I. THE EMERGENCE OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

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Summary

The supreme achievement of the totalitarian state is the destruction of civil society, that is, the space between the individual and the state consisting of private institutions, voluntary associations, the market, and the free expression of ideas and religion. Such destruction took place in the Soviet Union gradually during the first two decades after the Bolshevik revolution, and most intensively during the first and second five-year plans. However, a half century later, enabled by the twin projects of glasnost and perestroika, a civil society re-emerged. The collapse of the Soviet state, the instability of the new political structures, national divisions, and economic hardship make the reconstitution of civil society that much more urgent.

One of the most important attributes of the emerging civil society in the former Soviet Union has been the appearance of a variety of non-Party, non-governmental associations, commonly called samodeiatel'nye organizations, or "neformal'y." Associations have played an important role in the process of consciousness-raising, the coalescence of special interest constituencies, and the promotion of individual initiative and civic duty. Perhaps most important, the mere existence of independent associations challenged the monopoly of state power over public opinion.

If we are to understand the extraordinary efforts to reconstitute civil society in the former Soviet Union, we must understand their historical roots. In fact, more than a century ago, a civil society was forming in Russia. Essential to the development of Russian civil society, as well as to a dynamic urban environment and civic life, were the growing number of voluntary associations, particularly those associations that promoted the public interest, remained somewhat aloof from the business of making a living, and pursued broadly philanthropic, educational, and cultural goals. By using pre-revolutionary Moscow as a case study, this paper presents an overview of the most important organizations and their main activities, examines reasons for their rapid growth at the end of the nineteenth century, assesses their role in the development of civil society a century ago, and finally, suggests the significance of the Russian experience for social science theory.
Recent years have witnessed a revival of the concept of civil society in western Europe and America. New theories of human liberation and civic activism have abandoned the discourse of class and class struggle and instead have analyzed society by utilizing the concepts of gender, language, power, and the social construction of identities and cultural norms. Simultaneously, in eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, theories of civil society became a way to conceptualize multi-class attempts “from below” to limit the scope of state power. Before the existence of constitutionally guaranteed rights, political parties, representative institutions, impartial law, and property rights, grass-roots associations were the first element of civil society to re-activate.

Russia has never occupied a prominent place in the theories of civil society or in the histories of voluntary associations. It would appear that yet again Russia has been cut off from advances in the social sciences and analyses of the Russian experience must proceed along a well worn path: categories of analysis borrowed from western theory. Yet, in the world-wide reexamination of the state-society relationship and of the meaning of civil society, the Russian case affords an opportunity for Russian historians and social scientists to make an original contribution to social science theory. The Russian experience---both present and past---is particularly relevant to post-Marxist theories of civil society and voluntary association on four grounds. First, they help explain the processes of public initiative, self-constitution of interest groups, and rapidly changing social identities in a country with a strong state tradition. Second, they permit an examination of the sphere outside the state in a country with weakly developed property rights and a small bourgeoisie. Third, voluntary associations and civil society help us understand the struggle against absolutism spearheaded from below by non-entrepreneurial social groups and which reflected anti-bourgeois sensibilities. Finally, these concepts offer a new way to study liberalism and reform in a country without the corporatist tradition of Germany or the individualistic tradition of England and America.

I will contend that in countries where arbitrary autocratic-bureaucratic authority prevails, associations become the leading element in the emergence of civil society and a source of civil society’s strength. At the same time, the fractious nature of associations is also a source of weakness. In the final decades of the tsarist regime, Russian civil society proved not only incapable of defending the state; it was unable to defend itself. Thus Russian voluntary associations will not only allow us to to understand the process by which Russian subjects were becoming citizens. The Russian case will allow social scientists to assess the role of voluntary associations in a non-western country and to rethink western-based models of civil society.
II. CIVIL SOCIETY NATIONALIZED, 1917-1932

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Summary

If, as Jurgen Habermas stated in a significant revision of his earlier work, voluntary associations are the "institutional core of civil society," then the large-scale reorganization and liquidation of Russia's voluntary associations during the cultural revolution signified the end of a civil society that had been developing for more than a century and which had become especially variegated and lively, albeit fractious, by the end of the nineteenth century. Although significantly fewer in number than in pre-revolutionary years, on the eve of the First Five Year Plan Soviet Russia had hundreds of more-or-less autonomous associations, which promoted the public interest, remained somewhat aloof from the business of making a living, and pursued broadly philanthropic, educational and cultural goals. During the 1920s, such associations were a mixture of old societies which until 1917 had had imperial patronage, grass-roots organizations which had sprung up in the last decades of the old regime, and new societies, the products of the enthusiasm, if not confusion, of the new era. However, few (including those founded since 1917) survived the Gleichschaltung that followed; those that did were absorbed by state agencies.

Yet despite the important social history of the 1920s and 1930s, the phenomenon of associational activity has been treated only tangentially. The present survey of the legal framework of associational activity will not only offer a new way of looking at the "cultural revolution"; it will also show us the nature and eventual demise of civil society in early Soviet Russia.

Many pre-revolutionary associations were gone within the first year of Bolshevik rule. Hostility to the new government on the part of associations, hostility on the part of the Bolsheviks, and the chaos and deprivation of the Civil War decimated many societies and professional unions.

However, although some organizations were shut down or voluntarily ceased operations, many others did not. The disruption of the Civil War years and the absence of legislation permitted organizations to continue their activities without formal registration or approval. Those societies that survived the initial year of the revolution and civil war carried out a truncated existence. The disruptions of war and war communism restricted even the most prominent
societies to local activities, irregular publishing, reduced contact with foreign societies, and lowered membership dues.

Although laws of 1922 and 1928 gave rather wide latitude in matters of the self-definition, economic activity, and registration of associations and did not signal an intrusive state in society’s affairs, the powers of supervision over the leadership, charter, and activities of organizations cannot be ignored; though limited to registration and approval of charters, the NKVD had the power to close or restrict an association’s activities.

In 1930 the forms and methods of work of associations was altered drastically to meet the need to attract voluntary associations to active participation in socialist construction, to recruit into these associations the working masses, and to secure “proletarian leadership.” Compliance with these laws as well as with the spirit of the cultural revolution took various forms of restructuring, including consolidation and merger, liquidation, mission and membership realignment.

The fate of Soviet Russia’s voluntary associations during the First Five Year Plan followed patterns observed by many scholars of Soviet life during the 1920s and early 1930s. They were regulated by a variety of ad hoc and disorganized measures, many closely connected with the cultural revolution and the attempts to “proletarianize” Soviet life. Their demise followed a short revival during the mid and late-1920s. Older associations coexisted uneasily with newer associations in a situation of “dual power” before the majority of associations—“old” pre-revolutionary, as well as many “new” of the 1920s—were swept away. The policies toward associational activity moved through three phases—volunteerism, mobilization, and bureaucratic submission—that have been found in other dimensions of Soviet policy and institutions.

However, the ad hoc and seemingly unplanned policies toward voluntary associations should not mask the significance of their fate. Voluntary associations were among the last bastions of civil society. During the cultural revolution, civil society ceased to exist as an autonomous, however shaky that autonomy may have been, sphere outside the state. By the mid-1930s, associations were submitted to the control of state agencies, under “firm proletarian leadership,” and all committed to the cause of socialist construction. Civil society had been nationalized.
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One of the most important attributes of the emerging civil society in the former Soviet Union has been the appearance of a variety of non-Party, non-governmental associations, commonly called samodeiatel'nye organizations, or "neformaly." Unofficial, grass-roots organizations have become intermediary self-organized bodies through which (primarily) educated Soviet citizens could come together at their own initiative, form a public, and break down the sense of isolation. Associations have played an important role in the process of consciousness-raising, the coalescence of special interest constituencies, and the promotion of individual initiative and civic duty. Perhaps most important, the mere existence of independent associations challenged the monopoly of state power over public opinion.1

1 At first the authorities were not sure what to do with the "neformaly." See, for example, "Demokratia i initsiativa," Pravda, 27 December 1987; "Samozvantsy i 'Samodel'shchiki',' Komsomol'skaia pravda, 31 January 1988; "K 'neformalam'--neformal'no," Kommunist vooružennykh sil, 1989, no. 11 and 12. Soon journalists, political activists, sociologists and even historians began to analyze the phenomenon. See, for example, Neformaly: Kto oni? Kuda zovut? (Moscow: "Politicheskaia literatura," 1990); "Iz istorii obschestvennykh organizatsii: Dialog istorikov," in Istoriki sporiat (Moscow: Politizdat, 1988) and reprinted in Vsia Moskva 1990/91: Informatsionno-reklamnyi ezhegodnik (Moscow, 1990). Perhaps the best analysis was V. Berezovskii and N. Krotov, "Neformaly--Kto oni?" in Neformal'naia Rossiia: O neformal'nykh politizirovannykh dvizheniakh i grupakh v RSFSR (opry spravochnika) (Moscow, 1990). pp. 7-76. Finally, as the phenomenon of unofficial groups became less startling, and the groups themselves became rather less unofficial and more registered, the first directories appeared. See Neformal'naia Rossiia; as well as Rossiia: Partii, assotsiatii, soiuzy, kluby: Spravochnik (Moscow, 1991); and V. Pribylovskii, Slovar' novykh politicheskikh partii i organizatsii Rossi (Moscow, 1991).
At the beginning of perestroika, associational activity seemed sudden and surprising. Under current conditions it is aggravating and often seemingly futile. The recent historical experience affords little opportunity to analyze the significance of the phenomenon. If we are to understand the extraordinary efforts to reconstitute civil society in the former Soviet Union, we must understand their historical roots. In fact, more than a century ago, a civil society was forming in Russia. Essential to the development of Russian civil society, as well as to a dynamic urban environment and civic life, were the growing number of voluntary associations, particularly those associations that promoted the public interest, remained somewhat aloof from the business of making a living, and pursued broadly philanthropic, educational, and cultural goals. By using pre-revolutionary Moscow as a case study, I will present an overview of the most important organizations and their main activities, examine reasons for their rapid growth at the end of the nineteenth century, assess their role in the development of civil society a century ago, and finally, suggest the significance of the Russian experience for social science theory.

Public Organizations in Pre-revolutionary Moscow

Of course, for a long time voluntary organizations, like other major components of civil society in the West such as inviolability of person and property, the rule of law and the importance of contract, were virtually nonexistent in Russia. It was an extreme case of the continental pattern whereby officialdom rather than groups of private subjects took the initiative and whereby social needs were satisfied by traditional associations such as the family, the church, and the peasant commune. Moreover, the Russian city never attained the corporate autonomy achieved over centuries by the European city. The city’s inhabitants were grouped in hierarchical associations defined by tradition, law, and service to the state. Despite the intention of Catherinian legislation to create a third estate and an urban community, the city came more under direct control of the state, and the electorate shunned involvement in municipal life.2

Finally, it is commonplace in Russian history that the government repressed popular associations as sources of possible subversive activity and severely restricted the few associations permitted. To exist legally, an association required imperial approval, solicited through the Committee of

2 The standard Russian works on the pre-reform city are I. Ditiatin, Ustroistvo i upravlenie gorodov Rossii (Jaroslaw', 1877); and P.G. Ryndziunskii, Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo doreformennoi Rossi (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 1958).
Ministers. Thus, the fears of a mistrustful government coupled with the numbing inactivity of an apathetic population for centuries swaddled organized public life.

Despite its size and economic importance, Moscow had but a few charitable and learned societies before the era of the great reforms. The Moscow Agricultural Society, a learned society established in 1820, organized exhibits and conferences for peasants and in 1845 created the Moscow Literacy Society, which sponsored lectures and published books; however, this kind of public activity was rare at midcentury. Even important merchant organizations like the Moscow Stock Exchange Society did not exist until 1870. At midcentury, city guidebooks, unabashed boosters and image makers of the modern city, ignored Moscow's associations and "civic life". The 1868 guidebook, for example, informed the visitor that Moscow featured "heavenly cathedrals, royal palaces, aristocratic mansions, and innumerable shops and stores". Yet within a generation, guidebooks began to notice something else about the city. Quite different are the images presented by the 1903 guidebook, for example. Its authors crowed: "Moscow has been transformed completely from a big village with an aristocratic air to a huge, crowded commercial and industrial city adorned with museums, galleries, clinics, hospitals, charitable and educational institutions."

Voluntary associations and civic institutions had thus become a more important and more noticed feature of Moscow. In fact, by the end of the nineteenth century, in a nation not known

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3 Legislation concerning the establishment and supervision of societies went back to 1782. See A. D. Stepanskii, Samoderzhavie i obshehestvennye organizatsii Rossii na rubezhe XIX-XX vv. (Moscow: Moskovskii gosuderstvennyi istoriko-arkhivnyi institut, 1980). Useful introductions to Russian associations are "Obshchestva", in Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', 82 vols. (St. Petersburg: Brokgaus i Efron, 1893-1902), 42: 607-28, and studies of the Soviet historian A. D. Stepanskii such as Istoriia obshchestvennykh organizatsii dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii (Moscow: Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi istoriko-arkhivnyi institut, 1979).

4 Moskva v 1872 g. (Moscow, 1872), 54.

5 M. P. Zakharov, Putevoditel' po Moskve, 3d ed. (Moscow, 1868)

6 I. F. Gornostaev and Ia. M. Bugoslavski, Putevoditel' (Moscow: Sytin, 1903), 36. The guidebook was prepared by the Standing Committee on Technical Education of the Moscow Society of Engineers and published by Sytin; proceeds from its sale (a bound copy cost 1.25 rubles) went to support evening and Sunday classes for workers. For more on the changing images of the city, see Joseph Bradley, Muzhik and Muscovite: Urbanization in Late-Imperial Russia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), ch. 2; Bradley, "Moscow: From Big Village to Metropolis", in The City in Late-Imperial Russia, Michael F. Hamm, ed., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 9-41; and Bradley, "The Writer and the City in Late-Imperial Russia", Slavonic and East European Review 64, no.3 (1986): 319-38.
for its joiners, private individuals were joining and organizing associations in unprecedented
numbers, according to professional, occupational, philanthropic, and leisure interests. What
associations were they joining? The 1912 City Directory listed more than six hundred societies,
organizations, clubs, and associations, covering a wide range of charitable, technical, literary,
sporting, artistic, educational, cultural, and learned activities.7

The city's charitable organizations included many societies at hospitals and parish
almshouses as well as such venerable associations as the Imperial Philanthropic Society and the
Ladies Guardianship of the Poor. Moscow's charitable and mutual aid societies sponsored and
maintained a broad range of charitable institutions such as shelters and almshouses.8 Moscow
also boasted one of the most innovative and publicized charitable organizations in the country:
the Municipal District Guardianships of the Poor.9 Proponents claimed that by decentralizing
poor relief and using volunteer case workers these guardianships would not only regenerate
the poor but also transform the very concept of social service. Most mutual aid and consumers'
societies were more recent in origin. Organized on the basis of trade or occupation, they
reflected the increasing division of labor of the urban economy and were important in the
professionalization of many occupations. Mutual aid societies existed for agronomists,
veterinarians, teachers, physicians, engineers, pharmacists, feldshers, office clerks, sales clerks,
inkeepers, waiters, plumbers, leather workers, hair dressers, shoemakers, tailors, cab drivers,

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7 Vsetia Moskva za 1912 g. (Moscow, V. Chicherin 1912). City directories were printed annually,
beginning in 1894 in St. Petersburg and in 1897 in Moscow. The following discussion relies mainly
on the 1912 City Directory. For the sake of comparison, in 1897 St. Petersburg had approximately
four hundred societies. See also A. D. Stepanskii, Obshchestvennye organizatsii v Rossi na rubezhe
XIX-XX vv. (Moscow: Moskovskii gosudavstvenny istoriko-arkhivnyi institut, 1982) and A. D.
Stepanskii, "Materialy legal'nykh obshchestvennykh organizatsii tsarskoi Rossi". Arkheograficheskii
ezhgodnik za 1978 g., (Moscow: Nauka, 1979): 69-80. On the various laws pertaining to the
establishment of associations, reading rooms, public lectures, museums, and so on, see K. G. Von-
Plato, Polozhene o chastnykh obshchestvakh, uchrezhdaemykh s razresheniami ministerstv,
gubernatorov i gradonachal'nikov (Riga, 1903), and K. Il'inskii, Chastnye obshchestva: Sbornik
zakonov, rasporiazhenii pravitel'stva i reshenii Pravitel'stva uchrezhdaemykh Senata (Riga, 1913).

8 Adele Lindenmeyr, "Public Poor Relief and Private Charity in Late Imperial Russia" (Ph.D.
diss., Princeton University, 1980).

9 For more discussion of the Guardianships, see Adele Lindenmeyr, "A Russian Experiment in
Voluntarism: The Municipal Guardianships of the Poor, 1894-1914", Jahrbucher fur Geschichte
bakers, bathhouse proprietors, domestic servants, and other occupational groups. Benefit societies also existed for students and former students of various institutes and gymnasiums, as well as for Moscow’s non-Russian minorities.

The increasing division of labor of the urban economy showed up also in the city’s more than fifty vocational, technical, and medical societies. Many medical societies reflected the specialization within the profession. In addition, the existence of medical societies such as the Society to Combat Infant Mortality, the All-Russian League to Combat Tuberculosis, the Society of Municipal Physicians, the Russian Public Health Society, the Moscow Society of Factory Physicians, and the Moscow Hygiene Society reflected a widespread concern with public health. Best known, particularly for its work in conjunction with the zemstvos, was the Pirogov Society of Russian Physicians. The most important technical societies were the Moscow Society of Architects, the Russian Mining Society, the Polytechnical Society, the Moscow Section of the Russian Society of Engineers, and the Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge.

In urban society an increasing division of leisure matched the division of labor and showed up in the city’s sporting, artistic, educational, and cultural societies. Like other large European centers of the day, Moscow boasted several automobile, bicycle, and aviation clubs, as well as many other organizations promoting sports and hobbies. Also like large European cities, Moscow had several societies of spiritualists, mentalists, and theosophists. Literary and artistic societies included the Aksakov Literary and Political Society, the Moscow Society of Art and Literature, the Ostrovskii Society of Literature, Drama and Music, the Moscow Thespian Society, and the Society to Promote Musical Art.

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10 For an analysis of the urban labor force and occupational structure, see Bradley, Muzhik and Muscovite, 142-93, 359-70.


12 On scientific and technical societies, see N. G. Filippov, Nauchno-tekhнические общества России, 1866-1917 (Moscow, 1976) and N. N. Gritensko et al., Nauchnotekhнические общества СССР: Исторические очерки (Moscow: Profizdat, 1968); Iu. A. Mezhenko, Russkaia tekhnicheskaia periodika (Moscow-Leningrad: Akademiia nauk, 1955) provides an excellent list of societies and bibliography of publications. On the Imperial Russian Society of Engineers (also known as the Russian Technical Society), see Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk deiatel’nosti Imperatorskogo Russkogo Tekhnicheskogo Obshchestva s ego osnovaniiia po 1 ianvaria 1893 g. (Moscow, 1894).

13 A congress of spiritualists convened in 1906. See Veserossiiskii s’ezd spiritualistov, Trudy (Moscow, 1907).
Society, the Imperial Theatrical Society, the Moscow Choral Society, the Moscow Society of Artists, and the Russian Society of Photographers. Educational societies included the Moscow Literacy Society, the Moscow Free Library Society, the Moscow Society to Promote Educational Public Amusements, the Moscow Society to Organize Public Lectures, Libraries and Reading Rooms, the Moscow Society of Public Universities, and that most Victorian of societies the Temperance Society. Finally, the most prominent of the learned societies were the Imperial Society of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography, the Imperial Archeological Society, the Moscow University Society of Amateur Naturalists, the Imperial Society of History and Antiquities, the Russian Literary Society, the Moscow Mathematics Society, the Moscow Society to Disseminate Scientific Knowledge, and the Moscow Agricultural Society.

The Growth of Public Organizations

The dramatic increase in the number and variety of the city’s associations at the beginning of the twentieth century had political, socio-economic, and cultural causes. Like those of many plants that eventually robbed the old regime of nutrients, the seeds of civil association were sown by autocracy itself. By allowing nongovernmental institutions, such as the zemstvo, to play an active public role, the Great Reforms broke the monopoly of public life previously held by the autocrat and officialdom. For example, although approval from the central authorities of an association’s charter still was required, beginning in 1862 the process of gaining such approval had devolved to several ministries. The central government also granted Russian cities a measure of autonomy and permitted local political associations such as the city

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15 On the Agricultural Society, see Imperatorskoe Moskovskoe Obshchestvo Sel’skogo khoziaistva, Istoricheskaja zapiska o 30-ti letnej deiatel’nosti (Moscow: A. A. Levinson, 1890). Many other societies published jubilee editions; for example, see Istoricheskaja zapiska o deiatel’nosti Moskovskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva za 25 let (Moscow, Sinodal’naia tip. 1890). On learned societies in general see A. D. Stepanskii, "Nauchnye obshchestva pri vysshikh uchebnikh zavedeniakh dorevolutsionnoi Rossii", in Gosudarstvennoe rukovodstvo vysshikh uchebnykh zavedeniakh dorevolutsionnoi Rossii i v SSSR (Moscow: Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi istoriko-arkhivnyi institut, 1979), 210-39.

16 Stepanskii Samoderzharie i obshchestvennye organizatsii, 6.
council. In spite of limited franchise, Moscow began to develop Russia’s most active municipal government. Moscow was administered by civic-minded industrialists, businessmen, and professionals dedicated to expanding the city’s public services. During its first fifteen years the city council opened schools and hospitals, launched municipal public works projects, and involved itself in many areas of public health, housing, and urban transport. As professionals and businessmen became more and more interested in the city around them, the city council began to play a more activist and reformist role in urban affairs. Yet the “civic” significance of such municipal activism went far beyond the additional street car route or sewage line. In the eyes of a municipal social services commission, developing individual initiative (samodeiatel’nost’) and public morality were goals of city government. In this way, Moscow became Russia’s leading city in the movement for municipal autonomy and expansion of social services, and the City council catalyzed the cultivation of private initiative and civic vision.

A second important cause of the expansion of associational activity at the end of the nineteenth century was the rapid process of urbanization and industrialization. Moscow was the fastest growing of Europe’s metropolises, and smaller boom towns sprang up virtually overnight. The diffusion of science and technology and the specialization of the labor force meant an increasing need for technical and vocational training, especially of the adult population. Literacy and public education were spreading rapidly, and with them the horizons of the city’s lower white-collar employees and skilled workers. For women of leisure, opportunities for education and independence materialized so suddenly that Russia was arguably

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17 Many of Moscow’s mayors, such as Sergei M. Tret’iakov (in office, 1876-1882), Nikolai A. Alekseev (1885-1893), Konstantin Rukavishnikov (1893-1896), and Nikolai I. Guchkov (1905-1912), came from prominent merchant families. For more on the civic activity of the Moscow merchants, see P. Buryshkin, Moskva kupecheskaja (New York, Chekhov 1954), reprint (Moscow, 1990); Thomas C. Owen, Capitalism and Politics in Russia: A Social History of the Moscow Merchants, 1855-1905 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Alfred Rieber, Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1982); and Jo Ann Ruckman, The Moscow Business Elite: A Social and Cultural Portrait of Two Generations, 1840-1905 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984).

18 I develop this argument more in “Moscow: From Big Village to Metropolis”. For more on the city government see Robert Thurston, Liberal City, Conservative State: Russia’s Urban Crisis, 1906-1914 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

ahead of its time. Predictably, expectations grew even faster. No matter how activist Moscow’s municipal government, it was unable to keep up with the increasing needs and demands of its residents; into this vacuum stepped the city’s public oriented associations.

A third explanation for the growth in voluntary associations can be found in the increased interest in Russian national culture and the nature of Russian identity during the second half of the nineteenth century. Many manifestations of this interest are well known—populism, "small deeds" liberalism, the discovery of native and folk themes in art. The lode of material regarding folk culture and the native land beckoned learned associations such as the Society of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography, the Society of Russian History and Antiquities, and the Moscow Archaeological Society. The Moscow Slavic Conference and Ethnography Exhibition of 1867, sponsored by the former society, was a product of, and further promoted this interest in native culture. Likewise, one ingredient of the "singular popularity and fertile activity" of the Moscow Archaeological Society was its study of Russian archaeology and local monuments.

Moments of national pride or shame galvanized the public to step in where autocracy was unable, or unwilling, to satisfy national needs. Thus, for example, the War with Turkey in 1877-1878 stimulated private, voluntary relief activity. Moreover, the unpopularity of the war in certain quarters prompted a wave of "unofficial" sorrow for the fallen soldier and generated Russia’s first antiwar songs and paintings. Later, government efforts to relieve the famine of 1891 were widely perceived to be inept; this brought on feelings of guilt among the educated classes, prompted more private voluntary relief efforts, and stimulated further associational

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22 G.I. Vzdornov, Istoriia otkrytiia i izuchenia russkoi srednevekovoi zhivopisi XIX v. (Moscow, 1986), 139-40.

23 Recall, for example, Vereshchagin’s "Apotheosis of War". The warrior in Mussorgsky’s "Polkovodets", the final song in the composer’s cycle of "Songs and Dances of Death", is Death, who "surveys the ghastly field with pride" and proclaims "the Victory is mine! Men shall forget what you fought for today". These statements about the futility of war and the "unofficial" sorrow they reflect must be contrasted with the "official", bombastic, and warlike sorrow for war dead that is a well-known feature of both tsarist and Soviet governments.
activity. Not all moments of national anguish were directed against the autocracy. When two decades of unrelenting radical pressure against the foundations of Russia’s social and political order culminated in the assassination of Alexander II, the “Tsar-Liberator”, on March 1, 1881, the destructiveness of the radical intelligentsia was attacked. The era of small deeds liberalism championed sober, practical, and constructive associational activity.

Few would argue that Russia needed practical, constructive activity. Three important ongoing public activities of Moscow’s voluntary associations were publications, education, and the cultural philanthropy. The many bulletins, minutes of meetings, and transactions spread information about the parent society and contained news about similar societies in other cities. In this way, publications provided a national networking at a time when national organizations, unions, and congresses were anathema to the autocracy. Many serials also contained scholarly and scientific articles that disseminated information regarding the field of interest of the parent society. These publications acted as the conveyor belts along which passed Russia’s cultural intermediaries - teachers and physicians, for example - in their attempts to enlighten the common people. Most prolific in issuing scholarly publications were the Pirogov Society of Physicians and the Society of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography. More popular publications included the Pirogov Society’s booklets on public hygiene, the lectures and summaries of the Society of Public Universities, published by Sytin, the Readings for the Home and the Programs for Self-Education published by the Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge, and many others.

By offering classes, by systematically studying educational questions, and by organizing public lectures and opening libraries and reading rooms, several associations were directly involved in urban education. A few societies - the Polytechnical Society, the Russian Society of


25 A bibliography of the publications of the latter society is contained in Izdaniia obshchestva: Bibliograficheskii ukazatel’, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1894, 1913), reprinted from the society’s Izvestiia, vols. 89, 127. Among the publications of the Pirogov society were Zhurnal, Zemsko-meditsinskii sbornik, Obshchestvennyi vrach, Russkaia zemskaia meditsina, Zemskaia sanitarnaia statistika.

Engineers, and the Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge - sponsored sections that studied and formulated educational policy. Actual classes were offered by the Society for the Dissemination of Vocational Education, the Society to Study and Disseminate Accounting, and the Society of Retail Trade. In conjunction with the municipality, several societies ran general, vocational-technical, and business schools, many of which also organized adult education programs in the evening and on Sundays. For example, both the Russian Society of Engineers and the Society for the Diffusion of Technical Knowledge ran mechanics’ schools and sponsored public lectures and free drafting classes. Business schools, many of which opened in the 1890s and demonstrated the business community’s commitment to education, also contributed to the rapid expansion of secondary education in Moscow. For example, in 1897 the banker Aleksei S. Vishniakov organized the Society for Commercial Education to give technical training to clerks already employed and to prepare young students for careers in business.

Public lectures, reading rooms, and public libraries facilitated the efforts at general adult education. The first public lecture hall was opened in 1874 by the Commission to Organize Public Readings, itself founded by the Society to Disseminate Useful Books. According to the society’s annual reports, at first the audience regarded the lecture hall as a place of entertainment where for two kopecks one could see magic lantern shows. By the 1890s, however, this attitude allegedly changed, and the "public began to regard the lecture halls as centers created for their continuing education and an enormous number of people began to flock to them". In 1898 the Society to Organize Educational Public Amusements began to sponsor public lectures, along with slide shows, promenades, concerts, and plays. Other societies opening reading rooms or organizing public lectures were the Society to Study and Disseminate

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27 The Society of Russian Engineers had a Commission for Technical Education. See its Trudy, 1874-1897. Vocational, technical, and adult education have received little attention. See O. Kaidanova, Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia v Rossii i v SSSR (Berlin: Petropolis Verlag, 1939), and S. Elkina Ocherki po agitatsii, propagande i vneshkol'noi rabote v dorevolutsionnoi Rossii (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1930). Prerevolutionary studies include V. P. Vakhterov, Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie naroda (Moscow, 1917), V. I. Charnolusskii, Nastol'naia kniga po vneshkol'nomu obrazovaniyu (St. Petersburg, 1913).

28 Istoriia Moskvy, 4: 662; Owen, Capitalism and Politics, 153.


Accounting, the Pirogov Society, the Society of Public Universities, the Society of Free Public Libraries, the Society for the Diffusion of Technical Knowledge, and the Temperance Society. Similar to British and American university extension programs were the city’s two public (or "people’s") universities, the first run by the Society fo Public Universities and the second, the Shaniavskii Public University, run by the City Council. Their "public" goals were clearly stated: "The Public University is a free cultural institution with a single goal - the diffusion of science among all strata of the population. The basic goal of the [Shaniavskii] University is to disseminate advanced scientific education and instill a love of science and knowledge among the people." All programs of adult education aimed at nothing less than "the democratization of knowledge", "the levelling of social classes", and "the breaking of all barriers between people".

Perhaps the most visible example of cultural philanthropy on the part of the city’s associations was the creation of museums and exhibitions. Two organizations stand out in this type of civic activity - the Moscow Section of the Russian Society of Engineers and the Imperial Society of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography. The former, in 1901, founded the Museum for Assistance to Labor. Modeled after the Paris Musee Sociale, the Museum for Assistance to Labor launched a two-pronged effort to practice what was called "social", as opposed to political, economy. The museum collected data in order to help management improve the material conditions of workers; it also organized public lectures, classes, and exhibitions to help workers improve themselves. The museum became a focal point for progressively inclined professionals and the representatives of craft and clerical associations. In 1905 it sheltered the organizations and meetings of bakers and railway and municipal employees, organized the first All-Russian Conference of Representatives of Professional Unions, and even provided the hall for the first two meetings of what was to become the Moscow city soviet.

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31 N. F. Sustsov, "Organizatsiia obshchestvennykh razvlechenii", Obrazovanie, no. 1 (January 1898): 29-43; Pervyi Vserossiiskii s'ezd deleitelei obshchestv narodnykh universitetov i drugikh prosvesitel'nykh uchrezhdenii chastnoi initsiativy, Trudy (St. Petersburg: Sever, 1908); and El’kina, Ocherki, 209-15.

32 Vsiia Moskva za 1912 g., cols. 259-60.

33 V. Storozhev, "Po povodu otcheta Moskovskoi Kommissii domashnego chtenia", Obrazovanie 3 (1897), 75.

Best known for its broad educational activities was the Museum of Science and Industry, built on the basis of the Russian Exposition of Science and Industry in 1872. Organized jointly by the Society of Natural Science, Anthropology and Ethnography and the City Council, the museum was an example of cooperation between associations and the city government. Beginning in 1878 the Museum sponsored lectures, discussions, and Sunday tours pitched at the average worker. By the turn of the century, the museum resembled an open university; indeed the Society of Public Universities sponsored classes on law, economics, literature, natural sciences, and medicine all held at the museum. At first attended largely by the intelligentsia and lower white-collar workers, these classes attracted more and more blue-collar workers. By providing meeting halls and auditorium space free of charge to numerous other societies, the Museum became a civic center, contributing substantially to both adult education and civic life.

The Museum of Science and Industry was only one of many museums through which Moscow’s educated classes tried to spread learning and culture to the general public by means of permanent exhibitions. Among the many special exhibitions which were also held in Moscow were expositions of Ethnography (1867), Anthropology (1879), Geography (1892), Archaeology (1890), Agriculture (1864), Electricity (1892), Art, Architecture and Construction (1904), and Photography (1902). But perhaps best known for their lavishness were the Exposition of Science and Industry in 1872 and the All-Russian Exposition of Industry and the Arts ten years later.

Grand expositions in Russia, like those all over Europe and America during the second half of the nineteenth century, were major events that displayed the latest developments in science, industry, and the arts and showed off native industry and crafts to foreign visitors. The


36 Many special purpose exhibitions are listed in Mezhenko, Russkaia tekhnicheskaia periodika.

37 On the 1872 Exposition, see Obshchestvo liubitelei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i etnografii, Obshchee obozrenie Moskovskoi politekhnicheskoi vystavki (Moscow, Moskovskii universitet 1872).
1882 Exhibition of Industry and the Arts in Moscow was no exception. Its official report recognized that everywhere industry had become the major determinant of a nation’s power and prestige. A nation could display its power and prestige by displaying its industrial, scientific, and cultural achievements. Fittingly, the phrase “industrial celebration” was used repeatedly as a synonym for the Exhibition. By discovering that Russian industry was capable of producing articles of taste and refinement, foreigners would recognize that Russia was truly an educated, well-ordered (blagoustroennoia) European nation.

Impressing Europeans, of course, has been a venerable tradition in Russia, but Europeans were not the most important people to impress. One intended benefit of the exposition was bolstering Russian self-esteem regarding its own industry, long assumed by Russians themselves to be inferior. To prosper in the modern age, the report argued, industry needed the spirit of risk, self-confidence, enterprise, forward movement, competition, and public discussion (glasnost’). But the recent wave of terror and government repression, coupled with the alleged propensity of Russia’s upper classes to “self-accusation and negativism”, had paralysed society and, with it, economic life. Russia was plagued by “negative attitudes” and “groundless pessimism”. Hence the most important “moral consequence” of the Exhibition was restoring faith in the nation’s strength.

Associations and the Formation of Russian Civil Society

Moscow’s voluntary associations contributed significantly to the formation of Russian civil society by helping to create, expand, affirm, and defend the space between the individual and the state. From the above survey of associational activity, three manifestations of this contribution are most apparent: the development of individual autonomy, the promotion of professionalism, and the cultivation of civic duty. Voluntary associations promoted individual autonomy by espousing values commonly regarded as deficient in autocratic Russia: opportunity, individual initiative, self-reliance, self-improvement, a spirit of enterprise, industriousness, rationality, the ability to control one’s destiny, and a belief in science and progress. The very concept of associations suggests a behavior that is individual and voluntary, rather than corporate and ascribed; that is governed by choice rather than determined by fate. By providing forums for Russia’s burgeoning professional groups and by emphasizing the values of merit and technical competence, the city’s associations promoted professionalism. Indeed, given Russia’s archaic estate structure and the increasing discontent of liberal professionals over their

38 The following discussion is based on Otchet o Vserossiiskoi khudozhestvenno-promyshlennoi vystavke 1882 g. v Moskve (6 vols. (St. Petersburg, V. Bezobrazov 1884).
lack of rights and perquisites and the impediments to national organization, it is hard to imagine professionalization without local voluntary associations.39

Voluntary associations arguably played their most important role in the development of an independent civic life. The myriad of societies and associations that sprang up in the last two generations before the Revolution offered an opportunity to correct the alleged spasms of public life, to "enlarge the mind", to "make better citizens", and to improve taste. Associations channeled individual initiative toward certain spheres of practical civic activity that avoided both the selfish and rapacious pursuit of gain rejected by Russian Orthodoxy and traditional Russian culture and the nihilism of the radical intelligentsia rejected by Russian liberals. Associations were marriages of self-interest with the public interest, of individualism with the common good, and (so striking a feature of the Russian art world at the time) of European imports with old Russian culture. Associational activity not only promoted that sense of public duty and civic spirit that had been missing from Russian national life; it redefined it. Bureaucratic service to the state or visionary service "to the people" no longer defined the concept of public duty. Educated Russians could now engage in practical, purposive civic activity directed by, and at, structures between tsar and people.40

Associational life was not without its contradictions, which became more visible in the 1905 Revolution. Although discussion of associations' participation in national politics lies outside the scope of this paper, one contradiction may be readily noted. Many associations promised a breakdown of the barriers of tradition, the estate system, and state service. According to one Soviet historian, the public meetings and the "nesoslovnyi kharakter" (non-estate nature) of the Moscow Archaeological Society allowed "village priests, meschane, peasants, and women to sit alongside the customary aristocrats and even members of the imperial family".41 Yet voluntary associations also promoted new identities and groupings based on craft, profession, culture, and choice. Inevitably, as conflicts arose within organizations, as among the teachers in 1905, and between organizations and the government, new barriers


41 Vzdornov, Istoriia otkrytiia, 140.
divided no less than old. Herein lies an important flaw in Russia's nascent civil society. In its attempts to limit the central power, to create new and autonomous centers of power, and to train the populace in political skills, it became an increasingly articulate competitor to autocracy and officialedom in an effort to reconstitute political society. Yet, civil society created new fault lines and fissures. These cracked open in 1917, and during the next decade civil society was swallowed by the growing one-party state.

The Russian Case and Social Science Theory

Recent years have witnessed a revival of the concept of civil society in western Europe and America. New theories of human liberation and civic activism have abandoned the discourse of class and class struggle and instead have analyzed society by utilizing the concepts of gender, language, power, and the social construction of identities and cultural norms. Simultaneously, in eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, theories of civil society became a way to conceptualize multi-class attempts "from below" to limit the scope of state power. Before the existence of constitutionally guaranteed rights, political parties, representative institutions, impartial law, and property rights, grass-roots associations were the first element of civil society to re-activate. If it may be said that the one-party state had nationalized society, then associations were the first attempts at "privatization." Significantly, in a major revision of his own work, Jurgen Habermas, the preeminent theoretician of the public sphere, admitted that western theorists are now attaching more importance to the phenomenon of voluntary associations as the "institutional core of civil society."43

Russia has never occupied a prominent place in the theories of civil society. At first glance it would seem that a western-type civil society could not have existed in Russia. The institutional guarantors of civil society in western political thought--freedom from personal dependence and arbitrary domination; inviolability of person, residence and property; the rule of

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law and sanctity of contract—were certainly not features of autocratic Russia. Theorists of civil society from Hobbes to Hegel have connected its development to the concept of exchange and contractual relationships between individuals in the marketplace, as well as to contractual views of society and government. Though by no means guaranteed everywhere, civil society could exist under royal absolutism, and indeed the flowering of theories of civil society coincided with the flowering of royal absolutism. The very attempts of absolute monarchy to subordinate society to the state stimulated theories of the limits beyond which the state could not arbitrarily intrude. But while western absolutism subordinated society to the state, eastern absolutism "nationalized" it.44 In both tsarist and Soviet Russia, none of the "rights" that undergirded civil society in the west could be taken for granted. In the apt words of Antonio Gramsci, "In Russia the state is everything and civil society is primordial and gelatinous."45

Nor has Russia occupied a prominent place in the theories and histories of voluntary associations. Tocqueville anticipated Habermas' recognition of the importance voluntary associations by a century and a half. "Americans of all ages and all dispositions constantly form associations", noted Tocqueville. Indeed, Tocqueville claimed that along with institutions of local self-government, voluntary associations protected the citizens from both the central government and the excesses of the pursuit of private interest: "I think that private citizens, by combining together, may constitute bodies of great wealth, influence, and strength, corresponding to the persons of an aristocracy. An association for political, commercial, or manufacturing purposes, or even for those of science and literature, is a powerful and enlightened member of the community, which cannot be disposed of at pleasure or oppressed without remonstrance and which, by defending its own rights against the encroachments of the government, saves the common liberties of the country."46

Recently, voluntary associations have figured prominently in models to explain the formation of middle-class identities in nineteenth-century Europe and America. For example, Geoffrey Eley and David Blackbourn have challenged the prevailing Marxist paradigm in nineteenth-century German historiography of a "failed" bourgeois revolution. Despite its


inability to dominate political society, the German bourgeoisie. Eley and Blackbourn maintain, was able to dominate civil society in the Hegelian sense by securing the market economy and capitalist relations, private property rights and the rule of law, spearheading the movement of professionalization, and in general developing a public sphere separate and independent from the state. In particular, a network of voluntary associations was the "major agency through which the bourgeoisie set the tone in the material and cultural spheres of civil society". Moreover, associations were essential in the process of class formation: "Associational life was one of the principal means by which various constituent groups of bourgeoisie came together as a class." Finally, associational activity proceeded regardless of the political fortunes of the middle class. Indeed, the middle class was the most successful (and united) where its influence was the most quiet, natural, and anonymous; when it entered the political arena, the middle class became exposed, divided, and easily challenged by other groups.  

It would appear that yet again Russia has been cut off from advances in the social sciences and analyses of the Russian experience must proceed along a well worn path: categories of analysis borrowed from western theory. Yet, in the world-wide reexamination of the state-society relationship and of the meaning of civil society, the Russian case affords an opportunity for Russian historians and social scientists to make an original contribution to social science theory. The Russian experience—both present and past—is particularly relevant to post-Marxist theories of civil society and voluntary association on four grounds. First, they help explain the processes of public initiative, self-constitution of interest groups, and rapidly changing social identities in a country with a strong state tradition. Second, they permit an examination of the sphere outside the state in a country with weakly developed property rights and a small bourgeoisie. Third, voluntary associations and civil society help us understand the struggle against absolutism spearheaded from below by non-entrepreneurial social groups and which reflected anti-bourgeois sensibilities. Finally, these concepts offer a new way to study liberalism and reform in a country without the corporatist tradition of Germany or the individualistic tradition of England and America.

I will contend that in countries where arbitrary autocratic-bureaucratic authority prevails, associations become the leading element in the emergence of civil society and a source of civil society's strength. Russian civil society was hardly as "primordial" as Gramsci believed. At the same time, the fractious nature of associations is also a source of weakness. In the final decades of the tsarist regime, Russian civil society was indeed "gelatinous." It proved not only incapable

of defending the state; it was unable to defend itself. Thus Russian voluntary associations will not only allow us to understand the process by which Russian subjects were becoming citizens. The Russian case will allow social scientists to assess the role of voluntary associations in a non-western country and to rethink western-based models of civil society.
On 13 November 1930 Bogdan S. Bodnarskii, the venerable president of the Russian
Bibliographical Society, was informed that he had just been appointed to one of the many new
commissions that had been springing up in Moscow during the First Five Year Plan. The
commission's work was to last until the first of the following year. Its assignment—to liquidate
the Russian Bibliographical Society. Although Bodnarskii’s appointment to this commission
might strike one today as a bit odd—if not fiendish—to Bodnarskii it hardly came as a surprise.
On 19 December of the previous year he had been summoned to Glavnauka, the research
coordinator of Narkompros, where he was informed that a commission would soon be
investigating the activities of the society. Six weeks later he was summoned to the NKVD and
informed that Glavnauka already had a recommendation—to shut down the society. Although
here the NKVD played the good cop to Narkompros’ bad cop and allowed the society to appeal
the recommendation, Bodnarskii’s efforts to justify the society’s existence were to no avail and he
was appointed to the commission to close it down.1

Had "support groups" existed in Moscow in those days, Bodnarskii would have found no
shortage of members of liquidated organizations to give him a hug. Although significantly fewer
in number than in pre-revolutionary years, on the eve of the First Five Year Plan Soviet Russia
had hundreds of more-or-less autonomous associations, which promoted the public interest,
remained somewhat aloof from the business of making a living, and pursued broadly
philanthropic, educational and cultural goals. Yet despite the important social history of the
1920s and 1930s, the phenomenon of associational activity has been treated only tangentially.2

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1 The story is told, with a sampling of archival documents, in E.K. Bespalova, "Kak zakryvali
Russkoe bibliografichesko obshchestvo," Sovetskaia bibliografiia, no. 1 (January-February, 1989),
pp. 75-81 and no. 2 (March-April, 1989), pp. 47-54.

2 Sheila Fitzpatrick, The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and
the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921 (Cambridge, 1970); Education and Social Mobility
in the Soviet Union, 1917-1934 (Cambridge, 1979); Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., Cultural Revolution in
Russia, 1928-1931 (Bloomington, Indiana, 1979); Moshe Lewin, The Making of the Soviet System:
Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia (New York, 1985); Kendall Bailes, Technology and
Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941 (Princeton,
1978); Diane Koenker, William Rosenberg and Ronald Suny, eds. Party, State and Society in the
Russian Civil War (Bloomington, Indiana, 1989); Loren Graham, The Soviet Academy of Sciences
and the Communist Party, 1927-1932 (Princeton, 1967); Alexander Vucinich, The Empire of
During the 1920s, such associations were a mixture of old societies which until 1917 had had imperial patronage, grass-roots organizations which had sprung up in the last decades of the old regime, and new societies, the products of the enthusiasm, if not confusion, of the new era. However, few (including those founded since 1917) survived the Gleichschaltung that followed; those that did were absorbed by state agencies. A survey of the legal framework of associational activity will not only offer a new way of looking at the "cultural revolution"; it will also show us the nature and eventual demise of civil society in early Soviet Russia.

If, as Jurgen Habermas stated in a significant revision of his earlier work, voluntary associations are the "institutional core of civil society," then the large-scale reorganization and liquidation of Russia’s voluntary associations during the cultural revolution signified the end of a civil society that had been developing for more than a century and which had become especially variegated and lively, albeit fractious, by the end of the nineteenth century. Economic growth, urbanization, and advances in education, coupled with the Great Reforms of the 1860s, fostered the growth of organized structures that mediated between the family and the state. New professional, entrepreneurial, and artistic elites aspired to create new public identities. Essential to the development of a dynamic urban environment, Russian civic spirit, and new public identities were the nation’s growing number of voluntary associations. Bureaucratic service to the state or visionary service "to the people" no longer defined the concept of public duty. Educated Russians could now engage in practical, purposive civic activity directed by, and at, structures "between tsar and people."4

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Many pre-revolutionary associations were gone within the first year of Bolshevik rule. Hostility to the new government on the part of associations, hostility on the part of the Bolsheviks, and the chaos and deprivation of the Civil War decimated many societies and


professional unions. One of the first decrees after the October Revolution gave local soviets the right to disperse public organizations which advocated active resistance to or overthrow of the new regime. Thus, the Union of Towns and the Zemstvo Union were disbanded in January, 1918, the Teachers' Union was shut down in December, 1918; the Pirogov Society of Russian Physicians, the Free Economic Society, the Feldshers' Society, and several other public organizations were closed. In August, 1918, the Commissariat of Justice made all religious and charitable societies subject to closing and their property subject to transfer to local soviets. In 1919 the second Komsomol congress decided that since "scoutism" was a bourgeois system of physical and mental education, all boy scout organizations as well as sporting organizations should be shut down. Other organizations, such as the Red Cross, hostile to the revolution, were restructured on "democratic" principles: this frequently meant a removal of prerevolutionary officers from the "exploiting classes," a change in the organization's charter, and re-registration. In Petrograd, for example, of more than 500 societies listed in the pre-revolutionary city directories, only 50 were active by 1920.

However, during the chaos of the Civil War, these actions were largely ad hoc; there was no attempt to codify laws and procedures until almost five years after the revolution. Although some organizations were shut down or voluntarily ceased operations, many others did not. Many associations did attempt to re-register with the new authorities but simply submitted their prerevolutionary charters to Narkompros or the Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), the successors to the pre-revolutionary ministries responsible for the registration of most societies. The disruption of the Civil War years and the absence of legislation permitted organizations to

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5 "O pravakh i obiazannostiakh sovetov," Instruktsiia NKVD, 24 December 1917 in Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii rabocheho i krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva RSFSR (hereafter SU), 1917, no. 12, art. 180. See also articles by McClelland and Bailes in Koenker. Party. State and Society in the Russian Civil War.


7 SU RSFSR, 1918, no. 62, article 685; cited in Shchiglik, Zakonomernosti, p. 104-105.

8 Shchiglik, Zakonomernosti, pp. 100-101.

9 Ibid., pp. 108-111.

continue their activities without formal registration or approval. The (formerly Imperial) Geographical Society reported in 1922 that it saw no need to make any fundamental changes in its charter; it awaited the issuance of new model charters. Like other learned societies, it proclaimed that it was trying to adhere to its strictly scholarly purpose during "trying times" (v perezhitiu nami epokhu). The annual report of one of the oldest societies, Moscow University's Society of the Lovers of Russian Literature, noted in 1924 that it had adopted a new charter to conform to new organizational models and set up a new committee for the study of contemporary literature. "Both these facts, brought about by today's conditions, demonstrate that the society, in pursuing its fundamental task of developing belles lettres and literary scholarship, has, within its abilities and means, 'kept up with the times' (idet s vekom naravne)."

Indeed, many societies operated under their pre-revolutionary charters until as late as 1929. Those societies that survived the initial year of the revolution and civil war carried out a truncated existence, admittedly an existence not unlike the latter period of World War I. The disruptions of war and war communism restricted even the most prominent societies to local activities, irregular publishing, reduced contact with foreign societies, and lowered membership dues. At the same time, the Glavnauka section of Narkompros provided money to fund activities, rent meeting halls, and subsidize publications; the newly created Central Committee for the Improvement of the Life of Scholars (TsEKUBU) dispensed food, medical help, housing assistance, and old-age benefits. Annual reports indicate that most societies were not above

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12 Izvestiya Russkogo Geograficheskogo obshchestva, LV. 2 (1922), pp. 173-177.

13 Otchet Pervogo Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta za 1924 (Moscow, 1925), p. 222. But a quick scan of the titles of papers presented at meetings suggests little change from pre-revolutionary years.

14 For example, the Academy of Sciences operated on its 1836 charter until 1927, with references to soslovie, the Table of Ranks, the Senate, the Synod, and the Emperor. See Loren Graham, The Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Communist Party, 1927-1932 (Princeton, 1967), pp. 82-85.

15 Otchet o sostojanii i deistvijakh Pervogo Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta za 1922 (M, 1923), p. 176; Obshchestvo liubitelei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i etnografii (hereafter OLEAE), Otchet o deiatel'nosti za 1921/22-1923-24 (M, 1925), pp. 3, 29; Izvestiya Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva, LV. 2 (1924), pp. 190, 192. Among the societies receiving material support were the Russian Theatrical Society, the Society to Encourage the Arts, the Russian Geographical Society, the Russian Technical Society, and the Chemical Society. See also Fitzpatrick, Education and Social Mobility, pp. 75-79. Not all societies had difficulty maintaining foreign
requesting support from the new regime. The Geographical Society report in 1922 noted that
Lunacharskii and others in Narkompros were always solicitous to the needs of the society and
supported it in difficult times. The society’s president, however, was kept busy with the material
problems of members and with meetings and commissions on “matters of secondary
importance.” The Chemical Society continued to meet despite the difficulty faced by members
outside Petrograd. Various members took part in the work of the commissions of Gosplan, but
many of the other activities of the society—study of the needs of industry, development of public
education and professional training—were not unlike the society’s pre-revolutionary agenda. The
Chemical Society was able to jointly sponsor the Third Mendeleev Congress of Pure and Applied
Chemistry in 1922 in Petrograd, one of the first scientific congresses after the revolution. The
1922-23 annual report of the Moscow Society of the Lovers of Natural Science, Anthropology
and Ethnography captures well the sense of cautious optimism emerging from the civil war years:
Such hopes are entirely logical and natural. During 1918 and 1919, the members met
in nooks and crannies the city, without heat, light, or food, avoiding movement on
the streets. 1920 was rather bad. We managed to do something in 1921, but not
very much. In 1922 we got back into full swing and a real awakening started. And
1923 saw more of the same progress.

In 1922 a resolution of the All-Union Central Executive Committee required all
associations and unions to register with the the NKVD and to receive permission for all
congresses and national meetings. Registration entailed approval of each organization’s
charter and supervision of the organization’s activities by the NKVD. However, disapproval of
the charter could be appealed to the presidium of the Central Executive Committee, though how
such appeals would be adjudicated was not indicated. Despite the stipulation that advocacy of

contact. One, the Society of Russian-German Collaboration was established after Rapallo in 1922;
it's honorary president was Albert Einstein. (T. P. Korzhikhina, Obshchestvennye organizatsii SSSR
v 1917-1936 gg. (Moscow, 1981), p. 49.)

16 Izvestiia Russkogo Geograficheskogo obshchestva, IV, 2 (1922), pp. 173-177.
17 V.V. Kozlov, Ocherki istorii khimicheskikh obshchestv SSSR (Moscow, 1958), p. 50;
Nauchno-teknicheskie obshchestva SSSR (1968), pp. 126-127.
18 OLEAE. Otchet o deiatel’nosti za 1921/22-1923/24 gg. (Moscow, 1925), p. 52.
19 SU no. 40, art. 477 (1922); no. 49, art. 622 (1922). See also the handy booklet Sbornik
vazhneishikh deistvuiushchikh dekretov i rasporiazhenii Pravitel’stva ob organizatsii i deiatel’nosti
raznogo roda obschestv, soiuzov, areleii, tovarishchestv, religioznvkh, kooperativnykh i trudovykh
sel’sko-khoziaistvennykh ob”edinenii (Moscow, 1922), pp. 5-11.
anti-constitutional goals or methods was grounds for an organization's rejection, and despite previous ad hoc attempts to remove "exploiters" from leadership positions and to democratize membership and leadership, the 1922 resolution did not signal an intrusive state in society's affairs. At the same time, powers of supervision over the leadership, charter, and activities of organizations cannot be ignored; though limited to registration and approval of charters, the NKVD had the power to close or restrict an association's activities.20

By the mid-1920s a new generation of associations sprang up, many of whose titles reflect new agendas: "Down with Illiteracy" Society, the Union of Militant Atheists, "Friend of Children," "Friends of Radio," the "Scientific Organization of Work" league, the Union of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, the "Tekhnika-Massam" Society, the "Za ovladenie tekhnikoii" Society, OSOAVIAKHIM, and the All-Russian Association of Engineers (VAI).21 The latter acted as an umbrella organization which allowed pre-revolutionary technical societies to federate while maintaining their institutional independence. During the NEP years, one of the goals of VAI was to overcome the mistrust of old specialists and to raise the authority of the old technical intelligentsia in the eyes of the trade unions and party workers. Although the new government recognized associations like VAI which attempted to unite specialists in several disciplines in a national organization, it did not want them to become a forum for professional interests.22

New agendas appeared in older associations as well. The 1925-26 annual report of Moscow University noted that its Society of Naturalists was engaged in providing scientific principles for an increasing number of practical tasks, connected to the study of the country's

20 A. I. Shchiglik, "Dobrovol'nye obshchestva v perekhodnyi period ot kapitalizma k sotsializmu," in Ts. A. Iampol'skaia and A. I. Shchiglik, eds., Voprosy istorii i teorii obshchestvennykh organizatsii (Moscow, 1971), p. 207. refers to NKVD approved model charters as well as instructions and circulars which interpreted and applied the legislation on associations. These may be found in the Biulleten' NKVD. On the 1906 Temporary Rules on association and assembly, see my "Russia's Parliament of Public Opinion."

21 Articles on the Leningrad branches of many of these mass organizations can be found in the collection Dobrovol'nye obshchestva v Petrograde-Leningrade v 1917-1937: Sbornik statei (Leningrad, 1989). This does not even include all the new artistic, creative and performance associations, which will not be covered in this paper. See Richard Stites, Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution (New York and Oxford, 1989); Lynn Mally, Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia (Berkeley, 1990); Korzhikhina, Obshchestvennye organizatsii. pp. 70-84.

productive forces and of means to combat "wreckers" in agriculture.\footnote{Otchet za 1925-26 (Moscow, 1927), p. 323.} The Third Mendeleev Congress of Pure and Applied Chemistry in 1922 reflected a break (perelom) in scientific research activity: in place of work undertaken at the initiative of individual scientists, a new agenda of planned group research directed at solving pressing economic problems was clearly in ascendance. Indeed, utilitarian, planned, and group work are three of the pillars of Marxist science, as identified by Alexander Vucinich.\footnote{Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge*, pp. 79-80; Kozlov, *Ocherki*, p. 51.}

Six more years of associational practice under the conditions of NEP brought about a new law in 1928. The new law gave rather wide latitude in matters of the self-definition, economic activity, and registration of associations. Associations were defined as "voluntary unions of citizens who choose a particular goal unrelated to the pursuit of material gain or economic needs of the individual members as the subject of their activity."\footnote{"Polozhenie ob obshchestvakh i soiuzakh, ne presleduiushchikh tselei izvlecheniia pribyli," *SU*, no. 22, art. 157, par. 1 (1928).} Although, as in previous legislation, voluntary associations were regarded as "not-for-profit," a limited sphere of economic activity was permitted if it "directly addressed the goals of the society and were essential for the management of its affairs." Local chapters of associations were permitted to register without approval (iavochnym poriadkom), a goal of pre-revolutionary opponents of autocracy. A charter could be disapproved if it contradicted the constitution, threatened public tranquility and security, aroused national animosity, promoted the study of mysticism and the occult, duplicated the goals of an existing association, or left its goals unclear or undetermined. As in previous legislation, citizens deprived of voting rights in the soviets (the *lishentsy*) were ineligible to register as founding members or officeholders of an association. At the same time, the obligatory supervision required by the governmental organ registering the society was limited to familiarization with the society and inspection of its annual reports. According to S. Bertsinskii, writing five years later, the 1928 law stipulated a purely "formal supervision"--following procedures for opening the society, approving the charter, and making sure the charter conformed to Soviet law. Such a law, according to Bertsinskii, was a legacy of "bourgeois democracy," which was prejudiced to regard voluntary associations as independent of the state.\footnote{S. Bertsinskii, "Novye polozhenia o dobrovol'nykh obshchestvakh," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo*, 1933, no. 6, p. 107.}
The 1928 law did not extend to several categories of association, including religious organizations, trade unions, and a new type of voluntary organization—the "mass" organizations, such as Osoaviakhim and the "Friend of Children" Society. The latter category, a creation of the NEP years, had more direct government, party, or trade union leadership. Although there was some disagreement at the time among Soviet jurists about the differences between the "mass" organizations and other voluntary associations, the consensus was that in matters of approval, registration, leadership, and supervision, as well as, of course, size, the mass organizations were a distinctly different category of voluntary association.27

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That was 1928. Two years and the "great break" later, a "radical restructuring" in the forms and methods of work of associations were introduced by a new resolution of the Central Executive Committee and the Sovnarkom of 30 August 1930. The preamble was unambiguous as to the motive for the new legislation: the need to attract voluntary associations to active participation in socialist construction, to recruit into these associations the working masses, and to secure "proletarian leadership."28 Voluntary associations were defined as "organizations of workers' public initiative whose goal is active participation in socialist construction in the USSR as well as in national defense." Their activities were to be organized "to correspond to the general state plan for the national economy and socio-cultural construction, to participate in the solution of specific tasks of Soviet power... [and] to establish links with corresponding industrial enterprises, collective and state farms as well as with sections of soviets, mass educational and other public institutions and organizations."

A few small changes in the sections of the law concerning approval and registration signalled important changes in mission. While the 1928 law noted that an organization's charter had to indicate the membership and methods of selecting that organization's executive organs, the 1930 law noted that the charter must indicate the institution under whose leadership each organization functioned. While the 1928 law made several references to supervisory institutions, the 1930 law referred to organs responsible for supervision and leadership. The law also made provisions for youth sections within associations, to be supervised and led by the Komsomol, and

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27 Iu. Vlasov, "Dobrovol'nye ob"edineniia kak forma sovetskoi demokratii," Sovetskoe stroitel'"stroitel'stvo, 1929, no. 4, pp. 56-73; Shchiglik, "Doborovol'n"ye obshchestva," p. 211. Religious associations were regulated by a separate law of 8 April 1929 and published in SU, no. 35 (18 May 1929, pt. 1, p. 474).

28 SU, no. 44, art. 527 (1930).
for consolidation of similar organizations "in order to rationalize work (v tseliakh dostizheniia bol'shej planovosti v rabote) and to expediently utilize existing resources."

Most pathbreaking was article 27, and it is worth quoting in full: "The link between voluntary societies and unions (amalgamations, clubs, associations and federations) and the masses, as well as the supervision of the latter over the activities of associations and unions is accomplished by the presentation of these organizations' reports at mass meetings of workers, peasants, and collective farmers, investigation of their activities by worker brigades, as well as by the mentoring (shefstvo) of individual enterprises over the associations or unions." Thus, worker tutelage "from below" was added to government tutelage "from above" in the workings of Soviet voluntary organizations. Although the law itself was ambiguous whether these workers were also members of the societies whose activities they were to review (given that the preamble defined associations as organizations of the working masses, the reference in article 27 to the link between associations and the masses would seem redundant), a subsequent circular of the NKVD instructed all administrative organs to check the "composition of the association or union with a view toward the eradication of the closed shop mentality (izzhivanie tsekhovoi zamknutosti) and the recruitment of the broad working masses into the organization, first and foremost workers from production, proletarian students, and collective farmers . . . ." Such administrative supervision would ensure "firm proletarian leadership."29

The spirit of class war during the cultural revolution was reflected in criticisms of associations led, in the case of the technical societies by the All-Union Association of Scientific and Technical Workers (VARNITSO), established in 1928. Associations of the 1920s were accused of being "academic," of practicing "caste exclusivism," and harboring wreckers and churchmen. Societies had "build bridges to the pre-revolutionary past" across a "broad and deep furrow" plowed by the October Revolution. In a different metaphor, learned societies and scientific and technical societies were "islands of bourgeois science" which should be washed away by the "everlasting waves of proletarian science." Such organizations "reeked" and were "dark corners of bourgeois ideology" which needed the "light of communism." Such was the disorder of things that many organizations "cannot even say under whom they are subordinate."30

29 NKVD circular no. 531 of 3 November 1930 (Biulleten' NKVD, no. 36a, 1930), cited in Shchiglik, "Dobrovol'nye obshchestva," p. 220.
Compliance with these laws as well as with the spirit of the cultural revolution took various forms of restructuring, including consolidation and merger, liquidation, mission and membership realignment. "Open admissions" practices brought new young scientific workers and students into learned societies and helped "liquidate academic exclusiveness." The nation's oldest learned society, Moscow University's Society of Naturalists doubled its annual recruitment of new members, and shortened the customary length of articles in its "Bulletin" in order to give more beginning scientists an opportunity to publish. It paid more attention to bringing science to the "periphery" through public lectures, for example at the Moscow House of the Peasant.\(^{31}\)

The law frowned on duplication of effort, and consolidation and merger characterized associational activity during the cultural revolution. The Moscow Society of Lovers of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography (OLEAE) was a case in point. Founded by a group of Moscow University professors in 1863, the OLEAE's mission from the beginning had been the democratization of science. Unlike the learned Moscow Society of Naturalists, which admitted only specialists and included those whose publications were not in the Russian language, the OLEAE wanted to be accessible to the public, publish in Russian, and to attract youth to science. Its decentralized structure of autonomous divisions allowed it to cover many branches of science, to nurture numerous scientists, and to avoid "narrow professional exclusivity."\(^{32}\) After the revolution, its outreach activity continued and the Society organized congresses and conferences, excursions, public lectures and ran a library and one of the city's most important museums.\(^{33}\)

However, by late 1928, the activities of OLEAE came under the scrutiny of Narkompros, which concluded that the OLEAE and the Moscow Society of Naturalists duplicated their efforts. At the order of Narkompros, the OLEAE merged into the Moscow Society of Naturalists in 1931. Soviet histories of the two societies have been laconic and the full story waits examination of the unpublished record. Ten years later, two Soviet histories criticized the merger for its haste and its destruction of a well run organization (the OLEAE); some of the publications and


\(^{32}\) V. V. Bogdanov, "Obshchestvo liubitelei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i etnografii pri Moskovskom gosudarstvennom universitete," Uchenye zapiski Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, jubileinaia seriiia, vyp. LIII (1940), pp. 363-64; P.S. Lipets and T.S. Makashina, "Etnograficheskaiia deiatel'nost' Obshchestva liubitelei estestvoznaniia, antropologii i etnografii," Sovetskaia etnografiia, 1964, no. 6, p. 117.

\(^{33}\) Otchet o deiatel'nosti OLEAE za 1921/22-1923/24 (Moscow, 1925).
unpublished papers of the OLEAE were dumped in the courtyard of the Polytechnical Museum and destroyed. The merger was capped by a change in leadership of the newly consolidated society (the former president of the Society of Naturalists, M.A. Menzbir, had warded off restructuring in 1930 and had come under attack), and the admission of young "red specialists." "Without a doubt, the workers of Narkompros were to blame for the way this merger was carried out."34

The path to consolidation and merger frequently led through disaggregation and proliferation,35 as the experience of the Chemical Society after 1930 testifies. In his history of the society, Kozlov noted that the large number of new "scientific cadres" needing to "master new techniques" quickly needed leadership. "This leadership (vospitatel'naia) role to a large extent was assigned to the voluntary scientific societies." Yet, during the 1929-31 period, the Chemical Society allegedly still had not reorganized its work to conform to new economic tasks. Moreover, industry required separate organizations which could focus on the public activity of scientists and engineers. Accordingly, in 1930 at the initiative of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and the Committee to "Chemicalize" the USSR organized the Scientific Chemical-Technical Society, soon renamed the All-Union Scientific Engineering-Technical Society of Chemists (VNITO khimikov). For a time, institutional dual power prevailed among chemists and chemical engineers: the older Chemical Society emphasized theoretical work and was more prevalent in higher education and research institutes, while the newer VNITO emphasized practical work and was more prevalent at factories, design facilities, and engineering schools. By early 1931, all chemical societies and chemical sections of all other societies, except for the Chemical Society, by then reorganized as the Leningrad Scientific Research Chemical Society, were subsumed under VNITO. However, it was not until several more reorganizations that VNITO was disbanded in 1936 and the successor to the Leningrad Scientific Research Chemical Society, the All-Union Mendeleev Chemical Society emerged as the single organization combining all chemists.36 Consolidation was eventually achieved, but how tortuous and, with proliferation the short-term result, even contradictory the process!


35 Bertsinskii refers to the disaggregation of societies into smaller units as the "correct way" of bringing voluntary associations more in line with the "apparatus of specialized administration." ("Novye polozhenia," p. 108)

36 Kozlov, Ocherk, pp. 52-55; Naucho-teknicheskie obshchestva, pp. 128-133.
The closing of the Russian Bibliographical Society provides an example of outright liquidation. In both written and verbal reports, Glavnauka recommended closing the society on several grounds. First, it was necessary to centralize the activities of learned societies and organize their work around the appropriate institutions. Second, the society's work was random; it needed planning. Third, evidence of Marxist methodology in its bibliographic work was hard to find. The society's leaders were imbued with the principles of formalism and idealism. Fourth, the society shunned "mass" public activities and did nothing to recruit the masses into membership, let alone leadership positions. It was a "narrow," "closed," and "dead" organization. Finally, the society did not offer any contribution to socialist construction. None of the matters that concerned it was aktual'noe; it was detached from the great causes of the day. In short, it was a "useless" and "harmful" organization. Bodnarskii's attempt to refute the charges point-by-point, closing with assurance the the Russian Bibliographical Society was ready "to serve the cause of the cultural revolution in the great Soviet land" did not prevent the society's liquidation.\[37\]

Of more than sixty national scientific learned societies which had survived the Revolution, Civil War, and the 1920s to be around at the beginning of the cultural revolution, only eight were still operating by 1936: Geographical, Botanical, Moscow Society of Naturalists, Leningrad Society of Naturalists, Entomological, Mineralogical, a reorganized Astronomical Society, and the above-mentioned reorganized Mendeleev Chemical Society.\[38\]

Beginning during the cultural revolution, more and more scientific and technical societies took on the attributes of the mass societies in their mission, membership, and sponsorship. New model charters drawn up to conform to the 1930 law specified the close link between the societies and the broad mass of workers and the supervision of workers over a society's activities through presentation of reports at large meetings of workers and peasants. Charters also obliged societies to participate in the education of young worker and peasant cadres. Professor Ia. S. Edel'shtein put the new mission succinctly in a paper on the tasks of the Geographical Society delivered at the Congress of Geographers in 1933:

As a fundamental organizational principle, the Society, while preserving its scholarly character, must be a mass [organization] by bringing in the great strata of workers to research work, by mobilizing the masses to carry out the job of

\[37\] All the evidence, compiled from archival sources, has been taken from Bespalova's account in Sovetskaia bibliografiia.

\[38\] The city directories, Vsiia Moskva and Ves' Leningrad for the years 1928 to 1936 provide an approximation of the number of surviving societies. See also Swanson, "Bolshevization." p. 179.
socialist construction, and by uniting and coordinating its work with that of other mass organizations.\[39\]

In this, the older scientific and technical societies more and more resembled the Society "Technique to the Masses," established in 1928 to spread technical knowledge to workers.\[40\]

It is instructive that the work of the Society "Technique to the Masses" was directed by the Central Council of the Trade Unions. In 1929, VAI was liquidated and its organizations were transferred to the Central Council of Trade Unions. For some years before 1928, the trade unions had begun to organize cells of scientific-technical societies at selected enterprises. During the cultural revolution, and at a time when the loyalty of engineers was suspect after the Shakhty and Promparty trials, the technical societies were organized by the "production-territorial principle" with the creation of primary organizations at the enterprise level. Thus, the technical societies became subordinate to the trade unions and the economic commissariats.\[41\] While the technical societies became subordinate to the trade unions and the economic commissariats, the learned societies gradually became subordinate to the Academy of Sciences. And, although it has not been a subject of this paper, the cultural associations were consolidated and subordinated to Narkompros or to the creative unions.

Even the mass societies which were products of the Soviet years did not escape reorganization and eventual liquidation. The "Friend of the Children" Society provides a case in point. Founded in 1923 to help combat the problems of homeless children and juvenile delinquency, local "Friend of the Children" societies numbered 11,500 with a total membership of 1,227,845 by 1931.\[42\] However, its mission and organization were no longer adequate to meet new needs. Its shortcomings and new tasks will, by now, be easily recognized. An All-Union Society was to absorb the small local societies and new primary units were to be formed at enterprises, institutions, military bases, housing units, and collective farms. The society's major responsibility would no longer be the narrow and limited job of combating juvenile delinquency

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\[41\] Nauchno-tekhnicheskie obshchestva, pp. 101-105. The trade unions took over the functions of several sporting and defense societies. For example, at the initiative of the Komsomol, the pre-revolutionary Russian Society of Tourists was absorbed into the new (1929) Society of Proletarian Tourism, which in turn was absorbed into the Trade Unions in 1936. (Korzhikhina, Obshchestvennye organizatsii, pp. 43-44.)

\[42\] Korzhikhina, Obshchestvennye organizatsii, p. 67.
but now would include the job of communist upbringing and preparation of youth for socialist construction. Needless to say, it was to be a mass organization, reorganized from top to bottom, to provide proletarian supervision over other educational institutions. Finally, a single plan would eradicate the shortcomings, lack of planning and coordination, and "amateurish" (kustarshchchina) nature of work.43

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The fate of Soviet Russia's voluntary associations during the First Five Year Plan followed patterns observed by many scholars of Soviet life during the 1920s and early 1930s. They were regulated by a variety of ad hoc and disorganized measures, many closely connected with the cultural revolution and the attempts to "proletarianize" Soviet life.44 Their demise followed a short revival during the mid and late-1920s. Older associations coexisted uneasily with newer associations in a situation of "dual power" before the majority of associations--"old" pre-revolutionary, as well as many "new" of the 1920s--were swept away. The policies toward associational activity moved through three phases--volunteerism, mobilization, and bureaucratic submission--that have been found in other dimensions of Soviet policy and institutions.45

However, the ad hoc and seemingly unplanned policies toward voluntary associations should not mask the significance of their fate. And now that this significance can be examined in Russia itself, it is instructive to note the views of Russian scholars, writing during the sudden flowering of associations since 1985. The law of 1930 "legalized government leadership of voluntary associations," the "formalization of public life," and the "constriction of democratic principles." The demise of associations represented the "statization of scholarly and cultural life which had developed before largely by public initiative." "The administrative-command style of management . . . was not compatible with the pluralism of public life."46 Such a demise was

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43 La. A. Perel' and A. A. Liubimova, Obshchestvo "Drug detei" (Moscow-Leningrad, 1932), pp. 16-30.

44 Fitzpatrick, Cultural Revolution and Education and Social Mobility.


part of the "harsh regimentation of all aspects of public life" at the beginning of the 1930s; the Stalinist bureaucracy viewed public organizations as "a particular form of state institutions." 47

Voluntary associations were among the last bastions of civil society. During the cultural revolution civil society ceased to exist as an autonomous sphere outside the state, however shaky that autonomy may have been. By the mid-1930s, associations were submitted to the control of state agencies, under "firm proletarian leadership," and all committed to the cause of socialist construction. Civil society had been nationalized.

47 Bespalova, "Kak zakryvali," p. 76.