

Emily Joan Elliott
Doctoral Candidate
Department of History
Michigan State University

Migrants and Muscovites: The Boundaries of Belonging in Moscow, 1971-2002

May 18, 2017-August 18, 2017
Moscow, Russian Federation

Research Abstract

My dissertation examines temporary labor migration to Moscow from other parts of the Soviet Union from 1971 to 2002, elucidating the relationships between state-sponsored regimes and self-organized repertoires of migration. I follow the development of local, republic, and all-Soviet (later federal) migration policies and the interactions among state actors, migrants and Muscovites as a means of understanding how the boundaries of belonging within Moscow shifted, therefore affecting claims to social welfare and belonging. I argue that while migrants in the period under discussion underwent a temporary probationary period, but many gained permanent residency, causing an overall increase in the population. Soviet emphasis on transforming youth into model citizens through education inside and outside the classroom made the transition to permanent residency in the capital easier than in the post-Soviet period.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, migrants reaped the benefits of cultural development programs in dormitories and gained permanent residency in Moscow with relative ease. During perestroika and glasnost, however, city officials in Moscow desired to end temporary labor migration to the capital and instead focus the city's resources on the native Muscovite population. Understandings of who was a Muscovite were in flux during the early 1990s and encouraged a multinational understanding of belonging. However, by the late 1990s, state authorities restricted migration, viewing migrants as sources of crime and disease.

Research Goals

On a previous research trip to Moscow from September 2015 to June 2016, I conducted archival research at the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the Central State Archives of the City of Moscow (TsGAGM). I focused primarily on the Soviet aspect of my dissertation, which spans from 1971 to 1991 and scouted documents to inform my understanding of the post-Soviet period. When I submitted my grant proposal, I outlined that I would arrive in Moscow in early May to begin my work in the main branch of GARF by continuing to read letters addressed to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Russian Federation from workers living abroad. These letters contain requests for finding labor in Moscow as well as complaints from those who worked in Moscow but subsequently moved (or often returned) home. These documents have the twofold purpose of presenting why people wanted to move to Moscow and the problems they faced if they returned home. I additionally planned to read the Ministry for Federal, National, and Migration Affairs of the Russian Federation's studies on problems regarding migration. In June and July, I planned to visit GARF's smaller branch, dedicated to the history of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), to review records of the Ministry of Labor of the RSFSR, which contains requests from Moscow enterprises to increase limits on workers, information on recruiting workers, and studies of effective means of distributing labor power across the Soviet Union.

Research Activities

In May and June, I worked in both reading rooms of GARF. At GARF's second location, which is dedicated to the history of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), I read documents from Fond 10005. This collection contained documents from the State Committee for Labor of the RSFSR, in particular, plans for organized labor recruitment. The

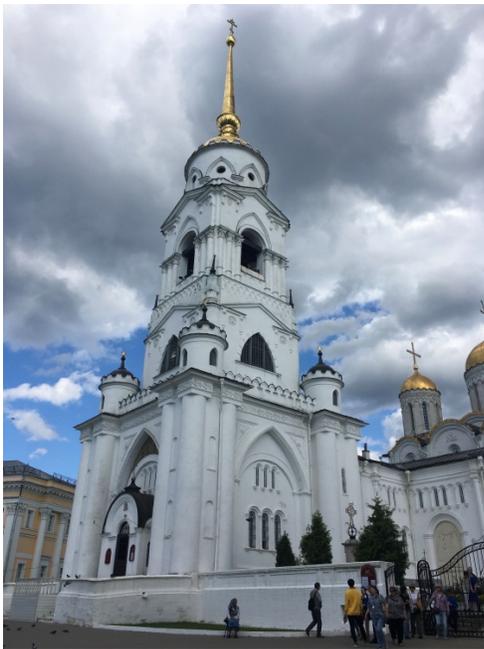
State Committee for Labor made plans for the employment of all citizens within the RSFSR, noting the employment of recent high school and university graduates as well as the relocation of workers from labor resource rich to labor resource deficit areas. From these documents, I gathered statistics on temporary and permanent labor recruitment for Moscow's enterprises. Moreover, I located studies and inquiries conducted by the Committee that examined labor deficits in the Central Region of the RSFSR and provided plans for addressing such deficits and low levels of productivity.

In GARF's larger reading room, I read documents related to the history of migration within and to the Russian Federation. Fond 10121, which holds documents related to the Federal Organs of National and Regional Politics, contained documents that detailed problems related to emigration, Russians returning from the near abroad, and the status of Russian language and Russian Orthodoxy. I also read files related to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Russian Federation (Fond 10158). These documents discussed methods for reviving Moscow Oblast's deteriorating light industry, finding employment for forced migrants arriving from the near abroad, and curbing illegal international labor migration. The last set of documents that I examined pertained to the Ministry of Federal, Nationality, and Migration Affairs (Fond 10156) contained federal inquiries into migration and plans for restructuring migration laws.

In June and July, I also resumed my previous work at TsGAGM. First, I reviewed additional documents from the Office for the Use of Labor Resources (Fond 249). Charged with recruiting and allocating workers to enterprises short on labor, the Office's records contained information on the processes of hiring workers from outside Moscow's city limits. I examined documents from the late 1970s through the late 1990s. Documents from the 1970s and early 1980s included plans for streamlining the hiring process for migrant laborers. While enterprises

had often hired such workers at the gate, the Office sought to exert more control over the process by funneling all workers through its own office. By the late 1980s, the Office changed its name to the Office for Labor and Social Problems and no longer viewed temporary labor migrants as a solution to labor deficits. As a result, the Office left behind documents on its plans to end the system of hiring labor migrants. The Office then focused on methods for increasing the natural population growth within the capital. By the 1990s, however, the Office grappled with finding employment for unemployed native Muscovites.

I also read documents from Fond 3261, which contains information on the Moscow Branch of the Federal Migration Service (FMS). Records from the early and mid-1990s were primarily statistical information on labor migrants who arrived in Moscow, noting their country of origin and type of employment. FMS also recorded information on domestic and international firms that hired migrant laborers, reporting those that hired workers illegally and made other violations in employment practices. By the late 1990s, FMS also instituted a quota system for recruiting both foreign laborers and domestic workers from outside Moscow.



Photograph from my research trip to Vladimir.

In July and August, I made two small trips to the State Archives of Vladimir Oblast. There I reviewed approximately twenty documents from Fond 3761, which contained documents from the Department of Labor and Social Problems of the Vladimir Oblast Executive Committee. On my first trip in July, I registered with the archive and ordered my documents. Due to their two-week closure for summer holidays, I returned to read my documents on a second trip. The documents provided information regarding labor shortages in Vladimir Oblast, modernization of technology, and cultural education in workplaces. The most helpful documents for my dissertation were those that provided statistical information, including age, nationality, party membership, and marital status, on workers who left Vladimir Oblast for work in Moscow.



Photograph of advertisements for workers, domicile registration, and medical certifications for work near Belorusskaia Railway Station.

During my time outside of the archives, I also formulated a website project, which I will execute under my tenure as a Cultural Heritage Informatics Fellow at Michigan State University in the 2017-2018 academic year. My proposed website analyzes the intersections of socialism and capitalism in present-day Moscow, drawing upon my archival research as well as photos I

was able to take while in Moscow. In particular, I visited the Olympic Center near Prospekt Mira, the Olympic Village near Yugo-Zapadnaya, and the ZIL Cultural Center near Avtozavodskaya. These locations, originally constructed in the Soviet period, have been repurposed in since the end of the Soviet Union to meet new needs of Moscow's population. The photographs that I have taken will provide a starting point to discuss these changes and their usefulness.

Important Research Findings

My research at TsGAGM and GARF helped me conceptualize my periodization of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. I have divided the Soviet period from 1971 to 1991 into three distinct epochs, each serving as a chapter of my dissertation. The first, 1971 to 1978, I termed the Golden Age of Temporary Labor Migration since enterprises, dormitories, and local city organs of power prioritized the cultural education of youthful labor migrants. Teaching shared Soviet values and Moscow's insatiable need for labor made the process of becoming a Muscovite simple for those who opted to stay. From 1979 to 1986, Soviet and city authorities invested less energy into the cultural development and education of temporary labor migrants, instead relying on policing methods, such as document checks, to maintain order in the dormitories. However, this new approach did not leave migrants without recourse for addressing problems regarding housing and employment. Migrants took their own actions, such as apartment squatting, and negotiated with the Reception Desk of the Supreme Soviet to claim their status as Muscovites.

Glasnost and perestroika serve as the spinal chapter of my dissertation, bridging the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Beginning in 1986, the Moscow Office for the Use of Labor Resources restricted the ability of enterprises to issue a temporary domicile registration to temporary labor migrants. The reasons were twofold. First, in light of the shrinking working-age

population in Moscow, the Office for the Use of Labor Resources realized that labor migration was not a long-term solution to labor shortages. Second, in order to address the problem of a shrinking labor pool, the Office redirected its resources to increasing the native population of Moscow. This included opening psychological and physical health clinics for young families. New economic policies on the republican and all-Soviet level meant economic liberalization and releasing workers from employment. The Office then switched tacks again, focusing on creating unemployment bureaus.

Examining 1992 to 1998, I consider the continuities between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The population of Moscow actually shrank during this time period due to increasing death rates, falling birth rates, and a standstill in migration. Moreover, the newly erected borders and opening of the Russian Federation to international migration shaped new regulations on labor migration. The Moscow Office for Labor prioritized finding employment for Muscovites first and citizens of the Russian Federation second. The federal government allowed citizens of most former Soviet republics to enter Russia visa-free and planned to make all citizens bilingual, accommodating the multilingual nature of the Russian Federation. I argue that throughout most of the 1990s, migration regimes and conceptions of belonging were in flux due to the formation of the new Russian government and economic and demographic problems that hindered migration. However, migration regimes did not inherently bar non-Russians, instead they continued to grapple with the meaning of Russian.

By 1999, the official state view of temporary labor migration to Moscow radically changed. All migrants from beyond Moscow's borders became suspect. Local and federal officials worked to relocate refugees and stem the tide of increasing labor migration. While individual enterprises could recruit foreign workers, the City of Moscow set a quota for the total

number of foreign workers allowed in each sector of the economy. Moreover, local and federal authorities viewed all foreign migrants – from both the near and far abroad – as threats to security and public health. I argue that migration regimes and repertoires were at their least compatible at this time. Regimes aimed to removed migrants that state actors viewed as problems, and migrants arriving in Moscow had few means to regularize their positions, particularly since they lacked shared citizenship unlike in years' past.

My research in Vladimir confirmed my understanding of who temporary labor migrants were based on my research in Moscow. In Vladimir, I discovered that the State Committee for Labor of the RSFSR charged the Vladimir Office for the Use of Labor Resources with providing between 25 and 50 workers annually each for four enterprises in Moscow. The statistical information also provided an overview of who these migrants were. They were predominantly unmarried, ethnic Russian, males under age 30, who lacked party candidacy or membership. Over 90 percent had a specific profession (as opposed to lacking a trained skillset), but only 30 percent were specialists in their profession. This essentially replicated the profile of temporary labor migrants who arrived in Moscow from across the Soviet Union. Moreover, the State Archive of Vladimir Oblast held information that I had not previously seen. Temporary labor migrants who left Vladimir left seemingly stable lives behind in terms of employment. Eighty-four percent of those who left had been employed in Vladimir Oblast until their moment of departure, and ninety percent of these had not changed their place of employment within the previous year.

Examining documents from Vladimir Oblast's Office for the Use of Labor Resources also provided a point of comparison for understanding Moscow's Office. The Vladimir Office modeled its work after the Moscow Office in its practices of attracting and allocating workers.

Additionally, both offices struggled with similar problems, namely, how to find adequate labor resources and use them efficiently. The most striking difference, however, is Moscow's exceptionalism. Although Vladimir (and presumably other regions that bordered Moscow) struggled to find a sufficient number of laborers for its own enterprises, the Vladimir Office was required to forward workers on to Moscow. Moscow, in contrast, only recruited workers and did not forward youthful laborers to other parts of the Soviet Union.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Temporary labor migration to Moscow, the focus of my research, has radically informed Russian conceptions of terrorism. Following the end of the Soviet Union, migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus worked in Moscow's markets, often selling produce grown in their home republics. Following terrorist attacks in the capital and during the wars in Chechnya, Moscow's police force conducted document checks and removed from the capital both legal and illegal migrants. Local and federal officials quickly associated illegality with darker skinned, non-ethnic Russian Muslims.

My work interrogates how local and federal authorities policed and understood suspected terrorists. Markets and train stations, places where migrants were likely to sell their goods, became marked as "black" places in need of purification in the form of document checks. Police, local, and federal authorities put in place new means of regulating migration. Moreover, with former Soviet borders now porous, Russian authorities argued that domestic terrorists received radical ideas from abroad. Last, my dissertation examines historical junctures such as metro bombings and official reactions to them, providing an understanding of how the Russian state has responded to terrorism. In short, my work offers analysis of Russian official stances on terrorist acts as well as a profile of the Russian conception of a terrorist.

In working with the government of the Russian Federation in combatting terrorism, the United State should be familiar with its conceptions of terrorism, which is rooted in its understanding of forced and labor migration. Moreover, the Russian case study provides insight into labor migration to the United States. In many cases, migration regimes – that is to say, state laws and policies that govern migration – often do little to stem existing migration repertoires. Migrants often rely on their own personal networks to move to places where they will have the support of family, friends, and a local community. Moreover, native populations often shun certain types of labor, which they deem “black” or “dirty,” leaving it for migrants to work. This creates a conundrum. Migrants become a necessary component of keeping the economy running, despite any laws that restrict their entry. Even when legally barred, labor migrants are often an economic reality. Combined irregular status with “black” labor makes migrants outcasts. While I would strongly recommend that the US government reconsider its current migration policies.

Co-Curricular Activity

During my tenure in Moscow, I attended a panel at the Higher School of Economics’ International Scholarly Conference on the History and Sociology of the Second World War and Its Consequences. One panel addresses the memory of the Second World War as represented in letters and diaries of socialists living outside of the Soviet Union. Additionally, I often discussed my research and the research of other scholars while in the archives in Moscow. I worked closely with my fellow colleague from Michigan State University, Liao Zhang, who also studies the Sino-Soviet border and migration within the Soviet Union.



Lunch at Café Pushkin with my colleague, Liao Zhang.

Plans for Future Research Agenda/ Presentations and Publications

Using the research that I gathered as a Title VIII research scholar through American Councils, I will present two papers on temporary labor migration to Moscow. I will present the first paper, titled “Managing Migrants and Muscovites: The Changing Role of Moscow’s Office for the Use of Labor Resources during Perestroika,” at the Annual Social Science History Association Convention in Montreal, Canada. In this paper, I examine how official policy to promote individualism and youth initiative in politics during perestroika and glasnost’ came at the cost of social welfare and protection for youthful labor migrants to Moscow. The second presentation is titled, “Making and Policing Muscovites: Migrant Letters to the *Priemnaia* of the Supreme Soviet,” and I will present it at the Annual Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Examining letters the migrants and Muscovites sent to the Reception Desk (*Priemnaia*) of the Supreme Soviet, I argue that that such letters led to both policing of migrant dormitories in Moscow and migrants claiming their identities as Muscovites.

I have a forthcoming publication in the *Journal of Migration History*, titled “Soviet Socialist Stars and Neoliberal Losers: Young Labour Migrants in Moscow, 1971-1991,” which compares the experiences of temporary labor migrants to Moscow in the 1970s and 1980s. I have submitted an application to participate in the International Forum for Young Scholars of Soviet and Post-Soviet History and Culture, to be held at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia. If granted to opportunity to attend, I plan to turn my proposed paper on labor migration and the 1980 Summer Olympics into an article for publication. While in Moscow, I will also visit the Central State Archives of the City of Moscow to review more of their documents related to the preparation and execution of the 1980 Olympics.

Conclusions

My research trip helped me conceptualize the relationship between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In the Soviet period, Moscow suffered a chronic shortage of labor due to its ageing population and problems within the command economy. My examination of temporary labor migration to Moscow provides a means of understanding how Soviet authorities attempted to solve these issues. Until 1986, Soviet authorities undertook no major measures to restructure the command economy. Instead, they used temporary labor migrants to temporarily solve its shortage of labor power, but the emphasis on shared Soviet culture and values made the transition from migrant to Muscovite a smooth one. During glasnost and perestroika, Soviet and city authorities did change the structure of the economy to the detriment of both migrants and Muscovites. In the post-Soviet period, native Muscovites experienced high rates of unemployment, but continued to avoid positions in low-paying and physically demanding sectors of the economy. Migrants from the near and far abroad took on these jobs, but the lack of a shared Soviet background often branded them as outsiders.

Bibliography

Central State Archives of the City of Moscow

Fond 249, opis' 2

Fond 3621, opis' 1

State Archives of the Russian Federation

Fond 10005, opis' 1

Fond 10121, opis' 1

Fond 10121, opis' 2

Fond 10156, opis' 1

Fond 10158, opis' 1

Fond 10158, opis' 7

State Archive of Vladimir Oblast

Fond 3761, opis' 1