, 1921, 102.

¹² "Arrival of Foreign Workers," *Soviet Russia*, 28 May, 1921, 528. Republished from *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, 18 March, 1921.

¹³ "Fraudulent Advertising," and "For Travellers to Russia", *Soviet Russia*, 28 May, 1921, 536.

¹⁴ "Statement by Charles Recht," *Soviet Russia*, 26 March, 1921, 320.

the lack of information that followed the announcement of the Soviet border closure provided fertile ground for those wishing to make money through dishonesty. Among the worst perpetrators of false information were the steamship companies, which had profited from the migration boom that began in 1920.¹⁵ These companies were well aware of the financial losses that would come from an end to migration to Russia, and continued to transport ships full of migrants after the borders had been closed. Though Soviet officials' refusal to admit passengers seems to have done well to discourage some of these companies, they nonetheless continued to prey on migrants for many years to come.¹⁶

The frustration created by this lack of reliable information is well captured in the letters that Americans sent to Soviet offices following the border closure. In a September 14, 1921 letter to Narkomtrud's remigration committee in Moscow, for example, MIT-trained engineer Howard Rossiter Wade of Somerville, Massachusetts detailed the various fruitless paths he had taken in his quest to gain information about migrating to Russia. "In short," Wade wrote, "since January 1920 I have made every effort to get in touch with the proper authorities on this question, writing or receiving nearly 50 letters,

¹⁵ "Sees Mystery in Slav Exodus," *Detroit Free Press*, 4 April 1921

¹⁶ "For Travellers to Russia," *Soviet Russia*, May 28, 1921; "Warning," *Soviet Russia*, October 1921, 174; "Russian Frontiers Closed," *Soviet Russia*, November 1921, 232. The persistence of steamship companies efforts and the general confusion surrounding Soviet immigration policy seems to have even affected Soviet officials charged with enforcing said policy. On October 21, 1921, the Soviet Consul at Libau wrote to NKID noting that he had seen ads in American papers announcing White Star Line's opening of a trip from New York to Odessa and wished to know if this had been approved. [GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 24.]

and have directed both my studies and my work to this end, but now seem as far as ever from obtaining an answer on the matter from anyone.” “You will understand that it is very discouraging,” Wade explained, “to find that in spite of repeated statements in socialists papers that men of my training are in demand in Russia, and although I wish to settle permanently in Russia with my mother, I cannot even get in touch with the proper people.”¹⁷ Though Wade’s request was prompted by the August 1921 issue of *Soviet Russia*, and therefore not in line with the most recent developments in Soviet policy, Narkomtrud’s officials took note of him and, whether for genuine interest or for pity, made a request to VSNKh that he be granted passage to Soviet Russia.¹⁸

Despite the confusion created by the sparse and often contradictory messages coming out of Moscow, there were some messages that remained constant in this period. Nearly all sources maintained that the Soviet government had a vision of the future that included the participation of American migrants. This is clear in all of the letters from Martens published in *Soviet Russia*, and was further driven home by a letter that Lenin sent to the members of STASR on August 11 to thank them for their work and express the Soviet government’s great need for their help.¹⁹ A second clear message was the constant reminders that the borders were closed until further notice, and that no steamship company had been authorized to hand out permission to enter Russia. And the final

¹⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 103-105.

¹⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, l. 108. There is no indication in this file as to whether Wade and his mother ever managed to make it to Russia.

¹⁹ “Lenin to American Workers,” *Soviet Russia*, October 1921, 158; Galina Tarle, *Druz’ia Strany Sovetov*, (Moskva: Nauka, 1968), 80.

message, which Soviet leaders continued to emphasize for the duration of the NEP-era immigration policy, was that anyone considering migration to Soviet Russia should be aware of the hardships that they would face upon arrival. Even Lenin's letter of gratitude to the STASR mentioned above asked all interested in migration to "bear in mind the hardships existing in Russia, the difficulties in connection with the food supply problem, and other obstacles which would have to be faced."²⁰

This last aspect is an important factor in understanding migrants' expectations; though it seems clear that many Americans found conditions in Soviet Russia were not what they had expected, this was clearly not the result of any misinformation campaign on behalf of Lenin or any other high-level Soviet leaders. As noted in the previous chapter, Soviet officials' concern with false expectations led them to mandate that all migrants sign a pledge stating they were aware of the depravations of life in the colony's region, a fact that was backed up by the explicit order that all migrants bring with them enough food for at least one year. That so few people were discouraged by these warnings suggests both the degree to which immigrants either held a set of expectations with a promise that made enduring hardships well worth the sacrifice or held a set of expectations that were somehow independent of the information coming out of Soviet Russia. Whatever the case, the evidence suggests that in the months leading up to beginning of STASR and AIK's official recruiting, Americans' interest in migrating to Soviet Russia remained strong despite the setbacks that came from misinformation and uncertainty.

²⁰ "Lenin to American Workers," *Soviet Russia*, October 1921, 158.

Though AIK's recruiters arrived in the United States a few weeks before Abraham Heller's late-November arrival, STASR had a tremendous head start on the recruiting process. When Ludwig Martens and others founded STASR in May 1919, its explicit purpose had been to organize and vet skilled American workers, primarily Russian re-emigrants, who were willing to relocate to Russia to assist in the rehabilitation of the Soviet economy.²¹ In the months that followed, STASR recruited around 20,000 members and collected data on the distribution of former residents of the Russian Empire who were currently living in the United States.²² Though the conditions in Russia had prevented the migrants from actually departing, STASR remained active by shifting its efforts to educating workers to better prepare them for work when they finally could depart, and by the beginning of 1921 no fewer than eleven STASR offices had been formed across the US and even into Canada. Furthermore, some STASR offices had expanded their membership beyond the Russian-American groups that had originally been the focus of their efforts, and by August 1921, thirty-two of the forty-three skilled workers who applied to STASR's San Francisco branch were born in the United States.²³

²¹ "Asks Russians here to Help Bolsheviki," *New York Times*, 18 May, 1919.

²² RGAE 3429, o2, d431, pgs 22-33. Some estimates of STASR's early membership differ, but generally average about 20,000. In a 1923 report from STASR, for example, the number given is 16,000. (GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, ll.10-12)

²³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 1-44. Only 6 of the 43 applicants either listed the Russian Empire as their place of birth or gave other information that suggested a Russian origin. This was likely the case due to the small Russian population in San Francisco, which STASR estimated to only 5,000 in 1910. The only STASR branch from a city with fewer Russians was the Seattle branch, where only 3,000 Russian emigrants resided as of 1910. (RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, l. 40.)

This provided STASR with a degree of connection to its target population that AIK lacked.

In February 1921, the leadership of STASR's New York office issued a call to all independent offices in the United States to convene in New York to create a unified STASR with a Central Bureau elected by delegates from all offices.²⁴ The first congress of STASR, which was held from July 2-4, 1921, drew representatives from some of the major industrial areas of the US, including the state of New Jersey, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Gary, South Bend, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston, and even included delegates from an STASR office in Montreal.²⁵ The congress did well to demonstrate the continued enthusiasm shown by Russian-Americans; the San Francisco branch reported that they alone had formed 8 agricultural communes of primarily Baptist and Molokoan sectarians who wished to migrate whenever possible. The congress further helped to encourage the formation of additional STASR offices in Detroit, Baltimore, and Vancouver among others.²⁶

STASR's was not, however, immune to the problems of the time. STASR's leaders were often just as affected by the lack of information coming out of Moscow as those individuals they were organizing, and they remained largely uninformed as to their exact role in the migration process even after the decrees of June 1921 officially made them an integral part of the new immigration policy. The members of the New York

²⁴ Tarle, *Druz'ia*, 76-78.

²⁵ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll 43-36.

²⁶ Tarle, *Druz'ia*, 76-78.; GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll 43-36.

branch of STASR had received Moscow's endorsement for their February 1921 call for a conference to unify various STASR branches into a single entity, and Narkomtrud. contacted STASR's officials as early as April 1921 to ask about the conditions and attitudes of the Russian colony in America, but the months that followed brought no new information. On August 5, 1921, a month after STASR's first congress, STASR's members wrote to Narkomtrud to tell of the conference's success, but sent a list of ten questions that remained unanswered. The basic nature of the questions, which included "Which types (of immigrants) are desirable for Soviet Russia, and which ones should we keep out of our organization," as well as the fact that their appeal to information was not to VSNKh, but to Narkomtrud, make clear the degree to which Moscow failed to keep even its most important allies informed of its decision making processes, a tendency that would continue throughout VSNKh's tenure as the head office responsible for immigration.²⁷ Nevertheless, the communication between the two sides improved as the year continued, and promised to continue uninterrupted with Heller's arrival in the US in late November.

The organizational groundwork in place gave STASR and OII a tremendous head start over AIK in terms of recruiting, but did not mean that STASR could immediately begin dispatching groups when Heller arrived. Unlike AIK, which was a single office with a specific set of concentrated, pre-established sites, STASR was but one of many offices to which Soviet leaders had allocated immigration responsibilities, leaving Heller

²⁷ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 36-43. Lenin only heard of the STASR conference of July 2-4 on August 2 when he received a telegram from a Soviet office in Riga informing him that the meeting had been reported in the New York newspaper *Russkii Golos*. [V.I Lenin to L.K Martens, August 2, 1921. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).]

and his colleagues highly dependent on the coordination and cooperation of a variety of Soviet offices, many of which were staffed with individuals who themselves seemed uncertain of their rights and responsibilities.²⁸ The Office of Industrial Immigration (OII) under VSNKh, for example, was responsible for putting together a list of all industrial enterprises that were available for migrant groups to take over, and STASR could not make informed decisions as to what types of workers to send without this information. Furthermore, even when OII did provide these lists, they rarely included detailed information about the sites it selected, which meant that the groups could not purchase the tools and machinery required to establish a productive enterprise until someone had carried out a more thorough investigation of the site. This lack of information required that American groups organized by STASR send scouts (*khodoki*) ahead of the group to inspect a given site and provide a list of materials for the group to buy before leaving the US.

In his first month of work in the US, Heller saw significant success in STASR's work. On December 9, two weeks after his arrival, Heller wrote to Martens to tell of his good luck, and the anxiousness with which many of their friends awaited his instructions. He also reported that STASR had grown tremendously in the last few months, and currently had 65 offices with approximately 5,000 members.²⁹ On December 20, 1921 Heller sent a report to Martens outlining his first month's work in the

²⁸ As noted in the previous chapter, members of VSNKh, Narkomtrud, NKID and other state offices continued to debate the allocation of powers over immigration until then end of 1921.

²⁹ GARF f 364, o1, d2, ll. 146-147.

United States, noting that three days earlier, two scouts had departed for London from New York en route to Moscow, and that several others would soon follow suit.³⁰ Heller also noted that STASR had already received requests from representatives of six groups- four from New York, one from Chicago and one from Montreal- that wished to move to Russia. “People are coming in masses to [the Society’s New York office] with questions on the possibility of resettling in Russia,” Heller wrote, confirming Martens’ statements from the previous months, noting that “it seems that a wide Russian mass desires to go to Russia.”³¹ On the same day, the Central Bureau of STASR wrote to VSNKh to inform them that STASR had organized the first agricultural artel in New York, and that it would be sending its own scouts soon. STASR reported that the commune consisted of 51 workers, most of whom had family in Russia, and had accumulated a total of \$6,000 in capital that could grow to as much as \$10,000 before the group departed.³²

These early letters reveal interesting trends in STASR’s recruiting that were not necessarily in line with the vision that Martens had put forth earlier in 1921. The first of these is the significance of agricultural groups in STASR’s work; two of the six groups mentioned by Heller were agricultural groups, as was the group that had sent their

³⁰ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 150. The scouts- Seleznev and Kaiutenko- were representatives of what would become the California Commune and Molokan groups located in Southern California, Arizona and Northern Mexico. According to Heller’s letter, they were stopping in London to meet with Soviet diplomat Leonid Krasin.

³¹ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 150.

³² GARF f. 382, op. 1, d. 625, l. 138.

khodiki on December 17.³³ Even less predictable was the fact that these groups were primarily comprised of religious sectarians of Russian origin- Molokans and Dukhobors- who had been driven out of Russia in the last decades of the Tsarist regime, and now wished to return. Though the immigration plan that Soviet leaders had adopted earlier in the year had not precluded agricultural groups, Martens' vision had always been one that placed primary importance on obtaining the technical specialists required in Soviet industry. From the very beginning of Heller's arrival in New York, however, a large portion of those groups that STASR sent abroad were members of agricultural groups, a trend that only grew stronger as the year progressed. And though the enthusiasm that Soviet leaders showed for working with religious sectarians may seem unusual for a regime so committed to an anti-religious agenda, the Bolsheviks' treatment of the Molokans and Dukhobors serves as evidence of the primacy of material factors over ideological issues in the NEP-era.

Whatever the trends, Heller's arrival in the United States marked a significant (if short lived) step in the development of Soviet immigration policy. As the official representative of VSNKh in the United States, Heller served to fill an authority gap that had existed since Martens' exile in January 1921. This, along with Lenin's public endorsement of STASR's work, helped to bolster the Society's reputation and encourage the formation of affiliate STASR offices across the United States. Though the allocation of immigration authority in Russia remained uncertain, STASR's stable position allowed news sources to finally catch up on developments regarding immigration to Russia, and

³³ One of the two scouts, Seleznev, was a sectarian, but the second, Kaiutenko, was not. [GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 281.]

by February, *Soviet Russia* was no longer printing outdated information.³⁴ Thus, despite its limited scope of action, STASR quickly reaped the benefits that came from being the first reliable source of information on immigration in the US since the US government had expelled the Martens Bureau nearly a year earlier.

AIK's recruiters, on the other hand, had a completely different set of problems. Unlike Heller, who could begin vetting individuals and groups almost immediately after arriving in the US, Calvert and Tom Baker arrived in New York without so much as an office to which they could direct people. Given STASR's strong ties within Russian-American communities, and the large publicity network on which it could draw, AIK also had a lot of work to do to make its recruitment known to the American public. The challenge was one that other members of AIK knew Calvert was suited for, but successfully recruiting an effective membership for the colony required that Calvert keep his passions in check. On November 6, 1921, as Calvert sailed to New York, and Heller spent a few final days in Riga before following suit, Rutgers penned a letter to Calvert in which the former gave instructions to the latter on how to go about his duties.³⁵ Much of the letter addressed basic issues concerning recruiting, but parts of the three-page letter reveal Rutgers' concern with the recruiting conditions in general, and with Calvert's tendencies in particular. Echoing concerns expressed by Lenin in his deliberations over support for the project in the preceding weeks, Rutgers directly instructed Calvert to

³⁴ "Industrial Immigration to Soviet Russia," *Soviet Russia*, 1 February, 1922, 67.

³⁵ S. Rutgers to Herbert Calvert, November 6, 1921. From Library of Congress, *The Meeting of Frontiers*. <http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfsplash.html>. (Accessed October 26, 1921).

“keep out the propaganda element” in AIK’s recruitment both in his own actions, and in those of the colony’s friends.³⁶ “Greet Tom [Barker] and other friends you may meet in America and be careful not to speak so much and not to make promises or to picture too bright,” Rutgers suggested, reemphasizing earlier comments about the importance of recruiting only “select” applicants for the colony. “The first groups,” he warned Calvert, “will have plenty of hardship.” Rutgers thus expressed his awareness that recruiting was not simply a matter of attracting interested parties, but required that Calvert manage migrants’ expectations.

Rutgers’ letter also made clear that the animosity between the Kuzbas group and those who had opposed it had not ended with the STO resolution of October 25, and that AIK’s recruiters faced potential problems in their relationship with STASR. Rutgers no doubt understood that the selection of Ludwig Martens’ close ally, Abraham Heller, as OII’s representative in the United States meant that the earlier animosity could continue to manifest itself in the streets of New York, as both STASR and AIK competed for the most well-qualified immigrants. Rutgers thus asked Calvert to “please try to avoid conflicts,” ensuring him that “Heller promised me to do the same and there is room for both [offices].” Overall, Rutgers’ letter stands as testament to the importance of personality in the outcome of NEP-era Soviet immigration policy, a factor that ultimately came to be one of the most important elements in the policy’s failure.

³⁶ In an October 12, 1921 letter to Molotov, Lenin described Calvert as “highly garrulous,” and expressed his concern that “enthusiastic people, in an atmosphere of unemployment, may recruit a group of ‘adventurous spirits’ who will end up in squabbles.” [V.I. Lenin to V. Molotov, October 12, 1921, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).]

Whatever the case, Calvert and Barker had good reason to remain optimistic about their prospects. In particular, the fact that the colony's most prominent figures were well known "Wobblies" gave them reason to expect that AIK would draw interest from members of the IWW.³⁷ Americans' interest in Big Bill Haywood and his life in Russia also made him the subject of media attention, and Haywood did not hesitate to tell reporters of his involvement in the Kuzbas group several months before the contract had been signed. Reporter Lewis Gannett, who had spent five weeks travelling through Soviet Russia as correspondent for *The Nation* in May and early June 1921, addressed the plans for AIK in both an August 17, 1921 issue of *The Nation* and the September issue of *The Liberator*, as did several other authors in late-summer and early-fall of 1921.³⁸ Though the information that Gannett and others could provide was highly limited by the fact that the contract for AIK was not concluded until the last days of October 1921, the letters written to Haywood and other Americans in Russia in the days following the publication of Gannett's articles do well to demonstrate the interest that AIK sparked within the

³⁷ "Wobbly" was a common nickname for members of the IWW which was used by both IWW members and non-members alike.

³⁸ Lewis Gannett, "Americans in Russia," *The Nation*, 17 August, 1921, 167-168; Lewis Gannett, "Bill Haywood in Moscow," *The Liberator*, September, 1921, 11-12. One letter to Haywood dated October 16, 1921 asking more about Kuzbas states that the author had recently heard about the "plan to rebuild Siberia with Wobblies" in an article by Tom Barker published in a periodical entitled "Rank and File." [Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI) f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, l. 71.]

American working class, as well as the motivations that drove Americans to move to Soviet Russia.³⁹

The recruiters also arrived with a plan of action for overcoming the challenges they faced. According to the instructions the Kuzbas group issued to Calvert and his co-recruiter Tom Barker prior to Calvert's departure from Russia, the first task with which they had been charged was the establishment of an organizational board for the New York office. The board was to be drawn from a list of reliable contacts that had AIK's leadership and Soviet officials had agreed upon in Moscow. The committee, which the group expected would take no longer than two or three weeks to form, was to ensure that those who departed for the colony "possess[ed] the highest qualification and morality" by vetting all applicants, and to handle purchases of goods that the migrants were to take with them. The first part of this order included not only evaluating the skill set of a candidate, but of acquiring a medical statement and requiring that all immigrants read and sign the colony's statutes and provisions, as well as the four theses of Lenin, which outlined the hardships they would face in Russia. As it carried out these orders, the committee was required to send reports on its work to its members abroad, as well as Rutgers' personal representative in New York, who was given the right to all information on the colony's activities.⁴⁰

³⁹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299. These letters are directly addressed later in the chapter.

⁴⁰ "Instructions to Calvert and Barker," Millie and Herbert S. Calvert Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 1, Folder 18.

Though AIK's leaders had expected to face problems in their recruitment work, it seems fairly clear that they did not anticipate the significant impact that developments in the US would have on their efforts. The IWW General Board, which both Calvert and Barker expected would provide support for their recruitment, refused to lend its official support to the project due to the conflicts between the IWW and the Russian Communist Party that had developed following the Comintern and Profintern meetings of summer 1921.⁴¹ The Board also wished to distance itself from Haywood who, though still popular with a portion of IWW members, had become somewhat notorious due to his failure to reimburse those who had posted his bond prior to his flight to Russia in April 1921.⁴² The General Board not only deprived Calvert and Barker of an important political endorsement, its membership refused to allow AIK to use its publications as a

⁴¹ "Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 4. This folder holds the second of twelve chapters in an unpublished history of AIK put together by Herbert Calvert and his wife Millie in the years prior to their death in the late 1970s. The first chapter of this history, which is cited in the first chapter of this dissertation, is the only chapter completed by Herbert himself prior to his death in 1977, and the remaining chapters were completed by Millie. Though Millie was not involved in the establishment of Kuzbas in Moscow, she was an integral figure in the colony's American office, taking on a variety of daily tasks that were required to keep the office operational. Millie's perspective, like her husband's, was thus informed by her personal experience working for AIK, as well as the impressive source base on colony that the Calverts collected with the help of fellow Kuzbas members Nemmy Sparks and Ruth Kennell Epperson.

⁴² Haywood fled the United States for Russia unannounced at the beginning of April 1921. At the time he was facing two sets of charges as a result of the Espionage Act and Palmer Raids, and would have likely spent the remainder of his life in prison if he had remained in the United States. Haywood maintained that the Soviet agents who had helped facilitate his escape had agreed to compensate those he owed, but his debts remained unpaid, and in October 1922, a Federal Judge ruled the bonds forfeit [Dubofsky, *Big Bill Haywood*, 110-139; "'Big Bill' Haywood's Bond Forfeited," *New York Times*, 11 October, 1922.]

medium for disseminating information on the colony, thus denying them an important network for making AIK known to those who would most likely be interested.⁴³

Their hopes of support from the IWW dashed, Calvert and Barker turned their efforts to James Cannon, an influential member of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) who Rutgers had suggested might be an ally in their cause. A former Wobbly, Cannon had been trained by Bill Haywood in the years before WWI, but shifted his party affiliation following the Bolshevik Revolution. Neither Cannon's affiliation with Haywood, nor Lenin's endorsement of AIK worked in convincing Cannon, and both he and Charles Ruthenberg (with whom Cannon shared an office) refused to endorse the project for fear that it would attract unwanted police harassment, and out of concern that the failure of the Kuzbas project would reflect negatively on the newly formed Workers' Party of America (WPA).⁴⁴ Though Calvert did finally manage to convince Cannon, along with two other CPUSA members, Matti Mularti and Edgar Owens, to join him, Barker and Rutgers' representative Julius Neiman at the first meeting of prospective members of AIK's American Organizing Committee on January 1, 1922, Cannon remained opposed to joining the committee, and only Mularti agreed to begin working for the colony right away.⁴⁵ Making matters worse, Cannon informed the group that the CPUSA press would not accept Kuzbas publicity. In the end, the meeting closed

⁴³ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁴⁴ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 4. The Workers' Party of America, which was formed at the end of 1921, was the legal branch of the CPUSA.

⁴⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

without an organizing committee, and with Calvert and Barker two months into a task that was supposed to take no longer than two to three weeks.⁴⁶

Having been denied support from the two most significant radical organizations in the United States, and shortly thereafter finding out that STASR also refused to support their work, Calvert and Barker took it upon themselves to spread the word about Kuzbas directly. As noted earlier, Haywood's affiliation with the group had helped publicize AIK, and other publications such as *Soviet Russia*, printed information about the Kuzbas contract after it had been signed, but the limited information on the colony that the media had provided did little to address the colony's details.⁴⁷ Short on money, the recruiters engaged in a grass-roots campaign, speaking to groups about the opportunities of AIK. More important, however, Calvert and Barker decided to produce their own pamphlet, and in February they began selling *Kuzbas: An Opportunity for Engineers and Workers: Prospectus*, a 32 page outline of AIK, for ten cents a copy.⁴⁸ Starved for reliable information on the possibility of migrating to Russia, Americans purchased about 10,000 copies of the prospectus in the three months that followed its publication.⁴⁹

In the days leading up to the publication of the prospectus, things had moved quite slowly for the organizers; AIK had no official office until the first week of

⁴⁶ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 4.

⁴⁷ "American Workers Get Concessions," *Soviet Russia*, December 1921.

⁴⁸ *Kuzbas: An Opportunity for Engineers and Workers: Prospectus*, (New York, February 1922).

⁴⁹ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.

February, when it sub-let a 12' x 18' room from STASR, and only three other individuals, Mularti, Pascal Cosgrove and Herbert Calvert's wife, Millie Calvert, shared the organizing work for the colony.⁵⁰ Though the slow start to their work had nearly convinced Rutgers to give up on the two recruiters, by the end of February 1922 Calvert and Rutgers had done an impressive job of overcoming the tremendous adversity that they faced upon arrival in New York.⁵¹ The interest that the prospectus sparked, which was given further publicity after the publication of an interview with Calvert in the February 12 edition of the *New York World*, finally attracted not only a mass of inquiries from those considering joining the colony, but also enough enthusiasm to attract a group of qualified individuals to form an official American Organization Committee. At a meeting of March 2, 1923, AIK's members agreed to a final makeup of the committee and Rutgers' assistant forwarded the list of proposed members to Rutgers.⁵² The committee's membership consisted of three Wobblies- Barker, Calvert and Claire Killen, three members of the CPUSA- Pascal Cosgrove, Matti Mularti, and Edgar Owens, and three individuals identified by Calvert as "liberals"- ACLU President Roger Baldwin, Tom Reese and Mont Schuyler, and therefore avoided the political concentration that Lenin had feared. Five days after the first meeting, AIK's committee concluded that they

⁵⁰ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

⁵¹ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 4. On February 25, 1922, Rutgers sent a letter to an unidentified party in which he wrote "All this proves that Calvert and Barker, under present conditions, are not the proper persons to get a strong organization committee together."

⁵² RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

had enough applications on file to justify sending the first group to the colony, and a month later, on April 8, 1922, the first group of about 60 workers and their families departed a New York port for their new lives in Soviet Russia.⁵³

In both the contemporary reports published by AIK's organizing committee and the later account of Kuzbas put together by the Calverts, the publication of the Kuzbas prospectus stands out as a marker of a tremendous change in the colony's fortunes. This was clearly the case, as it offered Americans not only a means for migrating to Russia, but with a wealth of specific information on the various enterprises included in the contract AIK had signed with the Soviet government, the types of workers that the colony needed, and the local economy of the various sites included in the colony. No doubt well aware of the negative connotations Americans attached to Siberia, Calvert also specifically addressed the weather, explaining that the "Kuznetsk Basin is just on the opposite side of the globe from Winnipeg, Canada, in the same latitude, and has generally the same climactic conditions."⁵⁴ In all these aspects, the Kuzbas prospectus offered a detailed set of information about the living conditions and type of work that Soviet Russia had to offer to American migrants that STASR could not offer in early 1921. Clearly aware of this, Calvert mentioned in one of the prospectus' early paragraphs that "most of the details of the enterprise were worked out in Russia, so that everything as

⁵³ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

⁵⁴ *Kuzbas Prospectus*, 20. In a letter of April 8, 1922, a member of STASR wrote to VSNKh in Moscow that Americans' idea of Siberia was indeed affecting AIK's work. "There are quite a few comrades who are willing to go to Kuzbas," Wilga wrote, "but a great majority of miners object to going to Siberia as they are under the impression that it is too cold for them and also that Siberia used to be a favorable resort for exiles during the Czar's regime." (GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 177)

stated in the following pages authoritative.”⁵⁵ This gave AIK an advantage over the more well established STASR, the latter of which awaited the arrival of such information from Soviet offices long after the Kuzbas prospectus was published.

The Kuzbas prospectus did more than just explain the technical aspects of the colony; it also emphasized the importance of the colony in both economic and historical/political terms. Regarding the former, Calvert painted a fairly accurate picture of the value of the Kuzbas enterprises to the Soviet economy, as well as the large output that could be harnessed from the colony’s mines when placed under efficient organization. Calvert’s account of the historical and political importance of the colony, however, bordered on grandiose, including descriptions of the colony as “a milestone along the road of human progress.” In Calvert’s words, AIK was “an opportunity so large and amazing that it takes the breath away. It is as if one were being asked to be the founder of a New America.”⁵⁶ Yet such language, which clearly shows the proclivity toward exaggeration that both Rutgers and Lenin feared from Calvert, is only a small part of what is otherwise a fairly balanced portrayal of the risks and opportunities that migrants could expect in the colony, and in no way could be described as ‘utopian.’⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Kuzbas Prospectus*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Kuzbas Prospectus*, 2.

⁵⁷ Reflecting on the criticism of the prospectus, Millie Calvert later wrote that “at the time the prospectus was written its statements about possible growth seemed visionary to some people, and it was criticized for not putting more emphasis on the hardships to be encountered in Kemerovo, but looking back, the prospects of Kemerovo seem understated.” [“Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2,” Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 4.]

If Calvert did well to keep his own passions in check while writing the prospectus, the same could not be said for many of the individuals whose imaginations were piqued by the story of Americans setting out to the wilderness of the Siberian frontier. In a letter to Martens from March 3, Heller noted that he had the sense that the Kuzbas recruiters were promising too much, and that even Julius Neiman, Rutgers' personal representative in New York, was referring to the colony as a "New El Dorado."⁵⁸ Perhaps the most notable proliferator of such idealized language was journalist Michael Gold, whose article "Wanted, Pioneers for Siberia" in the March 1922 issue of *The Liberator* is everything that Rutgers had warned Calvert to work against.⁵⁹ Gold's article, which made up the first four pages of the issue, shared many of the themes from Calvert's prospectus and included information on the colony, but Gold's claims were far more grandiose than those of Calvert. As evidenced by the title, Gold's article presents Kuzbas as a new frontier, with American migrants as the heroes in a historical narrative of progress that was familiar to Americans of the time. After positing the significance of 'pioneers' in developing language and founding Athens and Rome Gold explained that "pioneers ventured into the dangerous wilderness of America and planted a nation here; pioneers, divine fools and gamblers, made the Russian Revolution....[and].... have always led in the terrible, tragic, great and passionately interesting march of Humanity." As represented in Gold's article, Kuzbas was the rare

⁵⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1 d. 2, l. 121.

⁵⁹ Michael Gold, "Wanted, Pioneers for Siberia," *The Liberator*, 19 March, 1922, 1-4.; S. Rutgers to Herbert Calvert, November 6, 1921. From Library of Congress, *The Meeting of Frontiers*. <http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfsplash.html>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).

opportunity for Americans to once again engage in a meaningful human opportunity that was not available elsewhere. He thus concluded his article with a call to action, noting that AIK's recruiters were looking for:

....6,000 American workers to build up the industries of Siberia in a free environment, to sustain the Russian Revolution, and to show the world what free workmen can do when their genius is unhampered by the profit system, and they are their own masters, and the sole proprietors of the products of their labor. Wanted, 6,000 revolutionary forefathers for Siberia! This is the most glorious want ad that has yet been written in the pages of that yellow daily newspaper called History.⁶⁰

Gold's article does well to demonstrate one of the basic differences between the recruiting strategies practiced by AIK and STASR. The latter organization, operating under a plan detailed by Soviet officials in Moscow, was simply aimed at channeling migrants with a pre-existing set of motivations toward the task of rebuilding the Soviet economy. AIK, on the other hand, could not count on the same types of established expectations; Calvert and Barker had neither the established connection to the Russian émigré population nor the ties to the Communist Party that could make it attractive to the majority of those who wished to return to Russia. Furthermore, the distance of the colony from European Russia and its position in Siberia made the colony foreign to many of those Russians who were driven to migrate by a desire to return to their homes. In the course of AIK's early establishment in the United States, the colony was able to set itself apart from STASR through its possession of a concrete plan, and an autonomy of action in dispatching groups that was not available in STASR, but ultimately, the colony's most significant difference was its direct approach to motivating Americans to migrate, which

⁶⁰Michael Gold, "Wanted: Pioneers for Siberia!," *The Liberator*, March 19, 1921, 1-4.

it accomplished through an embellishment of themes such as a narrative of human progress through revolution and the appropriation of words and symbols such as ‘pioneer’ ‘colony’ and ‘frontier’ that made the unfamiliar in Russia familiar. Though some descriptions of the colony, such as ‘a new El Dorado,’ are clearly hyperbole, the later accusations of Kuzbas leaders’ promises of utopia are themselves largely unfounded. That is, of course, unless one maintains that the uniqueness of America in human history is such that any claims to either replicate or transcend America’s opportunities elsewhere is tantamount to the making impossible claims about building utopias.

Whatever the claims of utopian promises, the majority of those who pursued migration to Russia in the first months of the NEP-era immigration strategy did not express their desires in utopian terms. That is not to say that Americans did not have extraordinary expectations for Soviet space; the mystery and promise of Soviet space provided ample room for those who chose to allow their imaginations to run wild, as proven by the multiple letters from inventors who claimed to have invented fantastic devices that could only be completed in Russia.⁶¹ Yet these types of expectations are only a small segment of the motivations that Americans expressed in this period. Most Americans had far more realistic goals that pushed them toward migration to Russia.

As noted above, a significant portion Americans were driven to migrate by their desire to return to their previous homes. Such was the motivation behind the majority of those groups organized by STASR, including the religious sectarians who made up a significant portion of early applicants for migration to Russia. This dedication to Soviet

⁶¹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, l. 167-178.

space as home could operate as a lone motivation, or could be supplemented by an ideological dedication to the political goals espoused by Soviet leaders. Thirty five year-old Alaskan miner Daniel Kitach, for example, wrote to Charles Recht in August 1921 to ask about the potential of returning to his native Ukraine to work in the mines of the Donetsk region. Though his indication of the Donets Basin as a desired point of migration suggests the importance of his personal ties to his childhood home, his stated willingness “to give [his] last drop of blood for the success of the first workers republic in the world” demonstrates that political factors were much more important in driving Kitach to migrate to Soviet space than his desire to return to the land of his birth.⁶²

A similar combination of ideological dedication and more tangible pull factors also were at work in motivating many who became involved in Kuzbas. On September 26, 1921, electrical worker and future Kuzbas ‘pioneer’ Claire Killen wrote to his former Detroit co-worker Jerome Lipman, who was then serving as Haywood’s secretary in Moscow, to get more information on the possibilities of migration and express his interest in coming to Russia.⁶³ In his letter, Killen noted that he had learned of the Kuzbas colony from both Gannett’s article in the September 1921 issue of *The Liberator* and an interview with Haywood that had been published in a recent issue of the *New York Call*, and found the possibilities of the colony to be quite alluring. “That is great stuff,” he wrote of colonization plans. “That’s what we want,” Killen explained, “real job action.

⁶² GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 126-127.

⁶³ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 61-62; Lewis Gannett, “Bill Haywood in Moscow,” *The Liberator*, September, 1921 11-12. Though there is no mention of anyone named Jerome Lipman in Gannett’s article, Killen makes it clear that the man he calls Lipman is actually the individual that Gannett identified only as “Lifshitz” in his article.

‘Organization at the point of production’ never was so appropriate as when applied to a condition of this kind. We want to practice what we have been preaching for years [to build] a system that has never been practiced before.”⁶⁴ Though his affiliation with the IWW made him particularly interested in AIK, Killen’s desire to migrate to Russia was not simply ideological; his wife Sonia had been born in Ukraine, and the couple was excited about the prospects of giving their 14 month child the educational opportunities that the Soviet government had promised its citizens.⁶⁵

Killen and the most of the other authors of letters sent about the same time, do well to show that the promise that Americans saw in Soviet Russia did not preclude at least a basic awareness of the widespread hardship that they would face in Russia. Killen’s remark on this subject are limited to general comments on his awareness of the responsibility he would face, and the fact that he knew the 4 hour day was long off, but other authors made more specific references to the famine and illness that were common in post-War Eastern Europe. One such author, T. Korzeniowski, explained that he had gotten word from several of his former fellow workers who had returned to Poland that conditions there were “very rotten,” and that both the wife and child of one of his friends had died from illness shortly after arriving there.⁶⁶ Despite Korzeniowski’s seeming awareness that similar conditions prevailed in Russia at the time, he nevertheless clearly felt that the promise of Russia was preferable to his current unemployment in America,

⁶⁴ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 61-62

⁶⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 61-62.

⁶⁶ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, l. 81.

and thus asked Haywood to provide any information he may have on ways to migrate to Russia.⁶⁷

This idea that Russia offered employment opportunities not available in the US was also a factor that helped attract Americans' attention to Soviet space. For some, this was a simple matter of finding a means of subsistence, and several authors of inquiries into migration provide little more than a statement of desire to migrate and a list of skills and past employment.⁶⁸ For others, it was a matter of taking advantage of opportunities to employ their skills in more meaningful ways than were available in the United States.

The imagery produced by Kuzbas recruiters and other AIK-enthusiasts such as Michael Gold did well to attract Americans' interest, and Millie Calvert noted that many visitors to AIK's office were not radicals, but individuals who "identified Russia's revolution with our own American revolution."⁶⁹ AIK's organizers' presentation of Soviet space as a site upon which they could harness the possibilities of the Russian Revolution to fulfill the promises of the American West drew to the colony one of its most prolific writers, Ruth Epperson Kennell who described herself and her husband as being "of pioneer parentage." As Kennell wrote nearly fifty years after her arrival in

⁶⁷ Korzeniowski had lived in Chicago until the spring of 1921, at which time he set out for Russia via Canada, but "got stuck" in Montreal, where he remained as of October, 1921. Korzeniowski does not address the reasons for stopping his trip in Montreal, but it is possible that he was in the process of travelling at the time that the Soviet government closed its borders to immigration. In his letter he makes reference to both Russia and Poland as "over there," thus suggesting that he expected information on Poland to apply also to Russia. [RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, l. 81.]

⁶⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, l. 116.

⁶⁹ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 4.

Soviet Russia, advertisements like the one above presented “a dramatic account of what the Kuzbas Colony offered to Americans with the pioneer spirit of their forefathers.”⁷⁰

The majority of migrants’ accounts, however, present Kuzbas’ propaganda as but one of several overlapping factors that drove them to relocate to Russia. AIK member Nemmy Sparks, for example, explained his decision as primarily driven by his excitement with the new possibilities offered by Soviet Russia, but also noted that wages and conditions had slid back to “miserable” since he and his fellow ship workers had lost a strike the preceding year. For Sparks and his close friend Harry Kweit, the possibilities offered by AIK were not simply revolutionary, but practical; both men were skilled chemists who had been unable to find work in their specialization since the end of WWI, and AIK offered them the chance to return to their old profession. Overall, Sparks concluded, it was “the pull of the amazing Russian Revolution- the new world that was being created,” that drove them to enlist in the project.⁷¹ Even Kennell, whose account directly cites Gold’s article as an important document in inspiring her and her husband to join the colony, had motivations that predated the March 1922 publication; an August 1921 list of applicants to the San Francisco Branch of STASR includes her family as members who were prepared to leave for Russia at any time. Thus, despite the notable influence that Kuzbas’ propaganda had on the colony’s recruiting efforts, the imagery

⁷⁰ Ruth Epperson Kennell, “Lenin Called Us: A Kuzbas Chronicle,” *New World Review*, 39 no. 4 (Fall 1971): 86.

⁷¹ Nemmy Sparks, “Lenin and the Americans at Kuzbas,” *New World Review*, 39 no. 4 (Fall 1971): 74.

and embellished tales of the colony's promise existed alongside other overlapping push and pull factors, most of which were far more tangible.

In looking at the beginning of STASR and AIK's recruiting operations in late 1921/early 1922, one appreciates the degree to which Martens' anticipation of American interest in migration was well founded. The period leading up to the dispatch of American colonies that began in the spring of 1922 reveals a great deal about the nature of American expectations for Soviet space. First, the majority of those Americans who sought to migrate were motivated not by visions of a Soviet 'promised land,' but by very realistic factors such as a desire to return home or the search for meaningful employment. Though the evidence does suggest that recruiters and other sympathetic individuals in the United States may have presented an idealized vision of the promise of Soviet Russia, it would have been nearly impossible for anyone in America to migrate to Russia in the years of the NEP without getting a healthy dose of information on the hardships of life in Russia. Nevertheless, migrants found reason to endure depravation to achieve the promise that they saw in the new Soviet state. Such a position demonstrates that an understanding of migration to Russia in the 1920s as a function of what Richard Pipes dubbed "utopian dreams," is incorrect, and allows us to see the true reasons that the Soviet immigration strategy of the NEP-era ultimately failed. It is to these problems that we turn in the next chapter.⁷²

⁷² Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Visions and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIRST AMERICAN MIGRANTS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF IMMIGRATION INSTITUTIONS ON SOVIET TERRITORY

In the first months of 1922, Soviet representatives on both sides of the Atlantic began implementing a basic immigration strategy that, by all indications, had the potential to deliver the material and human resources that Soviet Russia so desperately needed. The basic terms that the state offered migrants did well to draw the interest of a large group of Americans for the variety of reasons addressed in the previous chapter, and the recruitment offices in the US began pooling notable amounts of capital for the purchase of goods that communes would need to begin their new life in Soviet society. By the middle of 1923, however, the immigration policy had proven to be a disaster. Many of the central figures in establishing the policy in 1921 had divorced (or been divorced by) their immigration projects, and the once broad set of actors from which recruiters had originally drawn their migrants had been narrowed to a small group of those whose attraction to Soviet space was not likely to make them the agents of revolutionary transformation that Soviet leaders had expected.

The focus of this chapter is the utter chaos that came to engulf migration from America to Soviet Russia in these first years of the NEP-era policy. Like so many policies in these years, the Soviet approach to immigration, however well founded, fell victim to the disjunction among and within Soviet state offices. As the first communes prepared to leave in the spring of 1922, the lack of a clearly outlined policy that had already been notable in late 1921 took on added dimensions as the actors involved in migration work set their plan in motion, and those who opposed migration attempted to

put an end to it. As a result, nearly all agencies involved in implementing immigration policy failed to provide what they had promised to their migrating clients. Though Soviet officials attempted to reconcile this problem by decisively shifting management of immigration from Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh) to the Council of Labor and Defense (STO) in the fall of 1922, the types of problems that emerged during the existence of OII continued to affect the foreign communes until Soviet leaders abandoned the policy in 1927.

The story of Soviet state offices and the attempt to implement the policy that had been adopted in 1921 builds on the work of scholars such as Yurii Goland, to provide insight into the nature of the NEP-era Soviet state and the viability of NEP-era institutions as an alternative to the centralized system that came to characterize Stalinism.¹ As is clear here, the early breakdown of the Soviet immigration system was not a result of an inherently flawed policy; though the policy's advocates overestimated the numbers of people (and thus dollars) that would relocate to Soviet space under the terms of the new policy, Americans' initial interest in migration provided more than enough labor and capital to carry out the migration projects that had been formulated in 1921. The soundness of the policy's underlying principles, however, were no match for the chaos that was the Soviet state of the early 1920s. In this political climate, the new state struggled, and often failed, to delineate rights and responsibilities, often leaving Soviet officials unsure as to which office was meant to carry out a particular function. In other cases, state officials simply disregarded resolutions of the higher organs of the

¹ Yurii Goland, "A Missed Opportunity: On Attracting Foreign Capital," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55:2 (March 2003): 179-216.

Soviet government when they conflicted with their own agenda. All this had the effect of making the fledgling Soviet body politic even more likely to trip over its own feet. Thus, the case of NEP-era immigration policy does well to demonstrate that, however one feels about the soundness of NEP-era Soviet policy, there is little reason to believe that the Soviet state apparatus of the 1920s had the organizational capacity to effectively carry that policy out. This ineffective leadership provides one perspective on how and why the more centralizing tendencies of Stalin may have appealed to many exasperated Soviet officials by the late 1920s, a topic to which I shall return in a later chapter.

Abraham Heller and other officials of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (STASR) began reporting the success they had seen in their recruitment almost immediately after Heller's arrival to oversee migrant groups in late November 1921. How those in Moscow received this information was not, however, immediately clear in the US, as neither Ludwig Martens nor other members of VSNKh's Office of Industrial Immigration (OII) reliably responded to the many telegrams that STASR sent to them. This lack of communication was a notable feature from the beginning, but became much more detrimental to STASR as time went on. As noted in the previous chapter, one of the most important roles that STASR provided for those wishing to migrate was filling the information gap that had left North Americans unaware of when and how they would be allowed to migrate following the April 1921 border closure. Though Heller had arrived with specific information about the new immigration policy and how to go about forming groups, this could only take him so far before he required information from Moscow about what types of groups Soviet officials wanted to migrate and what types of

enterprises were available. This meant that Moscow's silence had the power to quickly make Heller's presence in the US nearly meaningless in terms of migration.

On January 20, 1922, Heller wrote to Martens to report on his recent work, but noted that he was still awaiting an answer to a letter he sent a month earlier.² A few days later, on February 1, the Central Bureau of STASR sent a short description of its members' work to OII, noting that they had organized five communes and a number of skilled groups of workers, but that their work had been seriously hampered by a lack of information coming out of Russia.³ As STASR's members worked throughout the winter of 1922 it soon became clear that their success in attracting Americans' interest was actually a liability so long as the Society lacked the necessary information and authority necessary to begin dispatching groups. Particularly problematic was the fact that many Americans who arrived at STASR's offices in these months had sold most of their possessions to raise the money required to buy their membership in a commune. Thus many Americans who had so anxiously arrived in New York to set out for Russia were left stranded in New York with no accommodations or employment.⁴ As time passed, these migrants became less patient with STASR's inability to facilitate their migration,

² Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 130,150.

³ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 141-142; GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 159-163. This was not the first time that Martens had written to request an answer to the letter of December 20. Heller had also asked for a response in an earlier letter sent January 9. [GARF f. 364 op. 1, d. 2, l. 138.]

⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1.

making them a threat to STASR's reputation amongst those considering joining a commune.⁵

The reasons for OII's lack of attention to STASR's correspondence is not clear, but the discord within the Soviet state became obvious in the few cases in which Heller actually succeeded in dispatching migrants and their representatives. When the two scouts (*khodoki*) of American communes who were the topic of Heller's earlier correspondence arrived in Latvia en route to Russia, the representative of the RSFSR in Libau refused to accept STASR's credentials, leaving them stranded until their status could be verified in Moscow.⁶ Though this was almost certainly a product of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs' (NKID) opposition to OII's authority (discussed in detail below), the perception of the latter's culpability in the incident is apparent in a February 13 letter from STO informing Martens that Lenin considered the scouts' visit to be of "paramount importance" and ordered Martens to assist the scouts in their work.⁷ Lenin further ordered that Martens send a summary of his discussions with the scouts to STO member (*upravdelom*) Vadim Smol'ianinov, who would later play a significant role in the course of NEP-era Soviet immigration policy.

Despite Lenin's orders, Soviet offices remained equally unresponsive to information coming from the US. In March, Heller decided to take action on his own, and dispatched a group of around 150 American workers to Russia, noting that it was no

⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1.

⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, l. 120.

⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 6, l. 86.

longer possible to delay their departure without damaging the reputation of Soviet Russia among those who wished to immigrate.⁸ Of this group, forty-one were skilled mechanics who were bound for work at the AMO automotive factory in Moscow, and the remainder were divided between two agricultural groups bound for state farms (*sovkhoz*) in Tambov and Odessa Provinces.⁹ Though Moscow had not approved the two agricultural groups, AMO director Arthur Adams had requested that Heller recruit a large group of skilled American workers, along with machinery, to be sent to the AMO automotive factory in Moscow.¹⁰ In STASR's February 1 report, they informed OII that they were organizing the group for an early March departure, and, having received no response from Moscow, they sent the group as they had indicated.¹¹

Soviet authorities permitted the group to enter Russia on March 31, 1922, but only after the migrants were held up at the border by what seem to be the same issues as those that had delayed the two American scouts the previous month.¹² This was far from

⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1.

⁹ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE) f. 3429, op. 1, d. 3959, ll. 5-6. Though some sources give the group size as larger, the most common estimate is 150, which is a number that probably considers only male workers and not their wives and children.

¹⁰ An inter-office meeting at Glavmetal had resolved to allow the entry of 250 workers for AMO on September 28, 1921, and thus AMO head Adams was able to request Heller to organize these workers prior to his departure for the US. [GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 30]

¹¹ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 141-142.

¹² Donald Day, "Russia Greets 149 Farmers with US Plows," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 April, 1922.

the end of the problems for the AMO engineers, who arrived in Moscow on April 5 to find there were no jobs for them. Local authorities put them up in a workers' dormitory where they remained until April 23 without any information as to their prospects for employment at the AMO factory or elsewhere. In the meantime, the workers, many of whom had spent their last savings to purchase machinery for the factory, discovered that AMO no longer needed the equipment they had brought, forcing the migrants to find the few buyers who had the need and financial means to purchase such items.¹³ Finally, on April 23, Adams held a meeting and offered the Americans employment, but only eighteen of the forty-one who remained chose to take up work in the factory. According to one of these migrants, by the end of April, seventy-five percent of the migrants wished, unrealistically in his estimation, to return to the US. Even more troublesome, many of the workers wished to seek legal recourse against the Central Bureau of STASR.¹⁴

All the embarrassment caused by the mismanagement of immigration motivated OII to put greater effort into their work, yet the weeks that followed Lenin's February 13 rebuke of Martens proved just how little progress Soviet leaders had made on immigration since Heller's departure. Only on February 28, 1922, did VSNKh's presidium finally officially approve Heller's mandate as VSNKh's representative in the United States, which Martens and two others had signed the previous October.¹⁵ At the

¹³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 51-53.

¹⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 54-55.

¹⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 2.

same meeting, the presidium finally allocated cash for OII's recruitment in the United States and affirmed STO's earlier resolution on OII's right to select and reserve unoccupied state enterprises for immigrant groups. The paltry sum of \$5,000 for organizing work and the six-month maximum contract length for taking over enterprises, however, demonstrated the presidium's lack of understanding concerning migrants' desires, which was no doubt reflective of OII's lack of communication with STASR.¹⁶ After all, the idea of investing large sums of money into the establishment of an enterprise that could be lost after six months hardly must have seemed appealing to workers who were being asked to exchange most of their life's savings for the prospect of a new life in Russia.

The process of managing immigration grew more complicated as immigration became less focused on the industrial enterprises that had been the basis of Martens' plans and more focused on agricultural sites and the development of communal farms. Most notably, this shift expanded the state apparatus involved in the migration process by bringing the People's Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem) into negotiations with immigrant groups. Though Narkomzem was cooperative in these negotiations, it was ill prepared to take on such a daunting new task, and its inclusion into the migration process further complicated the jurisdiction over migration that remained unsettled between OII and the People's Commissariat of Labor (Narkomtrud).¹⁷ Furthermore, since these agricultural groups had not originally been part of the 1921 resolutions on industrial

¹⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 1, ll. 20

¹⁷ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 92. On April 12, 1922, for example, the Presidium of Narkomzem approved a land contract with American sectarians.

immigration, their inclusion in the immigration policy required new attention from Soviet leaders in the highest state offices.

In an attempt to get a better grasp on the migration process, on April 12, 1922 OII's leaders petitioned STO to clarify their rights regarding organized migration.¹⁸ In the letter, OII's representatives told of STASR's success in organizing Americans, but requested that STO permit unobstructed entry to all immigrant groups organized by STASR, and that immigrants be granted the right to import their goods duty-free. OII also requested that STO formally approve Heller's position as VSNKh's representative in the US, with the full authority to vise passports, as well as STO confirm VSNKh's right to set aside enterprises for lease to immigrant groups for a period of up to six months. Overall, with the exception of gaining duty-free importation of immigrants' goods, OII's petition to STO was not aimed at acquiring new rights, but sought to gain recognition and STO's support for those rights and responsibilities that it had been granted by STO nearly a year earlier.

This redundancy was largely a function of conflicts between OII and the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (NKID), the latter of which stood as perhaps the single largest impediment to the new immigration policy in these early months of 1922. According to OII's leaders, formalizing these rights through STO was necessary due to the "series of obstacles," that had been placed in front of them by NKID and various foreign missions. As discussed in chapter one, NKID's officials had originally been involved in migration affairs, but had been opposed to the immigration plan since learning that Heller had been given special authority in a time of diplomatic non-

¹⁸ RGAE f. 3429, op. 1, d. 3959, ll. 5-6.

recognition between the US and Soviet Russia.¹⁹ This animosity between OII and NKID had not since cooled, and, according to Martens, was one of the reasons that Soviet officials at Libau were reluctant to admit those Americans who had arrived with documents endorsed by Heller and STASR.

OII's April petition to STO provided NKID with a forum to air their grievances towards the immigration policy in general, and the details of its implementation in particular. In an April 29 response to OII's petitions to STO, L. Karakhan, member of the NKID collegium, stated that foreign affairs Commissariat retained an unfavorable attitude towards "so-called industrial immigration," which had already "shown to be a total failure."²⁰ Addressing only the question of immigration from America, Karakhan's primary concern was American workers' inadaptability (*neprisposoblennost'*) to the harsh Russian conditions. In Karakhan's description this was not simply a function of migrants' skill set, but of the dismal conditions that Americans faced from almost the beginning of their journey.²¹ "Full of enthusiasm and a sincere desire to help us," Karakhan wrote, "[the American migrant] comes here and already during the trip, he comes into a position that leads him to wonder if it wouldn't be better for him to return to

¹⁹ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 8.

²⁰ RGAE f. 3429, op. 1, d. 3959, ll. 7-8.

²¹ As noted in chapter one, a major problem with migration had been the inability of American workers to carry out the tasks of occupations in the Russian economy. This was primarily a result of the difference in the division of labor in the two countries, which meant that Russian workers in a particular trade performed a far wider range of tasks than their American counterparts. Though Karakhan mentioned this problem, his primary focus was the differing standard of living and the corresponding change in attitude toward Soviet Russia as his primary reason for workers inadaptability.

America.”²² Karakhan further explained that, upon arriving, immigrants often found that their baggage had been lost, and faced conditions that often led even those who had been born in Russia to petition NKID for the right to return to America. Even worse, Soviet conditions sometimes drove these recent arrivals to flee illegally emigration across western borders. These conditions had the effect of turning former American allies into enemies of the Soviet project whose accounts could be useful to the enemies of the Soviet government abroad.²³ Karakhan concluded that, because these responses were a function of conditions that were outside the control of any Soviet state office, the details of OII’s approach to immigration was irrelevant.

NKID’s criticism of OII also included more direct critiques of the recruiting process in America. In particular, Karakhan charged that OII’s selection of Heller as its representative was a poor one, as his limited time in Soviet Russia made him largely unaware of the conditions that Americans would face upon arriving in their new homes. Karakhan noted that members of a mechanics group that had recently applied to NKID for the right to leave had informed officials that Heller had led them to believe that they were going to work in a communist society in the service of the Soviet authorities, but that this turned out to be untrue. For these reasons, NKID stood opposed to OII’s efforts,

²² RGAE f. 3429, op. 1, d. 3959, ll. 7-8.

²³ Michael David-Fox has keenly observed that “the isolated and diplomatically weak international position of the revolutionary state made the sympathy of Western cultural and intellectual elites into one of the only trump cards the Bolsheviks possessed,” meaning that the state’s control over its image was of paramount importance to those responsible for international affairs. [Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 16-17.]

and concluded that the border should remain almost totally closed to immigration until conditions in Russia improved.

Though Karakhan's claims were perhaps a bit excessive, NKID was not alone in voicing criticism of VSNKh's handling of the immigration process. In a letter responding to OII's April 12 petition, the People's Commissariat of Finance (Narkomfin) noted that OII should take into account that the worker-cooperative had proven the least effective form of industrial organization, and that any future attempts to organize immigration should require a much more definite plan of action and closer coordination with offices in the US than those currently being undertaken.²⁴ STASR and Heller's recruitment strategies also came under scrutiny by Narkomtrud, after one of the two earliest American scouts, A. Kaiutenko, gave a report expressing his concern over STASR's recruitment work.²⁵ According to Kaiutenko, the Society's New York office was not recruiting specialists, but generally unskilled agricultural workers whose qualifications were examined by a secretary who was not himself a specialist in agriculture. Kaiutenko criticized STASR's San Francisco office for its ties to religious sectarian groups whose members sought to operate independently.²⁶ OII also came into conflict with the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade (NKVT), which rejected VSNKh's unilateral

²⁴ RGAE f. 3429, op. 1, d. 3959, l. 3.

²⁵ Kaiutenko was one of the two scouts who had departed New York in December 1921 and, after spending some time in London, arrived in Russia in February 1922. The second scout, who accompanied him for the duration of his travels, was a representative of a religious sectarian group Kaiutenko was thus a reliable source on both STASR's New York office and the intentions of the sectants.

²⁶ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, ll. 107-108.

demand concerning the duty-free importation of migrants' goods, and requested that a commission with representatives from both offices be formed to determine issues of importation.²⁷

Despite the clear opposition to VSNKh's demands, in the next weeks STO passed resolutions supporting these requests on nearly every aspect of the April 12 petition. On May 10, STO restated its commitment to highly regulated immigration, but maintained the rights of those offices that had been identified in the June 22, 1921 resolution.²⁸ The same resolution confirmed the right of unobstructed entry for those groups organized by OII's organs in America, and confirmed Heller's status as VSNKh's official representative in the US, with NKID agreeing to issue undisputed entry visas to those groups of workers organized by OII. The resolution also formally obligated Narkomzem to render full support to OII in reviewing and selecting sovkhoses available for rent to foreign groups, thus formalizing their de facto role in the immigration process. A few weeks later, on June 2, STO fulfilled VSNKh's remaining request by passing a resolution granting tariff-free importation of goods for communes.²⁹

Considering the negative impressions of American immigrants that were so prevalent in Soviet Russia at this time, it may seem surprising that STO sided so firmly with OII. After all, OII had accomplished little since it was established the previous year, and stories such as those of the stranded AMO workers mentioned above provided

²⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 1, l. 18.

²⁸ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 117.

²⁹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 696 l. 14

evidence of the problems that came with industrial immigration from America. Yet at the time of STO's May resolution, nearly every American inside Soviet borders had come under the previous immigration regime, ultimately meaning that OII's limited progress shielded it from accusations that it was responsible for the state of affairs at this time. Furthermore, some of the more embarrassing problems that had occurred, such as long delays at the border and misplaced luggage, were not so much caused by OII's mismanagement of immigration, as by other state offices' refusal to recognize OII's authority. This position is likely the one taken by V.I Lenin, who ordered an investigation into NKID's role in holding up the group that arrived in April, and demanded that "exemplary punishment" should be given if NKID was proven to have impeded the workers' entry into Russia.³⁰ Thus, considering the Soviet state's desperation for foreign capital and expertise in 1922, and Lenin's sympathetic position towards American immigration, STO's decision to retain support for OII makes far more sense than one may originally suspect.

STO's support of OII did not, however, put an end to all inter-office struggle over immigration; though the resolutions of May and June settled VSNKh's conflicts with NKID and NKVT, they nevertheless failed to clarify Narkomtrud's rights regarding immigration, noting simply that those immigrant groups permitted to enter must be those organized in America under the leadership of OII "by agreement with Narkomtrud."³¹ Just as before, this led to conflicts between the two sides. Already on July 6, 1922,

³⁰ V.I. Lenin to A.I. Rykov, April 4, 1922. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).

³¹ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 117.

Table 3
List of Immigrants Arriving in the RSFSR from America
January to October 1922

Year and Month	Group Name	Members	Region of Settlement	Freight Value
April 1922	Canadian Agricultural Group	52	Odessa Guberniia	\$35,000
April 1922	First New York Agricultural Commune	116	Tambov Guberniia	\$61,000
April 1922	Mechanics for AMO Factory	62	Moscow	\$15,000
May 1922	Miners	32	Ekaterinoslav Guberniia	\$20,000
June 1922	First New York Builders Group	34	Moscow	\$20,000
June 1922	Mechanics of the Latish Cooperative	12	Petrograd	\$15,000
June 1922	Cobbler Group	8	Petrograd	\$20,000
August 1922	Agricultural Commune "Kaliforniia"	27	Caucasus	\$11,000
August 1922	Agricultural Commune "Novyi Mir"	28	Kiev Guberniia	\$24,000
September 1922	Group of Tailor's Factory #36, Moskvoshvei	65	Moscow	\$20,000
September 1922	Agricultural Commune "Seiatel'"	84	Caucasus	\$60,000
Total	11 Communes	506		\$301,000

Source: GARF 364, o1, d7, l. 363³²

Narkomtrud's officials challenged OII, stating that the latter had failed to involve

Narkomtrud in the immigration process, and that OII had operated with "an incorrect

³² The original document listed one additional group, the 25 member Bronzvil'skii Building Commune, which arrived in June of 1921 and settled in Don Oblast'.

understanding or misunderstanding of the last resolution of STO.”³³ At the same time, claims that the failure of reemigration to make an impact on the Soviet economy was a result of Soviet offices’ poor handling of immigration affairs no doubt increased Narkomtrud’s officials’ desire to become directly involved in managing immigration.³⁴ The fact that Narkomtrud’s goal did not involve prohibiting immigration made it far less troublesome to OII than other state offices, but Narkomtrud’s objection to OII’s independent operations no doubt helped seal OII’s fate later in the year.

For the moment, however, STO’s resolutions gave those involved in the migration process an indication that their future work could avoid the problems that had plagued them to that point. After months of frustration, Heller wrote on June 20 that he was glad to see recent events “as first signs of the beginning of serious work in Moscow,” but his skepticism is clear in his reiteration of the importance of regular correspondence between the two sides.³⁵ The months following OII’s April petition to STO also saw the establishment of several new communes, whose members sent vanguard groups in these months to prepare for the later arrival of the greater membership.³⁶

Despite this progress, the complicated division of authority in Moscow that arose alongside the NEP-era Soviet state sometimes meant that what information did make it to

³³ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 119.

³⁴ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 118.

³⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 51-53.

³⁶ Letters announcing the departure of these groups are located in GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1.

the US further complicated STASR's work. On July 26, for example, Heller cabled Martens due to the lack of recent information on a group of American tailors whose delegates had negotiated an arrangement with Soviet leaders to work in the sewing industry in Moscow.³⁷ According to the cable, Heller had recently spoken with Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) leader Sidney Hillman, who informed Heller that the Central Organization of Needle Trades in Moscow had agreed to recognize only groups authorized by Hillman.³⁸ Hillman's authority on this matter came from his negotiations with the Soviet government to establish the Russian-American Industrial Corporation (RAIC), an independent affiliate of the ACWA formed to aid the Soviet economy by taking on Soviet textile factories through concession contracts along similar principles as those negotiated by Autonomous Industrial Colony Kuzbas (AIK). Hillman's statement regarding textile workers left Heller unsure as to whether the tailors he was preparing to send would be able to carry out the work they had been promised, or

³⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, l. 35.

³⁸ Hillman's ties to the Moscow textile workers had come as part of his participation in the establishment of the Russian-American Industrial Corporation (RAIC), a joint ACWA-Soviet project that facilitated capital and technological transfer from the US to Soviet Russia that was quite similar to other NEP-era plans. Hillman developed the idea in late 1921 following his trip to Russia, and had originally conceived the RAIC as an independent wing of ACWA that could take over Russian textile factories as concessions. Though in its final form RAIC was a mixed concession, it was not finally approved by STO until November 1, 1922, which is probably why, in mid-July 1922, Hillman had been granted authority to approve groups that were ultimately outside the bounds of what the RAIC eventually became. ["Memorandum of Agreement between Industrial Bank of Moscow and the Russian-American Industrial Corporation, November 4, 1922," Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library, Box 200 Folder 6; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 9: The T.U.E.L. to the End of the Gompers Era* (New York: International Publishers, 1991), 311-322.]

whether they could potentially find themselves in the same desperate position as the AMO workers had just a few months earlier. Thus, even as the events of 1922 increased the flow of information between Russia and America, the problems created by the unclear allocation of authority by the Soviet state often impeded the work of Heller and STASR.

The type of confusion caused by issues such as this may have been avoided in conditions of regular communication between the New York office and Moscow, but Heller's letters following his optimistic cable of June 20 demonstrate that OII's increased attention to immigration did not spark a corresponding improvement in its responsiveness to STASR. Just a few weeks after the aforementioned cable, an exasperated Heller wrote to Moscow to announce his resignation as VSNKh's representative in the US.³⁹ On July 20, Heller received notice that his resignation would not be accepted without STO's approval. He quickly responded by petitioning STO to grant his release, noting that he "no longer had the force (*sila*) to continue work in the absence of significant support from Moscow" and in the growing presence of alternative migration channels to Soviet Russia in the US. Furthermore, Heller complained that when STASR received correspondence from Moscow, it was generally aimed at ordering STASR to cease work or not to send groups that the Society had already organized, some of which had already been dispatched. "Under these conditions," Heller wrote, "I see no other conclusion than to close this unnecessary office here [in New York]."⁴⁰

³⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 4-5.

⁴⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 4-5; GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 245.

Heller's resignation was also clearly driven by his awareness that the May 20 resolution had failed to solve the larger problems facing Americans upon arriving in Russia. In his letters to Moscow, Heller noted that upon arriving in Russia, immigrant groups "do not receive the slightest support. All of their letters [sent from Russia to STASR] are of the same sad character; all without exception complain about the difficulties which they meet at the borders, both in Riga and Libau, and also in the regions in locating a suitable enterprise."⁴¹ In another letter to Moscow dated August 15, Heller noted that the scouts sent on behalf of the commune "Novyi Mir" had left the US at the end of June to secure a sovkhos prior to the arrival of the rest of their group, but that their work had been ruined after they were held up in Riga for unknown reasons.⁴² The June 2 agreement with import authorities also seems have done little to improve the movement of Americans' goods into Russia in the months that followed, leading one American reemigrant to file accusations of sabotage against OII.⁴³ These delays, while no doubt frustrating for all groups, took on growing significance as recruitment in the US became more and more focused on agricultural groups whose livelihood required that they begin work at a particular time of the year. Thus, on September 1, 1922, before even

⁴¹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 4-5.

⁴² GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 19-20.

⁴³ RGAE f. 3429, op. 1, d. 3962, l. 5; GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 3, l. 192. Though the reasons for the delay of luggage is not immediately clear, the agency which demanded payment was Tamozhen, not NKVT who had agreed to duty-free importation of goods. If this is the case, this once again points to the discord within the 1920s Soviet state.

receiving notification that STO had accepted his resignation, Heller closed the doors to his New York office.⁴⁴

By the end of summer 1922, the policy adopted in 1921 had clearly failed to produce the results that Soviet leaders had expected. Though many of the same problems were evident that had led to the resolutions of May and June, OII's much more direct involvement in immigration made it clear that it could not carry out the tasks with which it had been charged. As a result, Narkomzem, whose leaders had grown tired of the additional burdens that came with increasing agricultural immigration, formed a committee to address the question of immigration. The first of the committee's meetings, which included members of various offices, including OII, the Soviet Concessions Committee, and US representative of STASR, Leo Reichel, met at the beginning of fall to discuss potential means of handling the state's responsibilities to migrants.⁴⁵ The general consensus of the meeting reflected universal dissatisfaction with the state of affairs. Narkomzem's representatives told of their utter lack of preparation for handling immigrant groups dispersed across thousands of miles of terrain, and noted that, aside from VSNKh, no People's Commissariats had the formal authority or administrative apparatus to specifically deal with immigration. OII's representative, Margolin, agreed

⁴⁴ GARF f. 364, o1, d9, l. 245. Heller did not, however, cease his work for those groups to which he had already committed, a task which he claimed took up nearly all his time for the following weeks.

⁴⁵ RGAE f. 478, o. 7, d. 698, ll. 3-6. The date of the meeting is not clear, but the second meeting of the commission was held on October 2, 1922, suggesting that the first meeting was held in late September.

with this sentiment, stating that aside from the problems of arriving freight, there was “complete uncertainty” in regards to negotiating land contracts for immigrant agricultural communes, with no fewer than three state offices making claims to the right to grant land, all of which did so on different terms. After members had expressed their views on the conditions, the chairman summarized three basic conclusions: first, that immigration was important, second, that OII was not in a condition to regulate all types of industrial immigration, and finally, that the Soviet government had violated the terms they had previously guaranteed to immigrants. They thus moved to establish an administrative apparatus that could effectively implement the institutions established in 1921.

On October 25, 1922, after nearly a month of meetings to discuss the best means of addressing immigration, STO finally established a successor to OII, the Permanent Commission of the Council of Labor and Defense for the Regulation of Agricultural and Industrial Immigration (PKSTO).⁴⁶ The committee consisted of eight members; a chairman and two members appointed by STO, and one representative from VSNKh, Narkomtrud, Narkomzem, the VTsSPS and STASR.⁴⁷ On the same day, VSNKh’s leadership endorsed the creation of such a committee at a meeting of Gosplan, leaving

⁴⁶ PKSTO’s formal title changed on a couple of occasions to reflect its changing jurisdiction, eventually becoming the Permanent Commission of the Council of Labor and Defense for Agricultural and Industrial Labor Immigration and Emigration in 1925. Despite these changes, I, as Soviet leaders did in the 1920s, maintain the same acronym for the Commission throughout its existence.

⁴⁷ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI) f. 5, op. 3, d. 702, l. 3.

little resistance to the reallocation of immigration authority away from VSNKh.⁴⁸ A month later, on November 28, 1922, the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) officially approved STO's resolution of October 25. This decree officially revoked OII's authority and gave the newly-established PKSTO a degree of authority that its predecessor had not achieved.⁴⁹ The process of forming PKSTO also brought about a significant change in Soviet leadership. Martens, who had originally been identified as the chair of the new commission, was replaced by Aleksander Eiduk, marking the end of Martens' involvement in immigration affairs.⁵⁰

The process that led to the formation of PKSTO reveals a great deal about Soviet leaders' priorities at the time. In the discussions that led to the establishment of PKSTO, the offices involved shared a general sense that immigration was desirable, but needed to be better handled. Though these offices' representatives had differing interpretations of who was to blame for the bulk of the problems with immigration, they all agreed that the unfortunate fate that had befallen the immigrant groups to that point was not evidence of

⁴⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 100.; Galina Tarle, *Druz'ia Strany Sovetov* (Nauka, 1968), 168; "Reemigratsiia iz Sev. Ameriki," *Pravda*, 31 October, 1922, 3.

⁴⁹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 698, l. 25.

⁵⁰ The original Protocols of STO's October 25 meeting list Martens as PKSTO's chair, a fact confirmed by a cable that Martens himself sent to STASR at about the same time. [RGASPI f. 5, op. 3, d. 702, l. 5.], but shortly thereafter Eiduk took his place as chair of PKSTO. That Martens included no mention of his work with immigration in his application to membership in the Society of Old Bolsheviks suggests that he did not consider this work to be an essential part of his background. [RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 1210, ll. 1-14.] Though the reason for Martens' replacement is not clear, a June 26, 1923 letter from an author identified only as "W" in the papers of the CPUSA indicates that there was speculation that Martens was "sent to the back woods" due to personal differences. [RGASPI, f. 515, o. 1, d. 249, ll. 1-2.]

a bad policy, but of a poorly-run system for managing immigration. Though opposition to the plan almost certainly still existed amongst the leadership of organizations such as NKID, the creation of PKSTO in October, much like the resolutions of the preceding summer, reflect a persistent faith in the value of organized immigration within those offices that had been directly involved in the migration process. That PKSTO's membership lacked a representative of NKID also demonstrates a general unwillingness to allow opposition to immigration to impede the work of the new committee.⁵¹ Such a position is fully understandable; the preceding year had done well to demonstrate to Soviet leaders that their calculations regarding Americans' resources and interest in migrating were correct. Yet it is clear that Soviet leaders' inability to effectively implement a well thought-out policy was already impeding their access to the potential energy that was there to harness. Once again, however, this problem, which is central to the failure of NEP-era policy, seemed to be under control.

Soviet leaders were fully aware that maintaining access to this energy required not only refined state administration, but also Americans' continued desire to engage in the terms of the immigration policy. After all, the unfortunate circumstances in which many Americans found themselves upon arrival in Russia posed the threat of cooling Americans' passions for immigration, and the relations between STASR and Moscow remained damaged from the events of the preceding months. Well aware of this situation,

⁵¹ NKID was not totally excluded from immigration affairs in these first years, and shortly after it was established, PKSTO's leadership collaborated with NKID on addressing the problems of unauthorized immigration into the country. [GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 1, l. 36.]

on October 20 Lenin drafted a letter to STASR expressing his appreciation for their work and noting that their success in organizing communes could “truly be regarded as exceptional.”⁵² Lenin also noted that he was appealing to the Presidium of the All Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) to render to STASR “every possible assistance” in supplying communes with all necessary material, and to place the most successful communes in the ranks of model communes. “[N]o other form of relief is as timely and as important for us as the one undertaken by your Society in connection with the introduction of tractor farming,” Lenin wrote, following that he was quite pleased with the Society’s recently stated goal of organizing 200 agricultural communes. Shortly thereafter, on November 9, VTsIK recognized the First New York Agricultural Commune and the Canadian Agricultural Commune (Migaevo) as model farms for the rest of Russia. This news appeared alongside excerpts from Lenin’s letter to STASR in *Soviet Russia*.⁵³

This recognition and reorganization no doubt helped to improve STASR’s tarnished reputation, but what is impressive is the insignificant degree to which the tumultuous months of 1922 reduced Americans’ overall desire to migrate to Russia. On October 27, even before Lenin’s letter appeared in the American press or STASR had been informed about PKSTO, STASR’s secretary Fedor Wilga wrote to the Society’s recently-arrived representative in Moscow, Leo Reichel, to tell him that the number of those within the “Russian Colony” in the US who wished to return to Soviet Russia was

⁵² GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 281. The letter also appeared in *Pravda*, 24 October, 1922.

⁵³ “American Farms Models for Russia,” *Soviet Russia*, December, 1922, 287.

increasing every day, despite attacks from STASR's opponents.⁵⁴ Wilga also noted that attraction to Soviet space had transcended the Russian Colony, and that on October 14 scouts from the First German Agricultural Commune "Ekho" from Philadelphia had departed for Russia to locate a suitable point of settlement for their commune. Further evidence of STASR's persistence despite the recent frustrations was the October opening of the Russian Institute of Technology in New York, which aimed to train American workers for the conditions they would face in Russia.⁵⁵ The reorganization of Soviet administration in the last months of 1922, it seemed, had not come too late, and the potential energy offered by those who wished to migrate remained accessible to the state despite the disappointments of the preceding year.

Immigration continued steadily as the new year began; STASR had already formed several communes in 1922, and in the first months of 1923, the Society continued to send organized groups of American workers to Russia.⁵⁶ PKSTO's leadership also made notable progress, passing its first resolution on Agricultural Immigration on February 2, and sending out instructions to the Central Bureau of STASR a few weeks later.⁵⁷ These new instructions did not differ drastically from those of OII, but they did

⁵⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 268. Wilga specifically mentioned that the newspaper *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* had published articles attacking STASR. The exact date of Reichel's arrival in Russia is not clear.

⁵⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 160, l. 40.

⁵⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 79-80. On April 11, 1923 alone, STASR sent a total of 105 Americans representing 8 communes to Russia. The delegates carried with them almost \$60,000 in cash and machinery.

⁵⁷ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 698 ll. 78, 86-87.

include a great deal more detail on how groups should go about immigration.⁵⁸ The new instructions allowed for the continuation of industrial artels, but the primary focus of PKSTO's efforts shifted to agricultural groups, a move that reflected immigrants' growing interest in communal farms, and was no doubt driven by the greater results that agricultural projects had shown in the preceding year.⁵⁹ The instructions also noted that all religious sectarian groups would be granted exemption from military obligations, a sign of the growing importance of Dukhobors and Molokans in STASR's work.

The beginning of 1923 also brought about improvements in migrants' access to financial resources. The resolution adopted by Sovnarkom in November charged PKSTO with supporting immigrants during their organizational period through small, short-term loans and access to materials that might be needed to establish new communes.⁶⁰ Though

⁵⁸ The instructions, for example, outlined a set of goods that immigrants' could import duty-free and re-stated that the borders remained closed to individual immigration, the exception being those who could prove that they had family members in Russia who could not manage without their help. PKSTO also issued an order to refrain from issuing visas to those with children wishing to settle in urban areas.

⁵⁹ Though the agricultural groups sent by STASR had achieved limited success, much greater results had come from an agricultural project led by Harold Ware and organized by the Friends of Soviet Russia (FSR) in 1922. The FSR project did include a group of Americans who went to Russia to carry out this project, but these individuals had no intention of remaining any longer than it took to establish the farm and educate the population in the region on modern farming techniques. The success of this type of educational mission likely explains PKSTO's explicit requirement that all future American communes must serve to educate the surrounding peasant population on modern agricultural practices. For more on Ware and the FSR's work in Russia see Dana G. Dalrymple, "The American Tractor Comes to Soviet Agriculture: The Transfer of Technology," *Technology and Culture* 5, no. 2 (Spring, 1964): 191-214.

⁶⁰ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 698, l. 15.

Narkomzem stood opposed to offering loans as a standard practice, they did support providing loans in special cases, thus providing a lifeline to those communes that had been hindered by the state's poor management of immigration in the previous year.⁶¹ The establishment of money wiring services from the US to Russia in January 1923 also provided migrants with much faster access to financial support from their communities in the US, and helped unemployed migrants gain access to money that allowed them to relocate to sites with greater opportunities.⁶²

Just as before, however, the hopefulness that followed what appeared to be a positive step toward solving the largest problems of immigration policy was short lived. At the beginning of 1923, the Workers' Party of America (WPA), under the leadership of Charles E. Ruthenberg, began criticizing the Society for its efforts at organizing groups to

⁶¹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 698, l. 34. For example, Narkomzem's officials agreed to offer loans to the Commune Migaev, but only after concluding that the commune would not last without access to such a loan.

⁶² The Soviet state's seizure of a large portion of wire transfers and the inability to confirm that the intended recipients had received the remaining portion had led American Express to cease wire transfers to Russia by mid-1921. In January 1923, the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago re-opened the transfer service, building on ties established between the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) and Prombank Chairman Aleksander Krasnoshchekov to ensure reliable transfer service of funds guaranteed in dollars at a maximum fee of 7%. On February 12, 1923, American migrant William Nietmann wrote to ACWA President Sidney Hillman to thank him for transferring \$1,200 from Seattle to Moscow. Nietmann explained that was planning to join an American agricultural group in Ukraine, but had been stranded in Moscow for four months without enough money to pay for transportation. The service also meant that STASR could send money to communes without having to wait for the next departing group to physically transmit the money. ["Impossible to Send Money to Russia, *New York Times*, 9 Sept., 1921; ACWA Records, Box 19, Folder 22; Box 4, Folder 18; GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 138-141.]

be sent to Russia.⁶³ Likely responding to the Society's recent push to organize up to 200 new communes, in January the New York branch of the WPA adopted a resolution against American emigration to Soviet Russia, citing fear that the departure of class-conscious workers would weaken the American labor movement, as well as concerns that American workers were not prepared for Russian conditions.⁶⁴ STASR secretary Fedor Wilga, who had taken over as primary liaison to Moscow following Heller's departure, appealed to PKSTO to support the Society's Central Bureau in the conflict, noting that the WPA's attempt to block immigration had angered many Russians in America.⁶⁵ The WPA's affiliation with the Communist International (Comintern) further meant that this animosity toward the WPA could be extended to the Soviet government by those who perceived the Workers Party to be acting under orders from Moscow. "To hold Russian émigrés (*vykhodtsev*) from leaving for Russia, and forcing the wide, non-party masses to submit to this [WPA resolution] is as impossible as sending a river against its own current," Wilga wrote, explaining that the end of legal migration channels would simply lead to illegal migration through "various shady elements."⁶⁶ Wilga also noted that STASR's ties to the non-party Russian communities allowed it to serve as a means to recruit new party members, and that the current state of affairs was damaging to this

⁶³ The Workers' Party of America was the legal manifestation of the Communist Party USA, which had gone underground following the post-WWI Red Scare.

⁶⁴ "Russia in the American News," *Soviet Russia*, February 1923, 20.

⁶⁵ GARF f. 364, op.1, d. 80, l. 9.

⁶⁶ GARF f. 364, op.1, d. 80, l. 13.

relationship. The WPA's actions, Wilga argued, therefore not only threatened to undermine the work of STASR, but had the potential to cause problems for leaders in Moscow as well.

The WPA's actions did not stop at public opposition to STASR's mission, and in the weeks that followed, the Workers' Party engaged in attacks on the character of the Society's leaders. At the beginning of February, the WPA demanded that STASR's Central Bureau recall the mandate they had issued to Reichel, whom the WPA claimed had brought active struggle against the Society while serving as STASR's representative in Moscow.⁶⁷ Things continued to get worse in the following weeks, and on February 28, Wilga informed PKSTO that, despite Moscow's assurances that he had nothing to be concerned about, articles in both the party and non-party press told of an upcoming reorganization of STASR. "After hearing all that has been reported," Wilga reported that the members of the Central Bureau of STASR "were convinced that they were being eliminated from the Party and a new Central Bureau was going to be organized."⁶⁸

Having received news of the conflict between the Central Bureaus of STASR and the WPA, PKSTO's Chairman Eiduk sought to mediate the conflict between the sides. On February 23, he wrote to STASR, noting that the conflict was likely due to the WPA's misunderstanding of the Soviet government's intentions, and requesting that the Society postpone its second congress from March to May to allow PKSTO time to send a

⁶⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 39-40.

⁶⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 42-43.

representative to the meeting.⁶⁹ In more immediate terms, Eiduk requested that the Comintern intervene in the conflict and demand the WPA not to interfere in STASR's work.⁷⁰ Though Eiduk's correspondence with STASR was fairly neutral, his correspondence with the Comintern made it clear that he shared Wilga's concerns. Fortunately for Eiduk, STO and Sovnarkom manager Vadim Smol'ianinov, shared Eiduk's assessment of the situation and supported his petition to see the Comintern intervene in the matter.⁷¹

After months of disputes between the two sides, on April 16, the Comintern finally passed a resolution aimed at easing tensions until the Second Congress of STASR could be held in June.⁷² The resolution did not dismiss any of the current members of STASR's Central Bureau, but gave the Workers Party's Central Executive Committee the right to appoint three additional members to the Central Bureau, and required that all passports issued to migrants bear the signature of one of the WPA appointees. Though the Comintern resolution brought a compromise between the two sides, PKSTO's leaders remained unconvinced that all had been settled, and decided it would still be necessary to

⁶⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, l. 16.

⁷⁰ GARF f. 364, op.1, d. 80, l. 17.

⁷¹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, l. 18-20; GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, ll. 1-2. Ruthenberg was aware of Eiduk's support of Wilga, and on February 18, he wrote a letter opposing PKSTO's position on the matter. [GARF f. 364, o. 1, d. 80, l. 28.]

⁷² GARF f. 364, op.1, d. 80, l. 27.

send a representative of PKSTO to the upcoming STASR congress, at which a new Central Bureau was to be elected.⁷³

The second congress of STASR, held June 23-24, marked a momentous defeat for the Society's original Central Bureau, and brought the organization under the control of the WPA's Central Executive Committee. At the congress, the Central Bureau was once again reorganized, leaving only two members of the original CB on the nine-member bureau. The new secretary of the Central Bureau, Jacob Golos, was a loyal ally of WPA leader Charles Ruthenberg, and had been fiercely opposed to immigration in the months leading up to the congress.⁷⁴ The removal of Wilga from the Central Bureau was no surprise, as the WPA had already begun working to expel both him and another Central Bureau member, A.S. Broms, from the Party before the congress had begun.⁷⁵ The resolutions passed by the congress on June 24 retained the façade of a positive face toward immigration, but nevertheless dismantled some of the most important aspects of the Society's work. Amongst these was the elimination of STASR's newsletter

⁷³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, l. 24.

⁷⁴ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 51-55. The two remaining members of the original Central Bureau were A. Gorelik and A. Finkelberg, who resigned from the bureau just four months later.

⁷⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 209, ll. 1-5. An committee that summer had investigated the actions of a total of six party members, but concluded the other four party members, including new CB members Gorelik and Finkleberg, had only committed offenses due to confusion created by contradictory orders and reports given by a variety of agencies and institutions. Broms, described as the most egregious offender, was charged with exploiting his position for personal financial gain.

“Vestnik,” which had allowed the Society to reach a large group of potential immigrants, and provided a source of income through its ad revenue.⁷⁶

This reshaping of STASR proved to be one of the most detrimental events in the course of the NEP-era immigration strategy, but it was not the only significant development in immigration policy that took place in the summer of 1923. At the same time that STASR’s members were meeting in New York, Soviet leaders were overseeing the transition of the RSFSR into the Soviet Union, which had been formally established in December of 1922. On July 20, 1923, the work of forming the USSR passed to immigration officials when STO USSR approved the elevation of PKSTO RSFSR’s authority to an All-Union level.⁷⁷ Though PKSTO and OII had been somewhat involved in immigrant communes in Soviet Ukraine prior to the creation of the Soviet Union, their authority had been primarily limited to the area in the RSFSR, meaning that the new Commission would have a much larger jurisdiction than its predecessors. The new organization, PKSTO USSR, came with a corresponding change in leadership, with SNK and STO member Vadim Smol’ianinov replacing Eiduk as the chair of the Commission.

The reorganization of these offices in the summer of 1923, as well as the events that led to them, reveals a great deal about the problems facing Soviet policy makers in the NEP-era. Despite influential proponents of the immigration policy in Moscow, including Lenin, the Soviet state of the early 1920s was riddled with administrative inefficiencies and competing claims to authority, and staffed with officials whose

⁷⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 27, ll. 103-110.

⁷⁷ Tarle, *Druz’ia*, 169.

personal agendas often prevented even the best policies from succeeding. In some cases, the problems stemmed from a lack of administrative ability to carry out the new tasks that came with immigration. Narkomzem, for example, supported the establishment of immigrant communes, but overlapping claims to land and a lack of authority in the periphery prevented Narkomzem's leadership from effectively fulfilling contracts that it had negotiated with scouts. Other offices, such as NKID, not only opposed immigration, but blatantly refused to follow orders from higher-ranking state offices. In light of these issues, the developments of summer 1923 foreshadow a bleak future for the NEP-era immigration project. On one hand, STASR, whose Central Bureau had been amongst the strongest advocates of immigration, was seized by a new leadership that not only ceased to promote immigration, but actively sought to prevent it. On the other hand, PKSTO, whose leaders remained unable to ensure the fulfillment of contracts negotiated at the RSFSR level, were now tasked with implementing immigration policy in a much larger space and with the participation of far more actors. The impact of these developments, though not entirely unpredictable, is covered in more detail in the following chapters.

AIK's first year of work proved just as, if not more, problematic than that of STASR. As detailed in the previous chapter, AIK began its work without many of the disadvantages that faced the Society and OII/PKSTO. AIK had a pre-determined site, which meant that the colony's recruiters did not require scouts to conduct preliminary investigations prior to sending American workers to Soviet Russia. Unlike STASR, AIK did not require communication with Soviet officials prior to dispatching groups, and had its own officials on both sides of the Atlantic whose primary obligation was to the colony itself. As a concession, AIK held a high degree of autonomy, meaning developments

were not subject to the disagreements in Moscow that did so much to undermine the immigrant groups organized by STASR. AIK's leaders had also gained local support for their project when they traveled to western Siberia in the summer of 1921, which made disagreements between central and local state offices less likely with AIK than with the other agricultural communes negotiated through Narkomzem. And in what proved to be a savvy move, AIK founders Sebald Rutgers, Bill Haywood and Herbert Calvert had refused to allow VSNKh to serve as the agency responsible for overseeing the colony, petitioning instead to grant oversight to STO.

In the early months of 1922, AIK's New York office saw a great deal of activity. The publicity that came from the publication of the "Kuzbas Prospectus," Calvert's interview in the *New York World* in early February, and Mike Gold's colorful article in the March issue of *The Liberator*, brought about a tremendous spike in Americans' interest in the colony.⁷⁸ Though the trouble that Calvert and Tom Baker had seen in founding AIK's American Organization Committee (AOC) had evoked doubt from Rutgers, this increased publicity marked a change in fortunes.⁷⁹ On March 3, Barker and Calvert formally established the AOC, and by March 7, the organizers agreed that they had received enough applications to warrant sending the first group to Russia. Moved by the growing restlessness of those who had arrived in NY and did not want to wait any

⁷⁸ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23; Michael Gold, "Wanted, Pioneers for Siberia," *The Liberator*, March, 1922, pgs 1-4; *Kuzbas: An Opportunity for Engineers and Workers: Prospectus*, New York, February 1922.

⁷⁹ "Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Millie and Herbert S. Calvert Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 1, Folder 4.

longer, on April 8, the organizers sent the first group- consisting of seven engineers and fifty three workers- to their new homes in Russia.⁸⁰

These early months saw both an invigorating surge in participation in AOC's work and the rapid realization that AIK's New York office lacked the resources required to take on all the duties with which it had been tasked. Despite the number of advantages that AIK had over STASR, the New York office had only been established at the beginning of 1922, and had neither the experienced staff nor the established ties to Russian communities in the US that STASR had been amassing since its establishment in 1919. The surge of interest that came in the lead up to the departure of the first group also made it clear that AIK's office lacked the space required to carry out its basic functions, as working in such tight quarters led to confusion amongst both the organizers and those seeking to migrate. Further pressure on the group came from the US government's regulations on the dispatch of people and goods to Russia, which were neither clear nor easy to meet. In the end however, AIK's organizers, like those in STASR, came to benefit from the widespread sympathy toward Soviet Russia that was prevalent in these years, and engineers and workers who had no personal connection to the colony completed much of the work for which Calvert, Barker and the others were not prepared.⁸¹

Like STASR, AIK's organizers also experienced problems that came from the distance between their office and the colony's site. Though communication between

⁸⁰ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 4; RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

⁸¹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

AIK's agents in the US and Russia did not suffer from the same long periods of silence that frustrated Heller to the point of resignation, the more than 2,000 additional miles that correspondence had to travel to get to the colony's sites in Western Siberia meant that AIK was far from immune to problems arising from poor communication. In addition, Sebald Rutgers had returned to his home country of The Netherlands following contract negotiations in Moscow, thus bringing a third country into AIK's communications network. Further frustrating AIK's New York organizers was the inability to acquire all the information required to make shipments of much needed goods and machinery, with AOC member Mont Schuyler describing early correspondence as "vague to the point of uselessness."⁸²

In the months after the April 8 departure of the first group, the AOC continued to see mixed results in their work. The organizers moved to a new, larger office in the same New York City office complex that housed several other Soviet support organizations. The Organizing Committee continued to put great effort into recruiting workers from areas outside of New York City, with AOC members Calvert and Pascal Cosgrove spending lengthy periods of time away from the office giving talks to workers groups across the northern and Midwestern states. Matti Mularti, a Finnish Communist who joined the AOC, also helped expand interest in the project by working within Finnish communities in New York, where he held significant influence. Outside of the committee, AIK continued to garner support from individuals and groups committed to aiding Soviet economic development, perhaps the most notable of which was Bishop William Montgomery Brown, who donated \$500 to AIK in April to publish a publicity

⁸² RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, ll. 16-23.

magazine for the colony. The first issue of the magazine- entitled simply *Kuzbas*- was published on May 20, 1922, and was later described by Millie Calvert as the most effective tool the office had in their recruiting work.⁸³

All this work helped to improve the quality of workers sent with the second group on May 13, but the organizers remained dissatisfied with the quantity of migrants that they had sent, a sentiment that was clearly shared by Rutgers. In a letter sent along with the second group, Schuyler responded to a list of criticisms issued by Rutgers in an April 22 letter, including the accusation that the AOC had sent a group of workers who were ill prepared for their work in the colony.⁸⁴ Schuyler adamantly denied this claim, noting that each group was given an adequate store of supplies, and that in most cases the circumstances facing the recruiters promised to improve as the year continued. Schuyler further noted that he had shown the AOC's plans to Rutgers' assistant in the US, Julius Neiman, who came to agree with Schuyler's optimistic appraisal of the organizers' work.⁸⁵

Though AIK's organizers had made significant progress in overcoming some of the challenges they faced when founding their office in January, their work remained affected by the infighting amongst various leftist groups that had sprung up in the years

⁸³ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 4. Brown was an Anglican Bishop whose growing interest in socialism earned him the honor of being the first Anglican Bishop to be tried for heresy since the Reformation. While awaiting the verdict of his trial in 1924, he was offered a position in the Russian Orthodox Church, but opted instead to join the Old Catholic Church.

⁸⁴ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 105-106.

⁸⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 107.

since World War I. Calvert and Barker had done a remarkable job of recruiting a nine-member Organizing Committee that was split evenly between members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Communists, and non-partisan leftists, but this did not mean that the organization could escape earlier assumptions about its political loyalties. The most detrimental infighting that developed in the course of 1922, however, was not along party lines, but came as a result of the competition that developed between the AOC and STASR. According to Schuyler, it was this conflict that was amongst the most important factors in keeping recruiting numbers lower than the organizers had expected.

The conflict between the two organizations, which had originally been ordered to work together, is utterly unsurprising when one considers the circumstances in which it developed. Martens had been opposed to AIK from the very beginning, and had sent Heller to keep an eye on the Kuzbas exploratory group that travelled to Western Siberia in 1921. Martens' opposition to the colony clearly was not undone by the final approval of the AIK contract. In fact, even as Martens remained unresponsive to Heller's multiple pleas for information on Russian conditions, he took time to write to STASR to request reports on Calvert's progress in organizing migrant groups. Heller responded faithfully to these information requests, including reminders of his own information needs. These requests came as early as February 28 with the order "rush reply Calvert's progress."⁸⁶ Heller's response to this request, sent five days later, reveals that STASR's dislike of AIK began early in the year, and was driven by the fact that AIK's original office was in a room inside STASR headquarters that Calvert had rented from the Society. In Heller's opinion, Calvert was not a significant threat to STASR's position; he had done very little

⁸⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, l. 121.

to establish a foothold for serious recruiting, and the organizers' lofty rhetoric surrounding AIK had probably dissuaded many potential migrants from joining the colony.⁸⁷ Wilga echoed this sentiment in early April when he reported that the majority of those who wished to migrate did not wish to go to AIK due to their unfavorable impressions of Siberia, which was known primarily as an inhospitable region most famous as a point of exile.⁸⁸ What Calvert *had* managed to accomplish, however, was the recruitment of some of the individuals who had originally intended to join one of STASR's communes, but had been lured to join AIK when they arrived at the office to arrange their departure.⁸⁹

In Schuyler's assessment of the conflict, the problems came from the fact that, despite orders from Moscow that STASR assist in recruitment for AIK, the former had failed to assist the AOC, offering only empty promises to help attract workers for Kuzbas that the Soviety's leaders made no effort to fulfill.⁹⁰ Heller, Schuyler noted, had recently written an article on opportunities for Americans in Soviet Russia, but had failed to

⁸⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, l. 121. Heller noted that Julius Heiman referred to Kuzbas as a "New Eldorado" (*Novyi El'dorado*). Though this seems an unlikely statement to have come from Rutgers' representative, there is no doubt that such rhetoric was prevalent. Heller's assertion that such large claims had a detrimental impact on recruitment are confirmed by AIK colonist and engineer Nemmy Sparks, who describes his decision to join the colony as made in spite of, not because of, the unrealistic promises being made by some of promoters. [Nemmy Sparks, "Lenin and the Americans at Kuzbas," *New World Review*, 39, no. 4 (Fall 1971): 74.]

⁸⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 177.

⁸⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, l. 121.

⁹⁰ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 105-106.

include a single mention of Kuzbas. Schuyler did not deny Heller's claims, and openly admitted to poaching members of STASR's groups, but presented this as a response to STASR's lack of support. Schuyler also claimed that he had learned from "reliable sources" that the Central Bureau of STASR had actively sought to undermine AIK's efforts by circulating untrue stories about AIK. "We have hesitated to write about our troubles in this direction," Schuyler wrote in concluding his May 11 letter to Rutgers, "for we have thought that the difficulties would clear up. But on the contrary, we seem further apart than ever."⁹¹ A month later, in a June 16 letter, Schuyler asked Haywood to keep an eye on Reichel, should he show up in Moscow in the near future, noting that he was "definitely an enemy of Kuzbas" and was likely "up to a little mischief."⁹² Thus, despite the fact that AIK avoided hindrances that came with internal conflict in the Soviet government, Moscow's vague allocation of responsibility regarding AIK and STASR nevertheless came to shape the development of the Kuzbas colony.

The conflict between the two organizations was certainly detrimental to both AIK and STASR (though more so to the former), but did not put an end to AIK's progress, and interest in the colony grew well into the spring. The publication of *Kuzbas* on May 20 proved a valuable tool in AIK's work, as it helped to spread the word about the colony and served as a source of revenue for the recruitment office through both the \$.60 yearly subscription and the materials donated by the bulletin's subscribers. In addition, the cards that subscribers sent to the office provided Calvert and Cosgrove with a list of names and

⁹¹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 105-106.

⁹² RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, l. 15.

addresses that they could use to find local allies while out on recruiting trips.⁹³ In a June 13 letter to Haywood, Tom Barker expressed his optimism in regards to their work in the US, noting that AIK's "stock is going up here, and our organization is certainly by far the most efficient of all the agencies facilitating emigration of workers to Russia, and we are steadily improving."⁹⁴ Aside from the creation of their own publication, Barker noted that AIK was garnering attention from periodicals of various sizes which ranged from local papers to *The Nation*, and that the office had received applications from as far away as Australia. Barker also boasted to Haywood that the AOC had recently concluded a deal with the Holland American Line that would allow migrants travelling to Kuzbas to go directly to Petrograd port, while STASR's transportation partners still required that migrants land at Libau or Lattonia prior to entering Russia.⁹⁵

The AOC's work yielded larger groups in the summer of 1922. The third group, which departed on June 17, consisted of a hundred colonists. In a letter to Haywood that was sent along with the third group, Schuyler expressed a far more positive attitude than he had when sending the previous group, noting that though a few unreliable workers may have been able to evade their selection process, they were "more than overbalanced by the exceptionally remarkable men and women who are more than a mere percentage" of the group.⁹⁶ This group was followed on July 22 by an even larger group of Kuzbas

⁹³ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 4.

⁹⁴ RGASPI, f. 515 op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 111-112

⁹⁵ RGASPI, f. 515 op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 111-112

⁹⁶ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, l. 15.

“pioneers” which totaled 135 workers.⁹⁷ These groups reflect the impact that the various members of the AOC had had on recruiting. Mularti’s influence within Finnish groups was evident in the fact that fifty-one of the 235 workers sent in these groups were of Finnish nationality.⁹⁸ Calvert and Cosgrove’s organizing work was also clear in the fact that thirty one of the members of the fourth group were miners from West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Illinois. Though the total numbers of these groups was still far short of the numbers that the organizers had expected when they founded the colony the previous year, by the summer their groups were departing regularly and the groups continued to grow. Thus, at July 19 meeting of AOC, the committee members agreed to set a quota for the fifth group, to be sent in August, at 175 members.⁹⁹

The fourth group, however, marked a high point of AOC’s work, as the momentum they had been building in the first half of the year came to an end with the summer of 1922. This change in fortunes came not from a drop in interest in migrating to AIK, but largely from problems relating to the migrants that AOC had sent to work in Siberia. As early as May, news arrived in New York that a group of miners, known as the Zeigler group, had quickly grown discontented with the mining operations in Kemerovo. Claiming the colony was organized on principles of capitalist exploitation, the group

⁹⁷ “More Pioneers Leave for Siberia” *Soviet Russia* 15 August, 1922, 126.

⁹⁸ “Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 3,” Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 5.

⁹⁹ “Minutes Meeting of American Organizing Committee Kuzbas, July 19, 1922,” Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 26.

sought to break away and form their own colony.¹⁰⁰ As other groups arrived, the ranks of discontented workers swelled, as many who arrived found their new homes to be far from what they expected. This sparked unrest within the colony, which impeded the preparatory work that was required for the colony to begin productive operations.

There is no doubt that many migrants, like those in the Zeigler Group, opposed the colony's directors primarily on ideological lines, but political conflict was just one of several reasons that Americans from the first groups had to be disappointed in their new homes. On April 15, even before the first group of colonists arrived in Russia, Haywood received word from an American in the region that the housing conditions in Kemerovo were perhaps worse than expected, and would likely require that large groups of workers sleep in temporary canvas tents throughout the summer.¹⁰¹ The lack of attention to this matter, as well as a series of other unpopular decisions, led to increasing unpopularity for AIK's Managing Board member Jack Beyer, who had been sent to AIK following negotiations in 1921. Members of the colony opposed Beyer's position for a variety of reasons, including accusations of sexually inappropriate advances towards female workers, but it was his appointment of F.W. Baars as manager of AIK's Kemerovo operations that seems to have solidified non-confidence in Beyer's ability to maintain his position.¹⁰² By all accounts, Baars was an ineffective manager, and his use of his

¹⁰⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 196-197. Schuyler later blamed STASR for the troubles with the Zeigler group. [RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4200, ll. 105-106.]

¹⁰¹ RGASPI f. 515 op. 1, d. 4299, l. 101.

¹⁰² RGASPI f. 515 op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 108, 117.

position for excessive personal gain made him an object of despise in the eyes of those who worked under him. Thus, upon arriving in the colony to investigate conditions on July 1, Haywood dismissed Beyer from his position as a member of AIK's managing board and opened a series of investigations that led Baars to resign soon after.¹⁰³

Both Haywood and Rutgers visited AIK in the summer of 1922, both producing lengthy sets of correspondence describing their assessment of the successes and failures of the colony. The two shared common sentiments regarding the need to change the colony's leadership and the need for more specialists, but their opinions diverged notably in regards to the American migrants that AOC had sent. Though Rutgers was satisfied with the specialists working at the Nadzhezdy works, he chided those at Kemerovo for the amount of time they "wasted at useless meetings," such as those held by the Wobblies at the colony, and suggested that allowing a film crew to come to AIK was absurd because "it is ridiculous to have pictures taken of men doing nothing."¹⁰⁴ Describing the third group, which had recently arrived at the colony, Rutgers wrote disapprovingly of the large percentage of women and children in the group. Overall, he noted, members of the third group "were better organized en route, but may give trouble since they expected beautiful houses arranged for them."¹⁰⁵

Haywood, on the other hand, saw much more value in the work that had been accomplished by the workers in Kemerovo. In the opening letter of his report to the

¹⁰³ RGASPI f. 515, op.1, d. 4300, ll. 20-46.

¹⁰⁴ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 118-119.

¹⁰⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 118-119.

Managing Board, Haywood acknowledged the discrepancy in the two reports, writing that he felt that Rutgers “greatly minimizes the work accomplished by the Colony, having perhaps not taken into consideration the situation existing there before he got on the ground.”¹⁰⁶ Calling attention to Baars’ poor management, the lack of machinery and the difficulty in acquiring items needed for work, Haywood saw the workers as having made impressive strides in the face of adversity. Since Beyer had either been directly responsible for, or had served as a catalyst to, most of these problems, his removal from the board promised to bring about an improved outlook for the Americans in the colony.

The point on which both Haywood and Rutgers agreed, however, was that the imagery of the colony being offered by Calvert and other members of AOC was beyond the reality that faced American migrants upon arrival. Remarking on the poor housing and near absence of sanitation, Haywood noted that he “was not favorably impressed with the surroundings” and that “Calvert had stretched his imagination to the limit when he referred to Kemerovo as a Little Gary.”¹⁰⁷ Echoing his earlier comments about the third group’s expectation of “beautiful housing” in Kemerovo, on August 22 Rutgers noted that the unrealistic picture of Kuzbas held by many of the American colonists meant not only unhappy workers, but additional work for the colony’s management. In discussing the new plan for the colony following Beyers’ dismissal, Rutgers wrote:

“We cannot however neglect the difficult job of organizing the actual work for a group of Revolutionists, not accustomed to submit voluntarily to orders and regulations by whatever authority and brought together without proper selection and often without definite qualifications.

¹⁰⁶ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4300, l. 20.

¹⁰⁷ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4300, l. 20.

Moreover, the ideas they bring from New York and the fantastic expectations as to immediate results and bonus, based on such results, have to be gradually reduced to the cold facts.”¹⁰⁸

Though he remained optimistic that such an adjustment process could be successful with most workers, Rutgers laid down a hard-nosed policy for dealing with those “malcontents” who did not fit in at the colony, proposing that they be sent back to America.

The most notable aspect of this letter, however, is Rutgers’ order that AOC immediately cease its recruiting work, stating that “sending of new groups from America has to stop absolutely” in order to avoid the “catastrophe” that would come from the addition of more migrant groups in the upcoming months. Such was Rutgers’ resistance to additional groups that he proposed AIK pay to send those who had come to New York to join the colony back to their points of destination. Furthermore, Rutgers informed AOC that their current approach to recruitment should be abandoned, as even when AIK began to accept Americans again in the following spring, they would likely only need no more than a very small number of well picked specialists with “a maximum amount of machinery.”¹⁰⁹ The letter arrived in the US too late to prevent the dispatch of another group of colonists, but this fifth group would be the last organized through the

¹⁰⁸ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 141-143.

¹⁰⁹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, ll. 141-143.

recruitment strategies of the Calvert-led AOC. They brought the number of Americans who had joined the colony in 1922 to a total of 458 people.¹¹⁰

Rutgers' ability to ultimately make such a decisive move came as part of a reorganization of AIK's management that had been a looming topic of debate since mid-1922, but finally came to pass at the end of the year. This change was driven by the growing realization that the colony could not achieve the goals it had originally agreed to fulfill in its concession contract, a fact that even brought Lenin to drop his enthusiasm for AIK. As early as April 5, Lenin wrote to Rykov to ask that the Managing Department give AIK serious attention, noting that without assistance, the colony, which he described as an "exceptional concession," may go under.¹¹¹ The following months, however, brought Lenin's faith in the colony and Rutgers into question, and by the end of the summer, his doubt toward the colony and Rutgers became obvious. In an August 25 letter to Rykov, Lenin praised the accomplishments of an American tractor unit led by Harold Ware, but wrote only of AIK: "Has Rutgers achieved anything? I doubt it."¹¹² Thus, even as Lenin remained optimistic about American groups such as Ware's, and wrote statements of appreciation to STASR, his faith in AIK had fallen tremendously by the end of 1922. Considering this growing doubt in Moscow and the conditions on the ground in the colony, it is not surprising that on October 30, the colony's leadership sent

¹¹⁰ "Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1 folder 4.

¹¹¹ V.I. Lenin to A.I. Rykov, April 5, 1922. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).

¹¹² V.I. Lenin to A.I. Rykov, August 25 to September 1, 1922. Lenin Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin>. (Accessed June 28, 2013).

an official letter to STO stating their belief that a reworking of the original concession contract was necessary.¹¹³

Just as STASR's members witnessed a transformation in the Soviet government's administration in late 1922, so did the members of AIK's Managing Board and AOC watch as the original terms of the contract negotiated in 1921 were completely reworked to suit the lessons of the preceding months. The new contract, finally adopted by STO on December 25, 1922, resolved many of the colony's problems by clarifying AIK's authority and confirming its autonomy, but it did so through the consolidation of authority into a three member council, chaired by Rutgers, that had the ability to act independently in making decisions. Not surprisingly, Rutgers used his new authority to impose more rigid rules on the colony's workers, denying the requests of many, including the Wobblies at Kemerovo, that the workers be allowed to handle the management of their own affairs.

The revised AIK contract laid the groundwork for a more disciplined and effectively managed industrial enterprise, but Rutgers' decision to abandon the general recruitment plan established in 1921, and to use local Russian workers in the place of American immigrants, marked the end of Kuzbas as a model NEP-era immigration project, and put the colony more firmly into the camp of other business concessions, such as those granted to foreign investors including Averell Harriman and Armand Hammer, which oversaw the development of an industrial site with a domestic workforce, and brought in only those technical specialists that could not be hired locally. Though Rutgers' new plan required that an American committee work to recruit these specialists

¹¹³ Tarle, *Druz'ia*, 315.

to travel to the colony, these new colonists were primarily motivated by material factors such as income, and thus broke with the earlier migrants, many of who were attracted to the colony through non-material pull factors, as will be discussed in the following chapter. And though some of the American workers at AIK chose to leave the colony and return to the US, many remained in Kemerovo for years to come. Their stories, as well as those of the migrants who came through STASR, is the topic of the following chapter.

By the middle of 1923, the organizations that had been established in 1921 to oversee migration under NEP-era institutions had been transformed, both in terms of their personnel and goals. The transition of immigration authority from VSNKh to STO brought about a change in leadership, and marked the end of Ludwig Martens' tenure as the leading figure in managing immigration. It also explicitly acknowledged the shift in the state's focus from industrial enterprises to agricultural collectives that had been developing throughout 1922. Heller's frustration with Moscow's lack of support for his work drove him to resign his position working with STASR, while the political infighting within leftist circles in the United States led the WPA to force a reconfiguration of the Society's Central Bureau that left it squarely in the hands of WPA's interests. Finally, the catastrophic state of affairs in AIK exposed fractures in leaders' visions for the colony, leading to a reorganization that left the most conservative of the colony's founders, Sebald Rutgers, in control of AIK's operations on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus, though for different reasons, in 1923 the mass recruitment drive that had begun in 1922

came to an abrupt end, and the opportunities for Americans to migrate to Soviet Russia, though still formally available, were drastically reduced in practice.

Perhaps just as significant as the reduction in *quantity*, however, was the change in the *quality* of those whose migration was to be facilitated by the newly staffed offices. The first year of recruitment had been aimed at nearly anyone who wished to go to Russia, with the most significant qualifier being the ability to provide the material resources demanded by either AIK's management or the Soviet state. The new recruiting offices drastically modified the terms on which they would allow migration. For AIK, technical education became the new standard for recruitment, and those with explicit political agendas were to be avoided. Under the orders of WPA, whose leadership saw the emigration of politically aligned workers as a threat to the labor movement in the US, STASR not only ceased its active organization of those who wished to migrate to Russia, but sought to prohibit emigration of Party members and other sympathetic workers. This new limitation on migration virtually ensured the failure of the NEP-era immigration strategy both in terms of the total number of communes formed and the viability of those communes that were already established.

The impact of this shift will be covered in detail in the following chapter, but what is important to note here is that this key factor in the redirection of immigration strategy was neither a result of Americans' dwindling interest in migrating under the terms of the immigration policy, nor a shift in Soviet leaders' desire to use immigrants as a source in economic development. Though the poor results of AIK marked an end to the concession model of immigrant colonies, the administrative shift that took place within the Soviet government was not aimed at changing the terms of immigration policy, but at

clarifying these terms and better fulfilling the state's responsibilities as established in 1921. Thus, even as Lenin expressed his disappointment in the results of AIK, he wrote letters of appreciation to STASR in hopes of mitigating damage that the poor results of 1922 may have had on those considering migration. After all, whatever one's opinion on immigration policy itself, the blatant failure of the state to fulfill its obligations to migrant groups made it difficult to argue that the policy's principles were bankrupt.

Ultimately, the STO commission faced the same problem as its predecessor: it lacked the administrative capacity to fulfill the promises required for the immigration policy to work. Though PKSTO brought together representatives of the most important central offices involved in immigration, the unclear allocation of authority and the competing agendas of officials both within Moscow and in the distant regions in which the migrants settled meant that even a more well organized office was unlikely to impose order on the chaos that was the Soviet state of the early 1920s. For OII, problems primarily came from the limited capacity of the state to enforce policies in Russia, but the reorganization of STASR meant that PKSTO now had recalcitrant agents on both sides of the Atlantic. Making matters worse, the creation of the Soviet Union and the elevation of PKSTO to All-Union status in 1923 expanded PKSTO's responsibilities to a much greater set of territory and actors than those handled by OII. Thus, the improvements that PKSTO brought to administering immigration were more than outweighed by the new challenges facing the Commission's officials in the summer of 1923.

CHAPTER FOUR

“NOT A NEW ATLANTIS, BUT A NEW PENNSYLVANIA” AMERICANS AND LIFE ON SOVIET IMMIGRANT COMMUNES IN THE NEP-ERA

As Soviet officials and their agents struggled to see their immigration agenda carried out, they facilitated the movement of thousands of immigrants from across North America to their new homes in the Soviet Union. As noted in chapter two, the interest in migration, though never generating migration on the scale that Ludwig Martens had imagined in 1921, nevertheless provided the human and financial resources required to establish a substantial number of American immigrant sites. Beginning in the spring of 1922, the first groups organized under the rules of the NEP-era immigration regime began their journey to Soviet shores. Upon arrival, however, both the material conditions of life in their new homes and the administrative deficiency of the Soviet state brought about challenges that migrants had not anticipated. This rough start to the NEP-era immigration scheme led to the reorganization of the offices that had been responsible for immigration in late 1922 and 1923, but did not bring about a fundamental change in the principles of the immigration strategy until NEP-era institutions began to unravel as a whole later in the decade.

The flow of immigration from America to the Soviet Union did not, however, continue to widen as the decade continued, and most of the American communes founded under the NEP-era policy had already been established by 1923. Considering the persistence of official Soviet policy towards American immigration, this drop off in numbers of migrants has long been taken as evidence of the bankruptcy of Soviet immigration policy in the NEP-era, and has served as a proxy for a greater failure of the

Soviet system in general. Given the dismal picture of Soviet Russia painted by influential contemporary radicals such as Emma Goldman, and the stories of embittered returnees from the Autonomous Industrial Colony- Kuzbas (AIK) that circulated widely in the American press beginning in mid-1923, it is not surprising that many historians have attributed the breakdown in migration to ideological disillusionment amongst those who had previously considered immigration.¹ Yet the narrative that flows from these accounts assumes a high degree of irrationality on the part of both immigrants and Soviet policy makers, and overestimates the importance of utopian images in this migration process. In reality, the majority of those Americans who immigrated to Soviet Russia and Ukraine under the immigration policy of the NEP-era carried expectations for their new homes that were far less subject to disappointment than those expressed by embittered returnees in the pages of major American media outlets of the time. These expectations included, but were not limited to, a desire to return to their homelands, a desire to build a new future for Russia, and a dedication to the Communist Party's image of the future. Even many of those who worked at AIK, whose members were among the most ideologically driven of any American colony in the NEP-era, did not share a sense of utter disenchantment with life on the colony. Why then, did the Soviet immigration policy of the NEP-era ultimately fail to generate the numbers that Soviet leaders had expected?

This chapter demonstrates that the responsibility for the failure of NEP-era Soviet immigration policy to fulfill Soviet leaders' goals rests largely with those charged with

¹ Andrea Graziosi, *A New Peculiar State: Explorations in Soviet History*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000); Andrea Graziosi "Foreign Workers in Soviet Russia, 1920-1940: Their Experience and Their Legacy," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 33 (Spring 1998): 38-59.

recruiting and managing immigration. This failure came on two basic levels. The first was the disconnect between the aims of those in Moscow and the recruiters in the United States. As noted in chapter one, for those in Moscow, the primary goal of the immigration regime established in 1921 was to facilitate economic development and to attract immigrants with the class-consciousness and technical knowhow that could play a significant role in transforming the Soviet economy. Though Soviet immigration policy during the NEP-era was aimed at tapping into groups of Americans with non-material incentives for migrating, Soviet officials were always hesitant to recruit those with the most radical ideals, and had all but ended this practice by 1923. At about the same time, concerns that immigration would weaken the American labor movement led a reformed Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (STASR), under orders from the Workers' Party of America (WPA), to further narrow their efforts to non-Party members, and to deny applications submitted by the majority of Party members. This change in policy had two implications. First, by sending groups of immigrants with non-revolutionary expectations for Soviet space as agents of revolutionary transformation, recruiters in the United States made the fulfillment of Soviet leaders' goals highly improbable. Second, this policy meant that the actual numbers of those who immigrated was not an adequate reflection of overall desire to do so.

The second level of failure came through the simple mismanagement of the movement of people and goods from North America to the Soviet Union that took place on both sides of the Atlantic. If the selection process in North America made the probability of the communes' success highly unlikely on a general level, authorities' poor performance provided the material basis for the failure of many communes. This was

particularly the case with the agricultural immigrant communes, where the lack of coordination amongst Soviet offices often left immigrants without even the means to establish production on the level of the individual peasants living around them, let alone build the modern farms that were supposed to charm those peasants into the twentieth century. While those with a more firm dedication to the principles of economic transformation, the goals of the Communist Party, or other such ideals may have been more willing to endure hardships in the short term to reach their long-term goals, those “reemigrants” who increasingly became a larger portion of the immigrant population, had realized their goal of returning home upon arrival. Thus, when faced with the burdens that were often worsened, if not caused by, the state’s mismanagement of their affairs, these immigrants were more likely to abandon their projects and search for better conditions elsewhere.

This chapter seeks to elucidate the complicated life of American immigrants in Soviet Russia by focusing on the experience of the migrants as they set out for their new homes, bringing the expectations they had formulated in America to meet the realities of life on the “Red Frontier.” Though this chapter gives attention to most of the immigrant communes of the 1920s, it specifically compares the life of three sites of immigration established under the NEP-era immigration regime: the Commune “Migaevo” established in Odessa Region of Ukraine in the summer of 1922, the Commune “Kaliforniia” established in Don Oblast the following summer, and the areas colonized by American immigrants in Western Siberia as a part of AIK. These three migrant projects- which differ greatly in terms of both their geographic location and their members’ expectations for Soviet space- provide insight into not only the problems facing immigrants in these

specific areas, but also the greater impact of Soviet immigration institutions on the direction of immigration as a whole.

The immigrant commune that came to be known as Migaevo consisted primarily of Communists who were born in the former Russian Empire, but had settled in North America prior to the outbreak of World War I. These so-called “natives” (*vykhodtsi*) were among the quickest to respond to the opportunities created by STASR and, despite the fact that most members lived in Winnipeg, Canada, they arrived at STASR’s New York office and were ready to depart just a few months after the new immigration policy had been announced. The group members’ anxiousness to relocate is evident in both their rapid organization, and in the fact that they departed for Russia without first sending a scout to secure a plot of land for their farm. This was not in line with the general Soviet policy, which required that all communes dispatch scouts prior to relocation, but the group was able to take advantage of the uncertainty caused by Moscow’s lack of attention to STASR at the beginning of 1922. Thus, these migrants, originally known as the “First Canadian Agricultural Commune” set sail with the STASR’s inaugural group, which included a second agricultural group known as the First New York Agricultural Commune, and the ill fated industrial workers en route to the AMO factory in Moscow.²

After arriving at the Latvian port of Libau and being denied entry into Russia due to the administrative deficiencies addressed in the previous chapter, the group, which consisted of fifty two members carrying \$35,000 in total equipment, was finally admitted

² Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 220-221; GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 51-53.

to Russia on March 31.³ The group was specifically interested in establishing a farm in Soviet Ukraine, and, despite an absence of correspondence with Ukrainian officials, the group was permitted to travel to Khar'kov to search for a plot on which they could establish their commune. Upon arrival on April 15, VSNKh directed a few delegates of the group to Odessa Guberniia, where the provincial land department (Gubzemotdel') presented the delegates with several former estates that remained open for settlement. The delegates chose a plot in the Migaievo region, about 100 kilometers northwest of the city of Odessa. The delegates sent word to the group in Khar'kov to proceed to the commune site, but the local population was already in the midst of sowing their fields, and the time needed to transport the group's freight from Khar'kov put them even further behind. Fearful that the commune would be without food for the upcoming winter, the few delegates at the site began sowing their fields by hand to ensure that at least a portion of their land would yield crops in the fall. Fortunately, the remaining group members, along with three tractors and assorted implements, arrived in time to make significant progress in cultivating the land. The commune members' work yielded impressive results, with a total of 175 dessiatins (approximately 473 acres) cultivated with various crops. Even more impressive is the fact that twenty of the dessiatins were sown by the few delegates prior to arrival of the larger group and their machinery.⁴ Though this case is one with a happy ending, the migrants' concern that they may not be able to plant

³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 363.

⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 220-221.

enough within the sowing season does well to demonstrate the degree to which unexpected delays could completely ruin agricultural communes.

Though the hard earned victory of the summer allowed the commune members to feel more secure in their prospects for the future, they soon ran into equally serious problems that they had not anticipated. With all the focus on ensuring a successful harvest, these migrants had failed to return to the local Gubzemotdel' to negotiate a formal contract for the estate. When they did finally return at the end of the season, they discovered that the land to which they had been given informal rights, and in which they had invested all their efforts in the previous weeks, had since been included in a Sovkhoz Trust (*Sovkhoz Trest*) whose directors were of a much different mind than the leaders of the Gubzemotdel'. Whereas Gubzemotdel' officials had told the communes' delegates that they had the right to use the items that had been left on the estate by its previous owners, the trust not only refused this right, but sent its representatives to seize all of the items that the commune members had not brought themselves. The trust then drew out the contract negotiations for months, ultimately using its leverage to demand the commune members agree to highly unfavorable terms, including a requirement that the migrants surrender ten percent of their produce as a payment to the trust. This did not include additional fees for the use of the estate's windmill, which the trust also demanded. Equally troublesome was the fact that the trust refused to negotiate a long-term contract, finally agreeing to a term of no more than six years. This meant that the commune members were likely to lose all improvements that they had made to the estate in a relatively short period of time, and that the additional migrants being organized by

STASR to join the commune the following year may have reconsidered their decision to leave North America if they were without more long-term security.⁵

The members of the commune did not, however, agree to the trust's terms, and instead appealed to a variety of local and regional land organizations for support in their cause. After gaining the support of the local volost executive committee, on July 26 the presidium of Tiraspol'skii Uezd Executive Committee (*uispol'kom*) ruled in favor of the commune members, noting that their work had quickly made their commune a model for the entire region.⁶ The presidium suggested that the former estate be put at Migaevo's disposal permanently, but that any contract should be for a term of no less than 18 years. In order to facilitate this, the presidium further ordered the commune chairman, with the assistance of a local state land official, to prepare a statement explaining the circumstances surrounding the commune and what motives were driving the commune in its pursuit of a contractual right to the land. After a petition to remove the commune from the land trust received no response from Narkomzem Ukraine, local officials sent a petition, which included the chairman's statement on the group's activities, to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in Moscow, where it drew the interest of leading state officials. Finally, on October 10, the Federal Committee of Land Affairs under the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), took the matter up for discussion, ruling wholly in favor of the Commune's members, and suggesting that the commune be

⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 220-221.

⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 207.

granted an 18 year long contract to the estate.⁷ Though the contract negotiations continued to draw out for the next weeks, by the end of 1922 the commune had secured the right to the land under the terms decided by VTsIK.

The first months in their new homes gave Migaevo's members every reason to have felt disillusioned with Soviet space. Though they had signed forms acknowledging the hard conditions of life in their new homes, "incompetent state administration" was not amongst the factors that migrants had been warned about, and this certainly could have been taken as a reason to turn against the new government and abandon hope in their project. Yet the report drafted in September by the commune's leaders to be included in their appeal to Soviet offices in Moscow shows that even after border delays, stressful weeks of endless work to make up for their late arrival, and the antagonistic position taken by the local trust, the group remained unshaken in its commitment to the establishment of the commune. The account of the commune's history, which was included in the petition to higher state offices, does well to demonstrate the reasons that Migaevo's members remained confident that they would prevail in their struggle to maintain their land.

The account begins by providing a history of the commune's early days, and recounts the problems leading up to the conflict between the commune's leaders and the sovkhoz trust. The authors make clear that the commune members quite narrowly managed to cultivate the land of the estate, but the text of the letter suggests that Migaevo's members saw this as a sign of their commitment to the success of the

⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 224. The suggestion of 18 years was based on the precedent set by the contract negotiated by the First New York Commune, which later came to be known as "Seiatel'."

commune, and less as a reason to complain. In expressing their reasons for this commitment, and their decision to migrate in general, the author explains:

“In coming to Russia, our artel, the majority of which is composed of communists, hoped that we would have to deal with workers and peasants. This faith was instilled in us by [STASR]. We, having lived nearly ten years in America, which became our second home (*rodina*) in which we had already established significant prosperity and settled down with families- we tossed all this aside and, eager to help our brother-workers in the revival of the economy of our proletarian home- Russia, departed for Russia.”⁸

According to the account, Migaevo’s dealings with the Gubzemotdel’ fell in line with what they had expected, but once forced to deal with the land trust, they began to feel a sense of disillusionment with their new homes. Yet Migaevo’s members’ did not perceive the source of this disappointment as the failure of the Soviet state as a whole, nor as the bankruptcy of a lofty utopian dream they had attached to Soviet space, but as a single case of a bad organization standing in the way of their stability. The trust’s problem, according to Migaevo’s members, was that it was not staffed by communists, as the Gubzemotdel’ had been, but instead was run by “specialists,” whose difference in character was evident immediately.⁹ The fact that the delays and hard working conditions had not caused commune members’ disappointment allowed them to maintain their perception of the Communist Party and Soviet state as allies which could be relied upon

⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, l. 221.

⁹ The replacement of communists with the so-called *spetsy* was a common occurrence in industry in early 1922. This case suggests that these specialists, whom Lewis Siegelbaum described as “as much a personification of NEP as were the NEPmen,” may have taken similar authority in certain aspects of agricultural administration. [Lewis Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society Between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 117.]

to help reconcile the problems created by the non-Party led land trust. Fortunately for them, the local Party and state organs in the region of Odessa came to the aid of the commune, facilitating the transfer of Migaevo's petition to higher authorities, and going so far as to petition leaders in Moscow when Ukrainian agencies refused to respond. Thus, despite the tribulations they faced in their first year in Soviet space, Migaevo's leaders could ultimately see the events of 1922 not as a reason to lose faith in the Soviet regime, but as evidence that they had been correct in their expectations of the Party's commitment to immigrants.

In the months that followed, Migaevo served as a model commune. As detailed below, state investigators persistently noted that the problems that plagued nearly every other commune were virtually non-existent in Migaevo's operations. Such was the positive influence of Migaevo on the local population that in late December 1923, peasants living on the commune Novaia Zhizn' ["New Life"] in the vicinity of Migaevo wrote a letter to STASR in the United States requesting that they send to them one hundred migrants such as those living on Migaevo. "We watch our neighbors," explained Novaia Zhizn's leaders in the letter, "and wonder that our Ukrainian comrades, having passed through the brutal school of American capitalism, have been reborn literally to the point of unrecognizability."¹⁰ The striking similarities between these words and Martens' statement in his 1921 petition to Lenin suggest that, even if the immigration policy never lived up to Martens' dreams, it was not without its fair share of shining moments.

The positive outcome of Migaevo's first season on their new estate was not, however, representative of the majority of immigrant communes. On the opposite end of

¹⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 18, l. 5.

the spectrum was the Commune “Kaliforniia,” which, while sharing most of the problems that faced Migaevo, shared none of its positive outcomes. Like Migaevo, Kaliforniia was amongst the first groups to engage the new terms of the NEP-era Soviet immigration policy. The original group of what became the Kaliforniia commune had been formed through the San Francisco branch of STASR in August 1921, and sought to provide relief to Russians in light of news of the famine.¹¹ It was Kaliforniia’s representative A. Kaiutenko who, along with Ivan Selenzev, had departed the US for Soviet Russia on December 17, 1921, and, in February 1922, had been the first Americans whose entry was delayed in Libau.¹² After finally being admitted into Russia, Kaiutenko made his way into Don region of southeast Russia, where he secured the right to a plot of land for the commune’s settlement.

The difference in geographic positioning between Migaevo and Kaliforniia was just one of several major differences in the two communes. A second major factor that came to shape the future of Kaliforniia was the difference between the membership of the San Francisco and New York branches of STASR. The first applications to membership in the San Francisco STASR reveal that the core of that office’s membership was made up of those who had been born in the United States. Of the forty-four applications to the office in August 1921, thirty-two had been born in the US and only five had been born in Russia. Though several applicants reported that they spoke “some Russian” or were

¹¹ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE) f. 478, op. 7, d. 1527, l. 41.

¹² GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 150; GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 2, l. 120. The difference between the departure and arrival in Russia was the result of a planned layover in London.

“studying Russian,” only six of the applicants listed themselves as speaking Russian with no such qualifications.¹³ The members’ occupations also diverged greatly, with few members listing common membership in professional or trade organizations that would suggest ties between members prior to their membership in the Society. Though these members were not all affiliated with the commune that departed in 1922, the overall lack of knowledge of the country, as well as the limited knowledge of Russian language no doubt came to shape the commune’s future.¹⁴

Despite the early departure of the San Francisco group’s scouts, the commune’s first group, consisting of 14 members, did not leave the US until July. Neither the late departure nor the low number of members seem to be in accordance with the group’s original plans.¹⁵ Likely due to this low number, on July 15, 1922, the group signed a contract with a second migrant group from Vancouver, formally merging the group’s resources.¹⁶ Upon arriving in Russia in August, the two groups, both of which had negotiated with local authorities for the right to a plot of land in the Don Region of southern Russia, chose to settle on the land allocated to the San Francisco group in

¹³ This lack of Russian-language competency was a reflection of the relatively small number of former citizens of the Russian empire in San Francisco overall, a number which STASR estimated to be no more than 5,000 in 1910. The same estimates concluded that there were more than 473,000 former Russian citizens in New York. [RGAE f. 3429, op. 2, d. 431, l. 40.]

¹⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 1-44.

¹⁵ Earlier correspondence between OII and NKID indicate that in April, Martens had expected the group would consist of about eighty families and was slated for departure in May. [GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 1.]

¹⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 9, l. 219.

Sal'skii Okrug. They signed a formal contract for this land with Narkomzem on September 11, 1922, and shortly thereafter departed for their new home.

Upon arriving in Sal'skii Okrug, the group discovered that the Don Land Administration (*Donzemupravleniia*) had leased the land that had previously been offered to Kaliforniia to another group for a term of six years. Despite the fact that Kaliforniia had formally been granted the right to that land by Narkomzem, the commune's leaders decided not to protest their condition to authorities in Moscow, and instead accepted a vacant plot of land further south in the region. It quickly became clear why the land had remained vacant. The housing on the plot, like that of many other areas that had been largely unoccupied for years, was in terrible condition. The majority of the land on this lot was unsuitable for intensive farming, and what tools the groups had brought with them were not appropriate for local conditions. Furthermore, though the plot's proximity to a river ensured that the commune would have access to water, the terrain allowed for stagnant water pools to form, making the commune a breeding ground for mosquitos. This factor combined with a lack of medical supplies to bring about an outbreak of malaria in the commune that affected nearly every one of its members.¹⁷ The stresses brought about by these natural conditions quickly revealed divisions within the commune that were too significant for the newly-forged alliance between the two groups to withstand. Thus, in December the members of the Vancouver group broke away from Kaliforniia, taking approximately two-thirds of the commune's property to establish a

¹⁷ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1527, l. 41; RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2184, ll. 2-7.

new commune called Commune “Amerika” in Kubanskiia Oblast’.¹⁸ Having spent the previous months working the land, the San Francisco group chose to remain on the plot.

Despite the hardships, the remaining members attempted to make adjustments necessary to remain on the plot in 1923. In an attempt to restore the manpower and inventory that they had lost with the departure of the Vancouver group, on March 4 the commune voted to accept a proposal from two other communes in the region, whose delegates had agreed to bring their members and equipment to Kaliforniia’s plot and to accept the terms of the contract that had been negotiated between Kaliforniia and Narkomzem in 1922. This merger attempt does well to demonstrate a number of problems that plagued the state’s administration at the time. First, by May 14, when the matter of consolidating the three communes came before the Permanent Commission of the Council of Labor and Defense for Industrial and Agricultural Immigration (PKSTO), the two communes that had sought merger with Kaliforniia had folded and their inventories had been liquidated. Unaware of this fact, PKSTO moved to ask Narkomzem their opinion on the matter, a fact which shows both the disconnect between the regions and Moscow, as well as the continued bureaucracy of the Soviet state even after the

¹⁸ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, ll. 7-34. A later account produced by the Vancouver group explained the split in terms of growing factionalism and threats that the Vancouver group would be expelled from the commune. Though this indicates the possibility that more than natural conditions may have been at work in driving the Vancouver group to leave, most accounts by state officials and the remaining members of the Kaliforniia commune do not mention this conflict. It is thus possible that the Vancouver group fabricated such conflicts as a means of justifying their decision to form a separate commune without first obtaining approval from PKSTO. [GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 159-160.]

establishment of PKSTO.¹⁹ The limited capacity of central authorities is further demonstrated by the fact that PKSTO was unaware of the two communes with which Kaliforniia wished to merge. In sending the issue to Narkomzem on May 16, PKSTO Secretary Berg stated of the communes, “[i]t is known only that they are made up of American immigrants who arrived in 1921- a period in which PKSTO did not exist.”²⁰ Thus, even as PKSTO sought to reconcile the problems inherited from OII, its officials remained affected by the inefficiencies of their predecessors.

The failed merger, numerous bureaucratic tieups and slow delivery of freight that accompanied Kaliforniia’s second American group, all combined to make 1923 an incredibly difficult year for the commune. Only on December 8, 1923 however, did the group petition Narkomzem for the right to relocate to another plot. In their appeals, the group restated the troubles already noted, but did well to frame their concerns in terms that emphasized their inability to fulfill the state’s goals. The presence of marshes, for example, were not noted as problematic for their production of malaria, but were presented as impeding the development of intensive farming. In much the same manner, the more than sixteen miles between the commune and the closest railroad station was noted as preventing the delivery of much of the commune’s produce to the market, suggesting that even if higher production could be reached in the current location, it may not be accessible to the state. Furthermore, the petition noted that the inability to effectively apply machinery to the land meant that the commune would never be able to

¹⁹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1527, l. 17.

²⁰ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1527, l. 16.

achieve the status of a demonstration farm that could convince the local population of the benefits of abandoning their small plots and joining larger farms.²¹ Whereas Migaevo's officials had appealed to Moscow on the basis of shared ideology, Kaliforniia chose to do so on the basis of Soviet leaders' more concrete interests. Despite this difference in tactics, the groups' appeal was effective, and by January 1924, the group had accepted transfer to a sovkhoz in Rostov Okrug which had much better land and was only about two miles from the closest railway station.²²

Motivated by the lack of information on local affairs made clear in its dealings with Kaliforniia and other communes, in the fall of 1923, PKSTO ordered that all immigrant communes be investigated by an independent committee.²³ The investigators, with assistance from local land organs, were ordered to give particular attention to not only the internal affairs of the communes, but also the communes' relationship to the surrounding population. These investigations were to be concluded no more than three weeks following the October order, and were to be submitted to central state offices where they would be combined with surveys (*ankety*) in an attempt to produce an overall

²¹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1527, l. 69.

²² RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1527, l. 80.

²³ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, l. 3. PKSTO ordered the investigation of Kaliforniia in October, but had issued similar orders to local Party authorities in Tambovskii Province a month earlier after receiving information that the First American Agricultural Commune, "Ira," which had previously been considered exemplary, was not in good shape. The findings of that investigation were not, however, included in the November report addressed below. [GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, ll. 10-11.]

report on the state of immigrant communes in the Soviet Union.²⁴ Despite PKSTO's dissatisfaction with the depth of the investigation, the report, which examined eleven migrant communes that had been formed since 1921, nevertheless reveals that the communes that had been established in the first year and a half of the immigration policy fell far short of Soviet leaders' expectations.

On November 15, representatives of the Land Improvement Administration (upravmeliozem) and the Administration Department of the State Land Holdings (goszemimushchestvo) forwarded the conclusions of the investigations to PKSTO. The report divided the communes into three categories: "viable" communes which could be strengthened by relatively small actions, those communes whose continued existence could only be guaranteed through serious state measures, and finally "dying" (*otmiraiushchie*) communes, whose only options were radical transformation or liquidation. Not surprisingly, Migaevo fell within the first category, alongside Bessonovo, Novyi Mir, and Seiatel', while Kaliforniia's struggles led investigators to place it in the second category, along with John Reed, Niva Trudovaia, and Ekho. The final three groups, Krasnoe Znamiiia, Independent Canadian Dukhobors, and Amerika fell into the unfortunate category of "dying," a conclusion which was at least partially confirmed by the fact that Amerika had been liquidated in the period between the investigations and the issue of the final report.²⁵

²⁴ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, l. 4.

²⁵ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2124, ll. 48-50.

One of the most notable findings of the report was the frequency with which migrants were abandoning their communes. This, the investigators concluded, was due to several factors, most of which stemmed from the lack of communist principles being put into practice on the communes. Of the eleven communes, only Migaevo had taken adequate measures to socialize food and goods, with other communes falling far short of the collective life they had agreed to prior to their arrival. The isolation of group members had brought about conflicts, and the failure of most groups to operate on a collective basis did not provide the incentives for migrants to remain on their communes in times of uncertainty. Some departures had not been voluntary; the report noted that communes Amerika and Ekho had expelled “undesirable elements” whose speculation had caused division within the group. The report also revealed some unexpected reasons for desertion; the members of commune “Amerika,” who had left the Kaliforniia commune in 1922, told the investigators that they left because they were not interested in agriculture. Whether this was a cause of, or response to, the commune’s dismal condition at the time of the investigation is not immediately clear.²⁶

²⁶ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, ll. 9-39.

Table 4
Information on Communes Investigated in October 1923

Name of Collective	Guberniia	Uezd	Name of/miles to closest city	Miles to rail station (miles)	Date of collective arrival on land	Plot size (acre)
Commune "Third International" ("Ekho")	Odessaia	Khersonskii	Kherson/ 23	0.3	6/6/23	14,850
First Canadian Agro-Commune "Migaevov"	Odessaia	Odeskii	Tiraspol'/ 23	2.7	5/1/22	3,848
Agricultural Commune "Krasnoe Znamia"	Odessaia	Nikolaevskii	Nikolaev/ 23	27	5/26/23	6,056
Agricultural Commune "Seiatel'"	Donskaia Oblast'	Sal'skii Okr.	Proletarskaia / 2.6	11	9/28/22	12,960
Agricultural Commune "Kaliforniia"	Donskaia Oblast'	Sal'skii Okr.	Proletarskaia / 33	17	10/10/22	2,700
Commune "Amerika"	Kubanskaia Oblast'	Armavirskii	Armavir/ 23	2.7	7/6/23	n/a
Commune "Niva Trudovaia"	Ekaterinoslav	Apostolovsk.	Krivoi Rog/ 23	8	4/4/23	2,295
Independent Canadian Dukhobers	Ekaterinoslav	Melitopol'skii Okr.	Melitopol'/ 30	6	7/1/23	n/a
Commune "Novyi Mir"	Kievskaiia	Berdichevskii	Berdichev/ 12	4.6	10/18/22	2,136
Commune "John Reed"	Podol'skaia	Vinnitskii	Vinnitsy/ 2	4	3/1/22	597
Agricultural-Industrial Collective Bessonovo	Smolenskaia	Viazemskii	Viaz'm/ 27	4.6	11/14/21	1,936

Source: RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, ll. 9-39.

The communes fell equally short in establishing positive relations with their neighboring populations. The report noted that local peasants were generally only interested in the communes in so far as they could provide them with tangible benefits, a burden that few communes could bear considering their own lack of resources. Though some communes were found to have occasionally allowed their neighbors to repair farm implements with their machinery, Migaevo's inexpensive milling of flour for neighboring farmers and its recent acceptance of non-migrants into the commune, had helped it establish a better relationship with locals than the other communes. On the opposite end of the spectrum were Ekho and Novyi Mir, both of which had come into overt conflict with neighboring peasants. Though the report noted that Novyi Mir's situation had been worked out, it also stated that Ekho's neighbors continued "to look upon the commune [members] as unfriendly aliens (*prishel'tsy*)."²⁷

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the report, however, is what it reveals about the presence of Communist Party activity on communes. The investigators noted that only four communes- Migaevo, John Reed, Seiatel', and Novyi Mir- had organized cells of the Communist Party and Komsomol, and lamented that only Migaevo's Party activity was obvious, while the other cells' work was limited by migrants' inability to speak Russian and excessive labor demands in the communes. Yet whatever the state of affairs regarding the intensity of Party work, an analysis of the report suggests that the presence of a Party cell was among the most important indicators of a commune's success. Three of the four communes on which Party cells had been established were listed as viable, leaving Bessonovo as the lone viable commune without a Party cell. The fourth commune

²⁷ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, ll. 9-39.

with an established Party cell, John Reed, did not make it into the top category, but all six Party members had chosen to leave the farm earlier that year due to conflicts within the commune.

The limited information in the report makes it impossible to reach definitive conclusions on Party activity on communes, but the correlation identified above falls in line with the preceding analysis of Migaevo and Kaliforniia to suggest that Party membership was an important factor in the viability of immigrant communes. This adherence to ideological expectations for Soviet space, which has often been treated as an inherent precursor to disillusionment, in fact seems to have actually produced the degree of commitment to a commune's success that was required to overcome the seemingly endless material and administrative hurdles that were part of everyday life in the first decade of Soviet rule. This evidence gives further credence to Richard Stites' assertion that there "was apparently a high correlation between ideological commitment or level of spirit in the commune and its material success," and suggests that migrants' experiences were not completely unlike those of their local counterparts.²⁸

Compare, for example, the differing approaches to local authorities' reallocation of communes' plots taken by Migaevo and Kaliforniia. The former, whose members had been attracted to Russia by both their personal ties and an ideological commitment to helping build "the first government of workers and peasants," immediately petitioned to higher authorities when their land had been allocated to the land trust. As they saw it, the problem was local and could be fixed if the appropriate authorities were made aware of

²⁸ Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Visions and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 221.

their circumstances. Kaliforniia had no such faith and spent more than a year working under horrible conditions prior to seeking a land plot that was of the quality guaranteed under their original contract. In the meantime, competing expectations led to schisms within the group, dividing the commune's manpower and resources, and turning what may have been a single viable enterprise into two struggling communes, one of which had capitulated by the end of 1923. What's more, despite the regional variations in Soviet administration, location did not seem to be a strong factor in a commune's performance, as some provinces held both thriving and struggling communes. Thus, though it is by no means an indicator of guaranteed success, the evidence suggests that shared ideological commitment gave communes an advantage over those with more dispersed interests.

On December 24, PKSTO issued its conclusion on the inspection report. Though PKSTO's officials agreed that the report made clear that communes were in need of much more regular and direct supervision by local land organs, they stated that the report lacked the type of specific information that could allow them to reach conclusions about the needs of each particular commune.²⁹ The inspectors themselves had drawn attention to these shortcomings in their report, noting that the members of only four communes- Bessonovo, John Reed, Novyi Mir, and Migaev- had done a good job in filling out the questionnaires, with Kaliforniia, Krasnoe Znamia, Amerika, and Seiatel' providing inaccurate and incomplete information to the inspectors.³⁰ Thus, after requesting that land organs take a more active role in the communes' lives, PKSTO proposed that the

²⁹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, l. 44.

³⁰ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 1535, l. 10.

communes be invited to send representatives to a general meeting of communes to be held in the near future.

Three months later, on March 5, 1924, the first, and what would be only, meeting of foreign immigrant communes in the USSR opened in Khar'kov. Eleven communes- Nina Trudovaia, Kleborob, Novyi Mir, Krasnyi Luch, Seiatel', Kaliforniia, Koit, Krasnoe Znamia, Selianskaia Kul'tura, Lenin, and Migaevo- sent representatives to this conference, which provided migrants with a forum to engage directly with Soviet officials in finding solutions to the most pressing problems facing the communes.³¹ The Soviet state was represented at the conference by PKSTO Chairman V. A. Smol'ianinov, as well as representatives of Narkomzem's RSFSR and UkSSR offices. The meeting also coincided with STASR secretary Jacob Golos' trip to Soviet Russia, making the conference the first time that representatives of the communes, the Soviet state, and STASR were all present at a single event.

Though the communes' representatives had no shortage of complaints, the problems they identified were not cased in revolutionary rhetoric; when the communes' representatives identified problems with state officials, they tended to see this as more of a problem of a particular office or individual than a failure of the Soviet state itself. Perhaps the most notable aspect of immigrants' complaints is that they came not from the state's interference in their lives, but primarily from the state's lack of action on their behalf. Several communes, for example, reported that they had requested support from local state-employed agronomists, only to find local state offices irresponsible or

³¹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2119, l. 2. Kaliforniia and Seiatel' sent one delegate, identified only as "Papkov," to represent both communes, however the conference stenograph indicates that he was actually a member of Seiatel'.

unwilling to show up for scheduled meetings. Immigrants also expressed their need for the state to provide loans that would allow the communes to purchase the supplies they required to continue their work.³²

The nature of the immigrant communes also produced its own dissenters, but the type of complaints, as well as the means through which their assessments flowed, was, as we shall see, very different than those of AIK. Several of the communes' representatives acknowledged that they had lost members who had become disillusioned (*razocharovannyi*) and who had left the communes. Some of these individuals had remained silent about their discontent within the commune but had written letters back to their relatives in America telling a dismal story of the state of affairs in Russia, and asking that they send money. According to the accounts given at the meeting, however, the primary cause of this disillusionment was not ideological, but resulted from the straining material conditions the immigrants faced.³³

Despite the reduced tendency of political disillusionment in these groups, their accounts nevertheless came to shape the images immigrant life in the Soviet Union abroad. The less spectacular accounts in these letters made them of less interest to major newspapers than the stories of those arriving from AIK, but the closeness of immigrant networks in America acted as a conduit that allowed these accounts to have a notable

³² RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2119, ll. 3-91 passim. The stenogram of the conference is also located in GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 27.

³³ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2119, ll. 3-91.

impact on the attitudes of potential recruits for Soviet immigration projects.³⁴ It also seems that the more negative accounts of life in the communes often overshadowed the more positive reports, as even STASR's representative at the Kharkov meeting, Secretary Jacob Golos, admitted that, based on the information he had received in the US, he was surprised to find the communes doing so well.³⁵ The fact that STASR's secretary had no awareness of life on the communes that he was responsible for organizing, however, suggests that these letters home may not have not been the only reason that American immigrants were failing to live up to Soviet officials' expectations.³⁶

The insights that came from the Kharkov conference were further developed by another series of state-ordered investigations of communes that came shortly after the conference's conclusion on March 7. On April 19, Narkomzem RSFSR's office in South-east Russia forwarded the materials related to their investigation of Kaliforniia, Seiatel', and Independent Molokans, whose communes were located within the offices' jurisdiction.³⁷ Though the correspondence relating to Kaliforniia's conflict with the

³⁴ Kitty Lam has also pointed out the importance of personal communication networks within ethnic groups in relationship to the migration of North American Finns to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. [Kitty Lam, "Forging a Socialist Homeland from Multiple Worlds: North American Finns in Soviet Karelia, 1921-1938," *Revista Română pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice*, 2, no. 2 (2010): 203-224.]

³⁵ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2119, ll. 2-91.

³⁶ A 1925 investigation of STASR's activity later found that Golos had failed to fulfill nearly all the responsibilities that the Society had given him. This report is treated in more detail in the following chapter. [Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), f. 515, op.1, d. 541, ll. 1-39.]

³⁷ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2184, l. 1.

Vancouver group had already drawn Soviet leaders' attention to the region, the April report revealed problems with the immigration plan that had not yet been fully acknowledged. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this report was its detailed analysis of the reasons the emigrants had departed the commune. Though abandonment of communes was not uncommon, the report revealed that Kaliforniia was particularly prone to this phenomenon. Investigators noted that since the first group of settlers had arrived in September 1922, a total of seventy-five people had been members of the Kaliforniia commune, fifty-four of which had left the commune by early 1924.³⁸ Not surprisingly, the poor selection of land for the commune was identified as the primary reason for this departure, and five departures were directly attributed to illness.³⁹ Yet the report also pointed to push and pull factors that were largely outside the bounds of the commune's material conditions. Noting that no fewer than twenty-one of those who had departed had moved to either their former homes or, as in the case of sectarians, had joined communities of fellow believers, the report concluded that "many members of the commune used the organization only for the purpose of a cheaper and simpler move from America to Russia, which is why these individuals immediately upon arrival departed either for their homeland in various parts of Soviet Russia, or joined with Molokans of

³⁸ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2184, ll. 2-7. The members had arrived in three separate groups, with the exception of three local Russian women who had joined the commune after marrying commune members, and a family of three local Russians who had joined in March 1923.

³⁹ Perhaps attempting to absolve themselves of any culpability for leasing the land that Kaliforniia had originally been promised to someone else, the investigators blamed the poor land on the commune's scouts' lack of familiarity with agriculture.

Dukhobors, or otherwise took up personal affairs in commerce or otherwise.”⁴⁰ The remaining departures were attributed either to a lack of agricultural experience or a dislike of communal life. Even the commune’s former scout, Kaiutenko, had left the commune in December 1923 to pursue commercial affairs in the town of Armavir.

The investigators concluded with a somewhat optimistic appraisal that the commune had much better prospects on its new land plot, and a report from later in the year confirmed that the commune had grown from a total membership of twenty-one members to eighty-eight members, yet Kaliforniia nevertheless serves as an example of the importance of STASR’s work on the fate of immigrant communes.⁴¹ Though the commune had experienced significant growth, the bulk of the new members had come not from migrant groups organized in the US, but from the inclusion of forty-five additional members from the surrounding population. By all accounts, a significant portion of the trials that had faced the commune since its arrival in 1922 had been due to its personnel, a factor that was almost completely in the hands of STASR. The Society was effective in ensuring that migrants met the financial requirements of the immigration policy, but fell far short when it came to ensuring that those migrants wishing to join agricultural groups had any agricultural experience. Though the reorganization of STASR’s Central Bureau in mid-1923 was ostensibly aimed at resolving these issues, the second CB’s greater dedication to preventing the departure of Party members ultimately worsened the performance of immigrant communes; after all, STASR would not have

⁴⁰ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2184, l. 3.

⁴¹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2940, l. 2.

allowed the group at Migaevo the right to migrate if they had applied a year and a half later. It should not be surprising then, that a 1925 report found the groups sent to Kaliforniia by the second CB had a higher desertion rate than those sent by the first CB.⁴²

At this point it is important to note that very few of those who migrated to Soviet Russia as part of an agricultural commune sought to return to North America. Though peasants had very real reasons to be upset with their circumstances, and commune abandonment was not uncommon, the evidence suggests that many who left sought reunification with their families or opportunities elsewhere inside Soviet borders, not a return to their lives across the Atlantic. Of course, there were exceptions. Two members of Migaevo who had arrived in March 29, 1923 sought to return to Canada two years later for unspecified reasons.⁴³ In a more extreme case, the Sedminek family, en route to the Ekho commune in southern Ukraine in October 1923, decided to halt their journey once they arrived Libau.⁴⁴ Yet these returnees were only a handful of the thousands of Americans who migrated to Soviet space in these years. Of the fifty-four people who had departed from Kaliforniia by March 1924, for example, only one was described as having departed for America due to illness.⁴⁵ The overwhelming mass of documentation in Soviet archives makes it clear that the vast majority of voices being heard by PKSTO

⁴² RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 541, l. 27.

⁴³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 64, l. 172.

⁴⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 23.

⁴⁵ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2184, l. 3.

were from those wishing to come to the Soviet Union, not from those who wished to leave.⁴⁶

It is also important to keep in mind that my research encountered no evidence of a concerted effort amongst Soviet authorities to deny any American migrant the right to return to North America so long as they held the documentation required to ensure they would be admitted once they arrived in American ports. In fact, most of the documentary evidence in PKSTO's files relating to those wishing to return has been in the form of PKSTO's rulings granting permission for departure. Not only was PKSTO willing to tolerate these returnees, its leadership sometimes served as advocates for those whose departure was held up by NKID. In the case of the Sedminek family, for example, Smol'ianinov wrote directly to Litvinov demanding that their documentation be returned, and warning NKID officials that holding Americans against their will could lead to "unwanted diplomatic complications."⁴⁷ Even after PKSTO successfully petitioned to become the primary arbiter of the right to leave Soviet borders in February 1925, its members were concerned almost exclusively with ending human trafficking, a topic which will receive more thorough consideration in the final chapter of this dissertation. Though Soviet leaders remained concerned about the damage that unhappy returnees

⁴⁶ Though mass departure of migrant sectarians occurred after the state revoked their right to abstain from military service, it is important to keep in mind that this was not a result of the deficiencies of the immigration policy, but because of the beginning of efforts to dismantle this system.

⁴⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 23. Handwritten at the bottom of this document is the phrase "Reference: Passport received and given to Com. Sedminek."

could do to the reputation of the USSR abroad, for various reasons they made no coordinated attempt to prevent these individuals from returning to America.

For all the similarities between the terms of migration offered to those wishing to migrate, it is abundantly clear that those who ended up at AIK differed greatly from their counterparts who joined STASR's agricultural communes. As covered in chapter two, the recruiting strategies pursued by AIK's American Organizing Committee (AOC) were not simply aimed at informing those who already wished to migrate of the means through which they could do so, as was the case with STASR's strategy, but were instead saturated in a rhetoric that expanded the ways that Americans could understand the possibilities that awaited them inside Soviet borders. This difference meant that, whereas those who migrated as a part of STASR's groups were overwhelmingly re-emigrants whose interest was at least partially based in their loyalty to their former homes and/or families inside the former Russian Empire, or the goals of the new modernizing Soviet regime, those who migrated through AIK held far more divergent expectations for Soviet space that were not so simple to fulfill. It was the American migrants to AIK who were most incensed when they found that their new homes bore no resemblance to the lofty images they had painted with their imaginations on the beige canvas of imprecise information and chose to return to America to share their stories of terror with an American press that was anything but disinterested. Though they represent but a small handful of the total Americans who migrated to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, these vocal returnees formed a chorus with the denouncements coming from Emma Goldman and others to create a façade of universal disillusionment with the Soviet project.

In the summer of 1922, five groups with a total of about 450 members left the US to join the colony in Siberia.⁴⁸ The first of these groups departed on April 8, 1922, with the remaining four departing in roughly one month intervals. The migrants took with them cash and materials paid for by members' requisite payment, but the colony also benefitted from Americans' desire to help in relieving the terrible conditions facing Russians at the time. One of the later groups, for example, took along with them a set of water pumps that had been donated to the colony by "friends" of the colony in Charlotte, North Carolina, a fact which demonstrates both Americans' willingness to make significant investments in restoring the Soviet economy, and the degree to which word of the colony had spread even beyond the industrial centers of the US.⁴⁹

An article in the August 15, 1922 issue of *Soviet Russia* does well to capture the diversity in the fourth group of colonists, which departed on August 15. Within the group were representatives of thirteen nationalities, with the largest being "United States" (twenty-five), Finnish, (fifteen), Russian (fifteen), and Lithuanian (ten). The article further noted the myriad geographical origins and occupations represented within the fourth group:

"The party numbered 135 of which 84 are workers and the remainder dependants. Thirty-one of the men were miners from Pennsylvania, Illinois and West Virginia. The remaining members were

⁴⁸ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4296, l. 17; RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, l. 105; "Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Millie and Herbert S. Calvert Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 1 Folder 4. According to Millie Calvert, there were 458 Americans who left in the summer of 1922.

⁴⁹ "Calvert, Herbert and Millie; The Kuzbas Story, Chapter 3," Calvert Papers, Box 1, Folder 5.

farmers, machinists, electricians, lumbermen, engineers, etc. Jacob Klein, farmer and Leonard White, engineer, came from Alaska to join the party. Van Erickson, a young farmer from Seattle took along with him a dozen Rhode Island Reds with incubator and other poultry breeding requirements. As the Rotterdam left the rooster was crowing defiance to the steamer's siren, and affording much amusement to the departing pioneer.”⁵⁰

Such a jovial description of the rooster was indicative of a general positive attitude toward the migrants, which were described as “thoroughly equipped with tools and clothing,” and “well fitted to stand the rigorous Siberian climate.” Thus, though this article was pushed to the final pages of this issue of *Soviet Russia*, it nevertheless presented a positive image of AIK.

The diversity shown here does well to demonstrate that the work of AOC's recruiters had paid off, yet the inclusion of individuals from such a wide variety of backgrounds meant an almost equal number of expectations for what awaited them in the colony. As shown in the above comparison of Migaevo and Kaliforniia, such differentiations rarely benefited an immigrant community, and more often served as a means of exclusionary cohesion in times of conflict. This proved to be true in the case of Kuzbas, as hardships within the colony pushed colonists into groups along lines of ethnicity and ideological affiliation. Perhaps the most important factor at work here, however, is that the two most significant indicators of a commune's success- Communist

⁵⁰ “More Pioneers Leave for Siberia,” *Soviet Russia*, 15 August, 1922, 126. Numbers given here conflict with those given in the papers, which say there were a total of one hundred migrants in the group, thirty-six of which were Finns. This number, however, was given in the materials for the incomplete third chapter of the Calvert's book on Kuzbas, thus making the contemporary account in *Soviet Russia* the more reliable of the two sources. Whatever the case, there is no doubt that the group had representatives of several diverse ethnic and citizenship groups. (“Kuzbas Story, Chapter 3,” Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 5).

Party membership and dedication to Russia as home- were not significant pull factors in the migration to AIK. Instead, the most dominant ideological influence in AIK was that of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a group whose anarcho-syndicalist philosophy was predisposed to conflict with the Communist Party and opposition to any perceived interference in workers' right to self-government.

The concept of migrating to find "home," was equally problematic for the members of the commune who had been born in the United States. As noted in chapter two, much of the language used by the AOC and its allies evoked an image of Soviet space that harkened idealized images of the American frontier that were not available to Americans in the 1920s. Thus, for many native-born Americans who went to Kuzbas, the site they imagined was not a physical home, but a place in which circumstances produced a set of opportunities that were nonetheless familiar upon the idealized map of Americans' historical memory. Whereas even the most disappointed reemigrants could find something familiar in the people, culture, or language of those who surrounded them, the more idealistic native-born Americans had little to salvage as they found that the most salient commonality they shared with the American pioneers of the nineteenth century was the uncertainty of life and the looming threat of succumbing to the frontier. Yet even this most desperate of situations produced only a handful of embittered migrants who returned to the United States.

There is little doubt that AIK promoters used overly grandiose language in describing what awaited migrants in the colony. Calvert's proclivity to exaggeration, a characteristic that had concerned Rutgers from the beginning, was shared by Mike Gold and other promoters who had even less experience in Russia than did Calvert. Even Bill

Haywood, himself prone to bouts of exaggeration, acknowledged Calvert's description of Kemerovo as a "Little Gary" was inaccurate after visiting the colony in July 1922.⁵¹

Perhaps the case that best illustrates the degree to which this language took on a life of its own came in September 1922, when the editors at *Colliers* refused to publish an article on Kuzbas written by Charles Wood. Wood, who had previously written articles on AIK, then wrote to AOC member Mont Schuyler explaining that the editors had all agreed that Wood's article was "a whale of a story" about a project that the editors all agreed wouldn't go much longer without intervention. Their rejection, he explained, was not due to political bias, but was based on journalistic concerns due to lack of facts and inability to substantiate state guarantees.⁵² "Can you shoot me some definite information of performance so far," Wood wrote to Schuyler on September 2, "something that will permit me to write of Kuzbas as a going proposition and not merely as a dream?"⁵³ Clearly, neither Wood nor the other members of the AOC considered concrete information a necessary prerequisite to describing the wonders that awaited Americans in their new Siberian homes. It is not surprising then, that migrants may have found the descriptions offered by Wood and other such boosters to be inaccurate representations of the place that awaited them.

⁵¹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4300, l. 22.

⁵² Wood wrote at least one earlier piece on AIK, which was published in the February 12, 1922 issue of the *New York Daily World*. ("Kuzbas Story, Chapter 2," Calvert Papers, Box 1 Folder 4).

⁵³ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 4299, l. 152.

When the first groups of migrants, consisting of fifty-five men, seven women, and an infant arrived in Kemerovo in late May, they quickly found that that the town was without many basic necessities. A housing crisis forced many of the migrants to make homes in the rail cars that had brought them to the town, while others were given only worn out tents. Each group that arrived exacerbated the housing shortage. Ruth Epperson Kennell, who arrived with the fourth group, noted that at the time of her arrival on August 25, “[t]here seemed to be a feeling of resentment in the colony at our coming, since there were not enough houses for the three groups that were already there.”⁵⁴ Yet the lack of coordination among AIK’s offices allowed for the AOC in New York to continue sending groups, even as those working in the colony knew that the housing situation would not be resolved until at least the end of 1922, when a community house was slated for completion.⁵⁵ The town also lacked even basic sanitation, resulting in high rates of disease and an infestation of cockroaches and other vermin.

The American colonists also found that the Kemerovo mine was not a vacant site upon which they could easily cast their own will, but was occupied by the Kuzbas Coal Trust. The trust’s *spetsy*, which had been running the mine since before the concession contract was signed, were by no means anxious to cede their authority to the newly arrived foreigners, and continued to occupy much of the best housing in the town well after they were supposed to have handed authority to those appointed by AIK. Much like

⁵⁴ Ruth Epperson Kennell, “A Kuzbas Chronicle,” *The Nation*, 3 January, 1923, 7.

⁵⁵ J.P. Morray, *Project Kuzbas: American Workers in Siberia, 1921-1926* (International Publishers, 1983). 94-95.

the *spetsy* who had impeded the work of Migaev, these local specialists were unwilling to voluntarily recognize the guarantees that had been negotiated with higher ranking, but distant state offices. Unfortunately for the Americans, the AOC had done a poor job of verifying migrants' professional qualifications, and early mishaps resulting from migrants' mistakes helped bolster the *spetsy's* claims that the Americans were not prepared to take over the mine.⁵⁶ This complicated the implementation of the colony's plans, and especially incensed the members of the IWW who were opposed to any outside interference in the colony's affairs.

Unlike the other colonies, however, AIK suffered no food shortage, and the variety of dishes available in the migrants' kitchen may have been one of the few areas in which the ethnic diversity of the colony produced a positive result. Though the trust's opposition to the migrant colony hindered the development of the agricultural lands that were supposed to provide for the colony in the long-run, the two-year supply of food that every migrant was required to bring with them ensured that the colony had ample nutrition until these conflicts could be worked out. Kemerovo also had electricity, a hospital and several cultural institutions such as a library and a gymnasium (the latter of which had been formerly been the local Orthodox church).⁵⁷ Thus, despite the colony's many deficiencies, it was spared many of the depravations that were facing other parts of Russia in 1922, most notably the famine that had gripped the country's European territories.

⁵⁶ Morray, *Project Kuzbas*, 100-101.

⁵⁷ Morray, *Project Kuzbas*, 99-107 passim.

These amenities were not, however, substantial enough to prevent some migrants from abandoning the colony. Though all migrants had signed a contract to work a minimum two years at the colony, both AIK and Soviet officials allowed migrants to return to North America, so long as they forfeited their financial investment in the colony. The first group to depart, which the other colonists dubbed the “white feather” group, did so on September 3, 1922. These twenty former members were given a month’s supply of food and transportation to Petrograd where they could arrange their return trip to the US. According to Kennell, “[s]ome left Kuzbas because they were dissatisfied with the living and working conditions; others had proved to be misfits and trouble makers; still others were just plain homesick.”⁵⁸ In their return home, many of these individuals were delayed several times, and Haywood later ran into some of them much later in Moscow. Yet the fact that in 1922 and 1923 about fifty members of the colony were not only permitted to leave, but also were given the material resources required to do so, provides valuable insight into the freedom of movement that was very much a part of the 1920s in the Soviet Union.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Kennell, “Kuzbas Chronicle,” 9.

⁵⁹ Morray, *Project Kuzbas*, 139. A few accounts deny this claim to freedom of mobility. Returnee G.A. Gunnar, for example, claimed that he was initially denied the right to leave the colony, and was forced to remain in Kemerovo for about two months before finally being allowed to leave on February 1, 1923. He also notes that at the time of his departure he was given a passport to travel to the Manchurian border, about \$25 in rubles and a food allowance calculated to last a month. Gunnar’s account may be accurate, but the fact that his return trip from China to San Francisco was partially paid for by the *Chicago Tribune*’s correspondent in Peking gave him some incentive to produce a more sensational story. [G.A. Gunnar, “American Flees Soviets’ Utopia as From Plague,” *Chicago Tribune*, 11 May, 1923.]

As these members of the white feather group began showing up in American ports, they carried with them stories of the horrors of life in the colony that were of great value to a highly interested American press. As early as August 1922, reports of the colony's failure began appearing in the American press. An August 4, 1922 article from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, for example, gave an account of two American travellers from New York who claimed they had come across American colonists while travelling from Chita to Moscow on the Trans-Siberian railroad. Upon arriving in Riga, the New Yorkers told their story to reporter Donald Day, noting that the migrants were starving and being held against their will. The travellers claimed that the migrants had asked them to warn Americans to stay in the US "and instead of collecting money to aid starving Russia...raise funds to help us return."⁶⁰ By the following day, some version of Day's article had appeared in other major American newspapers as far away as Los Angeles.⁶¹ Given this willingness to accept such highly inaccurate accounts of the colony, it is no surprise that newspapers were more than anxious to publish the accounts of unhappy returnees as they began to arrive in the US.

No more than eight of the approximately fifty individuals who returned in these years shared their stories with the press, but those who did were given ample space for whatever miseries they could describe. Between May 6 and 11, 1923, for example, the

⁶⁰ Donald Day, "I.W.W. Colonists From U.S. Rebel in Red Russia," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 August, 1922. The two Americans who had supposedly come across the Kuzbas pioneers were civil mining engineer Word Leigh and Equitable Trust representative John S. Burroughs. The articles gave no information as to why these two individuals were in Russia.

⁶¹ "Haywood's I.W.W. Band Mutinies in Russia," *New York Times*, 4 August, 1922; "Wobblies Say Soviet Failure," *Los Angeles Times* 5 August, 1922.

Chicago Tribune dedicated four lengthy articles to returnee G.A. Gunnar's tales of horror and misfortune as a member of the Kuzbas colony.⁶² The most significant of these returnees, however, was Thomas Doyle, whose accusations that he and his family had been tricked into joining the colony eventually led to criminal charges against all nine members of the AOC in April 1923. According to Doyle, who claimed to have paid \$1,000 to join the colony, the colony's organizers had lured them and hundreds of other Americans "with their promises of a wonderful Utopia free from capitalism's oppression," only to deliver them into the material and moral depravation of life in the colony. In particular, Doyle was incensed by the practice of "free love," which he claimed was "enforced everywhere under Lenin's rule." "Day and night," he claimed, "these bewiskered Slavs would accost Mrs. Doyle, insisting that she yield." "There never was a more radical red than I was last May," Doyle told a reporter for the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, "so I went to the home of the reds- Russia- and they cured me forever."⁶³ As the Doyles told more tales of their treatment in Russia, newspapers across the country continued to cover their case with little effort to maintain accuracy in their reporting. Though the charges were eventually dismissed by local courts, and the Doyles' were

⁶² "Yank Exposes Bill Haywood's Russian Utopia," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 6, 1923.; "Soviet Utopia Winter Horror to Hungry Men," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 8, 1923.; "Kuzbas Leaders Never Heard of 50-50," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1923.; "American Flees Soviets' Utopia as From Plague," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 11, 1923.

⁶³ "Lies and 'Free Love' Cure U.S. Reds in Russia," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 7, 1923. The Doyles' story was also covered by the *Washington Post*, ("Charge Huge Fraud in Russian Colony," *Washington Post*, April 8, 1923.), the *New York Times* ("Starved, Robbed Back from Russia," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1923), and the *Los Angeles Times* ("Bill Haywood in Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1923.), all of which listed the Doyles' investment as \$1,100, not \$1,000 as the *Chicago Tribune* had cited.

shown to be of questionable integrity, the press had little reason to give equal coverage to stories that drew their own reporting into question.⁶⁴ It is not surprising then, that the narrative of migrants' disillusionment that monopolized the major American press in the early 1920s retains a foothold in the historical narrative nearly a hundred years later.

The Doyles' account of life in Kuzbas is, however, worth serious consideration, if not as a source of accurate information on life in the colony, then as a means of understanding the reasons that AIK became a target of media criticism. Though any of the colony's members would have had plenty to complain about, the Doyle's story overlooks these reasons, and instead provides a fabricated tale of forced immorality, state suppression, and a naïve utopian who was fully reformed by his experience in Soviet Russia. Ironically, these images were just as, if not more embellished than, those being evoked by AIK's promotional materials. This proliferation of an equally extreme vision of the failure of Kuzbas, and newspapers' interest in spreading this version of disillusionment, however, suggests that the AOC's co-opting of American concepts such as "frontier," and the overall suggestion that Soviet space was the heir to the legacy of freedom through colonization may have actually evoked a sense of anxiety within American society that the media sought to put at ease. After all, not only did the media put no such effort into telling the stories of returnees from the STASR colonies, but the *New York Times* ran a remarkably positive article on reemigrant agricultural colonies just

⁶⁴ In addition to their claims against the AOC, the Doyles also claimed that while in Russia another Kuzbas member, Noah Lerner, had bragged to them that he had been responsible for the September 16, 1920 Wall Street bombing. Lerner was arrested in New York on May 12, but his alibi was sufficient to allow him to walk free a week later. Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: The Story of America in its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 306-307.

a few weeks after the Doyles filed their charges against AIK. The author of this *Times* article, however, did not fail to remind readers that things at Kuzbas were not going well.⁶⁵

The sense of disillusionment with AIK was not, however, limited to those who chose to leave the colony, as the political, social and material challenges of life at the colony combined to challenge the expectations of even the more practical individuals. Such was the frustration that on December 26, 1922, less than a year after the first group of American workers arrived at AIK, the Kemerovo Branch of the IWW passed a resolution to send a memorial to Rutgers outlining their grievances with the reworking of AIK's contract and the new labor laws that had recently been passed in Soviet Russia. The essence of the workers' discontent was founded in the general sense that the conditions in the colony had come to resemble those in the United States, with the Soviet state replacing the American capitalists as the "master class." Soviet officials' threats of violence to solve conflict, the colonists explained, were "not uncommon in West Virginia but....rather unseemly in Soviet Russia."⁶⁶ This disappointment was further echoed by

⁶⁵ Arthur Ruhl, "Back to Old Russia as Pioneers," *New York Times*, 29 April, 1923. What seems to separate the STASR immigrants in Ruhl's mind is the fact that they are reemigrants who have benefitted from their time in America, which has made them agents of progress. Ruhl did not fail, however, to chide the idealists at the commune, noting that it remained unclear "[h]ow long this enthusiasm will last when the differences between the industrious and thrifty and the lazy and impractical begin to assert themselves, as they must, sooner or later, when wives and gossip and family bickerings begin to cloud the collective sky..." The article did not mention the commune by name, but it is almost certainly Migaevo.

⁶⁶ "A Memorial to be Presented to S.J. Rutgers, Member of the Managing Board of the Kuzbas Colony by the Kemerovo Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World," Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 23 Folder 5.

Kennell in a journal article of February 12, 1923, which was published in *The Nation* the following May:

The first period of the revolution, the period of excitement, romance, and adventure, is passed in Kemerovo as elsewhere in Russia. We have now settled down to the drudgery of reconstruction. The management of Kuzbas does not wish to bring over class-conscious workers as such. Kuzbas wants trained workers, qualified for particular jobs. It is no place for political theorists to work out their dreams or for individualists to express themselves. The reconstruction problem in Russia is a machine problem. Russia needs American machinery with human machines to operate it. Those who stay and those who come over must expect to accept this program, as they must accept the dictatorship of the Communist Party, without question. It is only upon such a substantial foundation of practical reality that Russia can hope to erect the new social order. We are building here, not a new Atlantis, but a new Pennsylvania.⁶⁷

Thus, by the winter of 1923, the project had ceased to be a space in which the idealized frontier of the American past intersected with the limitless possibilities of the revolutionary Russian future, and became a place where the Russian present took on the less desirable characteristics of its American counterpart.

In the end, the impressive accomplishments of the American workers at AIK never served to fill the gap left by the demise of its utopian promise; after growing to over 400 members in the fall of 1922, in the following years, the colony only recruited enough new American members to replace those who left. Thus, in the years between AIK's founding and its cancellation by the Soviet state in 1926, AIK never came close to attracting the 6,000 American workers that Rutgers and Calvert had expected to attract to

⁶⁷ Ruth Epperson Kennell, "A New Pennsylvania," *The Nation*, May 5, 1923, 511-512.

the project when they had established it in 1921.⁶⁸ This low number was not, however, a result of a lack of interest in migrating to Soviet Russia; the reworking of the AIK contract at the end of 1922 brought with it a major shift in the colony's recruiting strategies, and by 1923 the AOC's focus had gone from mass recruitment to the pursuit of a limited number of skilled workers who could only be located outside of Russia. Though there is little doubt that the embellished images being proliferated by the AOC were unsustainable in the face of mounting evidence of AIK's material conditions, it was not this strategy's failure to attract colonists, but its success in attracting the *wrong kind* of colonist, that ultimately led the colony's leadership to reorient its recruitment strategy. Because this shift occurred several months before the Doyles' accusations appeared in the press, it is not possible to gage the effect of this bad press on Americans' interest in AIK. What is certain, however, is that the quantity of those who went to Kuzbas in the years that followed could not have been a function of these disillusionment stories.

Though AIK's failure to live up to the expectations of its most radical members has helped to characterize the colony's history as one of failure, these disillusioned members tell only part of the story. One should not forget, for example, that despite the fact that most of the original plans for the chemical factory were not available, AIK's members managed to complete the factory in February 1924. For many of its members, AIK was a fundamentally positive experience that shaped their political lives and allowed them to imagine the Soviet project as one in which they had participated. Nemmy Sparks and Harry Kweit, who had traveled to Kuzbas with the first group, chose to return to the United States not as a result of any dissatisfaction with their situation, but because of a

⁶⁸ Morray, *Project Kuzbas*, 108.

sense that they had laid the foundation for the enterprise and were no longer needed there.⁶⁹ After returning to the United States in September 1924, Sparks joined the Communist Party, to which he remained committed for the rest of his life, serving terms as head of the Wisconsin and Southern California Communist Parties.⁷⁰ Others who came to AIK chose to remain at the colony well beyond the end of their contracts, leaving only after the new Russian management reorganized the colony so as to reduce wages and efficiency of the enterprise.⁷¹

Taken as a whole, the information above provides valuable insights into the ultimate failure of NEP-era Soviet immigration institutions to live up to Soviet leaders' expectations. Those in Moscow who had championed the policy in 1921 were unable to see to it that the policy was effectively implemented at nearly every level. Disagreements among various top offices in Moscow led to unnecessary border delays for migrants and their possessions that were especially problematic for agricultural communes. Moscow's inability to enforce regulations in its periphery brought about tremendous setbacks for

⁶⁹ Nemmy Sparks, "Lenin and the Americans at Kuzbas," *New World Review*, (Fall 1971): 84-86.

⁷⁰ Sparks also spent much of his later life working with Herbert and Mellie Calvert and Ruth Epperson Kennell to produce a book on the history of AIK. These materials make up two folders in his personal papers, which are located in the Reuther Library Collections at Wayne State University, which also hold the Calverts' papers. [Nemmy Sparks Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 8 Folder 3-4.]

⁷¹ Such was the new director's mismanagement of the operations in Kemerovo that in 1928 he was found guilty of negligence and abuse of power, stripped of his post and membership in the Communist Party, and sentenced to an eight year prison term. [Murray, *Project Kuzbas*, 173.]

communes ranging from the failure of local offices to provide technical expertise, to the outright denial of migrants' right to settle on the site they had been guaranteed. And Moscow's lack of control over the recruitment process in North America allowed recruiting agents to send over groups of Americans who were poorly suited to life in Moscow. Thus, the success of farms such as Migaevo was often carried out in spite of, not because of, the state's management of immigration.

Though all three of these factors were at play in the NEP-era, perhaps the most significant was Moscow's lack of control over the recruitment process. As we have seen, the communes that saw the most success were those composed primarily of reemigrants whose members were ideologically sympathetic to the Communist Party. This meant that when the new STASR Central Bureau began to restrict the migration of Party members in mid-1923, it not only limited the quantity of people and supplies that would have otherwise been channeled through Soviet immigration institutions, it also very specifically eliminated those individuals who were the most likely to raise the quality of the communes. The pool that remained consisted almost exclusively of those who wished to join groups as a means to return to their former homes. As suggested by Soviet state investigations of communes, and later proven by an STASR investigation committee, these migrants were likely to abandon their groups and return to their former home towns when life on the communes became difficult. Though several communes were able to mitigate the damage of these departures by inviting local peasants to join their farms, these new members offered neither the technical skill nor the capital investment that American migrants had to offer.

This conclusion challenges depictions of the Soviet immigration policy of the 1920s as primarily driven by utopian visions of what Soviet space and American workers had to offer one another. Though neither Soviet officials nor migrants found in each other exactly what they had expected, their expectations were largely practical. When migrants expressed their discontent with Soviet state agents, they most often spoke of the state's failure to fulfill very tangible obligations. The notable exception to this rule was the Kuzbas colony, whose recruiters had taken liberty with their information to make AIK more appealing to those considering migration. Yet even this site produced only a handful of vocal dissenters who returned to the US. It is likely that these figures' accounts damaged the reputation of the Soviet Union as a whole, but there is no evidence that these accounts had any effect on Americans' interest in migrating. By the time the most prominent of these accounts appeared in the American press, both AIK and STASR had ceased mass recruitment of American workers.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE END OF THE NEP-ERA IMMIGRATION POLICY

By the middle of 1923, the stage had been set for the end of the NEP-era immigration policy. Already in 1922 the industrial projects envisioned by Ludwig Martens, as well as the immigrant-run concessions championed by Sebald Rutgers and Herbert Calvert, had given way to the agricultural migrant commune as Soviet leaders' preferred means of turning migrants into a force of economic development, but the chaos of the 1920s made it nearly impossible to create the environment in which agricultural communes could thrive. As the decade continued, the terms of migration were opened up to foreigners from areas outside North America, yet the leaders of the Permanent Commission of the Council of Labor and Defense for Agricultural and Industrial Immigration (PKSTO) remained unable to deliver the benefits which were at the root of the argument for implementing the policy in the first place.

At the heart of this failure was Soviet officials' inability to live up to the terms of the contracts they had offered potential migrants, which was a function of PKSTO's inability to ensure that those with contradictory interests in both the capital and the Soviet periphery followed their obligations under the policy. By the second half of the 1920s, this persistent disorganization of the Soviet state had undermined the social forces that were supposed to fuel the success of the immigration policy. Thus, much like so many immigrants who had migrated to the Soviet Union under their supervision, PKSTO's leaders found themselves equipped with a set of tools that, however well crafted, were not suited to the new circumstances in which they found themselves.

That is not to say that the NEP-era immigration strategy couldn't have continued to function beyond its official end in the first months of 1927; groups of Americans continued to express their desire to migrate to the Soviet Union under the terms of the NEP-era policy well into PKSTO's last months. Yet numbers were low, and there was no chance of a substantial financial gain from those who remained interested. After all, the primary goal of NEP-era immigration policy had always been economic development and, for the majority of the policy's advocates, facilitating mobility was incidental. On the other hand, those who opposed the policy due to political concerns (espionage, black market trade, etc) had been told that the economic potential was worth the political sacrifices, and were ordered to strike deals on the basis of shared short-term interests. By the middle of the decade, events on both the domestic and international stage brought about a new focus on security concerns that began to shift the balance between economic and political considerations away from the former and toward the latter. After years of evidence that the immigration strategy provided insignificant economic gains, and without Lenin to defend it, by 1925 the policy was open to attack from People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (NKID) and others who had long detested the policy for its lack of attention to security concerns. By 1926, even the Commission's own leaders had become convinced that PKSTO could be liquidated.

The demise of the NEP-era immigration strategy in late 1926 and early 1927 serves as an early case study of the processes that brought down the NEP-era strategy as a whole. Much like other NEP-era policies directed toward capital acquisition, such as the establishment of a grain market and the recruitment of foreign concessionaires, the immigration strategy relied on striking deals with those who had short-term goals that

were in line with those of the Soviet leadership. Soviet officials made these deals with little concern for the contradictory long-term goals of their new partners; so long as Soviet leaders maintained their belief that the collapse of capitalism was imminent, the long-term intentions of those with opposing ideologies were largely irrelevant. Though results varied, all such economic deals required that non-state actors, such as peasants, foreign capitalists, and migrants, make up-front investments in the Soviet state, which in turn required that said actors had faith that the state would live up to the terms of their policy. As the first decade of Soviet power came to an end, non-state actors had adequate reason to doubt the state's trustworthiness, and thus became less and less willing to take on costs that they perceived as unlikely to yield benefits. The growing realization of the limits of NEP-era strategy in the middle of the decade was met with a growing consensus that capitalism was in recovery and a resurgence of siege mentality that led many Soviet leaders to side with those who opposed the NEP-era immigration policy.

From the very beginning of the NEP-era, Soviet immigration officials in Moscow, like so many of their counterparts in other central state offices, had failed to manage those individuals and offices outside the capital upon which the success of the immigration strategy relied.¹ This had been partially a function of the center's own negligence, as in the case of Ludwig Martens' irresponsiveness to queries from the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia (STASR) regarding immigrants in 1922, but

¹ In 1924, Felix Dzerzhinsky, chairman of VSNKH and head of the Cheka wrote: "We have almost every trust doing just what it pleases, it is its own boss, its own Gosplan, its own Glavmetall, it is its own VSNKh, and if anything does not work out right it hides behind the backs, and receives the support, of local organs." [Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (Penguin Books, 1989), 91-92.]

was primarily caused by the state's simple lack of ability to ensure that these non-central offices complied with orders issued by the government in Moscow. In the case of the Kaliforniia commune, for example, local authorities refused to recognize immigrants' right to settle on land that Soviet officials in Moscow had guaranteed them, and instead directed them to a plot of land that was wholly unsuitable for farming. In breaking away from the farm and forming the ill fated commune Amerika, the migrants themselves proved just as willing to dismiss central authorities in favor of the local, negotiating the right to transfer without so much as notifying PKSTO or the People's Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem) who were nominally in charge of such actions. And though PKSTO proved more effective in handling such affairs than the Supreme Economic Council's (VSNKh) Office of Industrial Immigration (OII), it remained incapable of guaranteeing local cooperation when its orders were not in line with the interests of local authorities.

The events of summer 1923 only served to exacerbate these problems. On June 24, the second Congress of STASR elected a new Central Bureau (CB), replacing the majority of those who had been loyal to Moscow with a core membership whose allegiance was to the Workers' Party of America (WPA). STASR's election had been called as a means of alleviating the growing tensions between the original CB and the WPA, the latter of which feared that the mass migration being called for by STASR and some elements of the Soviet leadership in Moscow, would weaken the American labor movement by serving as something of an early 20th century 'brain drain' for those who would likely otherwise be active members of the WPA. Taking the place of Fedor Wilga as Secretary of STASR's CB was Jacob Golos, a Ukrainian-born revolutionary who had

come to the US in 1909 after fleeing a lifetime sentence imposed by Nicholas II. A former Bolshevik, Golos continued his revolutionary work in the US, and by 1921 had become a highly influential member of the Russian section of the WPA. This influence, combined with his established ties to WPA leader Charles Ruthenberg, made Golos the ideal candidate for those looking to prevent mass migration of communists to the Soviet Union.

One of the first tasks taken on by the new CB was the consolidation of power into a single entity that was under the direct control of the WPA. On July 8, for example, Golos wrote to the Armenian section of STASR, ordering that they appoint a committee that could work with CB to work out a plan to merge the two groups.² Golos also began petitioning both PKSTO and WPA for STASR to take over the remaining functions of the Kuzbas office, citing STASR's ability to carry out the tasks of both offices for a much lower cost than that of the two ostensibly independent offices.³ On August 29, Ruthenberg even went so far as to order the CB itself to relocate to Chicago, where the WPA's leadership was centered.⁴ Ruthenberg ultimately decided to abandon this plan a few weeks later, but only after a lengthy appeal from Golos, assuring the CB's loyalty,

² Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 364, op. 1, d. 11, l. 321.

³ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI) f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 41-42, 45. Golos claimed that STASR was already assisting Kuzbas, the later of which relied on STASR's staff for translations of Russian language correspondence.

⁴ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 51-55.

and pointing out multiple reasons why the relocation would undermine STASR's usefulness to the WPA.⁵

The events surrounding the proposed move sparked a new wave of dissent within STASR's CB, this time led by the two members of the original CB who had been reelected, A. Finkleberg and A. Gorelik. On October 22, the two gentlemen resigned their positions on the CB, and two days later sent a report on the state of STASR and the reasons for their resignation.⁶ Central to this decision was the WPA's usurpation of the CB's authority. Correspondence sent from PKSTO to STASR, they charged, was only received after being filtered through the WPA. They also claimed that Golos and the WPA has disregarded resolutions of the CB on several occasions in which the CB's position was contrary to their own. In discussing Ruthenberg's orders to relocate to Chicago, Finkleberg and Gorelik claimed that not only were they told that their opposition to the relocation would be tantamount to a breach of WPA party discipline, but they were also ordered not to inform PKSTO of the potential location change.

The report also pointed out the various detrimental effects that the rulings of the second congress of STASR had brought about for the Society. Chief among these was that the selection of the new members of the CB based on political loyalties, and not practical qualifications, had brought about a tremendous turn for the worst for STASR. The authors claimed that the new CB had not only failed to organize new immigrant groups, but had allowed those that had been organized by the previous CB to disband.

⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 37-38.

⁶ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 51-55.

This negligence had also caused the disbanding of thirty of STASR's sixty-five regional offices, and a dramatic decrease in the activity of most of the remaining thirty-five. The authors also attributed this shrinking influence to the decision to replace their own bulletin, *Vestnik*, with a weekly supplement in the Russian language paper *Novyi Mir*. The shift in publication also resulted in a reduced revenue stream, which was further exacerbated by the reduction of STASR membership fees to less than half their former level. Though PKSTO managed to convince the Finkleberg and Gorelik to retake their positions on the CB, their return did not mark a beginning of reconciliation; on November 15, they wrote to inform PKSTO that two additional members of the CB, I. Garbuz and M. E. Perepilkin, had joined them in their opposition to the actions of Golos and the Workers Party⁷

Despite the opposition within the CB, STASR continued to serve primarily the interests of the WPA. On several occasions, the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party wrote to STASR to reaffirm their commitment to preventing "comrades" from migrating to the Soviet Union. On June 24, 1924, Ruthenberg wrote to Golos concerning an American Party member who had attempted to get credentials through the Soviet embassy in Canada:

In regard to the general Party policy, the policy of the Party is that Party members should not leave the country for Soviet Russia..... When comrades desire to go to Soviet Russia and apply to the Technical Aid they should be referred to the Party to secure permission from the Party first and the Party will pass upon the applications and if they are refused this will make it unnecessary for you to take any action, whereas in case the application should go to you first there may be many instances in which the application will be granted and later the Party will not grant

⁷ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 63-66.

permission. Also it will give the Party greater control of these applications.⁸

Though loyal to the WPA, Golos himself seems to have been aware of the importance of Party members to a communes' success. On May 7, 1925 he wrote to Ruthenberg requesting permission to organize an agriculture commune made entirely of Party members. Once again, Ruthenberg maintained his position, reminding Golos that "the Party does strenuously object to the organization of communes made up entirely of members of our Party...[and] communes should be organized as far as possible of non-Party members with only a sprinkling of Party members; for the purpose of Communist propaganda and giving the communes a Communist character."⁹ Thus, in impeding the migration of those most likely to build successful communes, the WPA and its sycophants on the CB continued to undermine the credibility of the NEP-era immigration policy.

The new CB proved no less effective in squandering possibilities presented by other social groups, most notably Molokan and Dukhobor sectarians who had emigrated from the Russian empire in the last decades of Tsarist rule. These sectarians had fled Russia to avoid religious persecution, but, ironically, were given the right to return to their former homes by the overtly atheist Soviet government.¹⁰ On February 2, 1922 the

⁸ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 411, l. 18.

⁹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 509, l. 12.

¹⁰ Lenin was particularly interested in religious sectarians, whom he viewed as "natural communists." [Vadim Kukushkin, "A Roundtrip to the Homeland: Doukhobor

Molokan khodik Ivan Selenzev who had accompanied Kaliforniia's delegate Kaiutenko as the first to arrive in 1922, proposed to relocate approximately 2,000 Molokans then living in Mexico and the southwestern United States, provided that they be exempt from any obligation to use violence or work against their religion.¹¹ Further evidence of the primacy of economic over ideological factors in the early NEP-era, the College of Narkomzem approved land contracts with sectarians as early as April 12, 1922.¹² The original CB had seen great success in organizing amongst these groups; the first group of the Independent Dukhobors of Canada left for Russia almost exactly a year later, on April 11, 1923, and the first group of Molokan sectarians from San Francisco followed less than a month later.¹³ After a somewhat slow start, the sectarians proved to be such a vital economic force that just a year after they arrived, PKSTO formed a committee to look into encouraging Dukhobor immigration to the RSFSR.¹⁴

By the time the committee was formed, however, the new CB had critically damaged the formerly strong connections between the sectarian groups and STASR. The CB's original organizer amongst the sectarians was dismissed at the second congress of STASR, and his replacement, P. Antoniuk, brought Molokan and Dukhobor emigration

Reimmigration to Soviet Russia in the 1920s," Doukhobor Genealogy Website, <http://www.doukhobor.org/Kukushkin.htm>. (Accessed June 29, 2013).]

¹¹ GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 144.

¹² GARF f. 382, op. 4, d. 625, l. 92.

¹³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 11, l. 79-80, 85.

¹⁴ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE) f. 478, op. 7, d. 2140, l. 54.

to a near standstill. This, according to Finkleberg and Gorelik's October 24, 1923 report, was a result of Antoniuk's "tactless attitude," which had halted the departure of seventy-five Molokan and one hundred Dukhobor families who were slated to leave for Russia.¹⁵ Though other factors, including difficulty selling their land in North America, were no doubt at work in this delay, Finkleberg and Gorelik's accusations were later substantiated by a June 28, 1925 investigation into STASR's activities, which noted that the "inactivity of the central bureau and shameful misdeeds of comrade Antoniuk while on a tour [amongst sectarians] have annihilated the splendid possibilities of fruitful work among the sectants, on whom the USSR has placed so many hopes."¹⁶ Here again, Moscow's inability to control its agents outside the capital proved detrimental to Soviet policy.

The CB's new strategy did allow the deployment of additional groups to existing communes, but even this reduced work load proved difficult for the new leadership. Perhaps the most blatant evidence of the CB's incompetence came in June 1924, when STASR's poor planning incited a group of eighty-eight migrants to riot against the CB. According to the June 1925 report, the riot happened after STASR's leaders took the

¹⁵ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 51-55.

¹⁶ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 541, l. 39. It is not clear exactly what Antoniuk did to earn such scorn from the sectarians, but this was not the first time his character had come into question. Antoniuk was an original member of the STASR's CB, but had left during the conflicts between the CB and the WPA in the spring of 1923, at which time it seems he may have stolen money and documents from STASR's office. As part of the investigation into this, Wilga interviewed one of the maintenance workers in STASR's office who noted that just the night before, Antoniuk had come into the office and "puked all over the room, sink and bathroom." The worker followed that Antoniuk had "a habit of throwing news papers all over the room and throwing matches all around him self and may start a fire and burn the place down." It seems like no stretch of the imagination then to expect that Antoniuk's falling out with the sectarians may have been alcohol related. [RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 250, ll. 31, 33.]

group to the ship on which they were to sail two days before the ship departed, forcing the migrants to return to the city and find lodging for two additional nights. This led the migrants to threaten violence against the members of the CB, with Garelik “insulted and only luckily [escaping] a beating.”¹⁷ Their anger was apparently not cooled by the trip across the Atlantic, and upon arriving, the migrants gave a report on the affair to PKSTO’s officials in Odessa.¹⁸ The lone new group the CB formed in these years was the commune Rybak (fisherman), which folded shortly after arriving in Russia.

According to the June 1925 report:

The Commune “Fisherman” organized by the new bureau was formed not of fishermen but sailors. When they arrived in Russia the commune fell to pieces. The fishing equipment bought [in the USA] and entirely unfit in the conditions there, is now rotting in a Sochos. [sic]¹⁹

Before the equipment could be left to rot, however, the members of Rybak were able to experience the anxiousness of waiting for their materials to arrive for some time after they had landed in Russia, a common experience for American migrants in these years.²⁰

The investigation carried out in summer 1925 by an independent group appointed by the WPA’s Central Executive Committee, which produced the report referred to

¹⁷ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 451, l. 7.

¹⁸ STASR’s officials reported the situation to PKSTO on June 27, but attributed the problem to inadequate lodging on the ship, a story that was likely at least partially true. They did not, however, make any mention of any riot. [GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 1, l. 107.]

¹⁹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 451, l. 26.

²⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 1, 107. Rybak’s members petitioned PKSTO to request information on the status of their goods, but according to Golos, they had been informed that it would take two months for the freight to arrive.

Table 5
Total Number of People and Goods Transported to the Soviet Union
June 1924 to November 1926

	Month	People	Freight Value	Baggage Value	Cash	Total Value of Goods
1924	June	96	\$41,300.00	\$35,451.00	\$10,379.00	\$87,130.00
	July	15	\$4,091.00	\$5,791.00	\$6,080.00	\$15,962.00
	August	80	\$8,001.00	\$15,214.00	\$22,650.00	\$45,865.00
	September	2	\$650.00	\$450.00	\$3,000.00	\$4,100.00
	October	17	\$1,719.00	\$4,355.00	\$4,142.00	\$10,216.00
	November	2	\$389.00	\$743.00	\$2,200.00	\$3,332.00
	December	3	\$186.25	\$1,075.00	\$7,045.00	\$8,306.25
1925	January	19	\$9,732.00	\$3,751.00	\$300.00	\$13,783.00
	February	133	\$26,624.00	\$46,470.00	\$16,937.00	\$90,031.00
	March	34	\$24,070.00	\$14,800.00	\$12,882.00	\$51,752.00
	April	85	\$36,064.00	\$28,750.00	\$7,910.00	\$72,724.00
	May	82	\$12,610.00	\$25,272.00	\$5,804.00	\$43,686.00
	June	20	\$27,167.33	\$5,627.43	\$5,725.00	\$38,519.76
	July	56	\$7,058.99	\$18,695.00	\$8,544.00	\$34,297.99
	August	2	\$5,765.99	\$1,015.00	\$2,674.00	\$9,454.99
	September	0	\$5,104.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,104.00
	October	0	\$3,131.26	\$0.00	\$2,349.30	\$5,480.56
	November					n/a
	December	3	\$100.00	\$670.00	\$330.00	\$1,100.00
1926	January	11	\$5,319.27	\$500.00	\$800.00	\$6,619.27
	February	24	\$12,379.42	\$6,525.00	\$5,200.00	\$24,104.42
	March	18	\$22,008.48	\$2,580.00	\$3,050.00	\$27,638.48
	April	29	\$5,483.92	\$5,000.00	\$2,550.00	\$13,033.92
	May	91	\$12,825.16	\$24,620.00	\$25,180.00	\$62,625.16
	June	42	\$3,248.68	\$10,900.00	\$5,300.00	\$19,448.68
	July	1	\$3,795.26	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,795.26
	August	20	\$15,991.96	\$4,025.00	\$5,990.00	\$26,006.96
	September	21	\$2,074.84	\$7,180.00	\$27,200.00	\$36,454.84
	October	1	\$10,659.80	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,659.80
	November	11	\$6,112.39	\$3,000.00	\$1,300.00	\$10,412.39
	Total	918	\$313,663.00	\$272,459.43	\$195,521.30	\$781,643.73

Source: RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 720, l. 61-65.

above, brought about yet another shake up in STASR's CB, and on January 10, 1926 Golos wrote to Ruthenberg asking that he be released from his position for two years, and that his membership be transferred to the Russian Communist Party. Interestingly enough, this came in response to Sebald Rutgers' personal request that Golos return to the Soviet Union to work in Kuzbas, a proposition which the WPA approved.²¹ Golos' resignation did little to change STASR's performance in the following months, as the WPA continued to block party members from emigrating. The death of Ruthenberg in March 1927 made matters worse, as rivalries for succession brought the former allies, Gorelik and Finkleberg, into conflict with one another.²²

It is worth repeating that neither the complicated life of STASR's Central Bureau nor the low quantity of those who actually migrated are clear indicators of Americans' disillusionment with the Soviet project or proof of Soviet officials' intention to prevent immigration. Though it would be foolish to suggest that unhappy returnees had no effect on Americans' enthusiasm, interest in migration to the Soviet Union obviously remained prevalent enough to convince the WPA's leaders that losing those who wished to move to the Soviet Union would be detrimental to the interests of the Workers Party. Though the political realities of the time may have led the WPA's leaders to overestimate this threat, the archive provides evidence that, throughout the 1920s, Party members and others continued to petition the highly restrictive immigration policy, which many incorrectly

²¹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 720, l. 41.

²² RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 1068, ll. 44-46. The ubiquity of the battle between the two factions is evident in the fact that, in October 1927, Gorelick requested that STASR's CB again be reorganized to include three "Fosterites," even as the Society was slated for liquidation.

perceived was being enforced by the Soviet government. There is no doubt that the financial obligations required to join groups served to prevent some poorer Americans from migrating, but the non-economic restrictions on migration were almost exclusively a function of the WPA's control over STASR. There is no better evidence of this than the fact that PKSTO granted visas to 100% of the 1,505 people from the United States whose applications to enter Soviet borders as part of an agricultural commune were presented to the to the Commission between October 1922 and August 1925, and denied only fifteen of the 554 applicants to industrial communes in the same period.²³ In other words, when Americans' applications made it to Moscow, Soviet officials almost always approved them.

STASR's defection was perhaps the most significant case of local impediments to PKSTO's work, but it was far from the only case in which local officials prioritized their own interests over orders from Moscow. As noted in previous chapters, officials in lower-level offices had regularly disregarded orders from central offices from the very first days of communes' existence. PKSTO's management of lower-level offices became even more challenging when, on July 20, 1923, the Council of Labor and Defense (STO) passed a resolution elevating PKSTO to an All-Union level. This shift brought about a new leading figure in Soviet immigration, as Eiduk was replaced by the much better connected Vadim Aleksandrovich Smol'ianinov as head of PKSTO USSR. Thereafter, PKSTO was not only in charge of helping shape regulations pertaining to the RSFSR, and management of immigrant groups coming to Russia and Ukraine, but was responsible for expanding the existing Soviet immigration institutions to all areas of the

²³ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 1, l. 48.

Soviet Union, each with its own unique issues and perspectives on how to handle immigration.²⁴

One of the most challenging issues facing Smol'ianinov and his colleagues in PKSTO was the establishment of a land fund to be allocated specifically to immigrant groups who wished to start collective farms. In collecting data about available land and local environmental conditions, and then placing the right to distribute said lands in the hands of central authorities, Soviet officials hoped to overcome the types of overlapping claims that had proven so detrimental to Kaliforniia, and to provide more accurate information that could help communes purchase equipment most appropriate to the conditions at their future homes. Work on this fund had begun prior to PKSTO's elevation to the All-Union level, but Smol'ianinov proved far more effective in gathering information from local land organs than his predecessor, and by December of 1923, PKSTO had a list of more than 500,000 acres that had been appointed to the land fund.²⁵

Managing the immigrant land fund, however, turned out to be much more trouble than making a list of empty land parcels. Local officials protested the requirement that the land allotted to the fund be leased out to non-immigrants for no more than a year, claiming that the policy discouraged locals from taking over sovkhoses on which they may have otherwise chosen to settle, ultimately delaying the improvements that the fund was supposed to facilitate. In some cases PKSTO was willing to grant exceptions to this

²⁴ Galina Tarle, *Druz'ia Strany Sovetov: Uchastie Zarubezhnykh Trudiashchikhsia v Vosstanovlenii Narodnogo Khoziaistva SSSR v 1920-1925*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 169.

²⁵ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2124, l. 69.

requirement, but local officials were often required to replace a particular farm with another plot in their district.²⁶ In other cases, local officials continued the established practice of nodding their heads to Moscow while carrying on as they had before. On February 26, 1924, for example, PKSTO informed the Perm Gubzemupravlenie that officials in Moscow had discovered that two of the plots they had supposedly set aside for immigrants had been subsequently rented out for a five year period. Given PKSTO's limited enforcement capacity, however, there was little Smol'ianinov and his associates could do aside from order that officials in Perm provide two replacement plots of equal value.²⁷

The challenges that PKSTO USSR inherited from its predecessor became even more serious as PKSTO worked to expand the immigration institutions of the RSFSR to the entirety of the newly-formed Soviet Union. As early as December 7, 1923, Smol'ianinov forwarded STO a draft of new immigration laws with the request that the draft be verified by STO and forwarded to SNK USSR for approval.²⁸ The draft reaffirmed the earlier resolutions of STO, but proposed additions to the law to account for issues that were not clear or had not been anticipated. One of the most significant proposed changes was simplification of contract negotiations regarding immigrants' use of land, which had previously required approval from Sovnarkom. Whereas the earlier legislation treated immigrants' land contracts as essentially the same as concession

²⁶ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2124, l. 90.

²⁷ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2124, l. 89.

²⁸ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, l. 1.

contracts granted to foreign capitalists, Smol'ianinov proposed an alternative approach which required that land contracts be negotiated through the regional offices and central organs of PKSTO and the Narkomzem of the corresponding Soviet Republic. The draft also sought official acknowledgement for the expansion of the land trust as well as reaffirmation of religious sectarians' right to be free from military service. The draft embodied PKSTO's commitment to reemigrants' right to return to the Soviet Union, asking that reemigrants be clearly defined in the legislation, and that all former citizens, as well as those who gained Soviet citizenship, should have the right to land from the land fund.²⁹ In addition, the new legislation addressed emigration from the USSR, which PKSTO's leaders felt deserved closer supervision.

In early 1924, PKSTO's proposed All-Union legislation was forwarded to various state offices for review, including Sovnarkom USSR's Commission of Legislative Proposals (KZP) and representatives of the Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Transcaucasian Republics to obtain their feedback on the new laws. KZP in turn sent copies of the proposals to representatives of the republics, as well as various Soviet state offices in Moscow, asking for their response to the proposed legislation.³⁰ Remarkably, in early 1924 the central offices- including the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS), VSNKh and even NKID - had little opposition to the proposed legislation, and suggested only minor changes to the draft.³¹

²⁹ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 2-3.

³⁰ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 19-22.

³¹ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 31, 34, 39.

This impressive show of coordination was not, however, seconded at the level of the non-Russian Soviet republics, where, with the exception of Belorus, republic-level officials opposed aspects of the proposed policy.³² For the Transcaucasian Socialist Federated Socialist Republic (TSFSR), the draft proposed an allocation of authority that was contrary to the TSFSR's constitution, which did not allow Narkomzem TSFSR to negotiate contracts without the approval of the Sovnarkom and Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the republic.³³ According to TSFSR representative Ter-Gabrizlian, the involvement of the republic's Sovnarkom and TsIK was necessary not only for legal purposes, but was also essential to ensuring that the interests of the local population were not compromised by ill-informed decisions regarding immigration and land distribution.³⁴ Ter-Gabrizlian's concerns on this issue were also likely influenced by the questions of legitimacy that faced the two year-old TSFSR as it attempted to centralize rule over the recently independent lands of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, while almost simultaneously ceding authority to Moscow as it joined the Soviet Union.

The most fierce and persistent opposition to the draft came from the UkSSR. On May 3, 1924, after months of silence in response to Moscow's request for Ukraine's

³² A similar struggle over citizenship was taking place at the same time, with Ukraine playing a similarly vocal role in opposing a single Soviet citizenship policy. [Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 155-157.]

³³ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 26. The Transcaucasian Socialist Federated Socialist Republic (TSFSR) was formed in March 1922 and encompassed what later became the Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijan Soviet Socialists Republics.

³⁴ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 37, 55.

position on the proposals, UkSSR's All-Union representative wrote to inform KZP officials that they could not agree to PKSTO's terms without major revisions. According to the letter, the proposed terms were not legal, and would "ruin the barrier of legal sovereign rights of the individual republics."³⁵ Like Ter-Gabrizlian, UkSSR's officials also expressed concern that the new proposal would prevent republic-level offices from responding the unique needs of their population.

In mid-May, PKSTO notified UkSSR's representatives that they were willing to amend the draft to include a requirement that all affairs concerning specific republics would be undertaken in consultation with representatives from said republics.³⁶ This change seems to have put to rest TSFSR's opposition to the draft, but UkSSR's representatives were by no means satisfied. On June 25, they finally responded with amendments to several of the draft's major points, including a demand that the language regarding republics' rights be more firmly defined.³⁷ The primary issue identified in this correspondence, however, was Ukraine's wish to be formally excluded from the immigrant land bank, which the draft proposed expanding from the RSFSR to all other republics. Though UkSSR was willing to uphold the contracts that they had worked out with immigrant groups to that point, Ukrainian officials stated that they needed the available land to use as part of an internal colonization program aimed at providing farm land to those already living inside Soviet borders. This opposition to participation in the

³⁵ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 59.

³⁶ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, l. 61.

³⁷ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 66-67.

land bank was not simply a case of Ukrainian officials fighting for their right to sovereignty, but was based in material concerns as well; since 1923, Ukraine had begun to receive substantial financial support from American-based philanthropic groups aimed at resettling Jews from the shtetl onto agricultural “colonies.” These groups, the most notable of which was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), had proven far more effective than immigrant groups in providing the foreign capital and agricultural expertise that rural Ukraine lacked, but without the complications that plagued the immigrant communes.³⁸ Reallocating land from the internal colonization fund would almost certainly mean depriving the republic of external resources, while increasing the burden of local administrators who would be required to monitor and assist the less-well supported immigrant communes.

The issue of republics’ representation in PKSTO evolved as it passed through various state offices, but ultimately the Commission never granted the republics the degree of sovereignty demanded by the Ukrainian leadership. By the time a revised draft was approved by KZP on November 11, 1924, the proposal listed PKSTO’s membership as representatives of the Economic Conferences (EKOSO) of the Soviet Republics, confirmed by STO.³⁹ When KZP’s draft was transferred for review by STO just a month

³⁸ E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, (MacMillan, 1958): 519-529; Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924-1941* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005). During its fifteen-year existence (1923-1938) the JDC’s colonization agency in the Soviet Union, the Joint Agricultural Corporation (Agro-joint), fostered resettlement of more than 150,000 Jews from shtetls to about 250 colonies that had been allocated nearly one million acres in Crimea and southern Ukraine. In the process, it invested seventeen million dollars in foreign currency into the Soviet economy. [Dekel-Chen, *Red Land*, 4]

³⁹ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, l. 79.

later, however, the language regarding republics' representation in PKSTO was once again changed, with the multiple representatives of republics' EKOSOs replaced by a single representative "appointed in agreement with the Narkomzems of RSFSR, BSSR, UkSSR and TSFSR."⁴⁰ When Sovnarkom passed the final version of the law on February 17, 1925, STO's proposal was codified, differing only in its inclusion of the Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics amongst the Narkomzems which would select a representative to PKSTO.⁴¹

The failure of republic-level officials to prevent the implementation of the new law no doubt reflects a centralizing tendency that was growing amongst Soviet leaders in the capital, but it was far from a clear win for Moscow. The simple fact that it took longer than fifteen months for PKSTO to gain official endorsement of the law is evidence that republic-level governments had the power to impede Moscow's work when they opposed central policy. Central policy was, however, only one means through which power could be exercised in the relationship between Moscow and lower-level offices, and in 1925 republic-level officials possessed alternative means of pursuing their own goals. In this case, on February 16, 1925, Narkomzem UkSSR responded to the imminent passage of the new immigration law by resolving that they would drastically limit the number of immigrants that would be permitted to join the existing communes, therefore imposing a

⁴⁰ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, l. 95.

⁴¹ Tarle, *Druz'ia*, 183. The Uzbek and Turkmen SSRs were incorporated into the Soviet Union in October 1924.

de facto end to the allocation of land for new immigrant groups.⁴² Thus we see here another example of the weakness of the central state that is characteristic of the NEP-era in the Soviet Union, and is at the heart of the failure of NEP-era policy as a whole.

Local resistance to central policy was not, however, the only persistent impediment to effective governance in the first years of the Soviet Union's existence. As high-level Soviet leaders sought to reallocate power within the USSR, conflicts amongst central offices and leaders once again came to undermine the fulfillment of state goals. Because Smol'ianinov put great effort into increasing PKSTO's role in the state functions related to immigration and emigration, the chairman brought PKSTO into conflict with other offices that were vying for the same position, while simultaneously increasing PKSTO's responsibilities. In his first months as PKSTO chair, Smol'ianinov could rely on Lenin's support for the NEP-era immigration strategy, but in the months after Lenin's death both PKSTO and the immigration strategy became open to attack from those who had previously been kept at bay. This made PKSTO an early casualty in what would be the greater war against NEP that came to define the Soviet Union in the late 1920s.

That Smol'ianinov had greater ambitions for PKSTO than his predecessor was clear from the beginning of his tenure as the commission's chairman. In late 1923,

⁴² GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 62, ll. 20-21. The exact nature of the Feb 16 resolution is not clear. The delo identified here includes two drafts of a letter from PKSTO to STASR dated February 27, 1925, each of which gives a different account of the resolution. The first draft states that NKZ UkSSR wanted to end future recruiting on account of the fact that "those coming from America create an unhealthy atmosphere in the communes, and notably hinder the successful work of the commune." This last line is, however, crossed out in red pen and does not appear in the second draft, where the verb "to end" is replaced with "to limit." Though the second copy was the one that was dispatched to STASR, the changes may have been intended to obscure the conflict taking place between PKSTO and UkSSR.

PKSTO petitioned Sovnarkom for the right to review individual applications, and was granted this authority on February 19, 1924.⁴³ In the months that followed, PKSTO discussed the possibility of allowing individual immigrants from particular specializations, and in September the commission formed a subcommittee dedicated to drafting a resolution on this matter.⁴⁴ By the beginning of 1925, PKSTO was working alongside VTsSPS and VSNKh USSR to put together lists of needed specialists, which were then to be forwarded to Soviet consular offices abroad, through which interested foreigners could then apply to fill these jobs. This process brought VSNKh back into the immigration process, but its new role primarily involved working with VTsSPS to verify enterprises' need for specialists, making it far less involved in the actual immigration process than it had been in the days of the Office of Industrial Immigration (OII).⁴⁵ Vetting of immigrants qualifications remained in the hands of PKSTO, but was also carried out with the cooperation of VTsSPS, whose officials worked to ensure that migrants were suited to carry out the work for which they applied.⁴⁶ Though fewer than half of the individual applicants in 1924 and 1925 were admitted to the Soviet Union, this turn toward a focus on individual specialists became the primary source of immigration

⁴³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, ll. 184-197. PKSTO's authority had previously been limited to the supervision of immigrants coming as part of a group.

⁴⁴ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2140, ll. 51, 54; RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2124, l. 155.

⁴⁵ GARF f. 5451, op. 9, d. 361, l. 1.

⁴⁶ GARF f. 5451, op. 9, d. 361, ll. 4, 16, 49.

in these years, and was a precursor to the Stalinist immigration system of the end of the decade.

PKSTO's new leader also expanded the Commission's capacity to ensure the well-being of those crossing Soviet borders. In November 1923, PKSTO was given thirty-eight apartments in which to house recently arrived migrants while they transitioned into the Soviet economy.⁴⁷ The horrible conditions facing migrants on the ships that carried them to Soviet Russia was a well-known problem even before the establishment of PKSTO, and Smol'ianinov saw regulation of transportation as a means of resolving this problem. Furthermore, Soviet authorities had grown concerned about the human trafficking being carried out by private steamship employees, many of which were luring Russian citizens away with their promises of a new life in the US, only to deliver them to sugar and coffee plantations in Brazil and Costa Rica.⁴⁸ Prompted by these and a variety of additional concerns, on May 9, 1923, VTsIK and STO resolved to establish an official state monopoly on sea transportation into the country. Yet the limited capacity of Soviet state fleets in 1923 required that Soviet officials grant concession contracts to private firms, meaning that the monopoly alone was not an effective means of ending the unwanted activities of steamship personnel. As a response, on July 22, 1923, Sovnarkom established the role of a general inspectorate of the conditions on steam ships, which it placed under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of General Transportation

⁴⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 5, ll. 7-8. The immigrant house had been established by resolution of VTsIK on October 10, 1923. Those apartments not granted to PKSTO were allocated to Narkomzem.

⁴⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, ll. 184-197.

(Narkomput'). Just a month after taking his position, Smol'ianinov petitioned Sovnarkom to reconsider their recent decision to place inspection of conditions on steamships under the authority of Narkomput, and to instead grant that authority to PKSTO.⁴⁹ Ultimately, Sovnarkom rejected Smol'ianinov's petition, but PKSTO secured a permanent seat on the Narkomput subcommission that oversaw the inspections.⁵⁰ Smol'ianinov's attempt to gain full authority, however, caused alarm amongst Narkomput's officials, who strongly protested against PKSTO's proposed changes.⁵¹ Though this conflict was resolved fairly quickly, such inter-office disputes over authority became more common as the decade continued, and rarely came to such efficient ends.

Not surprisingly, the most significant of these inter-office disputes emerged between PKSTO and NKID, whose leadership had long opposed what they believed was an immigration policy that worked against the political interests of the Soviet government. As noted in previous chapters, NKID had overtly worked against the NEP-era immigration strategy since its implementation, often by simply refusing to recognize resolutions that they opposed. Since that time, NKID's opposition to the policy had become more subtle, but the foreign affairs office retained, and utilized, several means for frustrating PKSTOs work. The expansion of group immigration policy to countries outside North America, for example, gave NKID an increased role in the immigration process, as those coming from countries that recognized the Soviet government applied

⁴⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 3, ll. 4.

⁵⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 3, ll. 5.

⁵¹ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 1, l. 223.

not through independent authorities such as STASR, but through the Soviet consulate abroad. That NKID used this authority to impede immigration was substantiated by a September 22, 1923 letter from a representative of the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate, who reported that he had received complaints about the red tape involved in getting immigrants into the country, and attributed this problem to the lack of agreement in the work of PKSTO and NKID, as well as other relevant institutions.⁵² The application in question, however, had been reviewed and forwarded to NKID on June 15, just two days after it arrived at PKSTO, and had since been awaiting review by the Central Bureau of NKID's Office of Visas.⁵³

In order to bring the two offices into closer coordination, on September 28, 1923, Smol'ianinov wrote to STO to request that a permanent representative of NKID be added to PKSTO, to serve alongside the representatives of VTsSPS, VSNKh, and Narkomzem who already held permanent seats. "Increasing the staff of the Commission by one deciding voice will not complicate its work," Smol'ianinov wrote, "and will help the Commission establish permanent contacts with [NKID] and avoid massive practical disagreements."⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter NKID was given a seat on the Commission, but the foreign affairs office made no such overture to Smol'ianinov, and continued to pursue their activities as they had before. By March 17, 1924, NKID's representative had already ceased to attend PKSTO's meetings, telling the other members that he was too busy to do

⁵² GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 15.

⁵³ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 16.

⁵⁴ GARF f. 5446, op. 55, d. 2390, l. 4.

his part in PKSTO.⁵⁵ NKID's dismissal of PKSTO continued throughout the year, eventually culminating in NKID's unsuccessful attempt to pass a new set of immigration and emigration laws without the inclusion of PKSTO.⁵⁶ Though my research did not give a clear account of the details surrounding this attempt to circumvent PKSTO's authority, it nevertheless does well to demonstrate the types of inter-office maneuvering and willingness to ignore central directives that were common in Soviet central offices well into the mid-1920s.

NKID's opposition to PKSTO and Soviet immigration policy once again became overt following the resolutions of early 1925. Following a February 2, 1925 joint resolution of VTsIK and SNK RSFSR which not only confirmed much of the previous immigration practice, but also granted immigrants the right to use land on the same terms as those offered to Soviet citizens, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgii Chicherin, was incensed for what he perceived to be the law's lack of concern for the USSR's security and political interests.⁵⁷ In response to PKSTO's proposed instructions to be issued under the new law, Chicherin slammed the Commission, noting that in the new instructions he found "not even small terms for ensuring our political interests" in

⁵⁵ GARF f. 5446, op. 72, d. 112, l. 11.

⁵⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 7, ll. 12-13. An undated letter from Smol'ianinov to Chicherin indicates that NKID had submitted a draft resolution on entry and exit from the USSR without so much as notifying PKSTO, despite the fact that this was directly in contradiction to SNK USSR's position on these affairs as issued on February 19, 1924. On October 28, 1924, NKID responded by sharing a TsIK USSR decree which ordered that no one shall be allowed to enter Soviet borders without permission from NKID.

⁵⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 28, l. 3.

regard to immigration from North America. No doubt referring to the religious sectarians, Chicherin expressed his concern that the presence of so many reemigrants who had fled the Russian Empire to avoid military service could “act as a corrupting manner on the fighting spirit required by capitalist encirclement.” Chicherin also criticized PKSTO’s lack of attention to emigrants’ potential exploitation by “dark elements” engaged in espionage, and requested that PKSTO inform NKID of the measures being taken to ensure that disillusioned immigrants did not return to America to tell stories that undermined Soviet credibility. Not surprisingly, Chicherin concluded by stating that effectively overseeing these affairs required permanent and close contact with NKID.⁵⁸

The points of conflict leading up to and following the new resolutions of 1925 do well to demonstrate the differing worldviews that prevailed inside PKSTO and NKID. Whereas Smol’ianinov saw immigration as primarily a positive force that could be directed toward state goals, Chicherin and NKID saw immigrants as a liability whose movement should be halted. The coexistence of these world views within Soviet leadership was by no means a new phenomenon in the mid-1920s; as Michael David-Fox has done well to point out, the dilemma created by the potential gains and threats of the outside world was a characteristic of Russian leadership that predated the revolutions of 1917.⁵⁹ This juxtaposition between Smol’ianinov’s idea of the state as a conduit of existing social force and Chicherin’s idea of the state as oppositional to existing social

⁵⁸ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2140, l. 17.

⁵⁹ Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

force presents a microcosm of the conflicts that came to a head in the mid-1920s, and ultimately decided the fate of the NEP system. Chicherin's concerns- the credibility of the Soviet state on the world stage and the fear of saboteurs amidst capitalist encirclement- were not compelling cases as late as early 1925, but eventually came to bring down both PKSTO and the group-based immigration system just two years later. A sincere consideration of the changes that allowed such a significant swing in the general attitudes toward the immigration regime from 1925-1927, thus offers insight into the breakdown of the NEP-strategy as a whole.

Nineteen twenty-five marked a tremendous shift in Soviet leaders' understanding of the processes at work on the world stage, as well as their conception of the Soviet Union's position within this system. In the years prior to this year, the predominant Soviet worldview was one that perceived the collapse of global capitalism as imminent. Even if hopes of a global communist revolution had largely been dismissed by the beginning of the decade, Soviet leaders could see in western countries' poor economic performance the evidence that global capitalism was a dying phenomenon. Yet by the middle of 1925, the years of improving economic performance were too much for Soviet leaders to dismiss.⁶⁰

The new factors at play in mid-1925 are evident in Bukharin's report to Moscow activists on April 17, 1925. Detailing the unexpected stabilization and expansion of the capitalist world, Bukharin noted that "[o]nly a short while ago we could say quite definitely that our own economic growth was taking place parallel with the political and

⁶⁰ Nikolai Bukharin, "Concerning the New Economic Policy and Our Tasks," in *Selected Writings on the State and the Transition to Socialism* (M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 183-208.

economic decline of the bourgeois countries....This element did not exist until very recently; now it does.”⁶¹ The “self-evident” conclusion put forth by Bukharin was not to abandon NEP, but to accelerate its implementation. What this meant, in Bukharin’s terms, was a push to eliminate the impediments to peasant agricultural production, and to increase output through the use of market incentives. At the core of this, as with nearly all NEP-era state strategies, was the requirement that the state work even harder to build trust between the state and Russia’s peasantry that would be required for Soviet policy to work. This speech has implications for the history of NEP that go further than intensification in the face of changing circumstances; the speech includes Bukharin’s explicit claim that the Soviet state could “scarcely expect much from foreign capital,” and the resulting conclusion that from thereon, Soviet leaders could rely on internal forces, and primarily the peasantry, as the sole force driving Soviet economic development.

The changing worldview expressed in Bukharin’s report, has major implications for the NEP-era strategy as a whole, and especially for the immigration policy of the time. On the one hand, as the capitalist world became increasingly more threatening to the existence of the Soviet Union, so to did the spies who could potentially enter the country as immigrants, thus making the voices of those who opposed the immigration policy on the basis of security concerns more relevant. On the other hand, Bukharin’s emphasis on the need to rely on domestic sources for economic growth, which was endorsed by Stalin and codified at the 14th Party Congress at the end of 1925, implicitly undermined the economic justification for taking the risks that came with allowing

⁶¹ Bukharin, “Tasks,” 184.

immigration.⁶² While the Soviet state's overall lack of capital in 1925 may have convinced them to continue tolerating an efficiently-run immigration system that brought in significant flows of foreign currency, the negligible results of the NEP-era immigration policy made it an easy target in the political context of 1925-26 Soviet politics. Thus, with no practical or ideological justification, and no support within the highest circles of the Soviet government, PKSTO's fate was virtually sealed.

Such foresight was not within the domain of PKSTO's leadership, and the victories of 1925 are a testament to the suddenness of the shift that inspired Bukharin's speech. In addition to the February 2 resolution mentioned above, a Sovnarkom USSR resolution of passed on February 17 expanded PKSTO's authority to those who wished to emigrate, making it responsible for nearly all long-term human movement across Soviet borders. In months that followed, Soviet officials passed resolutions detailing privileges of agricultural and industrial immigrant and reemigrant laborers, thus confirming earlier rights to import goods without paying tariffs.⁶³ PKSTO also expanded its role in protecting the rights of migrants inside the Soviet Union, as well as those Russian emigrants who had found themselves in bad conditions outside the country. Just as earlier, the Commission was responding to the abusive conditions facing Russian

⁶² Lohr, *Russian Citizenship*, 167. Writing on this topic, Lohr noted that scholars have tended to disregard that, in 1925-25, Bukharin "became the most extreme proponent of economic autarky. He let loose a barrage of criticism against concessions, foreign trade, and imports, stressing the need to rely solely upon domestic sources for growth." This was a position that aligned him with Stalin, while putting him at odds with Trotsky, who continued to advocate the use of external sources of development.

⁶³ GARF f. 5446, op. 6, d. 131, ll. 102-115.

emigrants misled into the inhumane conditions of Brazilian sugar plantations.⁶⁴ Even as late as July 22, 1925, the Commission helped to bring about an STO resolution that established an emigrant fund to help Russian citizens in need abroad.⁶⁵

Far from a sign of PKSTO's stabilization, the new authority granted to PKSTO in 1925 likely made the Commission more vulnerable than before. In the second half of 1925, the Commission finally faced tangible political opposition, which, combined with the greater change in political outlook, allowed PKSTO's opponents to begin an assault that would bring an end to the NEP-era immigration strategy. Among the most significant factors in this turn came on August 8, 1925, when one of its permanent members, Ermakov, petitioned Central Committee member Vyacheslav Molotov for his release from PKSTO.⁶⁶ Included in Ermakov's resignation was his assessment of the Commission's current state, in which Ermakov recommended that PKSTO either be eliminated, or at the very least, completely transformed under new leadership. Though Ermakov had only worked for the commission for about eight months, his comments are valuable for their insight both into PKSTO itself, and the deficiency of the NEP-era Soviet state as a whole.

Ermakov's criticism of PKSTO rested on two basic issues: the endless bureaucracy created by the dysfunctional Soviet state and the Commission's ineffective leadership. He opened his assessment with a review of PKSTO's five basic functions: recruiting groups from abroad for the establishment of demonstration farms, recruitment

⁶⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 14, l. 75; f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, ll. 184-197.

⁶⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 80, ll. 184-197.

⁶⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 44.

of highly skilled industrial workers, recruitment of specialists, acceptance or denial of those applying to resettle in the USSR, and control and inspection of steamship companies. In all cases, Ermakov concluded that PKSTO was failing to provide the services with which it had been charged. PKSTO's unresponsiveness to foreign scouts and poor communication with Narkomzem had taken what was supposed to be a relatively quick negotiation for a land contract and turned it into a seemingly endless process, leading many scouts to return home without a land contract, while others who did finally come to terms with the state were often left with such a negative impression of Soviet bureaucracy that life in Russia no longer seemed better than their current homes. This was partially because Narkomzem had refused to transfer all details of the state land fund to PKSTO and partially because scouts were constantly referred to one state office, which then referred them to another office, on so on.⁶⁷ That this was particularly problematic at the republic-level suggests that, whether for officials' unawareness of the law, or their blatant recalcitrance, the All-Union immigration policy that had passed early in the year was not being implemented. Ermakov's report also made clear that PKSTO had done little to improve the conditions of life in the communes that already existed, and on several occasions, had failed to live up to its contractual obligations to immigrant groups. Confirming Chicherin's fears that foreign immigrants would undermine the Soviet Union's reputation abroad, Ermakov confirmed that many migrants had begun writing letters to their families abroad, telling them of their living conditions, and asking them to send money. Ermakov claimed that he had twice attempted to reconcile this

⁶⁷ In a July 28, 1925 letter to STO, Smol'ianinov explained that Narkomzem had been pressuring PKSTO to limit its recruitment of immigrants. [GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 1, l. 40.]

problem by forming a permanent inspection apparatus under PKSTO that could serve as a direct link between the Commission and these communes, but that Smol'ianinov flatly rejected his proposal with no discussion both times.⁶⁸

Ermakov's criticism of the bureaucratic gridlock seen in PKSTO's dealings with immigrant groups extended to the Commission's other major functions. In its recruitment of individual workers from abroad, PKSTO was held up by its need to work with a variety of state offices, many of which were as uncooperative as Narkomzem. The People's Commissariat of Labor (Narkomtrud), for example, used its authority to deny entry to any industrial immigrants whose skills were not needed in major urban areas, but refused to inform the Commission on labor market conditions in other parts of Russia. This bureaucracy was further complicated by contradictory orders from various state offices that would have been confusing to even the most diligent adherent of official Soviet policy.

Based on this analysis, Ermakov concluded that the most appropriate response was to eliminate PKSTO and pass its functions on to the offices whose approval was already required for those wishing to immigrate. Should it be allowed to continue operation, however, Ermakov posited that its lone unique function would be its handling of agricultural immigrant groups, which would require full information from Narkomzem, the establishment of a permanent inspectorate, and the fulfillment of the mandate that allowed communes the right to duty-free importation of their their possessions. Just as important, however, was that the Commission be put under the

⁶⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 40. The commune inspections that had been carried out in the previous years had been carried out by outside committees, and were particularly reliant on the cooperation of local officials.

direction of a new chairman. According to Ermakov, it was Smol'ianinov's unwillingness to consider opposing viewpoints, and lack of time for the Commission (it was one of three chairs that he held at the time) that prevented PKSTO from making significant efforts to overcome their problems. Ermakov concluded that, in the unlikely event that PKSTO continued its work, it should be headed by an individual who worked permanently for the Commission alone, "and held responsible in from of both the Commission's members and the Party."⁶⁹

In the months after Ermakov's report, PKSTO became less active, and increasingly irrelevant, meeting just four times between mid-September 1925 and mid-April 1926.⁷⁰ In November 1925, PKSTO discovered that most of the thirty-eight apartments they had been allocated in the immigrant house were not being used as they were supposed to have been, and ordered that the apartments be emptied and made available for immigrants.⁷¹ Its recruitment of individual specialists remained highly restricted by both the bureaucracy identified by Ermakov, and Soviet officials' fear that the labor market was not strong enough to bring in additional workers.⁷² It also became

⁶⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 40.

⁷⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 84-87.

⁷¹ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 5, ll. 7-8. One apartment was temporarily housing members of the immigrant group "Solidarnost", but many were being occupied by members of Narkomtrud, and even a former member of PKSTO had made one of the rooms his home. Another room was a club for Pioneers that was rarely used. The rooms were located in a dormitory that was operated by Narkomtrud, which was likely responsible for these problems.

⁷² VTsSPS, for example, only agreed to admit eight of the thirty-six applications forwarded by PKSTO between October 24 to December 2, 1925. It delivered this

increasingly clear that STASR's work was a major cause for communes' troubles; an investigation of the communes Lenin and Gerold in late 1925 concluded that one of the most significant factors impeding the future development of the communes was "the poor selection of communards in America."⁷³

In early 1926, Smol'ianinov made what would be PKSTO's last significant effort to maintain relevance and preserve the basis of immigration policy in place at the time. This was sparked by a December 22, 1925 letter from a member of Narkomput to the chair of his own commission, Smol'ianinov, VSNKh head Felix Dzerzhinskii, and Chicherin, which advocated easing the Soviet Union's entry requirements for foreigners, including those who wished to immigrate permanently, and those wishing to come only for six months or less to visit families.⁷⁴ The author, Serebriakov, noted that his position was based on his recent trip to the United States, which made him aware of a "meaningful attraction" shown by the native-born Russians who were unable or unwilling to migrate under the current system. Allowing this greater access, the author argued, could have a positive economic and political outcome for Soviet Union, as those who traveled would bring revenue to the Soviet economy, and those who returned could share their impressions with those living abroad. The few dangers that this access presented, he concluded, could be eliminated by the appropriate organizational oversight. The author

information to PKSTO on December 8, meaning that VTsSPS alone help some applications for over a month before reviewing them. [GARF f. 5451, op. 9, d. 361, l. 119.]

⁷³ GARF f. 364, op. 1, d. 62, l. 107.

⁷⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 54.

included with his appeal a number of newspaper clippings from Russian-language American newspapers, which demonstrated both the desire and frustration shown on behalf of those in the US who wished to migrate, but could not gain permission to do so.⁷⁵ Smol'ianinov, not surprisingly, wrote in support of this letter, relying on the same economic arguments as those offered by Serebriakov.⁷⁶

At the time of this petition, NKID's position toward immigration from the United States was particularly negative. Though NKID was certainly wary of the problems that could be caused by the entry of counter-revolutionary elements, Chicherin's position on the matter was strongly influenced by NKID's inability to gain official diplomatic recognition from the US government. NKID's official response to 721 Russian-Americans' petition for open borders, published in the October 28, 1925 issue of the Russian language US newspaper *Russkii Golos* (Russian Voice) noted that granting permission to immigrate was extremely difficult without recognition.⁷⁷ This suggests that NKID may have hoped to enlist those migrants in its efforts to gain recognition. In Smol'ianinov's opinion, NKID's unwillingness to allow greater immigration from the US was a political maneuver meant to punish the United States for immigration quotas being imposed on Russia.⁷⁸ Even without these factors, the lack of an official Soviet Embassy

⁷⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 51-53. The clippings included articles from *Russkii Vestnik* and *Russkii Golos* dated from May to October, 1925.

⁷⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 54.

⁷⁷ "Ofitsial'nyi Otvet Moskovy po voprosu ob 'otkrytii granits,'" *Russkii Golos*, 25 October, 1925.

⁷⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 55.

in the US would have made opening borders unappealing, since facilitating this immigration would have required greater authority be granted to PKSTO and STASR.

In Smol'ianinov's response, which was addressed to all those who had received Serebriakov's December 22 letter, he stated that PKSTO had no general opposition to this proposition, noting only minor opposition to particular problems that could come from easing entry. Overall, however, Smol'ianinov followed the rationale that had underscored the immigration strategy since Ludwig Martens first argued for the establishment of the Office of Immigration in 1921, focusing on the economic benefits.⁷⁹ The only real opposition to this policy, according to Smol'ianinov, was political in nature, and thus could be dismissed. In the original draft of the letter, Smol'ianinov made it very clear that NKID was behind this irrational position, but the edits indicate that, whether through Smol'ianinov's reconsideration of the letter's tone, or because of the other Commission members' opposition to such an antagonistic position, these lines were removed from the final draft.⁸⁰ The other offices' direct responses to this position is not available in this archival file, however, the events of 1926 make clear that the logic of 1921, in which economic factors were paramount, no longer trumped the political in the changing economic circumstances of the Soviet Union.

The changing tide of 1926 was apparent from very early in the year. On February 16, PKSTO was forced to cancel the land fund that they had put so much effort into building in the previous years. In a letter to STASR explaining this decision, PKSTO's

⁷⁹ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 55.

⁸⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 7, d. 5, l. 54.

officials explained this as both a function of the low number of groups who were arriving, and a land shortage in many areas of the Soviet Union. “We are communicating for your information, that in the future, the establishment of [immigrant and reemigrant] agricultural collectives will be undertaken without a secured land fund for immigrants,” the communiqué explained, following that future groups would have to be considered on individual terms, and would only be able to choose from whatever land was available at the time of their scout’s arrival. This did not mean a total end to the group immigration strategy; portions of the fund that were unused, primarily in the Trans-Volga region, remained available for distribution to immigrants. As a major focus of PKSTO’s efforts, however, the land fund’s undoing is testament to PKSTO’s weakened position within the Soviet state apparatus.⁸¹

By the spring of 1926, PKSTO’s fate was virtually sealed. At the Commission’s May 19 meeting, Smol’ianinov opened discussion “on the further work of the Commission of STO for Immigration and Emigration,” at which PKSTO’s own members proposed that a committee be formed to investigate the necessity of the Commission’s continued existence. Their discussion led them to conclude that the “Commission of STO considers, that it is currently overdue for a discussion on the question of the necessity and expediency of the further existence of PKSTO for Immigration and Emigration as an independent organ of STO, and the possibilities of transferring its work into the apparatus of Narkomtrud USSR,” and to order members of several other state offices to participate

⁸¹ RGAE f. 478, op. 7, d. 2124, l. 10.

in examining the feasibility of such a move.⁸² Clearly convinced of the outcome of this investigation, a month later Smol'ianinov wrote to VSNKh, informing them that the economic council's recently formed "Commission for Recruitment of Foreign Specialists and Workers" could pursue its work without the need for PKSTO's permission.⁸³ And in late July, PKSTO decided to abandon plans for the construction of a new immigrant house in Moscow on account of a lack of interest in the plan, the low number of migrants coming through the Soviet capital, and the unwillingness of foreign representatives to invest in the project.⁸⁴

On November 30, 1926, after waiting more than six months for STO to form the investigation committee to look into PKSTO's future work, Smol'ianinov wrote to STO Chairman A. Rykov requesting that he be released from his position as PKSTO Chairman. Smol'ianinov explained his release request as a function of being overburdened with work from his other positions at both the RSFSR and All-Union levels, but it also seems clear that, by this point, Smol'ianinov realized that PKSTO was a lost cause. The failure to perform the investigation he had requested in May, he explained, had made PKSTO's work especially difficult, and thus he requested that the investigation committee be formed quickly. Shortly thereafter, Smol'ianinov finally got

⁸² GARF f. 364, op. 5, d. 1, l. 21.

⁸³ GARF f. 5451, op. 10, d. 369, ll. 112-113. The sub commission had been formed in early March, 1926, and included members of VSNKh, Narkomtrud, and VTsSPS, meaning that it had representatives of many of the same offices represented in PKSTO.

⁸⁴ GARF f. 364, op. 8, d. 5, l. 13.

his wish; less than a month later, the investigation committee was conducting its work, and Smol'ianinov had been replaced with Narkomput's long-serving representative to PKSTO, Marshan.⁸⁵

Not long after Smol'ianinov's stepped down as the Commission's Chairman, PKSTO's liquidation process began. At a December 6 meeting, the Commission's members voted on its own liquidation, drawing opposition only from representatives of Narkomput' and OGPU, neither of which believed that transferring authority to other commissions would assure a more successful and effective implementation of policy. On December 22, the Committee met again and passed a resolution detailing its members' conception of the appropriate reallocation of power in the event that liquidation was approved.⁸⁶ Not surprisingly, representatives of the Union Republics mounted no challenge to PKSTO's liquidation, and aside from Narkomput' and OGPU, only STASR showed any concern over the end of STO.⁸⁷ On January 18, 1927, PKSTO received notice that the Commission's work should be completed by February 1, and liquidated no

⁸⁵ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 5, l. 9. After the liquidation was final, Smol'ianinov returned to help with closing down the Commission's activities and distributing relative documents to the offices that would be responsible for PKSTO's former activities. [Ibid, 56.] This was not the end of Smol'ianinov's work in collaborating with foreigners. As director of the Magnitogorsk project, he was part of the Soviet delegation that traveled to Cleveland to negotiate a technical assistance contract with Arthur McKee and Co. [Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 44-45.]

⁸⁶ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 5, ll. 20-21.

⁸⁷ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 5, l. 28; RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 720, ll. 56-57.

later than March 1.⁸⁸ PKSTO's responsibilities were to be dispersed among several state offices, with industrial immigration going to VSNKh USSR, agricultural immigration being dispersed amongst the Narkomzems of the Soviet Republics, supervision of transportation placed fully in the hands of Narkomput', and all remaining affairs transferred to NKID. Finally, as a clear sign of the end of the group-based immigration strategy, on February 18, 1927, STO ruled that any future agricultural immigration would have to take place without any guaranteed land plots.⁸⁹

As mentioned above, news of PKSTO's liquidation was met with opposition from STASR, whose organizing efforts seem to have picked up in late 1926. According to STASR, at the time of the liquidation they had organized and were preparing to send 527 families and eighty single workers to the USSR, and could not simply abandon their work right away. Smol'ianinov petitioned higher state organs to see to it that those already organized were allowed to migrate under the previous terms of immigration, and on March 22, Sovnarkom approved the allocation of \$4,000 to help cover the costs of STASR's liquidation.⁹⁰ Though STASR had originally been given permission to allow those already organized to immigrate, in June the state refused to sign a deal with two large American communes, leaving STASR with the responsibility of repaying the commune members over \$60,000.⁹¹ On October 22, 1927, STASR's representatives

⁸⁸ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 5, l. 36.

⁸⁹ Tarle, *Druz'ia*, 194.

⁹⁰ GARF f. 364, op. 6, d. 5, ll. 55-56; GARF f. 5446, op. 8, d. 610, l. 1.

⁹¹ RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 1068, l. 32.

notified the Central Executive Committee of the WPA that the Society's Central Bureau had decided to liquidate itself, and would probably complete all remaining work by the following February.⁹²

The end of PKSTO marked the demise of the application of the NEP-era strategy to immigration. This came as a result of Soviet leaders' changing worldview, which had previously assumed Soviet victory as an inevitable outcome of history, but later came to stress the Soviet position as threatened by an unexpectedly recovering west. Certain elements of the Soviet state, especially the NKID, had long been concerned about the security threats posed by the immigration strategy established in 1921, but the economic promise of the immigration strategy, combined with its protection by Lenin, had prevented the policy's opponents from striking it down in the first years of its existence. By 1925, however, neither evidence nor Lenin could defend PKSTO and its position on immigration, making it an easy target amidst the growing fear of the outside world that came in mid-1925.

As shown above, PKSTO's failure to make any significant economic impact was not the result of an inherently flawed policy, but was an outcome of the greater chaos that characterized the Soviet state in the 1920s. In this environment, official proclamations were only as good as the capacity to enforce them, and central Soviet officials' influence outside the borders of Moscow was virtually non-existent. Local officials refused to allocate scarce resources to immigrant communes, immigrants left communes at will, and

⁹² RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 1068, ll. 44-46.

all the time the promise of the NEP-era strategy grew dimmer and dimmer. Even STASR came under the influence of local powers, redirecting its energies toward self-serving activities while it nodded dishonestly toward its partners in Moscow. All this chaos had the effect of placing the potential energy offered by the masses of North Americans further and further outside the reach of Soviet policy.

The questionable results of the NEP-era immigration policy at the level of the RSFSR did not, however, dissuade Soviet leaders from expanding PKSTO's authority. In taking over the Chairmanship of the newly established PKSTO USSR in July 1923, Smol'ianinov sought to match the Commission's increased territorial jurisdiction with a complementary expansion of responsibilities, transforming PKSTO from an office formed primarily to tap into the possibilities of group immigration from North America into a player in nearly all aspects of long-term human movement both into and out of Soviet space. Unfortunately for its members, PKSTO proved just as ineffective in all these matters, failing to resolve most of the problems that had persisted since 1921, while enlisting a host of new opponents both inside Moscow and in the newly-incorporated Soviet republics. Thus, when high-level Soviet leaders finally brought the question of PKSTO's continued existence to the floor in December 1926, the consistently slow-moving Soviet bureaucracy that had taken six months to even pursue the question, needed less than a month to rule that the Commission should be liquidated.

Conclusion

“The belief that some parts of the world are more romantic than others is largely an illusion of distance and novelty. We had left what seemed to us the tame and uneventful life of suburban America to venture into the unknown regions of Asia, only to discover that, in the eyes of the people there, America is the land of romance and their own country is dull and prosaic.”

-Former AIK colonist, Nemmy Sparks¹

These sentences, crafted more than four decades after Nemmy Sparks returned from the Soviet Union, are hand-written on a document in Sparks’ personal papers, located in the Reuther Archives at Wayne State University. Looking to find an opportunity unavailable in the land of his birth, Sparks joined the Siberian project in 1922, and came to play a significant role in the opening of the colony’s chemical factory. In September 1924, after two years at AIK, Sparks decided to return to the United States, where he became actively involved in the American labor movement, serving terms as head of the Wisconsin and Southern California branches of the Communist Party of America. Sparks’ emphasis on the normality of his time in Siberia strikes a stark contrast with the account given by the Doyles that opened the introduction of this dissertation. Far from a utopia gone wrong, the Soviet space described here by Sparks is not a “no-place,” but an “any-place,” with all the corresponding possibilities for unfounded imaginary investment that one may cast on the proverbial grass of the “other side.” Sparks was no doubt among the most fortunate of the thousands of Americans who migrated to Soviet space in the years of the New Economic Policy, but his treatment of Soviet space as

¹ “Nemmy Sparks, Handwritten Note, Undated,” Nemmy Sparks Papers, The Walter P. Reuther Library Manuscript and Records Collection, Wayne State University, Box 8 Folder 4.

subject to the same expectations as anywhere else makes him far more representative of these migrants than the more sensational accounts that appeared in the press in the 1920s.

Like Sparks, who joined Kuzbas primarily for the opportunity to apply and develop his skills as a chemist amidst a post-WWI economic downturn, yet never denied his attraction to the excitement of the Soviet project, the majority of those who migrated from the United States and Canada carried with them tangible expectations for Soviet space that were tinged with the excitement of the new possibilities of a post-Imperial Russia. For those “reemigrants” who sought to return to their former homes, there was good reason for hope in the simple fact that the Soviet government had done away with the Tsarist-era policy that made their emigration an illegal act, allowing them to return to their families who remained in Russia. Such non-material pull factors, including dedication to Russia as a homeland and a belief in the Communist Party’s vision of the future, were important factors in attracting immigration from America, but they did not preclude a realistic set of expectations for the hardships that migrants would face in Russia. Far from ignorant ideologues, the majority of those who engaged the terms of NEP-era Soviet immigration policy were aware of, and willing to endure, the material deprivation facing them inside Soviet borders in exchange for a set of gains that were well within the bounds of reasonable expectations. In fact, adherence to Communist ideology actually tended to make migrants more dedicated to their commune’s success.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of migrants in the NEP-era were drastically unprepared for the ineptitude of Soviet leaders to uphold the basic terms that they had guaranteed immigrants prior to their departure. Upon arrival, migrant groups were faced with a multi-dimensional set of bureaucratic nightmares that often prevented them from

thriving in their new homes. Competition among administrative units of the central government in Moscow, combined with provincial officials' lack of concern for the interests of leaders thousands of miles away, created an environment in which even the state's most basic terms were far from guaranteed. Immigrants were held up at borders, their freight disappeared, land supposedly set aside for their use was allocated to others, and all the time the immigrant communes floundered. Migrants' dissatisfaction with what they found in the Soviet Union was primarily a result of these problems and not, as the story goes, due to disillusionment resulting from an inherently unattainable goal.

That is not to say that grandiose expectations were completely absent in this migration process. The lack of reliable information coming out of Russia in the years after the Bolshevik Revolution made Soviet space an open canvas for those who sought to paint greater ambitions on the project being carried out atop the remnants of the fallen Russian Empire. Some of those responsible for recruiting workers for AIK took it upon themselves to fill in this blank space through embellished accounts of the colony's promise that encouraged those ill-suited for the realities of Soviet life to consider migrating to Kuzbas. Such recruiting practices were in direct contradiction to Moscow's orders, and only resulted in a small percentage of the total migration in this era before the individuals behind this were dismissed from their positions. Despite the small numbers who carried such expectations, and the fact that their accounts were often largely fabricated, the vocal outrage they expressed upon returning to the US was published in major newspapers across the country, as the opponents of the Soviet government fought to paint their own image of Soviet space as a sight of immorality and despotism on the

American imagination. That such images remain etched in Americans' collective memory is a testament to their victory.

These irresponsible recruiting practices highlight another aspect of the policy's failure, namely the practice of outsourcing selection and organization of migrant groups to non-state organizations in the United States. Those to which Soviet leaders allocated recruitment responsibilities were subject to both personal and local political influences that distracted them from a strict adherence to Moscow's orders. In the case of AIK, recruiters disregarded the actual conditions in Siberia, as well as Soviet leaders' expectations, instead selling their own version of Soviet space that was crafted through their personal vision of the colony's mission. More devastating to the immigration policy itself, however, was the cooptation of the Central Bureau of the Society for Technical Aid to Russia (STASR) by the Workers Party of America (WPA) in 1923, and the subsequent restriction on the emigration of Communist Party members who wished to go to the Soviet Union. This not only reduced the total number of migrants in the 1920s, it filtered out those most likely to succeed in building successful communes. Thus, much like the officials in the Soviet periphery, those expected to help implement Soviet policy in North America proved detrimental to the immigration policy.

Instead of increasing their efforts to improve the state of immigrant communes, those leaders in charge of the Permanent Commission of the Council of Labor and Defense for Agricultural and Industrial Labor Immigration and Emigration (PKSTO) invested their energies in expanding the Commission's authority. This came in both the form of PKSTO's elevation to an All-Union office and in its growing set of responsibilities, which eventually came to include nearly all aspects of long-term human

movement across Soviet borders. This widened sphere of influence did little to improve PKSTO's performance, but it greatly added to the list of the Commission's opponents by challenging the autonomy of Republic-level officials and threatening those in central offices whose authority PKSTO's officials wished to claim for its own.

For the above reasons, by 1925 it became clear that the NEP-era immigration strategy had not delivered on its promise, and was unlikely to do so in the near future. The failure of this and other NEP-era strategies to bring about substantial economic development eroded the justification for their existence, making them vulnerable to attacks by opponents whose political concerns previously had been trumped by potential material gains. The policy suffered a major blow with the death of Lenin in January 1924, and by the summer of 1925, the unimpressive rate of Soviet economic growth and the recovery of western capitalist economies brought about a shift in Soviet leaders' worldview that was the beginning of the end for the NEP-era immigration policy. In 1926, the growing perception of "capitalist encirclement" and corresponding skepticism of foreigners empowered the opponents of the immigration policy, allowing them to eliminate both PKSTO and the policy it was founded to oversee.

The rise and fall of the NEP-era Soviet immigration policy was not an isolated case, but was indicative of a greater strategy pursued by Soviet leaders in the 1920s. This strategy involved establishing alliances with a variety of non-Party and non-state actors on the basis of shared short-term goals as a means of facilitating the development of the Soviet state. Officials accomplished this by establishing formal institutions that were in line with prevailing informal institutions in order to incentivize the participation of actors whose long-term goals were incompatible with those of Soviet leaders, and may

otherwise have been unwilling to cooperate with the Soviet government. Tapping into the potential energy of those individuals and groups who could expand state capacity proved fairly effective in advancing Soviet leaders' goals, as many pre-revolutionary intellectuals and specialists shared the Bolsheviks' fetish for modern forms of governance and social organization. As a means of economic development, however, this strategy failed miserably. While Soviet leaders did a remarkable job of locating substantial reservoirs of potential economic energy, their inability to rein in administrative chaos made the idea of collaborating with the Soviet state too large for a risk for those with alternative prospects to endure. By the end of the 1920s, the arbitrary and inconsistent actions taken by officials at all levels had placed most sources of potential economic energy beyond the state's reach, proving the NEP-era strategy to be unsustainable, and making the recalibration of Soviet policy a necessity. The strategy of the Stalin era was by no means the only possible trajectory for the Soviet project, but identifying the fundamental problems of the NEP-era allows us to understand why the appeal of Stalin's calls for concentrated authority and the use of coercion to implement central policy may have grown in correlation with the evidence of NEP's bankruptcy and Soviet leaders' growing fear of foreign invasion. Though the turn toward rule of man is an unexpected outcome of the diversity that characterized the first years of Soviet rule, it seems at least some Soviet leaders found it preferable to the prevailing rule of none at the end of the 1920s.

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