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# **WANDERING WORKERS**

Mores, Behavior, Way of Life, and Political  
Status of Domestic Russian Labor Migrants

*ibidem*-Verlag  
Stuttgart

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## Preface

This book addresses the issue of Russian wandering workers—*otkhodniks*. They are a specific group of internal temporary labor migrants who migrate from small towns and rural areas to major cities and industrial centers. Among them, seasonal and agricultural workers are a negligible minority. In our view, these Russian labor migrants differ from both circular (circulatory) cross-border migrants and seasonal agricultural migrants, well familiar in many countries of the world. To highlight these differences, we refer to them as *wandering workers* (in Russian—*temporary departers*), and avoid using the terms *circular migrants* and *seasonal workers* more familiar to western researchers. A self-designation for such *wandering workers* appeared in Russia about three or four centuries ago. People started calling them *otkhodniks* [from the Russian *otkhod*—temporary departure], and this is the term they themselves and the Russian scientists still use.

Initially, we planned this monograph as a simple (authentic) translation of our book *Otkhodniks*<sup>1</sup>, which appeared in Russian at the end of 2013. However, in the past year and a half, while the monograph was being translated, we continued our field-work supplementing the existing records by the findings of new expeditions, observations and interviews. At the same time, we refined the conclusions made earlier based on the newly obtained field data, tested new hypotheses, and conceptualized our records. As a result, the English edition differs significantly from the Russian version both by the volume of the presented material, and by its analysis. Actually, it turned out to be a new book about *otkhodniks*. We have been collecting field data for this book continuously over five years, in summer and in winter. We have revised every chapter, expanded all of them, and added new ones. To the extent possible, the presentation of the material has been adapted for readers unfamiliar with the Russian reality in the sphere of labor behavior. In particular, wherever necessary, we have provided an explanation of the terms and events, which was not required for the Russian readers. We have also provided a US dollar equivalent not only for all our estimates but also for the cost of various types of work and wages received by the *otkhodniks*. For this purpose, we applied the average official USD/RUB exchange rate effective at the time of the surveys, which was 30–32 rubles per 1 US dollar (although, obviously, the purchasing power of the ruble in the Russian province was at that time substantially higher). We are extensively quoting our respondents, and we have retained all the original colloquialisms, slang, and

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1 Plusnin J.M., Zausaeva Y.D., Zhidkevich N.N., and Pozanenko A.A., *Otkhodniks* / S.G. Kordonsky (ed.). – M.: Novyj Khronograf, 2013, 376 p.

phonetics. To the extent possible, the translator has tried to convey this manner of speaking in the English text.

The co-authors contributed to this book as follows. Juri Plusnin supervised the research and development of the structure and content of the monograph, and co-wrote all the sections of the book. With the technical and editorial assistance of Natalia Zhidkevich and Artemy Pozanenko, he also re-wrote the entire text of the 2013 monograph, significantly amended and supplemented every chapter, and added two new chapters. Yana Zausaeva participated in writing chapters 4, 9, and 10 herein. Natalia Zhidkevich wrote chapter 8 and participated in writing chapter 5. Artemy Pozanenko took part in writing chapters 4 and 10, and was the principal author of chapters 5, 6, and 7.

## Preface to the 2013 Russian edition

Otkhodnichestvo as a phenomenon is not just a matter of academic interest for us. The senior co-author is himself an otkhodnik and experiences first-hand all the advantages and hardships of a "migratory" lifestyle. The three junior co-authors are involved in the matter in another way. For the past three years, we have traveled extensively; we have visited dozens of small towns and villages and knocked on hundreds of doors. We are looking for, finding, and trying to engage in conversation a mostly unknown, however, extremely interesting and charismatic type of person who calls himself *otkhodnik*—an archaic and seemingly long-forgotten (even by sociologists) term—and who leads a busy and productive life filled with hard work and weary household chores.

We have spent many hours amid the otkhodniks talking to them and their families. As a result, we have adopted their viewpoints and to a certain extent even started identifying ourselves with them. Apart from an advantage, this also poses the threat of losing a researcher's impartial approach. Nevertheless, we did our utmost to maintain a clear perception and present our findings primarily as sociologists. It could be that in certain instances we deviated from this principle.

The book provides a sociological phenomenological (not statistical) overview of contemporary otkhodnichestvo and relies on the findings of our fieldwork. We chose to present only this aspect of the recurrent labor migration in Russia—a one-sided approach does not always hinder research.

Writing the book turned out to be a long and complicated process; it was not easy to outline and summarize the interviews we had taken. Probably, partly due to this we failed to achieve all our objectives and feel a certain dissatisfaction with some aspects of our work. However, we count on the benevolence of our readers who chose at least to leaf through this book about otkhodniks, which is based on their words, stories and experience.



## Acknowledgements

Three sponsors contributed to our empirical research of contemporary otkhodnichestvo. This enabled us to make many expeditions to different small towns across Russia.

The Khamovniki Foundation for Social Research was our principal sponsor. Initially, it allocated funds for our studies in 2010–2011; subsequently, in 2011–2012, it provided a special grant for the research of otkhodnichestvo (Project 2011-001, *Otkhodniks in small towns*). Two separate projects supported by the Foundation and implemented in 2012–2013 contributed to the research. These projects are: *The social portrait of the contemporary Russian otkhodnik*, led by Natalia Zhidkevich; *The social structure of local communities territorially isolated from public authorities*, led by Artemy Pozanenko. Thus, the diverse and lasting support of the Khamovniki Foundation enabled us to focus on the fieldwork. In addition, the Foundation sponsored the publication of the monograph *Otkhodniks* in Russian and financed its translation and issue in English. Such a supportive (friendly) attitude to our research of labor migration gave us the opportunity to realize our ideas fully. We are very grateful to Alexander Klyachin, Khamovniki Foundation Chairman of the Board, for his interest in the research of otkhodnichestvo and his understanding of the challenges involved. His position allowed us to perform extended field research in spite of the many difficulties facing such an ambitious project. We would like to express our gratitude to Cholpon Beishenalieva, Khamovniki Foundation Director, for her attention to our problems, her patience when it came to inevitable disruptions, and her ongoing support and encouragement. We are certain that the success of our research is largely a result of her efforts.

In 2011, when the project was already under way, supported by the Khamovniki Foundation, we received assistance from the public Russian Foundation for Humanities in the form of a grant for field research of otkhodnichestvo (Grant No. 11-03-18022e, *Otkhodniks in Russian small towns*). This allowed us to collect additional field data.

In 2012–2013, we received funding from the Academic Fund of the National Research University—Higher School of Economics for the research of a particular aspect of the matter—interaction of the otkhodniks with the municipal authorities (Grant No. 11-01-0063, *Will the economically active population become an ally of the municipal authorities? Analysis of disruptions in the relations between the local communities and the authorities*, led by J.M. Plusnin).

In 2014, on our own initiative, we continued collecting additional data on otkhodnichestvo wherever possible; we conducted observations in the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East.

We are grateful to Olga V. Smirnova, director of the Kologriv local history museum, for her attention to our requests and the assistance she provided when we were working in the archive of the Kologriv branch of the Kostroma state museum reserve.

Many assistants helped us in the fieldwork and in the primary analysis of collected data. It is with great pleasure that we thank all the participants of the work, many of whom were at that time students, post-graduate students, and staff of the National Research University—Higher School of Economics. Among them are: Irina Popova; Sergey Pyzhuk; Sergey Sergeev, MSc; Evgenia Shardakova, MSc; Vasily Skalon, MSc; Anna Baidakova, MSc; Galina Babkova, PhD in history; Ivan Kokovin, PhD in history; and Jaroslav Slobodskoj-Plusnin, PhD in biology.

Obviously, we would have been unable to prepare this text without the information that we obtained from the local experts and the otkhodniks themselves. We mention the names of the local experts (with their permission) in the texts of the interviews with them. We refer to our otkhodnik respondents by name and the initial of the surname, or even anonymously, because that was their precondition for giving the interview. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the several hundred people, who agreed to talk to us and patiently listened to our boring questions, provided explanations, swore and joked out of despair, and laughed at themselves and at us: everything that is written in this book was expressed and suggested by them.

# Introduction

*"We have good people, patient and smart people.  
They suffer, suffer, and suffer!*

*They hear everything and see everything.  
However, they know that yelling and screaming will not  
change anything. No one will bring them bread; no one will  
give them money. The rich get everything. The poor have to  
survive. And they survive. They work wherever they can find  
a job. And they are happy when they get paid on time—  
thank God!"<sup>2</sup>*

*Otkhodnik, otkhodnik crafts and trades, otkhod*—these notions, which had already become archaic in Russia in the first third of the twentieth century, are back in use. After the end of the Soviet period of Russian history, when such a phenomenon could not exist in principle, *otkhodnichestvo* as a special form of labor migration re-emerged in Russia. Certainly, the new form differs from the one that existed a century ago, but it has such significant similarities with the previous one, that some researchers were compelled to return to the old, long-forgotten, term *otkhodnichestvo* [temporary departure from home to earn money elsewhere].

*Otkhodnichestvo* is an amazing phenomenon of our social and economic life. Primarily, it is amazing by its invisibility. Not only ordinary people in big cities know nothing about *otkhodnichestvo* and the *otkhodniks*, but also the authorities and until recently, the scientists were unaware of them. In the meantime, this is a mass phenomenon: according to our rough and conservative estimates, out of approximately 55 million Russian families, at least 10–15 million, or maybe even 20 million families live off *otkhodnichestvo* of one or even both adult members. In other words, the *otkhodniks* provide a considerable proportion of the economic potential of the country, but this remains unrecorded by statistics; moreover, it cannot be recorded, because the *otkhodniks* as market participants seem to be non-existent.<sup>3</sup>

For the authorities they do not exist as a target of social policy either. They are not recorded in local official accounts and not reflected in local economic indicators (but at least half of them are registered in the economy at the place of employ-

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2 Interview with a woman, who had moved with her husband from Ostrovnoy, taken during a round of a nine-storey apartment house; Podporozhye, Leningrad Region, February 2012.

3 Evidently, the *otkhodniks* and their activities are in one way or another recorded in our large-scale "shadow" economy (see: Radaev, 1999; Ryvkina, 1999) and in the structure of informal employment (see: Barsukova, 2003 and 2004; Sinyavskaya, 2005; *Non-standard employment*, 2006; Barsukova, Radaev, 2012; *In the shadow of regulation*, 2014). However, this category of labor migrants has not been differentiated yet.

ment). They do not work according to their professional background and, perhaps, they have received free public vocational education and training for nothing. They pay no taxes; therefore, they do not expect to receive any pension. They are never sick, so they do not benefit from public healthcare services. Moreover, they do not need any social support from the state, because they rely only on themselves. Although the *otkhodniks* may be the most active part of the Russian population, they actually remain outside politics—the public authorities do not notice them. Not only are they non-existent for the government bodies as an object of governance, the local authorities do not take them in consideration either, even if they are aware of them. Although the *otkhodniks* are those very residents, for whose sake the municipal authorities are implementing the worthiest of all theories of management—"the art of clearing the streets of manure".<sup>4</sup>

Sadly, so far the *otkhodniks* have also been non-existent for Russian sociology: we have no idea who they are, what life they lead, what they eat, what drives them, and what they dream of. We know nothing about their families or the way they bring up their children. We have no clue what distinguishes them from the families of their non-*otkhodnik* neighbors. We are continuing to study the exceptionally important phenomenon of Russian *otkhodnichestvo*, but we are doing it as historians rather than sociologists. However, rare sociological studies of the late Soviet (e.g., Islamov, Travin, 1989; Shabanova, 1992a and 1992b; Shabanova, 1993) and contemporary (e.g., Florinskaya, Roschina, 2004; Florinskaya, 2006; Roshchina, 2007, 2008; White, 2007, 2009; Employment and *otkhodnichestvo*, 2008; Kapustina, 2008, 2013; Velikiy, 2010; Baranenkova, 2012) *otkhodnichestvo* do exist. The most frequent and comprehensive coverage of *otkhodnichestvo* and its aspects can be found in studies devoted to internal temporary labor migration as a demographic process - in recent years, increasingly (e.g., Badyshtova, 2001, 2002; Florinskaya, 2001; Zayonchkovskaya, 2001; Moiseenko, 2004; Zayonchkovskaya, Mkrtychyan, 2007; Mkrtychyan, 2009; Mkrtychyan, Karachurina, 2014; Florinskaya et al., 2015). Researchers of the Russian village and peasantry have also mentioned this topic in passing (e.g., Fadeeva, 2002, 2012; Nikulin, 2004; Kalugina, Fadeeva, 2009; Kalugina, 2012; Nefedova, 2013). However, these studies are still incompatible with the magnitude of the phenomenon.

What is Russia's new *otkhodnichestvo*? Why did it suddenly re-emerge in contemporary Russia after decades, as if from a clean slate? The matter has long appeared important to us, but we were able to launch a systematic and detailed study of ot-

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4 Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826–1889), Russian writer and vice-governor. The quoted phrase is from the famous novel, *The history of a town*.

khodnichestvo only a few years ago. We realized the magnitude of the phenomenon, but also understood that the problem could not be "tackled" using standard scientific techniques: select from the array of official statistical data; describe based on the findings of a mass survey, by completing questionnaires, recording sporadic field observations, or by drawing parallels with the historical otkhodnichestvo. The only way to get a close look at contemporary otkhodnichestvo and grasp its essence is to collect meticulously individual data obtained in the course of direct communication with the representatives of this category of labor migrants. That is exactly what we engaged in. We immersed ourselves for several years in fieldwork. We traveled across the country to small towns and rural areas seeking out such people on an individual basis in order to meet with them and ask about their lifestyle; the underlying circumstances; the goals they pursue; the threats and risks they encounter on the way; as well as about their families and children; relatives and bosses; neighbors and authorities. As we can judge, they were rather frank with us, because the views of numerous people living in several dozen locations dispersed over thousands of kilometers proved to be similar and like-minded. Based on conversations with these people and their families and on observations of their behavior, we were able to get an idea of their permanent and temporary living environment; household and economic activities; everyday life; as well as relations in society and the nature of interaction with the authorities. We tried to describe the diversity of their occupations and draw the portrait of a typical otkhodnik.

Using various indirect methods, we attempted to assess the scope of the phenomenon. We now believe that when launching the research of otkhodnichestvo, we clearly underestimated its magnitude. The phenomenon may be much broader and deeper than what we managed to describe in this book. We are only carefully assuming that the immediate and remote economic, social, cultural, and political implications of contemporary otkhodnichestvo will be crucial for the development of Russia. Probably, not only Russia, given the proliferation of such phenomena in the modern world.

In the meantime, we do not overestimate the significance of our work: it is quite fragmentary, as any scientific study can be. We see our shortcomings and anticipate that we have made quite a few erroneous judgments. Moreover, within the team of authors, there is no complete consensus as to the interpretation of facts and their generalizations. Over the years of work, we have developed close links with our brainchild; however, the text manifests a difference of opinions on certain issues. We believe this to be a natural outcome of the work on depicting the phenomenon of otkhodnichestvo—tremendous in scope and at that same time barely visible for

the contemporaries. This book contains no statistical data (demographic, migration, financial, etc.) usual for the analysis of historical *otkhodnichestvo*, or for economic analysis. Our task was to highlight the phenomenon and to capture its substantial features.

The structure of the monograph follows the pattern of a phenomenological description, where we define the phenomenon of *otkhodnichestvo* distinguishing it from other forms of labor migration, and consider it in a historic context. We also compare the Russian phenomenon with similar processes in the global labor market (chapters 1 and 2). Chapter 3 deals with the methods applied to identify and study *otkhodniks* and *otkhodnichestvo*. Here we provide a description of the records, which served as a basis for further generalizations. Chapter 4 proposes different approaches to estimating the population of *otkhodniks* in Russia. Chapter 5 reviews the employment destinations targeted by the *otkhodniks* and their principal occupations, as well as the regional specialization by type of craft. Chapters 6 and 7 address the *otkhodniks'* labor motivation and economic behavior; the working conditions and living arrangements at the workplace; their earnings and spending patterns. Chapter 8 describes the *otkhodnik* as a social type and demonstrates his behavior at home, as well as relations within the family and with neighbors. Chapter 9 deals with the rather obscure relations between the *otkhodniks* and the public authorities—the state and local self-government bodies. The final tenth chapter is an attempt to assess the socio-cultural and political significance of *otkhodnichestvo* for Russian society. We are trying to determine the consequences that mass *otkhodnichestvo* of the most active part of the population can have for Russia.

# Chapter 1

## The phenomenon of otkhodnichestvo

*"The likes of us, even in this godforsaken place, are all old hands, and live off Petersburg"<sup>5</sup>*

We are considering the new, contemporary otkhodnichestvo as a special type of labor migration. What grounds do we have to transfer the old and long-forgotten name "otkhodnichestvo" to our current reality? Moreover, the name that used to characterize a specific Russian reality of the past centuries. Herein, we will try to justify this position through an in-depth overview of otkhodnichestvo expressly as a Russian phenomenon. In addition, we will provide its comprehensive definition. Furthermore, we believe that otkhodnichestvo, as a special type of labor migration is currently specific by far not only to Russia. It definitely exists in many post-Soviet republics. Some of them, like Turkmenistan or Lithuania, are less affected, whereas in some of the others, like Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, otkhodnichestvo in the form of cross-border migration is as widespread as in Russia today, and even wider. Besides, quite a few other countries demonstrate examples of seasonal interregional circular migration of "labor resources". Although here it is mostly an issue of cross-border migration of seasonal agricultural workers. Otkhodnichestvo, however, initially meant internal labor migration, rather than the cross-border one. Nowadays, the development of transportation and communication, and the easing or lifting of visa requirements facilitate (and in many cases trigger) otkhodnichestvo. Herein, we would like at least to mention otkhodnichestvo elsewhere in the world.

### 1.1. The phenomenon of Russian otkhodnichestvo

Otkhodnichestvo existed in Russia for many years—three-four centuries, or even longer. At the end of the 19th–beginning of the 20th century it became so widespread, that it drew the attention of local statisticians followed by scholars and politicians. Numerous studies have been devoted to the previous Russian (now already historical) otkhodnichestvo, and many special monographs have been written (*see, e.g.,* Chaslavsky, 1875; Yezersky, 1894; Rudnev, 1894; Vorontsov, 1895; Ponomaryov, 1895, 1896; Shakhovskoy, 1896; Kirillov, 1899; Molleson, 1901;

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5 Recounted by an old man, former otkhodnik to St. Petersburg, long retired and living in his native village Zharki on the road from Sudislavl to Galich in the Kostroma Province, 440 km from Moscow and over 1,000 km from St. Petersburg, 1857 (Kornilov, 1994, p. 37).

Mints, 1926; Vladimirsky, 1927; Kurtsev, 1982; Burds, 1998; Smurova, 2003, 2008; Vodarsky and Istomina, 2004; Perepelitsyn, 2005). Numerous publications of the imperial, Soviet, and current periods contain detailed descriptions of all the elements and attributes of *otkhodnichestvo*. The key reasons that triggered the departure of the peasant population from the places of their permanent residence have been identified (Chaslavsky, 1875; Ponomaryov, 1896; Mints, 1926; Savelyev and Potapov, 1928; Danilov, 1974; Akhsyanov, 2013). Different local and regional features specific to rural *otkhodnichestvo* from the northern, central, and southern provinces have been considered (Krzhivoblotsky, 1861; Chaslavsky, 1875; Bezobrazov, 1885; Rudnev, 1894; Ponomaryov, 1895; Varb, 1898; Kirillov, 1899; Information on *otkhodnichestvo...*, 1899; Molleson, 1901; Kurtsev, 1982; Perepelitsyn, 2005; Nikulin, 2010). Various types of *otkhodnik* occupations have been depicted (Chaslavsky, 1875; Vorontsov, 1895; Yezersky, 1894; Vladimirsky, 1927; Smurova, 2003; Yefebovsky, 2007; Bashutsky, 2007; Ogloblin, 2010; Sablin, 2008). Different methodologies have been applied to estimate the population of *otkhodniks* (Chaslavsky, 1875; Vesin, 1886; Ponomaryov, 1895; Vladimirsky, 1927; Mints, 1929; Ryndzyunsky, 1970; Burkin, 1978; Danilov, 1974). The social structure and character types of *otkhodniks* have been described (Rumyantsev, 1887; Kachorovsky, 1900; Lurie, 1995; Smurova, 2008), as well as their impact on the local peasant community, especially on the cultural stereotypes and traditional behavior (Zhbankov, 1887; Vorontsov, 1892; Kazarinov, 1926; Burds, 1998; Smurova, 2003; Kurtsev, 2007; Alexandrov, 2008). The most detailed analysis has been made of the economic behavior and labor activities of the *otkhodniks* in the capitals and the industrial centers of the Russian Empire. Based on the findings, some researchers and statisticians predicted the future political implications of the large-scale labor mobility of the Russian peasantry (*e.g.*, Vesin, 1887; Vorontsov, 1895; Lenin, 1971; Kuznetsov, 2005; Tyumenev, 2005; Smurova, 2007; Alexandrov, 2010; Selivanov, 2011). Unfortunately, their assumptions materialized: from starving St. Petersburg and Moscow, the *otkhodniks* flooded back to the village bringing with them "the virus of revolution"; ultimately, they became "the nucleus of concentration" consolidating massive rural support for the Bolsheviks (Suvorov, 1913; Volin, 2005).

Finally, the scholars have reconstructed the history of *otkhodnichestvo* as a specific Russian phenomenon of the 16th-20th centuries (*e.g.*, Lensky, 1877; Karyshev, 1896; Kachorovsky, 1900; Mints, 1926; Burds, 1998; Smurova, 2008). It was triggered by the special relations between the state and its subjects; relations based on the principle of autocracy, which consisted in the reciprocal service of all social es-

tates (sosloviya) (for details on the social estate structure and inter-estate relations in imperial and contemporary Russia refer to Mironov, 2003; Kordonsky, 2008; Ivanova and Zheltova, 2009).

The phenomenon of *otkhodnichestvo* was also reflected in folklore (e.g., Sindalovsky, 1994; Smirnov, 2002), and in numerous "peasant stories", many of which remained unpublished (as, for example, the autobiographical story of Yu. Sokolov about an *otkhodnik* family in the Kostroma Province, where the men and boys went from village to village making coats from fur and homespun fabrics). It was mentioned in travel notes, memoirs of landowners, and in local historical documents. Following are some sources of the 19th century (original, reprinted, or reissued and reproduced in recent works) relating to the areas of our fieldwork: Kornilov, 1861 (1994); *Crafts in the province...*, 1994; Dokuchaev-Baskov, 1996; *Toropets...*, 1996; *The olden times of Dorogobuzh...*, 2000; *Facts about the history... of Toropets...*, 2001; Kritsky, 2005; Kuznetsov, 2005; Tyumenev, 2005; Belyustin, 2006; Kislovskoy, 2006; Flerov, 2008; Cherdyn..., 2009; Ogloblin, 2010; Smurova, 2010; Figurovsky, 2010; *Around Nikolsk...*, 2011; Belousov and Morokhin, 2012; Toropov, 2012; Tolstoy, 2013).

What reason do we have to believe that rather than dealing with a new phenomenon, we are currently witnessing the comeback of the old one, with many, if not all, of its inherent attributes? Let us compare the key features of the historical and contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia.

Quite a few historical and historical-sociological publications, issued both by researchers of the 19th century, and our contemporaries, contain a comprehensive definition of *otkhodnichestvo* and *otkhodnik* occupations (see, e.g., Lensky, 1877; Vesin, 1887; Karyshev, 1892; Tikhonov, 1978; Smurova, 2003, 2008; Vodarsky and Istomina, 2004; Perepelitsyn, 2006; *The North-West in the rural history of Russia*, 2008). The definitions can also be found in encyclopedic dictionaries, which means that this phenomenon was previously well known. Thus, the pre-revolutionary Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary defines "otkhodnik occupations" ("*otkhozhiye promysly*") as "one of the sources of income of the peasant population. The reasons to depart for earnings can be either of a lasting nature (shortage of arable land or nonproductive land), or temporary (poor harvest, demand for labor due to major construction projects, etc.). The peasants depart primarily from the central provinces—they go south and to the capitals. *Otkhodnik* occupations are numerous: agricultural labor, mining, industrial labor, construction (stone-masons, plasterers, painters, paving slab layers, and carpenters), horse-drawn transportation, rafting, barge hauling, peddling, delivering, etc." (Small En-

cyclopedic Dictionary..., 1907–1909; also: Brockhaus and Efron, 1897, entry by N. Karyshev *Otkhodnik occupations*: [http://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/ЭСБЕ/Отхожие\\_промыслы](http://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/ЭСБЕ/Отхожие_промыслы) ). Since at that time *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia was a mass phenomenon, the short dictionary entry refers to the impracticability of estimating even roughly the *otkhodnik* population. It provides comprehensive information about the social structure of *otkhodniks*—they were exclusively peasants (actually, at that time peasants accounted for nearly eighty percent of Russia's population). It also indicates the reasons and destinations of *otkhodnichestvo* (inaccurately—the principal destinations were the capitals and the industrial, rather than the southern, areas, however, the author of the article researched *otkhodnichestvo* only in the southern provinces) and the main types of *otkhodnik* occupations.

In the Soviet times, *otkhodnichestvo* disappears in the early 1930s. This is reflected in the briefness of the references to the term and the phenomenon itself, which are being gradually erased from the social memory (among others, the reasons for this are considered in the monographs and dissertations of L.E. Mints, 1929; V.P. Danilov, 1974; *Establishing the foundations...*, 1977; A.N. Kurtsev, 1982; and also a very informative monograph written by E.A. Andryushin (Andryushin, 2012, pp. 205–232) based on the analysis of numerous official documents of the early Soviet period). Thus, the Ushakov Dictionary already gives a very laconic definition of the disappearing phenomenon: "temporary departure from the village to the city for seasonal work" (Dictionary of the Russian language..., 1935–1940, <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ushakov/916266>). Just ten years later, the respective entry in the Ozhegov Dictionary defines *otkhodnichestvo* simply as "engaging in *otkhodnik* occupations" and marks it "archaic" (Ozhegov and Shvedova, 1949–1992; <http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ogegova/148230>).

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia provides a brief but comprehensive definition of *otkhodnichestvo* as "the temporary departure of peasants from their permanent residences in villages to earn money in regions where industry and agriculture were well developed. This practice arose in the period of late feudalism because of intensified feudal exploitation and the increasing importance of cash obrok (quitrent), and it played a significant role during the rise of capitalism. When engaged in *otkhodnichestvo*, the peasant temporarily became a hired laborer. Having emerged in the 17th century on a small scale, *otkhodnichestvo* increased sharply in the second half of the 18th century becoming one of the signs of the decline of feudalism. It flourished in the Central Industrial Region, the Urals provinces, and the northern provinces, all of which were unsuited for agriculture and offered opportunities for nonagricultural earnings" (GSE, <http://bse.sci-lib.com/article085855.html> ). This

definition of *otkhodnichestvo* provides most of its attributes, namely: the temporary and seasonal (generally) nature of labor migration; a permanent residence where the *otkhodnik* always returns; employment destinations—the regions where industry and agriculture are well developed, primarily the capitals and the southern areas; the reasons for departure—initially, the need to earn money in order to pay quit-rent, later—poverty or the opportunity of high (non-rural) earnings at the "construction sites of the century" in the 18th-20th centuries. All researchers point out the evident external features of *otkhodnichestvo*, but very few indicate a very significant internal aspect—the more widespread this phenomenon becomes, the more often it is triggered not by need (although the majority of researchers identified such motives among the peasantry, the most prominent among the being: Zhbankov, 1891; Shingarev, 1907; and Lenin, 1971), but by the desire to raise the living standards and ensure the well-being of the family (this is expressly stated by Vesin, 1887; Vorontsov, 1892; Mints, 1926; Kazarinov, 1926; Vinogradov, 1927; Burds, 1998; Smurova, 2003; and Nikulin, 2010). Actually, even the definition provided in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia and reproduced in many other current definitions of *otkhodnichestvo*, implicitly mentions well-being as a motivation.

Thus, among the many types and forms of labor migration we can identify a certain set of features that determine a special type of labor migration—*otkhodnichestvo*. Researchers classify the types and forms of labor migration rather arbitrarily, generally, phenomenologically. They "capture" one or two specific distinctive features and attribute them to a respective type of labor migration (*Cf.*, *e.g.*, the classification of labor migration types in the thesis of T.G. Roshchina: Roshchina, 2008, p. 9, or Ruben, 1992; *European migration...*, 1994; Cordell, Gregory, Piche, 1998; *Work and migration*, 2002; Bauder, 2006). The use of colloquial terminology is common. Thus, reference is made to "guest workers" ("Gastarbeiter"), "shuttle traders" ("chelnoki"), "shabashniks", "recruits" ("verbovannye"), "rotation workers" ("vakhtoviki"), "bums" (bichi) and, finally, "otkhodniks". Formal sociological terms are far less expressive. They are also poorer by content, as they reflect only a certain external feature, which is not always significant (for example, "commuters", "circular migrants", "cyclical migrants", and "cross-border migrants"). As opposed, the common term "*otkhodnichestvo*" exactly captures the essence of this type of labor migration—its definitely recurrent nature (in Russian, "otkhod" means temporary departure always followed by a return back).



Photo 1. A team of loggers and raftsmen on the Vetluga River in Nizhny Novgorod Province; first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such teams were actually artels consisting of one or two groups of related families (peasant clan). The 15 pictured men are aged from 12–14 to 40–50 years. The teams left in winter to fell trees and deliver the logs to a river. In spring, the men tied the logs into rafts and floated them to the nearest big timber market. For Vetluga, it was the town of Kozmodemyansk located on the bank of the Volga opposite the confluence of the two rivers. Zinoviy Vinogradov, a prominent Russian photographer of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, captured the team of otkhodniks in late spring sitting on the riverbank on some roped logs. At the time, the otkhodniks were waiting for the spring flood and had little to do. Therefore, they are posing in white linen shirts, new bast shoes, smart peaked caps, and holding a garmon (accordion) and even tea saucers. Photo courtesy of Prof. N.V. Morokhin (Nizhny Novgorod).

## 1.2. Definition of *otkhodnichestvo* as a special type of labor migration

Otkhodnichestvo, as a mass labor behavior (both previously and currently), is determined by a set of significant features (attributes), which characterize this very form of labor activity. Thus, it forms a clearly defined type of labor migration.

Can we say that the currently existing forms of migration are similar to the old otkhodnichestvo, or do they just slightly resemble it? We believe (and our opinion is in line with the views of certain other sociologists and economists. See: Shabanova, 1992; Shabanova, 1993; Smurova, 2006a; Dyatlov, 2010; Shvartsburd, 2011; and Baranenkova, 2012) that the different forms of labor migration observable currently in Russia also include otkhodnichestvo as close or even similar to the old otkhodnichestvo, which disappeared in the 1930s. We personally are of the opinion that contemporary otkhodnichestvo is similar to the historical one. It is no coincidence, that back in 2007 and then later, the current residents (labor migrants) of the areas where historical otkhodnichestvo used to be widespread—namely, the regions of Kostroma, Vologda, and Arkhangelsk,—told us that they were exactly the same otkhodniks as their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. They were engaged in the same occupations and followed the same lifestyle with its pattern of seasonal wanderings.

Obviously, it is necessary to identify and separately consider the features of contemporary otkhodnichestvo and compare them with the above definition of the classical old otkhodnichestvo.

***Otkhodnichestvo originates from the province.*** The overwhelming majority of contemporary labor migrants, who call themselves, and whom we call otkhodniks, reside in small towns and villages. Many small Russian towns are actually rural settlements with respective household and economic arrangements (see: Treyvish, 2009; Lappo, 2012; Nefedova, 2012). Therefore, the families of most of these people are engaged in subsidiary farming; many of them live in private houses with adjacent garden plots (Nefedova, Treyvish, 2010). Generally, the income such people receive in their hometowns or villages is insufficient to provide a decent (sometimes even normal) life for the family. They have no highly paid jobs in the public sector, nor do they have sources of income in the private sector, be it manufacturing or services. Frequently, they have even no chance of finding a local job that would be in line with their vocation. Quite a few families live in economically doomed settlements, the so-called "escheated" townships and villages (Kordonsky, 2010), where there are no jobs whatsoever, on the one hand, and no one to offer self-produced goods to, on the other hand.

Such residential features of contemporary labor migrants resemble the situation of peasants in many non-black earth and northern, including Ural, provinces of Russia, who engaged in non-agricultural *otkhodnichestvo*, since this phenomenon was widespread only among peasants of those provinces where either the soil was poor (in the north), or the land allotments too small (in the south and west)<sup>6</sup>. Similar to the former *otkhodniks*, the contemporary ones are almost exclusively residents of rural areas and small towns "deep" in the province. We are not aware of any historical cases of *otkhodnichestvo* from big towns. Nowadays, such *otkhodniks* exist, and we even encountered some of them. However, their cases are isolated. They are either rotation workers (i.e., "recruits" using the Soviet terminology—people who were recruited on an organized basis for specific, usually seasonal, work), or specialists, whose vocation is not in demand in their hometown, but they do not want to downgrade their skills.

***Loyalty to the "small homeland"***. In addition to this first and important administrative-territorial feature of *otkhodnichestvo*—it originates from the province;—we must immediately distinguish a significant related motivational aspect. Like the former, "historical", *otkhodniks*, the contemporary ones have no intention whatsoever of moving house for the sake of a new job and relocating to the city "for good".<sup>7</sup> Even if a significant part of the *otkhodnik's* family spent most of the time in the city, their wives and the eldest and youngest family members—the old people and children—continued to live in the village. Family relations were maintained not only through regular cash remittances to support the household, but also because the *otkhodniks* returned home at least once a year to take care of the farm work needed to sustain the family. However, we believe the most important circumstance to be the many children constantly born in *otkhodnik* families (*see, e.g.*, the autobiographical story of Alexander Zinoviev, where he describes a typical *otkhodnik* family from Chukhloma district, whose men worked in Moscow—Zinoviev, 1999; or a slightly less lively picture of an *otkhodnik* family from Yaren-

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6 We know vivid examples of both limiting factors acting together. Thus, in such northern and eastern provinces as Kostroma and Nizhny Novgorod, infertile lands were complemented by feudal landownership; this led to respective consequences for land-hungry peasants after their emancipation in 1861.

7 The mass resettlement of former peasant *otkhodniks* to the cities in the early 20th century, and later—from 1926–1929 and until the early 1930s,—following an "outflow" back to the village because of the civil war and famine, was driven by political reasons. Therefore, the transformation of *otkhodniks* into new urban dwellers in those periods must be considered from this perspective (for more details refer to Andryushin, 2012. p. 213 et seq.; and Davydov, 2012). By the way, about 90% of all current "native" residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg are descendants of peasant *otkhodniks* from many northern and central provinces of Russia (*e.g.*, Lurie, 1995 and 1997).

sky district presented by prominent sociologist Pitirim Sorokin—Sorokin, 1991). Consequently, besides the economic functions of the family, the otkhodniks maintained also its reproductive functions. That in itself made the family's permanent place of residence the center of attraction for the otkhodnik.

The underlying reasons for not wishing to relocate to the city can differ and we are unlikely to single out the principal one. The researchers of the past completely omitted this aspect and we have to reconstruct the otkhodniks' motivation for maintaining residence in the village almost exclusively based on the observations of their contemporaries, on peasant letters, peasant stories, and the memoirs of the otkhodniks' descendants (*see, e.g.,* Rumyantsev, 1887; Maximov, 1901; Sorokin, 1991; Zinoviev, 1999; *At the Church of our Saviour churchyard (U Spasa na pogoste)*, 2002; Gerasimov, 2006; *Around Nikolsk...*, 2006; Flerov, 2008; Smirnov, 2009; Toropov, 2012; and many others, including discovered unpublished materials, like the manuscript of Yu. Sokolov, peasant of the Kologriv district (Kostroma Province) *Volokoskin's Memoirs* or collected archive documents of the 19th century discovered and reprinted by a schoolteacher in Lyoma village of Zuevka district, Kirov Region). Obviously an important factor was the severe shortage of housing in the city, which made it impossible for the otkhodnik to bring his family (usually, fellow villagers—otkhodniks and their sons—shared one tiny basement room in the city, so each of them was entitled to about one square meter of the floor). Less important, but also significant was the high rent of urban housing. It appears that the essential factor was the inability of the otkhodnik to provide enough food, water and fuel (firewood) for a big family (i.e. and additional five-six or even more mouths) in the city. These goods were too expensive and of very inferior quality<sup>8</sup>, whereas Russian villagers never experienced any shortage of water and fuel, if not of food.<sup>9</sup>

The families of contemporary otkhodniks, just as they themselves, do not intend to leave their villages and small towns. The reasons for refusing to move differ (including such commonplace ones as the high cost of urban housing), but they are everywhere supported by the psychological reluctance to change the environment and to lose the status and opportunities—the privileges of being an "insider" and the preferences granted to the "locals"—that any local community provides to its

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8 For example, in the middle of the 19th century, Moscow had only 103 wells, of which only three contained water considered potable; for drinking and cooking, the citizens had either to buy water daily from the water-carters, or consume water of very bad quality.

9 It is no secret that the peasants constantly stole wood for heating both from state-owned and private forest estates (*e.g.,* Tolstoy, 2013). This was the major administrative or criminal offence for which lots of peasants were prosecuted (Alexandrov, 2012).

members. Further, we will discuss this issue in detail. It is unexpected for an urban reader who is generally convinced that all "provincials" simply dream of becoming city-dwellers.

The lack of desire (and much less often—the lack of opportunity) to change residence for the sake of a job is the most important pre-condition for a person to become an *otkhodnik*. That distinguishes him from a guest worker, who has changed his residence for the sake of potential better opportunities for work and life.<sup>10</sup>

***The seasonal nature of otkhodnichestvo.*** Job seeking drives the inhabitants of small towns to large cities, regional capitals, and Siberia. There they find sufficient means to sustain the family. However, the presence of the family and homestead in a different location determine the nature of employment—seasonal and rotational. The temporary, seasonal nature of departure (*otkhodnichestvo*) is determined by the essential return home. Regularly and with a certain frequency, the people return home from work to relax and manage the household. Depending on the distance to the workplace, they may return home every weekend, or for two weeks off monthly (this is the schedule of almost all *otkhodniks* engaged as security guards, who work rotation shifts with two-week intervals). Often, the job requires a more extended absence from home—from one to two months—with short visits in between (log home builders working by the piece). Those who find employment at a great distance from home may return in six months or even every one to two years. In a sense, such labor migrants are a marginal group among *otkhodniks*, since their work is no longer seasonal; its cycle is close to or in excess of an annual one. Gradually, such people either leave home for good or quit the job. By the way, this rhythm is also specific to female *otkhodniks* who find employment as domestic staff (domestic helpers, nannies, cleaners, etc.), since their work is neither seasonal, nor cyclical. Nevertheless, they are still *otkhodniks*, as they have left their home and household in the care of other family members and know that they will definitely go back.

The seasonal nature of work away from home, in summer or in winter, is complemented by accommodating the work schedule to important and urgent domestic matters. Primarily this concerns potato planting and harvesting, and less frequently,

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10 Therefore, it is incorrect to apply the German term "Gastarbeiter" (coined to designate incoming cross-border labor migrants, primarily Turks) to residents of Russian small towns and villages working in Moscow and other industrial centers of the country. Similarly, this term is incorrect and inapplicable to nationals of the former Soviet republics (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, etc.), who come to work in Russian towns - their families remain home and they regularly return there themselves. Therefore, those people are exactly the same *otkhodniks*, as our residents of small towns and villages. Their labor status is identical, but the political one is different (the "Uzbeks and Tajiks" are now foreigners).

other farm work (in this, the small town inhabitants differ from the villagers—for the former, seasonal work involves mostly potatoes; for the latter—more large-scale seasonal work in the fields and at home). Unlike their non-otkhodnik neighbors, the otkhodnik families in small towns do not have large farmsteads (if any); however, many of them have a kitchen garden and potato field. The village otkhodniks also actively help their relatives with such work.

Contemporaries and historians similarly described the seasonality of otkhodnichestvo in the past. The otkhodnik, usually a man, left the native village after work in the fields was over—in autumn and in winter—and returned in time for the spring sowing. His wife, children and parents stayed home and managed the considerable peasant household, where the otkhodnik retained and from time to time exercised the functions of the master of the house and manager. The otkhodniks' persistent absence resulted in a notable development; their wives gradually took their place not only in domestic and social affairs, but also in administration and even wrongdoings. L. Kazarinov portrays Chukhloma women, who in the absence of men are managing all domestic affairs, including frequenting taverns (Kazarinov, 1926. pp. 15–17). In his travel notes, landowner I.P. Kornilov gives a similar characteristic to the wives of Kostroma otkhodniks: "Peasants from Kokoryukino live in St. Petersburg and other cities, where they work as stone masons, carpenters and painters; some are even engaged in commerce as clerks. The Kokoryukino women, according to my coachman, are no worse than their husbands are when it comes to farming. They plough and sow and thresh." Kornilov, 1860, 1994, p. 39). N.M. Alexandrov refers to documents on changes in the demographic behavior of otkhodnik families in the Yaroslavl Province. The wives of the numerous otkhodniks had to cope with the whole scope of agricultural work and made no distinction between male and female duties. Eventually, they began participating in governance on the commune and *volost* [lowest territorial and administrative unit in the rural area] level. Women even participated in local self-government bodies. They also started committing purely "male" offences, like, for example "theft of forest products"—they stole wood from state forest estates for their household needs and heating (see: Alexandrov, 2012. pp. 339–342).

However, quite a few otkhodniks (generally from the labor-abundant central provinces) engaged in non-agricultural otkhodnichestvo also in the summer season, finding jobs as loading hands, barge haulers or day laborers (Karyshev, 1896; Kirillov, 1899; Ogloblin, 2010). Agricultural otkhodnichestvo—day work in spring and summer—was more common in the southern black earth regions (Chaslavsky, 1875; Sazonov, 1889; Shcherbina, 1892–1894; Ponomaryov, 1895 and 1896;

Shakhovskoy, 1896; Information on otkhodnichestvo..., 1899; Kurtsev, 1982; Perepelitsyn, 2005).

Seasonality was less typical for female otkhodniks, who were numerous in the central provinces relatively close to Moscow and St. Petersburg. They frequently departed for longer periods due to employment in the domestic service or at factories. Often, they were not involved in seasonal work at home. There are examples of such female otkhodniks also from the northern provinces—Vologda and Arkhangel'sk,—who worked as servants in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and even Tiflis. Such women left home for a year or two and took no part in seasonal works (*see, e.g.,* Gerasimov, 2006). Presumably, otkhodnichestvo among peasant women started expanding only in the early 20th century, driven to a certain (unknown) extent by the World War, when many men were called up to the front. It was suspended in the 1920s. However, already in the early Soviet years, women (including young girls and adolescents) worked in winter at logging camps and in summer—at peat fields. This also determined the seasonal nature of female otkhodnichestvo. It appears that in general (we have not found any direct evidence thereof yet and are judging only by the above indirect indications), females engaged in non-agricultural otkhodnichestvo were less involved in household work. At present, the situation seems to be similar. Many women, especially from the central and southern regions of European Russia, do not, and even cannot, have any periodicity in their work due to employment in the service sector (nannies, domestic help, cleaners, etc.).

A typical male otkhodnik today follows the same seasonal pattern as was described by researchers in the 19th–early 20th centuries. This is particularly true for those otkhodniks, who rather than offering their labor, market self-made products—log frames and ready-made houses, sawn timber, and wild-growing plants. Such production is itself seasonal.

Naturally, nowadays, for different reasons, a significant part of the otkhodniks works periodically rather than seasonally. If previously, horse-drawn transportation used to be mostly a winter occupation, now, freight and passengers are carried all year round (cargo transportation by river is still seasonal, however, nowadays, business activity in this market segment is unfortunately close to zero. The state totally controls this segment, but for whatever reason is not interested in developing it itself and is reluctant to open the market for private business).

Rather than being bound by the seasonal nature of outside occupations, contemporary otkhodniks now depend more on the seasonality of their domestic work—planting and harvesting potatoes and other vegetables, haying, procuring firewood, making home improvements, etc. Therefore, as in previous years, they adjust their

labor rhythm to the tasks of providing the family with the necessities that can be produced locally, at home. In this sense, the provincial Russians diligently retain the archaic subsistence pattern, which came to the rescue in the crisis years of the 1990s (*see specially* Plyusnin, 2001; as one of the authors has already written, "*a Russian always has a store of potatoes in the cellar, a potbelly stove in the junk room, and a Berdan rifle in the attic*").

Like centuries ago, the essential seasonal domestic work determines the seasonality of the contemporary *otkhodniks'* outside occupations. It also underlies the compulsory nature of *otkhodnichestvo*, both in the past and now. Thus, recurrent seasonal (monthly) migration of a person, who does not want to live where he works, but who has no chance of finding a decent job (one that meets the needs of the family and is in line with the person's skills) in the hometown or village and is forced to return home not only to relax but also to take care of seasonal domestic chores, is another important determining feature of *otkhodnichestvo*.



Photo 2. Raftsmen on the Vetluga River in the Kostroma Province; first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The picture made by Zinoviy Vinogradov, a photographer from Nizhny Novgorod, shows Vetluga raftsmen at work collecting logs from a smashed raft and tying a new raft right on the water (the remains of the raft are roped to the bank of the backwater where there is no current). They had to do this kind of work often because the swift spring current of the winding Vetluga smashed the rafts against the riverbanks and islands. Photo courtesy of Prof. N.V. Morokhin (Nizhny Novgorod).

***The wage and industrial nature of the *otkhodniks'* labor.*** An important hallmark of historical *otkhodnichestvo* was its wage and industrial nature. Additional earnings on the side were provided either by different crafts and trades or by wage la-

bor. The otkhodniks manufactured and sold items of various handicrafts—from felt footwear and fur overcoats to log houses—and engaged in timber rafting. They also performed different jobs in the city (guards, janitors, and domestic servants; *see*: Volkov, 2000; Lurie, 1995a; 1995b; Alexandrov, 2010) or in the rich industrial and southern agricultural areas (barge haulers, loading hands, day laborers, etc.; *see*: Chaslavsky, 1875; *Reports and research on home crafts in Russia*, 1892–1912; Varb, 1898; Razgon, 1959). Among contemporary otkhodniks, quite a few also manufacture goods (log cabins, for example) or provide services (transportation services on their own vehicles—taxi drivers and long-haul truckers) and market them themselves. However, they are by far outnumbered by wage workers, who are often engaged in unskilled labor (security guards, gatekeepers, watchmen, janitors, cleaners, etc.); just as peasant otkhodnichestvo of the past was marked by low-quality labor. Moreover, similar to the social and demographic structure of otkhodnichestvo, which developed in the industrial areas of the Russian Empire by the late 19th century, contemporary female otkhodniks also target this sphere of low-skilled labor (*see*: Nikulin, 2010).

***Initiative and independence.*** Finally, we would like to point out an attribute of otkhodnichestvo that we believe is a distinguishing feature, which determines whether a person has the potential to become an otkhodnik. We are referring to a proactive approach and the ability to act independently. In the past, every person, who managed to "procure a passport" or "receive a leave permit" (*see specifically: Register of trade and craft certificates and permits...*, 1881–1887; Baiburin, 2009; *as well as*: Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated 16 March 1930; Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated 17 March 1933; and Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated 19 September 1934), found jobs in the capitals through relatives and acquaintances. Nowadays, such people find lucrative jobs by pulling strings, and without having to "procure any passports", they leave their home area for a period from one-two weeks to a year in order to market their skills, either through employment or by offering handicraft goods for sale. Otkhodniks frequently used to depart for work in teams consisting of several family members, usually brothers or fathers with grown-up sons. Such teams were narrowly focused, representing one single "vocation" or type of activity. They could, for example, make felt boots (valenki), sew fur overcoats or peddle across the country as independent "traveling salesmen" selling icons, books, and other "intellectual" goods (Rumyantsev, 1887; Vorontsov, 1895; Tyumenev, 2005; Smurova, 2007).

For the contemporary *otkhodnik*, independence is also a critical factor in the search for work; the initiative comes from the person himself. He either markets products of his labor (acting as a self-employed worker-entrepreneur, quite similar to the handicraft industry of the past), or takes up various jobs, most of which do not require high skills.

***Well-being rather than need.*** The forced nature of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* in the province is due to a lack or poor quality of jobs available in the local labor market—in fact, a lack of on-site resources necessary for life. However, we constantly note that this forced nature is relative: the well-being of *otkhodnik* families, both contemporary and former, is significantly higher than that of their non-*otkhodnik* neighbors. This is related to the important circumstance that the *otkhodnik* is driven not only by need; he is driven by the desire to raise the living standard of his beloved ones and to ensure that the family is well provided for. This is a very important feature: nowadays, mostly the wish to improve the well-being of the family rather than need trigger labor migration. Nowadays, the majority of *otkhodniks* from small towns can theoretically find employment locally, since jobs are available everywhere. The situation is different for rural *otkhodniks*, whose numbers are growing, but even they can find work as close as the district center. However, few *otkhodniks* accept such terms, as they are used to wages that are three to four times higher; even the psychological strain of constantly traveling back and forth does not deter them. Of course, there is a significant group among *otkhodniks*—security guards, most of whom have lost both their professional skills and the very desire to work, but they are a special category. In their mass, the *otkhodniks* are motivated to maintain high living standards for the family, and no one wants to lower the bar. Initially, we thought that the motivation to improve the well-being of the family was that specific feature, which distinguished contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* from the pre-revolutionary one; however, an analysis of historical literature and the works of researchers of the time convinced us to the contrary. Researchers have long noted that from the middle of the 19th century until the early 20th century, increasing numbers of peasants started departing for earnings not due to poverty but for the sake of raising the living standards of the family, which by rural standards were already quite high (Zhbakov, 1887; Kazarinov, 1926; Vladimirsky, 1927). Jeffrey Burds, a current researcher of Russian *otkhodnichestvo*, even tried to typologize this phenomenon by highlighting the transition in the goals of *otkhodnik* practices from "a culture of need" to "a culture of acquisition" just at the turn of the century (see: Burds, 1998, p. 181 et seq.). Amazingly, we are witnessing exactly the same situation and the same motivations in the 2000s! *Otkhodnichestvo* re-

emerged in the 1990s in various forms, including distorted ones (like "shuttle trade"), but it was mainly motivated by need. Just ten to twenty years later, we are constantly registering everywhere that the otkhodnik departs to work for the sake of a better life for the family and not due to need. What implications can these changes in the labor behavior of such an enormous mass of people have? We do not know, we can only assume.

Thus, the combination of the above features of otkhodnichestvo allows us to classify this type of labor migration into a separate category different from other forms of labor mobility. Incidentally, precisely because of these specific features otkhodnichestvo could not have existed in the Soviet period. Not only mass self-employment of the population, but also large-scale seasonal migration of people across the country were out of the question. Handicraft trades gave place to industrial production of "consumer goods" by people who were settled in the immediate proximity to the plants and agricultural enterprises, thus destroying the very grounds for otkhodnichestvo. During the Soviet period, possible forms of labor migration included rotation work and organized recruitment ("recruitment" and "recruits"); mandatory job assignment upon graduation from universities and colleges; free settling upon release from prison and labor camps ("chemistry"); and also certain exotic forms like "shabashka" [any temporary, occasional, and informal job] and "bichevanie" ["drifting around"]. However, none of them had all of the above features of otkhodnichestvo and none could be logically linked to that historical form of labor migration. By contrast, in the years of the systemic crisis, when the national economy was "reforming" too fast in order to adapt to the "new economic realities", new forms of labor migration emerged. A quarter century later, otkhodnichestvo became the most widespread subsistence pattern in Russia.



Photo 3. An old residential house (actually a wooden palace) built in the village of Astashevo in Chukhloma district of the Kostroma Province. A local peasant *otkhodnik* and cabinet-maker constructed the building at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He made a fortune as leader of Chukhloma carpenter teams (*artels*) that worked in the capitals. The house has long been abandoned. The tower in the forefront has been dismantled from the roof to be reconstructed. Currently, local and metropolitan volunteers are restoring the building. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich, June 2011.

### 1.3. "Otkhodniks" in other countries.

#### **Otkhodnichestvo in the contemporary world**

When we want to compare the Russian phenomenon of *otkhodnichestvo* with the international experience of temporary recurrent labor migration, our choice is limited. On the one hand, we can rely on the above mentioned features of *otkhodnichestvo*; on the other hand, we have to consider that the "typical guest worker", the cross-border labor migrant in Russia is actually represented (primarily in the public perception) by two contrasting types: the immigrant, who is working and living with his family in Russia on a permanent basis; and the circular or repeat labor migrant, whose family lives in another place where he always returns, because that place is his home, whereas the host country is just the place of his temporary work. Seasonal domestic circular migration, similar to the Russian one, is not a commonplace phenomenon, and in other countries, such domestic migrants are relatively few in number. Probably, only China "can boast" of a similarly mass rural-urban

circular labor migration comparable in scale (Ding et al., 2005; Li et al., 2006; Huang and Zhan, 2005; Hu, Xu, and Chen, 2011). What is the reason? Why do we think that we are dealing with a specifically Russian phenomenon?

Indeed, in the contemporary world cross-border labor migration is very widespread; much has been and continues to be written about it (e.g., Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, Taylor, 1993; *European migration...*, 1994; Zayonchkovskaya, 1997; *Migration policy...*, 2002; *Work and Migration...*, 2002; Bauder, 2006; Gogia, 2006; Hooghe, Trappers, Meuleman, Reeskens, 2008; Martin, 2009; Dyatlov, 2010; Zayonchkovskaya, Tyuryukanova, Florinskaya, 2011).

Following rapid global development of a widely spread form of cross-border labor migration, in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s special terminology was coined to reflect its specific nature. As opposed to immigration as such, this labor migration is of a temporary and circular or repeat nature, when workers regularly return home, where their families live (see. e.g. : Bovenkerk, 1974; Gmelch, 1980; DaVanzo, 1983; Massey, 1987).

In the 1990s and the 2000s, the rapid expansion of cross-border labor migration, including circular or repeat migration, generated extensive research, which resulted in the appearance of numerous studies, both empirical and conceptual, devoted to this phenomenon (see, e.g., Dierx, 1988; Snowden, 1990; Goss and Lindquist, 1995; Massey and Espinosa, 1997; Cassarino, 2004; Agunias and Newland, 2007; Vertovec, 2007; Newland, 2009; Bijwaard, 2010; Thom, 2010; Constant, Nottmeyer, and Zimmermann, 2012). We believe that besides easier transportation and communication; the increasing transparency of national borders; social migratory policies in the host countries; and legal protection provided to immigrants, the further global polarization of wealth and poverty throughout the past seventy post-war years has substantially promoted specifically circular labor migration. North America has known repeat cross-border migration for quite some time—migration from Mexico and Central America to the United States and Canada (Massey, 1987; Martin, 1993, 2002; Weber, 1994; Reyes, 1997 and 2001; Massey, Durand, and Malone, 2002; Basok, 2003; Mize, 2006). However, circular migration appears to have a special status in Europe, where it is much more contrasting than in North America and includes migration to Western Europe from North Africa and in the past 25 years from Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries (Neutsch, Pallaske, Steinert, 1999; Cyrus, 2001; *Die Migration von Polen nach Deutschland...*, 2001; Hess, 2002; Wallace, 2003; Castles, 2006; Glorius, 2006, 2007; Fargues, 2008; Kahanec, Zimmermann, 2009; Zaiceva, Zimmermann, 2009; Constant, Zimmermann, 2011; Benton et al., 2014; Van der Ende, Walsh, Ziminiene, 2014). Now, Australia,

New Zealand, and some other countries of South-East Asia are experiencing such migration (Bell, Ward, 1998; *Harvesting Australia...*, 2000; Lidgard, Gilson, 2002; Hugo, 2003; 2005; 2008; 2009; Lee, Sukrakarn, and Choi, 2011). Repeat migration is also widespread in India (Bird, Deshingkar, 2009) and China (Skeldon, 1998; Chan and Zhang, 1999; Xiang, 2003; Iredale, 2005; Chew and Liu, 2004). Besides, some insignificant return migration from host countries, in particular from Europe, is also observed here (*e.g.*, Weisbrock, 2007). Such migration is also specific for most African states. This concerns primarily North Africa and the south of the continent (Bigsten, 1996). Similar extensive cross-border migration is also specific for Russia, which acts as a host country for workers not only from the new post-Soviet states, but also from many Asian (primarily Vietnam and China) and African countries (Zayonchkovskaya, 1997; Dyatlov, 2010; Zayonchkovskaya, Tyuryukanova and Florinskaya, 2011).

The growing intensity of global cross-border labor migration and the persisting and increasing polarization of certain countries (in terms of positive and negative net migration), on the one hand, and the rising demand for labor in the host countries, on the other hand, have resulted in the recent development and expansion of programs promoting adaptation, education and acculturation of immigrants in the host countries (*see*: Newland, Agunias, and Terrazas, 2008; Benton et al., 2014; Burkert and Haas, 2014; Collett and Petrovic, 2014; Van der Ende, Walsh, and Ziminiene, 2014). In a sense, such programs promote further development of cross-border labor migration, but they also facilitate its transformation from temporary to permanent, *i.e.* to immigration in the full sense of the word.

However, is there any similarity between this globally widespread and well-known phenomenon and the Russian *otkhodnichestvo*? First, cross-border labor migration frequently refers to typical immigration from labor-abundant, resource-deficient or poor states to industrially developed countries in search of means of living and work, involving a permanent change of residence, often by the whole family or a group of relatives. In this case, it cannot be directly associated with *otkhodnichestvo*. Second, cyclical, or circular, seasonal labor migrations most often, or almost exclusively, concern agricultural workers (*e.g.*, Ruben, 1992; Weber, 1994; Rothenberg, 1998; Perloff, Lynch, Gabbard, 1998; *Harvesting Australia...*, 2000; Hess, 2002; *The Dynamics of Hired Farm Labour...*, 2002; Kasimis, Papadopoulos, Zacoboulou, 2003; Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2005; Jentsch, 2007; Jentsch, De Lima, MacDonald, 2007). Thus, circular migration, currently common throughout the world, practically everywhere refers to cross-border agricultural labor migration. We see that the publications devoted to cyclical (or circular) seasonal labor

migration address the issue of hired farm help engaged in the agricultural sector (see: Roseman, 1992; Cordell, Gregory, Piche, 1998; Rothenberg, 1998; *The Dynamics of Hired Farm Labour...*, 2002; Wallace, 2003; Jentsch, 2007). It makes no difference, whether migration is internal or international—agricultural workers account for the lion's share of such seasonal labor migrants. These temporary circular seasonal movements of labor are predominantly international rather than domestic. There are at least two reasons for this. Agricultural work requires short-term but intensive labor with a maximally extended workday, which does not assume daily return home. Moreover, the territories of most countries are such that any labor migration other than agricultural can be of a commuting nature. However, countries with vast areas, such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, China, and India can and do experience rural-urban migration similar to the Russian *otkhodnichestvo* (Ding et al., 2005; Thomsin and Tremblay, 2008; Bell and Ward, 1998; Cordell, Gregory, and Piche, 1998; Bell, 2001; Olwig and Sorensen, 2002; Hu, Xu, and Chen, 2011).<sup>11</sup>

Russian *otkhodnichestvo* is primarily non-agricultural internal labor migration. Russian authors of the past specifically distinguished between these two types of migration. They considered non-agricultural *otkhodnichestvo* to be the core form (see, e.g., Lensky, 1877; Kirillov, 1899; *Crafts and industries ancillary to agriculture...*, 1903; Mints, 1926; Smurova, 2003; Sablin, 2008; Nikulin, 2010), and the agricultural one its derivative (see: Chaslavsky, 1875; Varb, 1898; Sazonov, 1889; Ponomaryov, 1895 and 1896; Shakhovskoy, 1896; *Information on otkhodnichestvo in the Voronezh Province...*, 1899; Kurtsev, 1982). All previous researchers considered the agricultural and "non-agricultural" (handicraft and industrial) *otkhodniks* as two entirely independent groups, which differed by nature of employment, types of activity, and seasonality of work. The essential difference between these groups consisted in the fact that the people who went south to work as agricultural day laborers were not needed as workers at home; there they were rather treated as "extra mouths to feed". On the contrary, the "non-agricultural" *otkhodniks* were indispensable workers in the peasant household. For this reason, such labor migration was always seasonal and circular.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, typical Russian

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11 For instance, we know such exotic cases of typical *otkhodnichestvo* in the United States, when a person flies out weekly from Seattle, where he resides with the family, to Boston, where he works - his one-way trip lasts about 6 hours, of them 4 hours in flight.

12 Only in the late 19th and early 20th century, a substantial number of *otkhodniks* started appearing home much less frequently. The reason for this is also well known. They could already do without a big farm where their hands were needed. The women and children could easily manage the household, and the *otkhodnik* brought home enough money to buy all the essential goods (see: Kazarinov, 1926; Vladimirsky, 1927; Akhsyanov, 2013).

otkhodniks are primarily wage workers in industrial centers or informal sole proprietors marketing the products of their labor in metropolitan areas (such are the numerous log home builders). The proportion of otkhodniks engaged in the service sector, but again in the cities and industrial areas, is rapidly growing. Seasonal agricultural workers are very few among contemporary Russian otkhodniks (although in the imperial times they constituted a numerous group, the overall size of which is however unknown, as all estimates were local and covered only individual provinces or areas. Thus, according to several sources, the southern provinces hosted tens and hundreds of thousands of agricultural otkhodniks, see: Chaslavsky, 1875; Shcherbina, 1892–1894; Ponomaryov, 1895 and 1896).

A comparison of contemporary Russian otkhodnichestvo with different types of labor migration in other countries reveals some similarities. First, current cross-border circular labor migration from many former Soviet republics to Russia or other countries is directly related to Russian otkhodnichestvo. This is very widespread in contemporary Moldova: it is common knowledge that a significant proportion of the working-age population of this country is working as otkhodniks in Russia, Ukraine, and Romania (*e.g.*, Boar, 2010). The same applies to many residents of Ukraine working on a rotation basis in Russia, Poland, and Germany, while their families stay at home. Many men from Belarus work in Russia as long-haul truckers, while women are engaged as nannies, governesses, hairdressers, sales personnel and, of course, market vendors in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Smolensk, Novgorod, and even in such distant cities as Murmansk and Rostov-on-Don. Cross-border labor migration of the otkhodnik type is most common for the inhabitants of almost all new post-Soviet states of the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and to a lesser extent Georgia) and Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and much less Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; *see*: Zayonchkovskaya, 1997; Kirillova, 1997; Dyatlov, 2010). Obviously, all these people are by no means "guest workers", as they are usually referred to in Russia, but real otkhodniks of the Soviet era. As before, their families remain at home, and the adult members regularly return from their distant workplaces. Nevertheless, this is exactly the same labor mobility that was typical for the late Soviet period, specifically for the population of these areas. Therefore, the contemporary circular migration has simply inherited the former pattern of labor migration, and the "new otkhodnichestvo" in countries of the former Soviet Union should indeed be considered in the tradition of the Russian otkhodnichestvo.

The second group of labor migrants, somewhat similar to our otkhodniks, are hired agricultural workers, whose labor is widely used everywhere—from the northern

countries, Norway and Scotland, to the southern—China and Australia, Mexico and Brazil (Rye, 1993; Perloff, Lynch, and Gabbard, 1998; Kasimis, Papadopoulos, and Zacoboulou, 2003; Jentsch, De Lima, and MacDonald, 2007). These workers seem to follow a lifestyle similar to the one of Russian agricultural *otkhodniks* (Massey, 1990; McAllister, 2002; Boar, 2010). They move seasonally from areas where there is a surplus of labor or the labor market is underdeveloped to areas with intensive agriculture to participate in harvesting (from grapes to cotton) or work at livestock farms. In Russia, this type of agricultural labor migration is currently significantly less developed than in the other countries, or than in the past. One can even say that such a labor market is non-existent. The underlying reason is inadequate development of large commercial farms and agricultural enterprises, on the one hand, and numerous rural population in the labor-abundant rural areas, on the other hand. As a result, practically all existing commercial farms and agricultural enterprises use local labor.

In the meantime, neither group of labor migrants is completely similar to our *otkhodniks*, since our *otkhodniks* are internal and not cross-border migrants, and they are engaged in industry, transport and the service sector rather than in agro-industry. Moreover, if we consider the established criteria for circular labor migration, we will find some essential differences with those that determine Russian *otkhodnichestvo* (as set forth above). First, circular migration (as a type, along with seasonal work and temporary migration) is clearly defined as legal and cross-border migration ("Circular Migration. The EMN Glossary defines this as "a repetition of legal migration by the same person between two or more countries", *Temporary and circular migration*, 2011, p. 14); this immediately places it outside the scope of Russian *otkhodnichestvo*. Based on the definitions of temporary and circular migration used by EU member states, as well as in the broader context, it is possible to identify two groups of criteria: external phenomenological features and migration policies in the host country (e.g., Newland, 2009, p. 5–10; *Temporary and circular migration*, 2011, p. 13–28).

The first group includes (1) the temporary rather than permanent nature of immigration; (2) the return aspect determined by the links retained by the labor migrant to his country of origin; and (3) circulatory, repetitive entries to the host country. (The criteria are overlapping, therefore, formally excessive.) All three criteria are absolutely the same as those applicable to Russian *otkhodnichestvo*. However, the second group of criteria includes: (4) the legal character of migration; (5) control and respect of the migrants' rights; and (6) management and optimization of labor markets for both origin and destination countries. However, these three criteria

have nothing to do with Russian *otkhodnichestvo*. Our *otkhodnichestvo* is not subject to any internal laws or regulations. In most cases, it is an informal, shadow activity, where the workers register neither with government bodies, nor with the employers. Therefore, Russia has no control whatsoever over internal migration<sup>13</sup> (even control over cross-border labor migration from the former Soviet republics is inadequate, this being evidenced by repeated campaigns concerning migrants). It is therefore impracticable to speak about any rights of labor migrants in Russia, and the *otkhodniks* themselves realize this perfectly well (we will focus on this issue in the following chapters). Finally, the last of the criteria—state regulation of the labor market—is also irrelevant to the *otkhodniks*. The state does not notice the *otkhodniks* either as economic actors, or as a social group (we will further dwell on this aspect below).

Due to the above reasons, we have to consider the phenomenon of Russian *otkhodnichestvo* as standing somewhat apart, and distinguish it both from cross-border labor migration and from seasonal agricultural migration. Let us take a closer look at the phenomenon of *otkhodnichestvo* and the contemporary Russian *otkhodnik* as a worker and a social type.

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13 Even in the capital, where hardly half out of approximately five million *otkhodnik* migrants are registered with government bodies.



## Chapter 2

### Russian otkhodnichestvo: milestones

*"...The villagers used to depart for earnings, only that was a long time ago. The parents didn't have to go anywhere; they were all employed locally. People left when there was no work available. They used to go to St. Petersburg, where else... Before the revolution, many earned money elsewhere; there was no work to be found here."<sup>14</sup>*

The extended research of contemporary Russian otkhodnichestvo revealed rapid changes in this type of labor activity. The distinctive developments of the past quarter century (since the early 1990s) require distinguishing two stages in its evolution. Prior to proceeding with their description, we would like to touch upon the principal milestones of the preceding development of otkhodnichestvo in the Russian Empire. This allows understanding the logic of the structural changes that are taking place within contemporary otkhodnichestvo. We have prepared a graphic illustration of the evolution of otkhodnichestvo, which presents on a timeline the changes in the otkhodnik population in Russia (a rough estimate) under the influence of certain (primarily political and economic) factors; and the recent structural shifts in the composition of otkhodniks. The charts are placed at the end of the chapter (see Fig. 1a and Fig. 1b), as the text is entirely devoted to explaining the information presented graphically.

#### **2.1. Historical otkhodnichestvo of the 17th-20th centuries: causes and drivers**

In the second half of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century, otkhodnichestvo was widespread among the peasantry of Imperial Russia. It was precisely at that time, that it attracted the attention of researchers. Actually, otkhodnichestvo in Russia has a much longer history, which seemed to have terminated forever in the first decades of the Soviet era. However, "forever" did not last long: just two or three generations later, otkhodnichestvo re-emerged and is now rapidly developing.

Before disappearing in the Soviet period, otkhodnichestvo had reached an immense scale. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was extremely widespread: from half to three-quarters of the total male peasant population of the non-black earth (non-

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14 Interview with otkhodnik Igor P., Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

chernozem) central and northern provinces headed off for earnings (generally in winter and early spring) to neighboring and distant districts, and other provinces, reaching the very outskirts of the empire. In the 1750s, from 15 percent to 20 percent of the male population left their native villages in the Moscow, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, and Vladimir provinces to seek work elsewhere (Gauthier, 1906; Vladimirsky, 1927). Already in the first half of the nineteenth century, Russia had over one million peasant *otkhodniks*, states an article in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, <http://bse.sci-lib.com/article085855.html>). However, these figures were greatly underestimated, even as regards the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to the previously mentioned N. Karyshev (1896), the number of peasants engaged in *otkhodnichestvo* in the middle and the second half of the 19th century was no less than three to five million. Similar estimates can be obtained by extrapolating data on individual provinces provided by other authors (although *otkhodnichestvo* can greatly vary in scale within a province, depending on the district), or by the number of seasonal passports issued to peasants. Thus, according to the observations of N. Tolstoy (a landowner from Nizhny Novgorod Province and a cousin of Leo Tolstoy) made at his Vetluga estates in the first half of the 19th century, practically all the male population, both state-owned and private serfs, left their villages in winter and spring to engage in logging and timber rafting (Tolstoy, 2013).

At the end of the nineteenth century and up to the late 1920s, the share of the male peasant population engaged in *otkhodnichestvo* in certain areas reached 80%-90 % (see, e.g., Vladimirsky, 1927, pp. 76–121). After reaching its peak, the phenomenon disappeared from the socio-economic life of Russia for five decades. Now it has re-emerged. We have already addressed the causes and signs of the revival; now we will try to associate them with the milestones in the history of *otkhodnichestvo*.

Although the practice of engaging in seasonal work away from the native villages dates back to the 16th-17th centuries (e.g., Gauthier, 1906), *otkhodnichestvo*, presumably, received its first perceptible, strong impetus from the state at the beginning of the 18th century. That was the time when peasants were forcibly displaced on a mass scale to toil at the "construction sites of the century" that Peter the Great launched (St. Petersburg and many other new cities, especially along the border) and fight in the great wars that he waged (recruiting). Researchers of the 19th–early 20th centuries shared the opinion that widespread *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia was triggered by Peter the Great's reforms, which "shifted" the country's population to the capital cities and borders (see: Karyshev, 1892; Gauthier, 1906; Kazarinov,

1926, pp. 1–4; Sobyenin, 1926; Vladimirsky, 1927, pp. 51–74; Soloviev, 1928; Kulisher, 2005). The people bound to the land for life by the state, the commune or the landowner, could not leave their places of residence without a valid reason. Two preconditions are necessary for *otkhodnichestvo* to emerge as a pattern of economic behavior: the relative or complete binding of a person and his family to the land serves as a prerequisite; and the inability to feed the family from local sources, which forces the person to seek external means of existence, acts as a driver. It was impossible to subsist either in the poor non-black earth areas of central Russia, already densely populated by the 18th century, or in the practically undeveloped forest-covered northern regions. Peasants living in areas where the crops were poor, could not properly feed their families from the small land allotments they had. Besides, they had to pay quitrent and state taxes (researchers pointed out that taxation in Imperial Russian was underdeveloped and considered this to be an important trigger for *otkhodnichestvo*; *see*: Kachorovsky, 1900; Vladimirsky, 1927; Lenin, 1971; Burds, 1998; Vodarsky and Istomina, 2004). As a result, they were forced to send some family members (usually young men and boys) to labor in towns (*see*: Zinoviev, 1999; Davydov, 2007).

At a certain point, the state, rural commune, or the landowner "realize" this contradiction and take respective measures.<sup>15</sup> The state engages the population in nationwide construction projects or "wastes" it in wars. The rural commune is less reluctant to let its skilled craftsmen seek jobs in towns; their external earnings help the commune pay state taxes, the burden of which under Peter's rule had become excessive. As for the landowner, by the beginning of the 19th century he starts to realize that he can benefit from quitrent (*obrok*) much more than from *corvée* (*barshchina*); so, he allows more and more serfs to leave the estate temporarily to labor on the side. Moreover, he now promotes their training in various crafts (*see*: Vinogradova, 2010; Tolstoy, 2013). *Otkhodnichestvo* thus gradually develops, spreading across the central and northern provinces of the Russian Empire (the landowner is mostly the driver in central areas, and poor crops—in the northern ones. In some provinces—for example, Vladimir, Kostroma, Yaroslavl, and Nizhny Novgorod—both factors were equally important, and it was from them that the majority of *otkhodniks* always used to come).

The population of *otkhodniks* by the beginning of the 18th century was very roughly estimated at about one million people (Karyshev, 1896). The period from the early 18th century to the mid-19th century is characterized by an implicit develop-

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15 We know counterexamples of the ruling class addressing this contradiction. It is a known fact that the imperial family most strongly opposed the release of private peasants, since the high density of the population bound by serfdom makes land expensive and labor cheap.

ment of *otkhodnichestvo*, which implied its subsequent rapid growth. Initially, this growth was driven by the right granted to the landlords in 1731 to collect poll tax from their serfs; thirty years later it was bolstered by the Manifesto on exempting landlords from compulsory civil and military service (Manifesto on Granting Freedom and Liberty to the Russian Nobility, 1762); subsequently, by an additional confirmation of the "liberties" (Charter of the Nobility, 1785); and finally, by the permission for landlords to mortgage their estates (together with the serfs). Only 99 years later did the process finally culminate in the "emancipation reforms"—the Emancipation Manifesto of 1861 (*see: Mironov, 2003. pp. 430–486*). The subsequent emancipation of peasants (the foundation for which was laid down a century earlier by the change in the status of landlords) triggered their rapid transition to *otkhodnichestvo* (especially tenant farmers, whose allotments were too small, and peasants who had redeemed their land parcels—up to 1881: *see: Zhbankov, 1887*). This activity, initially caused by dire need, became the main factor of peasant well-being already three or four decades later. Largely, the changes that took place by the 1890s were promoted by rapid industrial growth (Vorontsov, 1892; Sukhanov, 1913; Lenin, 1971; Fyodorov, 2010; Davydov, 2012) and overpopulation caused primarily by inadequate farming. The peasant commune resisted any innovations and the peasants themselves were not motivated to raise the fertility due to the continuous repartition of land. *Otkhodnichestvo* peaked in the first decade of the 20th century, additionally bolstered by Stolypin's reforms (Danilov, 1974; Davydov, 2010; Kovalyov, 2008) and the cooperative movement in the province. The latter, largely driven by *otkhodnichestvo* and the home crafts triggered by it (*see: Yezersky, 1894*), developed in giant strides and in the 1920s outpaced similar processes in Europe (Kozlov, 2008; Urry, 2012). The statistics on passports and permits issued to peasants in those years allows estimating the number of *otkhodniks* (very roughly) at approximately 10 to 12 million people (*see: Register of trade and craft certificates and permits...*, 1881–1887; Vladimirsky, 1927; Mints, 1929).

It is noteworthy that the role of the state in relation to *otkhodniks* changed significantly throughout history. In the imperial times, the *otkhodniks* were first "at the mercy" of the rural commune and the landlord, then only the commune, and finally they were left on their own. During the Soviet period, the state took over control. Before serfdom was abolished, *otkhodniks* were sometimes very profitable for landowners in the non-black earth regions: they often generated higher incomes than the "poor ploughs" (the above mentioned landowner N. Tolstoy made a detailed comparative analysis of how his peasants and himself (of course) benefited from *otkhodnichestvo* in the 1840s: Tolstoy, 2013, pp. 60–62, 114–117). For ex-

ample, both in the Vetluga district of the Nizhny Novgorod Province, and in the Soligalich district of the Kostroma Province, peasants considered land to be an evil necessity, since it rendered practically no income and taxes on it had to be paid from side earnings. To buy out his freedom, a "profitable" otkhodnik had to pay much more than a simple farmer or a local craftsman; the cost of obtaining a "man-umission" for him was several fold higher (Zhbakov, 1891, pp. 17–18).<sup>16</sup>

Previously, the natural environment did not allow the peasant to produce locally enough food to provide for the family and sell excesses on the market in order to pay quitrent fees and taxes and to buy clothing and shoes for the family. Due to this, otkhodnichestvo was predominantly widespread in the non-black earth provinces of the central and northern part of European Russia. In the black earth provinces, in the south, and east of the Urals, it was less frequent and was triggered mostly by a scarcity of arable land. In those areas, otkhodnichestvo was generally of an agricultural nature. In the south black earth (chernozem) provinces and also in the Caucasus, agricultural otkhodnichestvo was much more widespread: peasants were hired in spring and autumn as day laborers (see: Chaslavsky, 1875; Sazonov, 1889; Shcherbina, 1892–1894; Rudnev, 1894; Shakhovskoy, 1896; *Information on otkhodnichestvo in the Voronezh Province*, 1899; *Ancillary agricultural crafts*, 1903; Selivanov, 2011). Even within a province, otkhodnichestvo could vary by intensity from district to district, depending on the fertility of the soil: N.N. Vladimirsky provides data for the Kostroma Province showing that even between neighboring districts the difference could be five-fold (Vladimirsky, 1927. p. 78 et seq.).

It is interesting that the local authorities were the first to attempt regulating otkhodnichestvo. In the 1870s, the authorities of the Syzran district (Nizhny Novgorod Province) proposed introducing the institution of "local agents", who were supposed to "stay tuned" to public sentiments and monitor the labor market in Zavolzhye (Trans-Volga region) in order to prevent, if necessary, an excessive influx of workforce from the mountainous (right southern) bank of the Volga River to Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow, or St. Petersburg. However, the provincial authorities failed to appreciate this initiative, and it did not gain popularity (Mordovtsev, 1877).

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16 Actually, the rural commune realized the benefits that such craftspeople provided very early; therefore, the redemption fees for a skillful craftsman, who earned money to pay public taxes and levies, were five-fold and ten-fold higher than those for a simple peasant.



Photo 4. Barge haulers-raftsmen returning home aboard a riverboat. Nizhny Novgorod, middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The trip took place in summer, at low water, and lasted over a week. To avoid extra costs, the returning peasants often traveled on the deck out in the open. Photo made by Zinoviy Vinogradov, a photographer from Nizhny Novgorod. Courtesy of Prof. N.V. Morokhin (Nizhny Novgorod).

Already by the end of the nineteenth century (in the 1920s especially), *otkhodnichestvo* was at the same time considered to be a result of agrarian overpopulation (i.e., the imbalance between the number of workers in a peasant household and the actual possibility to engage them productively) and a way to overcome it (Rudnev, 1894; Delarov, 1928; Mints, 1929; Suvorov, 1968; Ryndzyunsky, 1970; *The North-West in the agrarian history of Russia*, 2008). On the one hand, *otkhodnichestvo* was perceived as a progressive phenomenon, since "socially and professionally, peasant *otkhodniki* were a direct and immediate reserve of Russia's working class" (Sukhanov, 1913; Alexandrov, 2010; Andryushin, 2012, p. 232). On the other hand, *otkhodnichestvo* was a serious concern for the People's Commissariat of Labor, being a source of urban unemployment, which it was supposed to control

(Danilov, 1974). Rural dwellers migrated to the cities on such a large-scale, that in less than 15 years (already by 1930) the urban population more than doubled. The influx was so enormous that one of the official aims of introducing the passport system in 1932 was to "lessen the burden on the cities" (Andryushin, 2012, p. 205). For that reason, passports were introduced temporarily; initially they concerned only four metropolitan cities—Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and Kiev (see: Baiburin, 2009), as those cities experienced the most serious problems due to a two- to three-fold increase of inhabitants. In the meantime, it is well known that shortly prior to that Moscow and St. Petersburg had been the main recipients of rural *otkhodniks* (Kiev and Kharkov—to a much lesser extent). Therefore, the growth of metropolitan population in the 1920s was driven practically exclusively by *otkhodnichestvo*.<sup>17</sup>

Russian intellectuals, researchers, and local government statisticians were negative about *otkhodnichestvo*, as it was caused by dire need and impoverishment of a considerable part of the country's population. Thus, at the end of the 19th century, local politician and ethnographer D.N. Zhbakov noted that *otkhodnichestvo* was one of those "long-standing phenomena, which could not be dealt with in one blow, however harmful they might be"; and that external earnings would exist "until every single area was in a position to sustain its population". However, "in spite of its numerous drawbacks, *otkhodnichestvo* is absolutely necessary for the area in question". (Zhbakov, 1891, p. 6). This viewpoint was severely criticized by V.I. Lenin (Lenin, 1971, pp. 569–581), although the same ambivalent assessment of *otkhodnichestvo* is still true in most cases.

Attempts made by the Soviet State to regulate *otkhodnichestvo* treating it as part of the cooperative movement came in conflict with the goals of industrializing the country. By the beginning of the 1930s, concern that the scale of *otkhodnichestvo* was inadequate to achieve the industrial development of the country emerged. Consequently, this phenomenon was inventoried and institutionalized, thus changing its essence and turning it into organized recruitment (*orgnabor*) of workforce from the villages (striking examples of that time are the construction sites of Donbass, Kuzbass, Komsomolsk-on-Amur and many others, which were reflected both in official propaganda, including Soviet films and songs, and in folklore). For this purpose, in the period from 1930 to 1934, the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of People's Commissars passed several special decrees regulating *otkhodnik* activities of the population (*see*: Decrees of the Cen-

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17 Therefore, all current "native" residents of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev are second- or third-generation descendants of peasant *otkhodniks* from many northern and central provinces of the Russian Empire.

tral Executive Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of People's Commissars dated 16 March 1930, 30 June 1931, 17 March 1933, and 19 September 1934). Consequently, *otkhodnichestvo* dropped out of public discourse as a contemporary phenomenon and remained only as a historical one. The war that broke out shortly finalized the process.

In the period from 1931<sup>18</sup> to 1991, *otkhodnichestvo* in the Soviet Union existed as an extremely marginalized phenomenon and took distorted forms. The only form that was more or less approved by the authorities was the seasonal "recruitment" of workers from some southern and western Soviet Republics, where labor was excessive (Moldavia, Ukraine, Armenia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan), to work at logging enterprises in the northern forest-covered areas (Arkhangelsk, Karelia, Komi, Vologda, Kostroma, and Perm) and in Siberia, where there was always a shortage of labor.<sup>19</sup> Such "recruitment" involved primarily rural inhabitants, who worked at collective and state farms. Since timber is harvested mostly in winter, this form of employment became seasonal. The laborers regularly returned home to work on the farms. The "recruitment" of laborers for the logging camps started in the late 1940s and peaked in the 1950s.

It did not take long for the arrangements to change. The collective and state farms took over the initiative and started sending their own crews to the logging camps. During winter, such farmers earned money for their families and harvested timber (extremely scarce in the south) for their collective farms and fellow-villagers. At the same time, besides logging, the now former "recruits" sent by their collective farms, participated in the construction of various facilities in the forest settlements and villages. By the late 1970s, when the need for timber harvesters started to decline, this process "went out of control" and lost its organized nature. The "recruits" started forming their own logging teams and engaging in work independently of the collective farms. Accordingly, new labor relations required new designations: people nicknamed such independent builders "shabashniks"—a derivative from the slang word "shabashka" meaning an independently found side job, which generates relatively quick and high earnings.

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18 After adoption of the Decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated 30 June 1931 *On Otkhodnichestvo* and, subsequently, the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated 17 March 1933 *On the Procedure of Otkhodnichestvo from Collective Farms*.

19 The workers engaged by "recruitment" were referred to as "recruits" ("verbovannye"); that is how they were nicknamed in the settlements where they were brought to work.

In the 1980s<sup>20</sup>, "Moldavian", "Armenian", and "Uzbek" building teams were already rather numerous, working not only in the northern parts of European Russia but practically all over Siberia. Finally, this working pattern attracted the attention of researchers, economists and sociologists (see: Shabanova, 1986, 1992a). In fact, these seasonal loggers in winter ("recruits") and, at a later time, builders in summer ("shabashniks") were not quite genuine *otkhodniks*, as they did not possess all attributes of this type of labor migration (in line with the definitions provided in Chapter 1). The "recruits" were sent by their principal employer to work for the benefit of the employer and not the worker. In this respect, they were neither independent, not enterprising, although they did depart from home for seasonal work. The "shabashniks" left home not because of need or necessity, but for the sake of additional, temporary and occasional earnings; such work was not of a regular nature (although some of them, especially team leaders, were real *otkhodniks*). Neither the society, nor the scientists (with a few exceptions) treated these two phenomena as a particular type of labor migration, as *otkhodnichestvo*.

Repeatedly, *otkhodnichestvo* re-emerged as a new mass phenomenon of Russian social and economic life in the early 1990s (see: Shabanova, 1992b). Following the shock experienced at the beginning of the 1990s, which forced the population to return to the archaic pattern of subsistence farming (at that time, an urban family spent 90% of its budget on food), *otkhodnichestvo* gradually re-emerged as one of the most efficient (and now the most widespread) subsistence patterns. In response to the domestic economic chaos, in the early 1990s new subsistence patterns started rapidly developing in Russia, since the people were left on their own to seek and find means of existence (and survival). Besides establishing "disaster" models (like "shuttle trade"<sup>21</sup>, which was in a sense similar to "pack peddling"<sup>22</sup> of the 1920s),

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20 The 1980s was the only decade of the Soviet period, when the village prospered: farms and agricultural complexes were being constructed everywhere along with roads and residential houses for the collective farmers (*kolkhozniks*). In addition, collective and state farms had more flexibility in using the funds allocated for construction purposes than was granted to urban enterprises. Due to this, "recruits" and "shabashniks" from western and southern Soviet republics worked summers practically in every collective and state farm in those years.

21 "Shuttle traders" were independent, generally unregistered, traders, who traveled regularly (usually twice a week) as tourists to China and other countries of the Asia-Pacific region to buy cheap goods at local markets, namely, clothing, footwear, fabrics, carpets, tableware, electronic appliances, and foodstuff, which they brought back in their luggage by plane, train or bus and resold on Russian urban markets. They were nicknamed "shuttle traders" because of their regular cross-border shuttling from one market to another. Quite a few "shuttle traders" managed to make a fortune in the first half of the 1990s; however as many lost all they had, degraded, or even perished. Currently, "shuttle trade" rudiments can be found in areas with border crossings, like Kyakhta (Buryatia); the traders continue their "shuttle busi-

the people "remembered" and rekindled long-forgotten sustenance patterns, the first among them being the return to subsistence farming and the revival of *otkhodnichestvo*. In the early 1990s, one of the authors set forth on identifying and describing the various subsistence patterns that the population was forced to turn to because of the economic "shock therapy". Surprisingly, instead of adopting new patterns of economic behavior prompted by the new environment ("shuttle trade"; small business—very popular in the first years of the crisis; or formalized unemployment—not for the sake of the meagre allowance but with the only aim to maintain the service record for future pension benefits), the people in the province started largely turning to lost, forgotten, "archaic" patterns. Such patterns included primarily subsistence farming, which became a mass phenomenon in the rural area and in many towns. Potato fields virtually mushroomed in the suburbs. This brought about competition for land plots and a mass theft of crops. To prevent this, the crop owners formed voluntary armed groups to patrol the fields. *Otkhodnichestvo* initially re-emerged as a supplement to subsistence farming (see: Plusnin, 1997a). pp. 180–192).

Rather than reappearing in its historic center—the non-black earth regions, the new *otkhodnichestvo* emerged as temporary labor migration from the outskirts, the former Soviet republics, to the center. That was where the Soviet *otkhodniks*—the "recruits" and "shabashniks" lived, who had been the first to apply this subsistence pattern. It took some time for this centripetal movement to spread to the central regions, which used to be the main areas of *otkhodnichestvo*. Therefore, by its principal features, *otkhodnichestvo* as domestic Russian labor migration is indistinguishable from seasonal labor migration to Russia from such post-Soviet states as Ukraine, Moldavia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. By nature, these currently cross-border, but essentially domestic (within the borders of Big Russia) labor migrations are closely related. Probably that is the reason why *otkhodnik* activities currently affect not only residents of the traditional "old *otkhodnichestvo*" regions, but also the population of virtually all post-Soviet republics, and the eastern, Siberian areas of Russia, which had never before been involved.

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ness", transporting sacks of clothing and small articles - up to 50 kg at a time. Only now, they are called "camels".

- 22 "Pack peddlers" were small-scale vendors, who were widespread in the 1920s - during and immediately after the civil war of 1918–1922. They purchased goods in one region and re-sold them in the markets elsewhere. They traveled by train and carried their merchandise in packs; therefrom they got their nicknames.

## 2.2. Two stages in the evolution of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*

Although contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* is a relatively recent phenomenon, which appeared less than a quarter of a century ago, we can already distinguish two stages in its development. The first stage is characterized by the emergence (actually, re-emergence) of *otkhodnichestvo* and its large-scale growth in the small towns of European Russia; at the second stage, it expanded east and "dived deeper"—from small towns down to the rural settlements.

***The first stage: otkhodnichestvo emerges in small towns.*** The rapid re-emergence (revival) of *otkhodnichestvo* in small towns, primarily in the same areas as during the imperial period, was the main feature of the first stage. In the mid-1990s, this process was initiated primarily by two factors. First, the total absence of any labor market specifically in the small towns due to the "collapse" of all production. In the early 1990s, major and small state enterprises, which existed in every small town and district and served as principal employers for the local population, went bankrupt and came to a standstill. Employment at such enterprises seriously reduced labor mobility; therefore, in the early and mid-1990s, it was considered that intra-regional labor markets were virtually non-existent, and labor migration as such was not developed. Certain economists and sociologists still share this point of view. Many small-town families suddenly lost work and, respectively, the means of existence. Most of them had no or inadequate land plots for gardening, and this aggravated the situation. Rural families were in a better position, as subsidiary farming helped them overcome the collapse of collective and state farms. In the mid-1990s, over half of all schoolchildren took meals mainly at schools, as there was nothing to eat at home. This was so widespread that no one even considered it a social disaster. The desperate situation of urban families, who were left without work and had no farms or gardens to feed them, drove people to seek urgently new sources of subsistence. *Otkhodnichestvo* was one of them. As time went by and the labor market in the regional centers and capitals developed, it became increasingly widespread.

However, if this first factor drove people to leave home in search of work, the second one—the impossibility for the family to relocate closer to the workplace due to the notorious features of our residential system (in spite of, or more likely due to the rather relative privatization of housing)—determined the specific character of labor migration in the form of *otkhodnichestvo*. A new form of "serfdom"—"apartment serfdom", the absence of widely available rental housing and affordable mortgage, which hindered easy and quick relocation of the families, preconditioned the mass revival of *otkhodnichestvo*. We believe this form of "serfdom" has a

strong influence on contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*. Contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* would never have reached its current magnitude, if the people had not been "bound" to their apartments and houses. The Soviet people were sufficiently prepared to change their place of residence due to necessity: experts estimate that up to 50 million people were forced to relocate in the first five years following the collapse of the Soviet Union [on 26 December 1991]—every sixth family had to "take to the road". However, the negative implications of moving residence, for most families outweighed by far the consequences of a temporary, even though lengthy, absence of one family member.

Thus, the first stage of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* was shaped. It was spontaneous and driven by need; and it involved primarily the dwellers of small towns, who were "trapped" between the big city, where job opportunities were always available, and the village, where there were always opportunities to produce food. The small town had none of these opportunities in 1990s.

At the first stage, *otkhodnichestvo* was dominated by professional builders, carpenters, joiners, drivers, mechanics, and engineers—all those, who could independently market their skills and products. In those difficult years (in the 1990s), the industrial centers and even the capitals still required significantly more labor for the manufacturing industries than for the service sector (by the mid-1990s, manufacturing accounted for no less than 54% of all employed, whereas by the end of the 2000s, this figure dropped under 20%; labor was now more in demand in the service sector, which by then accounted for 70%-75% of all employed).



Photo 5. Kologriv, Kostroma Region, bank of the Unzha River. Otkhodnik carpenters, who pre-fabricate log cabin kits at home, deliver them to the customer in the suburbs of major cities, and erect houses from them. The high quality of their work can be seen even in the picture: the logs fit so tightly together that there is not a single gap between them. Every log is placed in the cribwork with due consideration for the growth characteristics of the tree and potential future checking (the splits will appear on the downside or inside surface of the logs). The photo shows the central cribwork of the future house; the beams on which the builders are sitting are the bottom (floor) connection of the cribwork with the exterior walls of the big 10x10 m house. The top beams and the roof rafters are not yet in place. Photo by Juri Plusnin, August 2014.

***The second stage: otkhodnichestvo spreads "down"—to the village and "out"—to Siberia.*** Contemporary otkhodnichestvo entered the second stage of its evolution at the beginning of the 2000s. We are currently witnessing its progress characterized by the shift from district centers (small towns and settlements) to the rural areas. The reason for this seems to be the economic stabilization and growth of the 2000s, due to which the enterprises that existed in the small towns were re-opened and many new ones were commissioned. Besides new job openings, which brought some otkhodniks back home, other interesting changes occurred in the occupational structure. Simon Kordonsky (2010) believes that they happened because "the power vertical finally reached the local level". This top-down command structure was implemented and strengthened during the first two terms of Vladimir Putin's presidency, especially starting from March 2004. As a result, the district centers—small towns and settlements—experienced a significant growth of public sector employees, including those engaged by regional and federal government bodies. Currently, public sector employees account for 40 percent, and sometimes even from 60 to 70

percent of the locally employed able-bodied population.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, this is true for district centers, which just recently used to be the main sources of *otkhodnichestvo*.

These two reasons—growing local production and the development of the public sector—somehow contributed to downscaling *otkhodnichestvo* in the small towns. However, the path was already well trodden, and "nature abhors a vacuum": jobs in the capitals vacated by small-town *otkhodniki* were quickly filled by village *otkhodniki*. Where previously jobless villagers looked for work in their district centers, now, directed by their colleagues from these district centers, they increasingly depart to make a living in the City (meaning the regional center) or in Moscow and the Moscow Region. *Otkhodnichestvo* filters down deeper and deeper into provincial life.

The eastward shift of *otkhodnichestvo* stands somewhat apart. Timewise, it coincides with the shift to the rural areas in the western parts of the country; however, the underlying factors are different. In imperial times, *otkhodnichestvo* (except for long-distance horse-drawn carriage) was completely alien for the rich and resource-abundant Siberian towns and settlements.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, a different point of view also exists: some researchers believe that it was the tradition of *otkhodnichestvo* that made rapid development of Siberia possible (*see, e.g.,* Remnev, Suvorova, 2010). However, until the 1930s, the population of Siberia did not need to seek any additional earnings. Siberia was sparsely populated, arable lands were abundant, and the people had enough money from hunting, fishing, cattle-breeding, logging, precious metal mining, and many other trades. After the 1930s, no one heard anything about *otkhodnichestvo* in Siberia, although Siberia was the destination for many teams of "recruited" loggers and "shabashnik" builders from the southern and western republics of the USSR.

Nowadays, facts of apparent *otkhodnichestvo* are revealed all over Siberia. However, as far as we can judge based on our still occasional observations of this phenomenon, Siberian *otkhodnichestvo* differs by structure from the European one by the following important details. First, we have not noticed any large-scale involvement of small-town inhabitants; *otkhodnichestvo* is mainly practiced by rural dwellers. However, in recent years, *otkhodnichestvo* has started massively picking

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23 Such a high proportion of people receiving their wages from the state budget is not surprising, as their share is determined not in relation to the total able-bodied population but only to that employed in the local economy and entered into statistical records, whereas the share of unregistered (in the economy) residents can reach from 10%-15% to 30% and over.

24 See, for example, a description of the lifestyle of the urban population in Siberia in the 19th century with details on substantial amounts of food that practically every family stored in cellars and ice cellars: Goncharov, 2004.

up among residents of one-factory settlements or towns. Thus, many fishermen from big settlements and towns of the Primorye Territory (such as Preobrazhenie and Bolshoy Kamen) are now leaving on their accord for Vladivostok and Nakhodka, where they join ship crews or engage in sea-farming, thus becoming *otkhodniks*.

Second, *otkhodnichestvo* here is "aligned" with the rotation form of labor migration. People take up jobs at construction sites, factories and mining enterprises, or join the ships in response to formal vacancy ads. However, unlike organized recruitment, they do it independently, form their own teams, and often negotiate with the employer on a team, rather than individual, level. For example, according to observations made in the Aldan district located in the southern part of Eastern Siberia, crews engaged in clearing gas pipeline right-of-ways from vegetation, besides Moldavians and Ukrainians, include local Evenki (Belletsky Evenk Ethnic Nasleg [rural district] of the Republic of Yakutia). The local people are extremely undemanding as to the living conditions and in winter, they can live in tents right on the felling site. Therefore, employers prefer to hire such teams from neighboring settlements, rather than engage crews of freezing southerners from Moldavia or Ukraine. Although local *otkhodniks* say they are mercilessly cheated, their earnings, nevertheless, exceed by far those of their fellow villagers. The new subsistence pattern is rather profitable, however, surprisingly, this lifestyle is severely criticized by the local "ethnic intelligentsia", who believe that the only suitable way for indigenous small peoples is to engage in nomadic reindeer herding and live in rawhide tents (*chums*).

The second stage in the evolution of *otkhodnichestvo* is characterized by its diversification. People with low skills or employed in unskilled jobs now engage in *otkhodnichestvo* along with builders, carpenters and other skilled workers. In major cities, the demand for labor in the service and social reproduction sectors had grown significantly. As a result, residents from the province stepped in to fill the positions of cleaners, nannies, governesses, sales personnel, and even health workers and teachers. Very few of these *otkhodniks* are engaged in skilled labor. Over 5 million people may be occupied in different segments of the service sector. However, it is currently impracticable to determine the actual size of this mixed cohort. Two professionally compact groups of *otkhodniks* are especially numerous—security guards and long-haul truckers. Myriads of companies, trade centers, establishments, and even hi-rise residential houses hire security guards. The number of these people exceeds the number of fences erected in any major Russian city. According to a very rough estimate, there are over 3 million security guards in the

country. Almost all of them are provincial residents from the regions surrounding the capitals. They work on a two weeks on, two weeks off rotation basis, and hold jobs about 500–700 km from home. The following chapters of the book will focus additionally on security guards. Long-haul truckers have been left without attention, since this category requires specific research methods, namely, accompanying them on the road. Here we will note only some specific features of contemporary "trucking".

***Long-haul truckers as otkhodniks.*** This category of workers has become another important element of the second stage of the evolution of contemporary Russian otkhodnichestvo. Similar to the imperial times, Russia is once again experiencing a rapid development of long-distance carriage—"long-haul trucking" [in Russian—"dal'noboy"], or simply "trucking". This phenomenon has still not caught the attention of Russian sociologists, although it is an extremely appealing target for research. In the past, American researchers conducted some in-depth studies of their "professional truckers" (see, e.g., Kramer, 1975; Thomas, 1979; Wyckoff, 1979; Will, 1992). Russian "trucking" emerged in the 1990s, and in the early 2000s, it experienced rapid development, the scope of which has still not been assessed. The "regulatory clamp-down", increasing failures experienced by the Russian railway monopolist OJSC Russian Railways and the excessive growth of its tariffs (for more details about these processes refer to "Ocean" on land <http://www.warandpeace.ru/ru/analysis/view/94708>) could have been the principal reason for such a boost in long-haul trucking.

Today, "trucking" means a multi-million, well-staffed, well-equipped and well-connected organized army of carriers. According to approximate estimates, professional truckers currently number from three to five million people. At least half of them are sole proprietors, who work independently, at their own risk, using their own trucks (which they often repair and maintain themselves), and negotiating business directly with the freight consignors. The second half are those, who hire themselves out as drivers to currently numerous freight forwarding companies. Their only responsibility is to deliver goods by corporate trucks. Specialized teams of mechanics are in charge of repairs and maintenance, and dedicated professionals take care of all business arrangements. However, both trucker categories rely on the already existing and well-developed system of dispatcher services, which apparently is becoming unified (at least, according to the truck drivers, all dispatchers are interconnected). The development of private dispatcher services has contributed even more to consolidating the truckers and making them professionally more self-contained. Freight hauling orders stopped being incidental. However, the dispatcher

service has spurred competition between "organized" drivers, who work for big trucking companies and drive vehicles provided by the employer, and "owner-operators", who use their own trucks to haul freight. In the past decade, trucking in Russia has followed general development trends, which are well known from U.S. experience—far from voluntary organization of independent drivers into small and big trucking companies (Wyckoff, 1979).

All truckers communicate regularly by portable radio using a dedicated radio frequency channel (Channel 15). This communication channel is a short-distance one (up to 1–3 km), but any driver voicing a request will shortly get a relay response from his colleagues who are hundreds and even thousands of kilometers away. Certainly, all drivers have mobile phones, but the walkie-talkie remains the most important communication tool, since it ensures all current contacts between drivers in short range of each other: they assist each other, provide advice, inform about the situation on the road, etc. (It is likely that the development of short-distance radio communications helped put a swift stop to highway robbery—the truckers learned to come to the rescue and effectively resist attacks; truckers have even posted several video clips on youtube.ru showing them fighting their pursuers and punishing the highway robbers.)

Besides Russian drivers, many men from neighboring republics are engaged in Russian trucking (although hauling has long since become international). However, there is selection by country of origin in this occupation: thus, large companies prefer to hire drivers from Belarus and Russia, but avoid engaging Ukrainians, Moldovans or citizens of other republics. The truckers themselves believe that such preferences are driven by the behavioral (moral) and psychological features specific for representatives of different nationalities. This issue remains open, since no one has yet studied it.

***The composition of contemporary otkhodniks.*** Unlike earlier, when a significant part of the otkhodniks were artisans offering self-made articles for sale, contemporary otkhodniks market products of their labor far from always. The share of artisans among otkhodniks used to be very high (see: Vorontsov, 1895; Alexandrov, 2008; Volodarsky, Istomina, 2004). Many, if not all peasant artisans were at the same time otkhodniks. Thus, according to data of the Kostroma Province Executive Board (zemskaia uprava), in 1906–1914 about 67% of all local peasant households were engaged in domestic crafts. When estimated by homestead rather than household (a homestead could house several households; the average figure was 1.33), handicrafts were practiced by 88% of all peasant homesteads (Statistical Yearbook of the Kostroma Province for 1908, 1908, pp. 21–38; *Trades and crafts in the Ko-*

*stroma Province*, 1913, pp. 24–25). These same households marketed their products themselves. For the overwhelming majority of peasant households, income from crafts and trades accounted for over half of their budget. Thus, in the Kologriv district of Kostroma Province, the share of income from trades and crafts in the family budget ranged from 52% in 1908 to 33% in 1923–24 (Statistical Yearbook, 1927, p. 32). In the Chukhloma district, well known for its *otkhodniks*, practically the total household budget relied on income from crafts and trades (see: Kazarinov, 1926, pp. 13–15). In general, according to the estimates of prof. D.I. Delarov, proceeds from crafts and trades constitute more than a quarter of the notional net income of a peasant household in the non-black earth areas of European Russia. However, he recognizes that it is impracticable to determine this figure precisely, since such earnings are much less evident than revenue from crops and animal husbandry, and the peasants do not tend to disclose them (Delarov, 1928, pp. 135–160; see also: Lenin, 1971, pp. 569–581).

Nowadays, few *otkhodniks* are marketing their own products. Among them are carpenters who build log homes, bathhouses and other wooden constructions and offer them for sale in the Moscow Region and in the regional capitals, where demand is high. As for daily household articles domestically manufactured by *otkhodniks*, part of this cottage industry has shifted to another format—the so-called "ethno-format". Currently, trendy felt shoes and boots, wicker chairs, earthenware pots, and other handicraft articles are manufactured as part of the tourist business. In some tourist locations, the number of *otkhodniks* pretending to be locals can be quite significant (for example, in the Altai area).

The majority of contemporary *otkhodniks* take up employment in industry, construction, transportation, and in security, trade, services, and domestic services. As compared to imperial times, the substance of *otkhodnik* activities has changed: from a sole proprietor (artisan), the *otkhodnik* has turned more into a wage worker. Contemporary *otkhodniks* engage in very few principal activities as compared to their predecessors. Based on a survey of over half a thousand people, we identified no more than fifteen types of activity, whereas a century ago, *otkhodniks* from every big settlement practiced up to fifty various occupations. Currently, the *otkhodniks* are mainly occupied in construction, transportation, long-haul trucking, community services (various communal services related to construction and maintenance of grounds around buildings), trade (both at market stands, and in supermarkets). The security "business" is rather popular among *otkhodniks*: in the major cities, the numerous army of office and factory security guards consists almost exclusively of *otkhodniks*. Organized groups—teams consisting of friends and relatives

(the team principle)—take up various jobs at big enterprises. Generally, such teams are engaged in non-core, unskilled operations.

Thus, contemporary otkhodniks can be classified into four major categories depending on their principal occupation: (1) carpenter-builders and industrial workers and engineers (rotation workers and former Soviet "recruits" and "shabashniks"); (2) security guards composed mostly of unskilled persons; (3) unskilled (generally) personnel in the service sector; and (4) long-haul truckers. Figure 1b presents the approximate changes in the otkhodnik population, by category. Our research focused mainly on the first two categories of otkhodniks; we made no in-depth study of activities in the service sector, and completely left out the truckers. This is mainly because only the first two categories of otkhodniks can be relatively easily reached at home due to the periodic or seasonal nature of their work. Many otkhodniks engaged in the service sector either have an irregular schedule, or spend most of the time at the workplace, as their employment is not seasonal. As for professional truckers, they have been completely left out of this research.



Photo 6. Russia even has a monument dedicated to otkhodniks. Sculpture "Seasonal worker" ("Sezonnik"), 1929, sculptor I. Shadr. The monument is erected in Lermontov Square, Moscow, at the former location of the Labour Exchange, where back in the 1920s, otkhodniks, among others, sought jobs in the capital. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich.

### 2.3. Typical features of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia

The people from traditional areas of *otkhodnichestvo* are very conservative in their selection of *otkhodnik* occupations, and this is a matter of special emphasis. Not only have contemporary *otkhodniks* "recollected" the lifestyle of their grandfathers, they have also "remembered" and reproduced the principal occupations that were common in those areas over a hundred years ago. Thus, log home building (manufacturing and transportation of log cabins) is the principal occupation of *otkhodniks* from Makaryev, Kologriv, Chukhloma, and Soligalich (Kostroma Region); whereas residents of Kasimov, Temnikov, Ardatov, and Alatyry, who previously used to hire themselves out as unskilled laborers, day workers, or barge haulers, now mostly seek employment as security guards and sales personnel.

Employment destinations are now somewhat different from a century ago, but considering the changes in the administrative-territorial division of the country, we have to state that in this respect *otkhodnichestvo* is also highly conservative. Where previously *otkhodniks* from the Trans-Volga region were "drawn" to St. Petersburg, now they are going to Moscow. However, in both cases, they aimed for the capital city. The same is true for regional centers: *otkhodniks* from district towns head for regional centers, wherever those may be. Where previously Mordovian *otkhodniks* traveled to Nizhny Novgorod, Penza, and Moscow, now they are going to Nizhny Novgorod, Syzran, and Moscow.

*Otkhodnichestvo* has expanded its geography, but no radical changes have occurred. In the 19th century, residents of Kargopol and Veliky Ustyug also used to work as servants and janitors in Kronstadt and Tiflis. Nowadays, people are still going from Temnikov to mine diamonds in Yakutia, and from Toropets and Kashin—to harvest beetroot in Krasnodar. Since during the past century, travel speeds have increased by an order of magnitude, *otkhodniks* now travel more frequently and cover greater distances. Where previously a workplace located from 100 km to 600–700 km from home meant that an *otkhodnik* would be absent from six months to a year, now a one- to two-week rotation shift would be common. However, structurally, the geography of *otkhodnichestvo* seems to have remained unchanged. Herein, we refer to our assessment as to the geography of *otkhodnichestvo* in the eastern districts of Vologda Province in the mid and late 19th century. (<http://expert.ru/expert/2011/10/neuchtennyie-potoki/>).

As previously, up to a half of all *otkhodniks* do not go far and look for jobs in the radius of 200–300 km from home. At least three quarters of all *otkhodniks* depart to destinations that are 500–800 km removed from home (nowadays, this distance can be covered by train or car in about half a day); and only about one quarter goes

away further, to places which require a significant part of the working time (about one-tenth) to be reached. The people estimate rather thoroughly and precisely the economic aspects of their hard work—not only the time outlays, but also the net earnings.

How much money does an *otkhodnik* actually bring home? In contrast to popular perception, on average, an *otkhodnik* does not bring home "big money". Earnings on the side are greatly dependent on the skill and activity. Carpenter-builders can earn up to half a million rubles during a season. Those, engaged in industry, transportation or construction earn less—from 20,000 to 50,000 rubles per month (about \$700–\$1,700), but they work almost all year round. Less skilled *otkhodniks* earn 20,000–25,000 rubles (\$700–\$900), and security guards—up to 15,000 rubles (\$500). Thus, on average, skilled *otkhodniks* earn from 300,000 to 500,000 rubles per year (\$10,000–\$17,000), and unskilled—from 150,000 to 200,000 rubles (\$5,000–\$7,000). Such earnings are generally higher than those a person would have received if he were to work in his hometown, where the wages of public sector employees do not exceed 100,000–150,000 rubles (about \$3,000–\$5,000) per year.

Therefore, currently it is worthwhile to be an *otkhodnik*, but only a high-skilled *otkhodnik* and that compared to neighbors engaged in the public sector, or unemployed. Because if you deduct the expenses that the *otkhodnik* incurs while working, the resulting amount will be far from impressive. According to our sources, despite generally miserable living conditions (except for the "North") and regardless of the *otkhodnik's* desire to save on everything and bring home as much money as possible, life in the city costs him from 5,000 to 15,000 rubles (\$150–\$500) monthly, which he covers from his average wages of 24,000 to 40,000 rubles (\$900–\$1,400). Therefore, usually he brings home about 20,000–25,000 rubles (\$700–\$900) monthly, rather than the 50,000–70,000 rubles (\$1,700–\$2,500) that he mentions.

What awaits the *otkhodnik* at home? Here he has his family, household, and neighbors. And he intends to spend his earnings on the children, house, household needs, and leisure. These are the four main items of essential and conspicuous expenses that the *otkhodnik* spends all his earnings on. The expense structure in *otkhodnik* families can differ significantly from that in the families of public sector employees or pensioners. By this criterion, the *otkhodniks* stand apart from their neighbors, thus triggering their envy and hostile attitude. In general, however, the *otkhodniks* have normal, good relations with their neighbors; the neighbors have long since understood how hard the work of an *otkhodnik* is, and envy is wrapped in compas-

sion. Besides, the neighbors do not observe the otkhodnik's conspicuous consumption, so there is less reason for them to be jealous.

As for the otkhodnik's actual social status, it is not an object of envy for the neighbors. Often, in the local community, an otkhodnik has no access to resources that are available to a public sector employee, especially a civil servant (bureaucrat). We believe the underlying reason is the "isolation" of such people from the state (Plusnin, 1999). The municipal and local government authorities do not "notice" these people either as labor resources or as part of the population entitled to social security and public benefits. A significant part of the otkhodniks work informally and provide services bypassing the state. The state does not partake of the fruits of their labor. Their travels between cities and regions cannot be tracked. They are uncontrolled, "unregistered", and "unenserved".

Assuming that all but two-fifths of all Russian families are engaged in otkhodnichestvo, the scope of their productive activity, "invisible" for the state (and therefore "shadow"), must be enormous; this has been established by many sociological and economic studies (refer to: Maleva, 1998; Radaev, 1999; Ryvkina, 1999; Barsukova, 2000, 2003, 2004; Sinyavskaya, 2005; *Non-standard employment...*, 2006; Barsukova, Radaev, 2010; *Society and economy*, 2010; Chepurenskiy, 2010 and 2014; Barsukova and Radaev, 2012; *In the shadow of regulation*, 2014).

However, does the state actually need this "invisible giant"? Practically left out of all public social security programs, and beyond the control of the government, it is also excluded from political activity. Although the otkhodniks take part in the "electoral process", they are ultimately of no interest to the authorities, who treat them as unimportant political subjects. The otkhodnik stands too much apart from the local authorities. His only value for them translates into the share of grants and subsidies the local administration receives to perform their functions, as such receivables are determined based on the number of residents. Therefore, the otkhodnik is useful for the authorities only as a demographic unit due to the "per capita share". Apparently, he brings home lots of money, thus raising the purchasing power of the population and stimulating the local economy. Usually, this is the only argument in favor of the otkhodnik. However, is this important for the local administration?

Thus, we are facing the "invisibility" paradox of contemporary otkhodnichestvo—a widespread phenomenon developing right next to us. However, the existence of otkhodnichestvo as a fact of social life requires considering not only the economic, but also the social and political implications it can have or already has. What are the actual and potential effects of otkhodnichestvo? We will try to provide an an-

swer by taking a close look at this phenomenon—as if from within, largely through the eyes of the otkhodniks themselves.

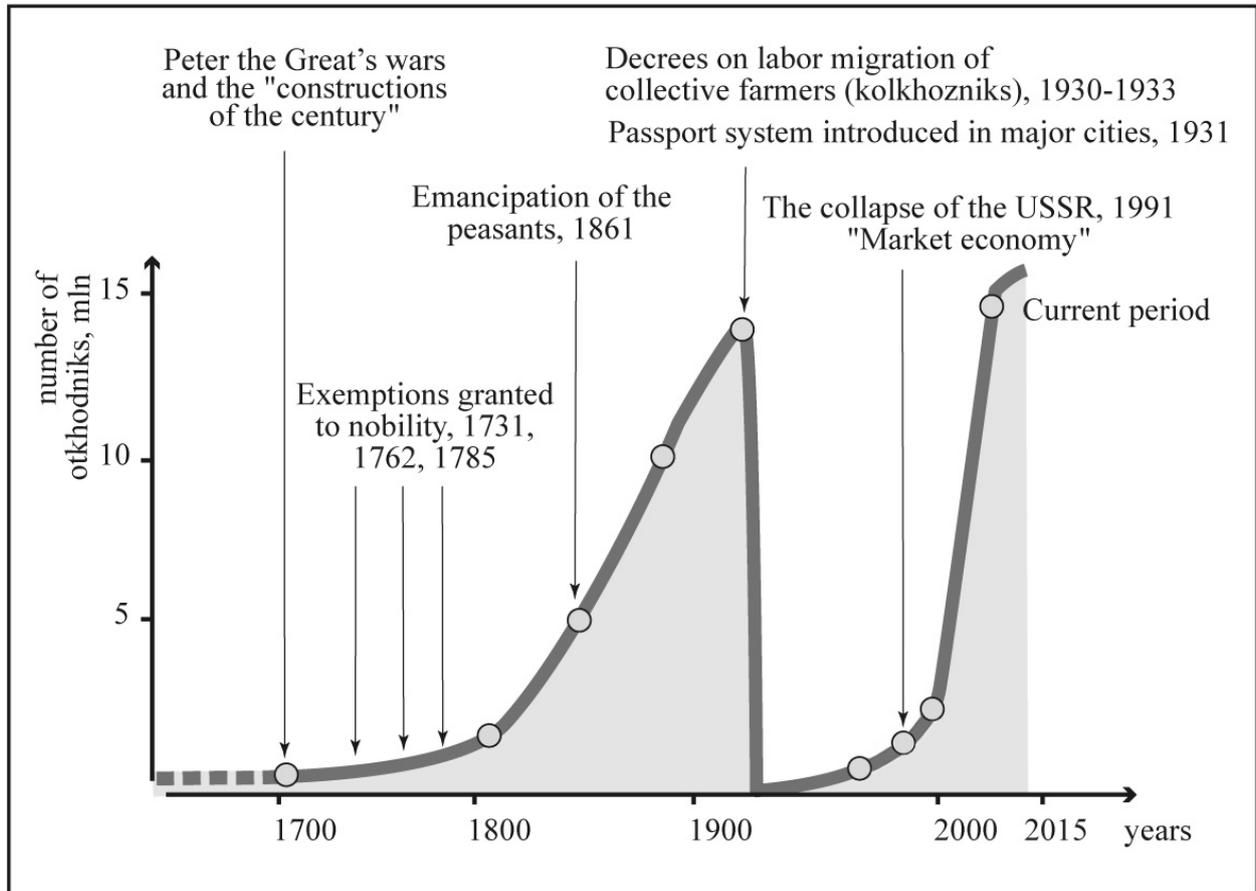


Fig. 1a. The evolution of Russian otkhodnichestvo in the Imperial, Soviet, and current (post-Soviet) period. The changes in the number of otkhodniks since the beginning of the 17th century are provided according to the estimates of different authors mentioned herein (marked as dots on the curve). The timeline shows the major political and economic events, which various researchers consider to be the drivers of otkhodnichestvo. For explanations see the text above.

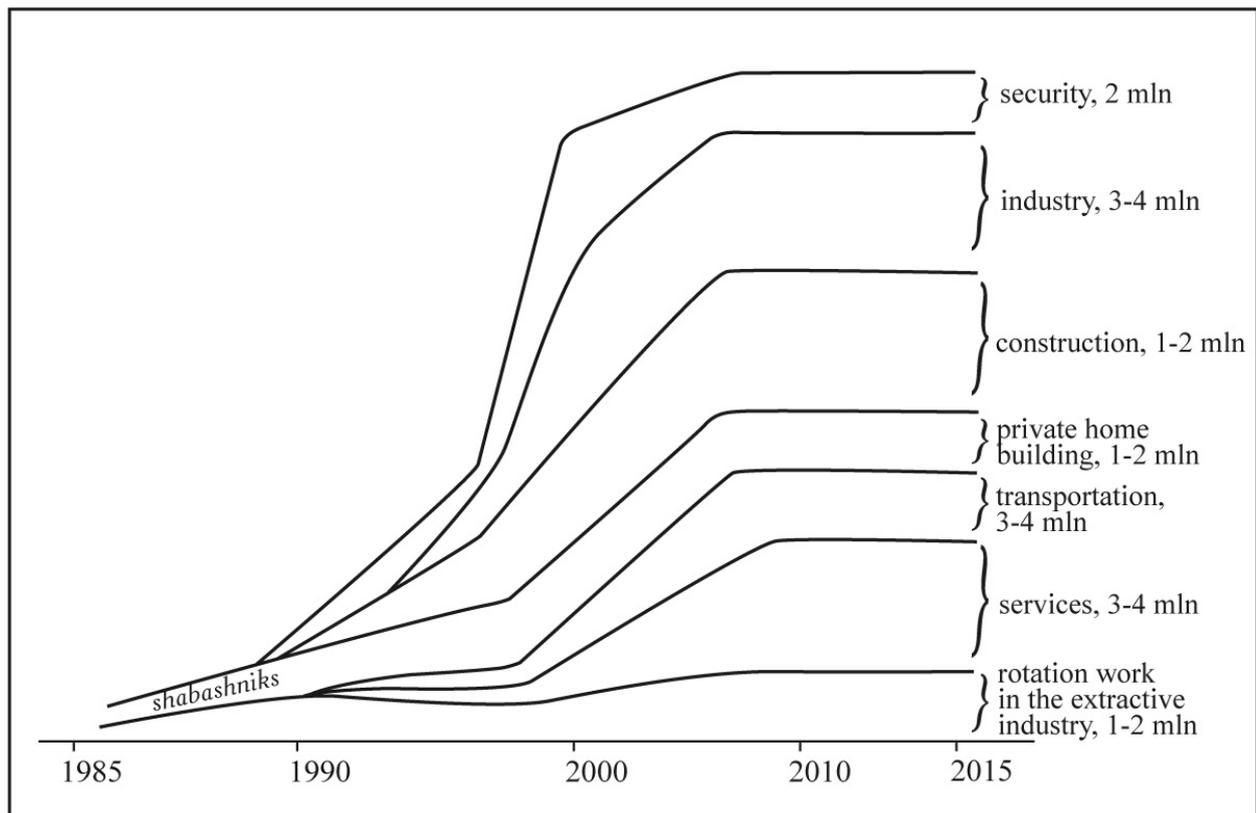


Fig. 1b. The composition of otkhodniks and its current dynamics. For explanations see the text above. The estimates of the total otkhodnik population are substantiated in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 3

### A study of contemporary otkhodnichestvo

- *...Hey, what's that you're doin', an opinion poll or what? Or studying something?*
- *Well, yes. We are conducting research.*
- *Conducting what?*
- *Research. It's not an opinion poll as such, it's just a conversation.*
- *I aint' got nothin' to hide. I didn't pinch anything from anyone. What else do you want to know?*<sup>25</sup>

The senior of the authors has been studying contemporary otkhodnichestvo for quite a few years (*see, e.g.*, Plusnin, 1995; 1997a; 1999; 2001, 2006, and 2007); however, research was primarily limited to recording this phenomenon. Observations were mostly situational, and minor importance was attached to otkhodnichestvo when describing new subsistence patterns, which were emerging in the 1990s.

It was only in 2006 that the phenomenon of otkhodnichestvo started gradually shifting to the focus of our attention. Under the guidance of professor Simon Kordonsky, the Laboratory for Local Administration at the Higher School of Economics developed and carried out a series of targeted educational and scientific expeditions aimed at studying the relations between the population and the local authorities (*see: Kordonsky et al., 2011*). As a result, arrays of interviews and field notes started accumulating in the laboratory's electronic database. They all contained information about widespread otkhodnichestvo in Russia, the scope of which was not only comparable, but as we now believe, by far exceeded cross-border labor migration from the former Soviet republics. As evidence was building up, we attempted to engage various public and private funds in the research of otkhodnichestvo. However, until recently we failed to enlist their support, so all research was carried out on our own initiative and at our own expense with the resulting fragmentary nature of what we managed to achieve.

In the meantime, we succeeded in obtaining certain materials describing otkhodnichestvo specific for groups of highly skilled professionals, and secured data on new regions generating wandering workers. Fieldwork carried out by Y.D. Zausaeva in 2009–2010 in Chistiye Bory of Kostroma Region, where the construction site (mothballed in 1996) of the Kostroma nuclear power plant is located, provided evi-

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25 Interview with otkhodnik Igor K. working as security guard; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

dence on *otkhodnichestvo* among highly skilled builders (Zausaeva, 2011). Field research carried out by J.M. Plusnin in 2010–2011 identified new territorial sources of *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia's east, in Kamchatka and Eastern Siberia, where previously, at the time of the Russian Empire and during the Soviet era, such form of labor migration was not observed among the local population.

Finally, after three to four years of ever more focused research of the phenomenon, in 2011 we obtained financing for sociological fieldwork from two funds at the same time: Khamovniki Foundation for Social Research and the Russian Foundation for Humanities. This enabled us to engage 14 young researchers, and in the period from April 2011 through September 2012, we arranged and carried out fieldwork in 16 regions of Russia. We interviewed wandering workers and their family members in 33 localities—small towns and townships serving as district centers, several villages, and six regional centers.

We spent over two years preparing our findings for publication, and all this time we were continuously expanding the list of regions and localities by our observations of *otkhodnichestvo*. Thus, we collected data on wandering workers in another five regions and fifteen localities. Finally, under a new project sponsored by the Khamovniki Foundation, we obtained new evidence in 37 towns and villages located in 17 municipal and urban districts of 8 Russian regions. The project was led by one of the co-authors and focused on establishing the social portrait of the contemporary Russian *otkhodnik* (project of N.N. Zhidkevich, *The social portrait of the contemporary Russian otkhodnik*, 2012–2013). The findings have been included mostly in chapters 5 and 8. Additional materials on *otkhodniks* were also collected in 2012–2013 under another project supported by the Khamovniki Foundation and led by A.A. Pozanenko, *The social structure of local communities territorially isolated from public authorities*. During 2014, we continuously collected information on *otkhodniks* from all available sources. Thus, by the time the book was ready for publication, the amount of collected materials devoted to Russian *otkhodnichestvo* was rather extensive, as presented on the map in Fig. 2 and the list of locations in Table 1 supplementing the map (see below). The additional observations did not add quality; however, they reconfirmed the scope and intensity of this up to now latent phenomenon. The facts and findings accumulated by the researchers were more than sufficient to attempt the first monographic description of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia.

### 3.1. Research methodology requirements

The specific nature of the target of our research requires customized methodology. Wandering workers have two key features: they are "invisible" to the authorities<sup>26</sup> and they "elude" registration both in places of their permanent residence and there, where they find work. Besides, they are very irregularly distributed across the territory (in neighboring towns the percentage of active population engaged in *otkhodnichestvo* may differ vastly). Due to the above, the research methodology was necessarily based on qualitative analysis; and the principal methods we used to collect field data were direct observations in the regions where *otkhodniki* reside, and interviews with them.

In fact, when conducting our research we could rely neither on Rosstat data (*see, e.g.,* The Demographic Yearbook of Russia), nor on "municipal statistics". At present, no national or local records whatsoever are kept of such a "social and professional" group as the *otkhodniki*.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, municipal statistics as such are non-existent in Russia (Kordonsky and Plusnin, 2011); on the other hand, this category of the population is of no interest to the municipal authorities as an object of governance.<sup>28</sup> Below are some typical quotes from interviews with representatives of the local authorities and government statistics agencies:

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26 *See, e.g.,* the admission of a vice-premier of the Russian Government about the "loss" of 38 million people out of 86 million population of working age in Russia made at the April Conference of the Higher School of Economics (National Research University) on 3 April 2013 ([www.hse.ru/news/extraordinary/79252003.html](http://www.hse.ru/news/extraordinary/79252003.html)).

27 As opposed to the far more accurate registration of *otkhodniki* in the imperial and early Soviet period, when the number of passports and "leave" permits (usually issued to the peasants immediately prior to their departure for work away from home) served as the principal and most reliable indicator of the scope of *otkhodnichestvo* (Vladimirsky, 1927; *see also* his references on page 73 and further to the findings of Y. Krzhivoblotsky, N. Vorobiev, and L. Mints, and data of the Kostroma Province Statistical Committee for 1872 and 1875). Departures without passports or permits were rare, and the share of passports issued for foreign travel to resorts was minor. Thus, in 1900 our model Kostroma Province had over 510,600 inhabitants (according to the census of (peasant) households conducted in 1897–1905), and the number of passports issued approximated 210,000. This means that 41% of the population, or practically all adult males, received passports for the purpose of leaving for seasonal work (*see: Vladimirsky, 1927, p. 12, p. 73*). A.K. Baiburin studied the history of the passport system in Russia. According to his findings, the scale of *otkhodnichestvo* in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century is extremely impressive: in 1911, the authorities issued about 11 million "passport books" only for foreign travel (Baiburin, 2009). The majority of "ordinary" annual passports for internal travel within the empire were issued to peasants seeking seasonal work away from home.

28 We consider this disputable statement further in Chapter 7.

"When asked whether any attempts had been made to assess the number of local *otkhodniks*, the respondent answered: "What for? They are of no interest to us."<sup>29</sup>

"We know that some people regularly leave for two-week shifts but we have no idea how many are actually involved. I don't even know how to keep track of this. Probably, it can be recorded as the difference between labor resources and the number of those employed. However, this can include housewives or somebody else... The above difference totals three thousand people. But it can also include able-bodied students. No, folks, we don't have such statistics. Probably, such records are kept somewhere else."<sup>30</sup>

Due to the above reasons, it is practically impossible to use quantitative analysis for such research. All our "records" are based on expert assessments or indirect estimates.

The second reason mentioned above—the uneven territorial distribution of wandering workers—also requires a qualitative approach. This irregularity has historical and economic roots. Previously, the extent to which the population of different provinces (*guberniya*) was engaged in seasonal work depended primarily on the following factors: diverse land use conditions; widespread transition of the landowners to the quitrent system; and the extent to which workers were recruited to the "major construction sites" of the 18th-19th centuries, which varied from province to province. Nowadays, the scope of engagement in *otkhodnichestvo* varies from region to region mainly due to the different development of the local labor market. Besides, *otkhodnik* families can be distributed extremely unevenly even across one town, and usually they are known only to their neighbors. Therefore, under such conditions, it is too costly (at least) and often senseless to conduct a routine sociological survey (*see, e.g.,* Varshavskaya, Donova, 2013). The search for *otkhodniks* has to be individually customized, and this also determines the specifics of the methods involved.

In our research, we applied the qualitative methodology in line with the now well established and traditional sociological approach (*see, e.g.,* Garfinkle, 1984; Ragin, Becker, eds, 1992; Schuetz, 1994; King, Keohane, Verba, 1994; Weisberg, Krosnick and Bowen, 1996; Becker, 1998; Campbell, Russo, 1998; Kovalyov and Steinberg, 1999; Shanin, 1999; Patton, 2001; George and Barnett, 2005; Bailey, 2006). We have been also developing and successfully applying this methodology for quite some time (*see:* Plusnin, 1997a, 2001, 2007; Plusnin, Kordonsky, and Skalon, 2009; Kordonsky et al., 2010 and 2011).

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29 Report by Y.D. Zausaeva and A.A. Baidakova on interviews with representatives of the municipal administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

30 Interview with I.V. Krasenko, head of the economic department, urban district administration; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

Structural and functional analysis was the second methodological approach that we purposefully used to study *otkhodnichestvo*.<sup>31</sup> To understand and describe the phenomenon of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*, it is necessary to analyze its economic and social functions, as well as the *otkhodniks'* place in the social and political structure of the society. Therefore, we designed integrated research procedures, where every specific interview pinpointed the *otkhodnik's* status; his/her place in the social and professional structure of the local community and the outside world (employment destinations); the functions that the *otkhodnik* performed as a member of the local community, and which resulted from his/her self-employment and development of necessary professional skills (see also: *Rethinking social...* 2004; Rubin and Rubin, 2004).

Thus, the range of research methods was determined by the methodology of qualitative structural and functional analysis and included two core methods—observation and interviewing—and a number of customized methods, some of which were developed in the process of research. Sometimes, a specific method emerged incidentally "on the spot".

### 3.2. Research methods

Research procedures primarily include first hand observations in small towns and interviews with wandering workers (*otkhodniks*), their family members and neighbors—local inhabitants who are aware of this type of activity.

#### *Observations*

Any qualitative research is based primarily on observation, which is then supplemented by other methods (*see, e.g.,* Yin, 2002; Abbott, 2004; Kordonsky et al., 2011). We duly focused on it. Goals of observation as a method are always specific of the target and the subject matter and therefore correlate with the goals of the research as such. We performed observations in order to identify wandering workers in a specific location and describe their characterological features—professional, domestic, social and psychological—which would allow differentiating them from other social and professional groups. We also aimed to observe and record the environment and everyday life of the *otkhodniks* and their families. It is difficult, al-

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31 We avoid the term "system approach" as it is overused, and often inappropriately. However, in fact, our conclusions from studying the social and political aspects of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* are based exactly on our understanding of the system nature of this phenomenon. Just like the *otkhodnichestvo* of the second half of the 19th century, the new *otkhodnichestvo* in post-Soviet Russia became an attribute (i.e., the most important, generic, determining feature) of the socio-economic system, although many sociologists and economists do not recognize this or are not prepared to acknowledge it.

most impossible, to get such details from interviews, as the respondents are often reluctant to share such information.

Observations can be either of a stochastic, or systematic (driven by a pre-set observation pattern) nature. We applied both approaches. They were not formalized, i.e. we did not pre-determine the behavior patterns and types of behavioral activity to be observed, and we did not register our observations in the form of an ethogram, customary for classic observations of human behavior (*e.g.*, Heymer, 1977; *Praktikum der Verhaltensforschung*, 1978; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989, pp. 107–112) or for observation techniques during field ethnological practices (Woolcott, 1995; Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater, 2002, pp. 217–292).

We relied on direct observation (Altman, Chemers, 1980; Denzin, 1988; *Data collection*, 1997; Gladwell, 2005), which is rather simple in terms of methodology (although it requires sound technical skills). Throughout the whole period of field-work, the observers kept daily records in the form of field notes, where they described (in free form) their search for otkhodniks, meetings with them, their behavior patterns, appearance, resulting information, and all their own actions as researchers.

The search for otkhodniks and subsequent attempts to meet and interview them may well be the toughest challenge we faced. Following is a typical situation encountered in the Kargopol district of Arkhangelsk Region and described in our field notes. It illustrates how difficult the search for otkhodniks is:

"We found the otkhodniks as follows. We bumped into one of them while making a round of three-storey buildings, and we were tipped about the others. One otkhodnik was indicated by a fellow villager, the other—by an acquaintance, and the third—by his neighbors. One otkhodnik is currently moving from Usachevskaya village and building himself a house in Kargopol. The other lives in a three-storey apartment house, and the third one—in a two-storey barrack-like wooden building which had been capitally renovated. The fourth otkhodnik comes from Oshevensk (official name—Shiryaikha) village of Kargopol district, which he now visits very rarely. He is employed by a company located in Ustyansk district, and when he visits Kargopol, he stays with his sister in a two-storey wooden building.

Once we got the address of a young man from Kargopol who was allegedly planning to leave temporarily for work elsewhere (we got the tip from his neighbors). However, he was not home. The other time, we obtained the address of a more mature otkhodnik who was engaged in building log cabins. He came from Usachevskaya but was currently residing in Kargopol (the information was provided by businessman Samylov from KAP Ltd.). We could not locate him either. We got the names of several more otkhodniks (up to five), however we did not manage to get their contact details. In one case, the son of otkhodniks from Usachevskaya concealed from us his parents' occupation. Similarly, the parents of a young girl working supposedly in Arkhangelsk withheld this information. Probably, the girl had simply moved and was not engaged in otkhodnichestvo.

We questioned five people on the street and in shops (three men and two women). Of them, one woman had never heard about otkhodniks, and the others were aware of them but could not give us any contact details. Curiously, one of them, a very elderly man, used to be a sha-

bashnik. Originally, he came from Ukraine. He had been recruited, and from the beginning of the 1970s came every spring to Kargopol district (for about 20 years) to build cowsheds. Finally, he moved there altogether, and settled down in his wife's hometown. Recently, he became a Russian citizen, which was far from easy. According to him, many former shabashniks reside in Kargopol."<sup>32</sup>

The procedure of direct observation is described in detail in our article (Kordonsky et al., 2011). Field notes served as a basis for analytical reports prepared following every expedition.

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32 A.A. Pozanenko. Report on the expedition to Kargopol district (Arkhangelsk Region) on 22–26 March 2012.



Photo 7. Jotting down the observations and conversation (where the interview was taken without a recorder) immediately on the spot. Perm Territory, October 2011. Photo by Artemy Pozanenko.

### *Interviews*

Interviews focusing on contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* were the second, more detailed source of information on *otkhodniks* and their activities. The interviews were

structured along several basic lines of research; and they were taken on the respondent's territory in the form of an open conversation. However, the search for a potential respondent could be exhausting and often unsuccessful, as evidenced by the report fragment quoted above. Moreover, even if a suitable person was found, there was absolutely no guarantee that he or she would be prepared to give an interview. As the *otkhodniki* are often economically active in the "shadow" sector of the economy, many of them are reluctant to discuss these matters even with their neighbors, to say nothing of "suspicious" researchers. Sometimes, a person who was indicated to us as an *otkhodnik* did not admit this fact to us. In those cases no interview could be taken. Some of the less experienced project participants regularly encountered problems with people refusing to talk, however, we (the authors) were almost always successful in this respect.

Although the interviews were conducted in absolutely free form, we followed a routine technology (see: Denzin, 1988; Campbell and Jean Russo, 1998; Patton, 2001; Rubin and Rubin, 2004). The interview covered six topics, and the questionnaire used by the interviewer included about 50 questions mandatory for discussion. We did not show the questionnaire to the respondent. According to the project plan, we study *otkhodnichestvo* along six lines, which include the following aspects: historic, economic, psychological, social, political, and local (or municipal) administration.

Under the historic aspect, we identified what the respondents knew about the forms and destinations of *otkhodnichestvo*, which used to exist in their region, and assessed the integrity of such knowledge. Here are some questions from this block: "Did any of your ancestors (parents, grandparents, etc.) or relatives engage in temporary work far away from home?"; "Do you know that before the 1930s (or before the revolution) this phenomenon was also widespread in your area?"

The economic aspect was the key part of the interview. It included several blocks of questions, such as:

(A) Job seeking and underlying reasons to become an *otkhodnik*. Examples: "What was the decisive factor which made you seek an outside job for the first time? When was it?"; "How did you find the job in another town?"

(B) Employment destinations and time frames. Questions: "Where do you work territorially (in what town, area)?"; "From what other regions do people work at your employment destination?"; "What months do you usually spend working away from home?"

(C) Types and forms of outside occupations. Questions: "What do you work as? Is your work in line with your education? If it is not, how did you learn the trade in

which you are currently engaged?"; "How long is your working day? Do you work every day or do you get days off?"; "How do you prefer to spend your leisure, if you have any free time?"

(D) Competition and cooperation. Working environment. Questions: "Do you travel by car/bus/train/otherwise from home to your place of work?"; "Do you travel alone or with a group of acquaintances/neighbors/relatives?"; "Do you encounter competition from workers coming from other regions or from former Soviet republics (Tajiks, Uzbeks, others)?"; "Do you stay in touch with the people with whom you worked together (those who came from other regions)? Did you establish any strong relations with them during your work?"

(E) Remuneration. Questions: "According to you, what level of remuneration would be sufficient to keep people working in their home town/village?"; "How much higher are your outside wages than those that you (could have) earned in your home town/village?"

(F) Living conditions at the employment location. Questions: "How do you live at your employment location?"; "What housing do you rent?"; "Where and how do you eat, launder your clothes, etc.?"

(G) Security and social guarantees provided by the employer. Questions: "Are you employed formally or informally?"; "Have you ever been cheated? Have you encountered criminal behavior? Did you ever have to seek protection from gangsters (provided by other gangsters or informally by law enforcers)?"; "Do you have any problems with the police? If you do, how do you resolve them?"; "If needed, how do you get medical aid at the workplace? Does your employer assist you in any way?"; "How do you remit your earnings?"

(H) Allocation of income from *otkhodnichestvo*. Questions: "In what way and how often do you transfer/remit money to your family?"; "What are your outside earnings mainly used for?"

Under the psychological aspect of the interview, we tried to find out the respondent's attitude to his/her way of life, and obtain his/her assessment of its challenges, opportunities and prospects. To a large extent, we did not clarify this aspect by posing direct questions. Instead, the interviewer recorded his/her observations describing the behavior and emotional state of the respondent, as well as the way he/she reacted to various external stimuli. The central issue was the respondent's self-assessment of how strenuous it was psychologically to live and work away from the family on a regular and extended basis: "How much time do you spend away from home altogether?", "How do you spend your leisure, if any?", "Can you afford to take a vacation (go somewhere for vacation)?"

The social aspect, like the economic one, included numerous questions united into several blocks:

(A) Family. The questions were aimed to identify the relations in the otkhodnik's family; the attitude of family members to his/her occupation; the occupation of the spouse; the upbringing and education of children. Examples: "Do the wives work away from home? If they do, where do they go and what do they work as? Who looks after the children in that case?"; "In what way and how often do you keep in touch with the family during your absence?"; "How big is your family? Do you help your children/grandchildren? How do you help?"; "Do any of your children also engage in otkhodnichestvo?"

(B) Relatives and neighbors. Relations with them; mutual support and assistance, if any; envy or disapproval manifested by the neighbors or relatives. Teams of otkhodniks consisting of relatives—respective advantages and benefits. "Are there cases of envy/disapproval manifested by neighbors who do not engage in otkhodnichestvo?"

(C) Local community. Relations with people in the hometown; the otkhodnik's status in the community; an estimate of the percentage of such people in town. Examples: "Do you want to move from this place? Do you want your children to stay and live here?", "How do people who do not engage in otkhodnichestvo make a living? What are your relations with them? Do they differ from you in any way?", "What is your estimate of the percentage of the male population of your settlement who engage in otkhodnichestvo?"

The political aspect of the interview covers the interaction of this category of the population with the authorities; their exposure to administrative actions that the otkhodniks require or avoid. Usually, our respondents are rather reluctant to discuss such matters; therefore, the conversation does not focus on them.

On the contrary, the local administrative aspect (matters of municipal life) is rather important for the otkhodniks, specifically in the context of them being "invisible" to the authorities, which can result in their "dropping out" of the local political life. "Do you vote?", "Do you feel any changes in the life of your settlement resulting from local elections?"

An interview could last from several minutes (10–15) to one or two hours (under favorable conditions). The duration depended on external and internal factors, such as emerging circumstances, distraction by other people, respondent's lack of time or his/her unexpected refusal to talk, etc.). On average, an interview lasted from 40 minutes to an hour. Some respondents (about 150 people) were not otkhodniks themselves; however, they knew about this form of activity as they were either

relatives or neighbors of otkhodniks; or as representatives of the local authorities, they had access to municipal records of the population's economic activity. All such respondents provided various information about otkhodnichestvo as "external observers".



Photo 8. A routine interview with otkhodniks held in the form of a casual conversation, which is often triggered by the researchers' sincere interest in the household and economic practices and hobbies of these people. The location is the bank of the Mezen River where the respondent is preparing his boat for fishing by pouring tar into hull cracks. Smolenets village not far from Leshukonskoye, Arkhangelsk Region, July 2006. Photo courtesy of A.V. Yermeev.

### ***Comparative historical analysis***

Our work plan included performing a comparative analysis of contemporary otkhodnichestvo with the classical one that lasted until the beginning of the 1930s. For this purpose, we searched local archives for sources of information on otkhodniks of the 18th -19th centuries. Extremely valuable in terms of information on otkhodnichestvo in the 19th–beginning of the 20th century was the unique archive of the museum in Kologriv, Kostroma Region<sup>33</sup>. We worked with the documents of

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33 This specific archive is distinguished by a wealth of local and provincial materials, including manuscripts. It also contains several dozens of magazines dating back to the 19th century. Among other sources, the archive is based on the extensive private library of G.A. Ladyzhensky, painter and founder of the local museum. The reason why so many documents remained intact is due to the fact that twice in history the directors of the Kologriv archive

this archive and collected respective information in May, August, October and December of 2011, and also in May-September 2012. Professional historians, students and postgraduate students—together 11 people—were involved in this work.

The search procedure provided for a consistent and complete review of all available archived statistical documents, analytical reports and scientific publications. The reports of the provincial statistical committee and district municipal councils were studied in detail. We also looked through certain magazines, paying special attention to *Otechestvennye Zapiski* from 1822 onwards. We studied the bulk of materials archived in depositories 3 and 4; identified all available sources of statistical and historic information on *otkhodniks*, dating primarily back to the end of the 19th–beginning of the 20th centuries. We copied all relevant documents. The obtained archive materials enabled us to perform a comparative historical analysis of the old "classical" *otkhodnichestvo* and its contemporary version.

### ***Customized methods***

We developed certain customized research methods "on the spot" while searching for and observing *otkhodniks*. In a situation where the observation target is difficult to locate and "elusive", the researcher should use any method, which serves to register and describe it. We succeeded in developing two specific methods for recording *otkhodniks* "on location", there, where they permanently reside. In one case, we performed "sagittal mapping" of all *otkhodnik* families living in one street; in the other case, we used school class registers [or interviewed homeroom teachers (sometimes all of them, like in Kasimov)] to determine the percentage of *otkhodniks* among families with schoolchildren.

***Information on otkhodniks from school class registers.*** We stumbled upon this methodology also incidentally. While visiting schools and interviewing teachers who served as local experts, we found out that school records on the occupation of the schoolchildren's parents could be a source of information on *otkhodniks*. Although the records in class registers are confidential, the teachers and administrators themselves told us to extract data on the engagement of parents in *otkhodnichestvo*. The class teachers proved to be much better informed about the nature and scope of *otkhodnichestvo* in their hometown than the municipal authorities. They are aware

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failed to obey orders to transfer their collection to other archives: back in the imperial times—to the archive of the Kostroma Province, and in the middle of the 20th century—to the archive of the Kostroma Region. In 1984, the regional archive, which was located in a church, burned out completely. The fire destroyed the documents of all districts of the Kostroma Region. However, the Kologriv archive remained intact, and it is still located on the ground floor of the two-storey stone building housing the museum. The building is also famous for the fact that it was initially built as a train station for the non-existent railway.

of the phenomenon of *otkhodnichestvo*, and often note specifically whether the parents of their pupils have jobs away from home. In three towns, we selected several schools where we reviewed all class registers (forms 1 through 11). This helped us clarify the data on *otkhodnichestvo* in families with schoolchildren. As the share of families with schoolchildren is usually known, the obtained results can be extrapolated to derive the total number of *otkhodnik* families. It should be noted that the resulting estimate would be understated, as parents of schoolchildren are less likely to become *otkhodniks* than those with grown-up children or childless couples.

***"Sagittal mapping"***. We selected a street that crossed the whole town (split the town sagittally); usually this was the central and longest street with both private and apartment houses. Starting from building number one on the selected street, we knocked on the door of every apartment and homestead asking their owners whether they themselves or their neighbors were engaged in any outside jobs. We registered those buildings and apartments that housed *otkhodniks* and marked them on the street plan. Thus, in one to two days we managed to map all families with *otkhodniks* in the street. Such information gives at least an approximate estimate (the order of magnitude) of the share of families in town who are engaged in *otkhodnichestvo*. As we did not select this method initially but developed it in the course of research, sagittal mapping was performed in several towns only and its findings are still of an occasional, supplementary nature. Still, the obtained results are indicative.



Photo 9. When searching for *otkhodniks*, we had to question passersby in the street. Their tips and suggestions provided the addresses of the first *otkhodniks* who then redirected us further to their acquaintances. We thus applied the "snowball" method. The photo shows Irina Popova, a volunteer interviewer, contacting a local resident in the town of Nerekhta in Kostroma Region; November 2010. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich.

### 3.3. Fieldwork findings: description

The plan of our regular fieldwork devoted to *otkhodnichestvo* included investigating about ten small towns in five regions of the European part of Russia. We selected those regions where *otkhodniks* were available historically, i.e. in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The purpose was to perform a comparative analysis of the economic behavior of classical and contemporary *otkhodniks* in view of more than half a century separating them (from the early 1930s to the early 1990s). It is a known fact that in the second half of the 19th century, the Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Vologda, Tver, Novgorod, Smolensk, south of the Arkhangelsk and part of the Moscow Provinces (Gubernii) were centers of mass temporary domestic peasant migration due to unfavorable agricultural conditions and overpopulation (Mints, 1927). The Kostroma Region was selected as a pilot region for two reasons: well-developed contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*, and the opportunity to perform a comparative historical analysis of *otkhodnichestvo* using materials of the Kologriv archive.

The towns were selected on the basis of complementary pairs: in every region we aimed to find one or two pairs of closely located towns where the level of the population's engagement in *otkhodnichestvo* in the 19th-early 20th centuries differed significantly. Evidently, this assumption is relative, and it is difficult to select a pair of polar towns based on this criterion. Nevertheless, we were aware of several towns at least in the pilot Kostroma Region, which significantly differed by the extent of the population's engagement in *otkhodnichestvo*, namely: Nerekhta, Buy, Galich, Chukhloma and Soligalich, partly Kologriv (see: Vladimirsky, 1927, p. 77 et seq.). Compared to them, the other towns were far less "externally oriented". The tentative town pairs were as follows: Kologriv and Makaryev, Chukhloma and Soligalich (Kostroma Region), Toropets and Velizh (Tver and Smolensk Regions), Kargopol and Nyandoma (Arkhangelsk Region), Temnikov and Ardatov (Republic of Mordovia).

Reality forced us to adjust our plans. On the one hand, we had to give up our idea to investigate the towns pairwise, as the assumption about their polarity did not prove to be correct. However, we retained the pairs of closely located towns, and carried out our expeditions according to this itinerary. On the other hand, we managed to investigate more regions and towns than initially planned. Since instead of ten months, our fieldwork lasted over four years, its geography broadened and even extended to the some regions of the Far East, Siberia, and the south of European Russia. Altogether, we carried out research in 40 regions of Russia:

- Republics: Altai, Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Karelia, Mordovia, Tatarstan, Chuvashia, and Yakutia
- Territories: Altai, Trans-Baikal, Kamchatka, Perm, Primorye, and Khabarovsk
- Regions: Arkhangelsk, Vladimir, Volgograd, Vologda, Voronezh, Ivanovo, Irkutsk, Kaluga, Kirov, Kostroma, Kursk, Leningrad, Moscow, Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Orel, Penza, Pskov, Ryazan, Saratov, Sverdlovsk, Smolensk, Tver, and Yaroslavl.

We obtained materials from 77 small towns, settlements and villages, which have the status of district centers; and from an additional 15 big settlements (besides several dozen small villages) within the districts, where core research was conducted. Besides, occasional, often incidental observations and assessments were carried out in several more dozens of localities; however, we included them in the general list, as the obtained materials support the findings of targeted research. Some data was also collected in the regional centers (in Kostroma, Saransk, Perm, Izhevsk, and Vladimir). The town of Kologriv has a special status for us as the center of our archive research. We visited it several times to interview *otkhodniks* and also to work in the museum archive with historical documents pertaining to *otkhodnich-*

estvo in the 18th-early 20th centuries. Thus, depending on the level of research, we have classified all surveyed localities into three categories:

- (1) Principal towns where we conducted focused research of otkhodnichestvo, performed observations, interviewed people, and collected local statistics; a total of 37 localities, of them 31 district administrative center
- (2) Towns of the "second range" where we performed focused observations, conducted occasional interviews, and sporadically collected statistical data—a total of 55 localities, of them 46 district administrative centers
- (3) Additional towns of the "third range" where we obtained occasional or even incidental information about otkhodnichestvo when visiting them in different years, not necessarily in the course of fieldwork—a total of 64 localities, of them 61 district administrative center.

All three categories are listed in Table 1, which is aligned with the map in Fig. 2. Table 2 provides a more detailed overview of the interviews taken. The list of the small towns and districts is split into two groups. The first group includes targeted areas of research. The second group includes areas, which were not initially selected for the research of otkhodnichestvo, but where we nevertheless performed observations, interviewed respondents, and communicated with the residents. There we only assessed the potential of otkhodnichestvo based on general information from the respondents. Some localities within this group had been visited in the course of other research projects, and the information on otkhodniks was a "by-product". In addition, we have split all interviews into two categories. First, we have indicated all interviews and conversations with local residents held in a given area at different times (and in the course of different expeditions). Second, we have indicated the number of interviews with otkhodniks and other competent people, i.e., only those where we obtained sufficiently detailed information about the local otkhodniks. Some localities listed in Table 1 are not included in Table 2; this means that we performed only observations, had occasional conversations in the street or in organizations, and made very rough estimates as to the scope of otkhodnichestvo in the given area.

Evidently, the locations where we took interviews are not representative of the entire Russian society; this is clearly visible on the map in Fig. 2. For the reasons indicated above, we are not able to perform a quantitative (analytical) sociological research of otkhodnichestvo. However, the general picture emerged quite distinctly. Therefore, we consider our conclusions reasonable.

Thus, all in all, our field research of otkhodnichestvo lasted five full years—from 2010 through 2014. During this period, we carried out 24 separate expeditions focused on studying contemporary otkhodnichestvo.

Table 1

List of towns and settlements where we conducted research and/or performed observations of otkhodnichestvo in different years\*

| <b>Principal, "first range" towns</b>                           | <b>"Second range" towns</b>                         | <b>Additional "third range" towns</b>             |
|---|---|---|
| Alatyr  | Bezhetsk  | Aldan   |
| Ardatov (Republic of Mordovia)**                                | Bikin   | Artem   |
| Alexandrov-Gay  | Bolgar (Republic of Tatarstan, Spassky district)    | Baikalsk (Irkutsk Region, Slyudyanka district)    |
| Bekovo (Penza Region)   | Bor (Nizhny Novgorod Region)                        | Belomorsk   |
| Belozersk   | Borovichi   | Beloretsk   |
| Borok (Vologda Region, Nikolsk district)                        | Verkhoturys   | Birobijan   |
| Buy   | Vokhma  | Bolotnoe  |
| Vetluga   | Vyshny Volochok                                     | Bolshoy Kamen                                     |
| Vladimirskoye (Nizhny Novgorod Region, Voskresenskoye district) | Vyazniki  | Velizh  |
| Voznesenye (Leningrad Region, Podporozhye district)             | Gavrilov Posad                                      | Velsk   |
| Voskresenskoye (Nizhny Novgorod Region)                         | Galich  | Vichuga   |
| Gdov  | Gorbatov (Nizhny Novgorod Region, Pavlovo district) | Vozhega   |
| Dmitrovsk   | Gusinoozersk  | Vorsma (Nizhny Novgorod Region, Pavlovo district) |
| Kazachka (Saratov Region, Kalininsk district)                   | Demidov   | Vytegra   |
| Kalininsk (Saratov Region)                                      | Zuevka (Kirov Region)                               | Guryevsk (Kemerovo Region)                        |
| Kargopol  | Zubova Polyana                                      | Gus Khrustalny                                    |
| Kasimov   | Kamen-na-Obi  | Dmitriev  |
| Kineshma  | Kanash  | Yefremov  |
| Kologriv  | Kirillov  | Kandalaksha                                       |
| Lysye Gory (Saratov Region)                                     | Kashin  | Karaidel  |
| Lyubim  | Krasnoufimsk  | Kachkanar   |
| Makaryev  | Kurovskoye (Moscow Region, Orekhovo-Zuevo district) | Kem   |
| Manturovo (Kostroma Region)                                     | Kyakhta   | Kiknur  |
| Nikolsk (Vologda Region)  | Lgov  | Kirzhach  |
| Podporozhye   | Mezen   | Kichmengsky Gorodok                               |
| Poshekhonye   | Nerchinsk   | Kozelsk   |
| Ryabinino (Perm Territory, Cherdyn district)                    | Nizhneudinsk  | Komsomolsk (Ivanovo Region)                       |
| Sebezh  | Nerekhta  | Kondrovo (Dzerzhinsky district)                   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Semyonov (Nizhny Novgorod Region)            | Novokhopersk   | Kostroma                                       |
| Soligalich                                   | Neya   | Kotelnich                                      |
| Temnikov                                     | Preobrazhenye (Primorye Territory, Lazo district)    | Labinsk  |
| Toropets                                     | Pyshchug   | Leshukonskoye                                  |
| Uren   | Rostov   | Luza   |
| Cherdyn                                      | Sanchursk  | Luchegorsk (Pozharsky district)                |
| Chistye Bory (Kostroma Region, Buy district) | Saransk  | Maslyanino                                     |
| Chukhloma                                    | Saskylakh (Anabar district)                          | Medvezhyegorsk                                 |
| Shemursha (Republic of Chuvashia)            | Solikamsk  | Mikhailov                                      |
|  | Suday (Kostroma Region, Chukhloma district)          | Morshansk                                      |
|  | Sudislavl  | Murom  |
|  | Suzun  | Namtsy   |
|  | Teykovo  | Olonets  |
|  | Tommot (Republic of Yakutia, Aldan district)         | Orlov  |
|  | Umba (Tersky district)                               | Ostashkov                                      |
|  | Urshelsky (Vladimir Region, Gus Khrustalny district) | Pavlovo  |
|  | Uryupinsk  | Pudozh   |
|  | Ust Kan  | Sortavala                                      |
|  | Khatystyr (Republic of Yakutia, Aldan district)      | Spassk-Dalny (Spassky district)                |
|  | Khotkovo (Moscow Region, Sergiev Posad district)     | Old Vichuga (Ivanovo Region, Vichuga district) |
|  | Tsivilsk   | Suzdal   |
|  | Charyshskoye   | Suna (Kirov Region)                            |
|  | Chistopol  | Taldom   |
|  | Esso (Bystrinsky district)                           | Tara   |
|  | Engozero (Republic of Karelia, Loukhi district)      | Totma  |
|  | Yuriev Polsky  | Turochak                                       |
|  | Yukhnov  | Tutayev  |
|  |  | Urzhum   |
|  |  | Usogorsk (Udorsky district)                    |
|  |  | Ussurijsk                                      |
|  |  | Ust-Koksa                                      |

|  |  |             |
|--|--|-------------|
|  |  | Ust-Labinsk |
|  |  | Cherepanovo |
|  |  | Chunsky     |
|  |  | Sharya      |
|  |  | Shuya       |

## Notes:

\* Principal towns—the small towns and villages where focused (detailed) research of otkhodnichestvo was conducted—observations, interviews and statistical data collection.

Towns of the second range—localities where we performed targeted observations, conducted occasional interviews, and sporadically collected statistical data.

Additional towns—localities that the authors visited in different years, and obtained occasional or incidental information about otkhodnichestvo and otkhodniks, and this information was included in the field observations array.

\*\* The districts and regions in brackets either follow settlements with duplicating names, or are provided when the name of the district is not the same as that of the administrative center; for settlements that do not have the status of administrative centers, their districts and regions are indicated.

Table 2

Principal and additional research areas and the number of interviews with respondents

| Region                            | District, settlement              | Time frame  | Number of respondents* | Number of interviews** |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| Principal research areas          |                                   |   |                        |                        |
| Kostroma Region<br>(pilot region) | Kologriv district<br>Kologriv     | April-May 2011<br>June-September 2012<br>November 2012<br>August-September 2013 | 37                     | 26                     |
|                                   | Makaryev district<br>Makaryev     | May 2011<br>May 2012<br>August 2012<br>July 2013                                | 27                     | 14                     |
|                                   | Manturovo district<br>Manturovo   | July 2010<br>November 2012<br>May 2014  | 17                     | 7                      |
|                                   | Chukhloma district<br>Chukhloma   | May 2011<br>July 2012<br>September 2013<br>June 2014                            | 47                     | 19                     |
|                                   | Soligalich district<br>Soligalich | May 2011<br>July 2012<br>September 2013<br>June 2014                            | 34                     | 16                     |
|                                   | Buy district<br>Buy               | November 2010<br>April 2012<br>September 2013<br>June 2014                      | 21                     | 12                     |
|                                   | Buy district,<br>Chistye Bory     | November 2010<br>November 2012  | 9                      | 5                      |

|                        |   |  |    |    |
|------------------------|---|--|----|----|
| Vologda Region         | Belozersk district<br>Belozersk                               | July 2011<br>July 2012<br>January 2013                 | 42 | 11 |
|                        | Nikolsk district<br>Nikolsk                                   | August 2011<br>January 2013<br>September 2013          | 49 | 20 |
| Tver Region            | Toropets district<br>Toropets                                 | November 2011  | 63 | 23 |
| Perm Territory         | Cherdyn district<br>Cherdyn, Ryabinino                        | November- December 2011                                | 24 | 20 |
| Republic of Mor-dovia  | Temnikov district<br>Temnikova                                | November 2011<br>July 2012                             | 49 | 32 |
|                        | Ardatov district<br>Ardatov                                   | November 2011<br>July 2012                             | 44 | 29 |
|                        | Saransk   | November 2011  | 6  | 6  |
| Republic of Chu-vashia | Alatyr district<br>Alatyr                                     | November 2011<br>July 2012                             | 17 | 6  |
|                        | Shemursha district<br>Shemursha                               | July 2013  | 33 | 12 |
| Ryazan Region          | Kasimov district<br>Kasimov                                   | December 2011<br>July 2012<br>August 2013              | 49 | 37 |
| Ivanovo Region         | Kineshma district<br>Kineshma                                 | February 2012  | 31 | 21 |
| Leningrad Region       | Podporozhye district,<br>Podporozhye<br>Voznesenye settlement | February 2012<br>June 2014                             | 78 | 28 |
| Arkhangelsk Re-gion    | Kargopol district<br>Kargopol                                 | March 2012<br>July 2012<br>August 2013<br>July 2014    | 69 | 18 |
| Nizhny Novgorod Region | Vetluga district<br>Vetluga                                   | July 2012<br>October 2012<br>August 2013<br>April 2014 | 42 | 17 |
|                        | Voskresenskoye district<br>Voskresenskoye                     | October 2012   | 9  | 5  |
|                        | Semyonov urban district                                       | October 2012<br>September 2013                         | 47 | 7  |
|                        | Uren district<br>Uren   | October 2012   | 3  | 1  |
| Pskov Region           | Gdov district<br>Gdov   | March 2013   | 39 | 16 |
|                        | Sebezh district<br>Sebezh                                     | March 2013   | 34 | 11 |
| Saratov Region         | Alexandrov-Gay district<br>Alexandrov-Gay                     | April 2013   | 21 | 12 |
|                        | Kalininsk district<br>Kalininsk                               | April 2013   | 25 | 12 |
|                        | Lysye Gory district<br>Lysye Gory                             | April 2013   | 9  | 6  |
| Penza Region           | Bekovo district<br>Bekovo                                     | July 2013  | 32 | 14 |

|                                     |   |   |       |     |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|-------|-----|
| Yaroslavl Region                    | Lyubim district<br>Lyubim                         | April 2012<br>July 2013<br>September 2013 | 38    | 8   |
|                                     | Poshekhonye district,<br>Poshekhonye              | July 2012<br>September 2013               | 6     | 5   |
| Orel Region                         | Dmitrovsk district<br>Dmitrovsk                   | August 2013                               | 8     | 3   |
| <b>TOTAL principal survey areas</b> |   |   | 1,069 | 479 |
| <b>Additional research areas</b>    |   |   |       |     |
| Kostroma Region                     | Chukhloma district<br>Suday                       | July 2012                                 | 1     |     |
|                                     | Sudislavl district<br>Sudislavl                   | March 2012                                | 5     |     |
|                                     | Nerekhta district<br>Nerekhta                     | November 2010<br>March 2012               | 14    | 11  |
|                                     | Galich district<br>Galich                         | April 2012<br>September 2013<br>June 2014 | 9     | 1   |
|                                     | Pyshchug district<br>Pyshchug                     | October 2012                              | 6     | 2   |
|                                     | Vokhma district<br>Vokhma                         | September 2013<br>October 2014            | 7     | 3   |
| Yaroslavl Region                    | Rostov district<br>Rostov                         | March 2012                                | 4     |     |
| Ivanovo Region                      | Gavrilov Posad district,<br>Gavrilov Posad        | March 2012<br>May 2012                    | 9     | 2   |
|                                     | Teykovo district<br>Teykovo                       | March 2012                                | 4     |     |
| Vladimir Region                     | Yuriev Polsky district<br>Yuriev Polsky           | March 2012                                | 4     |     |
|                                     | Vyazniki district<br>Vyazniki                     | May 2013                                  | 1     | 1   |
|                                     | Gus Khrustalny district,<br>Urshelsky             | November 2010                             | 1     | 1   |
| Moscow Region                       | Sergiev Posad district,<br>Khotkovo               | February 2013                             | 1     | 1   |
| Nizhny Novgorod<br>Region           | Bor urban district                                | August 2013                               | 6     | 1   |
|                                     | Pavlovo district, Gorbatov                        | September 2013                            | 3     |     |
| Kirov Region                        | Sanchursk district<br>Sanchursk                   | July 2012                                 | 4     | 1   |
| Kursk Region                        | Lgov district<br>Lgov                             | March 2013                                | 2     | 2   |
| Republic of Chuvashia               | Tsilvsk district<br>Tsilvsk                       | July 2012                                 | 4     |     |
|                                     | Kanash district<br>Kanash                         | July 2012                                 | 6     | 1   |
| Republic of Yakutia                 | Aldan district<br>Khatystyr settlement,<br>Tommot | April 2011                                | 23    | 12  |
|                                     | Anabar district<br>Saskylakh settlement           | April 2011                                | 17    | 10  |

|                                      |  |   |       |     |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|-------|-----|
| Kamchatka Territory                  | Bystrinsky district<br>Esso settlement                               | April 2011                              | 18    | 14  |
| Voronezh Region                      | Novokhopersk area,<br>Novokhopersk,<br>Novokhopersky settle-<br>ment | April 2014                              | 61    | 30  |
| Volgograd Region                     | Uryupinsk district<br>Uryupinsk                                      | April 2014                              | 13    | 7   |
| Sverdlovsk Region                    | Krasnoufimsk district<br>Krasnoufimsk                                | January 2014                            | 9     | 6   |
| Smolensk Region                      | Demidov district<br>Demidov (Porechye)                               | December 2013                           | 28    | 16  |
| Republic of Buryatia                 | Kyakhta district<br>Kyakhta<br>Gusinoozersk district<br>Gusinoozersk | March 2014                              | 16    | 11  |
| Primorye Territory                   | Lazo district<br>Preobrazhenie                                       | September-<br>October 2014              | 9     | 4   |
| Khabarovsk Territory                 | Bikin district<br>Bikin  | October 2014                            | 6     | 4   |
| Trans-Baikal Territory               | Nerchinsk district<br>Nerchinsk                                      | October 2014                            | 6     | 3   |
| Murmansk Region                      | Tersky district<br>Umba  | August 2011<br>August 2012<br>July 2014 | 24    | 15  |
| Republic of Karelia                  | Loukhi district<br>Engozero<br>Kuzema                                | July 2014                               | 6     | 3   |
| Altai Territory                      | Charyshskoye district<br>Charyshskoye                                | July 2011                               | 4     | 2   |
| <b>TOTAL additional survey areas</b> |  |   | 330   | 164 |
| <b>TOTAL surveyed</b>                |  |   | 1,399 | 643 |

## Notes:

\*The respondents include otkhodniks, their family members, neighbors, local authority representatives, and other local experts. We have indicated all respondents with whom interviews (independent of the duration) were held that produced any positive information. Where the interview was not captured separately, the researcher noted the contact in the field diary.

\*\*We included only those interviews, which we conducted with the otkhodniks themselves and with competent people who were aware of this type of activity and provided information on local otkhodnichestvo. Some interviews were not captured separately.



Fig. 2. Locations covered by observations and interviews with otkhodniks. The three specified categories conform to those listed in Table 1.





## Chapter 4

### Estimating the population of otkhodniks

*"We don't maintain such statistics at all; this matter is beyond our scope. The town has a statistics department. You could possibly get such reports there, provided they are in principle available. We don't keep track of otkhodniks, and we're not supposed to."<sup>34</sup>*

Determining the total population of otkhodniks in Russia is a challenging task. As we already repeatedly mentioned, otkhodniks are invisible to the authorities and they are not duly recorded in the economy. Actually, until now nobody has attempted to count them—what is the point of counting the non-existent?

However, as the phenomenon is now emerging from the "shadow", it would be useful to estimate its magnitude at least roughly. Several methods can be used to derive this figure. We identified six approaches and applied them all. The first three approaches can be classified as indirect methods based on the estimates of various parties. First, estimates provided by representatives of government and municipal bodies based on available statistics. Second, estimates which we obtained from local mass media. Third, subjective estimates made by the local inhabitants, including neighbors of otkhodniks.

The three other approaches we developed ourselves. We applied them as practically direct methods of estimating the number of otkhodniks in specific, relatively small settlements. The first such approach addresses the difference between the working-age population and the number of people employed in the local economy. The second approach is based on analyzing records in household registers<sup>35</sup> (this is possible only in rural settlements and some small towns where the majority of inhabitants live on homesteads and in private houses). And finally, the last approach is based on estimates derived from school class registers and/or obtained by interviewing homeroom teachers.

Surprisingly, these diverse methods produced quite similar estimates of otkhodniks, at least within specific localities.

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34 Interview with N.V. Nikitina, deputy head of administration for social matters; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

35 A household register is a primary administrative accounting document used to record the population by household. In Soviet times, such registers contained various information on the family, its members and their economic activity. At present, the status of household registers in Russia has suffered changes; however, in most areas they are still maintained. More details are provided in section 3.5.

#### 4.1. Statistical data

As Russian government migration authorities are focused exclusively on controlling migration flows from abroad, the number of otkhodniks is in no way reflected in official statistics. Internal migration is recorded based on declarations. Moreover, Russian migration statistics are able to trace only those relocations, which are followed by a change in the officially registered address. However, in recent years, a significant part of the population fails to register at places of their temporary (and sometimes permanent) residence. Frequently, members of one and the same family are registered at different addresses. These circumstances determine the fact that as of today there are practically no (to say nothing of reliable) statistical data whatsoever; therefore, the authorities can estimate the scale of otkhodnichestvo in Russia purely on an expert, moreover, only local, basis. Once, the Independent Institute for Social Policy performed an assessment of the number of workers unrecorded by economic statistics. The resulting figure of economically active individuals not accounted for by the economy was 20–30 million. The researchers concluded that they were self-employed and stayed somewhere in the "shadow" (Maleva, 1998; see also: Barsukova, 2004; *Non-standard employment...*, 2006; *In the shadow of regulation...*, 2014).

In a presentation made at the 14 April Conference at the Higher School of Economics (2–5 April 2013) Olga Golodets, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Government, admitted the following, "A multitude of negative developments has accumulated in this sphere. Out of 86 million people of working age in Russia, only 48 million are occupied in sectors, which are visible and clear to us. We have no idea where the rest are and what they are engaged in." ([www.hse.ru/news/extraordinary/79252003.html](http://www.hse.ru/news/extraordinary/79252003.html)). Evidently, the remaining 38 million people who pay no mandatory social contributions are engaged somewhere in the "economic shadow", and our otkhodniks account for a considerable number, if not the majority, of them.

Now and again, the public authorities in the regions seem to wake up and recollect that up to half of the able-bodied population remains unaccounted for, and make attempts to fill this information gap. However, this "remarkable" recognition of the magnitude of the problem is manifested locally in somewhat ridiculous forms. So, according to the information communicated to us by heads of municipalities in 2010–2011, the governors of several regions demanded that the local authorities provide information about the population not employed locally. The local authorities were required not only to provide a record of the share of self-employed economically active individuals in a municipal district or urban settlement, but also indicate their earnings, list the professions in which they were engaged, and even ob-

tain answers to the following questions: were they prepared to stay and work in their home town and what level of wages would be sufficient to keep them from leaving. Naturally, no municipal administration possesses such information. Nobody collects such data. However, the municipal officials provided the requested memoranda. It is absolutely clear how they got the required answers.

On the municipal level, it is also extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact number of otkhodniks. Neither the local branches of government bodies (employment centers or local Rosstat (Russian Federal State Statistics Service) branches), nor the municipal authorities possess such statistical data. Even if they do maintain certain statistical records, they do it at their own initiative, sporadically, and in a reduced form registering only those people who are specifically recruited to work away on a rotation basis:

"Official statistics keeps no record of otkhodniks, however, the employees of the Rosstat branch for Toropets district are aware of their existence. This awareness results from the fact that Galina Abramova, Rosstat leading expert, used to be a member of the election commission. She said that during elections to the legislative body (duma) in 2011, efforts were undertaken to persuade otkhodniks to vote: the local newspaper *Moi Krai* published an appeal, "Do not forget to take you absentee ballot!"<sup>36</sup>

For example, according to official data, 1,971 people were engaged in seasonal work in the Ardatov municipal district (Republic of Mordovia) in 2011. This constitutes 12% of the local working-age population.<sup>37</sup> The administration of Alatyr (Republic of Chuvashia) seems to possess information on the number of local inhabitants who leave to work on a rotation basis. However, in this case, the authorities use this term to designate all those people who are employed outside the area. As of 2009, rotation workers numbered 9,918 people, or 38% of the working-age population.<sup>38</sup> Generally, such data include only certain categories of temporary labor migrants, i.e. not all otkhodniks and not only otkhodniks.

In some of the surveyed districts we managed to obtain "local statistical"<sup>39</sup> data for 2010–2011 as to the size of the total economically active population, number of unemployed, and those employed in the district economy. As a result, we were able

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36 From the report by Y.D. Zausaeva and A.A. Baidakova on their expedition to Toropets, Tver Region: interview with Galina Abramova, expert of the Rosstat Toropets branch, November 2011.

37 Information obtained from reviewing the passport for social and economic development of rural and urban settlements of the Ardatov municipal district for 2011.

38 Information from the *Comprehensive investment plan for the social and economic development of Alatyr for 2010–2012 and for the period until 2020*, 2010.

39 We would like to point out once again that currently all local statistics are maintained at the initiative of the municipal authorities who are free to record any movements of the population in whatever form due to a lack of the respective legislative framework.

to calculate the number of all those who remained "unaccounted for: shabashniks and a part of the rotation workers, moonlighters ("kalymshchiks" in Russian), and otkhodniks as such. Indeed, the resulting figure included non-working individuals of working age (dependents or to put it more bluntly—hangers-on, including homeless alcoholics who are rarely met in small towns), housewives and a small group of women on maternal leave. Nevertheless, both our observations and local expert opinions indicate that classical otkhodniks make up the majority of this group. Respective information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

The percentage of unrecorded inhabitants among all economically active population in certain urban and municipal districts surveyed in 2011–2012

| Municipality                  | Per local statistics <sup>40</sup> |          |            | Unrecorded (otkhodniks, shabashniks, dependents, housewives) | Percentage of unrecorded inhabitants (%) |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------|------------|--|--|
|                               | Population of working age          | Employed | Unemployed |  |  |
| Alatyr urban district (okrug) | 26,000                             | 14,240   | 736        | 11,024   | 42.4                                     |
| Kasimov urban district        | 20,195                             | 17,033   | 302        | 2,860  | 14.2                                     |
| Kineshma urban district       | 55,100                             | 36,900   | 778        | 17,422   | 31.6                                     |
| Kologriv district             | 4,400                              | 2,700    | 100        | 1,600  | 36.4                                     |
| Chukhloma district            | 7,600                              | 4,000    | 68         | 3,532  | 46.5                                     |
| Makaryev district             | 10,000                             | 6,700    | 198        | 3,102  | 31.0                                     |
| Soligalich district           | 6,351                              | 4,361    | 64         | 1,926  | 30.3                                     |
| Temnikov district             | 10,400                             | 5,200    | 169        | 5,031  | 48.4                                     |
| Ardatov district              | 28,771                             | 16,666   | 244        | 11,861   | 41.2                                     |
| Toropets district             | 12,400                             | 10,300   | 225        | 1,875  | 15.1                                     |
| Podporozhye district          | 20,069                             | 14,605   | 347        | 5,117  | 25.5                                     |
| Kargopol district             | 12,355                             | 10,500   | 192        | 1,855  | 15.0                                     |

40 Information obtained during expeditions from various sources: annual reports of heads of municipal administrations; memoranda concerning the achieved social and economic development indicators of the district; programs for social and economic development; and internal documents drafted by the economic departments of municipal administrations, as well as data obtained from statistics departments and public employment centers (local branches of government bodies).

One can see that the percentage of working-age inhabitants of municipal and urban districts unrecorded in the economy varies significantly—from 14%-15% to 47%-48% (a threefold difference). Even this small data array clearly shows that the share of *otkhodniks* drops sharply as soon as local employment opportunities improve. In our example Kasimov, Toropets, and Kargopol demonstrate this. Whereas in those places where practically all employment opportunities are limited to "publicly funded" jobs<sup>41</sup>, where there are no industrial enterprises, and small business is underdeveloped, up to a half of able-bodied inhabitants are forced to migrate. This is the case of Temnikov, Chukhloma, and Alatyr.

According to our sample data, "unrecorded inhabitants" account for 31.5% (about one third) of the population. Assuming that *otkhodniks* (predominantly male) constitute the majority of such people, and taking into account that almost always only one family member works away from home, we have to conclude that at least every third Russian family outside big cities lives off *otkhodnichestvo* and other similar economic activities completely ignored by official statistics. A comparison of our above estimate with the figures communicated by vice-premier Olga Golodets shows that *otkhodniks* constitute up to three quarters of the population unrecorded in the economy.

## 4.2. Information on *otkhodniks* obtained from local mass media

Local mass media, primarily small private periodicals and district newspapers established with the participation of local and regional administrations, can provide valuable information on *otkhodnichestvo* and its scale. Practically all districts have their own newspapers, which are popular among the locals; therefore, their circulation is high<sup>42</sup>. Generally, the chief editors have long-term experience working in the paper and are well informed about the situation in the district, including the current business environment and changes, which occurred in the economy in the latest decade or two.

Private periodicals, if any (their number has significantly dropped as compared to the 1990s, and currently they exist only in every second provincial town), are often a lot more informative than the official district newspapers. Whereas the newspapers generally perform the function of the press service of the municipal administration and (regrettably) the local branch of the United Russia party, private periodicals are more oriented at highlighting the town's socially significant issues. For

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41 "Publicly funded jobs"—jobs financed from the national budget.

42 Generally, from 70 to 80 percent of families subscribe to their local newspaper, so its circulation can serve as a rough indicator of the number of households in the district.

example, the editorial staff of the private newspaper *168 Hours* (Kineshma, Ivanovo Region) came to the conclusion that *otkhodnichestvo* was a major problem for the town, and in late 2011 polled by telephone a limited number of respondents (slightly over 100 people). Of those surveyed, about 30 percent earned their living in Moscow (it remains unclear whether the respondents' age and working capacity were taken into account, however, this estimate perfectly matches the percentage of unrecorded inhabitants in Kineshma (31.6%) presented in Table 2):

Interviewer (I): Is it true that you performed a survey several years ago?

Editor of the newspaper *168 Hours* (Respondent—R): We conducted a poll, which showed that 30% of the respondents were earning their living elsewhere, mostly in Moscow.

I: How many people did you poll?

R: Slightly over 100. It was a limited survey.

I: Did you poll by phone?

R: Yes.

I: And how did you select the respondents?

R: At random. We just opened the telephone directory and dialled a number.

I: According to your estimate, what share of the local population makes their living elsewhere—over or under 30%?

R: Just about that many.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, it is rather common when the editorial staff is not an exhaustive source of information on *otkhodniks*. Moreover, there are cases when the chief editors have no clue about this phenomenon. For instance, the district paper *Moi Krai* is the only local newspaper in Toropets, Tver Region. Its chief editor is a woman who has been working in the newspaper for over twenty years. Although she is aware that some townsfolk regularly leave home to make a living elsewhere, she has no information whatsoever about these *otkhodniks* and knows none of them personally. This is very surprising, as *otkhodnichestvo* in Toropets used to be and remains an important way of making a living for a significant part of the population.

Indeed, more often editors of local newspapers do have some idea about *otkhodnichestvo*, but unlike the rare case of the editor in Kineshma, practically none of them possess any specific figures:

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43 Interview with the editorial staff of the newspaper *168 Hours*; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

"People are forced to go back to *otkhodnichestvo*. Chistye Bory is no exception. The inhabitants started seeking temporary jobs elsewhere as soon as the logging enterprise was shut down. It used to be the main employer in the district. Small-scale enterprises were closed as well. Currently, only publicly funded entities remain."<sup>44</sup>

"Some of my acquaintances make a living elsewhere. Practically everyone from Podgornoye Konakovo works in the North. They come home every second summer. They build. The principal destination is the Moscow Region. People depart in shifts. Few remain at construction sites—they are no idiots. They are cheated there. The current trend is security. It is the main occupation for retired policemen."<sup>45</sup>

In general, when we compare the observations of local journalists as to the scale of *otkhodnichestvo* in their districts (communicated to us during interviews) with the above estimates of unrecorded workers, we see that the figures are consistent. Where *otkhodnichestvo* is less developed, as in Kargopol (Arkhangelsk Region), the editor's estimates match our calculations. Thus, the former deputy chief editor of the district newspaper knows that there are people who make a living outside of Kargopol but he believes that such people are not numerous, since work is available in town, which is true. In those areas where *otkhodnichestvo* is widespread, e.g., in Ardatov and Temnikov (Mordovia), and Chukhloma (Kostroma Region), the editorial staff are well aware of it. However, their quantitative estimates are inaccurate; they know that many people are involved but they have no notion of the magnitude of the phenomenon (although they should).

It appears that although the most informed provincial professional community understands to what extent *otkhodnichestvo* prevails in their districts, its actual knowledge is as limited as that of the local administration. Probably, they know just a trifle more than the government authorities. Therefore, we can have only restricted reliance on their substantial assessment of this phenomenon.

### 4.3. Estimations of *otkhodniks* by local inhabitants

Many employees of local administrations and government bodies know about the existence of *otkhodniks* not by virtue of duty but out of private experience, as locals and neighbors of those who engage in *otkhodnichestvo*. The *otkhodniks* themselves and other local inhabitants have their own idea about the scale of this phenomenon. Of course, their understanding is not based on any objective assessment of the number of *otkhodniks*; however, it provides valuable information on how different categories of the population perceive the local social and economic situa-

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44 Interview with N.P. Zhuravlev, editor of the district newspaper *Vperyod*; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

45 Interview with A.M. Lebedeva, chief editor of the district newspaper *Temnikov News*; Temnikov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

tion. For many inhabitants, the departure of a neighbor to work elsewhere serves only as an indicator of need and failure to find employment locally. Generally, they see no other reasons for *otkhodnichestvo*:

Respondent Alexander: - Look here, Sergey [interviewer], mark my words! You asked me, "Why did you start jobbing elsewhere?" I'll counter your question by another question: when we had the depot here [Ryabinino depot of the Kama river fleet repair and maintenance base], everyone stuck to the job for 40 years and nobody budged, because the wages were OK, work was stable, the service record was growing, and there was enough dough. Then everything fell to pieces... Hey, are you taking notes? Damn you!

Denis: - Just watch out what you're saying. You didn't give your surname or anything.

Interviewer: - You haven't even said anything yet, you just gave your first name! I'm only taking notes to mark your words afterwards. Otherwise I'll forget everything.

Alexander: - We're going away while "a fish seeks where it's deeper, and a man seeks where it's better"<sup>46</sup>.

As many consider *otkhodnichestvo* to be a forced activity causing lots of inconvenience for those involved, the inhabitants of small towns tend to exaggerate the proportion of *otkhodniks*, thus making the situation look bleaker than it actually is. For example, according to approximate statistical estimates and our independent data, the share of *otkhodniks* in Kasimov (Ryazan Region) is about 10%-15% of the able-bodied population, whereas the townspeople themselves assess this figure to be about 50%. There can be several reasons for such obvious overestimations, the main one of them being the fact that people tend to judge by their immediate acquaintances. The existence of *otkhodniks* among acquaintances, more so among relatives, produces the impression that the phenomenon is more widespread than it actually is. What matters also is the general negative perception that locals have of the social and economic situation in small towns:

Interviewer: - Do many townsfolk live off outside earnings?

Respondent: - Many of them do, a huge lot, possibly 50 percent. Take, for example, my relatives. Many of them work elsewhere, since it is extremely difficult to find a job locally. And the average salary here is about 10,000 rubles [about \$350 per month].<sup>47</sup>

Respondent: - Everyone in Kasimov lives off outside earnings.

Interviewer (I): - You mean more than a half?

R: - As far as I know, all my acquaintances work in Moscow.

I: - And what sectors are they primarily employed in?

R: - Security and services.<sup>48</sup>

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46 Interview with *otkhodniks* Alexander (60 years old) and Denis (under 50); Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

47 Interview with a schoolteacher at secondary school No. 1; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

48 Interview with a local inhabitant of a private house, Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

There are also opposing factors, which impede *otkhodnichestvo*; and the *otkhodniks* are well aware of them:

Interviewer (I): Can you give a rough estimate, what part of the male population regularly departs to engage in outside jobs?

Otkhodnik-security guard (O): You mean leaves Kologriv?

I: Yes.

O: Well, you know, I would say that surely half do not go anywhere. The thing is that half of the men...

I: Have no means to leave?

O: Well guys, how should I put it... It's not that they have no means to leave... I always say no pain, no gain. They want to stay home and have everything at the same time...<sup>49</sup>

The *otkhodniks* themselves tend to exaggerate their numbers. The above extract illustrates this: significantly less than half of the adult male population make a living outside of Kologriv, although the *otkhodniks* themselves believe this share to be higher. For Kasimov, for example, their estimate averaged 50%-80% of the working-age population:

Interviewer: - What do you think, what percentage of men in Kasimov engage in *otkhodnichestvo*?

Otkhodnik: - About 80 percent. When I used to travel by bus, the bus station was like a meeting place. Everyone was either from Kasimov or the Kasimov district. Even here, everyone asking for a lift is travelling to Moscow.<sup>50</sup>

Interviewer (I): - Do many men work away from home?

Otkhodnik (O): - A lot.

I: - Less than a half at least?

O: - I would say more.

I: - That many?

O: - Well... the only potential work available here is with private businesses.<sup>51</sup>

The situation is similar for Toropets in Tver Region and Cherdyn in the Perm Territory, where the actual share of *otkhodniks* appears to be within 15%-20%, whereas the inhabitants provide an average estimate of 35%, and the *otkhodniks* themselves consider their share to be 40%.

It is interesting that government officials from employment centers and local Rosstat branches also tend to overestimate the percentage of *otkhodniks*. For instance, the employment center in Kasimov gave us an estimate of 30% (i.e., at least twice the actual number), and the Rosstat branch in Kineshma even provided the figure of 80%, whereas according to more reliable sources, the share of *otkhodniks*

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49 Interview with an experienced "diversified" *otkhodnik* from Kologriv, Kostroma Region, April 2011.

50 Interview with an *otkhodnik* working as security guard; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

51 Interview with two *otkhodniks* at the home of one of them; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

in Kineshma does not exceed 30% (in both cases we see a two- to threefold overstatement).

It is noteworthy that functionaries of the local administrations, who should be well informed about the life of their town and district by virtue of office and being themselves local inhabitants, either have no idea about otkhodniks, or underestimate (not always but often) their numbers.

On the one hand, we can of course assume that the officials are deliberately misleading the researchers. On the other hand, nowhere do local authorities keep track of such workers, and nowhere do they instruct their employees accordingly. At the same time, like most of the inhabitants, the officials from local branches of government bodies (public employment centers and Rosstat) tend to overestimate the share of people earning a living outside the town or district, although they do have the possibility to perform the simplest calculations using data from various available sources, just like we did. It seems that in their assessments, such officials rely not on the reports required from them by the authorities, but on their common sense as local inhabitants. Table 4 below presents a summary of estimates made by various categories of the population, including representatives of the local authorities (who are local experts in line with their duties).

Table 4.

Estimated population of otkhodniks in small towns and districts—estimates provided by the otkhodniks themselves, other inhabitants, and local authority representatives

| <b>Municipality*</b>                    | <b>Estimates provided by the otkhodniks</b>  | <b>Estimates provided by the local inhabitants</b> | <b>Estimates provided by the heads and staff of local administrations</b>           |
|---|--|--|---|
| Kologriv district, Kostroma Region      | Under 50%  |  |   |
| Chukhloma district, Kostroma Region     | About 70% (estimates in the range from 50% to "almost everybody")                          | About 60%  |   |
| Makaryev district, Kostroma Region      | Average of 60% (estimates in the range from 50% to 80% of the working-age male population) | About 50%  | Head of administration: There are many otkhodniks but their exact number is unknown |
| Soligalich district, Kostroma Region    | About 50%  | About 35% (estimates in the range from 15% to 50%) |   |
| Temnikov district, Republic of Mordovia | Average of 65% (estimates in the range from 50% to 80%)                                    | About 50%  | Head of administration: 10%-15% of the able-bodied population                       |

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| Ardatov district, Republic of Mordovia | 25% of working-age males                               | 50% or more   | Deputy head of administration: I am aware of otkhodniks; many people are involved  |
| Alatyr, Republic of Chuvashia          |  | Estimates from "over 50%" to "there are otkhodniks in every family" |  |
| Toropets district, Tver Region         | Average of 40% (estimates from 25% to 80%)             | Average of 35% (estimates from 20% to 50%)                          | Heads of the district and town administrations believe that there are practically no otkhodniks; the administrations have no information about their numbers |
| Kasimov, Ryazan Region                 | About 55% (estimates from "under 50%" to 80%)          | About 50% (estimates ranging from "over 20%" to "over 50%")         | The administration has no information as to the number of otkhodniks but is aware that this category of the population exists                                |
| Kineshma, Ivanovo Region               | 50% of the working-age population                      | 45% (estimates from 30% to 50%)                                     | About 15%  |
| Podporozhye district, Leningrad Region |  | About 40%   |  |
| Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region  | Significantly under 50% (the highest estimate was 40%) | Estimates in the range from 10% to "many are involved"              | The administration is aware that people leave for outside jobs, that this phenomenon is widespread, however the number of otkhodniks is unknown              |

*Sources:* field interviews with otkhodnik, their neighbors and relatives, heads of municipal administrations, and other officials acting as local experts.

*Notes:* Empty cells mean that the category of respondents in question failed to provide a definite opinion on the number of otkhodniks.

\* Where a municipal district is indicated, the survey was conducted both in the town and in rural settlements. Where a town is indicated, only its inhabitants were surveyed.

#### **4.4. Estimates based on the difference between the total working-age population and the number of residents employed in the local economy**

To a certain extent, a simple calculation of the difference between the working-age population and that employed in the local economy can serve as a direct method of estimating the scale of otkhodnichestvo. It is usually no problem to find such figures in local reports. One should however keep in mind that the difference between these indicators does not represent the net number of otkhodniks. As already mentioned earlier, this difference also includes dependents (i.e., disabled people and students) and some categories of the able-bodied population other than otkhodniks

(primarily those who are unofficially employed locally and migrants hired for specific jobs under quotas). However, our direct questioning revealed that these other categories account for a much lesser share of all "unrecorded" potential workers. Therefore, such an assessment gives a general idea about the magnitude of *otkhodnichestvo* in the district. This specific method was used to determine the population of *otkhodniks* in Kineshma, the only town among all others we surveyed where the municipal administration attempts to put the issue of *otkhodnichestvo* on its agenda.

Respondent: - Actually, it is very difficult to determine this figure.

Interviewer: - And how did you manage?

R: - Well, according to our rough estimate, there are about 50,000 people of working age in Kineshma, i.e. from the age of 16 to retirement age. About 15,000 are formally employed here. [In total] about 30,000 work in Kineshma, including those who are employed informally. Some six-seven thousand regularly depart to earn their living elsewhere. There is also unemployment.<sup>52</sup>

It is actually rather difficult to assess approximately the number of dependents, *otkhodniks* and other people engaged in the informal sector, both due to inaccuracies and discrepancies in municipal ("statistical") reports, and lack of required statistical information at local administrations (it is not rare when local administrations have to buy the required statistics from Rosstat). Nevertheless, the calculations are rather simple, as can be seen from the following example.

As of 1 January 2011, Temnikov (Mordovia) should have had 4,499 residents of working age (the figures are taken from a municipal document titled *Information about the settlement*). Of them, 150 are engaged in agriculture, 900—in social services, 1,400—in other sectors, and 300—in seasonal works outside Mordovia (note how rounded the provided "statistical" data is). The difference between working-age residents and those employed in the economy amounts to 2,049 people. The number of registered unemployed should further reduce this result. The document lacks such information, however, the practice of employment centers shows that given the total number of working-age inhabitants, those officially unemployed should not exceed one hundred persons. Respectively, the remaining balance of 1,949 people includes dependents, moonlighters, and *otkhodniks*. As there are no holidaymakers from Moscow and St. Petersburg (who are usually the main source of extra earnings) in Temnikov, the number of those who make extra money on the side should be rather limited. Given the customary share of non-working mothers, students and disabled persons (15%-20% or another 300–350 people), the number

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52 Interview with V.I. Brizitsky, chairman of the public council under the head of the administration of the urban district; Kineshma, February 2012.

of otkhodniks is at least over 1,500. Besides, those 300 persons who are officially engaged in seasonal works outside Mordovia should increase this figure. According to the above calculations, there are at least 1,500–1,800 otkhodniks in Temnikov, this constituting over one third of the town's working-age population (4,500 people). However, another municipal document titled *Development of the settlement (overview)* for 2012 provides figures which differ significantly from those indicated in the previous document, namely, the number of working-age residents is presented as 4,559, of them only 1,796 are employed in the economy. The difference between these two figures with due account for unemployed (we will again assume their number to be 100) amounts to 2,663 persons which include dependents, moonlighters, and otkhodniks. In this case, the number of otkhodniks reaches two thousand and over (2,000–2,300), this constituting not just one third but already 45%-50% of the able-bodied population. It is noteworthy that the same person—deputy head of the Temnikov urban settlement, provided both documents to us as official documents.

Although this method of determining the share of otkhodniks has certain material weaknesses and can be used only to obtain a general impression of the extent to which otkhodnichestvo exists in a municipality, it often produces more reliable results than official reports. It should however be noted that this method does not allow determining the net number of otkhodniks. They are estimated in "one package" with dependents, moonlighters, and other residents employed locally but on an informal basis. It is not always possible to single them out with the help of additional assessments.

#### **4.5. Aggregating data from household registers with that from district employment centers**

We believe aggregating data from household registers to be the most reliable method of estimating the percentage of otkhodniks. A household register is a primary administrative accounting document used to record the population by households. It contains the following information: family structure, demographic and other characteristics, occupations and type of employment of the family members. The register also describes the household's principal aspects: type and quality of housing; land plot availability and purpose; amount and kind of livestock and other property. In Soviet times, such registers were maintained everywhere but in the early 1990s, they stopped being mandatory, so some local authorities abandoned this accounting practice, although the majority of them continued registering households. This practice was later reinstated, and pursuant to Article 8 of Federal Law 112-FZ, *On*

*Private Subsidiary Farming*, local self-government bodies in urban and rural settlements maintain household registers since 2011. Although household registers serve as the primary source of information about the population, their form and content is now determined not by Rosstat but still by the Ministry of Agriculture (in 2010 it was this ministry that initiated and organized the reinstatement of household records). In Soviet times, household registers recorded the nationality, passport data, education, place of work, and temporary absence of the family members, as well as information about their pensions, housing, etc. Nowadays, the main purpose of such registers is to record private subsidiary farming property and activities. The respective order of the Ministry of Agriculture regulating the maintenance of household registers<sup>53</sup> contained a section on collecting "extra" data; however, the Ministry of Justice deleted this section when it was registering the regulation. As a result, recording any extra data is optional—the local authorities do not have to collect such information but where necessary they may include additional information in the household register (to the researchers' great satisfaction, most rural municipal authorities traditionally continue to collect data in the former scope). Pursuant to the above order of the Ministry of Agriculture, mandatory information to be recorded in the household register is as follows: household members; cultivated area under crops, including fruit and berry crops; number of livestock, poultry, and bees; agricultural machines, equipment, and vehicles owned by the household.

Thus, according to effective law, household registers may not contain any information on the employment of household members, i.e. the collection of such information is left to the discretion of the local authorities. However, the list of data deleted from the order of the Ministry of Agriculture is of interest not only to local self-government bodies but also to government agencies acting in municipalities.

For example, many public employment centers would like to determine unemployment levels based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) methodology. However, of all the employment centers we surveyed in the course of our research, only one (in Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region) managed to calculate actual unemployment using this methodology. The results that were obtained using information from household registers revealed that under the ILO methodology the number of unemployed in Kargopol district in 2005 totaled 3,000 people. This is significantly (fifteen times) higher than the officially reported unemployment among the local population—1.5%–2%, or 180–200 people. Such an enormous discrepancy in figures demonstrates that the picture provided by our official statistics

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53 Order No. 345 of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture, *On Approving the Form and Procedure for Maintaining Household Registers by Local Self-Government Bodies of Settlements and Local Self-Government Bodies of Urban Districts*, dated 11 November 2010.

is not just incomplete but grossly distorted and completely out of touch with reality. The successful application of the ILO methodology to calculate unemployment is due to the fact that the Kargopol employment center was the only labor exchange among those surveyed that relied on statistics provided by the administrations of urban and rural settlements based on information from household registers. Unlike Kargopol, the employment centers in Kineshma and Toropets failed to perform such estimations, as instead of appealing to local self-government bodies they requested the lacking information from regional government authorities who have no relevant data. As a result, the Kineshma employment center encountered problems (actually simply failed) in evaluating the segment of informal unemployment and determining the number of people who are forced to leave town to make a living. It is very common when functionaries of district employment centers, local Rosstat branches, and even local administrations mistakenly believe that higher-level authorities are more informed about labor migration:

Interviewer: - Do you have any information regarding people who live off earnings from outside jobs?

Respondent: - You should address this enquiry to the Ivanovo regional statistics service.

I: - Do you believe they have such information?

R: - They monitor employment by direct questioning. We do not have such data. Ivanovo should though...<sup>54</sup>

"Maybe there is such a service somewhere. Probably, the (regional) administration has a department that monitors this. We don't have such a department. Perhaps there are such monitoring functions in Ryazan. But not here..."<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, local functionaries tend to shift the responsibility for maintaining statistics on migration of the population to colleagues at other levels of authority. Administrations of urban settlements believe this to be the function of district administrations; and the administrations of districts and urban districts suggest addressing government statistics services:

Interviewer (I): As far as I know, a category of local inhabitants works in large cities on a rotation basis.

Respondent: - That is true.

I: - Are there many of them in Toropets?

R: - I do not have precise statistical data but such a group exists.

I: - Do you somehow survey these people and keep track of them?

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54 Interview with an employee of the Kineshma branch of Rosstat; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

55 Interview with I.V. Krasenko, head of the economic department, urban district administration; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

R: - No, we do not maintain such statistics. You must have noticed that our functions are segregated. Economic aspects are within the scope of the district administration. We tend to focus more on our direct duties. Those duties that are set forth in Article 14 of our beloved Federal Law No. 131. The most important issues are heat and electricity. Utilities. Area improvement. Those are our primary tasks.<sup>56</sup>

In many cases, employment centers make no attempt whatsoever to determine the actual number of employed and unemployed; their records include only those officially registered on the labor exchange. Thus, for example, the Ardatov employment center (Republic of Mordovia) does not even have data on the number of people employed in the local economy. The explanations provided by the officials are naive and boil down to the fact that the center deals only with unemployed citizens. We noted that many employment centers we visited are rather incompetent in their statistical work—everywhere employment statistics are fragmentary and incomplete. As the employment centers have generally an inadequate and distorted understanding of the situation on the labor market (this being determined by limitations in the methodology applied to estimate employment and unemployment), they also possess no information on *otkhodniks*. Thus, functionaries of the Kineshma employment center complain that they have no data on the number of employed at local enterprises:

"We simply do not know how many are employed at local enterprises. Everything we might say about this is our pure guesswork. It's just that we personally know that many locals work in other regions. But officially we can't say anything, officially we have no information—perhaps half of the population works outside the region, or it can be one third."<sup>57</sup>

In spite of the above, employment centers often disseminate information about "otkhodnik" vacancies themselves. Frequently, they post announcements about recruiting people for work on a rotation basis in Moscow or other major cities at their premises or on their web pages. For instance, the following notice was placed on the web page of the Alatyr (Chuvashia) employment center:

"The Alatyr employment center is recruiting laborers for work in the Moscow and Voronezh Regions, and in Nizhny Novgorod. Piecework payment system; meals and accommodation included; wages from 12,000 rubles upwards; transportation arranged by the employer. All interested are welcome to apply! Contact address: Alatyr, Komsomol street, 35, office 6; contact number: 2-17-29."

However, generally the employment centers do not monitor the fate of such vacancies. Their functionaries emphasize that they are powerless in this matter, as Rostrud (the Russian Federal Labor and Employment Service) is focused on devel-

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56 Interview with V.V. Yakovlev, head of the town administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

57 Interview with a functionary of the employment center; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

oping a single national electronic database<sup>58</sup>, the demand for which the employment center is not able to determine:

"Employment center functionary: - We wanted to determine unemployment based on the ILO methodology. We wanted to calculate the actual number of unemployed in our region. We failed. It is very difficult to establish whether a person is employed or not. He/she might be employed but informally. There may be no formal record of employment but the person will be actually working. It's just that employers fail to register them. Besides, it is next to impossible to keep track of those who take up jobs outside the region. That is why we failed in our estimations.

Interviewer: - Where did you obtain information when you attempted your survey? Did you question the residents?

Functionary: - We sent enquiries to the government structures. None of them provided any information. We asked the statisticians. Why don't you contact the statistics service? They conducted a census of the population; they should have the number of working-age residents. Probably, they can give you some information based on the census. They can say how many working-age residents we have, and how many are employed at local enterprises. So, if you deduct those who are employed locally from the total working-age population, you may come up with some figure."<sup>59</sup>

Thus, although the employment center actually performs the social function of informing rotation workers, shabashniks, and otkhodniks on job opportunities, it has no idea of the results achieved:

"You see, we have information only about those people who contact the employment center in search of work. Those who use our databases do not always inform us of their decision to leave the region or stay. They come, use our information, and usually we hear no more of them."<sup>60</sup>

"Well, probably somebody finds work but not through us. Every day we circulate the list of available vacancies. We have an information section in the interregional database of vacancies throughout Russia. An unemployed person can look up available vacancies in any region and select those that could be of interest to him or her. As to who went where, this is something we do not monitor."<sup>61</sup>

We saw that using data from household registers is far from straightforward. First, some vital migration-related information can "drop out" of household registers, since its collection is not provided for by federal law. Second, in order to use this information in their decision-making, district authorities and government agencies (Rosstat branches and employment centers) have to establish horizontal relations with the administrations of rural and urban settlements on issues concerning statistics. Household registers contain precise information which can be obtained free of

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58 Information website *Work in Russia* - [www.trudvsem.ru](http://www.trudvsem.ru).

59 Interview with a functionary of the employment center; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

60 Interview with E.V. Korshunova, director of the Kargopol district employment center; Kargopol, March 2012.

61 Interview with an expert on vacancies, employment center; Kasimov, December 2011.

charge (the only problem is to single such information out); however, district administrations often prefer to use admittedly unreliable data provided by employment centers which keep track only of registered unemployed, or to buy potentially inconsistent statistics from local Rosstat branches. Thus, although data from household registers could significantly improve the quality of statistical information used by district administrations and local branches of government agencies, generally such data is ignored (according to our observations, out of 25 municipalities where we worked, only one administration relied on data from household registers).

Therefore, if the employees of local Rosstat branches, employment centers and administrations are aware of the existence of *otkhodniks*, such knowledge is not related to their professional activities but results from their everyday experience as local residents. Interestingly enough, many functionaries within local administrations know about *otkhodnichestvo* but very few of them try to put this issue on the agenda, at least on the level of statistics:

Interviewer (I): - According to your estimate, what percentage of the local population lives off earnings from outside jobs?

Respondent (R): - We don't have such statistics but a lot of people leave the town to work elsewhere.

I: - More than a half?

R: - Well, probably not more than a half... But really a lot.<sup>62</sup>

"Statistics on such matters are not collected. Many people regularly depart to engage in outside jobs. Less than a half is involved but the percentage is high. Nowadays, fewer people are coming and going, probably due to the crisis."<sup>63</sup>

"Previously, only men used to come and go, now women do so as well. Nowadays, probably more than half of those involved are women. On the land, those who want to make a decent living, seek work away from home or take up odd jobs and moonlight the whole year round. The others engage in subsidiary farming or do nothing and live off their retired parents."<sup>64</sup>

Voters' lists are another source of knowledge about *otkhodniks* for government and municipal authorities. For instance, the leading expert of the Rosstat branch for Toropets district knows of this phenomenon as she used to be a member of the election commission. During elections to the legislative body (*duma*) in 2011, the election commission undertook efforts to persuade *otkhodniks* to vote: the local newspaper *Moi Krai* published an appeal, "Do not forget to take you absentee ballot!"<sup>65</sup>

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62 Interview with N.F. Gushchina, head of the social security department; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

63 Interview with the deputy head of the town administration; Temnikov, November 2011.

64 Extracts from an interview with V.A. Kalinin, deputy head of the Ardatov urban settlement and A.N. Dolgov, expert on land issues; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

65 Interview with G.A. Abramova at the Rosstat branch for Toropets district; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

At the Kineshma administration, we were also told that the scale of *otkhodnichestvo* could be traced when verifying voters' lists:

"People come to certain commissions and declare that they are not working. For example, when we check the files of the administrative commission, we see many entries to this effect. When we ask the person in question, the answer can be: "I am working in Moscow off the books."—"And why is it marked: "Not working, according to oral statement?"—"Because I'm working informally." That's common practice."<sup>66</sup>

Summarizing the above, we can identify several circumstances, which have to be considered when using household registers as important statistical sources. First, where household registers are maintained and the local authorities at their own initiative record information not provided for by the respective order of the Ministry of Agriculture, such registers prove to be the most reliable source of information on labor migration. Second, these registers are maintained by local self-government bodies and not by Rosstat but their content is regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture. As a result, household registers are non-aggregated local data sources that require meticulous work. Third, household registers gain even more significance as the public employment centers focus only on officially registered unemployment and often lack whole blocks of information related to informal employment. They rarely use the statistical resources of settlements, although such statistics could substantially supplement and refine their own data enabling to determine actual unemployment levels. Fourth, district administrations also tend to neglect records collected by the settlements preferring to use information provided by Rosstat. In view of the above, the knowledge that public officers have about *otkhodniks* is based exclusively on their private experience and on voters' lists drawn up for elections.

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66 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district, and L.S. Pantsurkina, deputy head of administration; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

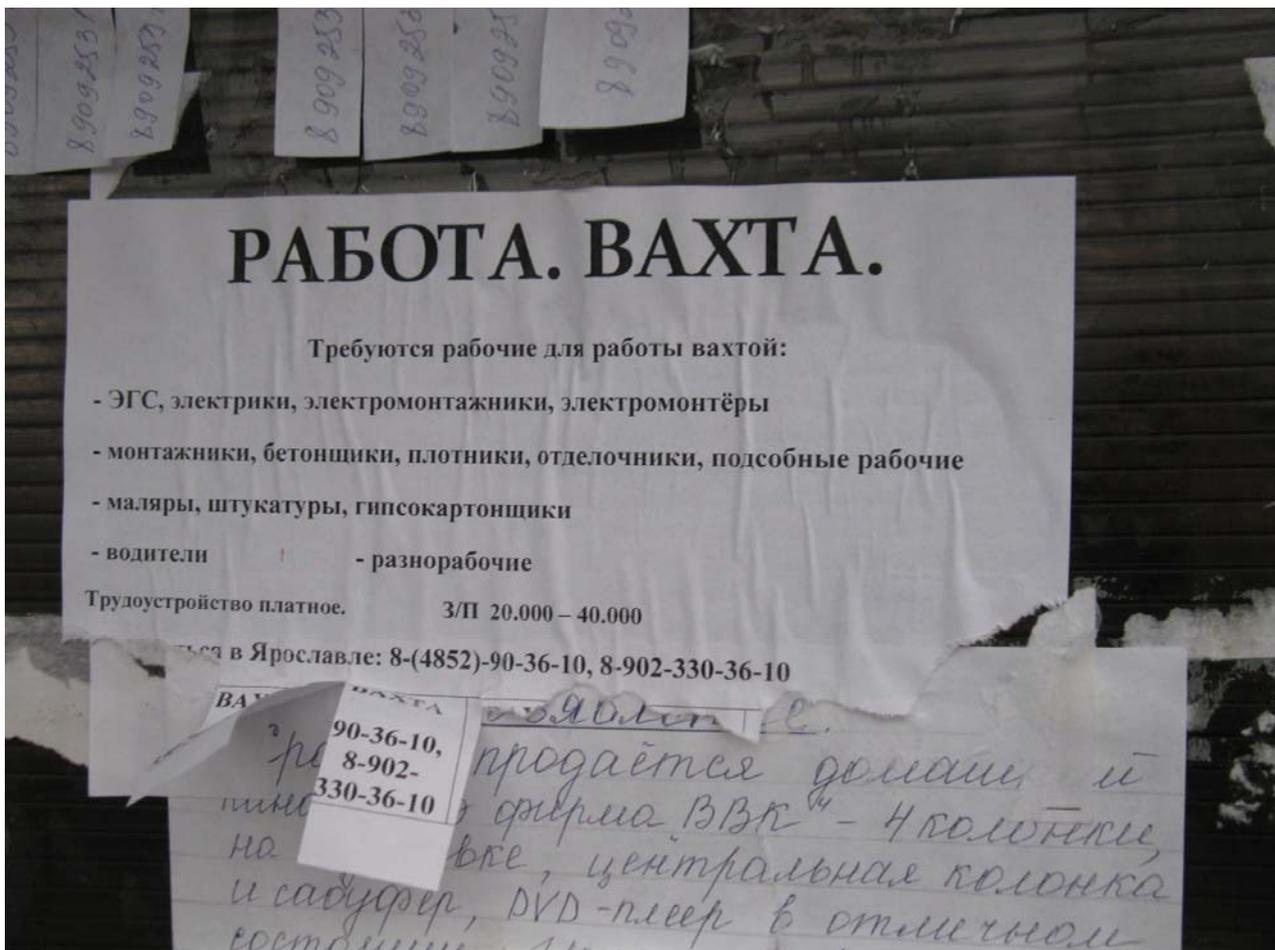


Photo 10. A street ad about recruiting electricians, riggers, welders, carpenters, builders, painters, finishers, drivers, and handymen for rotation work in Yaroslavl. Paper slips with the contact phone numbers have been torn off from such ads, i.e. people are actively seeking jobs. Photo by Juri Plusnin; Poshekhonye, Yaroslavl Region, September 2013.

#### 4.6. Using information from school class registers

Besides household registers, a review of school class registers and other sources proves to be a rather reliable method for estimating the share of *otkhodniks* in a locality. Three potential sources of information on employment of the pupils' parents are available at schools: class registers where the parents' place of work is indicated; information provided by class teachers who are usually very well aware of the parents' employment; and the school's social passport, which includes data on the children's families. This method limits the selection to families with schoolchildren excluding childless *otkhodniks* or those whose children are either still little or already grown-up. However, experience shows that people with schoolchildren form a substantial part of all *otkhodniks*.

Class registers are the least accessible (due to personal data protection) and not very factual sources of information about *otkhodniks*, since the *otkhodniks* themselves are reluctant to disclose their actual place of work and are more likely to indicate that they are unemployed. Hence, the problem with class registers is similar

to that which arises when we calculate the difference between the number of working-age residents and the number of people employed in the economy—otkhodniks come "in the same lot" with dependents and those employed in the local economy informally. For example, aggregate data from all classes of Toropets comprehensive secondary school No. 1 for the 2010/2011 school year shows that 2.2% of the parents (19 out of 864) indicated that they were working in St. Petersburg or Moscow, whereas 17% either failed to specify their place of work (4.6%), or declared themselves unemployed (12.4%). In the 2011/2012 school year, the share of parents who did not indicate their employer (8.9%) or recorded themselves as unemployed (7.4%) remained more or less on the same level—16% (the selection was incomplete and included 446 people).

Clarifications can be obtained by a parallel interview of class teachers, however the assistance of the school principal or deputy principal is needed to talk to a sufficient number of them. In Kasimov, for example, a survey of homeroom teachers identified that on average 9% of the schoolchildren's parents had jobs in Moscow. The percentage of children whose parents worked away from home varied in different classes from 0% to 30%. In Kasimov's secondary school No. 1, we interviewed homeroom teachers of 21 classes with 491 pupils. Of them, 48 children (10%) have at least one parent who engages in otkhodnichestvo. The deputy principal of school No. 4 communicated that out of 619 pupils about 50 children (8%) had parents who worked away from home.

A school's social passport can be a reliable source of information on the number of otkhodniks in the families of the schoolchildren; however, their content varies from town to town. In Kineshma, for example, social school passports contain the following field: "parents working away from home". This allows determining precisely the number of otkhodniks among the pupils' parents. Notably, such information for the school's social passport is provided not by the parents themselves but by homeroom teachers. At secondary school No. 19 in Kineshma, 880 pupils have altogether 139 parents working away from home (14.6%), whereas 554 pupils at Gymnasium No. 2 named after Ostrovsky have 87 such parents (15.7%):

Interviewer: - Wow, so you are maintaining a separate document, which contains a special field "number of otkhodniks"? It is the first time we are encountering anything of the sort. I assume not all parents indicate their place of work?

Respondent: - The information is provided not by the parents but by homeroom teachers. It is mandatory for us. Every school has a social passport. Homeroom teachers are maintaining social passports of the classes they are responsible for. This information is then accumulated in the school's social passport. This is relevant for us, as many parents work away from home, including on a rotation basis. Their principal destinations are Moscow, Kaliningrad, and St. Petersburg. That is it. For that reason, we maintain such data. You won't even have to talk to anyone. It will be sufficient to check out the social passport. The class registers are not availa-

ble at the moment. Moreover, the parents may refuse to disclose such information. We sign an agreement with them as to the personal data they should provide.

I: - Can you give a very rough estimate: do otkhodniks account for more or less than a half of the parents?

R: - In the gymnasium, I would say, they are under 50 percent. In other schools, I assume, their share is higher. Children from all over the town study here. They generally come from well-to-do, high-income families.

I: - You mean, children of the local elite?

R: - Yes, to a certain extent. Our gymnasium is the only one in town, so parents bring their children from all over the place. The school program here is more complicated and demanding. Now if you take the schools located in the vicinity of the factories—for example, schools number 1, 17, and probably 19, - the percentage there should be higher, as the factories are practically idle.<sup>67</sup>

As we see, this approach to assessing the share of otkhodniks in a locality also has immanent methodological weaknesses. First, the selection includes only families with schoolchildren. Second, enrollment depends on the location, status, and prestige of a specific school, so a more or less complete picture can be obtained only after surveying several schools located in different areas of the town.

#### 4.7. Data obtained by sagittal mapping

In several towns—Nikolsk, Toropets, Temnikov, and Soligalich—we did a door-to-door round of the apartments and private houses in one of the main (and usually the longest) streets. This allowed us to assess the share of families whose members engaged in otkhodnichestvo. Unlike other methods, this approach revealed that the share of otkhodnik families was not big—we encountered them only in every tenth house or apartment. Thus, according to the results of sagittal mapping only, the share of otkhodnik families in small towns is about ten percent. Here, however, we must bear in mind that a significant proportion of the urban population are pensioners, who, of course, cannot be otkhodniks. Considering that pensioners account for 26 to 30 percent of the families, we should exclude from the assessment a quarter or even a third of all houses (apartments) in the street. Moreover, people may say nothing to the researchers about their otkhodnik neighbors if the latter are absent. We permanently encountered situations when neighbors or relatives gave us false information about otkhodniks living in the building; they did not tell us the truth (even the otkhodniks themselves were often reluctant to disclose the truth). Therefore, we can only assume, that according to sagittal mapping, otkhodniks live in 20 to 25 percent (at least) of families where there are able-bodied members.

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Consequently, the situation with estimating the population of otkhodniks is completely unclear. The issue is not covered by official government statistics. Aggre-

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67 Interview with O.N. Yanshenkina, Director of Gymnasium No. 3 named after A.N. Ostrovsky; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

gated Rosstat data contains no information on *otkhodniki*. Public employment centers could theoretically record these people as able-bodied citizens not employed in the district economy, or record them according to the ILO methodology. However, for one or another reason they fail to do so, primarily because they focus exclusively on officially registered unemployed for whom unemployment has essentially become a profession. People who are not employed in the local economy are not included in municipal reports or the existing "municipality passports"; they simply "drop out" of all records. Local officials demonstrate no interest in them either, even though they live next to them in the same street or town. It is also impossible to obtain information from migration or tax authorities, as neither of them possess such data.

Currently, the only valid method is to apply various methodological tricks (just as we did) and assess the number of *otkhodniki* directly in a specific town or district; then to extrapolate the obtained figures to the entire country. What picture emerges as a result of the above? It is of course very crude and rather inaccurate but at least it allows assessing the magnitude of the phenomenon. We already gave an estimate of the number of *otkhodniki* in Russia at the time when we were launching our empirical research of this phenomenon (Skalon, 2011). Later we updated our estimates based on fieldwork findings (Plusnin, 2012).

Such estimates are based on the following considerations. Currently, in small Russian towns and rural areas from 10–15 to 50–80 percent of the working population (mostly male, but somewhere the share of women is also high) are working on the side, generally on their own. According to these criteria, they qualify as contemporary *otkhodniki*. On average, it appears that at least 40 percent of provincial families live off proceeds from *otkhodnichestvo*. Considering that these areas account for over 60 percent of all households, we have to assume that out of 50–54 million Russian families, at least 10–15 million, or maybe even 20 million families make a living by *otkhodnichestvo*. This means that estimated roughly, one quarter to one third of all Russian families are the families of *otkhodniki*.



## Chapter 5

### Regional specialization by type of craft

*"It is here [in the small towns and villages] that the locals, when asked about the husband's or father's occupation, reply, "Moscow!",—ignoring all rules of logic and grammar. And everyone understands them. "Moscow" is not an occupation, it is a lifestyle."<sup>68</sup>*

Determining the specialization of small towns and their surrounding areas in various otkhodnik occupations, identifying the prevailing otkhodnik practices and historical circumstances that influenced them, is an important and always interesting issue. Obviously, such specialization affects otkhodnik destinations—where local otkhodniks go and what they do there depends on their skills and type of activity. We will address these issues in reverse order: first—the prevailing employment destinations, then—the regional specialization by type of craft.

#### 5.1. Employment destinations

Obviously, employment destinations differ from area to area and from locality to locality, however, there is a uniform pattern. The dominating destination for inhabitants of the European part of Russia is Moscow and its vicinities, followed by regional capitals. Our northern capital—St. Petersburg—attracts otkhodniks only from adjacent regions. Intraregional domestic labor migration is rather rare, whereas long-distance wanderings are much more frequent. This distinguishes contemporary otkhodnichestvo from the classical one, and we believe that this is mainly due to significantly better and faster transport facilities, which allow contemporary otkhodniks to cover greater distances.

Moscow and the vicinities (Moscow Region) is the prevailing center of attraction for otkhodniks. Of all surveyed otkhodniks, over three quarters (78%)<sup>69</sup> either worked or were working in the Moscow area:

"...All healthy men work in Moscow. Especially now, summer is their rush time. You won't find them home. That's why in the *Parents* field [in the kindergarten] I indicate "unemployed". In Moscow. The father? In Moscow. Well, he is considered unemployed. Rarely who will admit that he is a driver or something. All declare themselves to be unemployed, and everybody works in Moscow and the like."<sup>70</sup>

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68 (Lebyodushkina, 2008, p. 249)

69 Please note that the total percentage of otkhodnik destinations exceeds 100%, as a respondent may indicate several different places where he/she used to work at any time.

70 Interview with the wife and mother of two otkhodniks; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

"Nowadays, all otkhodniks aim for Moscow, that's where they can find work."<sup>71</sup>

We do see that seasonal and temporary work tends to concentrate in and around Moscow, and nowadays the pattern of otkhodnik destinations in Central Russia remains the same as in imperial times—they migrate to the capital. Only previously otkhodniks used to travel mainly to St. Petersburg and less frequently to Moscow. Today, the northern capital attracts otkhodniks primarily from the neighboring regions (Pskov, Novgorod, Tver and Karelia) and partly from those regions that have long-standing business ties with St. Petersburg—Arkhangelsk, Vologda, and Kostroma. Currently, Moscow and its surroundings attract otkhodniks from the above areas, and from the eastern and all southern parts of European Russia as well.

Otkhodniks come to Moscow not only upon their own initiative. The Moscow area actively seeks labor resources in the regions through employment centers and private information channels. Thus, in Mordovia we checked out two local newspapers (*Iz ruk v ruki (Hand-to-hand)*) and a leaflet to the *Stolitsa S (Capital S)* newspaper issued in Saransk) and that day found 20 job offers in each issue. Sixteen vacancies were open in the Moscow Region. The remaining four invited workers to Sochi (skilled seamstresses), Mordovia, and Tyumen (Surgut)<sup>72</sup>.

Curiously, the residents of all towns we surveyed are absolutely certain that Muscovites are well aware of otkhodnichestvo and its magnitude, since Moscow accommodates so many laborers from all parts of European Russia. Our respondents cannot even imagine that Muscovites notice nothing and do not give a thought to who, for example, guards the neighboring supermarket or school. Probably only the janitors from Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan, who stand out by their appearance, rise concerns among the Muscovites as to the inflow of migrants. When we told our respondents that nobody in Moscow had any idea about otkhodnichestvo, they did not believe us, and the usual reaction was, "*You must be kidding! Everyone knows everything perfectly well!*" For them, otkhodnichestvo is such a commonplace phenomenon that they cannot even imagine that someone can be unaware of it, especially in Moscow which is swarming with people who came for afar seeking temporary employment. Currently, every third (if not second) able-bodied adult in the capital is not a local. Recently, Moscow's mayor Sergey Sobyenin officially indicated the number of Muscovites of working age—about 6.5 million people. It is

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71 Interview with T.A. Pronina, chief curator of the Kasimov Local History Museum; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

72 Report on the expedition to Saransk, N.N. Zhidkevich and A.A. Pozanenko, November 2011. It is noteworthy how low the remuneration for the "side jobs" is: employers at a resort in Mordovia offer slightly over 4,000 rubles (about \$120) for a fortnight's work during New Year holidays.

reasonable to assume that this figure should be increased by another 5 million people (at least), who work alongside the local residents as *otkhodniks*, most of them unrecorded.

We also found out that when our *otkhodniks* from locations relatively distant from Moscow (especially those engaged in building summer cottages) refer to the Moscow area, they mean not only the immediate surroundings of the capital, but also include all adjacent regions—Kaluga, Ryazan, Tula, Vladimir, and Tver Regions. The reason for such a geographical extension can be explained by the fact that the majority of homeowners constructing summer housing in the countryside within 300–400 km from Moscow are Muscovites:

"Well, the "Moscow area" is a general expression. Moscow occupies everything now. The Kaluga Region and the Tula Region. The homeowners come mostly from Moscow."<sup>73</sup>

Actually, all over European Russia, locals stick the label of "Muscovite" to all city dwellers who are currently buying houses in provincial towns and villages for their summer residences, independent of whether such "Muscovite" is a resident of St. Petersburg, Yaroslavl, Cherepovets, Murmansk, or Moscow. Unlike the *otkhodniks*, we made it a point to distinguish the Moscow area from the adjacent territories. Therefore, when our respondent referred to "working in the Moscow area", we clarified what he meant exactly:

"... - Mainly, the Moscow area.

- Do you mean Kaluga and other neighboring regions as well?

- Well, yes, all those regions. We have often orders to build in the Kaluga Region."<sup>74</sup>

Only 11% of all surveyed *otkhodniks* had ever worked in areas of the Central Federal District other than Moscow and the Moscow Region. Nowadays, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region are not as popular among *otkhodniks* as they used to be. Only 10% of *otkhodniks*, among them residents of Kostroma, Tver, Arkhangelsk, and Leningrad Regions, chose this area as their job destination:

My husband used to work in St. Pete [St. Petersburg]. Such people are mainly engaged in building. I have a friend here in town, who goes to work for some tea company. She works on a rotation basis, along with others. You can see by bus passengers that people come back home for the weekend, and then leave again for St. Pete. Less than half go to work out of town. We have teams here who used to build villas and renovate schools in the suburbs of St. Pete."<sup>75</sup>

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73 Interview with a truck driver (former *otkhodnik*); Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

74 Interview with an *otkhodnik* businessman, who has three construction teams (he secures construction orders and arranges the work of the teams); Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

75 Interview with the wife of an *otkhodnik* during a round of a nine-storey apartment house; Podporozhye, Leningrad Region, February 2012.

We observed a significant share of otkhodniks aiming for the northern capital only in Tver Region (31%) and in Leningrad Region (91%). The latter turned out to be the only region among those we surveyed in the European part of Russia, where Moscow and its surroundings was not the principal employment destination. Therefore, St. Petersburg is a significant center of attraction only for otkhodniks of the neighboring regions. An otkhodnik from Arkhangelsk working near St. Petersburg said that mainly residents of the Pskov and Novgorod regions were building summer cottages in the area:

"We have some sort of work at least due to the forests, but take the Pskov and Novgorod regions—they have nothing left, no work, nothing at all! They... all of Pskov is in St. Pete, and half of Novgorod!"<sup>76</sup>

In Temnikov, we also heard about otkhodniks going to work from Mordovia to St. Petersburg. There is an interesting correlation between the destination and the ethnicity of the otkhodnik:

"People find work in Moscow, St. Pete, and the North. Mordovian settlements go mainly north, to Aikhal. For example, practically everyone from Konakovo works out of town... Temnikov residents [Russians] go mainly to Moscow, and the Tatars—to St. Pete. They have lots of relatives and acquaintances there. Tatars account for over seven percent of the local population."<sup>77</sup>

Otkhodniks indicate the "North" as the fourth most popular employment destination (8%). By the "North" the people imply any distant place eastwards or north-eastwards from their home, including the Urals and Siberia: the Nenets Autonomous District, the Komi Republic and all the territory of Russia beyond the Ural mountains, including the Primorye Territory which is a relatively southern area.<sup>78</sup> Generally, work in the "North" is related to mineral extraction or construction of oil and gas pipelines and respective site development (including preparing routes, where woodcutting skills are essential).

When going far away from home, otkhodniks from the Urals (Cherdyn district of Perm Territory) prefer Siberia to Moscow and major cities of European Russia:

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76 Interview with otkhodnik Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

77 Interview with a researcher of the Temnikov Local History Museum; Temnikov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

78 Curiously, otkhodniks from central Russia do not include the Murmansk Region (with similar transport accessibility) into their definition of the "North", although that is exactly how the local residents refer to Murmansk.

Interviewer: - Where do people mainly go to work from Cherdyn—to the forests?

Respondent: - Yes, from here they go mainly to the forests.

I: - What about the central regions, the European part? Do they go there? Or do they go mainly beyond the Urals and to the North?

R: - I am not aware of anybody here going in the direction of Moscow.<sup>79</sup>

Only about 4% of those surveyed are working or used to work as *otkhodniks* in their own region (although in the Cherdyn district they constitute the majority, as almost everybody is either logging or working at sawmills in the neighboring towns of Solikamsk, Berezniki, and Krasnovishersk). The regional capital is not necessarily the destination of such intraregional temporary employment. *Otkhodniks* frequently aim for neighboring districts, where they work as loggers and sawmill laborers. Besides, they are often hired as drivers by trailer truck owners to haul various goods over long distances. Transport destinations can vary, but due to significantly tougher competition among long-haul truckers in recent years, drivers with their own trucks, who hire themselves out privately, tend to work within one or two neighboring regions. This trend is different from the one that existed previously, when long-haul trucks crisscrossed the whole country, and it was not unusual for drivers from Vladivostok to deliver goods directly to Perm and Samara, St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad. Such long-haul truckers exist still, but they get their long-distance orders from major companies, so they usually seek employment with these companies and drive corporate vehicles instead of their own.

Sochi is a target for just a handful of *otkhodniks* (under one percent). This is a new and possibly temporary destination, as it is related to the Olympic construction sites (after the Olympic Games were over, this destination disappeared from the *otkhodniks'* lists). Among our respondents, only one person was engaged in building a private house in Sochi.

The distribution of employment destinations by federal districts in the European part of Russia demonstrates that these areas are insignificant for the *otkhodniks*. Only two percent of the *otkhodniks* are interested in the Volga Federal District; one percent—in the Northwestern Federal District (without St. Petersburg and the Leningrad District); and less than one percent—in the Southern Federal District (without Sochi and its surroundings). Rarely, specific locations popular among *otkhodniks* were named. Thus, *otkhodniks* from Mordovia work in Ryazan and Kazan [relatively nearby]; far-away destinations include Aikhal in Yakutia and the Amur Region. Nizhny Novgorod, being the closest major city, is rather popular in Chuvashia and the Ivanovo Region. In Toropets, we heard about Velikiye Luki; in the

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79 Interview with S.A.T., brother of a builder *otkhodnik* working in Surgut; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, November 2011.

Leningrad Region—about Karelia, and the Murmansk and Vologda Regions. Otkhodniks from Kasimov aim for Ryazan, Sakhalin, and Primorye. Those from Kineshma mentioned Kaliningrad and Vladivostok. Sochi and Astrakhan were named as some of the destinations for Kostroma residents. People in Soligalich referred to the neighboring Vologda Region, where about a couple dozen of otkhodniks are engaged in the logging industry.

By contrast, principal employment destinations from Cherdyn are either intra-district (Pokcha, Nyrob), or intra-regional ones—both short-range (50–100 km), such as Krasnovishersk, Solikamsk, Sim, and Berezniki, and medium-range, such as Perm. Long-distance destinations are all located eastwards, and include Siberia (Surgut, Yakutia), and regional capitals of the Urals (Izhevsk). The Arkhangelsk Region and the Krasnodar Territory were also named among employment destinations.

Thus, in the European part of Russia, the geographical location is decisive for otkhodnik destinations only in the towns closest to St. Petersburg. In all other places, otkhodniks are attracted by the huge market presented by Moscow and the Moscow Region. Otkhodniks from the Cis-Ural area and the Urals seem to be drawn more to Siberia (this is illustrated by the Mordovian otkhodnichestvo, which is clearly split into two destinations—Moscow and Siberia).

The targeted destinations reveal the following pattern with regard to the distances otkhodniks are prepared to cover in their quest for work. Contemporary otkhodniks travel by train, bus, minibus taxi, or personal vehicles (passenger cars and trucks). Short-distance job destinations are generally in the radius of 200–300 km (less frequently—400–500 km) from the otkhodnik's hometown, which corresponds to a four to eight hour journey by train or car. Such a distance allows the worker to return home every week or two without straining the family budget by exorbitant travel expenses (a round trip by car or bus would cost from 500 to 1,500 rubles [from \$15 to \$50]). Most otkhodniks working as security guards in Moscow and the Moscow Region live precisely at that distance from their job destinations. For a two-week "shift", they receive about 15,000 rubles [~\$500]. Roughly, they spend a third of the earnings on food, drink and travel, so the net amount they bring home is about 10,000 rubles [~\$300].

The same distances to the workplace apply to many otkhodniks employed in Moscow as janitors, nannies, governesses and other similar unskilled staff. However, even these otkhodniks (both male and female) often stay away from home for months in a row. Thus, family members of elderly female otkhodniks from the Orel Region (Pokrovskoye settlement, Dmitrovsk-Orlovsky) say that the women, who

are all pensioners with grown-up children, come home from Moscow, where they serve as nannies, only once or twice per year for a week at the utmost, although the distance to Moscow is only 300–400 km. In this case, working conditions prevent the *otkhodnik* from commuting home; moreover, she is no longer bound by household chores or childcare duties.

Medium-distance employment destinations with an average radius of 500–700 km psychologically correspond to an overnight train ride (10 to 12 hours), or a less comfortable car journey of approximately the same duration. As round-trip travel costs either by train or by car exceed 3,000 rubles [~\$100], and the journey with stopovers lasts two days or more, the *otkhodniks* usually depart to such destinations for a month or two. This scheme is typical for such professionals as carpenters, builders, and engineers. The seasonal nature and piecework character of the job allow them to come home every month or two for a couple of weeks to catch up on household chores, family duties and parenting.

Long-distance employment destinations are located 1,000 to 1,500 km from the hometowns, which corresponds to about twenty-four hours of travel time. Generally, such destinations imply several months of continuous work. Finally, remote destinations are located more than 3,000 km away from home and require at least a two-day journey by train. In such cases, *otkhodniks* leave home for a year and longer. Should they work at enterprises in the "North", then they come home only every second year for vacation.

Thus, both the duration and the cycle of outside employment vary greatly depending on the type and character of the job as well as on the distance to the employment destination. It seems impossible to outline a uniform consistent pattern. Summarizing the overview of the distances between the *otkhodniks'* hometowns and their job destinations for all the towns and districts surveyed in ten Russian regions, we noticed that roughly, the totality of contemporary *otkhodniks* is distributed evenly among those who leave for short-, medium-, and long-distance destinations—one-third in every case. In view of the major attraction of Moscow and the Moscow Region, short-distance job destinations prevail among *otkhodniks* of the neighboring areas—Ryazan, Orel, Tver, and Ivanovo Regions, Mordovia, etc. Medium-distance destinations prevail in areas located further away from the capital, such as Vologda and Kostroma Regions, and Chuvashia. Naturally, the "preferred" distances to the employment destinations vary from town to town and depend primarily on the proximity to a major labor market. Thus, short-distance destinations are specific for *otkhodniks* from Kasimov, Temnikov, and Kineshma (they go to Moscow); Podporozhye (St. Petersburg); and Cherdyn (Krasnovishersk, Solikamsk,

Berezniki, and Perm). Otkhodniks from the Kostroma Region (Soligalich, Chukhloma, Makaryev, and Kologriv), Nikolsk, Toropets, Ardatov, Alatyř, and Kargopol prefer medium-distance destinations (Moscow and to a lesser extent St. Petersburg). At the same time, long-distance job destinations were also characteristic for otkhodniks from Temnikov, Kineshma, Nikolsk, Cherdyn, Kasimov, and Kargopol.

To summarize the above description, we provide a graphic presentation of employment destinations in Figure 3. The destinations and their popularity (determined as the percentage of otkhodniks going there) are outlined for 16 surveyed regions and their administrative centers.

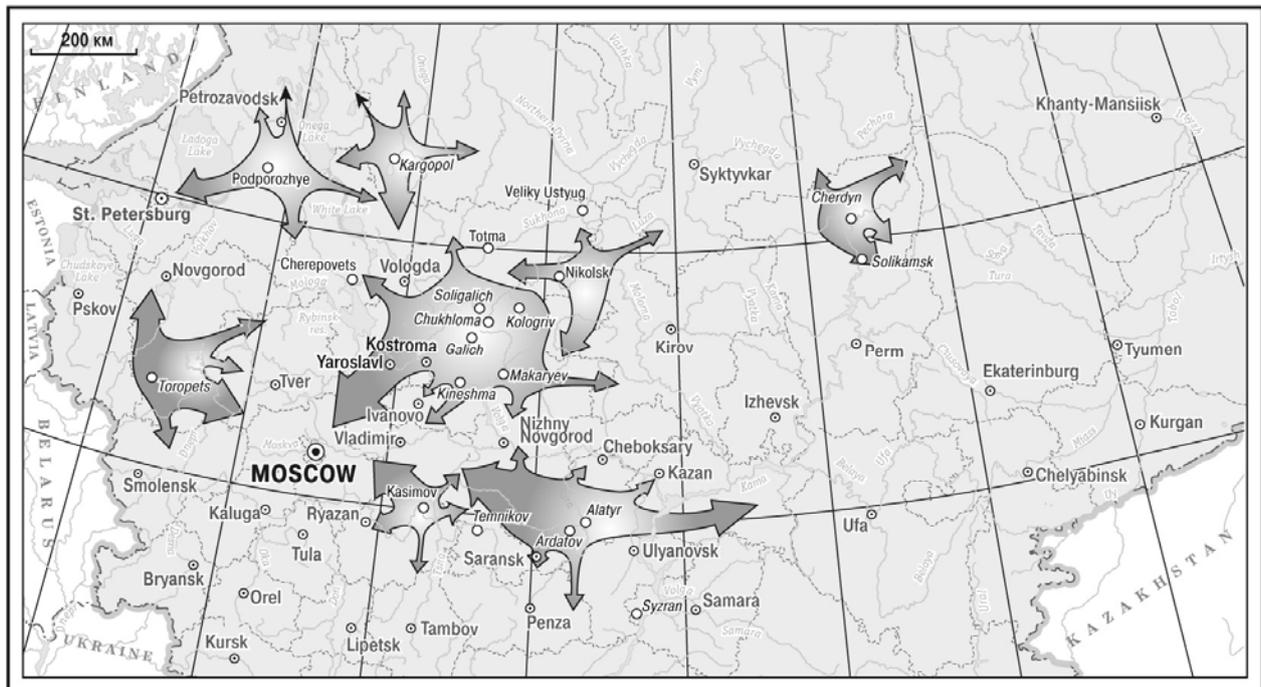


Fig. 3: Employment destinations targeted by the otkhodniks from some of the surveyed towns. The thickness of the arrows corresponds approximately to the share of otkhodniks aiming for the capitals and the regional centers. All arrows pointing eastwards indicate Siberia, northwards—"the North".

## 5.2. Otkhodnik occupations specific for different areas

At the initial stages of our fieldwork we got the impression that the crafts preferred by the otkhodniks are pre-determined geographically. This notion was supported by records of economic and historical research of otkhodnichestvo of the 18th-19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, which constantly underlined the pronounced professional specialization of otkhodnik craftsmen from different areas—carpenters and raftsmen, janitors and waiters, horse cart drivers and peddlers (*see, e.g., Vladimirsky, 1927; Lurie, 1995a, 1995b; Smurova, 2003*). Frequently, inhabitants of different districts focused on one or another craft to get a competitive advantage over other otkhodniks due to extremely tough competition among them

(especially in the capitals) resulting from large-scale *otkhodnichestvo* among peasants. However, employment through connections is not to be ignored. Anton Chekhov provided a vivid illustration thereof in one of his short stories, "All Zhukovo lads, those who could read and write were packed off to Moscow and hired out as waiters or bellboys (while from the village across the river all boys were apprenticed to bakers). That had been the custom from the days of serfdom long ago, when a certain Luka Ivanych, a peasant from Zhukovo, now a legendary figure, who served as a bartender in one of the Moscow clubs, would take none but his fellow-villagers into his service. Once established, these latter summoned their relatives and found jobs for them in taverns and restaurants. Since then, the neighboring villagers never called Zhukovo other than Lackeysville." [Chekhov, 1983, p. 105]. Contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* is nowadays only re-emerging and is in the process of acquiring the magnitude comparable to that of the classical one. Nevertheless, we got the feeling that specialization already exists, particularly because we launched our fieldwork in the Kostroma Region, which is traditionally famous for its carpenters. Research in the Kostroma Region was immediately followed by fieldwork in Mordovia. The resulting impression was that *otkhodnichestvo* in the north and south differ substantially by type of activity and nature of work—building trades prevail in the north, whereas the majority of "southern" *otkhodniks* work as security guards.

Therefore, initially we tentatively classified the surveyed areas of European Russia into northern and southern regions; later we had to extend the classification by adding central regions. According to our classification, northern areas include the Regions of Kostroma, Vologda, and Arkhangelsk, as well as the Perm Territory; southern areas include the Ryazan Region and the Republics of Mordovia and Chuvashia (later, already in 2013 we determined that by the nature of *otkhodnichestvo* the Orel Region could also be classified as typically "southern"). We expected Tver and Ivanovo Regions to be middle-of-the-road, however fieldwork confirmed this hypothesis only in part. Tver Region, indeed, occupied a certain intermediate position, but *otkhodnichestvo* in the Ivanovo Region, despite the geography and administrative and territorial characteristics<sup>80</sup>, demonstrated "southern" features.

The areas covered by subsequent research (under the project *The social portrait of the contemporary Russian otkhodnik*) can also be tentatively classified into three

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80 The Ivanovo-Voznesensk industrial area was established by "slicing" certain districts off several neighboring provinces; among others, it included a substantial part of the Kostroma Province.

groups: the northern Pskov and Yaroslavl Regions, the southern Penza and Saratov Regions, and the central Nizhny Novgorod Region.

The initial idea to classify regions by prevailing crafts based roughly on the latitudinal gradient proved to be deficient. It was more appropriate to rely on other criteria, namely, the essential local resources that the residents could independently use and process externally. The forest and its products are those resources that are most accessible to the people (*see: Makaryev on Unzha*, 2009, pp. 48–63; Kuester, 2012, pp. 87–94). However, a visit to the north of the Leningrad Region demonstrated that extensive forest coverage alone does not automatically determine the outside occupations practiced by local residents. We visited two localities in the Leningrad Region—Podporozhye and the village of Voznesenye. Both of them are now practically completely inhabited by the first three generations of newcomers from more southern areas. Strictly speaking, they are not woodlanders to the fullest extent. They have learned to fell and process trees, but they have not learned to build from them. That is why the external trades practiced by *otkhodniks* from Podporozhye have practically nothing to do with the forest. By contrast, some *otkhodniks* from the forests of Nizhny Novgorod Region (eastwards of the Volga river) have the skills to build wooden houses<sup>81</sup>, however, they are in the minority (Zhidkevich, 2013). A possible explanation is that historically these areas were the domain of stonemasons, and not carpenters. For this reason, *otkhodniks* from Nizhny Novgorod Region are currently engaged primarily in capital construction or related industries (for example, they work at concrete products plants). *Otkhodniks* from the relatively forest-covered Pskov Region go mainly to St. Petersburg. However, the proportion of carpenters among them is lower than in the northern areas that "serve" Moscow. On the one hand, the scale of effective demand for such work in the northern capital is not high enough for it to acquire a mass character. On the other hand, the Pskovians do not have the skills that inhabitants of the Kostroma, Vologda, and Arkhangelsk Regions, the Perm Territory, and the Komi Republic possess. The local home-building tradition is different; it is closer to that prevailing in northern Belarus and the Baltics. Large log houses are not customary for the Pskov area; this catches the eye of a traveler immediately. At the same time, the proximity to a city with a multi-sector economy significantly diversifies the specialization of Pskov *otkhodniks*.

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81 There are more skilled builders of wooden houses in Vetluga, which used to be part of the Kostroma Province (up to 1944), than in Semyonov, which always belonged to the Nizhny Novgorod area, although their surrounding forest resources are similar. It is noteworthy that the inhabitants of Vetluga continue to consider themselves natives of the Kostroma area, and not of Nizhny Novgorod.

Indeed, in the old towns and villages of the Arkhangelsk, Vologda and Kostroma Regions, as well as the Perm Territory, which have hardly changed in the past 100–150 years, many *otkhodnik* crafts are directly related to the forest. Thus, logging, wood processing, and construction of private wooden houses (predominantly log cabins) are the main outside occupations of over 80% of *otkhodniks* from Nikolsk, Kologriv, Makaryev, Chukloma, and Soligalich, and of up to two thirds of *otkhodniks* from Kargopol and Cherdyn (for these, Moscow is too far away). Most houses are built on a turnkey basis. Generally, the builders purchase timber from local logging enterprises or at sawmills and bring it with them to Moscow and the Moscow Region. In rare cases they harvest timber themselves (due to legislative changes, small-scale short-term lease of forest parcels is practically impossible, and sublease is unprofitable). Purchase of construction materials at the end destination is an exception. The underlying reason is that the quality of timber from forests in the north is much higher than that from forests around Moscow and more to the south:

Interviewer: - Do you bring your own timber?

Respondent: - Yes. That is why it is so expensive, because it comes from the Arkhangelsk area. They want us to build from Karelian and Arkhangelsk pine timber, because it is the best in terms of density and is rather rot resistant. Take any big tree in the Moscow area—hit it hard and it will fall to pieces<sup>82</sup>.

Customers prefer the builders to bring timber from their home regions, since this ensures its authenticity. Besides, it is cheaper to transport timber than buy it at a building materials market:

"It's simply cheaper to buy it here than somewhere in and around Moscow. It costs more to buy the same timber from a wholesaler in Moscow than to deliver it directly to the customer from here."<sup>83</sup>

The log home can be built either directly on the customer's property, or prefabricated off-site on the *otkhodniks'* grounds. In the second case it is disassembled, trucked to the customer and then re-erected on-site. Thus, prefabricated log cabin kits in various stages of readiness can be seen in practically every town or large rural settlement of the Kostroma Region, most closely surveyed by us. They are erected in the backyards of private estates, village outskirts, and sawmill premises to be later shipped to the end customer for installation. However, some log homes are manufactured not against specific orders but for casual buyers.

Other northern *otkhodniks*, who are not engaged in logging or log and timber home construction, are generally occupied in apartment renovations, capital construction of high-rise residential or commercial buildings and industrial properties, as well as

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82 Interview with *otkhodnik* Slava; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

83 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexey; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

in security (however, for the northern areas this is a rare case; thus, we did not locate a single *otkhodnik* working as security guard either in Kargopol (Arkhangelsk Region) or Nikolsk (Vologda Region)).

There is a whole group of people in and around Kargopol who regularly travel to West Siberia to fell trees at oil production properties—they clear the sites and prepare them for well drilling and pipe laying.<sup>84</sup> Curiously, it was here that we met the only female *otkhodnik* among all those we encountered in the Arkhangelsk Region. She accompanies her husband and works in the canteen and at the warehouse. We encountered no female *otkhodniks* in the Vologda Region (Nikolsk). The situation is similar in the Cherdyn district—although most of the local men are engaged in outside trades, we found no women *otkhodniks*.

Interviewer: - Do women practice *otkhodnichestvo*?

Respondent: - I haven't heard or seen anything of the like.<sup>85</sup>

Interviewer: - Do local women undertake jobs away from home?

Respondent: - No, our women don't. They only travel to Cherdyn if they work there. We don't have enough work here in the village.<sup>86</sup>

In the Kostroma and Yaroslavl Regions, we encountered just several female *otkhodniks*—they were working as plasterers, governesses, or nannies. One of them was even employed as a security guard at a kindergarten.

Besides the Arkhangelsk, Vologda and Kostroma Regions, we encountered *otkhodniks* engaged in log and timber building only in Toropets, Tver Region. We estimate their share to be about 15% of all *otkhodniks* there, and they specialize primarily in building houses from square timber, which is substantially easier than log building and does not require the relevant skills. *Otkhodniks* from the Ryazan Region, Chuvashia and Mordovia do not engage in the construction of wooden houses at all (we recorded only isolated cases, such as the assembly of a prefabricated wooden panel house, and participation in the construction of a summer cottage near Ryazan—all cases involved low-skilled carpentry).

According to our observations in Toropets and partly in Kashin and Bezhetsk, the Tver Region turned out to be the most diversified area by crafts practiced by the *otkhodniks*. Besides building homes from square timber (they do not possess the skills to build log houses) and working as security guards (about ten percent in each occupation), over three quarters of Toropets *otkhodniks* are blue-collar workers:

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84 In April 2011, we observed similar groups of loggers from the European part of Russia (and also from Moldova) along the oil pipeline route in the Aldan district of Yakutia.

85 Interview with *otkhodnik* Roman, 25 years old, working as logger in the Cherdyn district; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, December 2011.

86 Interview with Tatiana Ivanovna, the mother of an *otkhodnik* working at a sawmill in Solikamsk; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

builders (capital construction), welders, telecommunication technicians, electricians, drivers, telecommunication line installers, assemblers of outdoor advertising constructions, plumbers, car mechanics, food processors, and others. There are more women *otkhodniks* here than in the northern regions, but fewer than in the eastern and central ones, where female *otkhodnichestvo* is a common phenomenon. Women *otkhodniks* from Toropets work as painters and plasterers, as well as domestic helpers. A review of school class registers in a Toropets secondary school revealed new and rare outside occupations. Parents who had indicated Moscow and St. Petersburg as their place of work included a jeweler, a waitress, a high altitude installation workman, an accountant, and even a company director.<sup>87</sup>

In Kasimov (Ryazan Region), the activities of *otkhodniks* are less diversified. Every fifth *otkhodnik* here is engaged in security, another 20%—in capital construction, interior renovation and finishing. Many people work as drivers, including long-haul truckers. Quite a few are engaged as welders, fitters, excavator operators, lathe operators, and others. Women work in trade, catering, and as governesses, nannies and domestic helpers.

The situation in the town of Lyubim (Yaroslavl Region) is worth mentioning. Historical literature bears evidence that the residents of Lyubim district largely worked as waiters in the taverns and restaurants of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the Volga Region [see, e.g., Melnikov-Pechersky, 1976]. Due to this one-field focus, all waiters were gradually nicknamed "Lyubimovtsy" [coming from Lyubim]. While conducting research in Lyubim of today, we found that only some senior residents recalled this tradition. Besides, waiters are not common among current Lyubim *otkhodniks*. However, the one-field focus remains—the town's vocational school No. 47 duly supplies the market with drivers of specialty vehicles, who then work rotation shifts in the North, engage in road construction, etc.

"We have a vocational school in town... I am working there, by the way. Upon graduation, the students receive a driver's license (categories B and C) plus the certificate of a tractor operator. With such certificates, they may operate any vehicle, including in the North. Our graduates are employed at drilling sites. For example, the owner of the last house in Ostankovo. He has been in Yakutsk and all over Karelia working as a drill rig electrician. He is engaged on a rotation basis."<sup>88</sup>

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87 Report by A.A. Baidakova on the expedition to Toropets on 18–23 November 2011.

88 Interview with a teacher of vocational school No. 47; Otradny, Yaroslavl Region, July 2013.



Photo 11. A billboard announcing enrollment of applicants at the vocational school in Lyubim, Yaroslavl Region. The school trains future *otkhodniki*. Education there is in high demand. Most graduates annually join the ranks of *otkhodniki* working in line with their training primarily in the "North" and in road construction. They operate specialty vehicles. Thus, although the residents of Lyubim have lost their historical profile—working as waiters in metropolitan restaurants,—they still maintain a one-field focus in their *otkhodnik* occupations. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich, July 2013.

Many *otkhodniki* working rotation shifts in the "North" come from Saratov Region. This may be due to a large number of primary and secondary vocational establishments training personnel for the oil industry. However, only ambitious and disciplined people, ready for hard labor and harsh conditions, go there. In turn, those who for different reasons were not able or did not want to engage in such work are employed in various, generally low-wage jobs. Thus, besides the "Northerners", we have interviewed a security guard; a gas pipeline worker; an unskilled laborer engaged in the construction of monolith buildings; a fitter from a concrete products plant; a driver delivering passenger cars to other regions; loader and van drivers; and also the wives of a boiler facility operator, builder engaged in capital construction, railway worker, and the mother-in-law of a circus poster deliverer.

The Ivanovo Region (Kineshma) is noted for its high-recorded share of security guards among *otkhodniki*—about 60% of those surveyed. Besides, skilled men go from Kineshma to build bridges and work at construction sites and engineering enterprises (former workers of the OJSC Avtoagregat plant). Local respondents even

named lawyers and teachers among the otkhodniks. Women are engaged in trade and garment manufacturing (this is determined by the region specializing in the textile industry), healthcare (there is a medical school in town), and they work as warehouse operators, governesses, domestic helpers, and keep watch. There is even a family here, where the wife is the only otkhodnik, whereas the husband is employed in Kineshma.

The percentage of security guards among otkhodniks is also high in Mordovia (Temnikov, Ardatov, and Saransk), and locals assess this share to be even higher than our observations indicate:

"...few remain at construction sites, they are no idiots. They are cheated there. The current trend is security."<sup>89</sup>

"Three members of my family work externally as security guards. The young ones prefer this occupation, as they do not want to work at construction sites. They would rather guard or run around flourishing a pen."<sup>90</sup>

"The main occupation is in security, as everywhere. There are no local security guards in Moscow."<sup>91</sup>

"Those who work externally are mostly engaged as security guards. Mordovia provides security for the entire Moscow. All private security companies are staffed by outsiders, including people from the mid-Volga area, the Urals and Siberia."<sup>92</sup>

Besides the security sector, Mordovian otkhodniks are occupied in capital construction, and they also work as unskilled laborers and drivers (long-haul truckers and city taxi drivers). It is interesting that in Mordovia we did not find the usual clear distinction between male and female otkhodnik occupations. Thus, male otkhodniks trade in the city market, and women are massively involved in construction, finishing works and security. They are also engaged in trade, both independently in the markets, and as hired sales personnel in booths, kiosks and shops; they look after children, work as cleaners and janitors in the service sector (catering and hospitality) and municipal amenities. Special professional preferences emerge. Medical schools still function in Temnikov and Ardatov. They continue training medical personnel, the demand for which is dropping due to the "shrinking" provincial healthcare. Moreover, the meagre salary does not suit all graduates. As a result, medical otkhodnichestvo has become popular among women. Paramedics and nurses work in Moscow in private clinics. Moreover, some go further than that. One of our respondents admitted that along with medical work she was engaged in

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89 Interview with A.M. Lebedeva, chief editor of the Temnikov district newspaper *Temnikov News*; Temnikov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

90 Interview with a pensioner in the street; Saransk, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

91 Interview with V.F. Cheglakov, the chief editor of the district newspaper *Mayak*; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

92 Interview with V.A. Kalinin, deputy head of the Ardatov urban settlement; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

some "trading" on the side. Otkhodnichestvo in the republican capital Saransk is similar to the one common for the provincial areas of Mordovia. The local inhabitants confirm this. However, if we are to judge by newspaper ads only, the share of security guards in Saransk is somewhat lower than in the province.

Security guards prevail also among otkhodniks in the neighboring western areas of Chuvashia (Alatyr). Without doubt, the prevailing occupation in the Shemursha district (adjacent to Alatyr) is unskilled laborer engaged in construction. We got numerous confirmations thereof from respondents in other regions working in this sector—everyone always noted, *"You are bound to meet Chuvashes at a construction site"*.

We observed similar trends in the Penza Region. In Bekovo, half of the interviewed otkhodniks turned out to be security guards. Rather "aggressive" at that:

"I would put it like that: nobody wants to pay a driver for his hard work what he really earns; so, if nobody wants to pay, why work? I prefer to spend my time sitting on a stool. That's it."<sup>93</sup>

Women from Bekovo, Penza Region, actively depart to earn money elsewhere. Among other evidence, this was confirmed by two interviews with former female otkhodniks, who used to work in retail trade in Moscow.

Such a high percentage of security personnel among otkhodniks from areas surrounding Moscow is only due to strong demand in this unqualified labor on the backdrop of significant labor resources in the province whose professional level is too low for them to compete for jobs requiring specific technical skills. The security sector is also popular because with higher wages it requires fewer efforts than work in the industrial sector of the economy:

"If a person does nothing but open the gate—he's bound to lose his professional skills. Besides, given similar wages, a welder or an operator of a lathe or milling machine invests more physical and moral efforts than a security guard. It's like in the proverb: a fish seeks where it's deeper, and a man seeks where it's better. Nobody wants to strain himself. So even if a guy loses his job there, he is not eager to come home and go back to the factory, even when job opportunities are available. Remember I told you yesterday about the railcar repair works? They were very optimistic at the outset. They thought they would find skilled workers all right among the eight hundred that remained at the site. Previously we had five thousand working out there. Then they decided to train skilled workers, including welders. Now look here, first, it's pure laziness. Common human reluctance to work. Why go and work for fifteen-twenty grand per month, when one can get the same fifteen grand for lying two weeks on the couch and doing nothing but opening the gate. Moreover, the remaining two weeks one can idle away the time back home?"<sup>94</sup>

"I would have never been able to earn the same money in Kasimov as I get there. Such wages exist. But then you have to slave away from 8 in the morning till 5 in the afternoon. With only

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93 Interview with a security guard otkhodnik; Bekovo, Penza Region, July 2013

94 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

one day off. Whereas there I work every other week and in between relax back home. That is there I do absolutely nothing. I can sleep all the time if I choose. That's how it is. So I bloody well can't tell you anything about the wage level. Other people work out-of-town. They may make more money than I do. But they stand around in different supermarkets from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. They stand, whereas I sit. One can say that my job is of a lie-in nature."<sup>95</sup>

A separate case is the Temnikov district of Mordovia. Many residents work at diamond mines in Aikhal, Yakutia, where there is now a big Mordovian community. Moreover, an ethnic Mordovian heads the administration of Aikhal. Mostly Mordovians, the majority of them from rural areas of the Temnikov district, aim for Yakutia. Thus, practically all families in Podgornoye Konakovo have someone working in Aikhal. Initially, when a person commences employment there, the family remains at home. This is due to a shortage of housing and harsh living conditions in Aikhal. However, as soon as the person finds suitable accommodation, he brings the family over. From that point on he can no longer be considered an *otkhodnik*, as the family lives with him instead of staying at home. However, the home remains, and the whole family comes back for vacation every other year for the three summer months (due to high airfares, the employers cover travel expenses only once in two years). There were cases when such families saved money, returned to Temnikov and built themselves good houses (mainly in the new town district nicknamed *Barsky sad* (*Aristocratic garden*)). But when the money ran out, and there were still no decent jobs available, the families went back to Aikhal. However, few remain in Yakutia forever. After retiring, these people return either to their hometown or—this has recently become the trend—build themselves homes around Moscow. It is currently problematic to classify such people as *otkhodniks*—they seem to be typical rotation workers recruited for specific jobs in an organized manner. However, the absence of any organized recruitment and the fact that these people from Mordovian settlements hired themselves out to work in Siberia at their own accord and initiative makes it possible to include them in the category of *otkhodniks*.

*Otkhodnichestvo* in Podporozhye (in the northeast of the Leningrad Region) is in general similar to that in the non-forest areas of central Russia but it also has certain specific features. The town has the highest share of *otkhodniks* who work at industrial enterprises of the Leningrad Region and St. Petersburg, among them jewelry, textile, and tea factories and enterprises producing cardboard boxes. Such production facilities generally employ women. The majority of *otkhodniks* in Voznesenye settlement (which is also located in Podporozhye district but on the south-

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95 Interview with an *otkhodnik* working as security guard; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

western shore of Lake Onega, where the Onega canal flows into the Svir river) belong to the so-called fleet personnel, i.e. they work aboard vessels of the Onega basin. A survey held in the secondary school of Voznesenye revealed that water transport (fleet) personnel account for about three quarters of local *otkhodniks*. This is due to the fact that in the Soviet era the core local employer was the fleet repair and maintenance base. The base still exists but it currently employs only about 300 people out of more than 1,000 that used to work there earlier. Redundancies among the river fleet personnel created a large potential for the so-called professional shipping *otkhodnichestvo*. People apply for jobs on vessels of the Baltic, Onega and White Sea fleets and leave home for the whole period of navigation.<sup>96</sup> They include fishermen, sailors, fleet specialists and cooks, among which there are many women.

*Otkhodniks* in the Perm Territory (Cherdyn district) specialize in forest-related occupations—many form logging teams, seek employment at sawmills in neighboring areas, and work as carpenters. The market for individual residential and leisure construction in the Urals is not as extensive as in the Moscow area, however it is sufficiently developed to provide jobs for all skilled carpenters. Quite a few work as drivers, including long-haul truckers, but as Cherdyn is located off the main routes, this type of *otkhodnichestvo* has little potential here. Some local *otkhodniks* work as guards. About two dozen corrective labor colonies used to be located in the area, and many residents of Cherdyn and especially Nyrob worked there as guards and supervisors. In recent years, many colonies have been disbanded and the personnel dismissed. Since in most cases a professional prison guard has no other technical skills, such people are forced to seek respective jobs externally:

"...there are no roads, no work, and business is not developing. Previously Agrostroy [Ltd.] took care of the roads. Now they just clear them once in a while. And the people themselves do nothing but ask the authorities for this and that; they are used to this type of behavior. ... [We have] eight sawmills and six colonies. Well, three of them are going to be closed, so the settlements will have to be shut down as well [the population of which works in the colonies]."<sup>97</sup>

Several factors can determine the evident focus of different localities on specific *otkhodnik* occupations: both historical—past experience and professional skills of the population; and economic and geographical—proximity to major labor markets

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96 We observed the same situation back in the 1990s on the White Sea. All Pomor collective fishing enterprises (*kolkhoz*) along the coastline, which were united into the White Sea Fishermen's Association, staffed their fishing fleets not with their own workers (as it used to be) but with *otkhodnik* sailors from Estonia and Ukraine (see: Plusnin, 2001).

97 Interview with A.A.N., Director of Cherdyn-Bread Ltd.; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, November 2011.

and emergence of specific large production facilities in the immediate neighborhood. Indeed, "...every [otkhodnik], like every fish, seeks where it's better..." Table 5 summarizes the obtained information on the current specialization of surveyed areas by type of craft.

Table 5  
Specialization of the surveyed areas by type of craft

| Area   | Principal otkhodnik specializations  |
|--|--|
| Kostroma Region - Kologriv, Makaryev, Chukhloma, and Soligalich districts                                      | Forestry (loggers – work at timber sites; wood processors – work at sawmills and wood processing plants)<br>Timberwork and carpentry (turn-key construction) |
| Arkhangelsk Region - Kargopol district   | As above   |
| Vologda Region - Belozersk and Nikolsk districts   | Nikolsk district – similar to Kostroma and Arkhangelsk Regions; Belozersk district – log cabin building and carpentry, and rotation work                     |
| Yaroslavl Region - Lyubim district   | As above, and also specialty vehicle operators   |
| Perm Territory - Cherdyn district  | As above, and also guards in penal colonies  |
| Ivanovo Region - Kineshma  | Security, builders, mechanical engineers, drivers, service sector (trade, healthcare, childcare, and education)  |
| Mordovia - Temnikov and Ardatov districts  | As above   |
| Chuvashia - Alaty, Shemursha district  | Alaty – similar to Mordovia; Shemursha district – construction and security  |
| Tver Region - Toropets district  | Construction, installation works, security, drivers  |
| Ryazan Region - Kasimov  | Security, construction, drivers; for women – domestic servants, childcare, trade, service sector, and office work  |
| Orel Region - Dmitrovsk district   | As above   |
| Leningrad Region - Podporozhye district  | Workers at St. Petersburg plants and factories, fleet repair and maintenance personnel, service sector (trade, healthcare, childcare, and education)         |
| Pskov Region - Sebezh and Gdov districts   | Log cabin building and carpentry, drivers, security, construction  |
| Nizhny Novgorod Region - Vetluga and Voskresenskoye districts, Semyonov urban district, and Bor urban district | Construction, log cabin building and carpentry, drivers, security  |
| Penza Region - Bekovo district   | Security; trade for women  |
| Saratov Region - Kalininsk, Lysye Gory, and Alexandrov-Gay districts   | Construction, security, rotation work  |

Generally, *otkhodniks* from the northern forest-covered areas of European Russia and the Urals focus on forest-related occupations based mainly on private enterprise involving the use of local resources and marketing of the related products in metropolitan areas. More to the south, in the central regions where easily accessible natural resources are scanty, the locals can market either their professional skills, or their unskilled labor. There, the *otkhodniks* can be classified into two categories, significantly different in terms of occupation.

The first category includes *otkhodniks* whose professional skills are demanded by the market. Generally, such people live in the proximity of the regional centers. They successfully work in big cities and undertake jobs in line with their training in such sectors as industrial manufacturing, construction, transport, services, and the social sphere (childcare, education, and healthcare). The second category is more specific for inhabitants of the rural areas. Away from home, such people are engaged in unskilled labor, working as security guards, cleaning staff, retail sales personnel, domestic helpers, etc.

Our observations indicate that contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* is diversified along several (probably only three or four) lines. Only in the first case—where the *otkhodnik* markets a competitive local resource, which he can procure or produce and process independently—does he act as a classical *otkhodnik*—enterprising, independent and self-employed. In the second case, where the *otkhodnik* offers for sale his skilled labor, or in the third case, where he offers only his hands, he does not differ whatsoever from an employee or from the fourth category—a recruited professional or a rotation worker, retaining one or two distinguishing *otkhodnik* features—*independent job-seeking* and *long-distance recurrent labor migration*. That is why native Muscovites more often treat such labor migrants as either rotation workers, *shabashniks*, or simply "outsiders". That is why such people do not call themselves *otkhodniks*, whereas representatives of the first category (as we have already mentioned) not only know the term "*otkhodnik*", but also are well aware of their link with *otkhodnichestvo* of the past centuries.

In historically traditional areas, contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* reproduced ("remembered"?) those most important practices, which were already well developed there centuries ago. Destinations targeted by *otkhodniks* also reproduced previous trends. We are witnessing a situation when economic practices lost by several generations were revived as soon as external political conditions (and socio-economic ones as well) changed in such a way that local circumstances forced people to go back to universal and largely archaic subsistence patterns, including *otkhod* (temporary departure from home to distant destinations in order to earn a living).

## Chapter 6

### Otkhodnik in society

#### Who, why and for what purpose seeks jobs away from home?

*"It is better to live here, but one has to live off something!"<sup>98</sup>*

The social and economic characteristic of contemporary otkhodnichestvo in small towns of European Russia provided herein is fully based on interviews with the otkhodniks themselves. Therefore, the accuracy of the information on the activities of these people is verified exclusively by numerous repetitions and confirmations. No other—independent or "objective"—data exists, and we must fully rely on the several hundreds of interviews, which underlie our generalizations.

Based solely on the stories of the people themselves, we must provide a generalized picture of the otkhodnik's professional behavior, which would describe the reasons for engaging in otkhodnichestvo and the reasons for giving it up. To understand the circumstances promoting or preventing otkhodnichestvo, we have to study the current economic environment in the areas where the otkhodniks reside and the historical economic activities in those regions; household economic arrangements; the social and demographic status of otkhodnik families, and certain general features of local communities.

#### 6.1. The reasons for engaging in otkhodnichestvo

We would like to remind that, strictly speaking, only those people are considered to be otkhodniks who for economic reasons are forced to make a living far away from home. Those, who leave their hometowns to earn money for other reasons or for other periods, are classified as shabashniks or rotation workers. As we have already mentioned, poverty and necessity, responsibility for the family, and the ability to act independently distinguish such people from those who have other reasons to leave their homes. Practically all our respondents were indeed otkhodniks, and not people in quest of adventures, interesting life or wealth. Only three respondents (i.e., only about half a per cent) adopted this lifestyle out of curiosity or boredom. All others unanimously indicated economic necessity as the principal reason:

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98 Interview with the wife of a railway worker otkhodnik; Alexandrov-Gay, Saratov Region, April 2013.

"It's purely because of daily domestic needs. It's not that I'm after a huge profit or want to make tons of money or something of the sort—I couldn't care less about that. [...] And all the guys are driven to seek work away from home just because of those family, domestic needs. Nobody is out to make a fortune or chase rainbows."<sup>99</sup>

"What I want to say is the following: when northerners go away to work, they do it not for profit-seeking, for them it's a question of survival."<sup>100</sup>

"... Money. Mercantile values. What other reason can there be? Do you think someone can go to work in Moscow, because he likes it?"<sup>101</sup>

A person engages in *otkhodnichestvo* only if there are no financial opportunities to satisfy his personal needs or those of his family locally. One should keep in mind a decisive aspect—such needs are higher than those of the neighbors. A person decides to seek employment elsewhere not simply to make ends meet but because he wants a better life for his family. You will rarely encounter an *otkhodnik* who leaves home from sheer despair and real poverty, when the family's income is barely enough to meet physical needs.

Two issues inevitably emerge in an *otkhodnik's* speculations about the motivation to seek work elsewhere: the reason(s) for not being able to earn enough in one's hometown, and the spending pattern for the money earned far away.

Our numerous interviews produced just three possible explanations regarding the first issue. The common but not very frequent option is unavailability of work. Not any work is meant but that in line with one's profession. This situation generally results due to layoffs at the respondent's previous place of work. The second option (now less frequent than previously) is as follows: work is available, but wages are either delayed, or not paid. This is typical of villages where the remnants of collective farms in the form of moribund rural production cooperatives cannot make ends meet from year to year. It is to be recalled that villagers currently account for a significant number of *otkhodniks*.

Interviewer: - Do those who work out-of-town stand out from the other residents? Is it visible that a person lives off external earnings? Do they have better houses?

Respondent: - Sure. They usually have cars and other stuff... Basically, they go away, earn some dough, then come back to unwind and drink. After they booze away the last of the money, they move out again.

I: - That is, they mostly earn money for everyday existence and not, for example, to take the family out for a seaside vacation?

R: - Nay, nay, there's nothin' of the sort here. The smart ones try to land themselves a decent job here and earn money.<sup>102</sup>

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99 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor K. working as security guard; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

100 Interview with G.M. Pervyshin, principal of a teacher training college; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

101 Interview with a schoolteacher at secondary school No.1; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

The most frequent option is as follows: work can be found and wages are regularly paid, but they are too low to support the family. The third option was voiced by about three quarters of the respondents thus confirming strong motivation to ensure the well-being of the family. This means that generally, work can be found in the hometowns and villages but otkhodniks consider the remuneration unacceptably low:

Interviewer: - What do you think, what level of wages would be sufficient to keep your brother from leaving Ryabinino?

Respondent: - Well, first, at least twice the minimum subsistence level, that is about eight thousand [rubles].

I: - Would that be sufficient?

R: - Yes, because travel expenses are high. Housing and utilities are expensive. Those, who have a family and children, have to pay for schooling, clothes and food. And even that amount will hardly cover all costs.

I: - How much higher is the salary that your brother receives in Solikamsk, than the average level here, in Ryabinino?

R: - Well, if we divide 28 by 4, we get a seven-fold difference. Seven times higher!<sup>103</sup>

Since the local authorities do not always agree with this allegation, one should think that the remuneration is inadequate not in terms of making ends meet but in terms of satisfying less essential needs:

"To put it in a nutshell, the authorities claim, "There are numerous job opportunities both in the public and in the private sector. The wages are decent. There is a shortage of labor and professionals." And the people seeking employment away from home insist, "No normal jobs are available. The wages are low."<sup>104</sup>

Thus, we get additional confirmation that a typical distinction of an otkhodnik from his neighbors is the motivation to ensure a higher level of well-being for the family than is possible in the local context.

"When I earned one hundred rubles and we couldn't afford to buy enough food, my wife threw scenes every single day. That was no fun."<sup>105</sup>

"It's a simple choice—either to sit back on my ass trying to make ends meet, or fucking well go out and earn money...so I can buy something and educate my son ..."<sup>106</sup>

In the public sector, especially in education and healthcare, salaries are really meagre. But in the private sector, they are generally not high either. For example, the official salary of shop assistants everywhere in small towns is on the level of

102 Street interview with a middle-aged otkhodnik; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, November 2011.

103 Interview with the sister of an otkhodnik, cook by training, who is working at a sawmill in Solikamsk; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

104 Report by Y.D. Zausaeva on the expedition to Toropets on 18–23 November 2011.

105 Interview with otkhodnik Sergey P., working as builder; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

106 Interview with otkhodnik Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

5,000–6,000 rubles (2010–2013). Wages at industrial enterprises are slightly higher (usually from 10,000 to 15,000 rubles), but even they do not allow to provide properly for the family. In Kasimov and Kashin, Nikolsk and Kologriv we were told that the employers had arranged to coordinate wages and keep them at low levels: no laborer was paid more than 10,000 rubles at a sawmill. In some small towns wages can be kept on a more or less uniform level because almost all the businesspeople are locals.<sup>107</sup> Non-resident employers say they are prepared to pay higher salaries, but local entrepreneurs stop them from doing it. Most of our respondents still do not trust entrepreneurs (they are more commonly referred to as "private traders"). They are convinced that a private trader may simply choose not to pay wages if he doesn't feel like it. Market relations are still alien to most inhabitants of small towns, although the *otkhodniks* themselves face a tough market environment.

The second issue—what to spend the earnings on—produced only three-four options: children, household needs, means of transport, and leisure and recreation. *Otkhodniks* need the relatively high wages, which they earn away from home, primarily to bring up and educate their children, to pay for their colleges and universities. Many respondents admitted that the birth of a child was what triggered their *otkhodnichestvo*; the same applies when the child enters school or enrolls in a university. The elder the children become, the more incentives (and more opportunities) a parent has to seek work away from home. The children learn to take care of themselves, and it is easier to leave them with the grandparents, or even alone:

"The only reason to work away from home is to provide for a child's education—tertiary education—because if a budget-funded place at a higher education institution cannot be secured, the child enrolls on a fee-paying basis; then naturally he/she will need clothing, footwear, etc..."<sup>108</sup>

"A school principal and a deputy principal that I personally know used to work away from home as nannies to pay for their children's education. The parents are simply compelled to leave in order to survive and somehow provide for the family."<sup>109</sup>

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107 For example, "Muscovites" own a logging enterprise in Kichmengsky Gorodok (next to Nikolsk) district of the Vologda Region, and their relations with the workers are more rigid—the wages are higher, but the attitude towards the people is more demanding. Our respondents in Soligalich also pointed out exactly these differences to us. At the same time, they complained about their own local businessman who had established tougher and more formal relations at his enterprise. He pays higher wages, but kicks out anyone who breaches rules or procedures. Moreover, he demands that the premises of the sawmill be kept unnecessarily clean and in order. We, however, had a very positive impression after speaking with this businessman on various economic and everyday matters, and we could not understand why the local inhabitants were so irritated with the practices he had established.

108 Interview with a social teacher at secondary school No. 3; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

109 Interview with the principal of Gymnasium No. 3; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

Respondent: - There is no decent, well-paid work here.

Interviewer: - So it was not due to redundancy?

R: - No, the real reason is lack of normal work, so that a man can provide for his family.

I: - And what was the decisive trigger?

R: - Education of our son at a university in another city.<sup>110</sup>

It is interesting that only few of our respondents expect their children to secure budget-funded places in a higher education institution. And those who are counting on such places are collecting money for bribes, according to the same source. Occasionally, we encountered otkhodniks who were saving funds for their own education:

"My daughter's boyfriend is 23 years old. He has no opportunity to study, so he is working as a security guard in Moscow to pay for his education. [...] He is studying at a branch of the Moscow State Industrial University."<sup>111</sup>

An otkhodnik may return home for good once his children complete their education. However, if he continues working out-of-town, he goes on helping his grown-up children, as his earnings are often higher than theirs. The daily needs of those, who have no children to take care of, are generally very modest. People usually indicate a salary of 15,000 rubles as sufficient monthly remuneration.<sup>112</sup> However, local wages do not always allow satisfying even the simplest needs:

"If wages were decent here, nobody would go anywhere. Foodstuffs here are as expensive as in Moscow, and earnings are a lot lower. To plant potatoes, you have to pay two grand for dung, another grand to plow the land, then fight the bugs, and break one's back earthing up soil. Then you have to weed them regularly and hill them up. You toil the whole summer, and in the end you might get no crops. And it's very expensive to buy potatoes from the shop. So it's another reason to seek work in Moscow. [...] Wages here are low, but the power bills are as high as in the city. And this is no city, this is a village. Electricity costs less in rural areas, but we are charged as much as the townsfolk despite our low wages."<sup>113</sup>

The second most important spending target is household needs, especially the house. The overwhelming majority of otkhodniks live in their own houses, which are in constant need of maintenance, repair, reconstruction and improvement. Con-

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110 Interview with the wife and sister of otkhodniks; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

111 Interview with the principal of Gymnasium No. 3; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

112 By the way, daily pay rates for time work (as opposed to piecework) are more or less on the same level everywhere in the province: generally, 500 rubles per day (corresponds to an average monthly salary of a public-sector employee equal to 10,000–12,000 rubles). For high-performing workers the daily rate can be increased to 1,000 rubles. In rare cases, daily pay rates can constitute 1,500 rubles. This corresponds to about 30,000–35,000 rubles per month, which is considered to be very good remuneration according to local standards (for comparison, sawmill laborers are paid up to 10,000 rubles per month, loggers in the forest—up to 20,000 rubles, and long-haul truckers may earn from 30,000 to 40,000 rubles).

113 Interview with a former otkhodnik Leonid Ivanovich S. nicknamed Monya; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

struction and repair costs are always high and most people cannot afford to accomplish everything in one go or even in several stages. As a result we observe a picture characteristic for small towns, when many houses and outbuildings look like a patchwork of different materials and styles. Once a homeowner earns some money, he starts making household improvements: either builds a new steam bath (banya), or constructs a terrace, or simply inserts a new window. As soon as the money runs out, all building activities are suspended, often for a year or two, sometimes longer. By the time the next opportunity emerges, the owner's preferences or the trend may have changed; besides, new materials may be available. So the next reconstruction phase starts in a new way. And so many times over. The dwellings of contemporary otkhodniks are identifiable from afar by their eclectic style.<sup>114</sup> However, the non-otkhodniks do not have even that—their houses simply fall into decay retaining their original integrity.<sup>115</sup>

Vehicles are the third inevitable expense item for otkhodniks. Nowadays, many families in small towns and rural areas have several vehicles, instead of just one (they may not all be in running condition, but that does not really matter). Besides cars, many families own trucks, crawler and wheeled tractors, and other mechanical vehicles (snowmobiles, motorboats, motorcycles, and quad bikes). The backyards of many former collective farmers resemble the no longer existent machine and tractor stations. Besides having a purely utilitarian function, motor vehicles continue to be a matter of prestige in our society. For that reason, many otkhodniks spend money to buy unnecessary and completely useless cars (for example, such isolated settlements, as Tigil and Tilichki in Kamchatka, Yurung-Khaya at the mouth of the Anabar River, and Krasnoshchelye in the Murmansk Region, have from one to seven kilometers of dirt and gravel roads only. The nearest paved roads are hundreds

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114 By the way, in the past decade, new construction and reconstruction of private housing in small Russian towns and settlements have grown sharply—in terms of volume, a many fold increase has been registered. Currently, in every town or village we see that every fifth or even fourth estate is under construction or reconstruction, whereas in the early 2000s (in 2001–2002), this indicator was on the level of one to two percent (see: Plusnin, 2001). We believe that individual construction is driven by the development and expansion of otkhodnichestvo in the Russian province. Naturally, urban residents buying country homes for recreation purposes contribute strongly to this trend. However, the rates of new construction in areas with practically no holidaymakers are as high.

115 The homes of local officials, businessmen, and mobsters are of course an exception. They have the means to build or rebuild a house "in one go". However, their homes also stand out, as they all have similar "modern style" elements, such as metal tile roofing, siding, and high solid fences.

and thousands of kilometers away. Nevertheless, one can see cars parked in front of the houses).<sup>116</sup>

Finally, the last expense item—leisure—is actually most often an item of conspicuous consumption, since *otkhodniks* take their wives and children to "egypts and turkeys" not for the sake of sun tanning or bathing, but more to show off in front of their neighbors.<sup>117</sup> The vast majority of small town dwellers and villagers relax and unwind "out in the bush"<sup>118</sup>, fishing, hunting, and gardening.

Summarizing the above, we can state that *otkhodnichestvo* is mainly driven not by sheer poverty but by the wish to raise the family's well-being. The respective earnings are primarily used to give the children a good start in life, improve the living conditions, and show off in front of the neighbors. Actually, such reasons are by no means unimportant.

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116 For example, practically every household in *Krasnoshchelye* owns a Lada car, although the furthest one can drive is to the airport half a kilometer from the settlement. According to a source who was performing alternative civilian service at the local collective reindeer farm, "...everybody is waiting for the real frosts and winter trails to set in and just itching to haul over a used beaten-up Lada for 15,000 rubles."

117 The *otkhodniks* themselves very rarely travel abroad. During all our travels, we met just one such person in *Gdov*, *Pskov* Region—and that was beyond the scope of our project. *Otkhodniks* do not frequent even Black Sea resorts—only one out of ten takes his family there.

118 "To be out in the bush" [literally, "in the green"] is the most popular leisure activity in the province, both for adults and youngsters. Several families or a big group of friends get together and drive out to a riverbank somewhere in the green meadows to have fun, listen to music, dance, and share a picnic of *shashliks* and alcohol. Exotic forms of fishing often accompany all this.



Photo 12. Road works—an otkhodnik occupation. Kostroma Region. Photo by Juri Plusnin, November 2010.

## 6.2. The composition of otkhodniks

What categories of the able-bodied population engage in otkhodnichestvo? The majority of otkhodniks are young and middle-aged men. Few continue pursuing this work pattern after reaching the age of 55–60 years. In this, contemporary otkhodnichestvo is similar to the classical one—psychophysiological factors appear to determine the upper age limit. However, unlike previously, young adults and adolescents are currently not engaged in otkhodnichestvo at all. This is understandable, as at this age they are still studying at vocational schools and universities. Upon graduation, they leave to "conquer the capitals" without the intention of coming back, and even in the event of a speedy return, they do not want to, and in principle should not, join the ranks of otkhodniks. This will happen later—usually after they start a family and assume responsibility for it. For this reason, the majority of otkhodniks are persons in the range from 25 to 55 years old.

We observed that among otkhodniks engaged in different occupations, builders are on average older than security guards. It would seem that the younger a person is, the less ready he is to engage in heavy physical labor (the more so that this labor is poorly paid for) and expose himself to the risks of "gray" labor relations. Many of

our respondents recognize that the youngsters want everything and at once. They want to work little but to receive a lot. Obviously, the job of a security guard is much more in line with such requirements, than the hard labor of a builder.

Prior to its disappearance during collectivization, the previous *otkhodnichestvo* was (with rare exceptions) a purely male phenomenon. Nowadays, in certain areas female *otkhodnichestvo* is as common as the male one. Among the surveyed regions, the lowest percentage of women among *otkhodniks* was noted in the Perm Territory, Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Yaroslavl, and Kostroma Regions, where forest-related crafts and occupations, in which women are practically not engaged, traditionally prevail. Female residents of Tver Region seek outside employment already more often, however, men dominate among *otkhodniks*. In the remaining areas (the Republics of Mordovia and Chuvashia, as well as Penza, Saratov, Orel, Ivanovo, and Leningrad Regions), women are involved in *otkhodnichestvo* almost as much as men. Here, *otkhodniks* are mostly engaged in occupations that do not require any qualifications or special—"male"—skills, such as woodworking and carpentry skills.

It is also possible that the patterns of female *otkhodnichestvo* differ because in northern areas male *otkhodniks* receive sufficient incomes to support the family, so the wives can afford to manage the household or settle for low wages at the place of residence. Indeed, in terms of *otkhodnik* earnings the surveyed areas rank as follows: the regions of Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Perm, Kostroma, Tver, Leningrad, Ivanovo, Ryazan, and Orel, and the republics of Mordovia and Chuvashia.

This allows us to assume that females step in when male *otkhodnichestvo* does not provide sufficient means to support the family. It also evidences the complete inadequacy of local labor market, where there is no place for many women, to say nothing of the men. However, this explanation is valid only for married women. A woman locally employed in the public sector or in a private shop earns generally from six to eight thousand rubles per month, whereas monthly payments for a two-room apartment with amenities (utilities included) range from two-three to four-five and even seven thousand rubles. With food prices close to those in Moscow, a woman can rely on her husband's earnings as the main source of the family's income. An unmarried or divorced woman with children (even in the province, over 20 percent of families are incomplete), who often lacks the required level of vocational training and skills, has no choice but to seek an outside source of income. She is forced to go away leaving young children in the care of grandparents or even older brothers and sisters. These women—single mothers—appear to form a separate category among contemporary *otkhodniks*: it is pure need that drives them

away from home in search of work and not the desire to improve the family's living standards.

Sadly, many families in small towns fall apart because of *otkhodnichestvo*. The husbands often find other single women there, where they work, and start new families (formally or informally) with them. Judging from the interviews, this is unfortunately a rather common occurrence. *Otkhodnichestvo* first ruins the family and then forces the woman also to make a living away from home quite similar to how it happened in the late 19th–early 20th centuries and as described at the time (*see*: Kazarinov, 1926). Based on these considerations, it is now clear why most female *otkhodniks* are also aged from 30 to 50 years old—only the need to raise children forces a mother to seek outside employment when a decently paid job is not available locally. On the contrary, women in their post-retirement or close-to-retirement age engage in *otkhodnichestvo* (common in the central regions of European Russia) for the sake of additional income at a time when they are no longer encumbered by young children, or (frequently) by any family at all.

Thus, the statement that *otkhodnichestvo* is even now a predominantly male activity is true only for several, traditionally *otkhodnik*, areas. In many other places, women have also adopted this lifestyle. A possible reason for this could date back to the early and mid-1990s, when mainly women became shuttle traders supplying foreign consumer goods to our markets. Maybe that tragic forced shuttle-trade past experienced by many women allowed them and their daughters to engage 10–15 years later in a previously purely male working pattern of *otkhodnichestvo*.

### **6.3. Job-seeking and "length of service"**

A specific person does not engage in *otkhodnichestvo* for long. For the vast majority of our respondents, both active and former *otkhodniks*, the "length of service" did not exceed ten years. Only every tenth of them had embarked on this "journey" earlier than 1998. This fact has several explanations, the most likely one being that ten years is about as long as a person can physically endure this lifestyle. Many *otkhodniks* also indicate the psychological costs involved—permanent departures and life away from the family in rather harsh conditions is exhausting for anyone. However, many people are not prepared to admit this openly:

Interviewer: - Psychologically, is it a problem to work far away from the family?

Respondent: - Why should it be? I've been working like this for ten years, and I've become accustomed to it. The family is also used to it now but they miss me a bit, of course. Nowadays it's easier—everyone has phones, so we can stay in touch. Even when I was far away, in the Arkhangelsk Region, we called each other every day.<sup>119</sup>

Psychological reasons may also underlie the fact that such activities are mostly terminated by the age of 60 and over. There may be a more general explanation. It was only by the end of the 1990s, i.e. seven to ten years after the systemic crisis erupted, that people "recalled" forgotten business patterns and resumed *otkhodnichestvo* as one of the simplest subsistence patterns. Indeed, in the early and mid-1990s, *otkhodnichestvo* from small towns and villages was very rare due to the trivial reason that most families lacked the financial means to relocate and set up house in another place. At that time, shuttle traders (usually women) assumed, to a certain extent, the role of *otkhodniks*. However, there were very few of them in small towns. By the mid and late 1990s, the small towns suffered most due to the deterioration of the labor markets. The situation there became disastrous. Up to two thirds of the local population were unemployed (*see*: Radaev, 1999), and there was practically no chance for a family to be self-sufficient through subsistence farming, although many townspeople lived in private houses and had garden plots.<sup>120</sup> Following the 1998 crisis, the situation in the small towns, which was already extremely tough, became completely unbearable, and the active male population left home on a massive scale to seek means of existence on the side. In a sense, the crisis not only stimulated the development of small and medium-sized businesses, but also forced the active part of the population to finally break away from publicly funded jobs and bankrupt enterprises, and to seek employment independently. The regional boundaries of the labor market, which used to be practically impenetrable, started melting away and soon disappeared completely.

Until the late 1990s, it was difficult to find an outside job all by oneself, which could have been yet another reason for the rapid development of *otkhodnichestvo* (our local experts expressed this view). In small towns, migration mobility was always very low (Voloikh, 2010). Interregional labor relations were virtually nonexistent (*The society and economy...*, 2010). During the Soviet era, practically every small town had a core local employer on which the residents depended heavily in spite of permanent delays in wages (and often because of such delays). There-

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119 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dmitry, working as bulldozer operator; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

120 According to our estimates, the average size of a homestead in a small provincial town is about 400 square meters. Such a land plot is by far too small to feed an average family of three people throughout the year (*see*: Plusnin, 2001).

fore, certain time had to pass, and only after having lost all hope did the people finally decide to embark on the difficult journey of seeking jobs themselves.

Obviously, each of the above reasons may be valid. A person, who has finally decided to work away from home, must first find a suitable job. Only every tenth respondent sought and found work independently.<sup>121</sup> Even now, to say nothing of the 1990s, it is too uncertain, and often simply dangerous, to embark blindly on a job hunt in an unfamiliar location.

For that reason, two-thirds of the *otkhodniks* secured their jobs through relatives or acquaintances. Employment through acquaintances or with acquaintances (for example, in a construction team) is the most reliable and, perhaps, the best option for an *otkhodnik*. Notably, the majority of *otkhodniks* in all the regions we surveyed (without exception) found work only owing to their relatives or acquaintances (the responses indicate from 56% in the Tver Region to 100% in the Arkhangelsk Region):

Interviewer: - How did he find that job? Did he find it himself based on published vacancies or was it through acquaintances?

Respondent: - Oops, I don't even know; that was three years ago. Through acquaintances, I guess... By word-of-mouth... Practically all our adult able-bodied men aged from 23 to 40 work like that. And if you look around a bit, you may find those, who work even further away from here.<sup>122</sup>

However, obviously, that was not always the case. The pioneer *otkhodniks*, who adopted this way of life in the early 1990s (like the shuttle traders) did not have this opportunity. At that time, many were forced to seek jobs without any references and connections. The outcome was by far not always positive. Experienced *otkhodniks* shudder when they think about those times. Even then, in some towns there were alternatives to independent job seeking. Our respondents from the Kostroma Region recollect that in the early 1990s people from the Moscow area toured the local timber enterprises and logging camps that were shutting down in search of specialists who would be willing to build wooden (usually round log) houses at summer residences (*dachas*) in the Moscow Region. These people were not end customers; they were just mediators, who fulfilled the orders of the "new Russians". Initially, they were the ones who coordinated the builders, found construction sites for them, and negotiated with the customers. In those days, *otkhodnik* builders had lots in common with the so-called Soviet "recruited specialists" (local residents centrally recruited under a quota to work far away from home).

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121 Here and further, we obtained (less often calculated) the percentage estimates by processing all interviews with the *otkhodniks*, their relatives and acquaintances.

122 Interview with Tatiana Ivanovna, the mother of an *otkhodnik* who works at a sawmill in Solikamsk; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

However, amid the economic chaos and widespread breach of obligations by the customers, including failure to pay for the work performed, the people who had experienced "quick money" very soon started drifting their own way and became *otkhodniks* fully.

Cases when *otkhodniks* found work because they were referred to as good specialists are somewhat less frequent. Among our respondents approximately every tenth found employment by referral. However, with the passage of time, their share is constantly growing—good workers are transferred from one customer to another, and they gradually replace those, who are just occasionally out to make a quick buck.

The share of *otkhodniks* who managed to find employment by responding to a newspaper or Internet advertisement is about the same—one out of ten. A completely independent search for work, like posting job-seeking ads on specific websites or directly offering one's services at marketplaces in major cities (what is now happening along the main traffic exits from Moscow), is less likely to succeed. Practice shows that a person is more certain to land a job by responding to a client's ad, rather than by placing his own ad and waiting for potential customers. Few *otkhodniks* resort to the help of official agencies, like public employment centers, although such centers participate to a certain extent in arranging employment in other regions. Thus, contemporary *otkhodniks* seek jobs more or less along the same lines and in the same proportion as their predecessors—our first unemployed in the early 1990s (Plusnin and Poshevnyov, 1997).

The jobs that our *otkhodniks* find are usually informal ones. Nearly two-thirds of them indicated that they were working informally.

Interviewer: - Are you employed formally?

Respondent: - Definitely not. Where can one work formally nowadays?

I: - I asked the people in your village; some of them work formally.

R: - That guy that just passed by is my cousin. He is also employed informally. Everything is informal here.

I: - What is the reason?

R: - To pay less taxes.

I: - Are you not concerned about your employment history?

R: - I don't need it.<sup>123</sup>

Almost all builders, nannies and cleaners work informally. The same is true for a good part of the drivers (taxi drivers, logging truck drivers, and even long-haul truckers). Only 37 percent of our respondents reported formal employment. The vast majority of them work as security guards at enterprises and companies in ma-

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123 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexander; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

major cities. The same goes for highly skilled specialists like riggers and crane operators from Chisty Bory or Kamskiye Polyany.

" ...Hey, Alex, ask him, whether he is formally employed! Tell them the truth! Come on!

Interviewer: - Are you formally employed?

Respondent Alexander: - INFORMALLY. For many years now we have been working informally.

Respondent Denis: - And what pension will they receive when they reach retirement age?

Respondent Alexander: - We don't even have a sufficient service record. I couldn't care less about myself, but this one [points at Denis]...

Respondent Denis: - Come on! We're in the same position!

Respondent Alexander: - My service record is one year and seven months too short...<sup>124</sup>

Therefore, being employed for the most part informally, most otkhodniks find work through acquaintances and engage in it for several (generally no longer than ten) years. To what extent is such work in line with a person's professional training?

#### **6.4. Correlation between otkhodnik activities and the educational background**

Few otkhodniks find distant jobs that are in line with their educational background. Rarely, we encountered settlements where the majority of otkhodniks work according to their qualifications, like, for example, Voznesenye in the Leningrad Region and Chisty Bory in the Kostroma Region. However, they are an exception. Most often, people do not seek jobs similar to their hometown occupations. They undertake any work found through relatives or acquaintances if they possess the skills to accomplish it. Naturally, the work proposed is rarely in line with a person's professional credentials. Our surveys show that only 24% of all men engaged in otkhodnichestvo managed to find jobs corresponding to their qualifications; 60% have work that is not in line with their professional background (this figure practically matches the proportion of otkhodniks who secured jobs through relatives or acquaintances). The remaining 16% of otkhodniks have no profession whatsoever, as their education is limited to secondary school (8 to 11 classes). However, our data is inadequate to make definite conclusions. In the meantime, it is very likely that the percentage of those working in line with professional credentials is even lower among female otkhodniks. The majority of our female respondents engage out-of-town in unskilled labor (they work as nannies, cleaners, sales assistants, warehouse attendants, etc.). According to surveys held in Toropets and Kineshma (see quotes from interviews below), many teachers work as child minders and nannies.

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with otkhodniks Alexander (about 60 years old) and Denis (under 50); Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

Table 6 provides comparative data on the employment of otkhodniks according to their qualification at home (prior to departure) versus out of town (we compiled the data from all interviews with male otkhodniks). At home, the majority of our respondents worked in line with their training, and a slightly lower percentage—not in line, although the ratio is approximately the same—about forty percent for both categories. Out of town, the proportions changed dramatically—the share of those working in line with their profession dropped by almost half, and the opposite category doubled. Notably, the sixteen percent of otkhodniks who had no profession initially acquired no knowledge or training in the course of otkhodnichestvo. Thus, when engaging in a new form of labor activity, every fourth or fifth otkhodnik gives up his profession.

The majority of otkhodniks have received vocational training—primary, secondary, or tertiary—primarily in blue-collar occupations. The most common occupations are tractor operator, driver, mechanic, and builder. Their share, according to interviews, is 66 percent, although Table 6 shows that at least 84 percent of respondents should have one or another qualification. This can indicate that by "working in line with training" quite a few otkhodniks mean either their previous occupation, or they received on-the-job training, which is quite common in rural areas.

Table 6.

Percentage of otkhodniks with and without qualifications, who worked in line with their credentials at home and out of town (based on interviews with the otkhodniks)

| <b>Nature of work</b>                       | <b>Work at home prior to departure, %</b> | <b>Work out of town, %</b> |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| In line with training                       | 41  | 24                         |
| Not in line with training                   | 36  | 60                         |
| No profession available                     | 17  | 16                         |
| No work experience prior to otkhodnichestvo | 6   | -                          |

Only 12 percent of otkhodniks are university graduates. Another five percent at the time of survey were combining otkhodnichestvo with studies, and about four percent were at some point enrolled at a higher education institution but did not complete their education. The relatively low percentage of otkhodniks with higher education should not be interpreted as evidence that it is easier for university graduates to find a decent job in a small town or rural area.<sup>125</sup> After completing studies in the city, young people rarely come back home for good, however, they generally con-

125 For comparison: according to the 2010 census, the overall share of adult Russians with higher education is about 40%, whereas in rural areas this figure approximates 25%.

tinue to be registered as residents of their hometowns for long afterwards. Therefore, young people with higher education can a priori be excluded from the number of otkhodniks. Due to low staff turnover, middle-aged and senior persons continue to keep their jobs in the public sector with the only exception of those who have been made redundant. Consequently, potential otkhodniks with higher education are mostly people aged from 35 to 45–50 years; therefore, the majority of them graduated from universities still in the Soviet times, when the share of such professionals was slightly more than 11 percent. The percentage of otkhodniks with university degrees working in line with their training is also low. We should bear in mind that people with higher education have greater professional mobility—it is easier for them to change occupations or be specialists in several fields. At the same time, otkhodnichestvo generally assumes professional downshifting:

"The majority of people go to work as security guards (instead of engaging in other otkhodnik occupations), because if a person is a highly skilled specialist, he can find work here as well. The youngsters have no skills but want heaps of money immediately, that's why they go away. What is expected of a security guard? To be on duty, that's all."<sup>126</sup>

Female teachers, for example, most often go to the capitals to work as nannies or governesses:

" ... One of the school principals used to engage in otkhodnichestvo. When her elder child graduated from school and enrolled in a university on a fee-paying basis, she got employed as a nanny to pay the tuition fee. She worked there throughout the period of education, although at home she had a little daughter who was still in her preschool years. She was lucky, because when she returned, there was an open position of a school principal, and she got that job. There was another very good deputy school principal, who was forced to work out of town as nanny, when her children entered university."<sup>127</sup>

Men, who cannot find a job according to their training, often become security guards. In Mordovia, there is even a saying that we learned from one of our female respondents, "*Mordovia trains university graduates to work as security guards in Moscow.*"<sup>128</sup> Thus, the brother of an expert that we interviewed (staff member of the Ardatov town administration), became an out-of-town security guard after the meat-processing plant where he was employed as veterinarian shut down.

There is a widespread opinion that the longer a person works in a job that has nothing to do with his vocational training, the sooner he loses his professional skills and the more difficult it will be to revert to the previous occupation. Therefore, it would

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126 Interview with V.V. Yermachikhin, first deputy head of administration for municipal services; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

127 Interview with O.N. Yanshenkina, Director of Gymnasium No. 3 named after A.N. Ostrovsky; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

128 Interview with an elderly couple living in a five-storey apartment house; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

seem that *otkhodnichestvo*, which is not in line with training must have another negative aspect—it is impossible to work straightaway at an appropriate level, if you do not have the relevant experience. And retraining requires a certain amount of time. However, life, as usual, shows that this disadvantage is unsubstantiated. *Otkhodniks* rarely change their occupation for an activity that is completely alien to them. Where an *otkhodnik* activity is not related to their initial occupation, they are definitely familiar with it in their everyday life (e.g., construction, repairs, driving). That is the reason why most men in the small towns and villages of Kostroma, Vologda, and Arkhangelsk Regions know quite a few things about log and timber building, although they learned the craft from their fathers and grandfathers rather than at vocational technical schools. Such people are recognized as professionals based on their skills rather than training:

"They have their own teams and they always work together. One is a carpenter, the other a welder, yet another a bricklayer; one builds the masonry heater, the other one something else. The teams are already made up, and they don't need extra mouths to feed. Of course, you can take a "fetch-and-carry" sort of guy along, and eventually he will acquire some skills, but until then he will be just a fifth wheel. So nobody wants to take them on board. As for the loners, they often come back empty-handed, having spent the last penny they had or borrowed for the trip. That's putting it in a nutshell."<sup>129</sup>

"When I'm selecting fellows for my team, I know who can do what. I leave out the beginners, because their input will be zero. I pick those who know how to work, who understand at a glance what is to be done ... Anything can happen at the construction site...one can fall, tumble... The framing can be very complex. Churches, for example, are quite a challenge."<sup>130</sup>

The other extremely popular *otkhodnik* occupation in the central part of Russia is working as security guard. For this job, experience is required only for employment with a major company or bank, where all applicants are thoroughly screened and must comply with rather stringent requirements. Respectively, their wages are much higher than those of common security guards. Many former policemen and army officers work at such entities after early retirement. Thus, a respondent in Temnikov told us that the former district police chief and the second-in-command of the military unit that used to be stationed in the area currently worked in this manner. Now, they were simply security guards:

"An army officer I know works in Moscow. He guards a private medical center. He is well built and fine looking, but there he is just a simple guard. The employer has very stringent requirements. Every month a dedicated person cuts his mustache and dyes it a specific color. All guards at the establishment must look alike."<sup>131</sup>

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129 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor K.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

130 Interview with *otkhodnik* Sergey P.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

131 Interview with A.M. Lebedeva, chief editor of the district newspaper *Temnikov News*; Temnikov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

An officer with the right to bear arms has the opportunity to find employment with a well-established company, which prefers precisely such personnel. The remaining guards seek lower class and lower paid jobs at kindergartens, schools, supermarkets, etc. Such positions are the most available, as they require neither professional experience, nor specific skills. However, as we have already mentioned, these are the jobs where people not only lose their previous vocational skills, but the ability to work as such.

In spite of the "easy life" that security guards lead, they are far from satisfied with their choice of occupation. Among all our respondents working as security guards, only one was extremely satisfied with his life. According to him, "... in order to receive 15,000 rubles in Kasimov, one has to bend over backwards, work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. [that is, for him this is unacceptable] and stuff like that. And my job is of a lie-in nature." He does nothing, lies on the sofa and watches TV. Should something happen, he simply dials "02" to call the police. Thus, he is very pleased to be paid for lazing around. According to him, many acknowledged that 15,000 rubles could be earned in Moscow with much less effort than in Kasimov, however nobody considered such work attractive.

Thus, contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* has little or nothing to do with the Soviet system of vocational training, which still exists in Russia. In Soviet times, public spending for vocational training was justified by industrial and technical development objectives. Currently, especially in what concerns secondary vocational and higher education, such expenses appear to be superfluous and unreasonable. Upon receiving any publicly-funded (for whatever reason referred to as government-funded) education, a substantial number of graduates immediately engage in *otkhodnichestvo* (rather than work at least the first three years in line with the awarded qualifications), where usually none of the acquired skills are required. In the event that a person "embarks on the career" of a security guard immediately after graduating from a vocational technical school or university (the current number of such graduates could be from two to three million people), the government policy in support of vocational education appears to be unreasonably wasteful.

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Based on our field research, we identified significant social and economic features of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*. The main reason for engaging in *otkhodnichestvo* has nothing to do with sheer poverty, as basic needs can be satisfied locally with low-pay job vacancies available everywhere. *Otkhodnichestvo* is all about raising the family's living standards. The *otkhodniks* would be content to stay home and earn only twice as much as their neighbors employed in the public sector, or

three to five-fold more than the minimum subsistence level, i.e. up to 20,000–25,000 rubles per month. Actually, otkhodniks make twice as much as they aim for and generally three to four times more than they would have earned locally. Therefore, because of their earnings, the otkhodniks feel themselves wealthier than their neighbors. They spend their income on just a few important items: education of their children, including comprehensive and higher vocational education; household improvements, including vehicles; family leisure and vacations.

Among contemporary otkhodniks, men prevail or dominate only in the regions where otkhodnichestvo is a traditional way of life—in the north of European Russia, and also in the Urals and Siberia. Women engage in otkhodnichestvo on the same level as men in the central and probably in the southern (underexplored by us) regions of Russia.

Most otkhodniks find jobs through networking rather than through official information channels or public employment centers (in the imperial times, the approach was similar: see: Lurie, 1995b; 1997). (The role of the latter is insignificant. From the outset, public employment centers perform the function of a second social security service rather than an agency promoting employment.)

Employment is generally informal: the majority (up to two-thirds) of the respondents indicate that to the benefit (of course) of the employer and their own they are not registered, do not pay taxes and expect no pensions, being quite aware of the consequences. In this respect the otkhodniks are the most numerous category among all informally employed in the Russian labor market (see: Chepurensko, 2014; Zudina, 2013). We believe that the way otkhodniks view their prospects (in contrast to the expectations of public sector employees) is an anticipation of the near future of the Russian pension system—we are witnessing the last days of the central pillar of the national social security system.

Few otkhodniks find jobs in line with their educational background. Contemporary otkhodnichestvo is little or not related with the other attribute of a welfare state—the national vocational training system. That is why we believe that the still high public expenses on vocational training are currently superfluous and unjustified; therefore, the government policy in its support is unreasonably wasteful.

Along with the above two factors, we have to consider that contemporary otkhodniks practically do not resort to free public health care services, as they are never sick. Moreover, they cannot afford to be sick either at work, or at home (due to pressing household matters). Therefore, they are virtually excluded from the public health care system and remain on the sidelines with regard to services provided by the welfare state (see specifically: *Health maintenance...*, 2012). Thus, it is only

logical that these people are not registered in the economy and pay no taxes. In their majority, they appear to exist apart from the state (see: Plusnin, 1999).

## Chapter 7

### Otkhodnik in society

#### Expected and actual compensation, working conditions and reasons to give up otkhodnichestvo

*"Here he is master, there—a slave. However, in Moscow he can earn 20,000 rubles, whereas here—no way, do what he might."<sup>132</sup>*

The most sensitive matter regarding the cost of labor and the factors driving remuneration up or down is a key issue for the otkhodniks themselves.<sup>133</sup> Our respondents rather frankly disclosed their earnings, told us whether their working arrangements were formalized or not, how unscrupulous the employers could be, how often they had been cheated, and how they deal with law enforcers, since many otkhodniks fail to register their temporary stay and avoid formal employment.

A discussion of the principal, economic matters was always accompanied by side issues: working conditions, living arrangements, and leisure at the place of employment. We were interested in various aspects: how, with whom and by what transport do they travel to their job destinations; the seasonal nature of various jobs and how this affects the choice of occupation; working hours and duration of the whole "shift"; days off and sick days (if any); the people's living arrangements and leisure, and their relations with local residents, the authorities, and professionals (for example, doctors).

Finally, the discussion of everyday hardships that the otkhodniks experience always resulted in the following question: what level of earnings would be sufficient to keep people from leaving their home grounds in search of work? The conversation usually ended by the respondent voicing his or her views on the economic and social implications of otkhodnichestvo for the local economy, and its social consequences for the local community.

#### 7.1. Compensation

The matter of compensation for the labors is usually delicate and multifaceted. People are not always prepared to tell the truth about their incomes; many tend to

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132 Interview with a local resident; Vladimirskoye, Semyonov urban district, Nizhny Novgorod Region, October 2012.

133 Otkhodnik wages are stated herein in rubles. As we mentioned earlier, the official USD/RUB exchange rate at the time of our fieldwork was 30–32 rubles per 1 US dollar, and the EUR/RUB rate was 43–45 rubles per 1 euro.

exaggerate and brag, so they indicate an incidentally received high amount as their regular earnings. It is not always possible to get comparable data on the remuneration for the same amount and type of work; moreover, the rates vary from area to area. However, we managed to obtain relatively fair estimates of the proceeds from *otkhodnichestvo*. One should bear in mind that the earnings are split into two unequal parts: "overheads", which include the *otkhodnik's* transport and accommodation expenses, and the net amount (usually larger part), which he brings home. This net amount is exactly the one that is of crucial importance. The overheads incurred by the *otkhodniks* are subject to significant variations. Some customers and employers cover travel expenses, others do not; in some cases free-of-charge accommodation is provided, and in other cases *otkhodniks* have to pay for lodging and board themselves. Although these differences are generally taken into account in the wages, much still depends on how far the job destination is from the *otkhodnik's* home and how expensive life there is. Short-distance destinations allow a person to return home practically every fortnight,<sup>134</sup> whereas with long distances frequent shuttling is impossible:

"If you want to come home often, it makes no sense to leave at all. Because when we get down to it, it's a thousand kilometers there and back, which means 100 liters of gasoline. And 100 liters cost 2,800 rubles. That is about 3,000 rubles. So, the net travel costs are 3,000 rubles. Plus additional expenses here and there. Plus fines."<sup>135</sup>

An *otkhodnik's* wages also depend on the status of the employing entity. In spite of all the risks inherent to an informal job, remuneration for it is higher than in the case of formal employment. However, even here, there are features that can affect the final wages:

Interviewer (I): - Are you formally employed?

Respondent (R): - I was dismissed on September 1. Formally. It's a real nut house: I had to quit this job yet again. You know, reorganization and all that sort of stuff so as not to pay taxes. It's always unexpected. The foreman shows up and informs the laborers that they have to submit resignation letters. Last time the owners also dismissed everyone. Then they renamed the company (changed one letter actually), moved the office to a new location, altered the contact details, and hey ho - hired everyone back within a month.

I: - How often does this happen?

R: - Every three years.

I: - Is it because of some sort of inspection or what?

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134 Some people working in Moscow come home every weekend, e.g., residents of Urshel (Vladimir Region), or Kashin, for whom the journey takes three to four hours by cheap suburban train or five hours by train, respectively.

135 Interview with taxi driver Mikhail, former *otkhodnik*; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

R: - Tax inspection probably, I don't know. So, they've sacked me now, and after New Year they might take me back. It's weird.

I: - But you still go on working?

R: - What's the difference? I even keep my labor book [employment record book] there. They will make a new entry in it. And I'll sign the employment contract yet again."<sup>136</sup>

Pay also depends on the regional specialization by type of craft: for the same type of work, people from areas specializing in different *otkhodnik* crafts will receive different compensation. Thus, a resident of Kargopol will get higher pay for a carpentry job than a resident of Toropets:

Respondent (R): - Mind you, half of us are former teachers. I ask them, "What drives you out of your classrooms?" They reply, "We may go back when teachers are paid decently." Many of them studied here, in Kargopol, in the teacher training college. Then they just quit teaching.

Interviewer (I): - And started building log houses?

R: - Yes. This is something exotic for them [for the Muscovites]. For us, who grew up here, in the North, this is common practice, no big deal ... Customers, who want to build a log home, seek out carpenters from the North. There [at a building materials market in Mytishchi] one woman was specifically looking to hire guys only from Arkhangelsk or Vologda to build her house."<sup>137</sup>

Pay also depends on the level of competition in the market. That is why, for example, carpenters, building log homes around Moscow earn a lot more than the same people engaged there in capital construction or flat renovations. In the second case, they face tough competition from numerous migrant workers, who are also *otkhodniks*, only from the former southern Soviet republics; those people do not have the skills to build high-quality log cabins, but they can outdo any northern carpenter when it comes to renovating apartments. A rare profession significantly increases remuneration. Therefore, carpenters who besides building log cabins undertake also finishing jobs or build homes on a turnkey basis earn much more than their less skilled colleagues do:

"Everyone has certain skills but these skills are unique. Migrant workers are no competitors for us. Absence of competition from migrant workers means higher earnings."<sup>138</sup>

Many *otkhodniks*, who work in capital construction elsewhere, at home do not engage in such jobs even when they are available. That niche is now firmly occupied by migrant workers from former Soviet republics, whom the locals refer to as "unpaid labor". The migrants are paid such meagre wages, which none of the locals would ever accept. Although construction is not a seasonal business, the intensity of work is never constant, so to keep costs down developers prefer to hire migrants.

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136 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexander, working as carpenter; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

137 Interview with *otkhodnik* Sergey P., working as builder; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

138 Ibid.

It is too expensive to maintain formally employed staff workers. The employer has to pay them wages and make mandatory contributions even when they are idle. As for migrant workers, they can be hired only for the actual period of construction. When they are no longer needed, they can be immediately dismissed. Otkhodniks face more or less the same arrangements on similar jobs in the Moscow area, the only difference being significantly higher wages than they would have received back home.

Interviewer: - What are the average wages here?

Respondent: - Here? Well, it's as follows: unskilled workers get about 4,000–5,000 rubles. I mean those that just "fetch and carry". The more skilled ones are paid from 8,000 to 10,000 rubles. Ten grand is considered to be a good salary. Those who work out-of-town can earn up to 40,000 rubles. They leave for several months in a row, then come back and live here comfortably. Some stay away 20 days, and then spend 10 days home.<sup>139</sup>

According to the respondents, the most highly paid otkhodniks are those carpenters, who are informally engaged in building summer cottages, and who are recruited based on word-of-mouth referrals. However, their work is akin to slavery. Besides, it happens that they are cheated, left without pay, and kicked out from the construction site. Therefore, some of our respondents believe that because of the risks, the local status of builders is lower than that of security guards, although the former are much better paid than the latter.

There is a two- to five-fold difference in the earnings of different professional groups of otkhodniks and those of otkhodniks from different areas. For example, numerous otkhodniks engaged as security guards in big cities work under a two-week on, two-week off schedule. Their daily rate is 1,000 rubles, so per month they make only 15,000 rubles. This is incomparably lower than the earnings of otkhodnik builders from the northern areas engaged in log construction. It is routine practice for them to earn from 50,000 to 60,000 rubles per month. However, their jobs are seasonal and last only from May through October, whereas the security guards work all year round. Thus, builders from the Kostroma Region (from Chukhloma, Kologriv, and Makaryev) earn from 300,000 to 500,000 rubles per season, whereas residents of Ardatov, Temnikov, and Kasimov receive from their security activities an annual income of 180,000–200,000 rubles, or only half as much. Moreover, generally those Kostroma builders do not idle away the winter. They either find employment in the utilities sector, or engage in some occasional side jobs. Some of them register as unemployed with the district employment center.

Guaranteed wages paid to formally employed otkhodniks vary from 11,000 rubles (cleaner) to 27,000 rubles (security guard). We saw information that a security

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139 Street interview with a middle-aged otkhodnik; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, November 2011.

guard can earn up to 40,000 rubles, and a mere distributor of printed matter in Moscow streets next to metro stations—even up to 60,000 rubles.<sup>140</sup> However, such cases are rare, and can hardly serve to make a fortune. Practically all respondents admit that no formally employed otkhodnik brings home more than 30,000 rubles per month. Only informally working otkhodniks can "boast" of high earnings.

In the meantime, an amount of 15,000–30,000 rubles is sufficient to sustain a family in a small town or village. Usually, the spouse also has a small salary or pension of 5,000 to 10,000 rubles. Besides, additional seasonal earnings are not to be ignored. They include, *inter alia*, proceeds from roadside sale of self-grown fruit and vegetables, wild berries and mushrooms, bundles of birch branches (*veniks*) for the *banya*, and lots of other things. In the short summer season such "roadside" revenue can reach up to 200,000–300,000 rubles [\$6,500–\$10,000], thus significantly contributing to the family budget. For comparison, the annual salary of a public sector employee in the province averages 150,000–200,000 rubles [\$5,000–\$6,500]. Therefore, overall, the money brought home by an otkhodnik constitutes from a half to over two thirds of the total annual family income. One of our interviewees proposed the following simple formula to determine the lowest acceptable earnings: one should bring home at least an amount equal to the living wage per each member of the household plus another 5,000 rubles to pay utility bills. In total, a family of two to three people would require monthly from 15,000 to 20,000 rubles. Taking into account the salary of the second family member (usually the wife working in the public sector)<sup>141</sup>, it suffices for the otkhodnik to bring home up to 15,000 rubles per month.

Interviewer: - What level of wages would be sufficient to keep you from leaving Ryabinino, so that you could live and work here?

Respondent: - I would say, to live comfortably and be able to buy something, one needs on average 25,000–30,000 rubles. Well, 20,000 rubles AT LEAST, but thirty thousand is more like it.

I: - And how much higher are your earnings than the average wages you could receive here?

R: - Normally I make three times as much.<sup>142</sup>

External earnings have to be reduced by the amount of expenses incurred on-site: accommodation (minimum 5,000 rubles per month), meals (another 5,000 rubles),

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140 It is worth mentioning that this information was taken from an ad in a Saransk local newspaper. The otkhodniks themselves never mentioned such wages.

141 The wives of high-earners, especially "northerners", generally do not work; they take care of the household or having nothing better to do attend various classes, frequent clubs, and participate in the life of the community. Some wives keep their jobs solely to avoid boredom, since they do not actually need the 5,000-ruble salary.

142 Interview with otkhodnik Dmitry, working as bulldozer operator; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

transport, and limited entertainment (from one thousand to a maximum of five thousand, depending on the age, spirits, and marital status of the *otkhodnik*). It is, however, rather common for professional *otkhodniks* to live on-site in cabins, shacks, and trailers (where they pay only for the electricity), and to cook for themselves. Then their expenses at the employment destinations may be even less than 5,000 rubles per month. Thus, the wife of an *otkhodnik* from Sogra in the Vokhom district of Kostroma Region told us about her husband, who was employed as civil engineer at a construction site in the Podolsk district (near Moscow). By then, he had been working several years in that job, most of the time "on duty" with rare visits home. His on-site expenses never exceeded 5,000 rubles per month, so he could always bring home 15,000 rubles on average. That amount plus her unstable salary of five to seven thousand rubles was enough to support a family of five with three schoolchildren. They feel themselves better off than their neighbors, although the family's monthly cash income is below 30,000 rubles. Therefore, *otkhodnik* families stand only slightly apart from other families in town:

"Finally the people are starting to understand. Many, for example, come to me. I mean those who quit their out-of-town jobs. The fact is that the story about a better lot in life is, in principle, just a fable. Now look here. For example, you arrive in Moscow. It costs about twenty grand to rent a flat. OK, the young and unmarried ones can rent a one-room apartment for three people. What can you expect to earn upon arrival? Whoever you are, at the beginning you'll hardly make more than thirty grand per month. At a later stage you might get a pay raise for experience, knowledge, connections, including those in government bodies, if any.

So, you've rented a flat for three—deduct seven grand from the thirty that you earn. You're left with about twenty thousand. Then come the transport expenses. It is very rare to find accommodation next to work. So you have to take the bus or something, which means another three thousand for public transport. In fact, in the end it boils down to approximately the same amount of money. Yes, wages here are somewhat lower. You'll get two-three thousand rubles less, but you'll be spared those headaches."<sup>143</sup>

Summarized data (obtained from interviews with *otkhodniks* and their relatives) on the expected and actual wages, by area, reveals the following picture. In the northern areas, where the *otkhodniks* are mainly engaged in construction, the expected and actual earnings vary widely (all figures are presented in thousands of rubles):

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143 Interview with Victor Nikolaevich Supov, director of the Toropets liquefied gas facility; Tver Region, Toropets, 20 November 2011.

- Kostroma Region: the expected amount is from 10 to 40 (an average of 21); whereas the actual pay is from 14 to 100 (an average of 48)
- Ivanovo Region: the expected amount is from 10 to 35 (an average of 21); the actual pay is from 12 to 75 (an average of 30)
- Arkhangelsk Region: the expected amount is from 20 to 45 (an average of 29); the actual pay is from 50 to 136 (an average of 87).

The situation in the central areas, where the otkhodniks are predominantly employed as security guards, is as follows:

- Mordovia: the expected amount is from 14 to 50 (an average of 27); the actual pay is from 15 to 30 (an average of 20)
- Chuvashia: the expected amount is from 13 to 25 (an average of 18); the actual pay is around 20
- Ryazan Region: the expected amount is from 10 to 100 (an average of 34); the actual pay is from 13 to 50 (an average of 24).

In the western areas, where otkhodnik crafts are less specialized, the picture is as follows:

- Leningrad Region: the expected amount is from 10 to 30 (an average of 23); the actual pay is from 25 to 35 (an average of 30)
- Tver and Pskov Regions: the expected amount is from 20 to 30 (an average of 24); the actual pay is from 18 to 70 (an average of 41).

In the eastern areas and the Urals the situation is as follows:

- The Perm Territory: the expected amount is from 20 to 60 (an average of 30); the actual pay is around 40.

The otkhodniks themselves are prepared to work away from home for an average wage of about 25,000 rubles, whereas their family members would be content with 18,000–20,000 rubles. The actual earnings average 40,000 rubles per month. However, in view of the considerable differentiation between the northern and central areas, it is fair to speak about 40,000–60,000 rubles earned seasonally by otkhodniks from the North and from the Urals, and from 15,000 to 20,000 rubles earned by otkhodniks engaged in security and the service sector.

Remarkably, the requirements of low-skilled people—otkhodniks from the central areas working as security guards in major cities—exceed their actual earnings, whereas with professional builders the situation is quite the opposite—their actual earnings are often twice as high as their expectations. Probably, the guards spend too much time watching TV, and numerous commercials shape their requirements; it may also be that excessive idleness contributes to exaggerated needs. What is encouraging is that those people who really produce something earn more than they expect.

Thus, according to the same otkhodniks, they would be quite satisfied with outside jobs where they could earn about the double of a salary in the public sector back

home. Actually, they make twice as much as expected, and three to four times as much as they would be able to earn at home. So even considering the inevitable exaggerations, it is clear that incomes generated by otkhodniks allow them to feel better off than their neighbors:

Interviewer: - Can you indicate the amount of money you need to earn here that would keep you from seeking work elsewhere? An amount that would be enough for you.

Respondent: - Well, more than ten thousand for sure, at least fifteen or sixteen thousand rubles.

I: - Are you married? Do you have children?

R: - I am single...<sup>144</sup>



Photo 13. Otkhodnichestvo definitely drives the transportation business in small towns. It is common for entrepreneurs to arrange the delivery of otkhodniks to their job destinations and back. Buses of the Chuvash Poputchik (fellow traveler) company are always to be seen early in the morning at the Square of Three Train Stations (Komsomolskaya Square) in Moscow. Daily, these buses pick up numerous otkhodniks from different parts of Chuvashia and deliver them to the construction sites of the capital. Vlastelin Company is engaged in such business in the Saratov Region, where it has monopolized the transportation services to Saratov otkhodniks. The photo shows a Vlastelin office in Kalininsk on the Moscow-Saratov route. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich, April 2013.

144 Interview with otkhodnik Roman (about 25 years old), working as logger; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, December 2011.

## 7.2. Working conditions, living arrangements, and leisure

An otkhodnik's life away from home starts with the journey. Depending on the area, people use different means of transport to reach their job destinations. Thus, nearly nine out of every ten otkhodniks from the Kostroma Region travel by car, either their own, or a teammate's. The same is true for Vologda and the Arkhangelsk Regions, and the Perm Territory. On the contrary, the vast majority of otkhodniks from Mordovia, and the Ryazan, Tver and Ivanovo Regions use public transport. As we know, Mordovians also travel by taxi or expressly hire private vehicles for a group of three to four people.

Specific otkhodnik occupations underlie the regional differences in transportation means. Otkhodniks from Kostroma, Vologda, Perm and Arkhangelsk travel to build log houses. They need to bring tools, work clothing and other necessary materials. This is too much to carry by public transport. Should they be also transporting logs for the construction, they need their own or leased truck. Otkhodniks from Mordovia, and the Ryazan and Ivanovo Regions travel primarily to work as security guards in Moscow, the distance to which is from 300 to 700 km. Therefore, they can use either public transport or personal cars, as they do not have to carry anything bulky or heavy. In addition, carpenters earn significantly more money than guards do; therefore, it is a lot safer to transport it by personal vehicles. The more so that in the 1990s and the early 2000s, otkhodniks returning home with large amounts of money were often robbed. Even now people are being cautious:

"Those that we know and with whom they travel together—a guy never starts off alone in his car; they leave together in several vehicles, so if something happens, they stand up for each other. Well, you know what I mean; anything can happen on the road.

- That is, they travel in groups of ten to twelve people?

- Well, three or four cars leave Kineshma at the same time, and they keep each other in sight the whole way. This way we do not worry too much, because we know that our men are out there [chuckles] under their own protection. That is, they help each other out and don't leave anyone alone in trouble."<sup>145</sup>

In certain places delivery of otkhodniks to Moscow has become a separate business. For some people this has become their main source of income. They run their own minibus service shuttling groups of passengers to and from Moscow. For example, a regular bus connection exists between Temnikov and Moscow. Buses leave from the bus terminal three to four times per week. However, otkhodniks prefer to take the daily private bus, which costs 500 rubles as compared to the regular fare of 750 rubles (the distance to Moscow is about 500 kilometers). The local residents say that tickets for the private bus are sold out every evening. These buses

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145 Interview with Elena, wife of an otkhodnik. Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

(there should be at least two of them, as they depart and arrive on a daily basis) belong to a local businessman, who owns a large two-level department store. It is from this store that the bus departs. Apparently, the *otkhodniks* were initially the target group for the businessman, and the bus service was launched tailored for them. Moreover, according to one of our respondents, the businessman knows practically all the *otkhodniks* personally by name and is aware of their occupations. Exactly the same system functions also in Ardatov with the only difference that carriage is arranged by a local businesswoman who owns a hotel and a pharmacy in town. The bus departs to Moscow from the hotel twice per week. The fare is 1,000–1,200 rubles (the distance to Moscow is about 750 kilometers).

We encountered a similar pattern also in Kashin and in Semyonov (Nizhny Novgorod Region), where some entrepreneurs are engaged exclusively in carrying *otkhodniks*. The headman of the departing group sometimes act as coordinator, communicating with both the carrier and the *otkhodniks* to finalize the list of passengers.

In Chuvashia, there is even a large company, which specializes in bringing *otkhodniks* to Moscow from all district centers of the Republic. Furthermore, they offer a special additional service—company representatives meet *otkhodniks* from Chuvashia next to the Cherkizovskaya metro station and deliver them to various sites in Moscow and the Moscow Region. That service is however provided only to groups of four or more people.

In Kineshma (Ivanovo Region) and Kasimov (Ryazan Region), the business of carrying *otkhodniks* is not as well developed as in Mordovia and Chuvashia, the reason being good public transport connections with Moscow (cheap overnight train and numerous buses and minibus taxis):

"If you are very interested to see how many people do not live permanently in Kineshma, visit the station at around 10 p.m. There will be a bus leaving for Moscow at that time. The train departs at 6 p.m. Take a look, all the passengers are traveling to work, and not to resorts. At 10 p.m., another big forty-five seater bus is departing. It's also full to the brim every night, to say nothing of the minibuses and so on and so forth. All those people are traveling to be in Moscow by 6 a.m."<sup>146</sup>

Mordovian *otkhodniks* also travel by taxi. Three or four of them hire a car together, pay 1,200 rubles each and reach Moscow faster than by bus. An *otkhodnik* using his own car will never travel alone but will take fellow *otkhodniks* along charging them money for the trip.

Due to the relative proximity to Moscow (about 300 km), many Kasimov *otkhodniks* can afford to come home every weekend. As a result, after the weekend Kasi-

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146 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dmitry; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

mov buses travel full to Moscow and at the end of the workweek—from Moscow. A participant of our expedition could not buy a ticket for the required bus when she wanted to travel from Moscow to Kasimov on a Friday evening. The next bus with seats available arrived in Kasimov at 3 a.m. The majority of *otkhodniks* use the official and quite affordable public transport (for example, a guaranteed seat on the Kineshma-Moscow train costs only 400 rubles). However, for some *otkhodniks* public transport is inconvenient, because of the work schedule or out-of-town location of their job sites. Such people are forced to form groups and travel on their own by car, which is a source of concern for their loved ones.

"Two weeks later the boss says: three men are, for example, going off duty at three cemeteries [*otkhodniks* also work at cemeteries]. There will be a such-and-such car going to Kineshma. [...] So, the car owner picks up the three men from the three cemeteries, and they start off for Kineshma in the night. Due to traffic jams, people prefer to travel by night. Usually, they leave Moscow at around midnight or one o'clock in the morning, when the roads are more or less empty. [...] They prefer to travel by car. Some of the boys have cars, so four people pile into one car. Everyone chips in for the gasoline; it's still cheaper and faster for them that way. The road doesn't take that long. If they start at one in the morning, at 6 a.m. they are already home. He calls me immediately, "Mom, I've arrived, I'm home." Because, of course, we worry, especially in winter, when the roads are dark and slippery. Anything can happen—they sometimes fall asleep behind the wheel. They are all tired, because they work twelve days in a row and then immediately leave in the night for Kineshma without getting any rest. That is, they do fall asleep behind the wheel. The passengers have to keep the driver awake by all means—either switch on the music, or talk to him all the time to keep him from falling asleep. That's why we are always all nerves until they arrive safely home. It's such a risk, such a big risk!"<sup>147</sup>

Only two categories of *otkhodniks* have clearly expressed seasonal work: the "foresters", who work in the forest and build private houses (Kargopol, Nikolsk, Chukhloma, Soligalich, Kologriv, and Makaryev) and the "sailors" (Voznesenye, Podporozhye, and Kasimov). The former fell trees and prepare the log frame during the winter and spring period; then in summer they erect the house and do all the carpentry work at the customer's premises. For the latter, seasonality is related to the period of navigation. Navigation usually lasts from April-May to September-November, i.e., from five to eight months. *Otkhodniks* employed in other occupations (security guards, cleaners, nannies, governesses, and even workers engaged in capital construction) can work all year round; their jobs are not subject to seasonality. However, exceptions occur:

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147 Interview with the mother of an *otkhodnik*; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

"The season starts in early summer, or at the end of May, and lasts through December or the beginning of January. February, March, and April—that's low season. Usually there is no work at all. Why? Because the funding has not been allocated yet. That is my personal point of view. No funding means no tenders, and, respectively, no winning bidders and no awarded contracts. So, no work is available other than in the cases when it had been contracted for three years to come. Generally, public companies can secure orders for three or four years ahead; private companies do not have this opportunity. [...] In low season, the only activity is occasional warranty maintenance [road lighting systems]."<sup>148</sup>

The duration and frequency of job-related absence from home varies depending on the occupation, work arrangements, and the distance to the employment destination. Log and timber house builders work, as a rule, informally, and their working time is not regulated. They return home after completing the specified amount of work. On average, they work about a month on site, and then rest one week at home.

Interviewer (I): - And how much time do you spend at home, say, in a month?

Respondent (R): - A week per month.

I: - All the ten years like that?

R: - Yes, exactly, ten years. There is no alternative. No one is going to wait for you there. That's the way it is: there is work, and it has to be done. They couldn't care less about your problems, family circumstances, illness, troubles or whatever; so you forget everything, keep it out of your mind.<sup>149</sup>

Interviewer: - How long do you stay away from home when you work?

Respondent: - It depends. Sometimes I am absent 20 days, sometimes 30. When we go north, I can even be away for half a year.<sup>150</sup>

The work schedule is similar at construction sites for informally employed finishers, technicians, and other workers. All *otkhodniks* working in large companies on a piecework basis, regardless of whether they are employed formally or informally, have an indefinite time schedule, which depends not only on the amount of work and their own performance, but also on the will of the superiors:

Respondent: - Well, after two or three weeks of work... three weeks is even too long, our boss sends us home for a week's break at least. He virtually pushes us out: - Come on, off you go!

Interviewer: - So, you spend three weeks working and one at home?

R: - Well, it depends, sometimes it's two weeks. Sometimes, I finish a job in ten days and come home. It also happens that I stay away the whole month when I need to finish a job. It makes no sense coming home for a couple of days. [...]

I: - And how much time overall do you spend away from home?

R: - No two years are ever the same. On average, it's from two hundred to two hundred and fifty days.

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148 Interview with the wife of an *otkhodnik* working as electrician in a company engaged in street and road lighting; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

149 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

150 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dmitry, working as bulldozer operator; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

I: - What months are the busiest?

R: - The summer ones, of course, that's high season. Winter can be rather busy as well. During the crisis, we just managed to drop in home for five or six days—and off we went again. Over New Year, we left for the construction site on January 6 already. During the crisis, in 2009, we had hardly time to breathe.<sup>151</sup>

Long-haul truckers generally have a broken schedule, which depends not merely on the duration of the hauls and their frequency, but also on the orders that the person either finds himself (if he works individually and on its own a truck), or receives from the traffic controller or the owner of the freight forwarding company (if he is a hired driver, like many others):

Interviewer: - Now, when you return, how long do you stay home until the next haul?

Respondent: - It depends. Sometimes, I make three trips in a row, sometimes I sit a whole week without work.<sup>152</sup>

Formally employed rotation workers have a defined fixed work cycle; the duration of the shift is usually equal to or twice as long as the rotational leave. Most often, the rotation shift is two-three weeks or 15 days long. This regime is typical for people working in capital construction, transportation (with the exception of long-haul truckers), and security, at enterprises, mines, and thoroughfare development:

Interviewer: - Do they leave home for long?

Respondent: - It depends on the location. For example, if it is Krasnovishersk or Solikamsk, they go for week or two, and then spend two days at home. If there is a lot of work, they sometimes sign a contract for one month. But it really depends on the location and distance. What I mean is many go north to work for oil companies or whoever; they leave for three to four months. That type of job is also seasonal: to put it roughly, they leave for the winter and relax in summer.<sup>153</sup>

Some security guards from Kasimov and Kineshma, which are located relatively close to Moscow and have good transport links, can afford weekly rotation shifts. But on distant sites, such as, for example, the Olympic facilities construction in Sochi, otkhodniks from Ivanovo and Ryazan Regions, Mordovia and Chuvashia have a month on / month off rotation schedule. Otkhodniks employed at mining enterprises and those dealing with the maintenance of mines and trunk lines have the most extensive rotation shifts (from one to eight months). This is primarily associated with the remote location of the deposits (in Siberia), and the journey from the European part of Russia is long and costly. For example, we encountered an ot-

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151 Interview with otkhodnik Alexander, working as carpenter; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

152 Interview with otkhodnik Yevgeny, engaged in hauling log cabin kits; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

153 Interview with Sergey Alexandrovich T. (34 years old). He himself has a job in Cherdyn, and his brother works in Surgut. Cherdyn, Perm Territory, November 2011.

khodnik from Kargopol, who was working on the construction of the Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean gas pipeline:

Respondent: - [...] It's big money, but you know yourself, if one has to work six months in a row away from home...

Interviewer: - So you have a certain schedule: six months there and six months here?

R: - Yes!

I: - Six months in a row?

R: - Yes. Sometimes seven. Ones the rotation shift lasted eight months. This is very-very hard work.<sup>154</sup>

Otkhodniks, who work relatively close to their place of residence, can afford permanent employment with a traditional five-day working week, where they return home every weekend. Many otkhodniks from Kashin, from the Vladimir Region (Urshel, Kurlov, Gus-Khrustalny, and Yuriev-Polsky), and from the Ivanovo Region (Gavrilov Posad, Pistsov, Komsomolsk, and Teikov) work like that. This considerably expands the range of potential employment opportunities. Therefore, the share of persons with higher education, who seek employment in line with their training, is predictably significant among otkhodniks working under this regime. This type of otkhodnichestvo is already very close to commuting. At the same time, due to this working pattern, an otkhodnik spends only one and a half to two days per week with his family.

Much less common is a pattern, when a person works overtime or on weekends, thus accumulating compensatory time off. When enough days off are available, he comes home on leave.

Respondent: - [...] it's not exactly a rotation shift; he accumulates compensatory time off for working on weekends, and then uses these days to come home [...]

Interviewer: - How frequently does your son come home?

R: - It depends. Sometimes once in three months. He comes as soon as he accumulates certain compensatory time off, and his superiors tell him that no urgent work is pending and allow him to take so and so many days off. His colleague fills in for him while he is away.<sup>155</sup>

We also encountered otkhodniks who work too far away to come home for the weekend, but who cannot or do not want to accumulate compensatory time off. As a result, they are at home only during the off-season period. Where the job is not of a seasonal nature, they come home occasionally, and spend only about a month per year with the family:

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154 Interview with otkhodnik Dmitry P., engaged in clearing pipeline right-of-ways from vegetation in West Siberia; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

155 Interview with the mother of an otkhodnik working as an excavator operator; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2012.

Respondent: - During the busy season, he comes home every two months for two days. [...] During the low season, when they perform only warranty maintenance, he leaves, on average, for a period of three days, and then spends a week at home.<sup>156</sup>

Interviewer: - Does he come home often?

R: - No, occasionally. Once in three months, rarely more often. I don't know, whether he'll manage to come home for the New Year holidays.

I: - And how much time does he spend at home?

R: - Usually a week, maybe slightly longer.<sup>157</sup>

What schedule do the *otkhodniki* follow during the rotation shift? Generally, during the rotation shift only those *otkhodniki* get days off, who leave home for extended periods of time (a month or longer). We are not considering people, who work a normal five-day week and return home every weekend. The remaining *otkhodniki*, including formally employed rotation workers, are simply not entitled to any days off, as they are half a year off duty in any case and are supposed to be able to survive two weeks in a row without holidays. An exception are security guards who go on duty for 24 hours without rest and sleep. In this case, after every duty shift they get from a day to three days off. We met an *otkhodnik*, who in between duties managed to squeeze in a second job as a security guard at another enterprise. Being at the age of retirement, this *otkhodnik* sleeps daily (in his own words) only four hours.

*Otkhodniki* in the full sense of the word—self-employed log home builders and some other informally employed *otkhodniki* (skilled repair personnel, finishers, etc.)—are their own bosses in terms of work time arrangements. For the most part, they strive to work seven days a week to finish the job, collect the money, and return home as soon as possible:

"... I am my own boss. I can take a break if I want to. But what's the point? It makes a lot more sense to finish with the construction, get the pay and go home."<sup>158</sup>

However, some of these workers still allow themselves one day off per week. Notably, practically all such *otkhodniki* are under 35 years old, which is easily explained by the desire of the young people to have some fun:

Interviewer: - Are you allowed any days off at your workplace? Are they fixed or do you decide yourself when to take a break and for how long?

Respondent 1: - We decide ourselves.

I: - And what about you? Do you take time off or do you work seven days a week?

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156 Interview with the wife of an *otkhodnik* working as electrician in a company engaged in street and road lighting; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

157 Interview with the wife of an *otkhodnik* working in a roofing crew on the construction of apartment buildings; Toropets, Tver region, November 2011.

158 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dima, log home builder; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

Respondent 2 (the second young man): - The sooner you're done with the job, the sooner you go home. The faster you work, the sooner you leave.

I: - But what about leisure? Do you have any?

R 1: - Huh, why not? There's the lake. We can go there, relax, and have a BBQ.

I: - And do you do it?

R 1: - Hey, we're no worse than anybody else, are we?<sup>159</sup>

Respondent: - Yeah, we had days off. Every Sunday.

Interviewer: - According to the working arrangements or at your own initiative?

R: - That was our decision.

I: - And what did you usually do on your day off?

R: - Went swimming in the lake. Well, just relaxed.<sup>160</sup>



Photo 14. Fishermen on the ice of the Dnepr River in Dorogobuzh (Smolensk Region) on a frosty day in November 2001. Winter fishing is not a source of income. It is leisure and entertainment for many men in Russia. Most otkhodniks mention fishing as their favorite leisure activity. As soon as the rivers freeze, men sitting next to ice holes are a common sight near every small town or village. Such gatherings are real open-air clubs where people go to socialize and discuss vital everyday matters and even international politics rather than catch a pike or perch. Photo by Juri Plusnin.

The nature of the job and the possibility to change its pattern at his discretion determines the length of the otkhodnik's workday. Therefore, the schedule of piece workers, like log home builders, is driven by their desire to finish the job as soon as possible and return home. Such otkhodniks try to work during all daylight hours with a single short break for lunch.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with otkhodnik Alexey and his workmate, engaged in log home building; Makar'yev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with a former otkhodnik, log home builder; Soligalich, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

Interviewer: - How long was your workday there?

Respondent: - We worked as we could, we tried to get up early and finish as late as possible. The sooner we are done, the better for us.<sup>161</sup>

"Free time is something we don't have there. Work starts at 8 a.m. and lasts until late in the evening, including weekends. The idea is to earn as much as possible in the shortest period of time and to go home. [...] Not all young guys work the whole day. They are single, so they don't need that much money. They want to take a break, go out with the girls."<sup>162</sup>

"We work 12 hours a day, sometimes more, from sunrise to sunset, because we all know that the sooner we are finished, the sooner we'll get the money and be able to return home."<sup>163</sup>

However, if the builders are required to work in the presence of the home owner (without exception, all *otkhodniks* refer to the home owner as "the master") or his family (sometimes, the family moves into the unfinished house or lives on the premises), they can start work only at 8–9 a.m. instead of 6–7 a.m., and they have to finish before 10–11 p.m. so as not to disturb the owners or wake up their neighbors:

"We couldn't start working too early. The Muscovites are resting, and we are making a lot of noise. Therefore, we started only at 8 in the morning. Of course we worked more than eight hours."<sup>164</sup>

Interviewer: - How long is your workday?

Respondent: - As long as it is daylight.

I: - You mean the whole day long?

R: - Yeah, if you wish, you can take a break, but if you want to get the job done as soon as possible, you may start at nine.<sup>165</sup>

In apartment buildings, the repairmen and finishers are limited in their activities to the time when the able-bodied residents are away at work.

Respondent: - The Muscovites don't work, they don't want to work, they want to receive money, but they don't want to work ... they show up at eleven in the morning and by three in the afternoon they are already gone. We have nothing to do in the dormitory; we work there where it's allowed, of course. But it's very difficult to work in apartments in Moscow. Noisy operations are allowed only two or three hours a day.

Interviewer: - Do residents complain about the noise?

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161 Interview with a former *otkhodnik* nicknamed Monya, who used to build log homes; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, September 2011.

162 Interview with former *otkhodnik* Alexander S., log home builder; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

163 Interview with *otkhodnik* Slavushka, log home builder; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

164 Interview with former *otkhodnik* Mikhail Sh., log home builder; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

165 Interview with *otkhodnik* B., log home builder; Verkhnyaya Unzha, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

R: - Yeah, they do. One is sick, another is retired, and somebody has little children and so on. That leaves only two to four hours to get something done. And how can you avoid noise when you are handling an electric screwdriver or a hammer drill? The whole house, especially if it is a monolith building, hears even interior painters when they sand walls before painting, so when a hammer drill is at work, the building vibrates.<sup>166</sup>

Rotation workers engaged in capital construction or in industry, usually work from ten to twelve hours a day. Thus, in two weeks (without days off) they accumulate the standard monthly work hours.

Most of the security guards are on duty round the clock, however, they work in pairs changing each other to sleep, eat and relax (generally, relaxing means watching TV). There is a small category of security guards, who are forced to work alone and, respectively, round the clock. They have the right to a night's sleep, some rest, etc., but they are not allowed to leave their post. These include, for example, certain guards at holiday camps or cemetery gatekeepers.

Our rare respondents who go away to work as cleaners, concierges, nannies, and governesses have to be mentioned separately. Many of them have unlimited workdays, because they serve in families and cooperative buildings. For additional payment from management companies of the apartment houses, cleaners and concierges often also undertake garbage disposal (on an informal basis). The work can continue all year round, so they return home at indefinite times, and often only for one week in a year. Such a regime can be endured for a more or less lengthy period by sufficiently mature women, often already in retirement, who are no longer bound by children, a husband, or household duties. It is natural that such *otkhodniks* (usually women) are rarely at home; therefore, they are so few among our respondents. We obtained information on their activities from relatives or neighbors. According to them, some female *otkhodniks* lead such a life for quite a long time, starting usually a few years prior to retirement (the statutory retirement age for women in Russia is 55 years) and registering all this time as unemployed. By the age of 60, they generally give up such work.

Table 7 provides a summary of standard work schedules specific for major occupational groups of the interviewed *otkhodniks*.

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166 Interview with former *otkhodnik* Segey K.; Sukhoverovo, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, September 2011.

Table 7

The standard work schedules specific for major occupational groups of the interviewed otkhodniks

| Otkhodnik occupational groups   | Seasonal nature of the work        | Duration and frequency of the rotation shift   | Days off   | Standard work hours   |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Log home builders and carpenters  | From April-May to October-November | 2–3 weeks absent, 1 week at home   | None   | Daylight hours  |
| Engaged in capital construction   | None                               | 15 days / 15 days  | None   | 10–12 hours   |
| Security guards   | None                               | 15 days / 15 days  | None   | Round the clock with a workmate, changing each other  |
| Employed at mines and trunk pipelines in the North  | None                               | The rotation shift lasts several months, as many are then spent at home                          | Available  | 8 hours   |
| Engaged in intellectual work  | None                               | On weekdays—absent from home; on weekends—at home  | Available  | 8 hours   |
| Engaged in retail and market trade (supermarkets, booths, markets)  | None                               | Several days per month spend at home   | Usually available                                | Daily shifts or during market hours   |
| Engaged in domestic services (domestic helpers, cleaners) and pre-school education (nannies, governesses, and nurses) | None                               | Usually occupied the whole year with a few weeks leave when the employer family goes on vacation | Generally none, they get "compensatory time off" | 10–14 hours and longer Often, domestic helpers, nannies and governesses live in the employer's household, and their working time as such is not defined |

The majority of contemporary otkhodniks, except those employed in the service sector, trade, and security, work in crews, which usually consist of relatives, friends and neighbors. Even those who go to work as nannies and security guards often team up in groups of two or three and keep constant contact with each other. Just like a hundred and two hundred years ago, teamwork is a typical feature of contemporary otkhodnichestvo. The teams often consist of relatives and members of the same family.

Such practice could also be caused by psychological reasons—the widespread attitude of public sector employees is to "get paid" for doing nothing. This attitude hampers the otkhodniks' teamwork, where intensive productive labor and high performance are crucial. That is perhaps why public sector employees speak dryly about otkhodniks and approve neither their motivation, nor way of life.

The team nature of otkhodnik occupations also determines the way they arrange their life on site:

Respondent: - They all chip in and establish a common cash pool, which they use to buy food, other necessities, and cover travel expenses. The balance is then distributed as pocket money.

Interviewer: - What are their living conditions?

R: - As far as I know, he co-rents an apartment in the suburbs with two other boys; that is quite convenient, as each one of them has to pay only 3,000 rubles per month. They can afford it. They have all the necessary equipment, and work is not far away.<sup>167</sup>

Interviewer: - What are your living conditions?

Respondent: - We live in a house trailer; I don't know how to put it properly. A trailer for eight persons.

I: - Do you cook yourself?

R: - No, we have a canteen, since we have field allowance.

I: - And what about laundering?

R: - We practically do not launder, as we try to take a sufficient change of clothes with us.

I: - Do you get medical aid in case of sudden illness? Or do you go home and receive treatment there?

R: - In serious cases medical care is certainly provided, and the trifles will simply blow over.<sup>168</sup>

Otkhodniks usually share accommodation with their workmates. Several people co-rent an apartment so that each one of them pays monthly no more than five to seven thousand rubles. They usually search for flats through acquaintances, and often rent them from distant relatives or former neighbors of their parents who had moved to large cities long ago. In Moscow, a standard one-room flat, which can easily house three to four people, can be rented starting from 25,000–30,000 rubles per month, in the suburbs –from 15,000 rubles upwards, whereas rates in the regional centers are significantly lower, starting from 8,000 rubles. A bed in a dormitory costs as much, but that is the accommodation style for otkhodniks who have long-term employment at construction sites. They also often live in trailers at the construction site itself. In that case they practically pay no rent, and cook for themselves. As a result, their everyday expenses are rather low. Unfortunately, we obtained little information on the everyday life of otkhodniks, largely because we interviewed them in their home towns and have to rely only on their stories without the possibility to

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167 Interview with the sister of an otkhodnik working as a professional cook at a sawmill in Solikamsk; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

168 Interview with otkhodnik Dmitry, working as bulldozer operator; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

observe it firsthand. And people often like to exaggerate. Therefore, even relatives and friends may have a rather distorted impression of the nature and quality of life the otkhodnik leads at his workplace.

Interviewer: - How do you spend your free time?

Respondent: - Sitting around in the cabin watching TV.

I: - Speaking about the cabin: what are your living conditions?

R: - The cabins are OK; they are warm.

I: - Do you cook for yourself?

R: - Sure. Who else will cook for us? Some crews take cooks along. We have no need for them; we can cook ourselves.

I: - And what about laundering? Do you wash your clothes there as well?

R: - Yes, there is a bathhouse there.<sup>169</sup>

All otkhodniks, without exception, confirmed to us that usually they do not resort to medical care. We are never ill, they say. Of course, those otkhodniks who work at large construction sites and there, where they are formally employed, have health insurance and may attend clinics, and get medical treatment in case of accidents. However, this is not always the case. We were told that even in the case of rather severe job-related injuries, people prefer to go home for treatment, rather than receive on-site care.

For working men, drinking, especially social drinking at somebody's place, or even better, at a picnic on a riverbank in the countryside, is an essential element of leisure. However, for the overwhelming majority of otkhodniks, such leisure time is acceptable only at home. On the job, practically no one drinks—the foreman takes care of that. Generally, the foreman oversees the morals of those under his charge. Drinking men are left behind at home—no team, however skilled they may be, accepts them. Otkhodnichestvo implies piecework, tight deadlines, and mutual responsibility of everyone. In the event that somebody is caught drunk, he is immediately (sometimes the same day) sacked and blacklisted forever. According to the accounts, occasionally a young man may allow himself no more than some beer on his day off. Thus, the otkhodniks' leisure is dull, monotonous, and boils down to meaningless pastime and sleep. Therefore, they claim that at work they do not relax.

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169 Interview with otkhodnik Roman (about 25 years old), working as logger; Cherdyn, Perm Territory, December 2011.

### 7.3. The reasons for giving *otkhodnichestvo* up

Following is the viewpoint of two mature men from Cherdyn whose needs are rather modest even for their small town. It clarifies the reasons for engaging in *otkhodnichestvo*, and the reasons for giving it up:

Interviewer: - How much would you need to earn here to keep you from seeking work elsewhere?

Respondent Alexander: - Here? Twenty grand would be more than enough!

Respondent Denis: - Yeah, that's right. That would be enough to pay for the utilities, and for the firewood...

Respondent Alexander: - For everything: water, firewood, grub, power!

Respondent Denis: - Not a piece of cake, of course, but still OK.

Respondent Alexander: - ...See what they are doing ... If I were to get fixed pay on a stable basis, I would be able to plan my expenses, like, for example, under the communists...

Respondent Denis: - With thirty grand in wages, one could spend twenty on essentials and save ten.<sup>170</sup>

As soon as a person is able to meet the family's needs locally, he/she gives up *otkhodnichestvo*. All our respondents named the same preconditions for this. The main requirement is stable income, which would be three, four or five times higher than the statutory minimum monthly wage, i.e. 15,000–20,000 rubles or even 25,000–30,000 rubles rather than 5,000 rubles. For this, jobs envisaging such compensation should be available. In small towns, usually two types of occupations meet these criteria: certain jobs in the public sector and the commissioning of a large enterprise in the vicinity offering good wages to the employees. However, people immediately indicate widespread insurmountable obstacles in both cases. Only certain categories of employees have high salaries in the public sector. Such categories include the staff of local administrations and local branches of government bodies, including internal affairs authorities, some teachers and some doctors. However, the barriers here are practically insurmountable—competition is extremely tough for such "cushy jobs", and "outsiders", however skilled and knowledgeable they may be, have no chance. Moreover, such jobs often require high professional skills, this being a bottleneck for most inhabitants of small towns and villages, especially men. Finally, pensioners, who do not intend to retire, often hold such jobs. Thus, they prevent newcomers from stepping in. Besides, receiving both salaries and pensions, they almost double their real income, thus becoming one of the most highly paid local community groups. Thus, such problems as cronyism, nepotism, and the predominance of pensioners in publicly funded jobs, reduce occupa-

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170 Interview with *otkhodniki* Alexander (about 60 years old) and Denis (under 50); Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

tional mobility, on the one hand, and increase the territorial mobility of potential applicants for such jobs, on the other hand.

In the industrial sector, other limitations exist. In the past decade, medium-sized and large enterprises producing a variety of goods, from alcohol and eggs to combine harvesters and household appliances, have been springing up everywhere in the province, including in remote areas. Production facilities are removed from major cities, where land lease is high. District authorities are happy to welcome "Moscow businesses" and lease land to them on favorable terms, often preferring them to local businesses that are too small and are besides run by locals who must be reckoned with. However, "Moscow outsiders" expect equally favorable terms regarding wages to be paid to local residents, their future employees. As a result, the usual wage offer is on the level of 12,000–15,000 rubles to 18,000–20,000 rubles. This is hardly acceptable for the locals, as such earnings do not differ much from salaries in the public sector, which an employee can simply "receive" without investing much effort. Besides, "alien" entrepreneurs rarely take into account daily transport and lunch expenses. Therefore, where factory buses and canteens provide free transportation and meals to the workers, they agree to work for 15,000–20,000 rubles per month. More often, however, such enterprises experience problems with hiring local labor force (as, for example, in Poshekhonye) and are forced to hire labor migrants from the former Soviet republics (as, for example, in Topets).

Very few otkhodniks nevertheless manage to find a new job not far from home, practically none—in the public sector. Therefore, more common reasons for giving up otkhodnichestvo have nothing to do with finding a better-paid job in one's native area. They are related to the otkhodnik's age (usually 50–60 years), state of health, which is no longer good enough to engage in such activities, and health-related psychological reasons. The latter include extreme fatigue from permanent travels and miserable living conditions away from home.

In addition to the above, family considerations are an important factor in favor of coming home for good. Being the most important reason to engage in otkhodnichestvo, the family is also decisive in giving up this way of life. As soon as the children complete their education and become more economically self-reliant, the otkhodnik father returns home and seeks permanent, usually low-wage employment, or starts a business. Often this coincides with the age of 50. Family problems, such as divorce, often caused by the husband's permanent absence from home, is another reason to discontinue otkhodnichestvo. A special, but rather common family circumstance is when the husband leaves his family and settles down with an already

existing "second wife" at the job location. In this case, the family does not break up formally, but the husband actually moves his permanent residence to the employment destination, thus ceasing to be an otkhodnik.

Thus, according to our observations, the main reasons for discontinuing otkhodnichestvo are related to labor (decently paid local employment), psycho-biological (indicated most often), and family (break-up of the family or a change in its reproductive status) circumstances.

## Chapter 8

### Otkhodnik at home

*"My friend was forced to go to Moscow. She has two kids a year apart. She has to provide for them and educate them; nothing is free of charge. So she left. She came back for the two weddings and left again. She is still coming and going. She gave the children an education and continues to support them."<sup>171</sup>*

Does a person selecting a specific occupation (like our otkhodniks) differ from other people who are not engaged in such activities? Are there any particular aspects in his behavior at home, in his hometown that distinguish him from neighboring men, who are not engaged in otkhodnichestvo? How does he differ from other city folk in the rare moments of leisure when he goes out in the city where he works? Is it possible to provide a generalized socio-psychological description of an otkhodnik—his portrait, by comparing him with the opposite labor behavior, the non-otkhodnik neighbor? Naturally, within a local community it is practically impossible to distinguish representatives of different types of activity on the instrumental level. The difference between such people will manifest itself in their labor conduct, everyday life, and, most probably, in their values. However, such differences can be recorded only as an impression based on numerous observations, rather than a statistical snapshot.

This chapter is an attempt to describe the otkhodnik as a socio-psychological type that is based on specific labor conduct, which determines particular domestic behavior of such people. We base the description on our direct observations in small towns and villages, impressions received during interviews with otkhodniks and their families, or in conversations with their neighbors, as well as the assessments provided by local experts. Evidently, all such opinions and impressions are rather subjective, but their concordance allows us to assume that the descriptions also reflect the reality.

The otkhodnik's specific labor activity in part generates particular behavior, and in part is driven by his psychological features and mentality. This issue is still a rare topic of discussion, although at the time when otkhodnichestvo in Russia was widespread, some authors wrote about it (*see, e.g.,* Kulisher, 2004, pp. 257–266, 353–381, 415–424; Butsin'sky, 1889; Zhibankov, 1887; Kazarinov, 1926; Lurie, 1995; Smurova, 2003, 2006a; Velikiy, 2010). We encountered these differences during our expeditions constantly and everywhere. It appears that the specific labor behav-

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171 Interview with an otkhodnik sales clerk; Bekovo, Penza Region, July 2013.

ior, which assumes a complete change of a person's lifestyle, entails unconventional (judging by local stereotypes) household arrangements and respective social consequences for the otkhodnik himself and his family. In addition, the results of the otkhodnik's work and his new time schedule affect family life and household arrangements (e.g., Lurie, 1995, 1997; Smirnov, 2002; Shabanova, 1992; Kirillova, 1997). Our observations show that this is the sphere, where contrasts between otkhodniks and non-otkhodniks living side by side in one township or village are the most pronounced (Zhidkevich, 2013).

Thus, certain features make the otkhodnik stand out from his social environment. In a sense, when this type of behavior becomes widespread, it reshapes the environment. Clearly, the local community also continues to influence the otkhodnik in spite of his prolonged absence from home. However, we can hardly record this influence, since the otkhodnik grew up in this environment and only the adoption of a life and subsistence pattern new for him and for the local community change his behavior and local status. According to researchers, this was specific of otkhodnichestvo in the late period of the Russian Empire (Kazarinov, 1926; Burds, 1997; Smurova, 2003, 2008). Regular recurring absence from the permanent place of residence assumes a transformation of the otkhodnik's status in his native community (*see especially*, Zinoviev, 1998). Such psychological, mental and behavioral features that characterize the otkhodnik as representing a special group of the economically active population allow us to draw his social portrait and introduce him as a social type.

### **8.1. First impression: appearance and behavior**

In appearance, the otkhodniks we see most often do not differ much from people whose lifestyle does not include otkhodnichestvo. However, as a result of numerous encounters with such persons, we have identified certain specific features that they have in common. Like any middle-aged man living in the province, he chooses sensible and comfortable clothes, neither pretentious, nor chic. Most middle-aged otkhodniks prefer universal camouflage outfits, which have become a hit in the past 20 years. The standard outfit includes trousers, T-shirt, shirt and headwear—either hat or cap. In the province, the hat-cap is an indispensable attribute all year round—men take it off only indoors. Young otkhodniks are of course slightly choosier in how they dress—they often wear jeans, shorts, and sometimes, bright T-shirts with pictures. The footwear is sturdy, but neither pretentious, nor trendy. Otkhodniks prefer soldier boots with high lacing or faded worn but not shabby sneakers. They are generally neatly and carefully dressed. They keep their clothes

and shoes clean, since there is no wife or mother who would take care about their appearance at the workplace. The neat manner in which the otkhodnik dresses distinguishes him subtly from non-otkhodniks when we meet them together on the streets of their hometown. His pal, who practically never goes far from home, is generally less careful in what he wears; his trousers and shoes are not as clean, and their quality is inferior to that of the otkhodnik's outfit.

The physique of male otkhodniks is also somehow related to their occupation. For example, log home builders and rotation workers, who are engaged in developing mineral resources and at construction sites in Siberia, are usually strong, muscular and healthy-looking men. By contrast, security guards generally look more "frail"; they are often scrawny, thin and slouching, although even among them, one can find those radiating health. It is likely that the "lie-in" nature of their job negatively affects some security guards. In any case, few otkhodniks ever complain about their health.

Otkhodniks rarely uses foul and obscene language. Of course, certain ones among them widely use offensive expletives. In a conversation with strangers, they do their best not to swear at all. Their language is rather complex, advanced and coherent. We got the impression that male otkhodniks have a rather rich vocabulary and pick their words carefully. This demonstrates, on the one hand, a rather high level of intellectual development (on average) that such people have; and on the other hand, their experience and communication skills obtained in the years of otkhodnichestvo dealing with customers. "We must have the gift of gab",—they say.

Almost all otkhodniks have served in the armed forces. We see several reasons for this. Young people from small towns and villages have not yet acquired the pathological fear of military service so typical for the youth in major cities. Moreover, a substantial portion of these people have only secondary education or a lower level of vocational training rather than higher education, and that does not allow deferring the draft. But the main thing is: the army teaches a man to overcome hardships; live in new places and among new people; and adjust to others' and alien. Military service allows a young man to see other places, and as a result he is no longer afraid to leave his hometown in future. It is exactly the fear of anything new that stops many men and women in the province from rising, renouncing their habitual lifestyle and going in quest of a new destiny. Many respondents point out this specific feature of their non-otkhodnik neighbors, when it comes to the issue of why others do not follow their example and do not seek jobs far from home.

Otkhodniks are not heavy drinkers, and that is clearly written on their faces. They all unanimously declare that no team would take a drinking fellow along, or he

would drop out himself after the first attempt. Thus, there is tough selection among otkhodniks based on addiction to alcohol. An otkhodnik with self-respect drinks moderately. Having consumed alcohol (which he permits himself only at home—we interviewed people in such condition), he behaves properly, and is usually cheerful and disposed to joking. This is at least an evidence of intelligence and sound mental health. All our otkhodniks smoke, sharing this habit with their non-otkhodnik neighbors. Many local residents are very well aware of the difference in the lifestyle of otkhodniks and non-otkhodniks. They note the "soundness" of the former, their thrift, abstinence, responsiveness, and goodwill.

An otkhodnik tends to be optimistic. He refers to everyday problems (which are numerous) ironically and with humor. When speaking, he often grins. Usually, he is friendly and well disposed to strangers, extorting various details from him about his life and work.



Photo 15. A typical otkhodnik builder. This man is returning from work in Moscow to Koslan settlement in the Komi Republic. The train journey including a change of trains takes about 35 hours. He will stay home two or three weeks, take care of the household duties, go fishing, hunting, and pickicking berries and mushrooms. The local residents in the Russian North derive a substantial income from such activities. During the season, almost all otkhodniks try to return home and earn some additional money from forest resources. Photo by Juri Plusnin, August 2006.

## 8.2. Otkhodnik as a social type

Some subtle, but quite expressive differences in the appearance and situational behavior of the otkhodnik and his neighbors suggest that we can give a typological sociological description of our hero, put together and model his social portrait (*e.g.*, Zhidkevich, 2013)

Most future otkhodniks grow up in a similar social environment. The provincial society, small townships and village communities form them. Here, fellow residents surround them and strangers are rare (*see, e.g.*, Glazychev, 2003; Nefedova, 2003; Vinogradsky, 2011; Plusnin, 2013). An otkhodnik is usually one of several children in a working or a peasant family. The latter has become more common in the past decade. Brothers and sisters contribute to the early socialization of a person, and in future this is a big asset for the otkhodnik. They often name this factor as important for their work and process of adapting to the urban environment. The family gives him crucial hands-on competencies and crafts useful for his future work (*e.g.*, the skills to build log houses and masonry heaters; excavate; use carpenter's, joiner's, forging and other tools; drive and repair various vehicles; and other skills handed down from generation to generation).

An otkhodnik usually has extensive life experience; he had visited numerous places, experienced various life situations, and encountered many people:

"I also left home at the age of 14; I traveled everywhere... to Tallinn, Riga, and lived everywhere...Even in Bulgaria."<sup>172</sup>

At the same time he remains a typical provincial (and even rural) inhabitant who hates the bustle of a big city:

"It is psychologically stressful to live in a strange city. The pressure is permanent ... And most people are real shitty."<sup>173</sup>

Remarkably, during all the years of our expeditions devoted to otkhodniks, we encountered very few respondents who expressed the desire to relocate and live in a big city, especially in Moscow (no love is lost for Moscow and the "Muscovites", and all without exception frankly admit it).

Besides mature family men aged from 30 to 60 years, otkhodniks now also include numerous young, healthy and energetic chaps, who, for whatever reason, are still single. Their decision to engage in otkhodnichestvo can be triggered by different factors:

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172 Interview with former otkhodnik Sergey K.; Sukhoverovo, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

173 Interview with former otkhodnik Alexey; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

Interviewer: - Who would rather leave home in search of work—a family man or a single guy? Or it doesn't really matter?

Respondent: - I dunno ... eh... Take for example, the young guys...well I dunno, some go to work, some - to drink, and some—to have a good time. Depends on the goal.<sup>174</sup>

From time to time they go away for a change of scenery—"to see and be seen". Upon return home, they feast and have fun in grand style squandering away all their earnings. They go not from need, but to ensure themselves a comfortable existence, quite often from curiosity and for the sake of new impressions, so their attitude to work can be negligent:

"Not all young guys work the whole day. They are single, so they don't need that much money. They want to take a break, go out with the girls."<sup>175</sup>

Respondent: - I don't keep count of how much I squander on partying and how much I spend.

Interviewer: - Do you like working in other places?

R: - I dunno ... It's OK. I guess, if I did not like it, I wouldn't be going.<sup>176</sup>

Everything young *otkhodniks* earn, they often spend on-site for entertainment—restaurants, public baths, booze, etc. However, a person who leaves home for the sake of big money and squanders all his earnings on entertainment cannot be considered an *otkhodnik* in the full sense of the word. He is rather a *shabashnik*, because according to definition, an *otkhodnik* seeks outside employment for the sake of making a living, and usually for providing a decent life for his family. Therefore, an *otkhodnik's* earnings are his way to a normal, secure life.

*Otkhodniks* from the northern areas, such as, for example, Kostroma, Vologda and Arkhangelsk Regions, and the Perm Territory, have a clear and simple understanding, that the man should be the principal wage earner in the family. Therefore, the shameful situation when a man depends on his wife for money is an important incentive to seek work away from home:

"Women are working here at state-owned enterprises. A man is then ashamed to be jobless. That drives them to look for employment out of town."<sup>177</sup>

"When there is a shortage of funds, and you have to cadge change from your wife to buy cigarettes—hey, you're a man and you have to support your family. It's hopeless when there is no money available. Do you agree? Just imagine that your boyfriend (the interviewer is a young girl) invites you to a cafe and cannot afford to pay the bill. What sort of a guy is that?"<sup>178</sup>

*Otkhodniks* generally have secondary education or basic vocational training. Nowadays, few *otkhodniks* have only general secondary education; this is usually the

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174 Interview with *otkhodnik* B.; Verkhnyaya Unzha, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

175 Interview with former *otkhodnik* Alexander S.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

176 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dima; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

177 Interview with former *otkhodnik* Alexander S.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

178 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dmitry P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

case of men above forty. The upbringing and education are often complemented by good discipline acquired in the army and in a big family with many household chores that require regular and persistent efforts. A simple lifestyle that is close to nature coupled with favorable environmental conditions in rural areas or small towns contribute to the fact that the vast majority of otkhodniks whom we met are very healthy people (*see: On medical treatment of Makaryev district otkhodniks, 1909*):

"You must have noticed the good health that God has bestowed upon me—ha-ha-ha-ha!! The only problems I may have are dental. But even here, as they say, how many teeth do we have—32, 33?...—Well, I've lost only two, so you see ... "<sup>179</sup>

Good health gives him more opportunities to use his skills and strength. A healthy man is in any case more likely to seek work out of town, as illness far away from home is very costly, sometimes even not affordable:

Interviewer: - What happens if you need medical aid? Do you go to hospital?

Respondent: - We are never ill.

I: - Is that a matter of principle?

R: - Yes. We are never ill. Touch wood! I have never been to hospital yet. I've seen enough! It's better to keep as far away from them as possible. Especially now.<sup>180</sup>

We got the impression that even psychologically an otkhodnik represents a special type of working person. Besides a good sense of humor and a lively disposition, besides an optimistic approach to everything and an ironical or humorous attitude to everyday problems, which qualitatively distinguish an otkhodnik from many of his neighbors, an otkhodnik also has a feature that we consider very important—a higher level of activity, i.e., a sthenic personality. This feature is common for the overwhelming majority of otkhodniks (except for security guards). Governed by the principle that "God helps those who help themselves" (and this they often state themselves), proactive, energetic, courageous and strong-spirited people sacrifice a calm but needy and hopeless existence for the sake of a difficult but relatively well-to-do life. Circumstances teach otkhodniks to be always ready for any situations, train and educate then. They admit it themselves.

The described behavior and features are specific for self-employed male otkhodniks engaged in productive labor. Quite to the contrary, for the numerous group of otkhodniks occupied as security guards, we could not provide a description of any specific type, except for a general impression that such people have a less sthenic personality and are not as active as builder otkhodniks. That is understandable in

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179 Interview with otkhodnik Igor K.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

180 Interview with former otkhodnik Sergey K., aged 40–45; Sukhoverovo, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

view of the nature of their occupation. We assume that people with respective traits of character are selected for such a "lie-in" job. However, even numerous meetings and interviews with such security guard *otkhodniks* did not produce any meaningful traits of character and behavior common for people undertaking such jobs.

We also failed to work out a general impression about female *otkhodniks*. First, because there were few female *otkhodniks* among our respondents and we obtained information about them mostly from their relatives and neighbors (women *otkhodniks* engaged in the service sector or upbringing and education can rarely be reached at home; they return for a short break only once or twice per year). Second, the lack of a definite impression may be due to the variety of occupations in which female *otkhodniks* engage—from cleaners and sales clerks to governesses and medical nurses. In general, of course, such women are more active and enterprising than neighboring females in their native town or village. But this is relevant to all *otkhodniks* without exception.

### **8.3. Otkhodnichestvo: implications for the family**

The family is usually the first and foremost reason to engage in *otkhodnichestvo*. It is for the sake of the family that a person is prepared to sacrifice his/her forces and time for the exhausting travel; to live in miserable conditions, in cramped and dirty lodgings; to tolerate poor nutrition; to work without appropriate rest and without any leisure whatsoever.

Generally, the husband seeks a job away from home. However, depending on the situation, the wife can also become an *otkhodnik*. We encountered rare cases, when both the husband and wife left simultaneously to work far away from home. They can go to work either to one place, or to different ones. However, if male *otkhodniks* are most often married men, female *otkhodniks* tend to be either single or divorced. This indicates significant differences in the goals pursued by the ones and the others. A man generally leaves home to secure a decent living standard for the family. A woman goes from need, forced to provide alone for herself and the children (and sometimes for the parents). In the northern areas, cases when women engage in *otkhodnichestvo* are isolated. This can be due either to the preserved traditional pattern of family life, or to the high earnings of the *otkhodnik* father. In the more southern and western areas, such as the Tver, Ivanovo, Ryazan, Orel, and Nizhny Novgorod Regions, as well as the Republics of Mordovia and Chuvashia, female *otkhodnichestvo* is a much more widespread phenomenon. Here, generally single mothers or women of retirement age seek jobs away from home. Low-skilled jobs in which women engage (e.g., cook, paramedic, salesperson, or cleaner) gen-

erate lower earnings than those a man can receive from his outside occupations, but in any case, the wage level is higher than in their hometown. Sometimes a woman suffers a double shock from *otkhodnichestvo*: her husband finds another woman at the place where he works, and leaves the family; as a result, she in turn has to leave home to provide for herself and the children. In this case, the woman is forced to leave young children with the grandparents or older brothers and sisters, or even in social institutions.

"I myself live separately from my child. And this is awful. But I have no choice."<sup>181</sup>

When the children grow up, the existence of a female *otkhodnik* becomes easier; she starts focusing mainly on her personal needs and often gives up this life pattern. However, many women engaged in the service sector get accustomed to staying permanently in a large city and having a sufficiently high standard of living judging by local standards; such women continue working away from home long after formal retirement, leaving their house and household chores to adult children, relatives or even neighbors.

A man becomes an *otkhodnik* if he is the head of a family and has to provide for the family in full or is counted upon to be the main wage earner. In order to ensure an adequate life for himself and his family, a man is willing to tolerate lack of comfort, to live far away from his loved ones, to risk his health and sometimes even his life. With his earnings, an *otkhodnik* provides not only for his wife and children, but also often for the parents and even close relatives. Where the children are still minor, he works to give them an education, as nowadays even secondary school requires large financial investments, to say nothing of university.

"...only for the money, and only because my daughter is still studying. As soon as she graduates, I'll stop shuttling back and forth."<sup>182</sup>

"Well, until retirement; OK, I agree, until I retire he'll complete his education. I will continue working and will be going back and forth. But I have to educate him ... I mean, educate them ... 'cause my daughter is just about to enter school. That means money will be needed. My wife and I, we can earn ten grand here, and the kids want *chupa chups*, and chocolate and whatever else, and they need exercise books. Yeah, and shoes or whatever, and school uniform, heh-heh-heh. And how are we supposed to manage?"<sup>183</sup>

Interviewer: - You mean to say that when your daughter graduates, you will stop working out of town?

Respondent: - Sure, she has one more year to go at the university. Enough is enough; I won't need this shuttling back and forth any more.<sup>184</sup>

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181 Interview with a female *otkhodnik*; Podporozhye, Leningrad Region, February 2012.

182 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor K.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

183 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexey; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

184 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor K.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

It is not simply for the family and children that the *otkhodnik* works. For him, his wife plays a very important role: she gives meaning to his life; symbolizes stability and domestic bliss; it is for her sake that he hurries home after exhausting labor in a strange place:

"What else does a person need, eh? A good wife ... that's it."<sup>185</sup>

The wives of *otkhodniks* usually work in the public sector (as teachers, doctors, post clerks, employees of government and municipal institutions), or, less often, do not work at all, raise children and manage the household. The low salary of the wife engaged in the public sector<sup>186</sup> indirectly affects the husband's decision to leave in search of well-paid work. For both spouses, the husband's long absences from home are unpleasant but inevitable, and the wife accepts this, as she sees no other solution in the existing circumstances.

*Otkhodniks* usually have several children (most often two or three). Generally, in spite of his regular absences, the *otkhodnik* tries to take part in their upbringing, and his influence can be stronger than that of his wife:

Interviewer: - What do you think, who is more involved in their upbringing, you or your wife?  
Respondent: - I don't know, they obey me better.<sup>187</sup>

"She [mother] does not want him to work out of town at all; she feels more secure when he is home and I do better at school, because I hang out less."<sup>188</sup>

In the period when the family has to raise and educate the children, the *otkhodnik's* labor is proportional to the invested resources:

"He held out as long as he could. But when our son entered primary school, he was forced to go."<sup>189</sup>

Although the *otkhodnik* himself would never move from his native town or village, only a few of them would like their children to stay. In most cases, the parents wish

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185 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

186 In the province, the average monthly salary in the public sector currently does not exceed 10,000–12,000 rubles (about \$350–\$400), i.e. about the double of the minimum subsistence level (at the beginning of the 2010s, the minimum subsistence level in Russia was about \$150 per month). This amount is insufficient even for the subsistence of a two-member family, where one is a dependent, as it should also cover housing and utility expenses, which have risen significantly. In small towns, the monthly maintenance bill for a two-room apartment with amenities starts from 5,000 rubles (\$150–\$200), whereas a private house of the same area would cost only about \$30–\$50 to maintain (the difference is three to five-fold).

187 Interview with *otkhodnik* Sergey P.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

188 Interview with the daughter of an *otkhodnik* working in Solikamsk; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

189 Interview with the wife of an *otkhodnik*; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2012.

their children a better life; therefore, at any cost they try to give them a good education and "push them out" to a big city, preferably, with a bonus in the form of relatives living there:

Interviewer: - Would you like your children to live here or would you prefer that they move to another place?

Respondent: - There is absolutely no future for them here. They must definitely leave.

I: - Where to? To Kostroma, Galich or further off?

R: - Well, there's not that much to be done in Kostroma, actually... To Moscow, yet again to Moscow...<sup>190</sup>

Respondent: - No, I want to send to Tula.

Interviewer: - Why to Tula?

Respondent: - We have relatives there.

I: - Would you not like them to stay and live here?

R. - No, I wouldn't.<sup>191</sup>

This expectation of a "better fate" for their children in a big city always surprised us, as neither the otkhodniks themselves, nor their wives intended to move from their native location. Moreover, they sincerely believed that life in a big city was unpleasant and unbearable. Better employment opportunities is what they actually mean by a "better fate" for their children. Having seen different cities, people, and lifestyles during their travels, the otkhodniks themselves remain true to their native town or village. This is where they have their roots; this is the place where their parents, relatives and friends live.

Otkhodniks often continue supporting even grown-up children; they finance their higher education and help them get settled in life. Even with adult children, they pursue outside jobs. Their help is often needed to provide for the grandchildren. Either such help can be of a continuous nature, or in the form of occasional gifts (for example, an elderly otkhodnik uses part of his earnings to buy his grandson a bicycle):

"We still have to help. We raised our kids, now we have to raise our grandchildren! That's how life is!"<sup>192</sup>

While away from home, the otkhodnik communicates with his family in the most simple and convenient way—by mobile phone. Until mobile phones became a widespread phenomenon, the family communicated using fixed-line phones, often through the post office. That was the case until the mid-2000s. People note that

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190 Interview with a former otkhodnik (now a driver in Hermes Co.); Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

191 Interview with otkhodnik Alexey; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

192 Interview with otkhodnik Alexander T.; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

mobile phones contribute to families becoming more close-knit; when the husband and father is always within reach, the separation is easier to bear.

The otkhodnik also maintains close connections with relatives. He supports his parents, and is permanently in touch with his brothers and sisters. He also communicates with numerous relatives living in other locations:

Interviewer: - Why to Saint Petersburg?

Respondent: - Because it's a sure thing there for me. I have everything there.

I: - You mean relatives?

R: - Yeah, two aunts. If all gets fucked up completely, I will go [there].<sup>193</sup>

We already mentioned that many otkhodniks find jobs through relatives:

Respondent: - I have many relatives there. In Domodedovsky, in Moscow itself, and in Podolsk. Everywhere. Mostly cousins.

Interviewer: - How did you find out about this job that you finally undertook?

R: - Which one? The one in Moscow? I have relatives. I went there and lodged at my uncle's summerhouse. And then they let me know... That's how many people find out about potential jobs.<sup>194</sup>

Strong family ties are manifested when recruiting teams. Generally, a person putting together a building crew or looking for a back-to-back man to share a security guard job on a rotation basis, tries to engage reliable and trusted people; his choice often falls on relatives and close friends:

"We have a family team: my son, son-in-law, his father, and myself. The four of us usually work together."<sup>195</sup>

Interviewer: - Do you always take you own team with you?

Respondent: - Yes.

I: - Are there just the two of you working together?

R: - There's myself, my brother, father and another guy with us.<sup>196</sup>

Only once an otkhodnik with relatively "modern", "capitalist" views on working arrangements told us that he tried not to recruit relatives in order to avoid potential problems:

Interviewer: - Do you take a team here when you go?

Respondent: - Yes, I form the team here; those guys work with me all the time.

I: - Are they your relatives or friends?

R: - No. Usually I don't take relatives. It's less of a headache.

I: - Why?—What is the reason?

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193 Interview with otkhodnik Dima; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

194 Interview with a former otkhodnik (currently disabled); Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

195 Interview with a young otkhodnik; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

196 Interview with an otkhodnik—former forestry foreman; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

R: If I admit a relative to the team, I will be responsible for him. For me that means assuming additional responsibility. It's easier with strangers—there are no ties or connections, so, hello and goodbye, we go our separate ways.

I: - You mean that your teammates are not even your friends, just acquaintances?

R: - Yes, just acquaintances.<sup>197</sup>

In his hometown, an *otkhodnik* often helps relatives without charging them anything. In virtue of their skills, builders help their relatives to build houses, bath-houses, wood sheds, tool sheds, and other outbuildings:

"This is my house, the one after next is my father's ... Next to him I am going to build a house for my son."<sup>198</sup>

Although the family's well-being is the principal goal of *otkhodnichestvo*, it also entails negative consequences for the family, the two major ones being: collapse of the family, and failures in the upbringing of children.

"Our community council is concerned about this issue, because, to put it frankly, in terms of demography a lot of families are falling apart [...] ...when a man regularly goes away for two-week periods, in a year's time he inevitably gets himself there a permanent girlfriend. The girlfriend there demands nothing, except clothing and stuff, whereas the family here expects certain involvement from him—at least to dispose of the garbage. This creates a conflict situation, and families fall apart. Such families are very numerous. It is not right to have families, where only one parent raises children. The members of our community council are mostly elderly people, and they say, it could be understandable during war or shortly after. But when in times of peace families fall apart, and more and more kids grow up without fathers, this has an enormous impact on everyday life. When a man fifteen days in a row lives somewhere and somehow, he gradually works out his own algorithm of life; in a year's time the guy is already eagerly waiting for his shift and packing his suitcase three days in advance. One must be a fool not to see this problem."<sup>199</sup>

Ongoing extended periods when the husband and wife live apart are the main threat to family life. We were told about three family breakdown scenarios. In the first case scenario, the man finds himself another woman or even establishes a new family in the locality where he works, then breaks the relations with his first wife and moves residence to the place where he used to be an *otkhodnik*. This is an irresponsible, but economically the most advantageous option for the man. However, the ex-wife and children are left without means of subsistence. In this case, all relations, including participation in the upbringing of children, are terminated; the now former *otkhodnik* often does not even pay alimony to support his minor children. Obviously, we heard about the evolution of family relations according to this sce-

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197 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

198 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexander T.; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

199 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

nario only from neighbors and acquaintances, but never from the otkhodniks themselves, as those people had ceased to be otkhodniks by then.

In the second case scenario, the otkhodnik who starts a second family in the city chooses a more difficult but responsible way. He supports both families: keeps house with both women, and raises the children, including those of his second "urban wife". However strange it may seem, in recent years, people (even in villages and small towns) have become much more tolerant to such ménage-a-trois family arrangements, whether under the influence of "modern liberal views" picked up from the television, or due to new, still latent, trends. We even encountered instances when elderly people of quite traditional upbringing and conservative views pointed out a neighbor to us that we were looking for and by the way mentioned, "*He is in the other house now where his second wife lives...he has two wives; the first one lives here but he doesn't love her, so he is more often to be found with the second one—she is his darling and very hard-working.*"<sup>200</sup>

Respondent: - It is likely that the extended absence of the husbands ... men start relationships on the side, and it often happens that the husbands do not come back...

Interviewer: - Often? How do you judge?

R: - Based on rumors ... you know people gossip. Those are not our families. Or the men return, but...

I: - Support two families?

R: - Yes, support two families. Of course, it is clear that the children suffer in this situation.<sup>201</sup>

The third case scenario is also rather frequent and concerns affairs with "girls" at the work location:

"The boss comes and says, "Hey, guys, why are you so gloomy?—It's all included, go ahead! You want girls, no problem—there is the sauna, there are the girls." No problems whatsoever. Not every guy will miss such an opportunity just because he's married."<sup>202</sup>

We suppose that for the family well-being such commonplace affairs are relatively harmless and represent the best of the three options; however, here steps in the outraged wife who can herself initiate the divorce. Even where the otkhodnik is faithful to his wife, her suspicions are a constant source of tension in the family. The less a woman is confident that she is attractive and desirable for her husband, the more suspicious and jealous she is. With age the situation deteriorates.

"No, mostly family men are going, because they want a break. This is confirmed by statistics. With a man, you never know how much he actually earns, unless his

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200 From a conversation with the inhabitants of Gora village; Kostroma Region, September 2013.

201 Interview with the N.F. Gushchina, head of the social security department; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

202 Interview with otkhodnik Slava; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012. This otkhodnik, however, is a divorced man.

wages are transferred to a bankcard, and the wife keeps hold of the card. Who manages family finances? Usually the mother. Out of my practice: five of my friends divorced their husbands for this very reason—out of town work with related consequences. I tried reasoning with them, "Why do you let them go? What for?" They should work here, even though the wages are low. You have no idea, neither how much he earns, nor how much and for whom he spends there."<sup>203</sup>

An *otkhodnik's* family can also collapse at the initiative of the wife or because of her unfaithfulness. While her husband toils half a year in the taiga, works month on / month off at a construction site, or lies in every other fortnight on a security job, the wife finds herself another man. Many *otkhodniks* insist that this happens even more frequently than their male adultery. They argue that work away from home is so exhausting that it leaves them no strength to think about other women. Contrariwise, the wife who does not have to work because her husband is providing for her, has much more strength and opportunities for sinful temptations:

Respondent: - Everyone has his own difficulties... Some have problems at home... for example, we worked recently with a guy from Ukhta, he is 47 years old; so while he was away working, his wife found herself another one... He came back with money to his own log home, but another man already occupied his place... He swore, turned around, returned to Moscow and we lost all track of him.

Interviewer: - Do such things happen often?

R: - Yes. We have a guy in our team, whose wife left him for another while we were building in Murmansk.

I: - Do you mean to say that the wives are more often unfaithful than the husbands...?

R: - No doubt! ...If I start for work at 7 a.m. and, barring anything unforeseen, stumble back at 8 p.m., and I can hardly move my arms or legs because we had to haul logs by hand to the second floor, what misconduct can I be up to? The only wish is to take a bite and off to bed!"<sup>204</sup>

Apart from unfaithfulness, our respondents note a negative manifestation in female behavior in the form of a consumer attitude towards the husband. Extract from an interview:

"... one [woman] even said: I don't need to see him; he should just hand the money over through the window and be off."<sup>205</sup>

This degradation of family relations naturally leads to the man giving up *otkhodnichestvo*, since the main driver of such activity disappears. The man stops seeking outside jobs, and either settles down in his hometown, or moves for good to the

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203 Interview with a schoolteacher at secondary school No.1; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2012.

204 Interview with *otkhodnik* Sergey P.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

205 Interview with N.P.Zhuravlev, chief editor of the district newspaper *Vperyod*; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

place where he used to work as *otkhodnik*—a major city, the Moscow area, or a regional capital.

The second aspect of the negative impact that *otkhodnichestvo* has on the family is not as obvious. Nor is it relevant for many *otkhodnik* families, this being confirmed by some specialists among local experts:

Interviewer: - Is there any difference between those children, whose parents go away to work and those, whose parents stay and work here?

Respondent: - In general, the difference is not very noticeable. Everything depends on the family, and on the upbringing. Of course, one can say that the parents' departure exposes children to social dangers, because they are left without supervision. If we are to record all such families, we will have to record the whole town, as overall about 80 percent of the parents go to work in other places and leave the children with the grandparents. However, families where the grandparents are reliable do not require any special treatment. Yes, the parents in such families go away to work but this has no negative effect on the children."<sup>206</sup>

However, in quite a few cases the inadequate upbringing of children is caused by the regular absence of one or both parents.

Interviewer: - How much time did you manage to spend home per month? Or probably not even every month?

Respondent: - The best I could manage was like this: we arrived at the plant, and I rushed home: - La-la-la, hello, children! And they looked at me sort of [imitated a suspicious glance upwards], who is that?"<sup>207</sup>

In locations where most of the economically active population works out of town, "children growing up without fathers" is a regular topic for discussion at school parent meetings:

"The families are affected by this. And the children are affected, especially boys. They get out of hand. A man's presence is always necessary."<sup>208</sup>

Where both parents work out of town, or where a single mother is forced seek an external job, the children are left in the care of their older brothers and sisters, or grandparents. However, grandmothers are often not up to the challenge of raising their grandchildren:

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206 Interview with O.N. Yanshenkina, Director of Gymnasium No. 3; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

207 Interview with a former *otkhodnik*; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

208 Interview with a deputy school principal; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

"Initially, everyone agrees, the situation seems to suit them, and the grandmothers assume the responsibility. However, when the children reach the age of adolescence, the situation often gets out of control. Having experienced some freedom and liberty, a child no longer wants to obey, and then the grandmothers run to the police beseeching, "Help! Save me! Do something!" Nowadays, there are numerous cases when a grandmother comes and says, "Take my grandchild away."<sup>209</sup>

There is no doubt that their parents' lifestyle negatively affects the mental condition of the children, their behavior and discipline.

Interviewer: - What do you think, does this [the parents' absence] somehow affect the children?

Respondent: - Naturally, it does.

I: - Do you mean that they actually stand out [by their behavior in class]?

R: - Well, how can I explain? I have a girl in my class ... Her grandmother works in Moscow and so does her mother. Three kids are left in the care of the grandfather. Of course, he has problems managing them.

I: - Does it affect their discipline?

R: - The discipline, the way they prepare for the lessons. The girl is in my fourth grade. She has such an attitude to studies ... she could not care less what mark she gets. They have no father. Sometimes, their mother is gone for two weeks and the grandmother—for a week. And for a whole week they are left alone with the grandfather. One child is in the fifth grade, one—in the fourth, and one—in the second. For the grandfather it is also difficult. He says so himself. Two of the three children do not obey him.<sup>210</sup>

When parents go away from home leaving minor children behind, in villages, small settlements, and townships they can rely only on the help of close relatives. In bigger towns, some children can be left in the care of the state (for relatively short periods). In Kineshma, for example, this function is performed by the social rehabilitation center for minors. Single parents, who are forced to work out of town and have no one to leave their children with, apply to the regional government social services agency, *Kineshma social rehabilitation center for minors*, where children caught up in difficult life situations can temporarily stay.

"When a mother has to work in Moscow because she cannot find a job here, and has no one to leave her child with—this is a difficult life situation. She has absolutely no intention of abandoning her children, nothing of the sort. On the contrary, she is looking for ways to provide for them. That is exactly why she is going to Moscow—to earn money in order to support the family, feed, clothe and raise the children. So this mother seeks our help... We even had a father who went to work in Moscow... No, it was not Moscow; it was Sochi that he worked in. He was a single father, so he brought his daughter here. When the parents go away to work, they bring their children to us. Schoolchildren here attend classes."<sup>211</sup>

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209 Interview with O.N. Yanshenkina, Director of Gymnasium No. 3; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

210 Interview with the deputy principal of secondary school No.1; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

211 Interview with O.V. Zaitseva, director of the social rehabilitation center for minors; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

Before departure, the parents write a formal application: "Please admit my daughter/son for the period of my rotation shift in Moscow from ... to...". Upon return, the parents pick up their children and take them home. At the time of our expedition to Kineshma in February 2012, the live-in facility of the Center (meant for 13 children) had two inhabitants. The director noted that the Center provided temporary relief for such families, and the parents were urged to find an adequate solution to the problem. According to her, the parents generally rent accommodation in Moscow and send their children to school or kindergarten there. There were also cases when the parents gave up *otkhodnichestvo* and returned to Kineshma.

"...Moscow is not far away from us; so many parents go to work there. In such cases, they usually leave the children with the grandmothers, who are not always able to look after them properly. Eventually, without adequate care and attention, such children can end up in the street and come under bad influence of their peers. [...] We had such children brought to us. There were such cases, although not that many. When parents learn about our center, they are happy to benefit from our services. So, they bring the children here for the duration of their rotation shift in Moscow."<sup>212</sup>

Obviously, such a public institution cannot significantly contribute to resolving the problem, however, in some cases it provides the *otkhodnik* (especially a female one) with the only available solution.

However, irrespective of the above-mentioned problems with the spouses and children, an *otkhodnik* is primarily and above all a good family man, who has a close-knit family with children, for whose sake he engages in *otkhodnichestvo*. The family fully supports the *otkhodnik*, and most *otkhodniks* admit that such support is the first and only reason for them to continue their extremely hard, strenuous, and exhausting work.

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212 Interview with O.V. Zaitseva, director of the social rehabilitation center for minors; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.



Photo 16. The town of Soligalich in the Kostroma Region. Judging by the fact that children try to resemble their parents, this picture has captured the son of an *otkhodnik*. A cap, camouflage jacket, trousers, and work boots—this outfit is good to tinker with tools or sit with a fishing rod. Probably, in twenty years this boy will retain the same looks having joined the ranks of those earning a living "on the side". The majority of *otkhodniks* promote their children's education and subsequent settling down in major cities. Those who do not consider this option take their growing sons along and train them in a craft that will later help them provide for their families as well. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich, June 2011.

#### 8.4. The household and everyday life of an *otkhodnik*

Providing for the well-being of the *otkhodnik's* family implies domestic improvements and proper housekeeping. The *otkhodnik* loves his home. This is the place he dreams to return to after a long absence; here he recuperates and regains his strength before going away yet again. It is here that he leaves his beloved ones. He prefers his home to any other place:

Interviewer: - Do you mean to say that you do not want to relocate?

Respondent: - No way! Frankly speaking, I could not care less if I were offered a free flat at the Red Square [Moscow's central square].<sup>213</sup>

Besides, the house is the *otkhodnik's* "showcase", where he can demonstrate himself in all glory and show the local community the results of his hard work. The long months of our travels taught us to recognize at first sight the houses where *otkhodniks* live. Moreover, the house can also tell the story of the master's occupation and of his commitment to tradition. In small towns, where one-storey buildings prevail, *otkhodniks*, like all other residents, live in their own houses. In the towns

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213 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor K.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

that have one-storey and multi-storey residential buildings, *otkhodniks* are to be found in both private and apartment houses. The private house may be either new or old. A new house means that its owner is engaged in a high-income sector (e.g., log home building or rotation work in Siberia). An old house means that its owner can be engaged anywhere, and the house, most likely, was inherited from the parents. Lower-paid *otkhodnik* occupations, such as security, do not allow constructing one's own house, therefore, less well-to-do *otkhodniks* live in apartment blocks or in houses inherited from their parents. In rare cases, *otkhodniks* in need, who had not managed to achieve success, live in old poorly maintained private houses. There is an old Danish joke: as a smoker's income grows, he switches from smoking a pipe to cigarettes, and then back to the pipe. Similarly, as an *otkhodnik's* earnings increase, he moves from an old private house to an apartment, and finally to his own new private house.

Everywhere, houses belonging to *otkhodniks* differ from those of their neighbors, who work locally. Usually, they look richer both from the outside and inside. The attributes of wealth, which raise the *otkhodnik's* status as compared to that of his neighbors, are mostly nothing but a semblance and are often copied from the outside urban environment where the *otkhodnik* operates and inspired by his metropolitan customers. And the tastes of these latter are far from sophisticated. They prefer new synthetic materials of rather low quality: plastic siding rather than traditional timber weatherboards to protect the walls; plastic windows with inferior functional characteristics and short lifetime rather than traditional wooden windows; modern roofing materials, like onduline (or Russian tar paper) or metal tile roofing, which are significantly less durable than metal roofing, etc. Respectively, contemporary *otkhodniks* follow the fashion for modern low-quality materials introduced by construction-ignorant city-dwellers, and when building or repairing their own houses, they apply these short-lived modern trends.

Notably, the ways to express wealth in the exterior decoration of an *otkhodnik's* house change significantly when moving from north to south. In the north (the Arkhangelsk, Vologda, and Kostroma Regions), traditions and knowledge about the designation of various functional elements of a house prevail, therefore *otkhodniks*, especially builders and carpenters, avoid distorting the original structure of the buildings. External decorations borrowed from the urban culture are sometimes introduced but the exterior of the building nevertheless follows one and the same stringent style. The northern *otkhodnik* definitely knows a thing or two about buildings:

Interviewer: - If you were offered a free-of-charge brick house or a round log home, which would you choose?

Respondent: - The log one. What good is the brick?—I lived in brick, I had a flat in Usachevskaya, and I sold it. The kids were always sick, coughing and other stuff. So we rented a wooden house here on the riverbank, and it didn't matter that the floor was partly rotten, and the floorboards were all loose, and it was, of course, rather damp, but the girls [daughters] were less frequently sick.

I: - Are you building yourself a timber house now?

R: - Yes, a timber one...<sup>214</sup>

To make the home pleasanter or more "special", the northern otkhodnik renovates it and introduces elements, which fit organically into the overall appearance of the estate, and perform a certain function. Unlike the southerners, northern otkhodniks rarely use siding and plastic windows; they understand that such materials not only indicate the low quality of the building but also negatively affect its functional characteristics.<sup>215</sup> For example, in Chukhloma, a young otkhodnik proudly showed us new expensive (70,000 rubles for five window frames—about \$1,700) ornate wooden window frames (nalichniki) in his newly-built house:

"This guy didn't carve such window frames for anybody in Chukhloma, except me. In general, he supplies them only to Moscow. He hand-carves them observing all techniques. The little window in my room is twice or even three times more expensive than those two. Those are simple ones, whereas here all technological requirements are observed."<sup>216</sup>

Contrariwise, in the central and southern areas, where the majority of otkhodniks are not experienced in timber construction (the Ryazan and Orel Regions, and the Republics of Mordovia and Chuvashia), siding is often used as a trendy element of status. Brightly colored plastic siding has generally become here a distinctive feature of otkhodnik dwellings, and we used it to guide us to the otkhodniks. Besides the above feature, the house of such an otkhodnik is distinguishable by numerous "alien" additions. It is clearly visible that they were constructed at different times and from different materials. As soon as the otkhodnik earns some money, he adds something to the house; earns some more—adds another element, and so on and so forth. As his occupation does not imply very high wages, he never has enough funds to build a solid new home. As a result, such houses have neither integrity, nor a uniform appearance. However, something similar emerges in the image of a town,

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214 Interview with otkhodnik Sergey P.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

215 We could never understand the motivation that drove people to exchange good solid wooden windows for low-quality plastic ones, which obviously worsened the heat insulation and ventilation parameters of log buildings. Once, an otkhodnik countered our bewilderment by a simple killer argument, "Hey, my wife can hang curtains on this new window, and place many flowerpots on the windowsill! The old windows are little, and the curtains don't look half as nice on them".

216 Interview with otkhodnik Dima; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

where many *otkhodnik* families reside. Thus, many houses in Ardatov and Alatyř, Gorbatov and Dmitrovsk are capped by extended roof additions which resemble very much their security guard owners, who wear exactly such caps, battered and drawn over their eyes.



Photo 17. Although by local standards *otkhodniks* receive good wages and can afford to improve their living conditions, most of them cannot build a big new house in one go. Typically, having accumulated a certain amount of money the *otkhodnik* repairs part of the house or extends it. Then the money runs out. As soon as he saves a new amount, he extends the house further or repairs another part of it. This can go on for many years. The *otkhodniks* often pay little attention to the stylistic unity of the house and every time use different construction materials varying in color—those that are either cheaper or easier to purchase, or those that are at that time in trend. The photo shows a house with endless additions in Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia. Such buildings served as a certain beacon for us signaling the presence of an *otkhodnik* and helping us to find our respondents. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich, November 2011.

The home decor of a well-to-do *otkhodnik* (and all *otkhodniks* are like that, they all prosper) often as clearly demonstrates prosperity and compliance with a certain standard picked up from the TV and from urban customers: good furniture, modern appliances, and trendy decorations. For example, the interior design of a freshly renovated house of an exceptionally thorough *otkhodnik* in the Arkhangelsk Region contained the following elements: an enormous fan on the wall; a huge plasma TV set; a luxurious leather sofa; decorative dry plants in a tall potbelly vase; a plush crocodile in the middle of the living room, and modern little spot lights along the perimeter of the ceiling instead of the usual central ceiling lamp. Such a setup is

not rare among well-to-do otkhodniks, but it implies hard labor, as an otkhodnik can afford a leather sofa only when his family is well fed, clothed and shod.

Hardly any otkhodnik families keep livestock. This has become a general trend in the Russian province, but for otkhodniks, the absence of cattle is only to be expected—it is difficult for the wife alone to care for a cow, pigs, sheep or even poultry. At a maximum, otkhodniks keep chickens or rabbits.

Interviewer: - And your wife, does she stay here?

Respondent: - Yes, she stays here alone.

I: - Was it not difficult?

R: - Well, what can I say? We used to keep cattle. When I started working out of town, this had to change. We had two cows. We were forced to slaughter them, because we could not sell them otherwise. What else? A cat and a dog.<sup>217</sup>

In the meantime, practically all otkhodnik families have a land plot and kitchen garden, although many admit that it is now cheaper to buy root crops, vegetables, and herbs than to grow them.

Many otkhodniks, especially those of the older generation note that a vegetable garden is indispensable for people who work in the hometown and, respectively, receive low wages. However, practically all otkhodniks prefer to have the essentials in store within easy reach at the homestead. Generally, the otkhodnik tries to arrange with the customer or plan his work so as to leave time to plant his crops in spring and harvest them in autumn. Nothing is planted outside the town. All crops are grown on the land plot surrounding the house (this trend is also common for the Russian province—not only because the people will not be able to harvest everything themselves, but also because in our small towns every family owns on average from 400 to 1,200 square meters of arable land around its house [0.04–0.12 ha]).

A lot of specifically male work accumulates during the otkhodnik's absence. Therefore, when home, the otkhodnik hardly has any time to rest:

"All the boys have lots of work waiting for them at home. We come for two-three days, and I don't even have time to check my car. This car has been in service for five years already, and I have never been under it yet."<sup>218</sup>

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217 Interview with former otkhodnik Sergey K.; Sukhoverovo, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

218 Interview with former otkhodnik Sergey K.; Sukhoverovo, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

"The river is 50 meters from here, and I have no time to go fishing, because I come home for a week, and in the village there is always work to be done—something to be replaced, something to be repaired. There is no time to accomplish all the housework. One comes home sort of to rest, but for that there is never time."<sup>219</sup>

Transport vehicles are an important attribute of an otkhodnik's household. At the very least, it is a car. However, in the recent decade, otkhodnik families started procuring two or even three cars rather than just one. Practically every otkhodnik, especially if he builds log homes, owns a vehicle. Generally, it is an inexpensive simple car like Lada Kalina or Renault Logan. The brand and quality of the car distinguish real otkhodniks from young guys who go away to work for the sake of entertainment and who treat their car not as a means of transport but as a symbol of prestige and local status of its owner:

"I have an [Audi] A6 parked in the garage. And there people mostly drive such cars [points at the fancy Lada 2107 with tinted windows in which he is seated]. And what is this? Is this a car? No, it's just something to fool around with."<sup>220</sup>

Having a car and the possibility to purchase large quantities of goods in a big city, the otkhodnik has to decide where to buy household supplies—to save trouble and buy them locally at higher prices; or to save money and buy them at wholesale outlets, discount centers and cheap hypermarkets in the big city where he works. Every otkhodnik decides individually how to procure for the family. Some say they have no time to shop in the big city, therefore they buy everything, including expensive goods (furniture, computer or TV set, and household appliances), locally. In the city, where they work, they either buy nothing or only those things that can be purchased quickly, without spending much time shopping:

Interviewer: - Do you make any purchases in Moscow? Do you bring anything from there?

Respondent: - Sometimes.

I: - Why? Is it because it is cheaper in Moscow?

R: - I bought a phone there... Otherwise... Toys for the kids, nothing else... I don't have any spare time.<sup>221</sup>

Many otkhodniks shop in the hometown for other reasons rather than lack of time. It is easier to control the quality of the goods bought in a store around the corner:

Interviewer: - Is it true that prices in Moscow are lower than here?

Respondent: - Yes, that's right. But if something is defective in an item I bought here, I can go and talk to the salespeople and arrange repairs or spare parts on the spot. I can also return or exchange the goods. That's my reasoning. If I can buy an LG refrigerator for 16,000 rubles here, and in Moscow it costs 14,000, the difference of 2,000 is not worth the trouble to run

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219 Interview with otkhodnik Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

220 Interview with otkhodnik Dima; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

221 Interview with otkhodnik Alexey I; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

around, rent a van, and so on... What's the point? It will turn out even more expensive in the end.

I: - And what about smaller household appliances? A microwave oven or an electric kettle for example?

R: - There is enough of this shit here - kettles, and foodstuffs, and everything. You cannot stock up for the rest of your life.<sup>222</sup>

In the meantime, purchases often prove to be less expensive locally than in metropolitan stores:

"What was it that I bought then? A video camera and a video player. And then I saw that in Kostroma they were 400 rubles more...no, less expensive. And everything is more expensive there. That is the difference."<sup>223</sup>

Finally, for somebody, the game is not worth it:

Interviewer: - Does your husband bring anything from Moscow, any household appliances or whatever? Does he make purchases in Moscow?

Respondent: - We buy everything here. We earn enough to live normally.<sup>224</sup>

Otkhodniks who prefer to buy household goods in metropolitan cities are generally motivated by low prices and a big selection of products. Primarily, this applies to expensive goods:

Interviewer: - Do you make any purchases in Moscow for household needs?

Respondent: - Naturally.

I: - Household appliances?

R: - Yes.

I: - Are they more expensive here?

R: - By an order of magnitude!<sup>225</sup>

It also happens that an otkhodnik buys even foodstuffs at the location where he works:

"Take Moscow, for example. I know the prices there. In the supermarkets, they are significantly lower. If here, milk [1 liter] costs 40 rubles, in Moscow you can buy it for 34.50, thus saving 5–6 rubles. And this product is purchased daily. And there people earn ten times more than here. When my daughter was born, I brought foodstuffs, dairy products, from Moscow. I had a special cool box. So I loaded all those yoghurts-moghurts into the box and brought them here. Some cost-cutting at least."<sup>226</sup>

Respondent: - ... some clothes for my wife, because there are discount stores there and I dressed her from head to toe for three thousand rubles. I would have paid about twelve grand for the same stuff here.

Interviewer: - A four-fold difference? Really?

R: - Well, they have discount stores, like Finn Flare, for example. Not in a central location, but somewhere closer to the outskirts, like Aviamotornaya. Once the season is over, the unsold

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222 Interview with former otkhodnik Mikhail; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2012.

223 Interview with otkhodnik Alexander T.; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

224 Interview with Elena, wife of an otkhodnik; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

225 Interview with otkhodnik Victor; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2012.

226 Interview with a former otkhodnik; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

stuff is considered to be out of fashion and they pile it into that store. And we are simple people, not at all trendy.<sup>227</sup>

Savings is another matter of difference among the otkhodniks. Somebody is unable to save anything; the earnings just cover current expenses. Generally, this is true for people engaged in unskilled labor. Somebody does not trust monetary savings and immediately converts cash into material values:

"In principle, we make no savings, because the ruble's purchasing power is dropping. We try to invest—in the apartment, in equipment. Therefore, we make such purchases. There is no hope that money can be saved."<sup>228</sup>

However, the majority of otkhodnik families are practical and thrifty, and they try to save with the view of potential future spending.

The otkhodnik hands over all or part of his earnings to cover the family's current expenses. Most wives are well aware how much their husbands earn, and how much they bring home. Some women, however, do not believe in the honesty of their spouses:

Interviewer: - And how does he remit the money?

Respondent: - His wages are credited to his bankcard, and if we need money, he remits it to a card as well.

I: - Does he earn more in Solikamsk than he could have earned working in Ryabinino?

R: - I don't know, but now for 15 days he is paid 15,000 rubles [about \$500 for half a month]. Although mom isn't so sure about it, he doesn't tell her everything...<sup>229</sup>

Some otkhodniks admit that they try to get rid of their earnings as soon as possible in order to avoid temptation to spend them on something unnecessary, especially in the city where they are working. Although nowadays many otkhodniks remit their earnings to a bankcard or a bank account, most villagers that form a numerous group of otkhodniks still prefer to keep their earnings "in the pocket":

Interviewer: - How do you remit money?

Respondent: - I bring it with me.

I: - You don't send it by postal order or somehow?

R: - Nay ... I don't want to risk it being lost on the way.<sup>230</sup>

In most cases, the otkhodnik's wife is the sole manager of family finances. She is the one who allocates the funds for the most important purchases. Probably, the only exception is the purchase of vehicles and equipment for the men's pleasure: mo-

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227 Interview with Roman Z., otkhodnik and theater actor; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

228 Interview with the wife of an otkhodnik (school principal); Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

229 Interview with the daughter of an otkhodnik working in Solikamsk; Ryabinino, Cherdyn district, Perm Territory, December 2011.

230 Interview with otkhodnik Alexander T.; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

torbike, snowmobile, quad bike, boats and boat engines, etc., although we suspect that even here the final decision rests with the wife. At least, the men admit that no one would even replace an old car without consulting his wife, even where such replacements could be arranged very cheaply. As for household appliances, furniture or interior design, the husbands obediently accept any whims of their spouses.

Although most *otkhodniks* are financially better off than people working in their hometown, by far not all of them can afford to spend their holidays in another city or at a resort. Usually, *otkhodniks* do not even consider the option of traveling or visiting resorts (an exception could be a rare trip to Turkey or Egypt but that would be a whole event). Although it is worth mentioning that more and more rural *otkhodnik* families are now going to foreign resorts—from the capitals and small towns, the trend has finally reached the villages. Some of the more successful *otkhodniks* manage to take the whole family on vacation (such trips are more common for *otkhodniks* from Siberia, the Urals and the North, than for those from the central part of Russia):

"I can afford a vacation. We go to the seashore: Sochi, Adler, Gelendzhik [resorts on the Black Sea]. I don't like it there; I get bored in three-four days. I take the family on vacation by car. We were at the coast two years ago."<sup>231</sup>

Some *otkhodniks* send only their wives and children on holiday (they themselves are sick and tired of traveling, and any extra impressions from a trip, even a leisurely one, are of no interest to them):

Interviewer: - So, you have not gone anywhere on vacation for a long time?

Respondent: - Who, me?—No, I have not gone anywhere yet.

I: - And what about the children? Do you send them south or wherever?

R: - The kids are with granny. Last year we sent our older boy to a resort on the seacoast. We had to pay something for the voucher. [...] This year the kids are planning to go with their granny. Only what will she [speaking about his daughter] understand, what impression will she get of the sea?... She is still too young to understand anything.<sup>232</sup>

Interviewer: - Can you afford to go on vacation? Have you ever been to any resort?

Respondent: - No, never.

I: - Would you like to go?

R: - Sure, I would. But summer is busy season, I have to earn money.

I: - Do you ever send your wife and daughter on vacation?

R: - We wanted to send our daughter to a health resort but somehow never got around to doing it...<sup>233</sup>

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231 Interview with an *otkhodnik* in the street (young man with a bottle of Pepsi Cola); Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

232 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexey; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

233 Interview with an *otkhodnik*—former forestry foreman; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

Otkhodnik families living in mid-sized towns, where private estates are few, can spend their holidays at the dacha (summer cottage). Some optimists even consider a more or less easy business trip to be vacation. However, most otkhodniks agree that the best leisure is simply to be at home. Especially since this also means seeing their friends and engaging in favorite occupations like fishing and hunting:

Interviewer: - Is there a place that you like?

Respondent: - I like it here. Because I love hunting and fishing.<sup>234</sup>

Interviewer: - Have you ever been to a resort?

Respondent: - Yes, before I did military service.

I: - Did you go to the Black Sea?

R: - Yes. I could go if I wanted to; only I don't have the time.

I: - What do you prefer: the sea, hunting-fishing, or something else?

R: - Hunting.<sup>235</sup>

As we already mentioned more than once, the vast majority of otkhodniks prefer living in their own town and have no intention of relocating. Those few, who nevertheless would like to move (usually they are recently married young men, whose young wives have not yet lost the passion for moving in search of a better fate), can rarely afford it. According to them, the main hindrance is the cost of housing in big cities and their uncertain employment status, hence insecurity:

"We thought about taking a mortgage loan ... well, according to the terms, monthly mortgage payments were 12,000 rubles, which meant I had to have stable income. I could theoretically earn about 25,000 rubles per month in Moscow. And my spouse could make another 15,000. But what if I fall ill—break my arm or leg, or get some other problem? Mortgage payments are due every month. Should I fail to pay, penalty will be charged. And who knows how long I will be ill and how much penalty will accrue by the time I am back at work? No, that is not an option. [...] We considered a specific option in Tula. For 22 years I have no right to be ill, for 22 years ... hm. And all that time I need to have work. That is not a super option, either."<sup>236</sup>

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234 Ibid.

235 Interview with otkhodnik Dima; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

236 Interview with otkhodnik Alexey; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.



Photo 18. Despite regular stays in big cities, the *otkhodniks* from Shemursha district of Chuvashia have preserved their traditional views on the family and household. It is still customary for several generations to live under one roof. Mutual assistance allows keeping house and farming even when one or several family members are regularly absent from home. Functioning agricultural equipment is parked in the yard and every bit of land is cultivated. A big family needs a big house, and fortunately, income from *otkhodnichestvo* provides the opportunity to expand the living space significantly. The photo shows an impressively big house consisting of several residential blocks. The right-hand section in the middle (the log part) is the initial building; all the other parts are new additions. Equipment (including unserviceable) for which no room is left in the yard is parked in front of the house. Photo by Natalia Zhidkevich, July 2013.

### **8.5. Relations with neighbors and status in the local community**

Standard logic leads to believe that an *otkhodnik*, who has a special lifestyle and is often absent from home, must be rather isolated from other members of the local community. It is expected that *otkhodnik* families are better off than their neighbors are, that the *otkhodniks* themselves are less involved in local life, and due to their extended existence in a different cultural environment, they introduce a special mentality into the local community. The above is true to a certain extent. It should have caused the *otkhodnik* to be alienated from his neighbors, as well as, possibly, from friends and acquaintances, and marginalized in the local social environment. However, practice shows that *otkhodnichestvo* does not undermine the strength and quality of social relations:

Interviewer: - Do you socialize with many people here, in Kologriv?

Respondent: - Yes.

I: - Did your departure somehow affect your circle of contacts?

R: - In no way whatsoever!<sup>237</sup>

The neighbors and acquaintances usually know when a person is leaving and how long he will be gone. Based on that, they figure out when they can talk business to him and when he will be available for his friends. During their home leave, the otkhodniks continue to communicate, see each other and spend their leisure together. Having enough spare money and limited leisure time, they often meet and hang out together:

"He arrived yesterday, and he is leaving tomorrow. He is not home now; he is in the center [of the settlement] with friends. All otkhodniks always gather in the bar."<sup>238</sup>

The otkhodnik's social network does not change once he starts working out of town. What changes is the intensity of his communications, because when he returns, he tries to meet with all his pals and drink a glass or two with them. But do the relations between the otkhodnik and his acquaintances and neighbors change in substance? We can assume a greater amount of non-formal, leisure contacts. At the same time, the otkhodnik does not single out himself and does not believe that his social network at home is limited to leisure.

Although when on leave, an otkhodnik spends much time dealing with his own household chores, he is always ready to assist neighbors and even people he hardly knows, and undertakes time-consuming jobs. In general, the neighbors say that otkhodniks easily agree to help with various domestic matters in spite of fatigue and a heap of their own tasks. Whether the otkhodnik always helps altruistically is another issue. Thus, a young guy, whom neighboring villagers pester with requests to help with masonry heaters when he is home on leave, is of the following opinion:

"...They all ask to help: - we'll pay, we'll pay. They are all acquaintances, but I have no intention of doing anything for nothing. I can do what they want, but there is nothing to be taken from them. They start lamenting: - we don't get any pay, we have no money. Why should I care? I just finished fixing my own heater. Started yesterday, finished today. She [the neighbor] was whimpering, and what? Does she expect me to do anything? All she can pay is a tumbler of vodka. Why the fuck should I bother?"<sup>239</sup>

The neighbors may ask an otkhodnik to buy them some expensive or scarce goods. Generally, the otkhodnik does not turn down such requests. However, such practice

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237 Interview with otkhodnik B.; Verkhnyaya Unzha, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

238 Interview with the wife of otkhodnik Lekha S.; Dubrovka, Chukhloma district, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

239 Interview with otkhodnik Vanya; Chermenino, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

was common in the 1990s and early 2000s, when there was still a shortage of goods in the province. Nowadays, such orders are significantly less frequent, and the reasons to turn them down can be of a different nature:

"...I tried not to bring anything. Because you are responsible for the stuff you bring others. "Ah, what is that shit you brought me!" and so on... Why bother?"<sup>240</sup>

Non-otkhodnik neighbors may perceive the otkhodnik's lifestyle both positively, and negatively. The negative attitude is generally much rarer and manifests itself in the form of envy. But it seems that nowadays such an attitude to an active and successful person is a thing of the past. In the northern areas, people are even indignant when asked about envy towards the otkhodniks:

"The mentality here is different from that in the central regions. People don't strive to outdo and outsmart their neighbors. Mutual envy and the race after success and are not common here. Those who work, earn money. In line with their training, as we say. Nobody stops anyone from working elsewhere."<sup>241</sup>

Most agree that a person receives what he strives for; no one is forbidden to go away and earn money for a better life:

"Are they envious? Probably they are. Let me give you this example ... a vegetable garden ... I have a vegetable garden. Previously, it took me two weeks to turn over the soil with a spade. The year before last I bought a cultivator, and now I can be done with ploughing and harrowing in one day. And the neighbor is watching. He is digging with a spade, and he is sick of it. I don't know, whether he is jealous of me or not. Probably, he is. If they ask me, I always tell the others that they can go to Moscow too. Just recently, we got talking with someone and I said: why don't you yourself go to Moscow and earn some money? What stops you? Go and earn as much as you need."<sup>242</sup>

In the meantime, in the central regions there is also little envy towards otkhodniks, who have historically been engaging in rather low-income jobs (auxiliary jobs at construction sites, the service sector, security, trade, etc.). The reason is not that people are not jealous by nature, but because financially the otkhodniks do not differ much from their non-otkhodnik neighbors:

"Those who are working as security guards, earn fifteen thousand rubles [\$500] in fifteen days. They are not that well off. No one has yet built himself a house off security services."<sup>243</sup>

Some of our respondents mentioned that they have no envy towards otkhodniks. Rather, they treat them with pity and sympathy, as otkhodnichestvo is a very strenuous and psychologically exhausting way of life, which often leads to a collapse of

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240 Interview with former otkhodnik Alexey; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

241 Interview with A.V. Shirokikh, head of the economic and forecasting department of the Kargopol district administration; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

242 Interview with otkhodnik Alexey; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

243 Interview with V.F. Cheglakov, the chief editor of the district newspaper *Mayak*; Ardatov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

the family and problems with children. Nevertheless, practically in all the places that we visited we encountered people—somewhere more, somewhere less, but always few—who could go away to work but never actually do. Instead, they are bitterly jealous of those, whose benefits result from hard labor and numerous limitations. Strangely, those are mostly women who believe that their husbands earn not enough. This envy can reach the point of absurdity, like, for example, the statement of one woman to the effect that "*only dumb wives let their husbands go*".<sup>244</sup>

The situation, when people in relatively equal conditions, choose different patterns of behavior, already gives rise to many questions. What keeps people, dissatisfied with their lives and jobs, from leaving their hometown? What stops them from seeking work elsewhere, as the *otkhodniks* do? Those, who prefer staying at home, usually justify their decision by tolerant working conditions. Among other reasons, they refer to weak health, principal reluctance to leave their hometown, dislike of big cities, and finally, "*the wife does not let go*".

The *otkhodniks* believe that besides simple laziness and alcoholism, many of their neighbors are reluctant to work away from home for various reasons, the three principal ones being as follows: a "tolerable" job that suits the person; great attachment to the family (actually, a common fear of new places); and a lack of any specific professional skills:

"Not all go, ha-ha, of course, not everyone will go. Someone will not go due to his character; he has never been anywhere and has not seen anything; such people are real homebodies, they will never budge from home. As for us, we are used to being our own masters; we don't care where to go as long as we get paid."<sup>245</sup>

Interviewer: - So, would you say few people are going away to work, or is it a mass phenomenon?

Respondent: - Nay, very few are going, and only those who can do something.

I: - You mean those, who have talent?

R: - Not talent, but carpenter skills.<sup>246</sup>

As *otkhodniks* are good family men and financially better off than most of their neighbors, the local community tends in general to respect them, and only few are jealous of their success. It is safe to say that the attitude of the local community towards the *otkhodniks* depends on their numbers, the hardship of their labor, and the level of their earnings. The regional breakdown demonstrates this clearly. The well-to-do *otkhodnik* carpenters from the Arkhangelsk, Kostroma, and Vologda Regions enjoy the respect of their neighbors, as their work is both hard and profitable. In the more southern areas, like Chuvashia, the Kursk, Penza, and Saratov Regions, where

244 Interview with the wife of a non-*otkhodnik*; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

245 Interview with *otkhodnik* Igor P.; Usachevskaya village, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

246 Interview with *otkhodnik* Alexey Ch.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

almost everyone has become an *otkhodnik*, they are not treated with any particular reverence. On the contrary, admired are those who managed to find a good job locally (Zhidkevich, 2014). In the central areas of Nizhny Novgorod Region and Mordovia, located in between, no explicitly contrasting views exist.

However, the "Northerners" are everywhere an exceptional category of *otkhodniks*. A person departing to work in West or East Siberia is always regarded in a particular way. His job as such, be it bulldozer operator, mechanic, or logger, does not really matter; more importantly, he is working in an environment generally recognized as challenging and often dangerous. These people seem to belong to a particular social type, universal for the whole country. Such *otkhodniks* are everywhere depicted similarly; all recognize their dedication and note that not everyone would be ready to live and work as they do. The local society easily justifies, if not encourages, the heavy drinking that the "Northerners" indulge in at home on leave. However, where most of the residents are employed locally, and where *otkhodniks* are rare, as in the Sebezh district of Pskov Region, people usually say, "*Only those who are ready to take risks depart for work elsewhere. That is life on the edge.*"<sup>247</sup> An ordinary *otkhodnik* does not seek to participate in any public activities, because he simply does not have the time for it:

"My wife is very much involved [in the public life of the town] ... I have delegated all the powers to her, I am too busy."<sup>248</sup>

Certainly, there are cases when *otkhodniks* participate actively in local politics. Like the neighbors working in their hometown, *otkhodniks* are displeased with the ever-diminishing involvement of the state in local affairs. The *otkhodniks'* socio-political activity will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Thus, *otkhodniks* are active members of the society. Despite the fact that they do not participate in public life and are not present in the economy, in the local social structure they are by no means a peripheral group. In most small towns and everywhere in the villages this is the most prosperous part of the population, respected in general by the neighbors. As far as possible, to a greater or lesser extent, the *otkhodniks* take part in the economic life of the local community, and this participation is recognized and valued.

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An *otkhodnik* is usually a healthy middle-aged man, well socialized, a highly motivated worker, unpretentious in everyday life and resistant to problems. He is sociable, intelligent, has a good sense of humor, drinks little, and has a positive attitude

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247 Interview with a sales clerk; Sebezh, Pskov Region, March 2013.

248 Interview with *otkhodnik* Sergey P.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

to life. He is married, has several children, appreciates and loves his wife. He provides for himself and his family on his own. His short-term aim is to satisfy the needs of the family, make domestic improvements and ensure robust functioning of the household; his long-term goal is to give the children a good start in life. The *otkhodnik* has a higher living standard than his neighbor, who is not an *otkhodnik*, because like centuries ago, the contemporary *otkhodnik* is driven by the desire to provide a decent life for his family (see: Lensky, 1877; Vesin, 1887; Vorontsov, 1892; Lurie, 1996; Burds, 1998; Smurova, 2003). The *otkhodnik*'s house stands out as it is sturdy, well built and demonstrates certain introduced urban trends, thus resembling old-time *otkhodniks* (see: Burds, 1998; Akhsyanov 2013). *Otkhodniks* are also distinguished by their vehicles, which are of a higher class and quality than their neighbors' cars. Farming is small-scale and limited to a kitchen garden. He does not keep livestock. The wife manages both the household and financial matters. An *otkhodnik* does not alienate himself from the local community and maintains all family and friendly relations, and is prepared to help. He enjoys the respect of fellow townsfolk or villagers. He is definitely less engaged in the social and political life of the town than his non-*otkhodnik* neighbors, while even being at home, he does not have as much free time as they do.

## Chapter 9

### Otkhodniks and the State

*"No power shift will shower any money on us! We have to take care of ourselves! Any change of power is just a change of hats like in the movie "Wedding in Malinovka"<sup>249</sup>. For us it's different. When you manage to earn something, you sing and dance, when you don't—you tighten your belt."<sup>250</sup>*

From the political point of view, the status of otkhodnichestvo is a paradox<sup>251</sup>. Otkhodniks seem to exist beyond the boundaries of the state not only economically, but politically as well. Together with small business owners, they are the most active people in the local community, but their participation in the socio-political life does not manifest itself—neither on the government level, even if they vote at elections, nor at the local self-government level, in spite of their busy life. The authorities do not reach out to them either with economic programs, or social security programs, because they are outside the economy, they do not work in the public sector and there are no poor or wretched among them waiting for handouts or support. Having dropped out from economic accounting, these people also dropped out on a mass scale from government social programs and political interests. The otkhodnik is too busy to engage in social and political life. It can be hardly expected that a person who spends at least half of his time (if not almost all his time) away from home, will plunge into community work upon return and take part in all sorts of festivities and events rather than deal with household and family matters. Of course, they attend local festivals and events. Of course, the hand of the State extends over them, and being law-abiding citizens, they recognize and accept this. However, the impression is that the public landscape within reach of the government is composed of two very different parts of the society: one visible, external,

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249 A popular Soviet comedy film, where action takes place in a village constantly changing hands during the Civil War.

250 Interview with the wife of an otkhodnik employed in the North; Shemursha district, Chuvashia, July 2013.

251 While writing this chapter and discussing the underlying materials, the authors could not come to consensus when interpreting the otkhodniks' socio-political activity. The authors were not able to agree on all aspects of the otkhodniks' political status, and this difference of opinions manifests itself throughout the text of the chapter. The authors came up with two or even three different representations of the status that the otkhodniks have in the political system. However, we consider this situation normal for ongoing scientific research, when we still lack the full scope of information, which would clarify everything and allow us to treat the target of our research as a commonplace phenomenon. The existing internal divergence of our opinions gives us reason to believe that the topic is far from exhausted and will still produce many new findings.

represented by people receiving income from the budget; the other—hidden, invisible, living its own life, independent of public policy. What does this special relation with the State consist in? Let us look at this through the eyes of the people themselves—from bottom up,—and let us listen to what they have to say. In any case, a top-down approach (from the government level) is impossible, as *otkhodniks* do not exist for the State as an object of governance.

### 9.1. Participation in local political life

The phenomenon of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* creates a peculiar situation both for the State, and for the municipal authorities. The most active (in the economic sense) part of the local population falls out as a subject of public policy at the local level, and as an object—from the political process as such. The *otkhodniks* spend most of the time far away from home; as a result, they find themselves excluded from self-government in their hometowns and villages. They pay no taxes there, and usually do not participate in local elections. Many *otkhodniks* prefer not to attend local elections. They consider this a meaningless loss of time, as there are no worthy candidates and due to the fact that the local self-government is completely embedded in the government power vertical. About 35%-40% of the interviewed *otkhodniks* prefer to ignore elections; this figure, in general, does not exceed the average abstention rate throughout Russia. However, we do not know the actual percentage of *otkhodniks* that come to the polls. Spending a significant part of the time in major cities, they are also skeptical about electoral procedures at the state level. Elections are not relevant for them, as they receive no government support whatsoever and are not included in any government programs. What is the *otkhodniks'* attitude to political life, which for them, like for all the population, is limited exclusively to voting? Following are several typical excerpts from interviews:

Interviewer: - Do you participate in the local political life, do you vote?

Respondent: - Nay... It doesn't change anything. United Russia [political party] will win in any case, even if no one shows up at the polls. Something may be developing there, there, and there [points his head upwards and in the direction of Moscow], whereas here everything is collapsing. The police force has been reduced from one hundred and sixty to eighty people.

I: When was that?

R: Recently. Let me see... In September. We have no local tax office, just a branch; a branch also represents the pension fund; there is no military registration and enlistment office... So what's the point of going to the polls? To check boxes and waste ink? A woman came yesterday, "What party are you going to vote for?"—"Definitely not for United Russia".—"Why not?"—I replied, "Somewhere something is opening, but here everything is closing. Just think yourself, use your head."—"But it is your duty..."—I said, "I have no duty towards anybody

anymore." It was in the army that I had the duty to serve two years and survive. Here I do not owe anyone anything. Full stop.<sup>252</sup>

Interviewer: Do you vote?

Respondent: Nope [shakes his head negatively].

I: Is it a question of principle?

R: Yeah, it's a question of principle?

I: Did you also ignore the elections to the State Duma?

R: Sure I did.

I: And what are your principal considerations?

R: I was once at a banquet in celebration of the eightieth anniversary of the Komsomol, or something similar ... It was in the Pillar Hall of the House of Unions, and I personally saw [Gennady] Zyuganov kissing with... [Vladimir] Zhirinovskiy. They were embracing each other and pledging eternal love. What the heck, guys, who is all this circus for? There is no democracy in Russia, and there can be none. Our state is like that. We leaped from slavery straight into socialism. With a transitional period of just twenty years or so between the abolishment of serfdom and the revolution. It was a very short transitional period, an extremely short one to accomplish anything... No state would have been able even to establish adequate government institutions in such a short period of time.<sup>253</sup>

Interviewer: Do people actively vote in elections? They must have actively voted for the local candidate?

Respondent: I don't know. I stopped going to the polls; I have no illusions anymore, because everything is meaningless. They are all saying that every vote counts. Bullshit. Our votes mean nothing. They change nothing whatsoever. Everything and everyone depends on Moscow. What is the use of our administration, even the district one? They don't decide anything! They are allocated money, mere pennies, and even those amounts are embezzled. The budget is allocated from Moscow down to the regional level, and then further to the local one, with amounts being nipped off at every stage. What is left in the end is not even worth mentioning.

I: Do you feel any difference when the local authorities change?

R: No one feels anything and never will.

I: Is it because nothing depends on them?

R: Absolutely nothin'. Never ever was there any difference as long as I live... that's why I stopped going to the polls. What's the point? I do not contest that Moscow and Leningrad are OK; people, working people can live normally there; I understand that the main issue is housing, and if you want to work, you can earn money there, whereas here, even if you want to work, you can earn nothing. It's just beating the air, and I am sick of it.<sup>254</sup>

Interviewer: Do you vote?

Respondent: No, I haven't been home in ages! I did not vote. What's the point? Last year elections were held here. I have acquaintances in one small village, and they asked all the residents, who they had cast their ballots for. According to the answers, not a single person had voted for United Russia. But the official report stated that the whole village had voted unanimously in favor of United Russia. Although no one actually had. In such villages you cannot conceal the truth. It makes no sense to vote. Many villagers voice the opinion that in case of unrest, any unrest, the people will take up arms. Previously, the people were afraid of the tsar, because he had the army. Who are we to be afraid of now? Every second one has weapons. A

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252 Interview with Igor, former otkhodnik, welder and plumber; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

253 Interview with Roman Z., otkhodnik and theater actor; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

254 Interview with otkhodnik Igor P.; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

whole stockpile. No one is afraid of the army, because the army will not turn its guns on the people; it will be afraid to do so.<sup>255</sup>

The participation of the otkhodnik population in local, regional and federal elections varies from region to region and from town to town. For example, in the small towns of Kostroma Region—Soligalich, Chukhloma, Makaryev, and Kologriv—some otkhodniks participate in elections. At the same time, however, they believe that any power shift either changes nothing or even has negative consequences for the municipality. In the regions of central Russia, where there are more security guards among the otkhodniks, their participation in political processes is more pronounced—this is at least some sort of diversion in their dismal pastime. Of course, it is impossible to conclude to what extent otkhodniks are involved in local self-government based on their participation in local elections. Voter participation as such cannot serve as indicator, moreover as that of otkhodniks does not differ from the average rate throughout Russia.

In general, the otkhodniks themselves and their family members have low confidence in the institution of elections. From one-third to two-fifths of all respondents flatly refuse to take part in any elections. Certainly, there are people who hope to be able to influence local governance:

Interviewer: Do you vote if you happen to be in Kologriv at the time of elections?

Respondent: Certainly. And not only here, in Kologriv... It is for us to make our choice. We complain about our life, so to say, but we are the ones who have chosen it. Because, so to say, if we are to ignore elections completely and disclaim them...it will be our own fault, I am sure, if we are not concerned about is happening around us. In such a small town as ours, at least, this should be of interest to every inhabitant. And not only here, but in big cities as well.

I: Do you feel any effect when power changes in Kologriv?

R: I haven't experienced anything worth mentioning. Still the same mess as it used to be.

I: You know, everyone says so.

R: Well, it's like that: nothing has changed whatsoever. The thing is that even if a person wants to change something, no one will let him.<sup>256</sup>

External, feigned indifference to local governance conceals the people's concern with the state of affairs in the town and district. Such concern hides behind irritation or a joke:

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255 Interview with otkhodnik Slava; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

256 Interview with otkhodnik Igor K.; Kologriv, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

Interviewer: Do you experience any changes when there is a local shift of power?

Respondent: None at all. Our mayor lives over there [points to a modest relatively new two-storey building, rather resembling a holiday home]. Last spring he came back from Moscow, and the road was reduced to a deep-rutted track—cars were skidding or stuck. Everyone came to me or another neighbor for shovels. I went out and addressed the mayor, "Yura, how come you are not arranging for the roads to be cleaned?" To this he answered, "Dima, I will tell you a terrible secret; we owe the road department 360,000 [rubles]".<sup>257</sup>

Interviewer: Do you vote at local elections for the mayor?

Respondent: If I am not mistaken, the mayor was not elected. He was appointed. Why to elect?

I: But there should be a sort of local self-government...

R: Sure, they do govern themselves. They appoint whoever is suitable. It will always be like that. Our elections were held in a voluntary-forced manner.

I: How did they control that a person checked the right box?

R: Because the ballot had to be marked right in front of them.

I: You mean people were forced to tick the *United Russia* box in front of everybody else?

R: Yes. And why not? We had a visit from representatives of the superior authorities from Ryazan. They told our town head Vasiliev that if for whatever reason *United Russia* fails to collect the required number of votes, he would automatically lose his job<sup>258</sup>.

Generally, *otkhodniks* manifest real political activity, including voting activity, in those municipalities, where the local authorities and the local community are consolidated. This mostly happens when the local communities are territorially isolated and possess minimum resources (see: Plusnin, 2008).

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257 Interview with Dima, a young *otkhodnik*; Chukhloma, Kostroma Region, June 2011.

258 Interview with a long-haul trucker engaged in international freight carriage; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.



Photo 19. New standard houses built under a government welfare program in Temnikov, Republic of Mordovia. Many of the houses are occupied, but the people do not actually live there and the surrounding territory remains undeveloped for a long time. There is neither fence, nor small front or big back garden. The "free of charge" or "subsidized" houses seem to be standing on vacant ground thus sharply contrasting with the other buildings in town. We spoke to the few residents whom we managed to locate and found out that although the formal homeowner belonged to the category of those in need of social support, this did not stop the actual inhabitants from becoming *otkhodniks*. For example, elderly beneficiaries under the program remain in their old house and give up the newly received house to their grown-up children. The young *otkhodnik* owners are forced to work in Moscow. They have neither time nor funds to make any home improvements. They must earn and save some money first; only then can they take care of the house and the adjacent land. The situation is similar in many towns. The snow-covered path leading to the building is a sign that its owner may be a young single *otkhodnik* working away from home. Photo by Artemy Pozanenko, November 2011.

## 9.2. Attitude towards the local authorities

We saw quite many examples of such consolidation, primarily in rural settlements with few inhabitants, where the *otkhodniks* cannot avoid participating in community life, because the active population is few in numbers and the *otkhodniks*' respective share is significant. Chistye Bory (Buy district, Kostroma Region) is a perfect example of such consolidation. The settlement was intended to be the satellite of the nuclear power plant. However, in 1996, the construction of the nuclear plant was suspended, after which the construction of the settlement was also discontinued. Nowadays, Chistye Bory represents the uncompleted first stage residential development, which has actually become a bedroom community of Buy. There are

virtually no production facilities here; the principal local source of employment is the social sphere, and *otkhodnichestvo* has become the main source of income for the residents, as there is no local demand for their skills. Over 50% of working age residents of the settlement work away from home. In spite of their forced extended absence, the *otkhodniks* do not drop out of local self-government. Moreover, local *otkhodniks* are represented in the Council of Deputies of Chistye Bory; the meetings of the Council are adjusted to the schedule of the *otkhodnik* deputies' rotation shifts. Such deputies include two employees of the Dmitrov territorial company Mostootryad-90. One of the *otkhodniks* was "nominated" for deputy by the team in which he works, and the other took part in elections upon request of the head of the settlement. To ensure the presence of all deputies, it was decided to hold meetings of the Council in accordance with the shift schedule. As both *otkhodnik* deputies work out of town the first half of the month, meetings are held after the 15th. When an urgent decision has to be taken, the head of the urban settlement contacts these deputies by phone.

Since *otkhodnichestvo* has become a mass phenomenon and conventional way of life in the settlement, the presence of *otkhodniks* among the deputies is considered a necessity and does not surprise anyone. For example, the head of Buy municipal district commented the presence of *otkhodniks* in the Council of Deputies of Chistye Bory as follows, *"Why not, if people go there of their own accord. Why should they elect any Tom, Dick or Harry to the deputy corps?"* It is interesting that previously women used to be in the majority in the council of deputies. This was a logical consequence of widespread rotation shifts in the settlement. At the same time, it seems that *otkhodniks* are not represented in the higher-level council of deputies—that of the Buy municipal district.<sup>259</sup>

The respondents note that excessive growth of housing and utility tariffs drove *otkhodniks* to participate in the political life of the settlement. And in general a substantial part of the activities of local deputies is related to housing and utilities. For example, one of the *otkhodnik* deputies, who was urged by the head of administration to run for elections, justified the need for his presence in the council by the fact that women, who used to account for 80% of the deputies, had problems resolving certain matters. In particular, Chistye Bory deputies communicate with the residents in order to promote due payments for utilities and housing maintenance services; they check that the payment orders are made out correctly, and deal with

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259 In 2010, the council included one *otkhodnik*, who worked in Kostroma (80 km from Buy).

non-payers.<sup>260</sup> For this purpose, the deputies make a round of the apartments, which is safer to be done by men:

"Deputies have to make a round of the apartments but many women refuse to do so, "We will not go. I went once, and a man nearly sent me tumbling down the staircase. He said it was his business to pay or not to pay, and he would do what he felt like doing". Therefore, it is in any case better for a man to visit the residents."<sup>261</sup>

Thus, the otkhodniks of Chistye Bory are not excluded from local life; moreover, they take an active part in the settlement's self-government. However, in this specific case it is determined by the settlement's "compactness" (the population is under 5,000 people) and the significant share of otkhodniks among the working age residents. Generally, the local authorities do not admit otkhodniks in their ranks, even in the rare cases when they "notice" them. Such is the situation in Makaryev, where otkhodniks account for about 40% of working age men:

"Otkhodniks are numerous. Many work far away from home but I don't know them personally, except for two-three people from among my relatives. We don't interact with them. No statistical records are kept regarding otkhodniks. I assume, nowadays, as unemployment is on the rise, more people leave to work elsewhere than before. I am exasperated when people complain about the state of affairs... Stay and work! In the utilities and other sectors. Together we have more chances of succeeding."<sup>262</sup>

The presence of otkhodniks in local self-government bodies was noted in other regions as well. Thus, in the Ivanovo Region, otkhodniks are not only represented in municipal councils, but are also heads of municipalities. For example, the head of Timoshikha rural settlement is permanently employed at the Ivanovo district archive (in the city of Ivanovo, which is the administrative center of the district), i.e. she lives and works in a place other than that where she serves the people on a voluntary basis (she heads the municipality on a voluntary basis). This rural settlement is far from small—over one thousand people living in 18 settlements and villages that need ongoing economic supervision. The head of Pestiaky settlement (urban settlement in the Pestiaky district of Ivanovo Region) has the same informal status of an otkhodnik; he owns a big business in St. Petersburg, and usually spends most of his time there. Who manages the municipal administration during his absence? Probably, it is not without reason that the urban settlement is not even represented on the official website of the Pestiaky municipal district.

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260 The proportion of households not paying for utility services can be quite large—up to 1/10 and even 1/5—and it has a very serious impact on their neighbors, because many live in multi-storey apartment buildings.

261 Interview with an otkhodnik; Chistye Bory, Buy district, Kostroma Region, November 2012.

262 Interview with S.V. Grachev, head of the town administration; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

It is unlikely that the *otkhodniki* have time to attend regularly, on a monthly basis, the meetings of representative bodies. Moreover, an *otkhodnik* who heads a municipality is not able to manage current economic and administrative affairs, even if there is little to manage. It can be assumed that *otkhodniki* are included or admitted into a municipal power structure in those cases when the government institution functions by inertia, "in an automatic regime", and governance processes do not depend on the participation of the head. The situation is definitely weird, but, as we can see, quite real.

Overall, the attitude of *otkhodniki* towards the local authorities is indifferent or skeptical. The people do not believe that power rotation will bring about any improvements; they have a low opinion of the professional and personal qualities of local executives and doubt their administrative motivation:

"I sometimes go to the polls, but not regularly. It is pointless in any case. Nothing changes... The new district head is 47 or 49 years old. He has no one to care for—no family, no children. OK, he has a wife. He registered the sawmill in her name and is now enjoying life".<sup>263</sup>

Our respondents generally claimed that local elections were not legitimate; that heads of municipalities were appointed by superior authorities rather than really elected by the people; that local leaders had neither the motivation, nor the opportunity to change or improve something in the local life. The people especially harshly criticized the low professionalism of municipal leaders:

"No, the laws are not observed. What does he need laws for? He wants to sell as many prohibited assets as possible, I mean architectural monuments, and make off with the money. He somehow managed to get re-elected for the second term. I am not so sure about the third. He virtually elbowed himself in for the second term. He had no opponents... [...] There was no one worth voting for... Maria Ivanovna, our janitor, an obstetrician-gynecologist and a plumber. That was it. ... yeah, normally one should go [to the polls]. And destroy the ballots. The problem is I know all those people, and I know how much they are paid. Whatever you do, everything is prearranged in advance. So what's the point in voting? It's just a waste of time."<sup>264</sup>

Interviewer: And what about local elections...?

Respondent: Local... What's the point?

I: Is it meaningless?

R: As long as the governor is appointed, it will be senseless. Just imagine that the mayor is appointed. The current mayor was appointed. He used to head the district. So that's it. There is no industry and no taxes. You are economists, you must understand that every locality lives off what it earns. Accordingly, there are grants allocated by the regional center. The region has its own governor, who is not a local and was also appointed. He was actually appointed by Yuri Mikhailovich Luzhkov [former Moscow mayor]. I do not know whether the Ivanovo Re-

263 Interview with an *otkhodnik*, encountered by chance in the street prior to departing for work; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

264 Interview with taxi driver Mikhail, former *otkhodnik*; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

gion is of any interest to him, but I want to give you an example: at a certain point the Avtoagregat plant behind my back had six thousand workers. When I was leaving, only two thousand remained.<sup>265</sup>

Interviewer: Did you ever come back on purpose to vote?

Respondent: No, I only voted if I happened to be here. Like when Zarubin was elected, who was then head of the agricultural department. I was home for the weekend then.

I: Do you experience any changes resulting from a shift in power? Or nothing happens?

R: I would say there are no changes. If only for the worse. I was more or less absent for three years. When I came back, I drove by car from one end of Kologriv to the other—it's a total mess! The fences around the sawmills are all broken down. And nobody takes any measures. The owners have put up the sawmills; they sell sawn timber and make money, but nobody bothers to take care of the premises. There is a fenced enterprise at the entrance to Kologriv, which looks nice and proper, but these sawmills here are like a dirty common area. Logs are piled all over the place, as well as sawn and unsawn firewood—one cannot pass through, to say nothing of drive through. The district used to be more or less in order, but now... We were even short of gas. Gas was delivered only today from Nizhny Novgorod.<sup>266</sup>

Interviewer: Do you feel anything, when power changes in town? Does anything happen?

Respondent: Nothing, everything remains unchanged. Elections were held recently...

I: Do you vote?

R: Sure I do. When Mamatkulov was in power, life was better.<sup>267</sup>

Interviewer: What is your attitude to the authorities? Do you feel any changes?

Respondent: What changes are you talking about [laughs]! Those, who get elected, all feather their own nest. Take our mayor, for example. He used to work at the boxer, I know him for thirty years!

I: Where did he work, I beg your pardon?

R: At the box factory. He established a cooperative there for himself. He himself is a nobody.

I: Are you talking about N-ov?

R: Yes. There was one woman—Z-ova—she wanted [to run for office], well she was really [capable]... She is currently working as a notary public.

I: But you do go to the polls?

R: I certainly do, when I am home. It is interesting.

I: But do you vote against the acting authorities?

R: No, it depends on the candidates, you see, I know everyone here.<sup>268</sup>

Nowhere have the local authorities managed to gain the respect even of that part of the population that receives income from the public sector (public-sector employees and pensioners), to say nothing of otkhodniks, who have the opportunity to compare the results of economic, administrative and even political management in

265 Interview with otkhodnik Dmitry, manager in a Moscow advertising company; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

266 Interview with Sergey K.; Sukhoverovo, Kologriv district, Kostroma Region, May 2011. □

267 Interview with a former otkhodnik; Soligalich, Kostroma Region, June 2011. Every other respondent in Soligalich refers with longing and love to Mr. Mamatkulov, who was head of the district administration almost twenty years ago. His contribution to the prosperity of the district in the difficult 1990s was very significant, however, for obvious reasons he did not manage to stay in power. People associated with the limestone plant, who prefer the interests of the plant management to the needs and requirements of the town, now govern the district.

268 Interview with otkhodnik Alexander working as carpenter; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

their hometown and district with the way affairs are managed in the capitals. This comparison is never in favor of the local authorities. Besides, the otkhodniks have no interest in what the local authorities are doing, as locally their activities are centered on their home and homestead; communication with other people is limited to leisure and assistance; and generally there is no interaction whatsoever with the authorities. Whenever we visited local administrations, we never met any otkhodniks in the halls or offices—with rare exceptions, they are never seen there. And the executives confirm that otkhodniks never apply to them. Respectively, the administrators know either nothing about their otkhodniks, or their knowledge is limited to neighbors' gossip. For an otkhodnik, government is represented not by the local authorities but by talking heads from the TV screen and by various laws and decrees, which change his life one way or another. He does not like that government, but he knows it. As for the local authorities, he neither likes them, nor has any idea what they are occupied with.

### 9.3. Interaction with government and local self-government bodies

The attitude of the authorities towards the otkhodniks is ambiguous and even ambivalent. On the one hand, the local authorities often ignore otkhodniks, as otkhodniks take no part in the political life and for local self-government and government bodies they are non-existent as a segment of the society. The authorities are not interested in them and do not need them. We learned the same fact in virtually every district administration—the district has no statistics on otkhodnichestvo and has no interest in it; the district (i.e., the local authorities) *"simply does not need such statistics"*, according to the Toropets district administration. The reason is simple. Such data is not included in the reports of public authorities. Besides, the local authorities tend to explain the situation in the labor market by the laziness and low skills of the population, which seeks to make quick money. Effectively, the authorities consider moonlighters, otkhodniks, and unemployed—without distinction—to be a fringe group, or "unnecessary people":

"There are practically no people who are suffering without work. There are those who do not want to work at all. If we look at the statistics, about 250 people are registered at the labor exchange. They are registered there permanently, and will continue to do so, because they simply do not want to work. Why should they, if they can perfectly well manage without working [...]. They can receive the allowance—4,000 rubles—and spend it all on booze. Then they can chop wood for somebody, get paid and once again drink away the money. Everything depends on the person. People are different, and their motivation is different."<sup>269</sup>

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269 Interview with V.V. Yakovlev, head of the town administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

The interview shows that the municipal authorities represent primarily the interests of those groups of the population that receive income from the public sector (pensioners, disabled people, various employees of municipal organizations, and public-sector employees), i.e., the economically passive population, whom the government guarantees access to a certain minimum of resources. The more so that these groups are the most active voters. The public officers themselves at times understand that they are placed in such conditions, when they are forced to work as social security institutions, rather than bodies of local self-government.

" ... That is the biggest problem ... Although I cannot say that we have many applications at the moment. Surprisingly, the main problem has recently shifted from the utilities sector to providing housing for veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Because not all are entitled to it. Who is meant by the Law?—Those who have no accommodation or whose dwellings are dilapidated. The veterans, however, believe that they are all entitled to new housing. I fought in the war, but received nothing, although he got a new dwelling. But I have my own house. And let's assume that it is sound and solid. For example. So we have to explain, convene commissions, consider the criteria provided for by law, look for ways to resolve the situation. For example, we had a visit from a veteran today, and that is quite a lot... Supposedly, we have a waiting list of 24 people. We have them recorded; all the documents are in place. All the 80 veterans are 80 [years of age] and over. The authorities allocated two subsidies for the purchase of housing. The following Monday, several people showed up, "I am 81, I will never live long enough to receive this subsidy, why was I omitted?" We have a waiting list! I contacted the social department, and on Friday we received another eight subsidies. Totally, in the past two months ten subsidies were granted. This is substantial for a waiting list of 24 people. A man came, who was 24th on the list, now he is number 17 in line. Today the latest eight subsidies are being distributed, and he will move up to number 9. So the old gentleman calmed down, because it is not so hopeless to be number nine on the waiting list. But he understands that at this age any day may be his last one. They are already used to living in their current conditions. But they are all concerned about their children. The person fought in the war. Everyone should have received housing at that time, I think. And now, one has been awarded or by chance he has bad living conditions and is entitled to housing, and the other one is not entitled. And probably they fought side by side... The older generation is accustomed to do the available work; no one will go looking for a more lucrative job. And what about the State? The political system has changed, but the people... Well, this may be right... No one explained the new rules of the game to the people. The government should have honestly said, "Dear population, you are now on your own. Do you need work? Look around, search for jobs." But the older generation is used to being taken care of, to be invited and asked, "Would you like to work?" They are accustomed to social guarantees and so on. Nowadays, a good education only is not sufficient to live and work successfully; one has to run around, prove one's worth, and show oneself at one's best. Then there is a chance to succeed."<sup>270</sup>

The quoted interview is not customary for the local authorities; on the contrary, it is a rather rare example of in-depth understanding of the new relations forming between the authorities and the population, where the authorities should no longer focus primarily on people receiving income from the budget, although they still do. In

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270 Interview with N.V. Avvakumov, head of the Toropets district administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

certain cases, the authorities recognize their orientation on the population receiving income from the public sector, but due to limited resources and the mentality of the people, they have no idea how to change this situation. Here are some more interviews:

" ... When I started working here, I was struck by the attitude of public sector entities to money. I do not want to offend them, but they have no idea where money comes from; they are just used to spending it, and asking for more, as was customary during Soviet times. If they need 20 million, they ask for 40, so they may end up with 25. In any case, it is more than was initially required, so one can also spend more. Those from the industry are well aware how much effort is needed for the enterprise to be able to pay wages to the workers and what has to be done in this respect. Before the managers and personnel can be paid, the money has to be earned. This attitude is alien to the public sector. I have been trying to change it for the past seven years. I am explaining, substantiating my position. Only now things are starting to change. Now look, whatever others may be saying, the school has switched to a piecework payment system in the past five years. Where a class numbers more than 20 pupils, the teachers are paid more. Where the classes have few pupils, salaries are lower. Just recently, I checked all the schools. The salaries have increased everywhere by 30%. I checked all the schools personally; and everywhere the salaries have grown. At school number one the classes are full; the school is a prestigious one. And it is really good. It is not for the rich or whatever. We do not have such schools. They are all equal here. An ordinary experienced teacher with a track record earns from 22,000 to 24,000 rubles. Then I visited school No. 41. I do not know why it has such a number. It is affiliated with the railway. The classes are half empty there. As a result, a teacher's salary is only 15,000 rubles. The difference is more than 25 percent. What does this mean? It means competition between the schools. The schools have to be appealing in order to attract the children and their parents."<sup>271</sup>

"Since Soviet times, the people have the impression that the authorities ought to arrange everything for them. I am trying to convince the people, that the days are long gone when anybody had to do anything for them. In particular, since the Housing Code became effective, and all the apartments were privatized. The municipality is now responsible only for municipal housing and is ready to bear secondary liability, provided that all owners are willing to do repairs. The people do not understand this; they believe that the municipality "is simply obliged to do everything". This stereotype is gradually changing."<sup>272</sup>

The head of one municipality gave the most clear, precise and brief description of the changes under way in the public mentality and in the perception of the authorities:

"Not all are aware that the concept of the State has changed. The current concept is as follows: the people should take care of themselves."<sup>273</sup>

The *otkhodniks* drop out from the view of local authorities largely because this significant component of the local community is principally invisible for the official

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271 Interview with N.V. Avvakumov, head of the Toropets district administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

272 Interview with V.V. Yermachikhin, first deputy head of administration for municipal services; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

273 Interview with V.V. Afonin, head of the Temnikov urban settlement; Temnikov, Republic of Mordovia, November 2011.

government statistics and for municipal reporting to the government authorities. Besides, government migration agencies focus generally on incoming migration, as external migration is much easier to record than the domestic one. Moreover, Russian migration statistics are able to trace only those relocations, which are followed by a change in the official place of residence. This implies deregistering at the previous address and registering at the new address of permanent residence, the so-called "registered domicile" or "propiska". "Propiska" has been abolished by law in Russia 20 years ago (it seems, however, that only specialists are aware of this). As for temporary registration, a person may obtain it in several locations at the same time. However, the overwhelming majority of otkhodniks never register their stay in any of the locations where they work (by the way, this is fundamentally different from otkhodnik practices of the previous centuries, see: *Reports and research on home crafts in Russia, 1892–1912*; Lurie, 1995; Andryushin, 2012):

"We have no data on otkhodniks. We have only migration statistics—departures and arrivals. As for the purpose of the departure, we have no idea whether the people are going after big money or simply relocating to a new place of residence."<sup>274</sup>

Public employment centers generally have no information on otkhodniks either, as their understanding of the situation on the labor market is inadequate, this being determined by limitations in the methodology applied to estimate employment and unemployment. By placing information on rotation vacancies, the employment centers are actually promoting otkhodnichestvo, however, they are not monitoring whether such job opportunities are relevant.

It is only fair to mention—we already wrote about this—that some public employment centers attempted to determine real unemployment in the district using the ILO (International Labor Organization) methodology. In Kineshma, the attempt failed, as the employment center requested the lacking information from Rosstat and regional government bodies, which, naturally, did not possess it. However, the Kargopol employment center in 2005 successfully applied the ILO methodology using data provided by the administrations of rural settlements instead of requesting information from the regional authorities. The resulting real unemployment reached 3,000 people instead of 300.<sup>275</sup>

In certain cases, government employees (from local Rosstat branches and public employment centers) and municipal executives are aware of the existence of otkhodniks. However, this awareness is not related to their professional activities but

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274 Interview with an employee of the Kasimov branch of the Federal State Statistics Service; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

275 The information was provided by E.V. Korshunova, director of the Kargopol district employment center; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

results from their everyday experience as local residents, or their involvement in organizing the voting process as members of local election or other commissions. We must, however, acknowledge that some municipalities monitor the situation with *otkhodniks*; generally, this happens when employment of the residents at local enterprises becomes an important issue for the town. Kineshma is an example:

Interviewer: ... We are interested in *otkhodniks*. Are you aware of the magnitude of the problem?

Tomilin: It is impossible to be ignorant of the magnitude of *otkhodnichestvo*. The town is rather small, and everyone is somehow related or knows each other. Relatives of many acquaintances are working out of town. [...] The second point is: when we check voters' lists drawn up for elections, we anyhow obtain the information that people are going away to work.

Pantsurkina: People come to certain commissions and declare that they are not working. For example, when we check the files of the administrative commission, we see many entries to this effect. When we ask the person in question, the answer can be, "I am working in Moscow off the books."—"And why is it marked, "Not working, according to oral statement?"—"Because I'm working informally." That is common practice.<sup>276</sup>

We have encountered cases, when advisory bodies under the head of the municipality's administration address the issue of *otkhodnichestvo*. In Kineshma, for example, the Community Council, which facilitates interaction between the residents and self-government bodies, is concerned with this matter. The Community Council even made an attempt to estimate the approximate number of *otkhodniks* in Kineshma based on the difference between the number of working-age residents and the number of people employed in the economy (for details, see Chapter 4, *Estimating the population of otkhodniks*).

However, in those cases when the local authorities are aware of *otkhodnichestvo* and its magnitude, they have no idea how to convert it into local employment. On the one hand, they believe that the trend is so widespread that it cannot be addressed on the local level ("*half of Russia lives like that*"). On the other hand, they hope that external forces will appropriately resolve the problem of employment (the standard expectation of the local authorities is as follows:—"An external investor will show up and implement a major industrial project that will create new jobs"). Some local leaders believe that small towns have no chance of development, as they serve as a transit point between the villages and the major cities, which are actually the end destination of migration flows from rural to urban areas:

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276 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district and L.S. Pantsurkina, deputy head of administration for economic matters; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

"If you know, there is a certain Mr. Glazychev<sup>277</sup>; he is always wearing a neckerchief and walking around with a pipe. When I met with him, he voiced the concept that Russia would develop through seven or eight hyper-megalopolises. This is starting to be gradually implemented in Moscow through expansion of its territory. Every Federal District has a city with over one million inhabitants, which continues to attract additional residents. Therefore, devastation of the villages in the central part of Russia will continue... First, we need to understand that industrial facilities, which could employ from three to ten thousand people, can be constructed here only as an exception rather than common practice. This can happen only if the federal authorities bring here a strategic, global investor like Toyota, Ford, or someone similar. Accordingly, we must somehow survive by ourselves. Small business accounts for about 25 percent of the economy. We have developed a program and plan to achieve at least 20 percent at the first stage. The least costly businesses to establish are tourism and services. Setting up production enterprises that manufacture goods is rather problematic, starting from money and ending with obtaining various permits. It is much easier with the service sector. Second, the service sector does not require such high skills as manufacturing does; therefore, it seems to be the most accessible sphere in terms of employment and self-employment of the population. In this respect, we are now actively cooperating with the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation. The Governor has set the task of creating the Volga tourist cluster. As of today, Plyos has already been included in the federal program. We are preparing certain marketing and PR measures to present and position our town as a tourist destination."<sup>278</sup>

Actually, the local authorities and the *otkhodniki* represent completely different life-worlds, mentality and paradigms with regard to economic life. This is clearly evident from the opposing attitude of the parties to the situation in the local labor markets. The two main reasons for *otkhodnichestvo* are a lack of jobs and low wages. However, these two problems, which are universal for the Russian province, seem to affect only the local residents and not the local authorities. These are exactly the issues that the local authorities often fail to treat as significant problems for the areas under their administration. One of the reasons is that officially registered unemployment in small towns is everywhere on the level of one to three percent, whereas vacancies are always available (the vacancies are, however, for low-paid jobs, where the remuneration is often at or even below the subsistence level). As, according to reports, there are formally absolutely no problems with employment and unemployment, the local authorities tend to have a completely different view of the labor market than the residents. For the authorities, the main problem is a shortage of skilled specialists, because primarily they look to staff public-sector entities and those enterprises that are the principal taxpayers (especially, if local leaders originate from such enterprises). They disapprove of those residents who prefer to

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277 Vyacheslav Leonidovich Glazychev (1940–2012)—Doctor of Architecture; Professor, Department for Local Self-Government, National Research University—Higher School of Economics; member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation (2006–2012); prominent Russian scientist and public figure.

278 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

work out of town rather than seek employment locally. Following is a very clear position of the head of the district administration—former director of a major industrial facility and until recently a businessman:

Respondent: Nowadays, fewer people are working out of town. More used to go in the 1990s. They try to find work on a rotation basis. But now we have good enterprises here, where the wages are decent. We have no problem with employment in the district, but we do have a problem with unemployment. We experience a shortage of labor; we simply do not have enough workers.

Interviewer: Shortage of labor?

R: We have been experiencing a shortage of labor for the past five years. The enterprises are building dormitories. They currently employ about three hundred migrant workers. The employment is formalized, everything is legal, accommodation is provided, and the working conditions are decent. But this does not save the situation. The migrants are not professionals. They have no idea how to operate the equipment—and we have good, imported, modern equipment based on state of the art technologies. The migrants are engaged only in manual labor—they fetch and carry, load and unload, dig, etc. We are absolutely suffocating due to the lack of professionals—men, who have the required skills and know how to work! Everyone is interested only in trading; they strive to complete higher education and then off they go...<sup>279</sup>

The head of the urban settlement fully supports the opinion of his senior colleague from the district:

"I consider that the town of Toropets can offer enough jobs. And not only at industrial enterprises. Doctors are needed in the healthcare sector. They are really needed. If I am not mistaken, we have 44 doctors in the district. But, for example, we have no breast physician. Certain specialists are lacking. The town and district need them, but they are simply not available. Now, look at culture, for example. We have a rather well developed cultural environment. In the past 20 years, we managed to avoid collapse in this sphere. Currently, we have six on-stage performance groups. And they are working. Moreover, we have vacancies there. We need a stage director for our theater. Such people are required."<sup>280</sup>

Often, the local authorities and government bodies explain the problems in the labor market and the large extent of *otkhodnichestvo* by the fact that the people are simply lazy and are no longer used to hard work:

"I once had a team that was finishing my house. The foreman was the only person who said, "Thank you, Lyuba, you saved us from Moscow." The others voiced the opinion, "We would have rather gone to Moscow." Or, for example, a woman is trading in the market. She usually leaves at 1 p.m. already and is always complaining that business is very slow. I tell her, "Why don't you work then until 5 p.m.", and she replies, "I am no idiot to stick around till five in the evening." And that is the attitude that many manifest, "I am no idiot to slave away at the assembly line!" Few people are prepared to work. As for turnover, there is usually none among those, who "can and want" to do something. For example, the head of the repair service at

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279 Interview with N.V. Avvakumov, head of the Toropets district administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

280 Interview with V.V. Yakovlev, head of the town administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

NIL-Pharma, knows his job. He is also very well aware, that the less defective goods are produced, the higher his salary will be."<sup>281</sup>

Interviewer [pointing to the house of the respondent's neighbor]: Wow, just look at that house! Did he build it from his new wages?

Respondent: Not at all, he built it when he was still the police chief here. Valera K-ov, captain of the fire fighters. Now he is working as a security guard in... Many of those who are sacked from the police force, become security guards. They prefer not to work, but just to guard... Yeah... Everyone seeks a job that matches his wishes.<sup>282</sup>

Such judgments of local executives are not unreasonable, as security guard is really one of the most popular occupations for contemporary otkhodniks.

In response to the vacancies offered by the authorities (employment centers), the residents unanimously declare that the work is low-paid and the offered compensation does not reflect the time and effort required. Moreover, the work is usually low skilled, so the otkhodniks do not want to lose their more lucrative jobs. Every now and then, the authorities acknowledge this. For example, *"The specialists from Chisty Bory (assemblers and builders) try to retain their professional skills. They leave the town to take up jobs at various construction sites, including construction of power stations. New modern enterprises are needed to keep them from leaving. At the same time, the Buy district, where they reside, experiences a shortage of professional builders. For example, the local construction companies lack the facilities required to participate in implementing the program of resettlement from dilapidated buildings. At the same time, the rotation workers will not give up their permanent jobs for the sake of building housing in Buy during a couple of months. Consequently, this work is done by migrants form Uzbekistan, who come for two months, do the job and then leave. According to V.A. Yagodin, head of the Buy municipal district, migrants pay more taxes than the local residents."*<sup>283</sup>

When the local market experiences a severe shortage of labor, especially when new production facilities are launched in the area, but many skilled local workers leave the district to work elsewhere, the local authorities seek a solution through engaging migrant workers from former Soviet republics. However, this is a mixed blessing. According to the local authorities, foreign labor is employed in jobs that are of no prestige and remain unclaimed by the locals. This does not resolve the problem of the shortage of skilled specialists. The residents believe that they are displaced from the local labor market due to the employment of migrants that serves to re-

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281 Interview with L.S. Pantsurkina, deputy head of administration of the Kineshma urban district; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

282 Interview with a former otkhodnik, currently disabled, who is regularly invited to work in urban local self-government bodies on a voluntary basis; Makaryev, Kostroma Region, May 2011.

283 Excerpt from the analytical report prepared by Y.D. Zausaeva based on the findings of her research in the Buy district, Kostroma Region, November 2010.

duce the cost of labor. The residents have voiced representative opinions in Toropets, where the situation has recently aggravated because of launching new enterprises staffed by outsiders. The opinion of a representative of the authorities.

Interviewer: Where is there a shortage of labor?

Respondent: In manufacturing. Basically, workers are lacking everywhere. First, at all enterprises. Second, in agriculture. Third, in construction. We have found an investor and are currently building a four-storey apartment house. There is not a single Russian worker from Toropets at the construction site. Virtually only migrants are working. The Tajiks have just left, because they were working since spring, now the Moldovans have taken their place.

I: The people among themselves are saying that no jobs are available and they cannot find work.

R: Those who do not want to work are saying that.

I: Are many people trying to work on a rotation basis?

R: No, not many. Those days are gone. The wages in Moscow are not that much higher than those in Toropets. A normal non-drinking man... The times are returning when we had to run after every worker. At the time of real unemployment in the 1990s, vacancy ads clearly stated "without bad habits". I worked at a manufacturing enterprise at that time. There was a choice of labor then. Now people do not want to work. They want to drink wine, including at the workplace, and do nothing. Concerning the industry: a shortage of specialists is a huge problem. Young people are not interested in blue-collar jobs. You see? They want to obtain higher education by any means<sup>284</sup>.

Following are the opinions of the residents:

"Yes, yes, yes! That is not what people are experiencing. Here is an example of an ordinary true-life situation that happened with my friend here, in Toropets. He had a solid job in roofing. The earnings were very decent. A child was born, and he provided for the family. They were very comfortably off. They were not rich, of course, but they could afford good food and good clothes. No more than that. Then came the guys from Central Asia. That was it. Now he is sitting home jobless, and they are engaged in roofing. So, in fact, it is a rather sad situation."<sup>285</sup>

"...Megaplast? Yeah, all sorts of \*\*\* are working at Megaplast. Different Uzbeks, Dagestani ... Ours received 25–30 [thousand rubles = \$800–\$1,000]. Now those came, who are working for 10 [thousand rubles = \$300]."<sup>286</sup>

"There are rumors that whole families of migrants will be brought here to work. Gexa [enterprise], of course, does not hire such workers, they require skilled personnel, but Megaplast does and pays them next to nothing. And the most interesting part of it is that if our girls quarrel with these Tajiks, the girls' wages will be cut for improper behavior. No one is allowed to say anything against them, or fight with them, or strike them: one girl had a fight with a Tajik; as a result, she lost half of her salary [laughs].

Interviewer: Are they such valuable workers?

– It's not that they are valuable; they are cost-efficient; they are prepared to work day and night for next to nothing."<sup>287</sup>

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284 Interview with N.V. Avvakumov, head of the Toropets district administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

285 Interview with former otkhodnik Oleg; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

286 Interview with taxi driver Mikhail, former otkhodnik; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

287 Interview with Lena, wife of a builder otkhodnik; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

If for the local authorities the *otkhodniks* are an "invisible" segment of the society, for the *otkhodniks* the local authorities are a puzzling counterparty in terms of communication. The *otkhodniks* and their families do not understand how to communicate with representatives of the local authorities when dealing with everyday problems that are within the competence of local self-government bodies. Most often, they adopt an "attitude of avoidance", trying to reduce any interaction with the authorities to zero. At the same time, they believe that non-resident "vacationers from Moscow" (as they refer to all city-dwellers that have local summer residences) are much more adapted to dealing with local authorities; they have a better knowledge of the laws; and when addressing certain matters, they are able to defend their rights and interests. It seems that the rapidly growing number of such "vacationers" in small towns, with whom the local *otkhodniks* know how to interact due to their urban working experience, creates unique conditions for the emergence of a new socio-political environment in the Russian province.

It is also interesting that those *otkhodniks*, who used to work in government and municipal bodies, understand that the capacities, resources and influence of the local authorities are limited. In this they start to differ significantly from the people receiving income from the public sector, who are still always and in every respect relying on the authorities:

"Mr. T-in [head of administration] has lots of such freeloaders as we. He has doctors, but they are at least doing something. The teachers are also not idle. Only we are the real freeloaders for most people. What can I say? Some of my relatives, even my own mom, still do not understand what I am doing, and whether anybody needs it."<sup>288</sup>

"Well, I can say the following: if you have no money in your pocket, how will you shop? And if there is no money in the budget? What can he do? In general, since the year 2000, any mayor of a town like Kineshma, bluntly speaking, is the director of all municipal entities. Yes, at a certain point I did communicate with the head of our town administration, and so on and so forth, but that was back in the 1990s. He said a very good phrase: we do not have the same rights as before (when the communist party influenced the economic situation). Our economy has separated from the state, and the state is no longer entitled to exert pressure on it. So who can he exert pressure on? As for businesspeople—he can only [speaks with emphasis] ask them to do something. He can bully the women trading in the kiosks, because he can use the administrative resource to crush them. Any plant will just tell him to get lost. Full stop. He has absolutely no power there."<sup>289</sup>

*Otkhodniks* actively participating in the life of a municipality are generally well educated and are engaged in skilled labor. A matter vital for all residents of a municipality (e.g., problems related to the utilities sector) can serve as an additional

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288 Interview with Roman Z., *otkhodnik* and theater actor; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

289 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dmitry, manager in a Moscow advertising company, resident of Kineshma; Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

driver for an *otkhodnik* to participate in local self-government. The way *otkhodniks* perceive the nature of local power structures is very important for the process of establishing communication between them and the authorities. Many *otkhodniks* tend to be skeptical or indifferent towards the authorities; and they have an erroneous understanding of the capabilities, powers and functions of local self-government. Moreover, even in such rare municipalities as Chistye Bory, only a minor portion of *otkhodniks* is ready to take an active and constructive approach to local self-government. One of our respondents noted that too many *otkhodniks* could produce nothing but hot air when it came to resolving matters of importance for the local life, and too few were prepared to work constructively.

Although *otkhodniks* are virtually completely lost for government bodies, some local institutions interact even with this category of the population. The first and foremost, if not the only ones, are public employment centers, which are responsible for regulating the labor market.

#### **9.4. Public employment centers as a contact point between the authorities and the *otkhodniks***

The legislative framework for the existence of employment centers in their contemporary form was laid down in 1991, with the adoption of the Law of the Russian Federation No.1032-1, *On Employment of the Population in the Russian Federation*. Subsequently, district by district, the network of employment centers covered all Russia. The history of the "labor exchanges", the form and functions of which have undergone repeated transformation and "followed the general line of the party", is rather intricate. The first attempt to establish a regular network of public institutions designed to facilitate employment was made in 1918, when the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) passed a Decree providing for the establishment of local labor exchanges under the "urban and rural self-government bodies in settlements with a population of 20,000 people and more".<sup>290</sup> One of the key goals of such labor exchanges was "accurate recording and planned distribution of labor throughout all sectors of the economy". During "war communism", compulsory labor conscription was introduced, and the labor exchanges were renamed to labor registration and allocation bodies. Later, at the time of transition to the new economic policy (NEP), compulsory labor conscription was abolished in favor of voluntary employment, and the labor registration and allocation bodies were once again replaced by labor exchange-

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290 Decree of the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars dated 31 January 1918, *On Labor Exchanges*.

es. Initially, workers could be hired only through a labor exchange. Subsequently, their monopoly on labor mediation was canceled, and the use of their services became voluntary. However, registration of all cases of employment through labor exchanges was mandatory in order to maintain statistics on the movement of labor (Dogadov, 1927, pp. 46–48). In the 1930s, due to the "enormous success of socialist industrialization of the country and rapid kolkhoz and sovkhoz development", unemployment in the USSR ceased to exist, and the labor exchanges were respectively abolished. Personnel directorates, the functions of which included planned supply of labor to the national economy (Suvorov, 1968. p. 215), replaced them. Since that time, labor exchanges ceased their existence until the collapse of the USSR. They were replaced by a system of organized recruitment of labor for permanent and seasonal jobs. It was precisely then that *otkhodnichestvo* was governmentalized.

Currently, the functions of the labor exchanges, as the locals continue to call public employment centers, include helping residents to find appropriate jobs, helping employers recruit required personnel, and associated functions.<sup>291</sup> In spite of all the differences between the labor exchanges of the NEP and current periods, certain similar inherent problems exist. Among the most important problems facing labor exchanges of the NEP period was a significant undersupply of skilled labor and the existence of people who were professionally unemployed. For example, the inspection of labor exchanges conducted in September-October 1925 revealed that some people registered as unemployed had "luxurious apartments, personal vehicles, and even hired domestic help". Some unemployed "at the time of inspection were vacationing at their own expense at resorts in Crimea" (Suvorov, 1968, pp. 106–107). In order to combat this phenomenon, the labor exchanges were periodically subjected to "purges" under which "elements of low value in terms of employment, who were only seeking benefits and unemployment allowances" were deregistered. Nevertheless, the number of jobless persons registered at the labor exchanges continued to grow rapidly. However, the labor exchanges could not satisfy the demand of enterprises for skilled labor, since a significant portion of registered unemployed persons was either unskilled or low-skilled workers. For example, laborers and other unskilled groups accounted for approximately 47%, more than half of all the unemployed had no profession at all, and up to one-third—had never been employed before (Gindin, 1925; Establishing the Foundation, 1977). The reasons for such large-scale unemployment were at that time attributed to agrarian overpopulation, which

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291 Administrative regulations of the Federal Labour and Employment Service ([rostrud.ru/documents/15.shtml](http://rostrud.ru/documents/15.shtml)).

caused an outflow from rural to urban areas. Agrarian overpopulation was considered to be the principal reason for the extended departure of workforce to the cities, and that was the main source of growing unemployment (Mints, 1929; Suvorov, 1968). The labor exchanges, just like the employment centers of today, had no means to control *otkhodnik* migrations, since they were mostly spontaneous and unorganized. For example, in 1926–1927, only 13.5% of all *otkhodniks* had labor agreements with enterprises in place before starting work (Suvorov, 1968, p. 71). In the 1930s, *otkhodnichestvo* was considered to be a problem due to the shortage of labor resulting from the ongoing industrialization—timber rafting, peat harvesting, construction, and other seasonal works required at least from eight to nine million people, of whom about four million were to be provided by the village (Suvorov, 1968).

Nowadays, the public employment centers face similar problems, although they function in a different socio-economic environment. The contingent of registered unemployed persons still does not match the enterprises' labor demand structure, and the re-emerged category of "professional unemployed" represents a significant part of the registered jobless people. Thus, according to the staff of the Kineshma employment center, people who applied repeatedly, i.e. those, whose right to unemployment benefits had expired, who had worked for a short period and then registered again, represent a significant part (over two-thirds) of their contingent. Moreover, besides the unemployment allowance, many registered unemployed persons have other sources of income; they often make extra money on the side or are employed somewhere informally. An *otkhodnik* in Kargopol (Arkhangelsk Region) disclosed to us his ideas on establishing opportunistic relations with the state for the purpose of receiving unemployment benefits. He is engaged in oil production in the Tomsk Region under six months on, six months off schedule. He believes, it would be fair if during his months off the employment center would pay him unemployment allowance, because taxes in the amount of 10,000–15,000 rubles [\$300–\$400] are deducted monthly from his Tyumen wages:

"I want to register for unemployment, dammit. Why not, dammit? I have been paying for ten years; they are deducting from 10 to 15 thousand from my wages, dammit, for what?! Now you tell me. Why shouldn't I register here for unemployment and get seven thousand in allowance, dammit? [...] Why not? For the service record, for the future pension. I have to think of it already now, although I am still young..."<sup>292</sup>

For example, the Kargopol employment center tries to identify such unscrupulous unemployed persons, but this case is individual; rather few employment centers

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292 Interview with *otkhodnik* Dmitry P., working as drill man; Usachevskaya, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

monitor this situation. Representatives of the local self-government bodies also note the inefficiency of employment centers in their current format:

"These services were relevant in the 1990s, when everything was at a standstill. Toropets was no exception. No one invested money in the local economy; no one built any factories. Industrial construction started in 2005; factories were built and started producing. In the meantime, neither the practice of employment services, nor the underlying legislation had changed. I believe, it is time to introduce a law on parasitism, and engage the people in work, make them work, because they simply do not want to do it."<sup>293</sup>

Representatives of local enterprises also highlight the existence of people, for whom unemployment has become an occupation, and the fact that the skills of those registered at the employment center do not meet the requirements of the local labor market:

"The employment service is a separate topic. Yes, we sent a request to fill 90 vacancies. But I doubt there will be any result. The history of our relationship shows that even a cleaning lady cannot be recruited through the employment center. By the way, we had filed a request for a cleaner, and the employment center sent us a lady, but it was impossible to come closer than 20 meters to her—the stench of alcohol on her breath was a killer. The unemployed in Toropets are not interested in a service hand job for six thousand rubles. Higher wages, however, imply more work, and such an arrangement does not suit this contingent either. All those sent by the labor exchange want a lot of money preferably without having to work. No professionals with the skills we require are registered at our employment center. In any case, none of our requests were ever fulfilled. Just on one occasion, the labor exchange sent us a worker who met our requirements but he came and asked us to do him a favor and turn him down, "Vasilich,—he said,—I'll somehow make it to the age of retirement as unemployed, and here one has to work!"<sup>294</sup>

We repeatedly indicated that the officially registered unemployment is low, but, judging by the difference between the economically active population and that employed in the economy (in small towns this difference is generally quite significant), actual unemployment is considerably higher. A comparison of one and the other assessments in some cases produces a ten-fold difference. Employment center staff acknowledge this and confirm that very few people seek their assistance. The most active part of the population prefers to deal with problems on their own without resorting to the help of such public agencies. Therefore, the labor exchanges do not fully comply with their function of providing information and statistics. They always give a distorted picture of the local labor market, since they present only officially registered unemployed and are unable to monitor hidden unemployment. We would like to emphasize once again that of all the employment centers surveyed in almost twenty areas, only one (in Kargopol of the Arkhangelsk Region)

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293 Interview with N.V. Avvakumov, head of the Toropets district administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011.

294 Interview with A.V. Kuznetsov, CEO, Megaplast Ltd., recorded by V. Rubinova; Toropets, Tver Region, July 2009 (newspaper *Moi Krai*, 9 July 2009).

managed to determine the real level of unemployment. Besides, the employment centers are often unaware how many persons actually use the information they provide, because the people may use the vacancy database unilaterally without communicating with the employment center personnel. And the importance of an employment center as a public office is downplayed by the policy pursued on the federal level. Currently, all information on vacancies can be obtained from the website *trudvsem.ru*, which is an all-Russian database of vacancies developed and maintained under the auspices of the Federal Labour and Employment Service. Thus, public employment centers have no full picture either of unemployment, or of the employment of local residents, since most job seekers (a significant part of whom are *otkhodniks*) simply avoid them. Many employment centers (like the Ardatov one in Mordovia) do not even have basic data on the number of people employed locally. As an excuse, the officials simply state that only jobless persons are within their scope. It would be only fair to mention that many employment center executives fully realize that the data they provide has very limited informative value.

At the time of the new economic policy, labor exchanges also experienced problems with statistics. The *otkhodniks* of that period managed to avoid labor exchanges when initially finding employment in the city. Enterprises failed to provide full information on hired workers, thus further complicating matters (Gindin, 1925). Nevertheless, their data and that of their successors was by far more complete and representative than the information provided by the contemporary employment service. For example, we found a document titled *Report on the flow of builders in Soligalich district and on the movement of labor within the scope of the Galich correspondent office* in the archive of the labor department of the executive committee of the Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army Deputies of the Kostroma Province for 1918–1929.<sup>295</sup> It is impossible to imagine that the nowadays employment services would have such detailed information on the situation in the local labor market.

Thus, contemporary public employment centers perform their two basic functions stipulated by the legislation very poorly, in a reduced form—assist in recruitment/employment, and provide information on the situation in the labor market. At the same time, they often perform functions that are not directly provided for by the legislation. Sporadically, labor exchanges organize recruitment of workers as if

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295 In 1924–1925, the country had 384 functioning labor exchanges, and in subsequent years—281. Correspondent offices subordinated to the closest labor exchange operated in areas with at least 500 unemployed persons. In 1926–1927, the number of such offices was 1,240. They maintained close liaison with the labor exchanges, registered unemployed workforce, regulated its distribution, especially during *otkhodnichestvo* (Suvorov, 1968. p. 103).

recollecting their historical past dating back to the new economic policy and industrialization. For example, in 1921–1922, about 14,500 workers and members of their families were sent to work from the Chuvash Autonomous Region to other areas of Russia (The Chuvash encyclopedia<sup>296</sup>). Currently, *otkhodnichestvo* and organized recruitment are also actually supported on the regional level. The public employment service of Chuvashia has entered into agreements with 14 organizations in nine different regions on providing jobs to unemployed residents of the republic. Since 1991, over twelve thousand people worked outside Chuvashia by assignment of the republican employment centers. On a less systematic basis, recruitment of workforce is also practiced by employment centers in other regions. Thus, our respondents heard that in Podporozhye (Leningrad Region), the employment center recruited people for work in other locations:

"There are such people here. As far as I know, many townsfolk go to work there [to St. Petersburg]. They also go to Petrozavodsk and Murmansk. ... Women go to Italy. Many women found such work through the labor exchange. A company came and recruited women through the employment center... The teams of builders were officially recruited through the employment center some time in summer. We were also thinking about joining. A company comes there, and the people fill in an application form."<sup>297</sup>

However, in most cases, the employment center simply posts information about job opportunities in other regions, but takes no part in the employment process and does not monitor whether any action is taken on such information.

Interviewer: We saw ads in your office about rotation job opportunities. How common is this phenomenon? Are such ads in demand?

Respondent: I do not know about the demand. We hang the ads out, and the people come and read them. I do not know what their reaction is.<sup>298</sup>

The function of "assisting unemployed persons in relocating for the purpose of taking up jobs in another location under assignment of the employment service" often boils down to a rather meaningless reassignment of hopeless vacancies from one employment center to another in a different region. The employment centers of a certain area place information on such vacancies in other regions and also circulate their unfilled rural vacancies to the employment centers in other areas. The vacancies mostly include low-paid jobs (4,000–6,000 rubles = \$150–\$200) in the agricultural sector and healthcare in small towns and settlements. It is doubtful that such vacancies can be of much interest to the local people:

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296 Official website of the Public Employment Service of the Republic of Chuvashia, URL: [http://gov.cap.ru/SiteMap.aspx?gov\\_id=31&id=30805](http://gov.cap.ru/SiteMap.aspx?gov_id=31&id=30805)

297 Interviews with residents during a round of the apartments in a nine-storey building in Podporozhye, Leningrad region, February 2012.

298 Interview with an expert on vacancies, employment center; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

"Well, have you seen the job offers? They mainly concern rural areas. Doctors are required, for example, but it is very difficult to fill such vacancies. However, those are the requests that we receive most often. We also receive requests for high-skilled labor. However, the people that contact us are mainly interested in temporary rather than permanent employment. They seek work on a rotation basis. Here employers can also offer different options—rotation shifts lasting two weeks or a month. We simply provide information on available jobs. The candidate then contacts the employer himself and clarifies the terms and conditions. We have no feedback whether he finally takes the job or not. Besides, the government is promoting a single electronic database; therefore, we now have a database of vacancies, which enables anyone to obtain information on all out-of-town job opportunities offered by the employment service. We even have a terminal with Internet access, where everyone can check out all available options. [...] All employment centers enter their vacancies into the database on a daily basis. Should a candidate seek employment in Ivanovo, he or she can look up the jobs offered by the Ivanovo employment center."<sup>299</sup>

Thus, the employment centers currently serve as a "hospice for the fringe group". The activities of the centers are not in demand among the most economically active and skilled part of the population. Accordingly, they are not able to provide high-quality recruitment services to the enterprises seeking to hire personnel. Moreover, the centers are a source of distorted information on the labor market, and yet it is precisely this information that is subsequently used by local enterprises and local self-government bodies.

With regard to *otkhodnichestvo*, public employment centers in small towns demonstrate the following specific features in their work. First, the employment centers perform certain functions stipulated by law in a significantly reduced format. Second, the employment centers provide admittedly distorted information about the state of the local labor market. The local authorities and businesses rely on such information when taking decisions. This often leads to quite tangible consequences, such as replacement of local workforce by foreign labor. Third, the principal established customers of district employment centers are professional unemployed, who seek allowances rather than employment. As a result, the actual activities of employment centers tend to shift increasingly from labor exchanges to "almshouses". The state is forming a "Russian Speenhamland". Fourth, the centers do not monitor the developments related to the job opportunities they advertise; they have no information whatsoever about the movement of workforce beyond the boundaries of the town or district. In terms of statistics, the employment centers cover a very limited segment of the local labor market, and it would be a mistake to extrapolate it to the entire local labor market.

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299 Interview with an expert on vacancies, employment center; Kasimov, Ryazan Region, December 2011.

Thus, we have not obtained a clear and precise understanding of how a typical *otkhodnik* participates in the political life of the society. There is reason to believe that this participation is disproportionately low, if any, even though the *otkhodniks* themselves claim to take part in the electoral process (the only significant one for the State) on the same level as the other socio-professional groups of the population. The participation of *otkhodniks* in public social programs is most likely limited to occasional (primarily informational) interaction with employment centers as local institutions of regional government authorities.

The nature of the relationship between the *otkhodniks* and the local authorities follows three distinct scenarios. According to the first scenario, which is prevalent and typical, the municipal authorities simply "do not see" the *otkhodniks*. For the authorities, the *otkhodniks* do not exist, even if the officials know about such people who are their neighbors. The authorities perform no managerial functions for this category of the residents, and, consequently, there is no relationship between them whatsoever.

Under the second scenario, the local authorities "see" the *otkhodniks*, moreover, they see them clearly and can even assess the scale of the problem, but they cannot include them into local life due to various institutional and economic limitations. Since this situation is "not administratively critical" for the authorities, the officials treat it to a certain extent from a scholastic point of view—the problem exists but it has no solution, therefore, it is irrelevant.

Finally, under the third, still very rare scenario, the local authorities "see" the *otkhodniks*, and the *otkhodniks* are "included" in local self-government. In this case, the *otkhodniks* take an active part in the everyday life of the local community. However, such relations between the local authorities and the *otkhodniks* emerge in specific circumstances—in very compact settlements with limited resources that have nothing to lose and have no other way out than to assume all responsibility, having given up any hope on assistance from the state.

On his part, the *otkhodnik* has very poor (if any) knowledge of the local authorities; he does not like them and is not aware of their functions and activities. For an *otkhodnik*, government is represented not by the local authorities but by talking heads from the TV screen and by various laws and decrees, which change his life one way or another. He does not like that government, but at least he knows it. He also knows that for the government authorities he is insignificant, since he is unseen by them and unknown to them. The authority of the state does not extend over him.

## Chapter 10

# Otkhodnichestvo as a new factor of social and political life in Russia

*"Do you think I am the only one from Penza there? People are coming from Orel, Tula, Bryansk, Penza, from everywhere. They just keep coming. Life is not a bed of roses, and the most hard-working ones are on the move."<sup>300</sup>*

The absence of established relations between the authorities and the otkhodniks as a specific category of the population does not mean the irrelevance of otkhodnichestvo as a public and political phenomenon. On the contrary, we sincerely believe—and with each new observation we become more and more confident—that otkhodnichestvo is rapidly becoming a new and important factor of socio-political life. Underestimating this factor, to say nothing about being completely unaware of the very existence of this phenomenon, as is currently intrinsic to the authorities, may have serious consequences to the institution of the state.

In this final chapter, we slightly depart from the general phenomenological approach we have adopted and take the liberty to express cautious speculation regarding the social, cultural and political significance of otkhodnichestvo in contemporary Russia. We believe that this significance stems from the unevaluated role of otkhodnichestvo for the functioning of the state. By definition, the state is a total institution, but in recent years it has turned into an institution that supports those who receive income from the public sector, and completely ignores other law-abiding citizens that represent the most active and entrepreneurial part of the population. As a result, otkhodnichestvo remains out of sight of all other public institutions. In the meantime, otkhodnichestvo itself has developed into a new and important public institution that definitely affects the most different aspects of our society. Unfortunately, neither the society, nor the intellectual milieu have yet realized this influence.

### 10.1. The significance of otkhodnichestvo for the authorities

In spite of the fact that the phenomenon of otkhodnichestvo remains invisible to the authorities in the political perspective, it has so many social and political consequences that only completely blind administrative structures can fail to notice it.

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300 Interview with an otkhodnik engaged as welder; Bekovo, Penza Region, July 2013.

These consequences are diverse and not always visible to a third party. We will highlight some of the most obvious ones.

To begin with, we would like to point out that *otkhodnichestvo* has a dual, even ambivalent, influence on the economic life of municipalities. On the one hand, where *otkhodnichestvo* is well developed, the municipal authorities need not bother about any economic policy; they do not have to think and care about restructuring the economy, raising investments, setting up new production facilities, and all other matters which are needed for a healthy economy but require significant efforts on the part of the authorities. Owing to their self-organizing potential, the *otkhodniks* counter-balance the economic problems facing the municipalities and inject their external earnings into the local economy.

On the other hand, because of *otkhodnichestvo*, local budgets fail to collect a significant amount in taxes (especially personal income tax). In the absence of a clear economic policy, the municipal authorities can only hope for a mechanical growth (or at least no decline) of their own taxes collected from the population. Besides, if the *otkhodniks* were to remain at home, most of them, being active and entrepreneurial people, would definitely engage in some small business, which would also contribute to the local economy.

The first aspect of the problem is more expressive and visible, therefore, it appears to be more obvious (however, in the past, this influence of *otkhodnichestvo* on the local economy was not considered to be positive at all; *see*: Vladimirsky, 1927; Mints 1929; Nikulin 2010). We have seen quite a few impressive examples of how *otkhodnichestvo* serves to stabilize the local economic situation. Thus, in Chisty Bory, where practically all aspects of life—from the cost of utilities to the social structure of the local community—reflect the previous pattern of development, more than half of the working-age residents have been forced to seek outside employment for years. The head of the Kineshma urban district, where employment opportunities shrank when the light industry lost its raw material base and the orders placed with machine-building enterprises plummeted, pointed out that the issue of *otkhodnichestvo* can be hardly resolved through raising investment. Large-scale investment projects, creating more than 1,000 jobs, are rather an exception, which happens only when *"the federal authorities bring a strategic, global investor, like Toyota or Ford"*. Besides, some factors are beyond the reach of both regional and municipal administrations:

"Currently, the investment climate in the region, in general, and in Kineshma, in particular, is not very attractive. Certain aspects depend neither on the administration, nor on any other structures. Often, major investors are deterred by the high cost of connecting to natural monopolies. Prior to engaging in any project, the investors assess the initial costs. It is therefore premature to contemplate opening a major enterprise at the moment."<sup>301</sup>

Thus, where there is no real opportunity to change radically the existing local socio-economic environment, *otkhodnichestvo* provides temporary relief to local economic problems, prevents aggravation of social tension and contributes to maintaining the utilities infrastructure through payment for the services, etc.

The second aspect of the problem—losses incurred by the municipal economy due to non-collection of the "otkhodniks' share" of local taxes—rarely concerns the municipal authorities. They are generally concerned by the fact that while paying no local taxes, the *otkhodniks* nevertheless use the services of the same municipal institutions and enterprises as the other residents. This poses two (rather than one) problems for the local authorities. As the *otkhodniks* are numerous, the municipal budget falls short of a significant portion of taxes. However, the municipal enterprises and institutions continue providing services to the *otkhodniks* and their families. These services remain virtually unpaid for as quite often such families have only one working adult, and he/she is an *otkhodnik*. According to O.E. Popolitov, first deputy head of the Nerekhta municipal district administration, the problem with provided but unpaid for municipal services exists and could be resolved by associating the personal income tax with the employee rather than the employer.<sup>302</sup>

In the meantime, the issue is not as simple as it seems, since municipal services are assessed on all registered residents, including *otkhodniks*, and are taken into account in the structure of government inter-budgetary transfers. The extended absence of a significant part of the population to be served is not a valid reason to discontinue providing grants or subsidies for such services. However, no one, including us, has yet examined this aspect of the *otkhodniks*' economic participation in local life (and we doubt it can be studied in detail). We leave this issue for future research. The failure to collect a significant portion of personal income tax for the local budget appears to be a more relevant problem; at least, some forward-minded representatives of the municipal authorities point this out:

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301 M. Smirnova, *Profile of the textile past* // The Newspaper *168 hours*, 19 June 2011 - URL: <http://168.ru/component/content/article/35-1stquest/2313-2011-06-18-21-21-21.html>).

302 From an interview with O.E. Popolitov, first deputy head of the Nerekhta municipal district administration; Nerekhta, Kostroma Region, November 2010.

Interviewer: Does the departure of the most active and efficient people affect the socio-economic situation?

Tomilin: Yes, it does.

I: We heard that all municipalities dream of the personal income tax being associated with the taxpayer rather than employer.

T.: This may be true for provincial municipalities, because the people are leaving. However, I am not sure this is right in terms of taxation...

Pantsurkina: And whether this is feasible.

T.: Yes, is such control feasible? It will be complicated and time-consuming. But, of course, this would be a good solution.

I: That is, you believe a significant amount of taxes is thus "lost"?

T.: Naturally<sup>303</sup>.

Actually, depending on the scale of *otkhodnichestvo*, the amount of personal income tax, which drops out of the rather modest incomes of municipal and urban districts, can be quite significant. In several municipalities, where *otkhodnichestvo* is most developed, we roughly compared the amounts of personal income tax "lost" and received by the local budgets and discovered that the ratio could vary from 5% to 35% (Table 8). As a result, due to non-collection of "otkhodnik taxes", the budget of an urban district or the consolidated district budget can fall short of 1.5% to 10% of revenue. For many reasons, the above evaluation is relative. We assessed the number of *otkhodniks*, net of moonlighters and dependents, based on our judgment. Average wages were used as a level sufficient for the *otkhodniks* to remain working in their municipalities. However, the estimate at least gives a general idea of the scale of the phenomenon. We must admit that it is impressive and indicates the need for targeted economic analysis; we just touched upon this problem within the scope of our sociological research.

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303 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district and L.S. Pantsurkina, deputy head of administration; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

Table 8

Estimated personal income tax (PIT) not received by the municipal budget due to non-employment of the otkhodniks in the local economy (data as at 2012)

| Municipality          | Number of working-age residents (persons) | Estimated overall working-age population not engaged in the district economy (dependents, shabashniks, moonlighters, otkhodniks, and residents of the municipal entity living beyond its boundaries; persons)* | Estimated overall number of otkhodniks** | Average wages (RUB '000) | Estimated shortfall in PIT receipts assessed on average wages (RUB million)** | Proportion of uncollected PIT (assessed on average wages) to actual PIT receipts (%) | Proportion of uncollected PIT to the actual municipal budget revenue, net of subventions (%) | Budget revenues of the municipality (for municipal districts - consolidated budget), net of subventions (RUB million) | Amount of PIT in revenue (RUB million) |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| Toropets district     | 10,677                                    | 1,700  | 1,100                                    | 16.7                     | 5.73  | 4.88   | 1.67   | 342.99  | 117.33                                 |
| Kargopol district     | 11,385                                    | 2,480  | 1,139                                    | 15.7                     | 5.58  | 10.65  | 1.53   | 365.65  | 52.4                                   |
| Podporozhye district  | 18,200                                    | 3,215  | 2,300                                    | 19.6                     | 14.06   | 36.31  | 1.64   | 857.56  | 38.72                                  |
| Kasimov               | 19,112                                    | 1,852  | 1,720                                    | 17.1                     | 9.17  | 11.11  | 2.29   | 401.02  | 82.52                                  |
| Soligalich district   | 5,637                                     | 421  | 400                                      | 15.4                     | 1.92  | 8.31   | 1.81   | 106.1   | 23.1                                   |
| Kologriv district     | 3,350                                     | 1,373  | 800                                      | 10.4                     | 2.6   | 22.61  | 3.66   | 71.1  | 11.5                                   |
| Kineshma              | 49,300                                    | 11,400   | 8,000                                    | 13.4                     | 33.45   | 24.71  | 3.97   | 843.14  | 135.39                                 |
| Makaryev district     | 8,700                                     | n/a  | 1,740                                    | 11                       | 5.97  | 29.26  | 2.84   | 210   | 20.4                                   |
| Chukhloma district    | 6,362                                     | 2,015  | 1,800                                    | 11.4                     | 6.4   | 39.02  | 4.49   | 142.4   | 16.4                                   |
| Alatyr                | 22,000                                    | 7,090  | 6,000                                    | 14.3                     | 26.77   | 35.81  | 3.75   | 714.05  | 74.74                                  |
| Temnikov district**** | 8,762                                     | n/a  | 3,000                                    | 12.3                     | 11.51   | 32.89  | 7.67   | 150   | 35                                     |
| Ardatov district****  | 16,260                                    | n/a  | 5,000                                    | 13                       | 20.28   | 30.73  | 10.14  | 200   | 66                                     |

Notes:

\* Our estimate, calculated as the number of working-age residents of the municipality, less officially registered unemployed, and less persons employed in the local economy (data on disabled persons and employed pensioners have been taken into account only if available)

\*\*An urban district budget and a consolidated budget of a municipal district receive 20% of the collected PIT

\*\*\*Including otkhodniks of retirement age and those with disabilities, but excluding otkhodniks employed in the local economy who engage in otkhodnichestvo only during vacation (such persons are numerous among police officers, male teachers etc.)

\*\*\*\* Data for consolidated budgets of the Temnikov and Ardatov municipal districts are approximate.

Let us at least examine the obvious implications of a situation, where the otkhodniks were to pay taxes at their place of residence. High earners usually work informally; therefore, they pay no taxes. Thus, otkhodniks, whose professional qualification allows them to register sole proprietorship, prefer to remain in the informal sector of the economy to minimize their contacts with the state. This category includes log house builders, who are numerous among northern otkhodniks; they tend to minimize their interaction with the state and remain in the informal sector of the economy as a matter of principle. Should such otkhodniks ever register a sole proprietorship, they generally avoid formalizing the employment of other team members:

Respondent: I am operating under a simplified [tax] system, so I report whatever I record. I have no contracts. If I were to follow all regulations...

Interviewer: ... you would have no time for work?

R: It's not that there would be time for work, it's the taxes that can drive you crazy! You have to give away everything you earn.

I: Are the people in your team formally employed?

R: No, they are on their own.

I: Are they also sole proprietors?

R: Nay, they are just working. They are all aged 30–35, so they are still relatively young. That's it.<sup>304</sup>

Interviewer: You said that you had a sole proprietorship business that you terminated?

Respondent: Yes.

I: Was it because of the taxes?

R: Besides the taxes, the [mandatory] contribution to the pension fund was raised from 400 rubles to 1,000 rubles. That meant remitting 16,000. I would rather give this money to my girls.<sup>305</sup>

Formally employed people generally receive low wages, so there will be no significant gain. Similarly, no big contribution to the budget can be expected from people who work locally and receive average wages. If the implications for the local economy are mixed, and in the long-term they tend to be negative, the consequences for the local community tend to be favorable. At least, as long as otkhodnichestvo does not result in the local community being scattered across major cities and is still not

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304 Interview with Igor P., otkhodnik and building team foreman; Usachevskaya village, Kargopol district, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

305 Interview with otkhodnik Sergey P.; Kargopol, Arkhangelsk Region, March 2012.

so widespread, that no one is left to work in the public sector entities, the utilities sector, municipal institutions, and etc.

We must also keep in mind the far from simple fact that municipal services are allocated to all registered residents; this is reflected in inter-budgetary transfers aimed at aligning the fiscal capacity. In this sense, a sizeable part of the transfer intended for municipal services to the residents is accounted for but remains actually unclaimed, so, theoretically, the municipal budget can use it for other purposes.

However, it is not that simple and straightforward. In many districts and especially in small towns, residents owe huge amounts to municipal enterprises for the services provided. Primarily this concerns utilities—heating, water supply, sewerage, and even electricity and gas supply. However, the *otkhodnik* families, who are better off than their neighbors, pay all their bills regularly. Therefore, V.A. Yagodin, the head of the Buy municipal district, believes that although *otkhodnichestvo* reduces the amount of taxes collected by the local budget, its total effect on the municipality can be considered as positive, while "...the *otkhodniks* come back, bring their earnings, and settle their utilities and other bills for the services received here".<sup>306</sup>

Here we also see the mixed influence that *otkhodnichestvo* has on administration and the local economy. It remains to be seen which aspect outweighs—the positive or the negative one.

We would like to draw the attention to another consequence, which is important for the local community and economy. During the time the *otkhodnik* works away from home, he does not spend any money within his municipality. This seems to be bad. However, as externally he earns much more than he would have made locally, his family still spends more money at the place of residence. This is especially visible now, when people have started purchasing almost all expensive items locally rather than in big cities.

Many *otkhodniks* (about half of all those we interviewed) are engaged in the informal sector of the economy. As a result, they have inadequate social security coverage, as the employer provides no social package for them. Due to this, the *otkhodniks* often fail to receive any benefits under the government social policy. Informal employment is more pronounced in northern towns, where the people can use forest resources and specialize in log house construction. This is less typical for central and southern areas, where *otkhodniks* undertake jobs as security guards, sales personnel and domestic help, and where their employers formalize their relations. As a

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306 Interview with V.A. Yagodin, head of the Buy municipal district; Buy, Kostroma Region, November 2010.

general rule, the northern otkhodniks do not even register their sole proprietorship and work in teams informally. Such a situation is typical, for example, for the small towns of Vologda and Kostroma Regions (Nikolsk, Tot'ma, Makaryev, Chukhloma, Kologriv, Soligalich, and other), where up to 90% of otkhodniks work informally (formalized employment for security guard otkhodniks from the southern regions is much higher due to technical limitations to their activities). However, the interests of otkhodniks intersect with the social policy of the state. To be entitled to medical aid, some otkhodniks obtain medical insurance policies for the unemployed, thus entering into relations with the state, from which only one party benefits.

As we see, the described economic and social implications of otkhodnichestvo for the local community, economy, and administration are ambivalent. However, the phenomenon of otkhodnichestvo has at least two implications, which must be considered purely negative not only for the local community and local self-government, but also for the state.

The first of these is well known, and we have already touched upon it several times—lack of specialists on the local level. Many skilled workers started practicing otkhodnichestvo long ago. Since then, some of them have found jobs in line with their training and have no intention of giving them up for the sake of emerging employment opportunities at home, which generally offer significantly lower compensation. Even allowing for considerable overheads and transport expenses (according to our rough assessment, they can reach from one-tenth to a quarter of an otkhodnik's earnings), and the psychological stress associated with otkhodnichestvo, the net amount brought home exceeds wages offered locally. Due to the erosion of specialists, it becomes impossible to set up locally a new production facility<sup>307</sup> or even ensure high-quality routine work:

"You know, I would put it this way: we have a shortage of good craftsmen. They have all left. Respectively, those who stayed have done so either for family reasons, or due to age or poor health. They [the business people] are forced to hire those, who are available. From time to time, these people start drinking, i.e. one day they are at work and the other they are absent. They get paid, and immediately spend all the money on booze. For example, we experienced this problem when renovating the school building. Anyone available was hired for the job, those who were unemployed. As a result, the quality of the work was very low."<sup>308</sup>

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307 Thus, for example, several new flax, fish and timber processing enterprises have been recently built in Poshekhonye of the Yaroslavl Region, and everywhere their owners have problems hiring workers from among the locals. Despite sufficiently high wages (18–20 thousand rubles = \$500–\$800) plus a social package in the form of free travel to and from work and meals at the corporate canteen (+ \$200), few local residents took up the job offer, since most of those motivated to work are already engaged in otkhodnichestvo (from an interview with N.N. Belov, head of the Poshekhonye district, and A.A. Rumyansev, head of the urban settlement administration; Poshekhonye, Yaroslavl Region, September 2013).

308 Interview with the director of Gymnasium No. 3 named after A.N. Ostrovsky; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

By the way, the same negative consequences for the economy (especially for the local labor market) are triggered by such "weapons" in the arsenal of the state as Federal Law No. 94-FZ, *On Public Procurement*. This law reduces the opportunities for supporting the local business through municipal orders. Outsiders, who subsequently either subcontract a local company or hire workers from other regions and countries, often win mandatory tenders. In both cases, the implications for the municipality are not very good. In the first case, funds are withdrawn from the local economy, whereas the second leads to a "replacement of workforce"—while local residents make a living in major cities, migrants come to work in their native town. The second implication is not as clearly observable as the first one, but its consequence for the local economy is no less substantial. In small towns and settlements, a significant number of active residents were forced to turn to *otkhodnichestvo*, although they would have preferred engaging in small business locally. Actually, many of them did have their own businesses but were forced to abandon everything and "take to the sea" in order to avoid government charges and meticulous despotic control (see our special research devoted to this subject: *Plusnin and Slobodskoj-Plusnin*, 2012). Both the local business and the municipal authorities are subject to particular attention on the part of control bodies. Endless inspections and the overwhelming reporting burden coupled with the failure of the authorities to meet their obligations, often become a formidable barrier for a small business, forcing the owners to abandon it in order to minimize any interaction with the state. Obstacles deliberately created by municipal officials for merchants trying to open new sales outlets can at least be explained by the well-known fact that most municipal executives own similar outlets and simply want to prevent competition on their territory (we find such examples in practically every municipal district). However, when it comes to production or service facilities, purposeful obstruction or inactivity seem illogical and obviously harmful for the local community. The regional authorities demonstrate a similar attitude:

"We have free niches for small businesses. I know them...For example, managing waste dumps is a very profitable business. The economic department could provide assistance in this respect. Instead, they only block any initiative. There was a sausage production facility in the district. The regional budget owed it 700,000 rubles and failed to pay. As a result, it went bankrupt. The sausages they produced were of very good quality. They were so tasty that my mouth waters when I think about them. The woman who owned the business had also a farm and feed yard. She produced sausages and dairy products. And what was the result?—Everything collapsed. She borrowed 700,000 rubles (approximately \$23,000). The regional administration promised to reimburse interest payments, but failed to do so. That was it. The facility closed down. So much for assistance from the authorities. Does anyone consider such issues?"<sup>309</sup>

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309 Interview with E.N. Perlova, pharmacy owner, former head of Pyschug district; Pyschug, Kostroma Region, October 2012.

In view of such developments, where will an active and entrepreneurial person striving to provide a decent life for his or her family go? The only way out is informal employment away from home. However, as entrepreneur, this person will be lost for the local economy. Definitely, the entrepreneurs and usually all local leaders are perfectly well aware how important it is to develop small business, both from the economic and social perspective. Therefore, people in the province are astounded by the shortsighted and incompetent decisions of the federal authorities, which the municipal bodies are forced to obey. The recognition that the central authorities are incompetent raises doubts about their legitimacy. The line between these doubts and the certitude that such authorities are good for nothing is very thin. Following is a much too long but extremely representative excerpt from an interview—a sore point:

"We pay all taxes duly. However, the authorities raise them over and over again to an outrageous level. We are leading a very hard life. All businesses are under extreme pressure.... Today, small business accounts for approximately half of the taxes [in the district budget], and provides most of the jobs here [in the district]. It pays wages to the people. But the authorities make life a nightmare for it. They treat small business only as a source of money and make no move to support or assist it.

An entrepreneur provides jobs for the whole district, but he is stifled by taxes. An expansion of his business would result in additional jobs and officially declared salaries... The social tax used to be 14 per cent. Then it was raised to 34 [per cent]. If previously we paid 7,000 rubles (about \$ 250) in social taxes monthly, after the increase this amount grew to 20,000 (\$750). This is a monthly payment. Besides the social tax, we have to pay for electricity, telecommunications, detergents, work wear, etc. I ask my accountant: how many additional expense items do we have?

- A heap [responds the accountant from behind the neighboring desk].
- A heap! Just to think of all the expenses we have to cover from our income! Consequently, a sharp increase in tax rates leads to a drastic fall in income. Do you expect me to report [to the tax authorities] the salaries I pay? What for? The unified social tax is assessed on the payroll. So, immediately, all small businesses start paying their employees under the table. The employees accept this. Why? Because there is no choice. They understand that should the business collapse, they will be out in the street. The people are happy to get paid and be in a position to feed their families. They will have no more income if the enterprise shuts down. Where can they go? Nowhere.

So what is the option? Realization dawned. The business community started protesting. The authorities promised to reduce the taxes imposed on small business. Have they done it? How significant was the reduction?—They reduced the taxes to

28 per cent. From 34 to 28. Come on, guys, if you say the taxes will be on the level of 20 per cent, stick to your word. Why behave like that?"<sup>310</sup>

What emerges is a paradox, when local inhabitants find it easier and more efficient to get employed on a rotation basis far away from home, rather than run their own business, provide employment for fellow citizens, and contribute to developing the local economy. Endless inspections, irresponsible and unreasonable government decisions have made small business unprofitable. Otkhodnichestvo becomes an alternative to doing business locally; it ensures higher revenues and allows avoiding unpleasant contacts with government structures that endanger the process of providing for the family. People use the institution of otkhodnichestvo to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the state with its excessive red tape and arbitrary approach. Thus, the phenomenon of otkhodnichestvo demonstrates the current stage of engagement between the government and the population, which is traditional for Russia—avoid control by fleeing to the outskirts of the empire. Nowadays, it is flight to the shadow niches of the economy, which have escaped the attention of the authorities, rather than to remote undeveloped areas.

## **10.2. The social and political implications of contemporary otkhodnichestvo**

We have already mentioned that otkhodnichestvo is not simply a type of labor migration; the purposes of such migration make it a particular way of life that has been adopted by a vast number of people. These people work and lodge in one place, but live their real life in a completely different place. That is the place where they have their household, family, friends, and neighbors; where they relax and plant potatoes; educate their children and unwind "out in the bush". For some otkhodniks, this real life consists of short-term periods, whereas most of their active life they spend working far away from home. However, quite a few otkhodniks manage to split their time evenly between distant jobs and life at home. Not long ago, at the time of the Soviet Union, such a "distributed" lifestyle was the lot of just a few; in the past two decades it has been adopted by a great number of people. This lifestyle is still alien and completely unfamiliar to most residents of large cities and capitals. Although tens of millions of men and women throughout Russia have adopted this way of life, metropolitans still believe it to be so rare and unusual that it is not even discussed in scientific magazines and monographs. Until recently, scientists also failed to show any interest in this generally unappealing way of life.

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310 Ibid.

This changed when numerous urban residents bought dwellings in remote towns and villages and also started experiencing this "distributed" lifestyle. The blending of these two flows, opposite in direction, but similar in seasonality and magnitude, sparked research interest (see especially: Nefedova 2012).

We are studying not the "distributed" lifestyle as such but its consequences both for the family and its members, and the local community. For the most part, *otkhodnichestvo* allows raising the living standard of the family. As a result, the provincials can match the metropolitans in satisfying various requirements. However, the economic side effects turn out to be no less significant: not always favorable for the husbands and wives; generally promising for the children; and often disastrous for the families themselves.

Just as at the end of the 19th century, despite themselves, the *otkhodniks* trigger changes in the local society. (Vesin 1886; Burds 1998; Smurova 2003; Smurova 2008). They offer new patterns of consumption and behavior, and new standards of urban "better life" (Urry, 2012). Today, *otkhodniks* visibly differ from their neighbors not only by the attributes of well-being—the quality of cars and exterior of houses, the look of fences and flower beds—but even by their appearance and behavior, and since recently, by the structure of family expenses, where education and leisure are high on the list of priorities. Their neighbors are already adopting the attractive consumer patterns, and we see how quickly the small towns and villages are changing their appearance influenced by the new trends brought by *otkhodniks* from the City.

Studies devoted to *otkhodnichestvo* in the period before the revolution and in the 1920s note some definitely positive effects of non-agricultural labor migration. In particular, *otkhodnichestvo* contributed to raising "*the literacy level and consciousness of the population*" promoting higher public and political activity of the peasants (including women, who remained at home to manage the household and took over significant public functions specific to men). It introduced new urban fashions and trends and many other aspects, which at that time signified progress (*see, e.g.*, Mordovtsev, 1877; Zhbankov, 1887; Sazonov, 1889; Vorontsov, 1892; Yezersky, 1894; Karyshev, 1896; Mints, 1926; Vladimirsky, 1927; Lenin, 1971; Selivanov, 2011). (Only few researchers, like A.I. Shingarev, emphasized solely the negative implications of *otkhodnichestvo* for the local public and cultural life: *see*: Shingarev, 1907). Following the above authors, contemporary historians note the same features as positive implications of *otkhodnichestvo* (*see*: Danilov, 1974; Kurtsev, 1982, 2007; Vodarsky and Istomina, 2004; Smurova, 2006b; Perepelitsyn, 2006; Alexandrov, 2008; Nikulin, 2010).

Today, the purely "Kulturträger" (culture-bearing) function of otkhodniks is not that pronounced, although certain authors believe that it is still typical even of contemporary otkhodnichestvo (*see, e.g., Baranenkova, 2012*). We ourselves observe the features evidencing the influence of otkhodniks on the local community, especially deep in the countryside.

We believe, however, that in our days, such a "Kulturträger" role of contemporary otkhodniks is not as significant as in the imperial times, especially after the successful Soviet experience of "leveling differences". Nonetheless, we should not underestimate the role that contemporary otkhodniks play in eroding the joint integrity of many local communities. By a number of formal criteria, the position of the otkhodnik and his family in the local society is marginal. As a result, solidarity with the local community becomes a burden for them, moreover, as members of such a family partially lose the preferences for "us". We believe that in a certain sense, the otkhodniks involuntarily start disintegrating the community's natural self-organization processes. Due to their lifestyle and activities, which proceed outside the local community as the community gradually but yet imperceptibly starts "crowding them out", the otkhodniks and their families increasingly become inhabitants of the City, rather than their native town or village. Unexpectedly, here they find like-minded people in exactly the same status—seasonal residents from the big cities. The small towns of the European part of Russia are all but flooded by "metropolitan" summer residents. In spite of their social passivity and seasonal presence, they "get their share of the cake", if only due to their large numbers (more often, because of a relatively better awareness of their rights and opportunities). Unwittingly uniting their efforts, these two groups—the otkhodnik families, who are becoming alien to the local community, and the summer residents, who are integrating into it—increase their transformational (destructive?) influence on the local community. The provincial local society of today perceptibly differs even from that of the late Soviet period. Close scrutiny gradually reveals that the large groups of "them" (urban summer residents) and pushed aside "us" (otkhodnik families) are increasingly imposing their differing perceptions of what is "right" and "appropriate" on the local community. It is becoming more and more evident that it is easier for the otkhodniks to find common language and interact with the summer residents than with their own neighbors. Thus, the otkhodniks are emerging as a new factor of public life that exists everywhere, but on a local level.

However, there are more profound changes in the minds of the otkhodniks that they are demonstrating in the local community and thus influencing it. One of them is increasing exactingness as to the quality of services and the work of the local ad-

ministration. According to our observations, the local authorities note that *otkhodniks* with the experience of working in major cities become more demanding of local self-government bodies:

"... They come back completely different people. Their mind is no longer that of a local resident ... First, they are more demanding. Their self-esteem is higher than that of the locals. The difference is evident. I see it when they come to my office. Second, they insist on what they need, "I want to, and you are obliged to". Those people know their rights, and they want to be served in the same shops and the same social institutions."<sup>311</sup>

Actually, these distinctive features were also common for the former *otkhodniks*. Many authors note that the period from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century is characterized by a significant growth in the *otkhodniks'* political culture; they become much more demanding of the authorities (*see, e.g.,* Nikulin, 2010; Alexandrov, 2012).

However, "raising the literacy level" is not the case with contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*. As the most widespread existing job opportunities require unskilled labor, *otkhodnichestvo* currently embraces many people with a low level of vocational training. Moreover, it forces people with higher education to lose their motivation for high-skilled labor and, consequently, their former qualification. This is due to the fact that remuneration for skilled labor in the native town is far inferior even to the wages paid for cushy, "lie-in" jobs with private metropolitan security agencies. As a result, it is highly unlikely that in the future *otkhodnichestvo* will transform into employment in the local economy. We have already mentioned that in those municipalities where *otkhodnichestvo* is widespread, the workforce in the local labor market is displaced; as a result, the economically active population, which is not employed locally, no longer possesses the necessary skills and proficiencies. The disproportions of the local labor market cause the engagement of foreign workforce. This, in turn, creates obstacles for the return of the *otkhodniks*—the cost of labor at local enterprises drops, and native specialists refuse to work for such low wages.

The educational level of the *otkhodniks* is rather dubious due to the distorted system of primary and secondary vocational education that has emerged in provincial towns in the past two decades. The system itself is becoming a factor, which reproduces *otkhodnichestvo*. For example, similar to many other Russian apprenticeship training schools and secondary vocational educational institutions, the Buy Agricultural College (from which nine out of ten local residents graduate), despite its purely agrarian focus, offers only three non-core programs (Land and Property

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311 Interview with A.V. Tomilin, head of administration of the Kineshma urban district; Kineshma, Ivanovo Region, February 2012.

Matters; Construction and Maintenance of Buildings and Facilities; and Economics and Accounting).<sup>312</sup> There is not a single "agrarian" discipline in this specialized college, and probably because of that, the vice-principal says that most secondary school graduates enroll here "by entire classes". Every year, about 40 students graduate from the Construction and Maintenance of Buildings and Facilities Department, and subsequently, all these graduates work exclusively as *otkhodniks* in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yaroslavl, and Sochi. Actually, the college trains future *otkhodniks*. The situation is similar in Lyubim of Yaroslavl Region, where drivers of trucks and specialty vehicles are trained. Since currently practically nothing is being constructed in Lyubim and the surrounding area, the local market cannot absorb even a dozen young builders, so these people go to work in St. Petersburg and other locations.

Our longtime observations have revealed that vocational educational institutions of the following towns were experiencing similar problems: Vyshny Volochok, Toropets, and Staritsa (Tver Region); Kachkanar and Verkhoturys (Sverdlovsk Region); Makaryev and Manturovo (Kostroma Region); Kozelsk and Yukhnov (Kaluga Region), and Zubova Polyana and Kotelnich (Kirov Region). Basically, our research of vocational training shows that this problem is typical for any provincial town with a once developed network of secondary vocational educational institutions (see: Kordonsky, Plusnin, and Morgunova, 2010). In particular, the shortage of skilled specialists in Toropets could be resolved by expanding relevant training programs at local educational establishments. The manufacturing sector of Toropets is short of the following specialists: extruder operators; molding and duplication operators; mechanics for control and measuring instruments and automation; electricians; and lathe operators. However, local secondary specialized educational institutions train mainly managers and accountants. Industry representatives also note with regret that the educational system does not meet the requirements of the local economy. However, measures taken by the local authorities are not very logical. In 2006, a branch of the Moscow Institute for Humanities and Economics was opened on the basis of the agricultural college in Toropets. The programs offered include legal science, psychology, and economics and management, the graduates of which are completely out of place in Toropets. In spite of this, the head of the district administration is extremely proud of this achievement.

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312 [http://www.koipkro.kostroma.ru/npo/Buy\\_sel\\_tehn/](http://www.koipkro.kostroma.ru/npo/Buy_sel_tehn/)

Respondent: - We have established an educational complex. We have an apprenticeship training school, we have a technical college, and we have also brought in, i.e. invited the Tver branch of the Moscow Institute for Humanities and Economics. We have 400 people studying there now.

Interviewer: - And who do they train?

R: - They train managers, economists, and lawyers.

I: - But these professions are not required by the industry!

R: - No, they are not. But this, at least, keeps the people from leaving...<sup>313</sup>

There is a second important aspect of the impact *otkhodnichestvo* has on the local environment. Does it cause the deformation of the local community structure or are there other triggers to the changes we are observing? As the youngest and most active part of the population spends most of the time living and working far away from their small towns, it seems natural and even apparent to assume that *otkhodnichestvo* leads to the degradation of the social structure. It is not uncommon for *otkhodniks* to eventually relocate and settle down in the cities where they originally went to work. The active population is eroded from many "otkhodnik" municipalities. Consequently, pensioners and people in need of social support or those who have social problems gradually prevail. Is it, however, possible to discourse on such an impact of *otkhodnichestvo* on the structure of local communities, where a large share of the residents initially represents "nomadic" occupations, such as builders of major facilities, who constantly move from one construction site to another? The same issue remains open for communities, where new occupational groups regularly emerge, with every one of them changing the local social structure (see, e.g. : Plusnin, 2013a). We have no simple and straightforward answer.

Moreover, as *otkhodnichestvo* becomes widespread, it introduces new features into the local social structure, which may serve to make this structure more complex, rather than degrade it. We are referring to the trend when outsiders, often labor migrants from the former Soviet republics, who are alien to the local community, both ethnically and, in a sense, culturally—the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Moldovans, and even Ukrainians, replace local workers. Labor migrants from South-East Asia are also present.

Our observations show that practically every small town or municipal district in Russia has either small or large groups of such labor migrants—from 10–30 to a hundred and more people (in a certain sense, these cross-border labor migrants are also *otkhodniks*) (Plusnin, 2013a). These people work seasonally and live in the

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313 Interview with N.V. Avvakumov, head of the Toropets district administration; Toropets, Tver Region, November 2011. However, according to a respondent, this was driven by the opportunistic interest of the local officials, who needed to improve their skills in order to perform administrative functions. For this purpose, they "brought in" the Tver branch of the Moscow Institute for Humanities and Economics.

community many months and sometimes years. Some of them settle down and start families, just like some *otkhodniks* from these very towns do in the big cities. A certain "chain" emerges: if Moscow is the center of attraction for security guards from Kineshma and builders from Toropets, Kineshma is the center of attraction for weavers from neighboring Vichuga, and all these towns together—for builders from Uzbekistan and Moldavia, and for factory workers from Vietnam and China. It would be wrong to say that such a situation in the local labor market is brought about exclusively by arbitrary decisions of the local authorities and businesses. It is also the product of the existing labor market structure, where the economically active population not employed in the local economy lacks the required skills and proficiencies. Those who possess the required skills are engaged in *otkhodnichestvo*. Therefore, the shortage of labor in the local market is addressed by replacing economically active residents that "dropped out" by economically active non-residents (in full compliance with the model proposed by Fernand Braudel, 1993). Only those non-residents have a different ethnic and sociocultural background. Thus, several factors contribute to the complexity of the sociocultural environment in provincial towns. Both the native *otkhodniks*, and the foreigners that replace them introduce something individual or new: the former—metropolitan cultural patterns; the latter—alternate domestic and cultural habits, and a different lifestyle, which affects the members of the local community, even if they reject it. Therefore, it is now difficult to say whether *otkhodnichestvo* disrupts the structure of the local community promoting its degradation, or whether it is a factor enriching the local community with new elements.

No less important is the role that *otkhodniks* play in the political life of the country. Here we can only make assumptions based on the fact that for the public authorities the *otkhodniks* remain "invisible"—both as an economically active category of the population, and, more important, as a social phenomenon. We have considered in detail this complicated and unclear issue (Plusnin, 1999; Plusnin, Kordonsky, and Skalon, 2009; Plusnin, Zausaeva, Zhidkevich, and Pozanenko, 2013), therefore, in this chapter we shall only touch upon several likely consequences.

Being active by nature, *otkhodniks* possess quite a high potential for political activity (especially the business people). However, the low socio-political status these people have in the local community is an obstacle to realizing this high potential. In other words, the *otkhodniks* enjoy recognition and respect as local residents, but they do not participate in social life due to their extended absence from home. Although many *otkhodniks* declare their high voting activity, we know very few who actually participate in the work of local public bodies, and none among the acting

officials, who used to be an *otkhodnik*, or became one after leaving government or municipal service. *Otkhodniks* not only exist apart from the authorities and "apart from the state", the authorities neither need, nor see them. In the meantime, it is well known that a high potential needs discharging; so, a certain "discharge" is only to be expected from such people. At the same time, their economic initiative is limited by the authorities, and the socio-political one is completely suppressed by their way of life. How and in what areas can these people manifest themselves? Can they once again become destructive factors of social life, should that life change (Eisenstadt, 1999; Plusnin, 2013b)? This happened a century ago, when along with the defectors in the cities, the *otkhodniks* returning to their villages became the "flesh of the revolution" that secured the expected success (*see, e.g.,* Lenin 1971; Sukhanov 1913) of radical socio-political reforms in Russia.

Although we are currently observing foreboding signs of many unfavorable processes, we still hope that the answer to the above question will be negative. Two facts sharply distinguishing contemporary *otkhodniks* from their historical predecessors give us reason for hope. A significant part of the *otkhodniks* still has a high proficiency level; the share of unskilled people without a vocation is still low among them. If in the coming years, *otkhodnichestvo* does not expand through unskilled workers, we can be certain that the *otkhodniks*, being potential business people, will realize their capacities in the economy, rather than in politics. The second positive fact, and we have repeatedly mentioned it, is that *otkhodniks* are motivated by the desire to raise the family's well-being—it is not need that drives them away from home but the intention to provide a decent life for their families and children. Such people are as unwilling to destroy the foundation, as skilled professionals. In order to maintain the current status of *otkhodnichestvo*, where many *otkhodniks* have decent skills and all of them pursue high consumption levels, measures to preserve the situation and real support in realizing the entrepreneurial potential inherent to many *otkhodniks* would be sufficient. As soon as the state lifts the numerous imposed barriers (primarily, administrative ones), the *otkhodniks* will immediately manifest their business skills.

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Concluding this chapter, we have to state that the political status of *otkhodniks*—a numerous and very active part of the Russian population—remains uncertain and, most likely, significantly lower than that assigned by the authorities to the much more passive (in economic terms) part of the population—public-sector employees, pensioners, and people in need of social support. Should this imbalance be as pronounced as we now believe it to be, formidable domestic political consequences are

to be expected in the relatively near future. A high difference of potential always results in a thunderstorm or a strong nerve impulse. The discharge of tension can take different forms, including those that remain underestimated by historians, but which the contemporaries had pointed out (*see, e.g.*, Mints, 1929; Lenin, 1971). Besides political consequences, the economic behavior of *otkhodniks* has other implications for the local community—they are creating a new social environment by not participating in social life, and, indirectly, by promoting the substitution of certain elements of the local social structure. What will this lead to in the timeframe of one to two generations? We believe, not only to changes in the patterns of domestic behavior (which used to be the main focus of attention for researchers of *otkhodnichestvo*), like the adoption of obscene language, tobacco smoking, and city footwear by the rural inhabitants. And not only to changes in labor patterns due to the emergence and institutionalization (for example, in the status of professional unemployed) of widespread scornful attitude to labor, which is treated as a misfortune rather than a source of means of existence. The local social structure is gradually changing. By this, we do not mean the emergence of the "middle class" or progress in "overcoming poverty". We mean the shifting balance between "us and them", between the active and passive members of the society. The consequences are vague, but the outlines of new relations are already starting to appear out of the mist. The foundation has already been laid, now the frame is being erected. And we continue to underestimate this invisible silent giant that is creating a new social reality right before our eyes.



## Conclusion

We conclude our overview of *otkhodnichestvo* with generalizations based on empirical data rather than speculative analysis. These data were obtained there, where the *otkhodniki* reside and from where they embark on their journey. Obviously, no record in itself enables clear and uniform generalizations. Indeed, upon analyzing our records, each one of us formed a particular opinion; in certain aspects, these opinions even differ. Nevertheless, we attempted to put the mosaic together and provide a more or less general picture. It is depressively schematic, but at least it gives an understanding of those common features that shape the phenomenon of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*.

Contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* is a type of labor migration, which is distinguished by its temporary and recurrent nature. An adult able-bodied family member temporarily leaves home to offer proactively his or her services or seek employment in other regions (areas). Nowadays, *otkhodniki* come mostly from small towns or rural areas to offer their services or seek jobs in major cities—regional centers and capitals, in the industrially developed areas of the country.

Certain features distinguish a classical *otkhodnik* from other types of labor migrants (rotation workers, *shabashniki*, cross-border migrants, etc.). Generally, *otkhodniki* work far from home, from the place of their permanent residence; their work is of a seasonal (recurring) nature; they are self-starters and act independently; they are driven by the desire to improve their material well-being; and they have no intention to relocate their families. The above features make contemporary *otkhodniki* similar to typical *otkhodniki* of the 18th–early 20th centuries. That is why we consider that *otkhodnichestvo* is a subsistence pattern similar to the one, which existed in Russia up to the second decade of the Soviet era.

The classical *otkhodnik* emerged primarily from the north of European Russia and the Urals. Those areas have sufficient natural resources that the population can largely use and independently market. We believe, the availability of such resources in places where the *otkhodniki* live was a major factor which contributed to their emergence as a special type of labor migrants.

The classical type of *otkhodnik* is flanked by variations with an incomplete set of features, which we nevertheless classify as *otkhodniki*—rotation workers and those employed in the service sector. A proactive approach to job-seeking, the leave-and-return nature of the jobs, lack of intention to relocate permanently to the place of work, and the motivation to raise the well-being of the family are common for these

categories of laborers as well. Such *otkhodniks* (not strictly classical) are to be found in the central and southern regions of Russia.

In many parts of European Russia, contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* has reproduced the most important practices that were already well developed there centuries ago. We are witnessing a situation when economic practices lost by several generations during the Soviet era re-emerged as soon as external political conditions changed in such a way that local circumstances forced people to go back to universal and largely archaic subsistence patterns, including *otkhodnichestvo*. The employment destinations have also reproduced previous trends—*otkhodniks* aim for developed labor markets, regional centers, the capitals, and metropolitan agglomerations. The primary center of attraction is Moscow and the Moscow Region. In the past, St. Petersburg used to be the principal destination.

Contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* is not a homogeneous phenomenon. We find that it is diversified along several (probably only three or four) lines. Only in the first case, where the *otkhodnik* markets a competitive local resource, which he can procure or produce and process independently, does he act as a classical *otkhodnik*—enterprising, independent and self-employed—an entrepreneur. In other cases, where the *otkhodnik* offers for sale either his skilled labor, or only his hands, he does not differ whatsoever from an employee, a recruited professional or a rotation worker, retaining only one or two distinguishing *otkhodnik* features—*independent job seeking* and *long-distance recurrent labor migration*.

Based on our field research, we identified significant social and economic features of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*. The main reason driving people to seek temporary jobs away home is the desire to raise the well-being of their families rather than need. Surprisingly, this is entirely in line with what motivated *otkhodniks* of the late 19th–early 20th centuries. The *otkhodniks* are prepared to stay home and be content with earning only twice as much as their neighbors employed in the public sector, or three to five-fold more than the minimum subsistence level, i.e. about 20,000–25,000 rubles. Actually, many *otkhodniks* make twice as much as they aim for and generally three to four times more than they would have earned at home. These people—active and efficient workers that rely primarily and exclusively on themselves—have rather modest needs, which they more than satisfy by their own achievements. This constitutes a fundamental difference between *otkhodniks* and many of their neighbors who are engaged mainly in the public sector or do nothing themselves to secure a job—such people's expectations are higher than their capabilities and actual economic performance. In all local communities there are those

who seek and find ways to make a decent living, and those who have no other wish or intention than to "take". Local communities are split along this line.

Due to their earnings, *otkhodniks* feel themselves wealthier than their neighbors, and this shows in their everyday life. They spend their income on just a few important items: education of their children, including secondary or higher vocational education; household improvements, including vehicles; and family leisure and vacations. Their short-term objective is the well-being and decent existence for the family; and the long-term goal is the future of their children.

Among contemporary *otkhodniks*, men are an absolute majority only in the regions where *otkhodnichestvo* is a traditional way of life—in the north of European Russia and in the Urals and Siberia. In the central and southern regions of the country, women engage in *otkhodnichestvo* on the same level as men. This fact is also not new—in the Russian Empire, the share of women engaged in temporary non-agricultural peasant labor migration (*otkhod*) in the southern and central provinces was also significant. We believe that the availability of a special type of resources, which the local population can utilize themselves, underlies such sustainable regional differences in the gender breakdown of *otkhodniks*. Such resources include forests, wild-growing herbs, berries and mushrooms, as well as water resources that are abundant in the north and east of Russia. Mainly men are engaged in their development, and they form the majority of classical *otkhodniks* who deliver competitive processed goods to the outside market.

A significant difference between the contemporary and former *otkhodnik* is age: if previously, children and teenagers held a very high share, the *otkhodnik* of today is usually older than 25. Actually, the majority of contemporary *otkhodniks*, both men and women, are middle-aged and older. The reasons for such differences lie primarily in the special status of contemporary youth and the late age when they start a family; it is the need to provide for the family that drives a person to leave home and become an *otkhodnik*.

The sociological portrait of a typical *otkhodnik* is as follows: a healthy middle-aged man, well socialized, a highly motivated worker, unpretentious in everyday life, and resistant to problems. He is sociable, intelligent, has a good sense of humor, drinks little, and has a positive attitude to life. He is married, has several children, appreciates and loves his wife. He provides for himself and his family on his own. The *otkhodnik* has a higher living standard than his neighbor, who is not an *otkhodnik*. His house stands out as it is sturdy, well built and demonstrates certain adopted urban trends. Farming is small-scale and limited to a kitchen garden. The *otkhodnik* does not alienate himself from the local community, maintains all family

and friendly relations, and is prepared to help. He enjoys the respect of fellow townsfolk or villagers. He rarely participates or does not participate at all in the political, social and cultural life of his community.

We applied different methods to estimate the population of Russian *otkhodniki*, and came to the conclusion that they constitute no less than 10–15 million, or maybe even 20 million families. This means that estimated roughly, one quarter to one third of all Russian families are the families of *otkhodniki*. Currently, from 10%-15% to 50%-80% of able-bodied inhabitants of Russian small towns and rural areas make a living far from home and they usually find sources of income themselves.

The mobility of the economically active population in the Russian province is astounding in scale. However, this mobility remains concealed and imperceptible for official economic statistics. *Otkhodniki* are not recorded by government statistics. Neither are they registered in municipal reports. Most *otkhodniki* find jobs through acquaintances rather than through official information channels or public employment centers. The overwhelming majority of *otkhodniki* are either informally self-employed or informally employed. They pay no taxes. Therefore, for the economy they are non-existent.

The *otkhodniki* work far away from the places of their permanent residence (where they are registered) and are often absent from home. At the same time, they are not registered at places of their temporary residence and usually work informally. As a result, the *otkhodniki* drop out of social government programs and do not benefit from the mandatory public service package provided to all citizens. The *otkhodniki* practically do not resort to free public health care services, as they are never sick. Moreover, they cannot afford to be sick either at work, or at home. Contemporary *otkhodnichestvo* is little or not related with the other attribute of a welfare state—the national vocational training system. Few *otkhodniki* find jobs in line with their educational background. Since most *otkhodniki* work informally and pay no taxes, they perfectly well realize that they are not entitled to any pension benefits. Therefore, we have to conclude that the *otkhodniki* are virtually excluded from the welfare state. Thus, it is only logical that these people are not registered in the economy and pay no taxes. In their majority, they appear to exist apart from the state.

Since the *otkhodniki* practically do not participate in local social life and are actually non-existent for the local economy, they also escape the attention of municipal authorities. Moreover, they are beyond the scope of their interest. Nowhere and in no way do the municipal authorities engage with the *otkhodniki*; usually, the authorities are not even aware of them. In their activities, municipal bodies, just as government organizations, target primarily or exclusively people receiving income

from public sources, i.e. members of the local community represented by pensioners, public-sector employees and those in need of support and custody. In the meantime, economically this is the least active part of any local community, whereas the *otkhodniks* and local business people are its most active and entrepreneurial part. However, neither the municipal, nor the government authorities interact with them or consider them as participants of political actions. This category of active residents does not seem to exist within the competence of the authorities. In the existing type of relations with the public authorities, the phenomenon of *otkhodnichestvo* demonstrates the current stage of engagement between the state and its subjects, which is traditional for Russia—avoid control by fleeing to the outskirts of the empire. Nowadays, it is flight to the shadow niches of the economy, which have escaped the attention of the authorities.

We realize the limited nature of our observations of contemporary *otkhodnichestvo*. We recognize the diversity of *otkhodnik* activities and the involvement of very different categories of the population in them. We understand the challenges and importance that *otkhodnichestvo* has both for the local and national economy; and we sense the unpredictable political implications that the differentiated approach of the State to various (by potential and vital activity) categories of its citizens can have. Therefore, we tried to abstain from irresponsible scientific forecasts or social science predictions.

We focused on the phenomenological sociological analysis of a phenomenon widespread in our society. For whatever reasons, it remained undetected by the public, by economists and sociologists, and even by the State. We believe the generalizations to be reasonable and hope they will urge our colleagues to perform a more in-depth analysis of this both dramatic and remarkable phenomenon of Russian economic and social life.



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