

Life at the Ludwig Rabeneck factory at Shchelkovo 1905-1925

Memoirs of K.A.Filaretov¹

Konstantin Alekseyvich Filaretov's memoir is mostly about the history of the city of Shchelkovo and life in the Rabeneck Shchelkovo cotton mill in the early twentieth century. Written in simple, lively language, the author's memoirs contain much fascinating detail and accounts of events to which he was a direct witness. Written around 1969, Filaretov's work was not published. The text has recently been edited by Alexander Poslykhalin, divided into 10 chapters for ease of reading, and issued in 5 episodes of 2 chapters each on the Trojza Blog: <https://trojza.blogspot.com> The publication is illustrated with photographs from the archives of the Shchelkovo Museum of History and Local Lore, digitized at the end of 2016. Published for the first time in 2017.



K.A.Filaretov – author of memoirs, member of CPSU since January 1, 2025

Part 1. Youth at the factory of L. Rabeneck, and the strike of 1905.

Brief historical background: Before the revolution, the Ludwig Rabeneck Cotton Mill was one of the largest industrial complexes in Russia, specializing in the production and dyeing of cotton fabrics. The original “Old” factory opened in 1833, while the “New” factory was built in 1900. The plant also included a chemical plant, in (1873-1898) producing the chemical dye alizarin, and from 1894 switching to the production of sulfuric acid. In 1879 all three factories were made part of a joint-stock company "Ludwig Rabeneck Manufacturing Partnership". After the 1917 Revolution the entire production complex was nationalized by

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Decree of the Supreme Economic Council, December 1918. For a long time, the production site was known as the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo Factory. In 1929 it was renamed “Cotton Mill”. From 1959 to 1965, extensive work continued to introduce new production equipment and technologies. Further modernisation continued until 1975 because the plant was considered to be of national rather than local significance. In 1975, the plant was re-named after M.I. Kalinin, and from 1992 to 2004, OJSC Slavia Textiles. The fabrics produced, in a wide range of colours and patterns, have remained in demand for decades, both in the USSR and abroad, frequently receiving recognition at international exhibitions.

Chapter I: Youth under capitalist conditions at the factory of Ludwig Rabeneck

The February Revolution of 1917 was greeted enthusiastically by the young people at our factory, as well as the adult workers. Everyone went to a rally convened by the workers A.P. Pustov and N.I. Asonychev, who ran around the factory floors, shouting: “stop the machines”, “go out into the yard for a rally”, “Revolution!” I was 12 or 13 then, but I had already experienced all the hardships of the capitalist system and learned about exploitation and discipline at the Rabeneck factory. Oppression, arbitrariness, bullying and lack of rights. The young people at the factory actively participated in public life, joining in the struggle for power in the Shchelkovo district. During the February Revolution of 1917, most workers at the factory were women, teenagers, young boys and girls. But everyone, especially those 16 or 17 years old, had already gone through the harsh school of life in the factory, having already worked for 6 or 7 years in production. They already had a clear idea of their future under capitalism and well understood from the outset the sort of deliverance a revolution could bring them, the main thing being freedom.



Metalworking shop of the L.Rabeneck factory, before 1917

Young people opposed slavery, and there was no other way to describe the life of young people under those working conditions and discipline. When talking about the organization and history of the Komsomol,² it is necessary to consider a number of circumstances that influenced

² Komsomol. or the ‘All-Union Leninist Young Communist League’ was a political youth organisation established in 1918, known as the youth division of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

the behavior of young people, why from the first days of the revolution they followed the calls of the Bolshevik Party.

At the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo factory, even before the revolution of 1917, young workers took part in many events, especially the Revolution of 1905, expressing their resistance to the existing capitalist system of the manufacturer Rabeneck. Later, in 1917, these same young workers actively participated in the February and October revolutions.³ They were led by active Bolsheviks A. Pustov and I. Chursin, among others. Between 1905 and 1917 harsh working conditions forced young people to become active, to be demanding and persistent, as well as courageous, in opposing the tsarist regime together with adult workers.

What were the working conditions for young workers really like before the 1917 revolution at the Rabeneck factory? Textile factory owners were happy to take on women, teenagers and minors. Women did the same work as men, for 50–60% of a man's earnings, and a teenager who worked 10–12 hours like an adult, and sometimes performed physically harder work than an adult, received just pennies, 20–25 % of the salary of an adult worker, about 20 - 25 kopecks a day.

In the textile factories of the Shchelkovo district there were several factory schools for the children of employees and workers.⁴ But as far as I recall, rarely did any of the factory children graduate from school, reaching the 5th grade which was the law. They'd be put to work after just three or four grades; the factory didn't need literate workers, only physically healthy workers. Fortunately, I learned to read in spite of this. The schools were supplying the owners with free labour. The workers didn't choose to send their children to the factory, but they couldn't live on their earnings, especially when there were 5-6 children in the family: they were pleased for them to have any job. They'd even beg the master to take their children. And should a girl object, "Please let me go to school to study," the mother will answer, "Who is going to feed and dress you? You only need 3 classes to marry a manager, but a carter or a mechanic will marry you with even less." That's what the parents thought.

Workers go to their shift and talk to each other:

- My Petka was hired.
- I'm surprised they took him, he doesn't look 11 years old?
- But he's tall, he grew this year. Let him work, he'll make money for food. It's OK. Why stay in school? You don't need an education to weave cotton competently. So, at the age of 11 they all become factory workers.

In textile factories, there were several rather fiddly jobs, where it was impossible to place an adult worker, but a teenager would do the work for less pay. You'd pay more for an adult, but the result is the same as a teenager, and a teenager does it for 25 - 30 kopecks a day. These specialist jobs for young workers were known about: the youngest were boiler cleaners, sweepers, lacemakers, weavers, car cleaners, lint and dirt pickers, menders, sizers and all kinds of apprentices. An adult worker can't crawl under and between the machines, but a teenager can bend over backwards and be in the dust all day. They get covered in oil, unable to breathe, but they don't complain. What's a boy going to say - he's pleased to be in work, but if he asks to go home, they might not rehire him, and if you don't work, you'll die of hunger.

³ including N. M. Asonychev, E. N. Smirenskaya, T. Obedkov, Monin, I. F. Andreev and others.

⁴ Rabeneck, Chetverikov, Sinitsyn, Fryanovo, Zalogin.

In a spinning factory a spinning machine operator is considered an easy job. But neither the parents, nor the mill-owner, when sending children to the factory, considered that this work involved a lot of stress and was very tiring. In a stuffy, dusty room with no ventilation, the work of a teenager or a young worker was calculated minute by minute over a 10-11 hour working day.

Occasionally, during the working day there would be a break of several minutes between shifts. The machine minder had to run and get a drink from the cold-water tap. There were no breaks to eat a piece of bread and water – which is not good. Having removed the shuttle and filled a canvas bag with bobbins of yarn, with the bag hanging around his neck like a collar all day, the teenager runs to the basket, empties the bobbins, and sets off with a metal box under his arm, running to the storage shed to collect new bobbins. Some of the storage sheds were located on the opposite side of the building; you had to run through the entire area. Before you have time to pick up the bobbins, the supervisor is already shouting hurry up, the pick-up is coming! Once again you must run to the spinning machine. And so on, all day: hurry, hurry!

Or again, in the warehouse of the dyeing and finishing factory, many teenagers worked as product measurers. They were positioned next to a wooden machine on which the finished goods were spread out to be measured. From the outside looking in, it seemed as if there was no physical activity. But inside, the teenage worker rushes about all day in front of the measuring machine from left to right, like a shuttle, fixing the selvedge of the fabric onto the needles of edge strips, fingering them like an accordion player, and often walking around with cut hands. Before the measuring man has time to measure out 40 - 80 meters, the warehouseman is already waiting. He's on piecework and has to hurry. I had a warehouseman, Nikolai Asonychev, for whom I used to measure goods. Sometimes I couldn't keep up with him, he would just say that he was tired, and even smile good-naturedly, no anger, no threats. But there were some who, if the measurer got behind, would hit him on the backside with a yardstick to make him work faster.

Or, teenagers controlling the movement of goods to the dyers in a semi-basement, damp room, in semi-darkness, stuffiness, the air is saturated with smoke, sitting like a mole underground.

Or, in bleaching shops before the revolution, you could see teenage girls regulating the passage of goods after they had been bleached in boilers and laid out in concrete pits. Before they were moved on to further processing they were spread out in concrete pits. Imagine a 11-12 year old girl in a summer dress, with slippers or shoes knitted from old waste laces, standing on the wet goods, straightening them with a stick all day long, so that there is no delay. Nowadays in factories, bleaching uses automatic spreaders that guide fabrics. But in the old days, as the quantity of fabric decreased, the teenage girl sunk lower and lower into the concrete pit, until she becomes invisible. And she stands there all day, sees no other people, the light of the sun, all alone into the twilight. She's standing on wet goods soaked in chlorine, a teenager breathing acids and fumes. Her clothes become saturated with acids and become damp and wet. When I get home from that sort of work, I have to dry my clothes and shoes on the radiator.

And tomorrow it will be the same again. The results are most brutal. Even after a short period of time leg and arm joints become sore, and the fingers become crooked. A young teenager becomes quickly disabled.

For many years at a number of textile factories, including Rabeneck, dyed goods, yarn and material, were washed in the Klyazma River on specially built wooden rafts. Adults and young

teenagers did this work in the heat of the summer or in the cold rainy fall weather, wearing torn, light clothes and boots with holes. The owner didn't provide special shoes or clothes. So, in winter during severe frosts and snowstorms, your legs became numb from the cold water and the soles of your boots froze to the boards of the raft. Teenagers worked together with adult workers. And if you got sick and didn't show up for work, you might be fired. I eventually started to get sick and was told I was no longer needed.

That's how things were. A mother comes to the factory gate and bowing asks every passing master or head of department: "Master, please give me some work, do me a favour." "Okay, we need someone to work in the dye boiler."



"Green" gates of the L. Rabeneck factory at Shchelkovo, early 20C

The dyeing shop in those years was a terrible place, hard labour for teenagers. Concrete floors with specially punched holes for drainage, from which came an eternal stench and cold, or rotten wooden boards with large cracks for rinsing water and dye after the yarn or fabric left the washing tanks. Water flows over the floor all day long, and my feet are damp. On the walls at a certain height there are tanks where the dyes are boiled, and teenagers drag around bags with dyestuff, heavy buckets, bottles full of acid, etc. All the dirty work is done by teenagers, anything associated with danger of injury, etc. Ready-made dyes are delivered in buckets on special carts to the dyeing boats and printing machines. It is impossible to actually learn any skills, or to acquire knowledge. The master keeps the secrets of cooking the dyes, measuring quantities, types to use, etc. He looks at his little book like a sorcerer and does everything to avoid sharing his knowledge or teaching anyone.

All day long young teenagers breathe in gases from dyes and acids. At the factory, walking through the workshop, whenever one sees a cart bearing buckets of dye approaching, pulled by a teenager, one should run off to the side as quickly as possible, in case the cart or the carrier himself hits you. You can't wash off the dyes. And the teenager wears these clothes all day long. Nowadays, dyeing factories have automatic stations installed supplying dyes directly to machines.

Those are the sort of jobs teenagers did in textile factories, so we young workers from the age of 11 years old had to work hard to earn our bread. Long hours and meagre pay, plus cursing and slaps on the head. All mothers and parents dreamed of getting their son a job as a mechanic

or turner. They would take you to the workshops to meet acquaintances. You couldn't be taken on without an acquaintance, but if you got a job in a mechanical workshop, you'd do cleaning for a year or a year and a half: sweeping, hauling metal shavings from lathes to the dump, you'd have to wait to be put on a machine. Children of staff members might be taken into the office. So, by the age of 17-18, a factory worker knew about factory procedures and the attitude of the owner towards the workers, as well as his faithful servants: tradesmen, foremen, heads of departments, managers. That is how young workers quickly understood and realized, after the revolution of 1905, that they had to support the Bolsheviks, they must really support the Soviet government as a true worker government, bringing freedom to the workers. Nowadays, no one thinks about whose land he walks on, who owns the park, the garden, the pond, or whose club it is, why it was impossible for a working person to visit such places before the February Revolution of 1917.

Back then, you took your hat off to the manager, you told the truth to the foreman, and you defended your dignity as a worker, but if you got into an argument with your boss - you'd be fired and evicted from your apartment. Yes, life was hard for adult workers, but it was no less hard for teenagers. Young teenagers got up to work at 4 a.m., just like adults. I was roused by a beater, and if you lived in the villages of Khotovo or Zhegalovo, you'd have to get up even earlier, at 3 in the morning. Many workers, in their own minds, understood how difficult and joyless the life of a working person was, in what a pitiful position their master and the capitalist system had placed them. A mother would bring her child, daughter or son, to the factory, lead him by the hand with fear and anxiety on the first day of work, trying to instil in him: "Listen, try to work, don't mess up." The teenagers went to the factory cheerfully when they were hired, but their childhood was already ending, no more games, no time at school, and the more they worked at the factory, the more they became gloomy like old people. They had no fun.



Factory office of the L.Rabeneck company, before 1917.

Sometimes as you walked from the factory at the end of your shift you would see a mother walking, followed by her tired daughter, like a child learning to walk, grabbing onto her mother's skirt, to get help walking to the residential barracks where she could lie down exhausted. But in the summer, with what joy we ran from the factory gates, past the guards,



Barrack building at the L.Rabeneck factory. Photo before 1917.

everyone quickly rushing to the pond on the raft, or to the Klyazma River, breathing the fresh air, getting in the water, and rejoicing in the relaxation and freedom from work.

Chapter II: The 1905 strike and youth participation

The young people were the first to protest the existing order at the factory, established by the Rabenecks. As they grow up, girls and boys aged 18–19 years old develop interests outside work, and they also need cultural relaxation and entertainment. The question immediately arises, where a young man can relax? In those years after hard, exhausting work, including Sundays - where could you go for a holiday?

A good club house has been built at the factory, but workers are not allowed to enter, only office staff. There is a garden and a park near the factory – also closed to staff. Enterprising owners like the Rabenecks, having made millions of roubles by exploiting the workers, stole even more money through fines and rents each year, but tried to represent themselves, to some extent, as benefactors of the workers.



Solving a social issue, Rice. T. Heine. Publishing house. "Rose hip".

A summer house/gazebo is being built near the residential barracks of the Old and New Factories, and music is played there in the summer and on Sundays. Young people can dance. But during the winter there are only the bare walls of the barracks, the corridors, and the kitchen - card games are the only entertainment. Where can one relax? In Shchelkovo itself there are beer halls, tea houses, a carousel, and a boxing ring. The factory owner Rabeneck, although he was protected by all the laws of the bourgeois system, and was protected by tsarism, the police, and the gendarmerie, was still afraid of the workers, especially literate workers. Anyone who read the newspapers was placed under surveillance and fired at the first opportunity.

The residential barracks were surrounded by a three-meter fence. They tried to isolate workers from the outside world. Also, young people were prohibited from visiting each other between barracks. As a rule, they maintained a large security staff and spent money on watchmen, patrols, and policemen. Whenever there was a fair demand from the workers, they would call in soldiers and Cossacks, aiming to intimidate the workers. But this was not all; religion was called in to help, and high hopes were placed on the church. They tried to teach young people, workers, to pray from childhood, instilling the fear of God, with religious instructors at school, teaching that the more you work on the land, the more likely you will be hungry and die prematurely, the shorter and more difficult your life the sooner you will go to heaven, after you die you'll end up in heaven. If you suffer on earth, you will rest when you die. Strict rules were established. Schoolchildren were taken to the Zhegalov church to fast, confess, and be absolved of their sins.



"Autocratic system." Poster. Artist: A. A. Radakov, 1917.

And what were the children's sins? That they didn't eat enough, their whole life in childhood is the barracks and the kitchen, and from the age of eleven they go to work in a factory to create wealth for the manufacturer Rabeneck.

This is the situation for young people. But among young people there are boys and girls who soon began to think about their difficult and hopeless situation. Why are such orders established on earth? We create millions of dollars in wealth for the owner, he builds factories, erects new buildings, houses, has a lot of money, enjoys all the benefits of life, meanwhile we work for decades and because we were poor, we remain the same as we came. The only difference being that we started healthy and young, and left sick and disabled. And the young people did protest. The first protest, albeit an economic demand, was to raise wages by 5 kopecks a day, a demand that was already about low wages. Many have already described that episode in their memoirs: comrades Belov, Ozhigov and others. This happened in 1905, when young workers went on strike on their own, and withdrew their labour.

So, at the New Factory, and also at the Old Factory during the days of the 1905 revolution, young 19-year-old Nikolai Asonychev was distributing proclamations and leaflets among the workers at the Rabeneck factories, actively participating in the strike of 1905, walking around the villages of our region, calling on peasants to fight against tsarism, participating in the restoration of the Belov-Shishov factory in Losino-Petrovsk. During 1905, factory youth, together with adult workers, actively shut down factories, attended rallies, showed courage and joined fighting squads.

In his memoirs about the revolution of 1905, when Nikolai Asonychev participated in a strike and prepared for an armed uprising, he wrote: "My first acquaintance with the revolutionary movement of 1905 was in the spring of that year, when an armed uprising was being prepared.

I'd receive leaflets from revolutionary comrades, and I distributed them, handing them out to reliable colleagues. That year I participated in secret meetings several times. In December, we took part in demonstrations aimed at supporting the armed uprising in Moscow. We went to Shchelkovo and shut down several other factories.⁵ I wasn't a member of the organization, but I used to get revolutionary leaflets from Comrade Ryabov Konstantin that I distributed among the workers. He was following instructions from the revolutionary organizers. After his arrest, his wife Elena carried on the work, getting leaflets from S.P. Malgin in Moscow.



"New Factory" of the Ludwig Rabeneck Partnership. Before 1917

The second time the young people presented their demands to the owner Rabeneck in 1910, they demonstrated both awareness and courage. They argued that the owner had built the club house with money from our labour, so how can it be that we are not allowed in. Walking along the railway track on Sundays, they can only look through the windows of the club house and see the office staff are having fun. Why are young workers not allowed to organize a drama club and stage plays? Young people are worried about this situation. They meet in the residential barracks and talk about these topics: "We must demand that the owner allow the working youth to use the club house." It should be noted that among this group of workers were a number of names that became well known to us in the early days of the February Revolution of 1917.⁶ Delegates were chosen to visit the owner Rabeneck, the most courageous and decisive guys who can talk to the owner and stand up for the interests of the workers, proving they are in the right. So, one day comrades Monin, Obedkov and Klimov went to see Edouard Rabeneck. They arrived at the main office, and their arrival was a big event; the office workers were alarmed. After all, they weren't coming to see the manager, but the owner himself. Their arrival caused excitement among the cowardly staff. The delegates came into reception and asked to see the owner. Office clerks began to look around the reception area door, reporting that they saw "Young guys, who've worked a lot at the factory, and are not embarrassed about bothering the owner." It was rare for the owner Rabeneck to receive workers in his own office. And then young workers made it clear that they didn't want to talk to anyone except the owner.

⁵ Chetverikov in Gorodishchi, Shishov-Belov in Losino-Petrovskaya, Sloboda

⁶ Active comrades included: Obedkov, Smirenskaya, Feofanov, Monin, Kozarev, Dogadaeva, Trukhanin, Politaev, Andriyanova, Ivanov, Fomicheva, I.P. Antonov – and the future director of the plant, Klimov.

Rabeneck agreed that it would be interesting to listen to the workers, and it's never too late to drive them away. The German was cunning; if I send them away now, we're in for a turbulent time, there will be strikes at other factories, as the newspapers are reporting. While the owner was mulling it over, the workers' representatives waited patiently: "If he doesn't accept it, we'll just stay here." The office staff were indignant. Meanwhile, the delegates stood outside the owner's office. His office was quite small, and the owner stood at his desk, next to a specially high chair. He looked gloomily at the delegates coming in, but such looks didn't bother the guys, especially Obyedkov, a future sailor in the Baltic Fleet, nor Monin, a future Bolshevik. Later, during the days of the revolution of 1917, Monin led and led the struggle of the workers in Podolsk.

The owner stood there but did not invite the delegates to sit down. "What have you come for? What are you unhappy about?" he asked them without raising his voice. The guys introduced themselves politely, then Monin spoke, "We came to ask for permission to use the worker's club, to organize a drama club at the club house and to stage plays for workers." "Well, did you come up with this yourself?" "Why would we ask this for ourselves?" they explained. "We've been elected by the young people working at the factory as their representatives." The owner looked at the tall, brave guys who were unafraid of the all-powerful owner. And he wondered, how many like them worked at the factory, more than a thousand. Looking at Monin, he tried to remember him, and as events later showed, Monin was soon fired from the factory. The owner thought: if we don't resolve this in an amicable way, they will take a different path.

"Okay, I allow you to organize a drama club and stage one production a month." Rabeneck said. Saying goodbye, the guys went out, thinking that a start had been made, but we'll see. This was the second victory for the young workers. As if to help, but also to control the workers, staff members Chesnokov and Yashkin were assigned to the drama club. Within the club, most were young people. The plays were selected according to their content so that the workers, after watching the production, would reflect and judge at their leisure about their working lot. They staged "Poverty is not a vice", "In a lively place", "Hard lot", "Guilty without guilt", etc. On days when the factory announced that a production would take place at the club house, it was difficult to get a ticket, there were so many young people interested to get in. Eyewitnesses also say that on the day that war was declared in 1914, the young people mobilized for war, and came out carrying a red flag almost as far as the hospital, where the policeman on the gate removed it.

The third time the young people stood up for their rights was in 1915, when they demanded proper payment for the products they produced. The events were as follows; soon after the 1905 revolution, frightened factory owners, supported by the tsarist government, launched an offensive against the workers. Factory owners organized their unions, the police and gendarmerie became unruly, workers were arrested, imprisoned, and sent to hard labour. The factory owners reacted by taking revenge on the workers, gradually taking away from the workers what they had won in the struggle, during the days of the 1905 revolution. There were lockouts, blacklists, evictions from apartments, especially of those who had actively participated in revolutionary events. Many of our young workers can be clearly seen in the group photos of our theatre club, and in Shchelkovo museum. Rabeneck dealt harshly with the family of Matveev, a worker who had taken an active part in the 1905 revolution, by firing him and his wife. The family, with 6 children, were thrown out of the gate and doomed to starvation. This is what factory owners did at all the factories. A worker fired from one factory could not get hired at another. So, for example, Andrei Pustov, working as a weaving master

in Pavlovo Posad, a Russian-French spinning and weaving factory, was fired and was not re-hired. He was forced to leave for another area. This was the fate of many. Manufacturers extended the working day, lowered prices, and increased fines. Rabeneck also took advantage of the national situation. At the spinning mill, female workers had to do a third extra work for the same salary. Anyone not agreeing could leave the factory. But where could you go? So, everyone stayed to work. Time passed. The 1914 war began, and factory owners made colossal profits from supplying the military. Food prices rose, but wages remained unchanged. The workers endured the situation for a long time, but then voices began to be heard louder and louder: “Why doesn’t the owner pay for the extra one third production of yarn?” Eventually, we agreed to demand payment, and if they refused, to go on strike. Workers like Elena Smirenskaya and Vera Mukhina began talking to people, and they elected a delegation to the manager Meshkov.⁷

They’d hardly got into the office before Meshkov said: “Why are you shouting?” “We’re not shouting, but we came to ask you to pay our wages for the extra third, and to pay for arrears. We have been working for free for nearly eight years.” So Meshkov said: “Okay, I’ll pay.” And indeed, fearing a strike, they did pay, although not in full. They gave the workers one hundred roubles each, about half of what was due. Furthermore, inflation in food prices made it worth Ludwig Rabeneck’s up to 1917, didn’t suffer intolerable conditions. They had fought for their rights, put their demands to the owner, and achieved some success.

To be continued.

Part 2

III February Revolution and youth participation in revolutionary events

IV Participation of youth in the Civil War

Part 3

V Organization of the Komsomol cell at the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo plant

VI Activities of the Komsomol cell during the years of restoration of the national economy

Part 4

VII Pioneer Organization, 1923

VIII Work of the KOR club

Part 5 (not yet posted on Trojza as of March 2024)

I X Komsomol members of the plant on the economic front

X Komsomol members on the front of the Great Patriotic War and in the rear .

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⁷ Elena Smirenskaya, Maria Kulebyakina, Maria Lapteva, Klavdiya Ivanova, Andriyanova

Shchelkovo youth during the revolution of 1917 and the Civil War

Memoirs of K. A. Filaretov

Continuation of the publication of the memoirs of Konstantin Filaretov, dealing with the participation of Shchelkovo youth in the revolution of 1917 and the Civil War, the living conditions of textile workers, the famine and typhus epidemic in Shchelkovo during 1918, and the organization of the first food detachments. These two chapters cover the period 1917 - 1919.



Female and child workers at the L.Rabeneck factory at Shchelkovo. 19C.

Chapter III: February Revolution and youth participation in revolutionary events

When the February Revolution took place and events reached our region, more than half of the workers at the factory were young people: teenagers, youngsters. From the outset young people, together with adults, took part in events: they stopped cars, went to rallies and demonstrations, disarmed policemen, shut down the factories of Sinitsin, Polyakov and others. They took part in everything: selling newspapers, putting up posters and slogans, handing out leaflets to workers, publicising meetings. Even when the struggle broke out between the Mensheviks of the Old Factory and the Bolsheviks of the New Factory, especially during the voting for the Constituent Assembly, the young guys decided to help the adults there, too.⁸ The Bolsheviks in the Constituent Assembly voted for No. 5, the Mensheviks for No. 3. And on all the walls of the buildings of the Old Factory, the Mensheviks painted in large numbers and wrote the words: "Vote for list No. 3 (Land and Freedom)." Then one evening a group of Bolshevik guys, including Ivan Bukhtanov, went to the Old Factory with buckets of paint and rags. On the walls of the printing house, right at the gate where the guards stood, and on the walls of the owner's garage near the main office, they covered up or painted over the Menshevik slogans.

⁸ A democratically elected Constituent Assembly to create a Russian constitution was a key demand of all Russian revolutionaries before the Revolution of 1905. Convened in 1917, it met briefly, but was illegally dissolved by the Bolshevik Central Executive Committee in early 1918.



Confrontations between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks in 1920.

Young people came out to demonstrate on May 1, 1917. They carried posters “All power to the Soviets”, “Down with the war!” When the Communist Party organization was established at the factory in April 1917 the Bolsheviks came out of hiding and launched political propaganda for the Party, invoking Lenin’s April proposals.⁹ At Shchelkovo, in the “new” factory, a committee of Bolsheviks was set up to perform the functions of party organization.¹⁰ Several young people also joined the party.¹¹ Young girls and boys became enthusiastic helpers in the party organization, working as the first Shchelkovo Council of Worker’s Deputies, helped by some old Bolsheviks including A. Pustov, and I. Pelevin. The first “Youth Union” in the region was set up, a precursor to the later Komsomol.¹² Meetings took place in the reading room of the new factory. The board of the Youth Union was elected with Comrade I. Vladimirov as chair and A. Knyazev as secretary, as well as others. It should be noted that although most young people were aged 17-18, there were children as young as 13-14 years old. Although they couldn’t enrol in the Youth Union, they took part in the meetings and the work.

The young people were very keen to take an active part in the events and wanted to participate on an equal basis with adults! My own dream was to join the ranks of the Red Guard and go with a detachment to the Don. We lived in the Red Barracks at the New Factory. The Kondratiev family lived next door with their six children. Their eldest, Tonya, was 17 years old, and I had several other other brave, determined friends. At the time we were mostly 2–3 years younger than them, and that turned out to be decisive.

We lived with a large family of relatives. It seemed normal during the day, when half of the people are at work, but at night, with everyone there, every surface was covered in bodies, under tables and up against the radiators. We were jammed in like sardines. And then one day the door opened while the whole family was sitting down to dinner. Semyon’s cousin, Senka,

⁹ Pustov, Chursin, Panfilov, Kudryavtsev.

¹⁰ The first to join were: N.I. Pelevin, S. Matveev, Ermolaev, Shcherbakov, Agapov, Makhov, Zhizhin, Usachev, Andreev, E. Smirenskaya.

¹¹ Klavdia, Pustova, Mikhail Subbotin, and others. Boys included.¹¹ Mikhail Subbotin, Stepan Matveev, Alexey Oreshkin and others.

¹² See "Union of Socialist Working Youth" in Shchelkovo in 1917 - 1922. Memoirs of A. Knyazev, at <https://trojza.blogspot.com/2017/10/1917-1922.html>

who worked at the New Factory in the carpentry workshop, appeared on the threshold. And what was this? He had a rifle in his hands. Everyone turned to look and couldn't take their eyes off him. A man with a rifle was in our flat; yesterday's boy who got pulled by his hair, or if necessary, tugged around on his back by one leg (one of the more effective methods of teaching and education, or punishment, for misdeeds). With great care, he placed the rifle in the corner of the room, looked at us and resolutely, and said "Don't touch it!". Amid general silence, he sat down at table. And when he picked up a spoon, his father, who had been silent the whole time, asked "What is this Rifle for?" Senka replied "What do you mean? It's to fight and beat the White Guards, to defend the revolution." His father said "Senka, you didn't ask my permission." "What's the point? It's clear that I'm an adult now, I'm seventeen."

So, everyone became adult and independent at the age of 17. When Tonya Kondratiev turned up, also with a rifle, it caused even more commotion and surprise among adults and teenagers, as well as envy and frustration among the 13-14 year olds. At the time I was very interested in the events taking place. And we were all terribly upset when victims of the troubles were brought home to be buried near the new church.¹³

At first the young conscripts went to Moscow, then on to the Don. Young and poorly trained, they bravely fought the White Guards. Many of them did not return, including my cousin Semyon. One such young guy in his detachment, was from the village of Turabyevo, on the Don. When asked "How was it?" He said: "There were very fierce battles and one day we were surrounded by numerous white forces, but our old front-line machine gunners broke through, and we were able to retreat." He said, "...as we were leaving, some of the guys were lying down and shooting. I shouted to Semyon to move away!" But he replied that "While we have cartridges, we'll shoot." And we didn't see him or the other guys again."

So, seventeen-year-old boys realized early on that the revolution and the republic had to be defended by the workers themselves, including young people. However, it should be noted that not only working boys, but also the children of merchants from Shchelkovo joined the Socialist Union. But they often ignored the tasks set by the Youth Union and pursued completely other goals. The leaders of the Union however, young working guys, followed the policy of the Bolshevik Party and maintained a strong connection with the Shchelkovo Soviet and the party organization.

As a result, conflicts arose. For example, the merchants' sons filed a statement against Panfilov, a leader of the party, accusing him of treating them incorrectly. But the party committee, after examining the statement, found Panfilov's political behavior and attitude to have been correct.

During 1918, when A.P. Pustov simultaneously worked as deputy chairman of the Bogorodsk District Council, and chairman of the District Cheka, a detachment was created to combat counter-revolution, profiteering, and desertion. The young people of the Shchelkovo cotton mill became part of a detachment responsible for the suppression of a counter-revolutionary uprising in Pavlovsky Posad.¹⁴

Young people became active in the trade union, signed up for the Red Guard and other volunteer units. Organization of the Youth Union, with the help of the District Council, was

¹³ Nowadays the Cathedral of St. Trinity in Shchelkovo. The tombstone has not survived. Kostya Kryuchkova .

¹⁴ http://www.pavlovskyposad.ru/p_article_soviet.htm

chaired by Comrade. A.P. Pustov. He actively launched mass political work among young people in the factories of Sinitsyn, Polyakov and others. The Youth Union put on films at the Temperance Society club, renamed the Socialist Youth Club. Young people held meetings, lectures were given, plays were staged, and a drama club was organized at the club. The club was in the middle of Shchelkovo. The premises burned down in 1919 (the site of the current post office). During 1918, a congress of Youth Unions was held in Moscow, to which delegates from the Shchelkovo district were sent.¹⁵ When the Bolshevik Party put preparations for armed struggle and uprising on the agenda on April 13, 1917, the district party committee decided to organize a Red Guard for the area, and every member of the Youth Union as well as non-party youth joined the Red Guard, whose detachments supported Shchelkovo Council in mounting a number of events. The situation in the region and around Shchelkovo was tense. The factory owners, supported by the Provisional Government, continued to oppose the working class and the revolution. To slow the momentum of the revolution, they decided to condemn the workers to hunger. They closed food stores, held up the supply of food, hid raw materials, shut down factories, and stopped paying wages. This happened in the Shchelkovo district at the factories of Sinitsyn, Kabtsov and elsewhere. Polyakov's factory shut down from June 20 and for all of July. It took the intervention of the Council of the Trade Union Organization to take action to stop the sabotage of the factory owners.



Panorama of the "Old Factory" of the L.Rabeneck Company at Shchelkovo. 19C.

There was also a struggle against the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, who were actually helping the factory owners and the Provisional Government to deceive the workers by hiding behind revolutionary phrases. Wherever the workers were less vigilant or less well organised, as at Pavlovsky Posad, the traders, merchants, factory owners and other counter-revolutionary elements would take advantage, burning down the premises of the Council and beating workers, Bolsheviks, and members of the Council. Armed with pistols and rifles, they even began killing workers. Only by the intervention of the Red Guard from Shchelkovo and Bogorodsk, were counter-revolutionary elements suppressed. Regular classes were held among the Red Guard soldiers to study weapons and rifle use. The detachments were divided into military units, and military discipline was established. The party allocated party members to support the work of the fighters. Older workers also joined the Red Guard detachments. It should be noted that throughout the revolutionary days, all the young guys tried to get into the

¹⁵ Comrades: Nazarov, A. Knyazev, I. Zabrodin, V. Rogunov, and Vladimirov.

The young textile workers at our factory, all members of the Youth Union plus the non-party youth, strove to defend the Republic by rushing to the front. There were so many volunteers that, in addition to the first detachment, two more went out. The encouragement of the old Bolsheviks, A.P. Pustov and I. Chursin, who had helped young people get on their feet and understand whose side the truth is on, was bearing fruit. And the result was that young people went voluntarily to the front, exhibiting high awareness; each considering it an honour to receive a rifle and go to the front. Everyone was proud of the trust placed in him, and when the tsarist generals started an uprising on the Don, the first detachment of Red Guard volunteers left the factory to join the Red Army. They were members of the Youth Union. Many can be listed by their glorious first and last names.¹⁷

Tonya Kondratyeva and Natasha Kuznetsova remember the way it was. Whole families enlisted; so, three brothers from the Kochetvov family at the Old Factory volunteered. The eldest Sergei, a cadet at the All-Russian Central Executive Committee school in the Kremlin, went to the front as a battalion commander, and was killed near Balashov. His two brothers, Vasily and Georgy, volunteered for the Yaroslavl division, and went to Ukraine, returning only at the end of the Civil War. The two Yudin brothers also went, and many others beside. Lots of textile workers fought on the various fronts of the Civil War, and many did not return. They joined the Red Army. They were truly brave and fearless people, fighters.

This poem from 1919, by the writer Tikhonov,¹⁸ is about them - the volunteers from the factories who fought around Likha, Novocherkassk, Rostov and other places:

*I should make nails out of these people,
There couldn't be any stronger nails in the world.*

In later years, songs were composed and sung about them by Komsomol members and pioneers:

*An order is given: he goes to the west, she goes in the other direction.
Komsomol members left for the Civil War.*

They were the fearless defenders of our Republic, in those dangerous days on the borders of the Motherland, wherever the enemy appeared, they stood up to defend us, boldly went into battle singing the “Internationale” and other songs then popular:

*We will boldly go into battle for the power of the Soviets.
And as one we will die fighting for it.*

The Bolshevik writer and legendary commissar of the Chapaev division, D. Furmanov, had these wonderful words to say about the textile workers:

You will meet them wherever you go: at the Chinese border, in the Siberian taiga, along the Orenburg steppes, on the Polish borders – show me a battlefield they haven't watered with their blood? That's why they are remembered - like a song composed across the endless Soviet land.

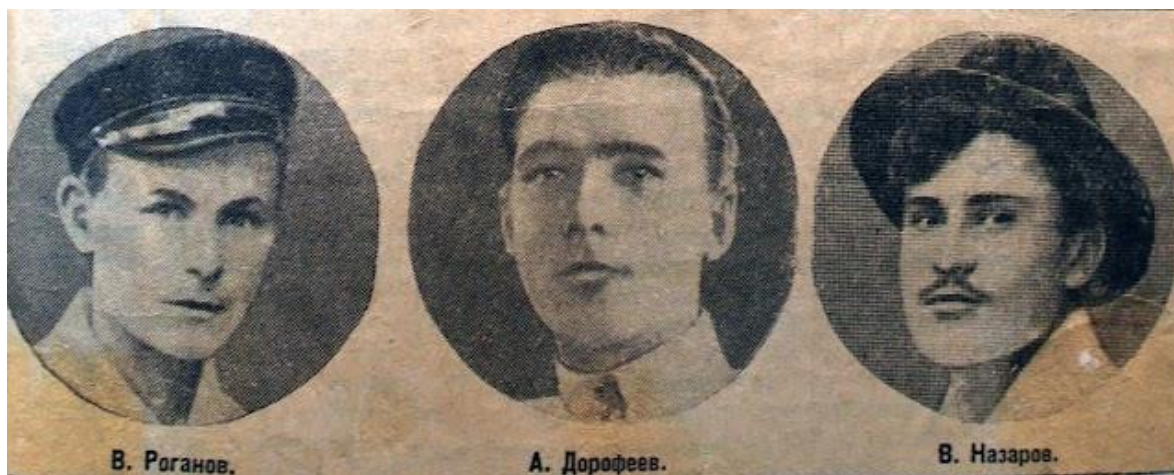
¹⁷ Sasha Dorofeev, Ivan Zabrodin, Vladimir Nazarov, Semyon Osipov, Nikita Usachev, Alexey Oreshkin, Vasya Simagin, Petukhov, Pantyukhov, Subbotin, Morozov, Kryuchkov, Sergeev, Britassov, Nesterova and others.

¹⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Tikhonov_\(writer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Tikhonov_(writer))

Leaders of the Youth Union, also went to the front, for example comrades I. Vladimirov and A. Knyazev. Several of them wrote memoirs of those heroic days working and organising for the Union. In 1958, I. Vladimirov recalled the events that took place:

“I well remember when comrade Panfilov, a representative of the district party committee, came to the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo factory. Having assembled the most active youth, he told us about the organization of the Youth Union. During his speech, we agreed to hold an open meeting of young people. This was the meeting that marked the beginning of the Youth Union at Shchelkovo. At the meeting, a board was elected, and I was made chairman, with comrade Andrey Knyazev as secretary. We used to meet at the club (formerly the Temperance Society), which we renamed the Socialist Club. We loved meeting there: we sang revolutionary songs “Varshavyanka”, “Boldly, comrades, in step”, “Boldly we will go into battle” and others. After a while, the Provincial Congress of Youth Unions was convened in Moscow, and we sent several delegates.¹⁹ The Youth Union grew every day. Its members actively participated in the entire political life of the region. Bolsheviks like Pustov, Panfilov, Filatov, Kalinichev and others would come to our meetings, and they would set us certain tasks. Members of the Youth Union went together with party members to confiscate property from capitalists and landowners, also collecting protection money from merchants and kulaks.”

It was an anxious time. To strangle the young Soviet Republic, the imperialists, led by the ruling members of the Entente, the USA, and France, organized a military campaign against our country. Internal counter-revolution unleashed a Civil War. On the very eve of the October Revolution, an armed workers’ detachment had to be created at our factory, including many young people. In 1918, many members of our Youth Union voluntarily joined the Red Guard and, together with all the working people, stood up to defend our homeland.²⁰ During those years, I also went to the front. Many of the young heroes did not return home from the fronts of the Civil War; they gave their lives to the cause of the victory of the revolution.²¹



V. Roganov, A. Dorofeev, V. Nazarov, who gave their lives for the Revolution

¹⁹ V. Nazarov, V. Roganov, A. Knyazev, I. Zabrodin

²⁰ The following joined the Red Guard detachments: A. Dorofeev, V. Nazarov, F. Khapugin, V. Roganov, I. Zabrodin, Usachev, Shishkin, Volchkov, Morozov, Oreshkin, Simagin, Petukhov, Pantyukhov, Soloviev, Subbotin, S. Osipov, K. Kryuchkov and the girls Tonya Kondratyeva, Natasha Kuznetsova, V. Mukhina, Babakina.

²¹ A. Dorofeev, V. Nazarov, R. Roganov, Mikhail Subbotin, K. Kryuchkov, S. Osipov, Usachev and others.

Union Secretary, Andrei Knyazev, also recalled those distant days of the revolutionary struggle, how the youth of our plant participated:

From the first days of the revolution, Shchelkovo Bolsheviks became politically active among the young people. On one of the difficult days for us in December 1917, Panfilov came to our factory. The youths were gathered in the reading room, which was in the residential barracks at the New Factory, where the activist youth of the factory met. Comrade Panfilov spoke about the tasks of the Socialist Youth Union, and an organizational group was set up tasked with preparing the youth meeting. The first organizational meeting was held at the end of December 1917. The organizing group did a lot of work to ensure that more young people came to the meeting. The reading room was packed. The chairman of the meeting was N.P. Vladimirov. However, the meeting was disrupted by Veretenikov and Lisovsky, who didn't want to organize youth under the leadership of the Bolsheviks and went off to meet elsewhere - in the teahouse of the Temperance Society. Our meeting, however, was a success, and chairman N. Vladimirov instructed a group of us to develop a charter for the Youth Union based on the that of the Youth Union in Moscow.”²²

Since it's foundation the Youth Union Council, also included students from the Shchelkovo Commercial School. They were often opposed to the Bolshevik aspects of the charter, and even tried to take over leadership of the Union, but they failed. In heated debates the youths of the New Factory won out. The headquarters for the newly organized Union was the Temperance Society club. The building was renovated and renamed the Socialist Club. At first, we held cultural and educational events there, for the young people of Shchelkovo and nearby textile factories. A drama club was set up. Later, Bolsheviks began to turn up.²³ They soon started coaching members of the Youth Union in small tasks, and then in increasingly serious assignments. In that way youth got involved in the confiscation of property from the local bourgeoisie and landowners, in the collection of protection money and other events carried out by the Council. They also helped choose the best members of the Union to send to the Red Army, to defend the Republic.

Among the Rabeneck factories at the Shchelkovo plant, during 1917–1918, there were two political factions. Workers at the New Factory were led by the old Bolsheviks, A.Pustov and others, who had joined the party in the earliest days of the 1917 revolution, while at the Old Factory there were generally supporters of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.²⁴ There was a struggle between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks for control of the workers. Even so, most of the younger workers at the Old Factory preferred the Youth Union, the Red Guard, and the Red Army.

Early in 1918, the Factory Club was no longer needed as an infirmary for war wounded. So all the activities of the Youth Union were moved into it, and it became known as the Club named after the October Revolution - KOR.²⁵

²² A. Knyazev (secretary) and members: I. I. Solovyov, S. G. Mayorov, V. R. Gobets, A. Dorofeev, Ivanovich and other comrades.

²³ Often including A.Pustov, Panfilov, Kalinichev, Filatov, Kudryavtsev, and others.

²⁴ Savon, Naumov, Voskresensky and others.

²⁵ <https://trojza.blogspot.com/2017/10/1920-1930.html>

With the creation of the Red Army in 1918, the first mobilization from our factory began. On August 3, we sent several delegates to a youth congress in Moscow.²⁶ The Civil War front was growing. Defending the young Soviet Republic became our priority, and young people voluntarily joined the Red Army, in several detachments. Many of our comrades didn't return home - they gave their lives defending the gains of the revolution.²⁷ And some Comrades came home with serious wounds, including our club secretary, Comrade Alexander Knyazev, who served in the Red Army until 1923.

In April 1919, when the party put out a call to mobilize all forces against Kolchak,²⁸ the White Russian leader, anyone able to bear arms came to the defence of the Fatherland. But as many as ten percent of those in our organization never returned from the front; many died heroically, defending their homeland. The workers and young textile workers who remained at the factory saw our soldiers off to the front, and followed up by collecting clothes and blankets, organising parcels for the front. They worked overtime and weekends to buy food to support the families of front-line soldiers. Remembering the twenties, first you think about those wonderful guys who were just a little older than us. They actively participated in life; they were brave, perky, devoted to the revolution, and from a young age they were proud to explain that we at the New Factory were Bolsheviks. They were willingly accepted into the Red Guard, and they knew no fear or cowardice. They had suffered a lot as youngsters, so the revolution was truly liberating for them. They had done menial work as boiler cleaners, weavers, folders, measurers, and repairers. Their only goal was to defend the revolution. I was so used to being in the party cell, I hung around there all day long, and one day they took me on to work. So, I received some money, but remained in a cell. When Secretary Asonyche went to work on the Shchelkovo district executive committee, Ivan Nikitovich Bukhtanov took over our party cell. He did all the preparatory work to set up a Komsomol cell at the factory. And to some extent I became his assistant.



I.N. Bukhtanov

²⁶ A. Dorofeev, I. G. Zabrodin, V. G. Roganov, V. Nazarov, A. Knyazev.

²⁷ Alexander Erofeev, Vasily Nazarov, Vasily Roganov, Fyodor Khapudin, Konstantin Blinov, Viktor Dikarev, V.S. Zharov and others fell in battles with the White Guards.

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Kolchak

The celebration of party week in 1919 sticks in my memory. It was at a very difficult time. There was famine, the factory shut down, and the Whites had advanced as far as Orel. When you joined the party, you knew you could be mobilized at any time and sent to the front. Each member put his life at the disposal of the Revolution, ready to carry out any assignment. There were grown men, women, and most importantly, a lot of young people. Despite the difficult situation, nothing could intimidate or break the will of the workers of our factory.

Once, Ivan Bukhtanov was away in Moscow, and I was left to man the office. People came and asked for party enrolment questionnaires, so I took some out of the desk and handed them out. I remember that N. Maslov came by whom I knew well, since he and his son Dmitry were friends: "Kostya, give me the questionnaire!" I reached into the desk and pulled some out. Then another worker came in, and turning to Maslov he asked: "Are you also here for an enrolment questionnaire?" "Yes, apparently the time is coming when working men can no longer stand aside, we have to defend our power."

That's how the factory workers treated their homeland when the revolution was in danger. And one more thing I remember during those years: people were very unselfish. They were enthusiastic, perky and brave, ready to complete any task, just ask. It seemed that we had suffered so much in our youth, endured so much grief, deprivation and humiliation, and such torment that we had to do everything possible to support the government whether at home or at the front where we needed to defeat the White Guards. That's what the workers and youth decided.

Throughout the country, due to the lack of raw materials and fuel, factories were shutting down. It was eerily quiet in the residential barracks, with a lot of empty rooms. Not many people remained at the Old Factory controlled by Mensheviks. Famine was approaching, and anyone with relatives in the countryside had already rushed there. About half of those at the Old Factory had left. But at the New Factory, where the revolutionary proletarians lived, there was nowhere else to go; on the contrary, workers came in from other factories in the district. The young people at the factory participated in every event put on by the party organization.

By 1919 there was widespread famine in the country. Speaking on May 19, 1919, V.I. Lenin said: "*In a country that is ruined, the first task is to save the working people. The primary productive force of all humanity is the worker, the labourer. If he survives, we will save everything and restore everything*".²⁹ The situation at the factory was difficult, especially for children and teenagers. They rushed into the fields and forests, foraging for sorrel, berries, and mushrooms. They'd raid market gardens with shovels, digging up potatoes, and looking for any that remained in the ground. Each potato was considered a treasure. They dug up hundreds of meters of earth.

Somehow, I had to find a solution for myself. The situation was especially difficult for mothers with two, three, or four children. Putting them to bed in the evening, they didn't know whether they'd wake up in the morning, and when workers woke up, the first thing they said was "Is there any bread?" Nor was it easy for those who remained at the factory. On the coldest days, after working 8 hours at the factory, we'd repair railcars in the evenings, right at the railway station, on the line. The carpenters made the parts themselves, especially when the carriages

²⁹ V.I. Lenin. Works. Ed. 4. Vol. 29, p. 334.

were being prepared for a trip to buy bread. After all, hungry people will do anything for food and there is famine in the country.

How bad were things in Shchelkovo? At that time, the Shchelkovo Council noted: “Petitions are coming from the surrounding factories with cries for help, and emergency food assistance, and some of the hungry are pretty desperate. No one has died yet, but it could happen any time, since it is clear there is widespread malnutrition. In the factories people are becoming exhausted, due to hunger, and so the risk of accidents increases.”

Nevertheless, there was no panic, despondency, confusion, or cowardice among the workers and youth. The workers at the new factory did not stop working, especially those in the machine shops. Part of the production was fabric for military uniforms. The workers were vigilant and looked after the safety of the steam power plant and equipment. And yet, whenever necessary, they went to cut wood, unload and load wagons, and work in the peat bogs. The situation at the factory was such that the factory committee wrote to the Shchelkovo Council on December 4, 1918:

“We hereby ask you to pay attention to the following: recently, a lot of factory workers, due to the lack of food and other products, have approached us with a request to allow them to go shopping for food. Therefore, we appeal to you to help and take measures to supply food to the factory workers. Our workers are suffering, and the most difficult thing is providing food for infants (there is nothing to give them). The children urgently need some kind of cereal.”

Signed by: Chairman Golubev. Secretary V. S. Bukhteev.

On December 27, 1918, the factory committee again appealed for help, due to the very difficult food situation at the factory. They sent the Council minutes of a meeting of mechanical department workers at the Old Factory. The workers had decided to petition the town food administration to release food for the mechanical department, because they were too weak to work, and repairs were not being completed. Conditions were terrible; some days you couldn't even get a ¼ pound of bread.

But how could people be saved from hunger? Local organizations prioritized workers and children. They organized free public meals. Some of the food was requisitioned from local rich people and exchanged for textiles. Party officials and the Shchelkovo Council took measures to prevent people from dying. A worker's club opened in 1917 next to the cotton printing buildings, almost opposite the stable yard. And lunch was put on there every day. They got military kitchen equipment from somewhere, and all kinds of utensils. There were always queues, but lunch was served regardless. Soup was ladled out to everyone; lucky ones sometimes got a piece of fish as well. The soup was only lentil or millet, but nothing in the world seemed tastier than millet soup with a bit of fish. This sort of meagre meal saved many and supported life. Hoping to get potatoes, people bartered coats, dresses, or textiles at stations along the Mytishchi Northern railway line. They travelled on the roof or on the steps of freight cars, in winter, in the cold. They rode back from Moscow in empty freight cars that had been delivering wood to the city. They wedged the doors shut from the inside. At the stations soldiers would knock on the doors shouting, “Open up or we'll shoot”, but they could not open the doors, and we held our breath. They'd uncouple the car, but still we kept quiet, waiting for the train to leave before we got down with our food, a bag of potatoes, grain or potato flour. We made cakes and bread from potato peelings. Things were very tough, but life went on. There were dances and performances in the club. Young people went to the front, studied at Sunday school, and worried just like the rest of the country. There were white army

blockades everywhere; a mortal struggle was going on. Then disaster struck the factory, as well as the whole country - typhus. Maybe someone foraging for bread spread it, or someone brought it back from the front. But soon the suffering began. The hospital quickly filled up, but there were ever more patients and nowhere to put them. Each day carts with coffins were pulled to the Zhegalovskoye cemetery. There were a lot of sick among the young. So, we decided to put the sick in one of the residential barracks. A building at the edge of a birch grove and next to the rail line was set aside for about 100 people.

Leaders of public organizations helped the front, and that was important. But they also fought to save people by organizing food detachments, which immediately made things easier. Detachments were made up of 13-14 year old boys, Komsomol members, who were sent out to find bread, offering goods for barter and coming back with bread and flour. They never lost faith in the revolution, and were always cheerful and ready to do anything, unafraid of difficulties. They were supported by the party committee, the factory committee, and the factory management. The government, too, after May 1919, supported the organization of food detachments.

Food detachments were organized at the factory, and they played a big role in saving the workers. They brought in food in exchange for manufactured goods, thus saving people from hunger. They organised free public meals for workers as well as for children and teenagers. The food detachments went as far afield as Ukraine, Kazan, Samara, Orenburg and other places. Given the great responsibility, the party organization allocated senior management to the organisation of the detachments, including the factory director I.P. Antonov. The envoys in the detachment were procuring bread, but they were also spreading the Soviet message locally in the villages, helping Peasant Committees establish Soviet power, and fighting the kulaks who often sabotaged the delivery of surplus grain, and prevented Peasant Committees from establishing and building Soviet power.³⁰

The kulaks brutally killed several fighters of the food detachments, showing cruelty and bullying. A young Youth Union worker, Viktor Dikarev, who did not return from the food detachment was beaten to death by bandits. His stomach was ripped open and stuffed with wheat grain, and a note: "The surplus grain appropriation has been completed." The bandits also killed 18-year-old Fedor Bulkin, a party member and food detachment fighter since 1919.



Bulkin Fedor Kuzmich (1900-1920)

³⁰ Kulaks were relatively rich peasant farmers and local mayors, who had benefitted from 19C land reforms, and were often opposed to the Bolshevik advocacy of Soviet government.

That is how young people participated in the struggle for life. No matter how hard it was, people did not lose heart and did not panic. They knew that what matters most is the struggle, and they worked tirelessly.

The events taking place in the country were very relevant to young people. In October 1918, the first Komsomol congress took place, and 1919, the second. Young people and Komsomol members fought on all fronts of the Civil War. Representatives of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, as well as the Moscow Regional Committee of the Komsomol, often came to the factory. Ivan Bukhtanov worked as the secretary of our party organization. Sometimes representatives would come to spend a day or two with us. Our office was in the reading room of the New Factory on the 3rd floor, where we had two small rooms. I personally worked in the office, supporting secretary Bukhtanov. Our visitors staying the night would settle down to sleep on wooden benches, and for dinner I'd get them boiling water, and that's often all we could give them.

To be continued.

Part 3

V Organization of the Komsomol cell at the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo plant

VI Activities of the Komsomol cell during the years of restoration of the national economy

Part 4

VII Pioneer Organization, 1923

VIII Work of the KOR club

Part 5 (not yet posted on Trojza as of March 2024)

I X Komsomol members of the plant on the economic front

X Komsomol members on the front of the Great Patriotic War and in the rear .

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The unforgettable nineteen-twenties: Shchelkovo Komsomol 1920 - 1923

Memoirs of K. A. Filaretov

In this part of his memoirs, Konstantin Filaretov describes the events that took place in Shchelkovo in 1920 - 1923, a most challenging time for Shchelkovo residents in the early years of Soviet power, involving young people aged 11 - 17 in the life of the city. The history of the formation of the first Komsomol organization and its cells in the factories of the district, explains the unparalleled enthusiasm of youngsters at that time, building a railway line to deliver fuel to the factory, caring for typhus patients, establishing children's institutions, providing the factory with fuel, getting an education ...

Chapter V: Organization of the Komsomol cell at the Rabeneck factory

We were keen to establish a Komsomol cell at the factory.³¹ Secretary Bukhtanov did a lot of preparatory work and convened a few girls and boys to discuss it. A notice went up at the gate that there'd be a meeting at the club. To help make it happen I had to run through the corridors shouting out: "Go to the club for a meeting!" At the club there was only one item on the agenda - the organization of a Komsomol cell.

This would be the first Komsomol cell in the Shchelkovo region. But only about 35 people turned up for the meeting, mostly from the New Factory where the party was stronger. Times were turbulent; the difficult year of 1920 was approaching. Factory chimneys had stopped smoking, production buildings stood silent, the rhythmical noise of spinning and weaving machines couldn't be heard, transmission belts did not rotate. Only a few machines at the Dyeing and Finishing Factory continued to produce fabric for the military. But those who made it to the meeting really wanted to join the Komsomol. They'd known each other for many years, growing up in the same barracks, meeting in the kitchen, and going to the factory school together. At the age of 11-12 they went to work as measurers, lacemakers, metalworkers, spinners, and weavers. They were part of one big family, and everyone at the meeting was excited about our joining the Komsomol. It could be a turning point in our lives, a new beginning, embarking on a conscious, independent path. Being a Komsomol member also represented a big obligation to the party, to help build the new state. Standards were high; you had to be a fearless fighter, always honest, setting an example, and religiously following the party line.

Bukhtanov talked about the significance of the Komsomol in his speech, and we elected him as chairman with Andrey Zakharychev as secretary. I lived on the same corridor as Andrey. Yesterday we were just neighbours, and today he's our leader, our secretary.

There was a lot of chatter, excitement, anxiety, and uncertainty about how to proceed, what we needed to do, and how we could set an example for non-party youth. Each speaker was fully committed, ready to pick up a rifle, go to the front, carry out any task, or even give his life for the revolution - nothing scary, no problem. Lots of those in the front row begged "Give me a rifle! Send me to the front!" It wasn't a big meeting that day, but it was a great start.

³¹ Komsomol, or the 'All-Union Leninist Young Communist League' was a political youth organisation established in 1918, known as the youth division of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).



Shchelkovo, Rabeneck factory. Photo from the collection. K. Filaretova. Unsigned, undated (c. 1920?).

Nowadays, of course, it's nothing special to reach a village 10 - 11 kilometers away: you just get on a bus and in a few minutes you are there. You could even walk to a factory a few kilometers away. But back in those days it took great courage to meet and discuss the Komsomol, the fronts in the war, or the duty of young people. There were a few adults at the meetings, who came find out what was going on, to gain knowledge and listen to the speakers, some of whom were only 15–16 years old. To get to the club they'd had to walk several miles in the cold. They were dressed in autumn clothes, with leather boots. But the young people, the revolution-minded, felt no hunger or cold. Honour and glory to them, the wonderful guys from our factory, who organized the Komsomol in our area.³²

Remembering the days of 1920 when the Komsomol cell was set up, it's worth recording the memories of the most active original organisers. In 1966 our cell celebrated its 46th anniversary, and Ivan Bukhtanov, our first chairman, spoke to us. He told young Komsomol members how the Komsomol cell had been organized:

“The twentieth of January this year marked 46 years since the organization of the first Komsomol cell in the Shchelkovo district. And it took place at Sobolevo, which was the original name of the Rabeneck cotton mill. On January 20, 1920, at 21:00, several dozen young people gathered in one of the rooms at the club. The meeting agenda was: “Tasks of the Komsomol and organization of the cell. That day I was elected chairman of the cell, with Andrei Zakharychev as secretary. And many wonderful guys and girls came to the first Komsomol!³³. Later the guys from the Old Factory joined us. At first, they were rather uncertain, but then they were encouraged to join by Stepan Matveev, Vasily Kotov, and others. Matveev was then elected to the committee. Out of the meeting a core group formed that took charge of political education and sports work among the young people of the plant, and who supported the leadership of the club. They interacted with organisations of the

³² Ivan Bukhtanov, Stepan Matveyev, Andrey Zakharychev.

³³ Dusya Andreeva, Tonya Kondratyeva, Vera Mukhina, Maria Ryabtseva, Ivan Kokorev, Kostya Filaretov, Ivan Evseev, Stepan Chernobrovkin.

proletkult Proletarian Culture movement,³⁴ and most importantly, liaised with the Republic of Kazakhstan, a major market for products from the Rabeneck factories. By 1920 the factory was managed by a remarkable Bolshevik, director Ivan Pavlovich Antonov.

Soon, on behalf of the Shchelkovo district committee and our Komsomol I, Zakharychev and S. Matveev began to travel to factories and villages around the region with the aim of organizing similar Komsomol cells there.³⁵ And on March 18, the first district conference took place, at which a district committee of the Union was elected. Zakharychev, Matveev and I were elected to represent our factory. Also in 1920, Zakharychev and I were honoured to see and hear dear Ilyich at the 3rd Komsomol Congress in Moscow.”



“Speech by V.I. Lenin at the III Komsomol Congress.” Artist B.V. Ioganson. 1950

The directorate of the factory and the first Komsomol committee received wonderful support from members for their initiatives in the factories. They were not just efficient, but also showed great initiative on the labour front.³⁶ Teenagers, once they joined the Komsomol organization, immediately felt like adults, and became completely different people. Obstacles to a new way of life seemed to fall away, as people gave up bad habits and remnants of their past. You’d no longer see people playing cards, or behaving in such a way that an adult might make a remark. Everyone tried to present themselves as disciplined and useful in their work. They really wanted to be useful Komsomol members. The club, now that the cell was organized, became the place to be seen. Members treated it like their own home. There were fewer negative conversations and moods, people began to understand. At meetings we often heard reports that, indeed there was hunger, cold, and typhus, or that a factory had been shut down – and for what reason? We began to understand that everything was connected to our legacy from the capitalist factory owners. We stopped listening to the phony excuses. As for the practical

³⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proletkult>

³⁵ *Cells were established at the Sokolov factory, the Sinitsyn factory, the Tekhnotkan factory, the Sverdlovsk factory, as well as in some villages: Amerevo, Zhegalovo, Khotovo, etc.*

³⁶ Bukhtanov I., Dmitry Maslov, Nikolai Shlykov, Liza Burlova, Shura Borisova, Klava Usacheva and others were actively involved in Komsomol work.

difficulties of day-to-day life, we understood that they were temporary. The main thing was the front, to win victory in the civil war. We understood the need to support the front. That's why everyone wanted to get a rifle and fight.

The endurance and diligence of the Komsomol members can be explained in part by harsh wartime conditions, but also the teenage Komsomol members had already worked for the Rabenecks for two or three years, they had experienced exploitation and humiliation. They really hated the tsarist system and were enthusiastic about the new Soviet system. They had a strong sense of a new beginning thanks to the revolution, which had to be defended. They understood and they were taught that only Soviet power, people power, gives freedom. As of now doors have opened for young people, opportunities to show their abilities, talents. They have access to books, to knowledge, to training in any speciality, everyone can get a job. All this was new for them. The words 'freedom' and 'equality' came to life for them.

Having set up the first Komsomol cell the activists, the most politically literate comrades, did not hide away inside the club but encouraged by the Shchelkovo Provincial Committee of the Komsomol, and on their own initiative, began to set up Komsomol cells in all Rabeneck factories. That's how Bukhtanov and Matveev became well-known. They were helped by Bolsheviks working in the area.³⁷ In his 1965 memoir Bukhtanov describes a letter he wrote to comrade Kuznetsov:

"We started traveling to the factories and villages of the region, to organize Komsomol cells.³⁸ And on March 18 at the first regional conference the first district committee was elected. From our cell I was elected chairman, Zakharychev became deputy for organizational work, Matveev deputy for political education. Plus, several from the other factories."

That's how our first Komsomol conference took place. By the time of the second conference there were representatives from several factories: Krasnoznamennaya, Sverdlovsk, Fryanovo Technofabrics, etc. The conference elected a district committee, as well as delegates to the provincial conference. We elected the following to the Komsomol office: Bukhtanov became secretary, Zakharychev headed the organizational department, Matveev led political education. The meeting took place in the Vesuvius Cinema in Shchelkovo.



Former "Vesuvius Cinema" at Shchelkovo, scene of Komsomol regional conferences Undated photo.

³⁷ Asonychev, Lobanov, Smirenskaya, Nesterov, Kalinichev.

³⁸ Sokolovskaya factory, Sinitsinskaya - Fetrovaya, Tekhnotkan, Sverdlovsk, Fryanovo, Monino, plus the villages of Amerevo, Fryazino, Ivanteevka, Zhegalovo, and others.

Shchelkovo sent three delegates to the third congress of the Komsomol in Moscow where they were lucky enough to see and hear the speech of the leader of our party of the Soviet people, the Great Lenin, whose speech about the tasks of the Russian Communist Youth League became a program for the life and struggle of Soviet youth. After the congress, secretary Bukhtanov reported Lenin's speech to our members at the club.

Education and knowledge were the most challenging tasks for most Komsomol members during the 1920s. The question was how to master science, to gain the technical knowledge to manage the economy, particularly factories. Komsomol members mostly had only 3–4 grades of schooling. There was a Commercial School in Shchelkovo, but it had been exclusive to the children of merchants, managers, and other categories of wealthy parents.



Building of the Commercial School at the Rabeneck factory, Shchylkovo. Postcard approx. 1914.

But young people had a burning desire to study. Nobody forced them back into school, but they began to study in the evenings and in their free time. A fresh start was needed. Almost everyone in the club began to borrow books, read fiction, read newspapers, listen to lectures and conversations. They also tried to understand the international situation and what was happening more widely in the country.

Komsomol members were full of energy, strength, enthusiasm, perseverance, and the desire to work. Everyone strove, according to their abilities, to achieve a work-life balance within the organization. Everyone wanted to do it; no one had to be forced. Only a few Komsomol members had completed 5 years of school.³⁹ Now the party organization, recognising that young people strive for political knowledge, sent the keenest Komsomol members to study at the Moscow Provincial Party School, and they later returned to become teachers. We held regular evening classes, and the guys were enthusiastic. One of our textbooks was The Alphabet of Communism, and we had to listen carefully and remember. It might have been difficult for us, but it was also difficult for our inexperienced teachers.

I remember my first teachers well, despite many others I heard later. I had shared a desk with Matveev in primary school, yet he became my first teacher of political knowledge. 80-90 of us sat and listened attentively. Lessons would last for 3–4 hours, until the teacher couldn't stand it. And we'd ask endless questions. Some wanted to know what financial capital means, others

³⁹ Bukhtanov, Matveev, Maslov, Novozhilov, and employees: Katya Dikareva, Savaleev.

asked what imperialism is, others wanted detail about socialism, etc. No one would suggest that he had no time, or that he needed to go home; we all sat and listened with great interest. But this wasn't the only thing Komsomol members did; they took an active part in political and social life.

Komsomol members worked on educational literacy, with individual members assigned to female workers who couldn't attend school due to family circumstances. Lots of Komsomol girls were given great confidence and got elected to the meetings of factory workers. When questions arose about opening children's institutions, many female Komsomol members became teachers.⁴⁰ They worked in nurseries and kindergartens and completed special teacher training courses. During the typhus epidemic these girls, despite the personal danger, went to work in the infected barracks and looked after the sick. And what an incredible effort the youth and Komsomol members put into helping solve economic issues! When we were putting together food brigades, young people, as well as experienced workers stayed at the factory every evening after work, and on weekends, repairing railway cars without any payment, taking part in clean-up days, and when the factory needed fuel in order not to freeze, young people went into the peat bog at Khomutovo, to cut peat. The guys worked in stone quarries, and the girls transported, laid out and dried peat. They worked from morning to night, all day long, and provided the factory with enough fuel for the winter. Their work was a great help for the factory director, Comrade Ivan Antonov.

So, fuel was collected in the forest and wood was cut. In the Komsomol office in 1920 - 1921 one of the members had a special responsibility – to organize clean-up days. And my job was to organize *subbotnik* volunteer labour and weekend activity⁴¹ The youngsters worked with great enthusiasm and were very conscientious about the getting jobs done; you didn't have to persuade them, just announce where and when the clean-up would take place and 200-300 people turned up. They didn't ask how long it would take; they knew they just had to finish it. Nobody asked about payment.



Komsomol members at the Shchelkovo factory. The photograph is not dated, probably 1921.

I was very busy at the factory. We had to unload wagons of firewood and deliver it to homes, hospitals, and kindergartens. We had to prepare ice for the factory, for the production process,

⁴⁰ Katya Dikareva, Nyura Golova and others.

⁴¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subbotnik>

as well as for the hospital and kindergarten. It was tricky getting the right tools, crowbars and shovels, and finding a suitable horse from the stables. We'd get to the pond, then we had to load heavy slabs of ice onto the sleds and drag them back to the ice cellars. Often there weren't enough mittens for everyone, or they had the wrong sort of shoes and got wet feet. But no one grumbled or whined or said that it was too difficult.

Our young people were particularly good at building the railway line. We'd all read Ostrovsky's book "How the Steel Was Tempered", which tells about building a branch line to save people in Kharkov from the cold.⁴² Our situation was similar, but we could only work when the ground was not frozen, in spring and summer. In the difficult days of 1918 - 1919, it was decided to extend the line from Shchelkovo deep into the forest to provide Moscow with fuel. Many passengers today, traveling on the Moscow-Monino train, once they get past Shchelkovo, can't imagine that in until 1921 that the whole region was nothing but virgin forest. The line was extended beyond Shchelkovo on the direct instructions of V.I. Lenin. Its builders were army engineers, but because we were interested in wood for our factory, our Komsomol members also took part in its construction.

We had no modern bulldozers or tractors then. There were picks and shovels, wheelbarrows, and a sled for carrying earth. But every day the railway went deeper and deeper into the forest. By winter they had laid 15 kilometres of track. And, at the same time, we were preparing and cutting firewood for winter. We'd ride the train out to the forest in snow, blizzards, and frost, leaving in the morning and getting back in the dark. 2-3-meter-long logs had to be dragged to the rail cars, lifted on, and loaded. It was very hard work. Both boys and girls did the work, and if they got too tired and hungry, they'd be given 100 grams of bread. In the evening the train would reach the factory and had to be unloaded; they never complained. On the contrary, they used to sing songs.

A remarkable feature of Komsomol boys and girls was their sense of social responsibility, their grasp of the situation, understanding what needs to be done and how important it is. There was no self-interest in them, no greed, no inclination to profit, no one-upmanship. Everyone was happy and subordinated their personal interests to the public good. They'd thank you if you gave them tea and 100 grams of bread, but if at other times there was nothing – oh well, too bad. Komsomol members lived in harmony, didn't panic or give in to provocation, and were proud to be Komsomol members.

There were a lot of Komsomol meetings, and sometimes a member would fail to turn up for no apparent reason, and usually that would go unnoticed. But it was probably shyness. Although they liked to sing revolutionary songs at meetings, it was tougher to get members to speak up. They were often embarrassed to express their thoughts and make suggestions, unlike today. They'd come to the meeting armed with something written on a piece of paper pulled from their pocket, and they'd just read it. That's your speech.

In the first years of the revolution, 1917 – 1919, our young people in the ranks of the Red Guard were eager to join the ranks of the Red Army, but they were only 14-15 years old, so despite many requests they were not accepted. The cherished dream of every Komsomol member was to join the army, and in 1921 such an opportunity arose. The challenge for the party and government was to educate officers for the army. The civil war was still going on, the country

⁴² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_the_Steel_Was_Tempered

was surrounded by capitalism, and Komsomol members were needed to enrol in the military academies. All our Komsomol office staff wanted to join the army. So, who would be left? In the summer of 1921, we held a big office meeting at the cell's premises (by then we occupied a whole house next to the club, that survives to this day). Even the secretary of our cell, Dmitry Maslov, wanted to go. In the end we cast lots for who would go and who would stay.

Claudia Usacheva, in the office, came to the rescue. She stepped in as secretary so we could all go off to Ukraine. At least 100 people went from the Shchelkovo district. A farewell evening at the Vesuvius club was organised and Ivan Bukhtanov, Secretary of the Komsomol District Committee, made a speech. We didn't return until after demobilization, in 1924.

It was tough to learn. We were sent on courses in Kharkiv. After five months away from home, many could not stand it and ran away. Out of 10 – 15 people in my group, only three stuck it out: Vasya Galkin, and Dmitry Maslov and I from our factory. Our teacher didn't have any proper materials – he used a hat instead of a globe, for example. You'd be sitting at a desk, with a rifle leaning on it, plus thirty rounds of live ammunition. Things were uneasy in Kharkov in the fall of 1921, and we were understandably anxious. We were sent to guard government institutions around the city, and we took part in raids at night. In winter, in frosty conditions, night duty was freezing. It was especially stressful with food: 100 grams of bread per day, plus lentils for lunch. It was tough, and there was famine in the Volga region. But we all managed to graduate from the academy in 1923. We were in the army for a year, then in May 1924 we were demobilized and went back to the factory.

Chapter VI: Activities of the Komsomol cell during the years of restoration of the national economy

When the Civil War ended, most people returned to the factory, to their machines, to begin peaceful work. Despite issues of fuel procurement, the biggest challenge was to get the factories running and the restoration of industry. The country was beset by capitalism. The international bourgeoisie did everything possible through trade to disrupt our construction of the world's first worker and peasant state - Soviet Russia. You can't depend on help from outside; you must rely only on yourself and your work.

The party set us a major new task – to train industrial managers. Develop your own specialists: engineers who can implement technical policy, and who can manage factories. Workers faculties were set up to train young people and prepare them for admission to higher educational institutions. Young guys returning from the Civil War, having proven their devotion to the country, were sent to these workers faculties.⁴³ Also, the party and trade union organizations sent the most active local Komsomol members. In 1923, Ivan Bukhtanov was sent, and the following September, a group from our Komsomol.⁴⁴

It was certainly true that young people were following V.I. Lenin's instructions - to study and acquire knowledge. Back in 1921, Dmitry Maslov had been elected secretary of the Komsomol cell at the factory. That was a year when sometimes two or three unpaid work sessions were

⁴³ Vasya Kochetkov, Stepan Kornilov, Nikolai Bulkin.

⁴⁴ I was among them, as were: I. P. Kuznetsov, K. Kulygin, Burlova, K. K. Poletaev. In 1925, Grisha Promakhov, Sergei Demin and other comrades went.

held in a week, especially in winter. So, our members were not only intensively engaged in political studies but were also helping to solve economic issues.

Work, youth activity, and participation in economic events improved considerably when Nikolai Basov became the secretary of the cell. He was a wonderful young, guy who enjoyed great authority among the young people and the party organization. He was literate, politically developed, and well-read. He contributed frequently to national newspapers such as Pravda about factory life. He was a real leader who worked well with young people and made a great contribution to the work of the cell; always cheerful, and with great initiative. So, in November 1923, the fifth anniversary of the Komsomol movement, Nikolai Basov wrote:

The Russian Communist Party sees the Komsomol as its closest assistant. The party draws fresh strength from the ranks of the Komsomol. The Young Communist League (RKSM) serves as a conductor of communist ideas. Komsomol is a faithful defender of Soviet power, and, consequently, workers and peasants.

Is that really the case? Let's check a few historical facts. Members of the Youth Union of the 3rd International in Moscow took an active part in preparing the October Uprising, distributing literature and leaflets from the Moscow Bolshevik Committee. Later, they stood firm on the barricades in Moscow. In 1919, when Denikin was advancing on Tula and threatening our October gains, the Youth Union made up 30% of our strength. Komsomol members were on all fronts, showing examples of heroism. They went into battle - to die or to win.

And in terms of economic measures when the slogan had to be "Everyone to the labour front" to rebuild the country, Komsomol members did no less than their older comrades, here either. The party week held by the Communist Party in 1919 produced tens of thousands of young, strong Komsomol members. On the fifth anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution in 1922, the Moscow organization of the Komsomol presented the Republic of Kazakhstan with over a thousand well-seasoned Komsomol members capable of work.

Later, on the 25th anniversary of the Republic of Kazakhstan, our cell was able to send two comrades as a gift to Kazakhstan, making a total of 12 people transferred from Shchelkovo. This is typical of Komsomol Russia. The Moscow Komsomol has 25,000 people who are studying and who are ready to become builders of a future communist society. During the holidays these guys pass on their knowledge to the workers and peasants. Local Komsomol members, carrying out political educational work and economic work, make a deep impression on the proletarian masses. Thus, the Komsomol has become a thought leader of communist ideas in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The tasks facing the Communist Party have been deeply absorbed within the Komsomol. A good example is the youthful enthusiasm, shown in connection with helping Germany and the spreading of the world proletarian revolution. The Party has a vanguard of strong young people who will undoubtedly emerge victorious in the coming battles. The Komsomol is ready for the last decisive battles with the bourgeoisie. The history of the Komsomol is closely connected with the history of the Communist Party - two inseparable companions of the proletarian revolution. From past experience, we know whoever is on the side of youth will be victorious."

Nikolai Basov

The factory set up training for young, qualified personnel, such as spinners, rovers, and other professions. A school was organized for 250 people, the children of workers. Factory apprenticeship schools were set up in response to a decision of the Kosmosol Congress of 1920 - 1921.

Our cell's focus was on economic issues. It found jobs for young people, since even in those days there was unemployment. There were up to 300 boys and girls in the Komsomol organization, and by 1921 there were already 100 Komsomol members in our cell. The cell looks after the welfare of young people and teenagers. Despite the good attitude of the factory director, Comrade Ivan Antonov, getting a job remained difficult. The youth representative on the factory committee was a key member of the Komsomol office.



Komsomol cell of the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo factory. Photo from 1922

The representative monitors the work of teenagers, their training, their promotion, so that they quickly build up qualifications and are put on a machine or machine tool. Until recently, young people took part in the installation of new machines, but there were issues of productivity and discipline, so this practice ended. Young workers were given a specific task to evaluate their abilities, especially mechanics and turners. The representative made sure that young workers did not work overtime, or at night.

The young people worked diligently; there were virtually no violations of labour discipline. At the Moscow District Committee of the Komsomol there was a special commission on economic work, where representatives of factories often gathered, and briefings were given. The cell closely monitored the training at apprentice schools, and educational work was supervised. 100% of the students were Komsomol members.

When a big issue of political importance arose at the factory in 1923, a drive to increase labour productivity, the youth were once more in the forefront. For example, Komsomol weaver Yulia Bykova-Belova was one of the first to switch from working on 2 looms to 4 looms. Komsomol members of the spinning mill also greatly increased the maintenance of spinning machines. Komsomol members were very much in step with the times. If they'd previously shown conscientiousness in battles, now they worked honestly and with enthusiasm. Party and government initiatives found a lively response in the hearts of Komsomol members. The

country is trying to restore industry: factories are getting back to work, wounds are being healed, the country is busy with peaceful work. The youth at our factory worked tirelessly to build up production.



Poster "The enemy is dangerous from the sea", 1923.

In 1923, the Komsomol became active in the Navy, and many of our members were drafted.⁴⁵ Around the same time, Komsomol members were organizing community workdays, unloading incoming wagons, etc., donating the money earned to combat child homelessness. Young people were also active in mobilizing Komsomol members to restore the Donbass mines for the fastest restoration in coal industry history.

In 1922, Komsomol members showed great initiative in publishing the newspaper 'Creativity'. The editor was M. L. Shorin, an old party member since 1917, who worked as a carpenter, lived in residential barracks at the Old Factory and knew the life of the factory well. The newspaper was eagerly read by both adults and youth.

Celebrating the fifth anniversary of our Komsomol cell, we heard the decision of the national Youth Union to convert the best Komsomol members to membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Our factory Komsomol Committee recommended: Ivan Kuznetsov, and N. Basova for membership in the CPSU. It should be noted that the young people from our factory had been joining the party from an early age of 11 - 17 years and even younger.⁴⁶

Ivan Kuznetsov remembers the work of the Komsomol organization in 1922–1923. He is well known and respected at the Shchelkovo Cotton Mill. He and other retirees often recall the 1920s when they worked together in the Komsomol. And they have a lot to remember, especially the time when Ivan was at seventeen, working as Komsomol cell secretary. And even now (c.1969) Ivan participates in several meetings around the plant. He visits schools and pioneer gatherings, and meetings of Komsomol members. He never refuses when he is invited

⁴⁵ Vasily Kotov, Kruglov, Kirillov, etc.

⁴⁶ Between 1917 - 1919. Klavdiya Pustova, Mikhail Subbotin, Dusya Andreeva, Grunya Klimova, Vera Mukhina, Stepan Matveev, Ivan Bukhtanov, Nikolai Shlychkov and others joined the party.

to meetings in workshops or dormitories. And he has something to share, telling what he has experienced, Shchelkovo's overall contribution to the construction of socialism in the country. He gave 50 years of his life to all this. He has years of civil war behind him, years of five-year plans, he is a participant in two wars: he was a tank commander in Finland, he participated in the Great Patriotic War from 1941 to 1945, he defended his homeland from German invaders. Years have passed, and now Ivan is in well-deserved retirement, but he hasn't given up on social work. He remains in close contact with Komsomol members, to [pass on his experience and worldly wisdom.

In 1920, when Komsomol were being set up in the Shchelkovo region, envoys from Shchelkovo cotton mill went to the village of Trubino. That's where Ivan Kuznetsov first heard Andrei Zakharychev's report of Lenin's speech to the III Komsomol Congress. The speech made a great impression on the young Ivan: a blueprint for living and working in a new way, how to be an active builder, to participate and work in a youth organization. He immediately wanted to join the Komsomol. And since then, he has not missed a single meeting or rally. He left school far too early, after only 3 classes, but he realized that he really needed an education. He became a voracious reader: brochures, magazines, he wanted to know about everything happening in the country, at the front, and internationally. With his good memory and desire to know everything, he not only reads, but also writes notes and accumulates knowledge. Komsomol members at Sobolevo elected cell secretary, and he justified their trust with his energy and tireless work. He was tireless, seen everywhere: with young guys, Komsomol members in the club, at the factory, in the workshops, at the machines, at home, on the factory committee, at meetings of the party organization.



*"Shchelkovo Komsomol". Photograph of 1919, 1920-1921 or 1928. Published for the first time.
Caption: "Sitting from left to right: Kalinichev I.N., Sholovsky P.S., Babakin, Kudryavtsev M.I. (secretary),
Vasiliev F.N., Rubtsov G.P. Standing: Surin M.N., Baranov A. V., Asonychev N. M., Khramenkov M. S., ...
Feofanov D. I., Churkin F. P., Pavlova A. K.*

Looking at photographs of the fifth anniversary of the party organization, full of old Bolsheviks, participants in the 1917 revolution, we also see the secretary of the Komsomol cell, Ivan Kuznetsov. The organization had 42 people. Komsomol members actively participated in the re-opening of the factory, went to clean-up days, prepared machines for the opening, overcoming difficulties of the long machine downtime. Ivan Kuznetsov, who was still

very young in those years, was very serious and business-like. He paid great attention to improving his political knowledge. In terms of his abilities and knowledge, he stood out among his comrades, and he managed to graduate from the Moscow District Party School. The Komsomol members respected him, he enjoyed great authority among them, and he did a good job as a secretary. He was very interested in improving his knowledge and in 1924 he went to study at the workers' faculty. Like all active Komsomol members in the 1920s, he showed persistence and diligence in fulfilling the task assigned to Komsomol members by Lenin - to study and acquire knowledge.



Masters and assistant masters of the Weaving Factory of the Sobolevo-Shchelkovo plant. The photograph is undated. Published for the first time.

Slogans on banners: "On the ruins of bourgeois states throughout the world, Red Soviets will rise." "Long live the United Front of Labour against the United Front of Capital."

Recalling his years of work as secretary of our cell, Ivan Kuznetsov writes:

Time, indeed, is an unusually long thing – it is 48 years since we were exactly the same age as today's Komsomol members. The only difference is that the years were different, the years of the early but confident steps of the Komsomol. The Shchelkovo cell was created in 1920, coinciding with a historical event - the convening of the III Komsomol Congress, held in October 1920. And all that work was accomplished by our first youth leaders⁴⁷

Ivan Bukhtanov was a delegate to the 3rd Komsomol Congress, and heard the speech of V.I. Lenin. When he returned, he talked a lot about Lenin, about his parting words to the young builders of Soviet power. The Shchelkovo delegates to the Congress often spoke to boys and girls about what they'd heard there.

Our work at that time was determined by events. The country was gripped by unemployment. We tried our best to reduce it, especially among teenagers. This was achieved in various ways, right up to the development of a special resolution, which established a certain

⁴⁷ Ivan Bukhtanov, Andrei Zakharychev, Stepan Matveev, Vasily Morozov, Konstantin Morozov.

percentage of young people who could be admitted to the factory. To protect the interests of boys and girls, a youth representative was elected to the factory committee. In most cases it was the secretary of the cell. He was invited to a meeting of the Rating and Conflict Commission, where wage rates for teenagers were set. Because of its importance, the Komsomol district committee had an economic and legal department. In 1920-1921, Vasily Kurakin was in charge of it. In 1924, the youth representative in the factory committee was Konstantin Filaretov, and the secretary of the Komsomol factory committee was Comrade Terdityev.

It was a remarkable time because while working, young people felt they could become involved in culture. The Soviet state, on the initiative of Lenin, created workers' faculties, where boys and girls received secondary education, and then, following the direction of workers' faculties, they could study at higher educational institutions.⁴⁸

The creative initiative of working youth gained great momentum in many amateur artistic circles at the Shchelkovo club. We cannot forget the acting performances of our Komsomol members V. Kotov, V. Demidov, V. Moiseeva, and there was also a choir. In 1922, our Komsomol cell began publishing the newspaper "Creativity". It was edited by a worker, a carpenter by profession, Mikhail Shorin. Life was in full swing, as they say. Young people often organized excursions to museums in Moscow. Volunteer days were often held, with the money earned sent to the commission to combat homelessness. Frequent mass excursions to Moscow united the Komsomol members of the factory into a single friendly family. In this unforgettable time, whose name is the twenties, I contributed by working as secretary of the factory's Komsomol cell 1922-24. In 1923, Ivan participated, as a textile worker's trade union representative at the Moscow Congress of Trade Unions. He clearly remembers how, expressing concern for the state of health of V.I. Lenin, letters were sent on behalf of the congress to Vladimir Ilyich wishing him a speedy recovery.

In the twenties, the Shchelkovo cotton plant, was the largest enterprise in the region, so was strongly represented within public organizations.⁴⁹ In the fall of 1922, the Fifth All-Russian Komsomol Congress assumed patronage of the Navy, and fulfilling the decision of the congress, we sent two Komsomol members to the fleet. Young people willingly, with great enthusiasm, became well educated. Many went to workers' schools, to evening schools, to professional technical schools, to political courses to increase their political knowledge.

Nowadays you hear that young people need to be educated on the glorious revolutionary traditions of the older generation. Indeed, the Komsomol member of the 20s had many glorious deeds and strong revolutionary discipline. We always lived together, worked with passion, and constantly felt support and help from the party organization. The leaders of the party, the factory committee, and management always found time to provide practical assistance to us, young Komsomol members.

1923 was especially memorable because an organization of young pioneers was set up at the plant. Dozens of children of workers and employees of the plant started to be brought up in the

⁴⁸ Among the first Shchelkovo Komsomol members, I. Bukhtanov, K. Filaretov, K. Kuliygin, E. Poletaeva, I. Kuznetsov went to study at the workers' faculty.

⁴⁹ Factory worker communists I. Babakina, V. Usachev, L. N. Pribylov, N. M. Asonychev and others worked in the Shchelkovo district council and the district party committee. I. Bukhtanov and Stepan Matveev worked in the Komsomol district committee.

pioneer organization. I remember a lot of work during those years of my stay in the Komsomol in the 20s and participation in the work of the cell.

In Autumn 1922, the Fifth All-Russian Komsomol Congress was held at The Bolshoi Theater. I was lucky enough to have a guest ticket at this convention. At that time, I was a cadet of the Moscow District artillery school, where I had been sent from our plant. Those were difficult years. Our country has just ended a civil war. The Soviet people, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, set about restoring the national economy. And at that time, young people, at the behest of the Communist Party, went where their young hands, energy and enthusiasm were needed. That was the main topic the Komsomol congress.

Komsomol members of the twenties understood that building a new society would not be easy, but were not afraid of difficulties and did not refuse any work. In those years, Komsomol members went to build factories in Siberia and the Urals, went to restore destroyed factories, went to Donbass to restore mines, to mine coal, and to go everywhere at the call of the party. In those days, Lenin's words about the need to study, study, study were a call for us. Remarkable Komsomol activists in those years were I.E. Nikolaeva, V. Moiseeva, who worked on the design of our "Creativity" newspaper, and later on the large circulation "Textilshchik" magazine.

Komsomol members of the 20s invested a lot of effort and labour into the common cause of building a socialist society in our country. And we are thrilled that our modest work was not in vain. Present day Komsomol members continue the glorious traditions of the Komsomol members of the twenties. Under the leadership of the party, the Komsomol organization of our plant has grown into a large detachment based on the heroic traditions of the revolutionary struggle, on the examples of the selfless work of Soviet people, educating young men and women in the spirit of selfless service to the Motherland."

The year 1923 was marked by a remarkable event in the work of the Komsomol organization. The first pioneers appeared at the factory.⁵⁰ Children with red neckerchiefs marched through the streets singing cheerful songs, and drums were heard in the surrounding area. Young Pioneers appeared - future Komsomol members, fighters, communists, builders of a socialist society, builders of communism. In the summer of 1923, Young Pioneer organizations were set up in 64 factories. The children of workers and employees of the plant were brought up in the pioneer organization.

To be continued.

[Part 4](#)

[VII Pioneer Organization, 1923](#)

[VIII Work of the KOR club](#)

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⁵⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Pioneers_\(Soviet_Union\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Pioneers_(Soviet_Union))