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The Сентябрьский:
Exit, Voice, and the Consequences of Mobilisation in Putin's Russia.

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ABSTRACT

On the 21st of September 2022, Vladimir Putin announced a partial mobilisation of Russian reservists to support his 'special military operation' in Ukraine. For hundreds of thousands of young men eligible for conscription, the news sparked an immediate decision to emigrate. The idea of protesting against the decision within Russia no longer seemed viable. Exit, for them, had become a necessity.

Drawing on the framework of Hirschman's (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, I ask how the Hirschmanian model applies to the September 2022 migratory wave from Russia. My research builds upon nine interviews I conducted in late 2023 with the Sentyabrsky (сентябрьский), a term I introduce to Western literature to denote the September relocants, that is, the collective of predominantly young men who fled Russia in the wake of the 2022 conscription announcement. First providing a taxonomy of the Sentyabrsky, I assess the interplay of their emigration with political voice across the Russian world. Ultimately, I argue that the mass emigration of this politically engaged class, in tandem with the increasingly repressive policies of state authorities, has significantly diminished the prospects for reform in Putin's Russia. Exit, just as Hirschman would suggest, has subdued the voices against the war in Ukraine; because, for many of the Sentyabrsky, the hope of return means that outspoken opposition remains a dangerous prospect. In such a way, mobilisation might be seen as an invaluable tool in ensuring domestic loyalty for ongoing conflicts.

Keywords: Mobilisation, Conscription, Hirschman, Russia, Exit, Voice, Migration, Politics, Draft-dodgers

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Exit and voice, or migration and protest, are two interrelated concepts that have entered the discussion around the war in Ukraine. These two ways of confronting political dissatisfaction – theorised under Hirschman's (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* – have been particularly relevant as scholars try to understand the mass emigration from Russia since the war began. Outmigration has been seen as a significant drain on the Russian economy, another challenge for Putin's efforts to operate his army, and a potential destabilising force upon neighbouring CIS states[1] (Jenkins 2023, Al Jazeera 2023a, Aralkhan 2023, Matusevich 2022). Hirschman's theory has been used to argue, primarily, that the difficulties in raising voice in the Russian Federation have made exit by far the more attractive option for those opposing the war (Shteinert & Matskevich 2022, Gelman 2022, Kolesnikov 2023, Mukhina 2023, Rapoport 2023), but commentators have also noted its applicability to the case of exiled Russian activists (Henry & Plantan 2022), the constraints on Russian foreign policy experts (Graef 2023), and the lack of unified resistance to the 2022 draft measures (Meduza & Gelman 2022).

This research builds upon the existing literature on Russia since the war in Ukraine began, by analysing the ways by which Hirschman's theory applies to the peak of the recent Russian migration cycle: the wave that followed the mobilisation announcement in September 2022. It examines specifically the choices, motivations, and circumstances of the Sentyabrsky (сентябрьский) – a term used in the Russian-speaking world to describe the Russians who emigrated in September 2022, but never previously introduced into Western literature. Central to this study is an attempt to understand exactly what motivated their decision to leave Russia, their experiences of exit, and the effect upon their political engagement since. With data sourced from nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Sentyabrsky now living in Almaty, Kazakhstan, as well as an analysis based on media articles and scholarly papers on the September mobilisation, this research explores the relationship between migration and voice in the Russian case. I find that the fear of conscription acted as an impetus for exit in ways that go beyond the immediate implications for those drafted, that, not surprisingly, the hope of some Sentyabrsky to return acts as a constraint upon political expression even in exit, and, crucially, that the migration of the Sentyabrsky marked the exodus of much of Russia's 'liberalised' political class – those most opposed to the war in Ukraine. The mobilisation has thus limited the voices unsympathetic to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, and solidified loyalty in Putin's increasingly anti-western Russia.

This paper will begin by placing the Sentyabrsky in context, categorising their distinct social status as somewhere between economic migrants and political refugees. I will then apply their case to

[1] Commonwealth of Independent States, referring to the former republics of the Soviet Union

Hirschman's (1970) framework, considering the model's theoretical developments and its relevance to migration studies. After, I will expound my data and methods of analysis, detailing the processes behind my research and interview selections, before providing an analysis of my findings through the lens of the concepts of exit and voice. Finally, the paper ends with a look at the limitations of my research, and some concluding remarks on its relevance in the years to come.

2. BACKGROUND

"The decree on partial mobilisation has been signed."

- Vladimir Putin, September 21st, 2022

Although millions of Russians have left their homeland since the outbreak of fighting in Ukraine, migration out of Russia is by no means a new phenomenon (Ministry of Defence 2023). Millions of white émigrés fled west as the Bolsheviks rose to power, and even greater numbers departed in the years after the Soviet Union's collapse (Tsereteli 2023, Heleniak 2004, p. 103). While those who fled after the October Revolution did so for fear of reprisals, and those in the 1990s in the hope of a better life, all these migrations are tied together as moments that express a collective dissatisfaction with the political status quo. In other words, these are moments when people 'voted with their feet'. The emigration from Russia since 2022 is thus, in a certain sense, the most tangible expression of Russian opposition to the war in Ukraine to date, even if it is one expressed more so by numbers than it is by words.

In opposition to President Vladimir Putin's rule, or for a better economic life, at least three million Russians are said to have left between 2010 and 2020 (Federal State Statistics Service, Herbst & Erofeev 2019). As such, some commentators have argued that the post-Ukraine war migration is but a continuation of a 'Putin Exodus' that coincided with the start of Vladimir Putin's third Presidential term. For them, the post-2022 emigration is not a distinct social migration (Mukhina 2023). Post-war relocants rather share a common cultural condition with the émigrés of the 2010s – with high levels of education, an interest in both Western and Russian politics, and a more liberal mindset – and thus their decisions to exit Russia have seemed motivated either by the weakening economy or the Kremlin's increasingly repressive policies (Herbst and Erofeev 2019).

While these emigrations are certainly connected, it is also clear that two distinct waves of people have left Russia since February 2022. The first of these was a 'shock wave' of Russian emigration that occurred within the first few weeks of the conflict (Rapoport 2023). At that point, an estimated 700,000 individuals left, for the most part due to a strong ideological opposition to the military aggression in Ukraine (Zavadskaya et al. 2023, p. 2). The second wave, and subject of this study, was the mass emigration of mostly young men who fled in the weeks following the 21st of September: the day when

Putin announced his partial mobilisation to the nation. In this instance, data released by the FSB initially appeared to suggest that a staggering 9.7 million Russians had left, taking with them an amount of capital so substantial that it caused an immediate economic downturn in Moscow (Haseldine 2022, Korsunskaya & Marrow 2022). While this FSB figure does not account for those who made return journeys shortly after, it can be assumed that around a million people made a permanent departure at that time (Pheiffer 2022).

This 'September wave', as I will hereafter refer to it as, is distinct from previous waves for several reasons. Firstly, the wave is inextricably tied to Putin's partial mobilisation announcement, and might therefore be categorised as an exodus of 'draft-dodgers' above anything else. For those who left at that time, exit was weighed against the risk or expectation of a draft summons, and so for many, exit here had become a matter of life or death. Moreover, while the 'partial' mobilisation itself had called for 300,000 reservists, they were to be drawn from a staggeringly large pool of 25 million eligible young men (Reuters 2022a). Understandably, this provoked considerable panic, and therefore the September departure was much more chaotic than previous waves, with less time for planning, swirling rumours that the border would soon close, and journeys complicated by inflated ticket prices and arduous waits at Russia's southern border (Korobkov 2022, Ward-Glenton 2022, Bantock et al. 2022).

The wave was also marked by the considerable risk attached to many of those choosing to leave. While not everyone who left during the September wave had themselves received draft notices, for those who had the actual process of crossing the border entailed the possibility of being stopped by the authorities, thus risking being sent to a frontline where draftees have been repeatedly deployed as cannon-fodder (Schmidt 2024). Some local authorities even established temporary draft offices during the period, threatening that "reservists attempting to leave Russia would be given draft papers on the spot" (Light 2022). For this reason the migration was treacherous, uncertain, and in some instances traumatic, with many suffering the additional threat of exploitation by opportunistic border guards and locals, as my research reveals.

If not all of those who left during the September wave had themselves received draft notices, the demography of the group indicated that they were young people with their futures in front of them. In this sense, they were distinct from those that had left before. Although there were reports of tens of thousands of men in their 40s and 50s being handed papers (Phfeiffer 2022), and the wives and children of draftees are known to have left at that time too (Vorobeva 2022), for the most part these emigrants were young men 'of fighting age' (Al Jazeera 2022a). Thus, the September wave had a gender dynamic that was not at all present among previous migrations.

The migratory wave is also distinct when one considers economic status. Whereas out-migration from Russia in the preceding years had mostly come from the more affluent political class, that is, more liberal-minded people from big cities (Inozemtsev 2023), the September migrants appeared to encompass a much wider socio-economic stratum. The men avoiding the draft worked in fields as varied as construction, education, or entrepreneurship (Babich 2023), and many who fled to CIS countries did so because it was the only affordable option (Trotsenko 2022). In turn, there has been considerable speculation that there may have been marginal pro-Putin supporters among the migrants of the September wave, or rather, people who left for fear of mobilisation rather than because of any ideological opposition to the attack on Ukraine (Trotsenko 2022, Mukhina 2023, p. 5). In such a way, in a sociological (and perhaps ideological) sense, the September wave differs from its predecessors.

It is therefore conceptually useful to distinguish the September wave from those who left before. Previous studies tend to discuss these migrants as part of the same grouping as the 'shock wave', or 'Putin exodus', calling them a variety of names: émigrés, migrants, and at times even refugees (Soroka et al. 2023, Mukhina 2023). The majority, however, tend to not identify themselves with such terms, associating 'migrants' with guestworkers from poorer states, and refugees with those who have been affected by war in a more direct sense (Inozemtsev 2023, pp. 8-9). In response to this, the term *relokanty (*релоканты*),* or relocants, has gained significant popular currency, denoting more specifically the Russians who have left since the war in Ukraine began (Aralkhan 2023, Inozemtsev 2023, Osmonalieva 2023). Within this term is the connotation of individuals temporarily relocated to another place, reflecting the hope of return that many of them still hold, as well as the sense by which their decision to emigrate was freely made (Inozemtsev 2023, p. 9).

This study hopes to gain better sense of the class, motivations, age, and other factors of the *relokanty* by analysing the *Sentyabrsky* (сентябрьский) – those migrants of the September wave. Derived from the Russian word for September (сентябрь), the term captures the particular experience of flight from forced military recruitment, and thus allows a more focused analysis on the impacts of the mobilisation itself. The word *Sentyabrsky* also encourages one to consider the parallels between the September wave and the October revolution (Октя́брьский перевоpо́т); two periods defined alike by mass emigration and a radical shift in domestic Russian politics. This research now intends to investigate the phenomenology of that September departure, with the hope of better understanding the consequences of mobilisation in relation to the Hirschmanian concepts of exit and voice.

3. EXIT, VOICE, AND THE SENTYABRSKY

3.1 Hirschman's (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*

Despite being initially conceived to explain consumer dissatisfaction, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* has frequently been used in discussions around migration and political discontent. The model holds that in any declining firm or organisation, unhappy buyers or members are faced with two choices – exit or voice – with a third option, loyalty, functioning to shape the attractiveness of either path. For Hirschman, the theory represented a synthesis between economic and political thought. Exit, here understood by the decision to emigrate, was a neat, binary, impersonal choice; voice, per contra, the direct articulation of discontent, "all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest" (Hirschman 1970, p. 16). Voice, thus, might be understood as a "messy" political act, ranging from the expression of disaffection in social forums and media posts, to widespread public protests.

Brief and broadly applicable, Hirschman's text has nevertheless attracted its critics. Most crucial is the objection to the idea that exit and voice are necessarily alternatives. Whereas, conceptually, exit and voice can be clearly distinguished, early commentators noticed the possibility for the two phenomena to be sequential or concurrent, as in the case of 'noisy' exits, where voice announces the decision to leave (Barry 1974, Birch 1975, Dowding 2000). Looking at the complimentary effects of out-migration and domestic protest in the GDR, Hirschman himself noted that exit and voice can in fact reinforce each other (Hirschman 1993), but as the years have gone by the interconnectedness of the two options has only become more and more apparent. Scholars have since argued that transnationalism has internationalised voice rather than diminish it (Hoffmann 2010), and that the advent of social media and low-costs of travel have made "voice-after-exit" easier than ever before (Rone & Junes 2021, Landgrave & Nowrasteh 2016). Exit, too, has been shown to enable voice, as factors such as repression and political hostility act as constraints upon protest in the domestic domain (Henry & Plantan 2022). What is clear today, is that the relation between exit and voice is complex and multifaceted, and that the two influence each other in ways that go far beyond the 'see-saw' dichotomy that Hirschman first envisaged.

Another criticism of Hirschman's initial formulation relates to how he vaguely defines his two central terms. In studies of transnational migration, for example, exit has been shown to operate with far greater fluidity than Hirschman's binary 'in-out' categorisation would suggest, and thus it requires scrutiny in the modern context. More specifically, the establishment of diasporas with loyalty to the 'imagined community' of a nation (Anderson 1983), or the existence of transnational voting rights (Fitzgerald 2004), suggest that exit does not always mean exit. Today rather, it is easier than ever for migrants to maintain social ties across vast distances, and to continue to make an economic and political contribution to a nation from abroad (Hoffman 2010). While, in the Russian case, strict penalties for 'draft-dodgers'

makes return a more dangerous prospect (Maynes 2023), and the influence of emigrants upon the political sphere is undercut both by authoritarian rule and limitations upon consulate voting rights (Grobman et al. 2024), the binary of the term exit should still be questioned.

Voice, similarly, has been criticised for failing to consider the disparities between individual and collective forms of protest, each with vastly different meanings and cost-benefit calculations. An individual complaint about a product is clearly a very different thing to a mass uprising against a regime, and thus the lumping of the two forms of voice together fails to account for their variance in rationality, or their differing prospects for provoking change. This critique, in fact, is one of the earliest raised against *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. Barry (1974) noted that Hirschman acknowledges but fails to properly consider the implications of Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action*, whereby the costs of promoting some collective good often vastly outweigh the expected benefits upon the individual. In the political realm, therefore, one must assume that voice entails a cost, both in the energy expended in protesting itself and in the penalties imposed by authoritarian regimes: be they imprisonment, dismissal from work, or even death (Clark et al. 2017).

A final consideration relates to the concept of loyalty, which is particularly relevant to the discussion of political emigration. Hirschman considered loyalty as a constraint upon exit and a catalyst for voice, but it might also be seen as an alternative option: a silent acquiescence to the deteriorating status quo. The EVLN model – Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect – attempts to account for this consideration by postulating neglect as a fourth reaction to decline, in which no effort is made towards recovery of the relationship or firm (Rusbult et al. 1982, Withey & Cooper 1989). The similarity between loyalty and neglect here lies in the fact that both are difficult to measure in any quantifiable sense; instead, they are only recognised by their effects, which in some sense makes the concepts difficult to incorporate into any working model (Barry 1974, p. 96). Importantly, too, it is not always immediately clear to what or to whom loyalty is supposed to be directed. In relation to the state, for example, the object of loyalty might be different to that which one directs voice, or from which one decides to exit (Dowding 2000, p. 491). In other words, loyalty to Russia is very different from loyalty to the Kremlin, or to the Putin regime. As such, even if loyalty does intuitively seem to be a significant phenomenon, the extent to which it modulates emigrant behaviour is often hard to quantify.

3.2 Applying *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* to the Sentyabrsky

Since the war in Ukraine began, many academics, journalists and bloggers have noted Hirschman's theory's relevance to the mass out-migration facing Russia, arguing that the difficulties in raising voice have made exit by far the more attractive option for Russians opposing the 'special military operation'

in Ukraine (Shteinert & Matskevich 2022, Gelman 2022, Kolesnikov 2023, Mukhina 2023, Rapoport 2023). In simple terms, Hirschman's theory weighs the opportunity costs of protest and migration against each other, helping us to understand why Russians tend to see migration as the more accessible option when they are discontented with their nation's politics.

In relation to the Sentyabrsky, however, the application of Hirschman's framework appears to garner a meaning that expresses more than discontent with the Kremlin. Exit, for reservists in September 2022, is not exit from the state alone, but escape from the call-up to fight in Ukraine. Exit thus captures two phenomena: that from nation and that from the immediate demands of the mobilisation. The parameters for voice, in this instance, also shift, as protest is expressed against both the specific draft measures as well as against the authorities in general. In such a way the cost of using voice appears much greater for the Sentyabrsky, entailing the risk of exposing yourself to the very people who would send you to war. Finally, and most dauntingly, loyalty ceases to mean neglect or acquiescence, but carries the very real responsibility of picking up arms to fight in Ukraine. It implies a loyalty not just to Russia, or to the Kremlin, but to the idea of the 'special military operation' itself, and a willingness to die for its cause.

Despite its exceeding relevance, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* has only infrequently been applied to the phenomenon of draft-evasion. While Hirschman himself noted the case of Senator Eugene McCarthy's anti-Vietnam war presidential campaign (Hirschman 1970, p. 117) – one in which exit was to "resign under protest" (ibid, p. 104) – he said nothing of the migration of 50,000 draft-age youth to Canada, or rather, "the largest political emigration from the United States since the American revolution" (Hagan 2001, p. 171). Exit, in the form of draft-evasion, gains new meaning when one considers Hirschman's view that exit "has an essential role to play in restoring quality performance of government" (Hirschman 1970, p. 117). During war time such emigrations are a direct expression of opposition to the conflict, and so they can be pertinent anti-war messages, public refusals of complicity. Hirschman's recognition that exit can be branded as "criminal" or "desertion" is also at its most evident during wartime (Hirschman 1970, p. 17). Take, for example, Putin's statements welcoming the departure of pro-Western Russians, labelling them as "scum and traitors" (Troianovski 2022). Applying Hirschman's framework, such comments serve the politically useful purpose of delegitimising those Russian emigrants in the public eye, thereby reducing the clamour and authority of their exit.

As far as I am aware, only one paper has ever applied Hirschman's framework to the phenomenon of 'draft-dodging' in a way that might be comparable to the Sentyabrsky. Looking at the case of the Eritrean National Service, Kibreab (2018) notes that "the tendency among Eritrean conscripts and draft evaders has been to exit from the dissatisfying conditions rather than exercising voice". Given the deeply repressive practices of the Eritrean government, he argues that exit is the only means through which to

protest the government's policies. It is, in his words, the "sine qua non for exercising voice" (Kibreab 2018).

Perhaps the most interesting conclusion of Kibreab's interview-based study, however, relates to his conclusions around loyalty. Kibreab presents evidence suggesting that "not all those who have stayed… are necessarily loyalists", and, analogously, not all those who left are disloyal, but rather that there are other explanatory factors as to why Eritreans stay put. He cites specifically the "shoot-to-kill" policy at Eritrea's borders with Sudan and Ethiopia, the risk of being trafficked and the considerable dangers posed for women in transit as major disincentives for exit. In turn, he argues along Withey and Cooper's (1989) framework that loyalty more closely resembles "entrapment" than devotedness, particularly in the case of conscripts. One interviewee, Adem, for example, when asked why unhappy conscripts do not flee or protest responded quite frankly that "they are imprisoned" (Kibreab 2018). Describing the actual conditions in service, another respondent said "I had no choice. I was literally a slave to my commanders in the national service" (Ibid). Through these testimonies, it can be inferred that similarly the loyalty of reservists called to fight in Ukraine is not as clear-cut as Hirschman's framework might suggest. The grave difficulties surrounding exit and voice might mean that loyalty was the only serious option that many reservists faced, and given the morale problems within the Russian military, this assessment gains a certain credence (Mappes et al. 2023).

Another important consideration regarding the Sentyabrsky relates to the specific border policies in operation during the September wave. Despite the numerous threats to close the border and the installation of temporary draft offices in certain frontier locations, the Kremlin never enacted a total restriction on emigration from Russia at the time. The reasons for this policy choice may be significant. A 2023 study on the border policies of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), for example, argues that authoritarian regimes often "target anti-regime actors for emigration, thereby crafting a more loyal population without the drawbacks of persistent co-optation or repression" (Michel et al. 2023). While Hirschman himself argued that exit can act as a 'safety valve' that allows political opponents to leave, thereby reducing domestic opposition, Michel et al. consider the possibility of a "targeted safety valve strategy" whereby regimes deliberately select troublesome opponents for emigration while limiting the movement of those with a clear value to the nation's economy and security (Hirschman 1970, Michel et al. 2023, p. 528). Their empirical analysis – based on an original data set from over 20,000 pages of East German state archives – shows that the GDR was much more likely to allow actively vocal protestors to emigrate, while at the same time state authorities actively considered and curtailed the emigration of professionals who were economically valuable to the state. The study concludes from this that autocrats design emigration policies to strengthen their regime, removing opposition while limiting the exit of high-yielding citizens.

In relation to Russia in September 2022, the decision to leave the border open might therefore be seen as a deliberate strategy to ensure the exit (and thus silence) of those most opposed to the war effort. Michel et al. (2023) argue that rather than being limited to the individuals themselves, regimes also have agency over exit, playing an active role in deciding who is eligible to leave (Michel et al. 2023, p. 528). In the GDR they claim that only the most determined citizens were able to exit, and thus a clear parallel can be drawn to the Sentyabrsky, who confronted significant risk in leaving during a period rife with the perils that exist during a state of war.

On a final note, other literature around 'draft-dodging' reveals that there is also a historical precedent tying migration flows to dissatisfaction with efforts to mobilise troops. To understand resistance to mobilisation efforts during the First French Empire, Chatelain (1972) looks at migration records to argue that seasonal occupational migrations soon became long-term, as workers desperately attempted to avoid conscription. The same can be said for war resisters in South Africa, and those avoiding forced conscription during the Syrian civil war (Israel 2002, Monroe 2020). In sum, the stories of migrant draft-dodgers provide a valuable insight into perspectives on military service, and the effectiveness of and support for mobilisation in general. This study will now turn to those stories themselves, and the interviews I conducted with Sentyabrsky living in Almaty, Kazakhstan in late 2023.

4. DATA AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

4.1 Case Selection

This research looks at the experiences of the Sentyabrsky in their flight from the partial mobilisation announcement, then relates that to the prevalence of voice against the Putin regime and his draft measures. This, I hope, will shed light on the impact of mobilisation announcements in general, revealing how they affect the motivations of those that they implicate. To this end, I have chosen a qualitative case study as a research methodology because it allows a more precise understanding of the personal circumstances motivating the Sentyabrsky, which can then be supplemented by larger contextual considerations.

The decision to conduct interviews with the Sentyabrsky was based partly on ease of access, as I was studying on exchange in Almaty in late 2023, but also because the Sentyabrsky living in Kazakhstan are a more representative sample of those who fled during the September wave. Kazakhstan was one of the most popular destinations for the Sentyabrsky as a whole – with 300,000 crossing the border in September according to most reports (Trotsenko 2022, Askar 2022) – albeit large numbers also travelled to Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey (Kuleshova et al. 2023, Akin 2023). The Sentyabrsky in Kazakhstan,

however, appear to have been better welcomed than those elsewhere, perhaps given Kazakhstan's close economic ties with Russia and the large ethnic Russian population in the north of the country (Al Jazeera 2023b, Mühlfried 2023). As a former Republic of the USSR, Kazakhstan shares with Russia a common language, Russian, as well as the second-longest continuous land-border in the world. The interviewees are thus better placed to represent those who had no time to plan before departure, capturing more concisely the effects of the partial mobilisation itself.

In a more general sense, the case of the Sentyabrsky is interesting because it is the largest and most visible single flight from military mobilisation in recent times. It allows, therefore, for an understanding of draft-dodging in a transnational, globalised context. The political, economic, and social reflections offered by this study too, might allow its conclusions to be reapplied to other cases of draft-evasion, in addition to explaining why so many people left in the September wave itself.

4.2 Research Technique and Data Collection

I decided to employ a mixed methods approach to this study, focusing on a set of nine in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with Sentyabrsky based in Kazakhstan. All nine interviewees had fled from Russia into Kazakhstan in September 2022, and all but one had chosen to stay in Kazakhstan long-term. All participants, too, were young men between 25 and 36 years of age. Given the language barriers between myself and the participants, interviews were conducted either with the help of a third-party translator, or with interviewees with a knowledge of the English language. They were arranged either through mutual connections established while living in Almaty or through encounters in the city night-scene. The interviews were conducted in informal settings, be they bars, cafés, or the houses of mutual friends.

The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to speak freely about what they found important and to tell their stories from their own point of view. However, they also covered a number of key topics, including: their life in Russia (educational background, family situation, political stance), their experiences since the start of the 'special military operation' (where they were in February and September 2022, their exit from Russia, their arrival in Kazakhstan), and their political engagement since (views on the ongoing situation, political activism and expression, and desires to return to Russia in the future).

Understandably, given the small sample size and the selection bias from how the interviews were obtained, the group is not entirely representative of the demography of Russians who migrated during the September wave. Rather, the study is based on a limited dataset that was sourced without institutional

support, and therefore tends to represent a younger, more liberal demographic. Furthermore, the study is narrowed to those arriving in Kazakhstan and does not reflect upon how the Sentyabrsky faired elsewhere. Although more interviews would have allowed for a more comprehensive analysis, it is important to note that in some sense data saturation was achieved, as the interviews represented a broad range of individual motivations and personal circumstances. New information from the interviews is contextualised with findings from newspaper and journal articles, to paint a picture of the Sentyabrsky that extends beyond individual narratives.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

The new laws signed by the Russian authorities since the start of the conflict have meant that there is considerable risk attached to those who speak out against the Kremlin. Those found to have refused the draft face a maximum ten-year jail sentence, and sweeping anti-war dissent legislation means that even minor acts of protest can carry criminal charges (Maynes 2023, Troianovski et al. 2023). Given these factors, many of the Sentyabrsky face dangers should they ever wish to return to Russia, as well as potential dangers while living abroad, even if the risks are certainly lesser from outside (Osborn 2023, Reuters 2022b). As a result, great efforts were made throughout the interview process to protect the anonymity of respondents. All notes were taken by hand, and all names have been changed to shield their identity. Consent was verbally obtained, and respondents were informed on the sensitive nature of the questions and made aware that they could withdraw at any time.

5. EXIT

5.1 Wants and Exigencies

Ekaterina Vorobeva (2022) suggested that the Sentyabrsky consist of four categories or groups: (1) the young men motivated entirely by the mobilisation announcement, (2) trailing family members of those called up, (3) economic migrants who had already been devising an exit from Russia and for whom the mobilisation only sped up their plans, and last (4) transmigrants, who now felt compelled to stay abroad. While I might suggest that the second group be expanded to include the family members and friends of reservists, these categories are very much in keeping with my findings.

Aleksandr, 30, left Russia mainly to support a friend who had been drafted. “I have eye problems; I wouldn’t get drafted. But I wanted to help him, and I wanted a new life.” Aleksandr came to Kazakhstan on the 27th of September and initially lived just off his savings, but when the ruble lost its value, he was

forced to find work. “I needed to be paid in the local currency, but it was a terrible job, the pay wasn’t consistent.” The friend Aleksandr left with has since returned to Russia for employment, but Aleksandr doesn’t want to go back just yet. “Russians are barbarians, not all, but the majority. The people are better here.”

When I first met Aleksandr in a nightclub in Almaty and asked him where he was from, he initially told me that he was Ukrainian. It was only later, when I questioned him on this, that he revealed that although he was born in Ukraine, he had said so because he fears a negative reaction from Westerners. “Other countries see Russia as the aggressors, because in the 21st century war is a thing of the past.” What struck me about Aleksandr’s account was his pessimism about the future. “It’s hard to predict what will happen, but even if Putin died it wouldn’t change much.” Aleksandr, in such a way, is a case of someone who almost seems stuck in purgatory as the war in Ukraine continues. He is not entirely happy with his new life in Kazakhstan but remains adamant in his desire to not return home to Russia.

Most of the respondents had long considered an exit. Six of the nine participants expressed some desire to leave Russia before the mobilisation was announced, though all were constrained by personal factors as they made their differing plans. Konstantin, 28, from Murmansk, for example, told me that he had lived in England for half a year and had planned on going back. “I was in St Petersburg only two months when the war started, and suddenly it was difficult to get a visa to the UK.” Splitting his time between Mormonsk and St Petersburg, he wasn’t sure in the end whether he had been called up to fight. “I think I got a conscription letter, but I don’t know. I didn’t stay around to find out.”

Renat and Andrey, 25 and 27, had both been working at a major international bank when the war began. Suddenly, international sanctions forced them to consider options abroad. “When the war started, I thought it would only last a few days. I tried not to think about it. But when I was at work I remember staring at the ceiling, trying to work out what to do with my life.” A few months earlier, Andrey had been offered a normally great position at one of Russia’s largest companies. “I decided then that I didn’t want to work for them. Then I would be tied to Russia.” Instead, Andrey began applying for jobs all over the world. “I looked at the US, UK, even Caribbean countries, Jamaica, Cuba. Eventually I had the choice between a role in Boston or a transfer to Kazakhstan, but when the draft started, I thought getting a US visa would be impossible, so I accepted the role in Astana.” The effect of the draft on Andrey’s decision-making thus seemed very similar to the start of the war itself: it was just another example of why he didn’t want to live in Russia. “I didn’t see a future in this country. I had joined this company with the thought of global opportunities in mind, but the company left. There were no opportunities anymore.”

Igor, 28, had also felt an immediate desire to leave Russia after the invasion started, but needed time to save money to travel abroad. “Even in 2014 it smelled really bad. I had strong feelings that all this is wrong.” When the war started in February, Igor worked multiple jobs as he planned how he and his girlfriend would leave the country, continuing until even after the mobilisation announcement. It was only on the 27th, however, that an uncle of his who worked at the police found a ‘list’ with Igor’s name on it. The uncle urged him to leave while he still could. “I remember my father saying, ‘I never thought I would live long enough to see this ****’,” Igor told me, noting “The consequences will last for generations.” His whole family were very supportive of his decision to leave, but his girlfriend was forced to stay in Moscow because she was tied into a rental contract on her apartment.

The demands of family and work were clear motivators among all the Sentyabrsky that I interviewed. All the respondents’ family members were supportive of their decisions to leave, and some positively forced them to go. Grigoriy, 27 from Mormonsk, told me his mother begged him to leave at that time. “She said ‘You have to leave right now! People are getting drafted in the streets’.” Konstantin, 28 from Mormonsk, however, told me that despite initially being supportive his family had wanted him to come home after a few months. “I was scared, I don’t know what would happen to me if I came back.” Quite a few interviewees talked about this risk of return, citing specifically government statements on potential prison sentences for ‘draft-dodgers’ and the rumours of people being interrogated on re-entry (Putin 2023). “Technically I can come back,” Igor told me, “But they check your phone totally. They try to scare you.” For all interviewees, the prospect of return to Russia hinged on either the availability of work opportunities, or the potential for total governmental change. The risks at present seem too high to go back without a considerable commensurate reward.

Out of the nine interviews, only four respondents received or believed they had received draft notices themselves, but seven out of the nine recognised their suitability for military service. Given these fears, I heard many stories about the physical measures that the Sentyabrsky took to avoid conscription. One respondent, for instance, talked about seeing the draft letter wedged into his door frame, taking it out, and placing it back as though untouched as he left his apartment. He told me that he hoped the returning officer would take this as proof that he was no longer living there. Another told me about receiving a call from the conscription office each year, and how he made some excuse every time. One more told me that a letter arrived at his address with the wrong name, and that he stayed silent as the conscription officer banged at his door. Importantly though, the imperfections and inefficiencies of this draft system that allowed so many of the Sentyabrsky to escape seem to have been a focus for the authorities over the past year. Putin has already enacted reforms to establish a “digital gulag”, setting up a “database of all Russians eligible for military service” (Stanovaya 2023). Already, it runs through *Gosuslugi*, a website and app that millions of Russians already use to apply for a passport. The impact of these reforms

will be to make it very difficult for Russians to escape another mobilisation, even if questions have been raised about the feasibility of integrating such a system after the recent brain drain of IT specialists (Komin 2023).

Today, the new database is a key reason why many of the Sentyabrsky are unwilling to return to Russia, but it has not made return an impossibility. One respondent told me that while drunk on holiday he decided that he wanted to go back to Russia. He bought a ticket for two days later, surprised his fiancé, and reported that his mother cried, "a lot." He woke up the next day, and "I thought, it's not so bad. But then I opened the news and saw about Prigozhin's mutiny. I decided it wasn't worth it. I was there just three days."

All the Sentyabrsky I interviewed were resolutely against the war in Ukraine. "A lot of people are traumatised because of this war," one said, and another that "This is a madness." When I asked him the same question, Konstantin repeated "конечно, конечно" (of course) imploringly, adding "I have relatives from Ukraine: Crimea, and Sumi." Another respondent's father was Ukrainian and had passed away only two years before. That September he had received a draft notice that called on him to fight against his fatherland. While these individuals were clearly motivated by personal factors – the demands of family, work, and loved ones – they also all shared a deep sadness about the war itself and longed for peace to return.

In such a way, even though Russians with pro-war views were certainly among the Sentyabrsky – a fact testified to by three of the respondents – many if not most of those who settled in Kazakhstan appear to have done so largely because of their opposition to the conflict. Furthermore, many of the Sentyabrsky have since returned to Russia for work or other duties, though it is not clear whether that return is permanent (Chevtayeva 2023). From my interviews, the sense was clear to me that for many Russians – both domestically and abroad – the mobilisation was something that made the war real in their eyes. The thought of being implicated in the conflict made political engagement necessary, and exit a necessity, and as such, the effect of the mobilisation was as much psychological as it was material. It motivated people in a way that related to them personally: their moral stance on Ukraine, their capacity to fight, and their corporeal commitment to their nation. It was this new reality that inspired the Sentyabrsky to be exigent in their exit, the stories of which I will now discuss.

5.2 The Phenomenology of Escape

In the days after the mobilisation announcement leaving Russia would become increasingly difficult. Putin made his speech on the Wednesday evening, but did not reveal the 'partial mobilisation' until past 9pm in Moscow (Al Jazeera 2022b). In the east of the country, this meant that many would not hear the news until they woke up the next day. Boris, 26, from the city of Ufa, told me he only found out when he got to work. "I decided to leave the same day that night, but the prices for flights had already skyrocketed, it was something like $3000 if you wanted to leave the country." On Telegram channels Boris saw videos of people already getting stopped at the Georgian border, which fed into his sense of urgency. Living not far from Kazakhstan, he said goodbye to his mother, hitched a lift with a friend and managed to cross without any queues. "I was the fastest cowboy" he smiled, as I asked if he had any difficulties getting across.

Renat, from Novosibirsk, had similar ease in exit. At a fixed price, he bought train tickets to the Kazakh capital Astana for Friday evening, leaving him with a few days to get himself in order. "The train wasn't scary" he said, "they only have 40 minutes to check everyone's passports at border, because another train is sat behind. If you don't say anything stupid, they will let you go. I said I was a tourist." Everyone on the crowded train, he went on to say, was of recruitment age.

Articles from the time showed that direct flights out of the country almost immediately became a privilege for the rich, with the number of one-way tickets sold rising by 27% in that week alone (Reuters 2022c, Ward-Glenton 2022). However, many of the Sentyabrsky bought tickets to domestic airports close to the border, before getting out and crossing by other means. "I spoke to my friends, and we all decided to come to Kazakhstan," said Andrey, from St. Petersburg. "We flew on the Thursday evening to Kemerovo before taking a bus to Novosibirsk, and then another to Pavlodar. We went through the border in just four hours. It was actually really fast." Although these long-winded routes were cheaper and more reliable, the length of the overall journey meant that some of the Sentyabrsky were unable to sleep for several days. "We were worried about whether we could get through the border or not. We were constantly reading the chats on Telegram about the crossing. I didn't sleep the night of the 21st. I didn't sleep until Pavlodar even, on the morning of the 24th." Arriving safely in Kazakhstan, Andrey then told me about an encounter he had in a Kazakh railway station as he tried to buy tickets to Astana. "Some taxi driver joked, 'Hey lady, get them tickets to Donbas!'."

Another option for those heading to Kazakhstan was to fly to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and then take a coach across the border to Almaty. "Flight tickets one-way to Almaty were $15,000 by the following week, and in Georgia videos were showing panic at the borders," said Igor, from Moscow. "There were

strong rumours that the borders would soon close (by the weekend of the 1st of November) so I bought tickets for 60,000 rubles (around $1000 dollars at the time) to Bishkek." Despite landing miles away from the Russian border, Igor told me that the threat of conscription was far from gone. "I remember when crossing into Kazakhstan that the guy in front of me was shaking in fear. There were two Kyrgyz soldiers checking him out, and one came and took him away somewhere. I tried to act composed and told them I was here to visit my uncle, but one of the guards said there was a special operation with the FSB to catch people fleeing conscription. They threatened to call my manager, or to contact the Russian authorities. I knew they were just trying to extort me. I told them I left Moscow today without any problems, so why would the FSB stop me here? I never knew what happened to the guy in front of me though."

For Fyodor and Vadim, both 36, who did not set off until the following week, the situation was even more nerve-wrecking. On the 27th the pair took a flight from Moscow to Astrakhan – a Russian city near the Caspian Sea – before travelling by taxi to the Kazakh border. At the border, they told me they were confronted with a queue of cars almost 15 kilometres long. "People weren't allowed to cross by foot or by bike, so everybody was looking on Telegram for cars with an empty seat." At first, they told me they paid over $1500 for a lift with a local who, when they arrived at the border, the guards laughed at and turned away. "'This is the third time you've crossed the border this day' they said." The two got their money back, but they soon spent it again to get in another car with two Russians who were also fleeing conscription. During separate interviews, both Fyodor and Vadim described how tense this journey would become. "We slept in the car, three days and two nights, and it was horrible. The two men liked Putin, one even said 'there's a lot of Nazis in Ukraine'." While waiting in the traffic jam, they told me they struck up conversation with some Dagestanis who couldn't believe the two Russians had charged them for the journey, "but they offered the only car to get through, we had no choice." Vadim, an ethnic Korean, also told me about an encounter with a border guard that sent shivers down his spine. "He was wearing a mask, with a huge gun and a patch on his sleeve with the letter Z[2]. He saw my nose piercing and joked that I would *definitely* be sent to fight in Ukraine. I was terrified, and he saw that and told me to chill, 'it's just a joke'."

"At the border they had a list of people who had already been drafted," Fyodor continued. "Those on the list were forced to stay. I remember the guy in front, they checked his passport, looked at him, and told him 'Your country needs you,' then they took him away." Fyodor also describes being asked many questions at that time; about any unpaid bills, any previous jail time, why they were coming to Kazakhstan. "The scariest part was the seven hours we were in limbo between Russia and Kazakhstan. The feeling of relief when we finally arrived was amazing."

[2] Z, standing for 'за', 'for', as in 'for war', is a Russian symbol of support for the conflict in Ukraine.

It took Fyodor and Vadim three days, and cost them thousands of dollars to exit Russia, but at least they both got out. For the draftees who were stopped at these crossings, their story is very different. I found no statistics on how many were forced to stay after attempting to exit, and the indefinite service periods for draftees has made it hard for them to communicate their story at all (Ivanova 2024). Given that most of my interviewees detailed the efforts made by border guards to catch draftees, however, the number of those detained at the border and forced to fight is likely to be significant. An NGO named 'Go By The Forest', a play on words meaning 'get lost', has made it its anti-war mission to help as many potential conscripts escape as it possibly can (Gvindadze 2023). Between September 2022 and March 2023, they claimed to have housed over 4,000 people, and built an audience of around half a million (About us: ковчег 2023). Their work will no doubt prove invaluable if another partial mobilisation is announced, though it is unclear how significantly new draft rules will affect their capacity to continue helping.

Despite drawing many bleak conclusions, the interviews did also reveal some more positive stories that have emerged since the September wave came to Kazakhstan. Some have found themselves accidentally integrating, falling in love, discovering a dream profession, or setting up a successful music venue. While the Sentyabrsky certainly find themselves in a liminal space, with their whereabouts continuously dictated by the war in Ukraine, some have nevertheless found avenues through which to live good aspects of life. Vadim, for example, told me "I always wanted to make music, to make money from music, and here I can. In that sense, my life in Moscow was worse than it is now. But if you asked me if I'd prefer to have my life now, or no war, the answer is obvious. Every now and again I still feel a horror when I think that I'm here because of that."

6. VOICE

6.1 Political Expression in Putin's Russia

What is incontestable from the stories of the Sentyabrsky is that their exit was itself an expression of opposition to the war in Ukraine. In their case, exit was a form of voice. It was a moment when they 'voted with their feet'. Then again, the September mobilisation also had another impact on political expression, causing a very real protest movement in Russia and its near abroad. More than 1,300 protestors were arrested at anti-war demonstrations on the day after the mobilisation was announced (The Guardian 2022), and videos from Serbia showed "self-imposed exiles" protesting the new measures, even if it is unsure whether their voices had any effect (Al Jazeera 2022c).

Plainly, the dangers of raising voice in Russia today are huge. In July 2023, Amnesty International reported that over 20,000 individuals had been subjected to heavy reprisals for their part in the anti-war movement at home, and anti-war dissent legislation has become increasingly weaponised to prevent domestic unrest (Amnesty International 2023). In 2022, sweeping legislation even made the most innocuous acts criminal offences. Now, requesting a DJ for a Ukrainian song, or taking a photo with a blue and yellow scarf, are illegal under Article 20.3.3 of the Russian criminal code (Troianovski et al. 2023).

All the Sentyabrsky I spoke to were mindful of these laws, even after having emigrated abroad. Fears over the Russian surveillance system, what it meant for their prospects of return, and threatened regarding their visa status in Kazakhstan – still a close Kremlin ally – meant that they all exhibited reserve in how they expressed their political stance. Only three of the interviewees had been politically active before they left Russia, but all had refrained from protesting in Kazakhstan, except for one who confined it to social media at first, then stopped altogether as the dangers became more apparent. For him, 'No to War' (Нет войне), became "*** *****", then later "Two words" (два слова), before it was nothing at all. These coded forms of protest, in his eyes, were the only way to signal opposition without triggering the surveillance infrastructure, but even then, they were not fool proof. As such, the effectiveness of the Kremlin's measures in silencing dissent are already manifest, and in this digital age, they extend far outside of Russia's borders.

As commentators have noted, however, the mobilisation announcement did have a significant effect on political awareness, which may become instrumental in due course (Al Jazeera 2022c). Eight of the nine respondents in this study indicated that they had become more engaged in the news and media since the war (and mobilisation) began, suggesting that the war has inspired a more immediate political interest. "It's like the walk between fridge and the TV," Igor told me, "When the fridge is empty you stop believing the **** you see on TV." The mobilisation was a wake-up call for many of the Sentyabrsky. The direct burdens it placed upon them inspired a more conscious reflection on the state of Russian politics, and a rejection of its underlying reasoning. At the very least, the interviews show that Putin's propaganda machine has not been effective upon everyone. Many still oppose the war, even if they do so in silence.

Assuming this general political opposition of the Sentyabrsky, the intrinsic value of the September wave to the Kremlin becomes more apparent. Despite the numerous rumours that Putin would close the borders on the fleeing Russians, these threats never seemed to materialise. Of course, there are political reasons for this. On the Friday after the mobilisation the Kremlin was forced to admit that it didn't understand the sustained "hysterical and highly emotional reaction" to the mobilisation announcement,

and closing the borders would have certainly contributed to the surging panic (Sauer & Roth 2022). Then again, "It has long been a truism that if you want to know how a people feel about a government and its policies, just open the borders" (Richburg 2022). As Hirschman's model tells us, dissatisfaction can often be expressed as simply as a see-saw dichotomy between exit and voice. The costs of exit, although not insignificant in the Sentyabrsky's case, still tended to be much less than the costs of articulating their discontent. Thus, in allowing the September exodus, Putin succeeded in ensuring the reduced clamour of voices most opposed to the war and mobilisation. Like a "safety valve", the discontent renounced on their possibility to articulate protest (Hirschman 1970, p. 63).

In this way, the exit of the Sentyabrsky represents the departure of the latest Russian anti-establishment political class. Through their absence, they have subdued opposition voice from within Russia, and led to an increased sense of domestic support for the war. It is entirely because of the absence of this vocal opposition that domestic support for Putin seems so high. Polls from the start of 2024 indicate that over 80% of Russians express support for Putin and his actions (Statista 2024), though Russia's increasingly repressive policies – those that began with Putin's first term and reached a climax upon the partial mobilisation – imply that the apparent support for Putin is in many cases mere façade. Although, certainly, many Russians remain content with their situation, the others may be too scared to voice their concerns. This means that loyalty is no longer to be taken just at face-value. Just like the Sentyabrsky, we see this in the significant numbers of Russians who have 'internally emigrated', and now attempt "to live through dark times by hiding away or imitating obedient behaviour" (Kolesnikov 2023). For these individuals, the desperation to avoid the draft will ensure their continued silence. One cannot protest while in hiding.

The most vocal political outburst from the Sentyabrsky, their exodus itself, is unlikely to be repeated given the new legal amendments. The impossibility of applying for a passport without going through the conscription office means that any future draft-dodgers will be forced to emigrate internally instead. There will no longer be any legal means for them to exit Russia, which makes reports predicting another mobilisation a frightening prospect (RFE/RL 2024). Then again, the Kremlin's efforts to incentivise new soldiers, including recruiting huge numbers of fighters from across Asia and the Indian subcontinent, may mean that another conscription mobilisation will no longer be necessary (Pokharel et al. 2024). Russia is in a far better position to continue fighting a protracted conflict than Ukraine is, and for now, at least structurally, it is much better placed to bring in more troops (Watling 2024).

Regardless of whether another mobilisation does occur, the silencing effect of the 2022 partial mobilisation – felt through both the fear it inspired in would-be protesters and the exodus of those who protested before – may still be felt for years to come. The very real prospect of being sent to the frontlines

is as good a reason as any to refrain from vocal opposition, and it is also a powerful incentive for Russia's domestic security forces to make sure any new protests do not get out of hand. Mobilisation thus affects the political life of a nation in ways that go far beyond the implications for the draftees themselves. Psychologically, it has a silencing effect that now seems almost built into the very fabric of Russian life.

7. CONCLUSION

This research recounts the experiences of the Russians who fled Putin's war. It uses in-depth interviews with the Sentyabrsky to connect Hirschman's concepts of exit and voice to the phenomenon of 'draft-dodging', thus expanding the literature around his text. With help from articles and media, it has created a taxonomy of the Sentyabrsky and shown that the mobilisation announcement had a notable silencing effect, given that the exodus itself was the most vocal indication of discontent that has emerged against the partial mobilisation. In such a way, rather than being mutually exclusive, the case of the Sentyabrsky shows that exit and voice are heard loudest when they operate in unison. The interviews also revealed that many of the Sentyabrsky were motivated by personal contingencies as much as by their larger ideological opposition to the conflict in Ukraine, and that the hope of return has left many hesitant to use voice-after-exit.

There are many shortcomings of this research, though the most apparent relates to the sample size of the study. Being limited to just a small number of emigrants in Kazakhstan, the research offers only a snapshot of the motivations and experiences of the Sentyabrsky, and certainly more interviews could help to build a more complete picture of the September wave, particularly in terms of comparisons with other receiving nations. Much more could also be said on the significance of Sentyabrsky's immigration into Kazakhstan, and how it stands as an episode in Kazakhstan and Russia's complex geopolitical past. This goes for their integration, too, and how the Sentyabrsky reflect the broader plight of ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan since the collapse of the USSR. Additional research on the inner workings of the Kremlin's border policy at the time of the September mobilisation could also shed greater light on whether the wave was an example of a "targeted safety valve strategy", which might provide an invaluable insight into the links between conscription announcements and autocratic efforts to minimise dissent. At this stage, such a conclusion is recognised only by its effects, and further enquiry may reveal a deliberate attempt on behalf of the Kremlin to allow anti-war Russians to leave.

On a final note, I hope that this study has shed some light on the political implications of a second mobilisation, which would have worrying overtones for the many currently in hiding within Russia's borders (Politico 2023). Putin's tightening of the laws around conscription, making it harder to voice

protest and even harder to leave, raises serious questions about both the potential impact of more call-ups and the effectiveness of this new 'digital gulag'. A second mobilisation would certainly test these policies, and may create a vastly different set of stories to the ones revealed in this study. Beyond Russia, however, the findings of this research could also be applied to other cases of forced military conscription, showing how draft measures impact upon exit and voice in a more general sense. The 'draft-dodgers' in Ukraine, for me, seems a perfect counterexample to the Sentyabrsky, and thus it is an ideal starting-point for further scholarly work. It seems to me that there is a great difference between how these two groups have been portrayed in the public eye, and as such, their story is essential if we are to create a more complete picture of mobilisation in the current age.

INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

Boris, 26

From: Ufa

Profession: IT worker

Education: Bachelor's Degree

Left Russia: 22nd September 2022

Aleksandr, 30

From: Tyumen

Profession: Sales

Left Russia: 27th September 2022

Konstantin, 28

From: Mormonsk

Profession: Unemployed, though previously a Taxi Driver

Left Russia: 28th September 2022

Igor, 28

From: Moscow

Profession: DJ, Club Owner

Education: Bachelor's degree, well-travelled.

Left Russia: 29th September 2022

Grigoriy, 27

From: Mormonsk

Profession: Translator

Education: Bachelor's degree, time spent studying abroad.

Left Russia: 28th September 2022, has since been granted asylum in the US.

Fyodor, 36

From: Novosibirsk, then Moscow

Profession: DJ

Left Russia: 30th September 2022

Vadim, 36

From: Novosibirsk

Profession: DJ

Left Russia: 30th September 2022

Renat, 25

From: Tomsk

Profession: Auditor

Education: Bachelor's in Law

Left Russia: 23rd September 2022

Andrey, 27

From: St. Petersburg

Profession: Accountant

Education: Bachelor's in Management, Masters in Economics

Left Russia: 23rd September 2022

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