The Phenomenon of the ‘Soviet Hereditary Worker’: From Asseveration of Social Class Purity to Workers’ Dynasty

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Introduction

One of the aspects of the social changes in post-revolutionary Russia was the restructuring of the social stratification order. Old estates and social hierarchies were overturned. The destruction of the pre-revolution pyramid of social strata and the creation of a new one were officially based on a Marxist-Leninist terminology of classes. Nevertheless, the criterion of social background became the strongest in the definition of one’s class. According to such a criterion, large numbers of people found themselves stigmatized as ‘social aliens’ in the new society. On the other hand, ‘hereditary workers’ - workers whose ancestors were also workers, being truly proletarian in the Marxist sense, got key positions and, accordingly, a wide range of rights in the Bolshevik stratificatory system. Thus, a labour aristocracy replaced a tsarist aristocracy equally based on the criterion of origin.

Although the ‘hereditary worker’ kept his elite position within the industrial working class throughout the Soviet period, the social representation and functions of this group of workers were historically changing in official Soviet discourse. Generally, the hereditary worker followed a clear trajectory in Soviet discourse.

During the post-revolutionary period, until the late 1920s, the presence of a large number of hereditary industrial workers was regarded as a condition of the class purity of the revolutionary proletariat. With the beginning of Soviet industrialization in 1928 and the proclamation of the Soviet factory as a ‘Bolshevik fortress’, hereditary workers began to be linked with a particular factory. In this way the abstract hereditary worker was transformed into the representative of the so-called ‘workers’’ or ‘labour dynasties’. During the Stalinist period workers’ dynasties were supposed to be the social mechanism for the increasing and reproduction of the Soviet labour working class. Besides, the occupational inheritance within a family presupposed an increase in productivity and professionalism within the factory. In the post-Stalinist and late-Soviet period the official distinguishing and support of workers’ dynasties as a ‘working aristocracy’ can be shown to be one of the Soviet labour rituals. As Christel Lane notes, the usage of the term ‘dynasty’ in Soviet industrial language meant ‘the
Soviet worker occupied as high and honored a social position as the highest nobility in czarist Russia did’.\(^1\) This ritual used to be one of the elements of factory labour and family policy, a condition of the younger generation’s upbringing ‘in the spirit of revolution and the labour traditions of the Soviet working class’.

The official nomination of the workers’ dynasty representatives as ‘the best people in the factory’ created some individual and family strategies within an enterprise. Particularly, in those conditions where the factory was almost the only source of social support, this group of workers had privileged access to a host of social and economic benefits. Besides, belonging to the factory dynasty proved a strong channel of vertical social mobility within the enterprise.

This paper is aimed at highlighting the Soviet discursive strategies for constructing one of the elite strata of the industrial working class – the representatives of the workers’ dynasties. The analysis is focused on the social functions that the so-called ‘workers’ dynasties’ performed to encourage the popularity of the regime. Moreover, I am emphasizing the problems hereditary workers met in performing their role as the ‘best people’.

*Industrial Hereditary Workers in the Official Ideology of Post-Revolutionary Russia*

**Revolutionary Vanguard**

The main intention of the Bolsheviks’ development of the state was general social change. The popular revolutionary slogan, ‘We’ll build our world, the new world’ (in the words of *The Internationale*) presupposed the deepest and most rapid transformations of all aspects of post-revolutionary Russian life. In terms of social mobility these transformations involved increasing social mobility processes, both upwards and downwards, so that they took place with comparative ease.

A high level of social mobility as a feature of a mature and egalitarian society, where everyone’s advancement is guaranteed, statistically characterized the social structure throughout the Soviet period. There was only one social group or social stratum in Soviet Russia, whose members’ upward mobility or any other status change would not have met with official approval i.e. the group consisting of hereditary industrial workers. At first sight the idea of inheriting a job or occupational inheritance within a family seems to contradict the idea of freedom of choice and self-expression supported by the Soviet regime. As one of the researchers of St.Petersburg’s industrial workers in the early 19th century justly argues, ‘the

existence of hereditary, or second-generation workers was often associated with traditionalism and backwardness rather than progress and change’. Why then did the Soviet regime need this group of people? What was the trajectory of its historical migration in Soviet society?

Stephen Kotkin in one of his most recent articles concludes that ‘ironically, the social historians who defined October as a “workers’ revolution” were correct - not because workers made or participated in it, but because, following that revolution, categories of class, above all the working class and working class consciousness, were institutionalized’.

Indeed, the regime that described itself as a ‘dictatorship of proletariat’ needed to bring to rebirth its own creator.

The first sketch of the creator’s portrait was made in the programme of the Russian Communist Bolshevik Party at its 8th Party Congress. One of the points of the programme defined ‘the leading revolutionary role of the city industrial proletariat as the most concentrated, united, educated, and struggle-hardened part of the working masses’.

Although theoretically an industrial working class was constructed, there is no convincing evidence of its great size or of its coordinated political actions. The peasantry made up four-fifths of the total Russian population. Nearly half of Soviet workers were unskilled or semi-skilled operatives even in 1926. Sheila Fitzpatrick in her Everyday Stalinism shows that ‘even the industrial working class, the Bolsheviks’ pride and joy, fell apart during the Civil War as workers returned to their native villages or went away to serve in the Red Army’.

She distinguishes two main reasons for the decrease in the size of the industrial working class: property expropriation and general post-revolutionary chaos.

In the first place, the revolution deconstructed its own class premises by expropriating the property of capitalists and landowners and forming factory workers into revolutionary cadres. In the second place, the turmoil attendant upon revolution and civil war led to a breakdown of industry and a flight from the cities that... temporarily wiped out the Russian industrial working class as a coherent social group.

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7 Fitzpatrick, Sheila, Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia, in the Journal of
Modern sociologists and social historians have distinguished two possible ways that were available to recreate the missing post-revolutionary industrial working class. The first way was to make use of the old industrial working class which existed before the Revolution. Under such a policy the main indicator of belonging to a particular class was to be one’s parents’ social status. The Bolsheviks were too anxious about the class purity of the proletariat.\(^8\) Aiming at the proletarianization of Russia they esteemed ‘preemsvennost’, or occupational heredity, as a crucial measure for achieving their ends. The pure proletarian was, above all, a worker with the ‘right background’. To the extent that the Russian proletariat included hereditary workers – who had been expected to be rational, disciplined, class-conscious, and urbanized for a generation or more – the revolution gained in legitimacy as a popular transformation of Russian society. The hereditary worker was represented as an absolute master of the state, a member of revolutionary elite as a result of the disqualification of all pre-revolution social strata, including the peasants who were devoid of revolutionary potential, being undisciplined, disoriented and still rooted in the countryside. Fitzpatrick shows that proletarian origins became a ‘trump card’ in the class ascribing game. Ascription to a class had a literal meaning: ‘class position’ was one of the new passports to success. To have a position as a worker by family origin meant survival in the post-revolutionary chaos just as, similarly, it was better to have German than Jewish origins in Nazi Germany.

The necessities of Russian economic development led to the second way of increasing the size of the working class – using the countryside as a source and seeing country workers as the source of a factory labour force. Kenneth Straus in his study *Factory and Community in Stalin’s Russia* argues that Russian workers experienced factory work and urban life through the prism of a very sharply bifurcated ‘dual’ labour market.\(^9\) He is referring to the caste style grouping of the urban labour force which postulated a dichotomy between two categories of factory workers - the newcomers (the former peasants) and the established workers (basically, the hereditary and cadre workers). The regime, concentrating on the class struggle against imaginary enemies, did not take into account the other conflict - the inevitable social tensions on the shop floor. This opposition was based on the cultural and income gap between an experienced hereditary ‘labour aristocracy’ and the former peasants.

\(^8\) Ibid. p.750.
In the social maelstrom, better paid and more highly skilled “hereditary proletarians” - long idealized in party ideology - themselves often became isolated or estranged because of cultural differences and were frequently assaulted for their ability to follow routines or meet production norms that others could not.10

Straus’s analysis of archival sources and newspapers shows that there were serious conflicts between the established workers and the newcomers during the first Five-Year Plan (1928-1932). Conflicts occurred over job assignment and distribution, training and apprenticeship, and concerning the distribution of housing.

In my view, the regime began to concentrate its policy at the factory level in order to escape this conflict, involving newcomers in the group of ‘core’ workers (including hereditary workers). The idea of joining up various groups of workers demanded the active use of the family image in factory and shop floor relationships. Here the hereditary workers’ role was substantial.

A Small Family in a Larger One

Bolsheviks declared the factory to be a special unit long before they declared that the family was a cell of society. In so far as post-revolutionary workers were expected to be politically active, ‘not a territorial district, but a production unit (mill, factory) became an electoral unit and the main cell of the state’.11 At the end of the 1920s Stalin launched his massive industrialization campaign. In accordance with the Stalinist ideology of the first Five-Year Plan period, the Soviet factory was supposed to become a ‘Bolshevik fortress’. The metaphor of the ‘fortress’ as a safe and stable place is drawing closer to the idea of the factory as a family or an urban factory-community. Along with such a feeling of safety came the wide set of social benefits provided by the Soviet factory. On the analogy of the contemporary welfare state the Soviet factory could be defined, to a certain extent, as a ‘welfare factory’. The average large enterprise provided housing, rest and leisure facilities such as ‘palaces of culture’, sanatoria, holiday resorts and pioneer camps for children, kindergartens, prophylactic health care facilities (sometimes along with local health care facilities), allotments, access to a variety of goods in short supply etc.

11 Programma possiiskoi kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov), p.415.
Despite the image of the Soviet Union as a gigantic labour camp, the locus of the social integration of the Soviet worker was the primary working group, normally the shop, section or department. Moreover, the British specialists in industrial relations, Simon Clarke and Sarah Ashwin, empirically prove that the Russian workers supported the model of family relations at the factory, and demonstrated an outstanding devotion to it throughout the Soviet period.

*The workplace was the principal locus of social integration within the Soviet system and Party policy was directed towards encouraging people to remain in the workplace... This policy was reflected in the subjective orientation of workers, which was based on the ideal of a job for life, of the workplace as the “second home”. The ideal work history for a Soviet worker was to find a suitable place of work and then to stay there for the rest of his or her working life, making a career by moving from job to job within the same enterprise...* 12

*Interviews with workers reveal that, though they may not have accorded to ‘the collective’ precisely the same significance as the authorities did, they too felt attached to the labour collective and their immediate work collectives. For example, the sense of common endeavour fostered by attempts to meet the plan is often referred to by workers, as is the importance of their workplace as a community, or “second family”.* 13

The intensification of a collective sense of unity and the way the authorities sought to promote ‘the twin virtues of patriotism and productivity’ 14 unavoidably was related to a stern proletarian labour discipline. This question of proletarian labour discipline is worth further examination beyond this paper. The American sociologist Timothy Luke tends to compare the proletarian labour ethic to Weber’s Protestant ethic, and the roles of class and class-derived value codes in the development of an industrial work ethic in the USSR to those in Western European capitalism. 15 Socialist labour, as depicted by Lenin, was to be gratuitous and self-motivated:

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It is labour performed without expectation of reward, without reward as a condition, labour performed because it has become a habit to work for the common good.  

Obviously, factory authorities needed the stratum of workers who would show their loyalty and commitment over a long period of time; who would make the factory their ‘second home’; who would take pride in the work and achievements of their brigade or their shop; who would regularly show initiative and ingenuity in overcoming production problems; who would always be ready to stay after work or to come in on their day off to help to achieve the plan. The great demand for such a category of workers made the hereditary worker’s presence in a certain factory very important. Thus, the figure of the dynastic worker occupying a key position in a particular enterprise, replaced the figure of the abstract hereditary worker in the official Soviet discourse. A workers’ dynasty signifies several generations of workers from the same family working at the same factory.

I suppose that basically, the special role of the workers’ dynasties was accentuated by the special need to form a Soviet factory labour culture and correlated labour traditions. The two main fundamentals of factory labour - high productivity and self-discipline - provided by a wide range of the labour aristocracy (stakhanovites, shock-workers, socialist competition winners), needed to become established in labour traditions seen as a continuation of revolutionary traditions. Traditional models of attitude and behaviour become established in a community if they were transmitted across generations. Multigenerational workers’ families appeared to provide an ideal pattern for the reproduction of Soviet workers’ values, helping to avert the development of a generation gap.

The shift from peasant in-migration to a self-reproducing urban working class did not occur until the mid-1930s, as the seminal study by M. Sonin shows.  

This was a fundamental break in Russian and Soviet history and in the history of working-class formation, since it marked, in Sonin’s demographic terms, the end of the dual labour market and the first stage in the integration of the caste-like grouping of urban labour aristocrats. The demarcation point was the first Five-Year Plan and the drive towards industrialization and collectivization.

Officially promoted as well as voluntary migration processes resulted in the committed upward mobility of huge masses of people, so that they could pass on their

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‘higher’ position to their children. The following words of a worker – a workers’ dynasty founder’s son - talking about his father, make this idea clear.

All people were on the move in those days [the 1930s]; they were striving to live in a city, for knowledge. He was striving for knowledge, for light as well. He had moved. They had six children in the family. Why should he stay there [in the village]? He moved to Svir’ stroi.\textsuperscript{18} They were hiring builders at that particular time.

In the early 1930s a Soviet factory still lacked any stability in labour resources, any order and traditions. In order to overcome these problems the Central Committee of the Communist Party initiated in particular the publication in 1931 of the book series \textit{Histories of Factories and Mills} in which the topic of workers’ dynasties also featured. The members of workers’ dynasties earned their fame in each enterprise, being identified as pure proletarians, the descendants of former revolutionaries. Stephen Kotkin demonstrates this idea with an example from Magnitogorsk:

\textit{For a Soviet worker, reporting on one’s work history became an important ritual in defining oneself before others, and among the most important details of one’s work history was the time and place of one’s original work experience. It was not uncommon for workers to trade boasts about who started work at the youngest age: fifteen, twelve, and so on. Extra value was attached to that initial experience if it had been gained in industry, especially in one of the older and better-known industrial enterprises such as Putolov (renamed Kirov) in Leningrad or Gujon (renamed Serp i Molot) in Moscow. The ultimate boast was when one could trace one’s lineage back to a family of workers: father, grandfather, great-grandfather. Such was the proud background of Pavel Korobov, a blast furnace apprentice, who was descended from a “dynasty of blast furnace operators” who catapulted to a Magnitogorsk factory directorship during the dizzying social mobility of 1937.}\textsuperscript{19}

Obviously, such a worker could transmit to his/her children not only professional skills, but common moral qualities as well. In fact, this family upbringing nourished some kind of feeling of community among the factory workers and the local populace, and helped

\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Svir’} river is one of the waterways in \textit{Leningradskaja oblast’} (region), connecting \textit{Ladozhskoe} and \textit{Onegskoe} lakes. \textit{Svir’stroj} is one of the great Soviet creations of the first Five-Year Plan.

to construct the factory-family. Hereditary workers reinforced all the main labour virtues - high productivity (by transmitting labour attitudes within the family); self-discipline (induced by the control of relatives: ‘Actually relatives can tell you more than other people’); local patriotism (a factory was a small motherland, a common house, a place where everyone was familiar to everybody else). Meanwhile, members of workers’ dynasties had an almost official duty - the upbringing and training of newcomers, the younger workers or even schoolchildren who improved their working skills at a particular factory.

The Post-Stalinist Era: Workers’ Dynasties in Public Discourse

The post-Stalinist era – the Khrushchev and, especially, the Brezhnev reigns – is a good period in which to study workers’ dynasties. The main tendency in the relationship of the state and the workers was the flourishing of the workers’ dynasty theme in the official discourse. In my opinion, there were some objective reasons for the intensification of emphasis on this theme.

The inevitable process of the self-reproduction of the Soviet working class began to take on a new momentum in the late 1930s, and reached its highest level in the 60s and 70s, as the data from various surveys indicate\(^\text{20}\).

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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Indices of Hereditization, Various Soviet Cities (in percentages)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hereditary Workers</td>
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<td><strong>1960s</strong></td>
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<td>Taganrog</td>
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<td>Sverdlovsk</td>
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<td>Kazan</td>
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<td>Leningrad</td>
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<td>Lithuania (Zhalgiris Factory)</td>
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<td>Lithuania (Kaunas Turbine Plant)</td>
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<td><strong>Late 1960s/early 1970s</strong></td>
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<td>Cheliabinsk</td>
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<td>Kirov/Kuzbass</td>
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<td>Bashkir ASSR</td>
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\(^{20}\) Connor, W. The Accidental Proletariat: Workers, Politics, and Crisis in Gorbachev’s Russia. Princeton University Press. Princeton. 1991, p.54. Generally, the surveys are focused on the registration of workers’ dynasties. It looks convincing enough, because one factory was observed in each city.
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<th>'55.8</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moscow oblast</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>24.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sverdlovsk area</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
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<td>Galich</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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### Mid to late 1970s

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<th>'55.8</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sterlitamak</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>71.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naderezhnye Chelny</td>
<td>69.1</td>
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<td>Magnitogorsk</td>
<td>70.3</td>
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<td>Elista</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>26.2</td>
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<td>Taganrog</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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### Outflow: percentage of all those of worker-origin who became workers

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<tr>
<td>Ufa (1970)</td>
<td>55.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magnitogorsk (1976)</td>
<td>72.7</td>
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<td>Kazan (1974)</td>
<td>75.3</td>
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The rate of growth of the Soviet economy had been declining since the 1960s, and by the late 1970s stagnation had set in. By the early 1960s the strategy of ‘extensive’ development, which relied on the intensive exploitation of labour and natural resources, was already reaching its limits. In terms of labour resources it meant that ‘in large cities perhaps only one fifth of the workers belonged to ... workers’ dynasties, but second-generation workers typically formed a majority among blue-collar workers even in less developed regions of the country. To this extent, the occupational working class had gained in social depth’. Furthermore, Alex Pravda points out:

Most workers’ children tried for the better-paid and more interesting skilled trades, leaving the more laborious jobs for incomers from the villages...and it is clear from Soviet evidence that most young workers followed in their fathers’ footsteps as a matter of necessity rather than choice. Blue-collar school leavers found the professional office far more attractive than the shop floor.

The statistics shows that workers’ descendants tried to escape their social stratum. Collective vertical social mobility, begun in the late 20s by leaving the countryside, had been continuing, or at least had the potential to be continued by moving higher up the social ladder.

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23 Ibid.
Presumably, workers’ children wanted to prove they could be ‘the best’ even outside the working class.

However, an extensive Soviet economy could not allow the working class to decline quantitatively and qualitatively thereby losing the resources of the workers’ dynasties. Thus, the theme of these dynasties achieved great popularity in Soviet discourse, and gave them a new life.

Above all, the regime appealed by means of art. From about the early 50s onwards, numerous novels, poems, and films on this theme became quite widespread. The best-known film was *Large Family*, shot in 1954 by Joseph Heifits. The script was prepared by Vsevolod Kochetov, the famous editor of *Oktyabr* and *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and an active promoter of the late-Soviet working class as the favoured opposition to an intelligentsia supposed to be lacking in principles and ideas. The film tells of the members of a three-generation workers’ dynasty, working at the same factory and living all together in the same house. In fact, the film is based on the following series of oppositions:

| · a blue-collar worker (a workers’ dynasty member) | · a white-collar worker (an intellectual) |
| · industrious | · lazy |
| · honest | · lying, hypocritical |
| · brave | · cowardly |
| · a good father (son, grand-son) | · lewd |
| · talented | · ordinary |
| · an active member of a collective, surrounded by friends | · far removed from collective affairs, isolated |

Similarly, such a positive exaggeration of the workers’ dynasties’ image was reflected in their general glorification within factories. Christel Lane argues that from the 1960s onwards this glorification acquired clear ritual forms.

*An extended family is turned into a Workers’ Dynasty during factory based celebrations. During such celebrations the family’s history is told with illustration and documentation. Individual members of the family talk about their life and about how they distinguished themselves in one of the fields mentioned above. Sometimes family members even act out their family history, recreating the most dramatic episodes. At the end of the evening they inscribe their names into Rolls of Honor of Workers’ Dynasties and receive some sort of certificate or*
A “dynastic” evening may also include an exhibition of some of the products made by various members of the dynasty and of “family valuables”, such as medals, orders, testimonials and prizes.24

A biography of a workers’ dynasty was the biography of the whole working class, so that the hereditary workers went beyond the limits of the factory and returned to the All-Union stage as workers’ dynasty members. For instance, in 1971 the All-Union Congress of Workers’ Dynasties took place in Donetsk (Ukraine). ‘Above all, the hereditary workers are “the best” people in the Soviet Union of the 20th century,’ declared the so-called Letter to 2018 (celebrating the centenary of the Komsomol), which was meant as a greeting to future generations of Soviet people. It reads like a statement of the collective moral will. In the late 1970s L. Brezhnev drew attention to workers’ dynasties in some of his speeches and open letters.25

The most fruitful sources depicting the regime’s expectations of workers’ dynasties are thematic books and factory newspaper articles. In these factory work is portrayed as interesting and honourable, and workers’ families as united and prosperous.26

Lychak brought up his sons in the right way. He inculcated in them the love of labour, fascinated them with the romance of the profession. Now his sons - Ivan, Gennadii and Vladimir - work side by side with him. They all are keen on their father’s occupation, it is absolutely impossible to refuse the honourable title of steel-maker’ (Kirovets, 02.06.1961. P.2)

The members of this large workers’ family have all that they could wish for. They are not worried about tomorrow; they definitely know that tomorrow they will work, build, and create in the way they do today.... Recently, Evgenii Ivanovich got a four-roomed apartment. The other members of this large and united family are prospering too (Kirovets. 12.01.1962. P.1)

The dynasties form an elite within the working collective. Belonging to a dynasty is a

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24 Lane,.The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case. p. 116.
26 Here I refer to factory newspaper articles. The newspaper Kirovets is published in the Kirov (former - Putilov) factory in St.Petersburg. It is one of the oldest enterprises in Russia. It began work on 28th February 1801. During the Soviet period it belonged to the military complex. More than 46,000 worked there until the late 1980s.
person’s ‘passport’ or ‘characteristic’. Managers at different levels who work in that factory and are in touch with dynasty members confirm their outstanding features:

*These people [the workers’ dynasty members] were proud that they belonged to a dynasty. So they worked hard in order to avoid discrediting their family. Usually they criticized each other, “Try to do your best, son!”*  
*(Secretary of the Kirov factory Party bureau 1967-76).*

For a dynasty the factory is not only a working place but also a place for the integration of the family. Dynasty representatives are regarded as the most devoted of the factory’s workers.

*I should say that it is thanks to the dynasties that our factory has continued to operate for 200 years. These people are sure that in spite of any troubles they should work and transmit their professional skills across the generations* *(Assistant to the Kirov factory personnel manager).*

Moreover, the dynasties’ representatives are the most predictable and controlled category of workers and the most conservative, as was mentioned above. According to one of the top managers at the Kirov factory, the members of the workers’ dynasties are always expected to show exemplary behaviour:

*We [the factory’s managers] always knew about these workers’ intelligence and decency. We were sure that this sort of people wouldn’t drink, steal nails and discredit their families’ reputation.*

These and other interview extracts support Simon Clarke’s claim that recruitment into the stratum of the labour aristocracy ‘was not just a matter of technical training … but also of passing through a series of filters by which the workers’ ‘moral’ and ‘ideological’ qualities were evaluated as well as their technical skills. Once recruited into this stratum a worker was relatively secure so long as he or she continued to toe the line.’

Emphasizing the moral qualities of workers’ dynasties’ representatives allowed the authorities to realize the idea of a socialist youth upbringing more effectively. The key point

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in such a socialist programme for bringing up the young was the interrelating of family, school and factory. The workers’ dynasty was expected to make family and labour values complementary.

*The labour family dynasty helps its younger members and exercises control over them both at the working place and beyond it. Thus any younger worker being subjected to this system of educating and upbringing is a member of a united family, of a labour collective and of the whole of society. This is a complex approach to the bringing up of youth that combines political, labour and moral elements.*

Although such an approach was mainly focused on occupational inheritance within the family, different members of labour dynasties could be on any rung of the occupational ladder. Whatever height they had reached, such families did not lose their dynastic status. On the contrary, such dynasties were themselves considered examples of high social achievement, involving the acquiring of higher forms of education:

*The occupations of the Soviet workers’ dynasties’ representatives are extremely varied. They may be workers or technicians, engineers or economists, construction workers, canteen or sanatorium workers, teachers, etc.*

Besides, belonging to a factory dynasty was the strong channel of vertical social mobility within the enterprise. In Alex Pravda’s opinion, ‘continuing the family tradition... may mean to many workers following their parents’ example in climbing the social-occupational ladder’. The British researchers D. Lane and F. O’Dell outline the pattern of a characteristic factory career chain:

Metalworker — brigade-leader — technician — construction engineer ... master-craftsman — shift leader — deputy workshop foreman — workshop foreman ... departmental deputy-head — department head — deputy chief engineer...

I suppose that workers aimed at upward mobility but the process was masked by the label of belonging to a workers’ dynasty. It was the only way to keep a wide range of social

29 Ruch’eva, T, Estafeta Truda, in Rabochie Dinastii, Moscow, Moskovskii Rabochii, 1975, p.56.
30 Pravda, Is there a Soviet Working Class?, p. 17.
benefits and moral rewards, and to change the type of work at the same time. Upward mobility of workers was more or less approved of only if it took place within one enterprise. Anything else destroyed the stability of the collective.

Propaganda about “the happiness of pursuing different ways”, “the romantic appeal of the restless” leads to a high degree of youth migration and to the early leaving of the family, actions that all result in the destabilization of young labour resources as well as in various forms of deviant and antisocial behaviour. As a rule, a child’s moving to another city means a crucial decreasing of the parents’ responsibility.\(^{32}\)

Paradoxically, the immobility of family members is described as being a characteristic of a family’s social maturity. Basically, the responsibility for the family members’ behaviour and their ability to influence other factory workers in a positive way were the main informal duties of the dynasties. Yet the interviews with workers reveal that though they were treated as ‘an ideal’ and ‘the best’ they felt themselves to be simply ordinary people and these extra duties were an impossible burden on them.

For instance, opening up family life to the public gaze was regarded as an infringement of privacy. As the wife of a Kirov dynasty member complains,

\begin{quote}
At first, when I entered the factory, workers frequently asked me, “Where is Alexandr Mihailovich now?” I answered, “Don’t ask me. I’m only his wife at home. Find him yourself. Here is the shop superintendent’s secretary. Don’t come to me”.
\end{quote}

However, the function of bringing up children was a much more difficult responsibility and the representatives of workers’ dynasties who discharged these obligations were rarely competent in the pedagogical field. One of the founders of a dynasty, aged 78, told how when he worked as the shop superintendent’s assistant he had to teach other workers ‘how to conduct their lives’:

\begin{quote}
One day one worker’s daughter came to me and complained that her father had sold the present she had got for completing school, and had drunk all the money. I sent for her father
\end{quote}

and talked to him rather severely. I said something like, “I wish you were dead instead”. Next day he committed suicide. In no way can I forgive myself. It seems as if I took his life.

These and the other quotations show that, as a matter of fact, the representatives of workers’ dynasties felt themselves ordinary people forced to solve the problems of other factory workers.

**Conclusion**

Officially defined as ‘class’ in the Marxist sense, social class in the Soviet context described the range of rights and obligations of different groups and citizens in their relationship to the state. The regime began to acquire a ‘social base among certain segments of the working class’.  

Each society needs exemplary people whose behaviour follows formal rules, and who discipline others in informal ways. With this aim Soviet society, as a ‘proletarian society’, created a labour aristocracy, relatively conservative in terms of its unvarying life values and life style and passing them on through the generations.

It appears that the workers’ dynasty became the universal mechanism for reproducing the Soviet working class ideologically and numerically both in the age of industrial development (the first Five-Year Plan period), and in the era of economic stagnation (the 70s and 80s). Certainly, the existence of workers’ dynasties throughout almost the whole of the Soviet period was needed to demonstrate the stability of the system. They proved over and over again that the regime was firmly based and long-lasting. In other words, in Soviet discourse these families symbolized the supposed eternity of the regime: dynasties exist (ancestors), they are working at a factory (those of the present generation) and will do so in the future (descendants).

At the factory level, the nomination of the members of one family as ‘the best’ people in the factory provided the labour force with a model – highly qualified, self-disciplined and familiar to the other workers. This cohort of workers should not be compared with the other elite groups – the stakhanovites, the shock-workers, etc. These latter groups were defined by their extremely high levels of productivity. The dynastic workers on the other hand were more likely to be singled out for their ‘moral’ qualities.

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To a greater or lesser extent, the representatives of workers’ dynasties were emotionally involved in the work process and factory community. Their patterns of behaviour were, to a certain extent, related to blood. They could always get more than other groups of workers but at the same time they also had more to lose, a point likely to be of use in Soviet factory policy. It is likely also to be the reason for the preservation of this cohort of workers throughout the Soviet period, and indeed why it continues its existence in the Russian factory of the 21st century.
Bibliography


